DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 030 030 AC 004 294

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Pub Date 68

Note-14p.. Prepared for the 4th HEW Forum, January 17, 1968

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80

Descriptors-Educational Methods, *Educational Philosophy, Land Grant Universities, *Rural Extension, *Rural Urban Differences, *Universities, *Urban Extension

For the university to be of service, it must be attuned to urban life. Some educators have suggested that a special chain of urban grant universities could reproduce in the cities the success of the landgrant colleges with rural society. The question is. Is the rural precedent really pertinent to contemporary urban needs? Analogies from urban problems to rural problems will not easily give us the methodology necessary for improving the quality of urban life. The rural precedent, however, teaches us something of the need we have of a design for urban development. The community, itself, has become the classroom; and thus a new conception of community education may be evolving. (se)

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INFORMAL EDUCATION: THE RURAL PRECEDENT AND THE URBAN CHALLENGE*

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I want to speak today about two aspects of education, and about how they relate to the problems of urban America. The first -- a subject of great interest to the office I now represent -- is university education. The second, a lifelong interest of my own, is informal education -- the learning that takes place outside the school as an element of living and working. Call it continuing education, on-the-job training, extension service, or as I like to think of it, community education, it is of uncertain prestige among educators generally, yet of so notable an achievement record that its potentialities command respect. I want to share with you my thoughts on the significance of these two aspects of education in a troubled urban society.

As the crisis of social relations has deepened around us, the tasks to be taken up have been seen, increasingly, in terms of governmental initiative, the duties of private business, the responsibilities of a revitalized community itself, and the role of that new center of modern life, the university. How many hopes and fears are focused on the university! Samuel Gould[1] implies that the urban world is the one front

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*Prepared for the 4th HEW Forum, January 17, 1968, HEW Auditorium, Washington, D. C.

[1]S. Gould, "Whose Goals for Higher Education?", American Council on Education, October 12, 1967

on which all higher education must be prepared to serve. Clark Kerr[2], on the other hand, thinks that a special chain of urban grant universities could reproduce in the cities the success of the land-grant colleges with rural society. President Johnson[3] is equally enthusiastic about the idea of transplanting the land-grant concept.

Thus far, however, the high hopes have not been fulfilled; education in schools and colleges as we know them has not yet caught up with the forces which have turned the revolution of rising expectations into the revolution of rising demands. The disparity between what is and what is needed is especially clear in the developing countries, where the great majority of the people have no significant formal schooling, and, in our time, never will. Thousands upon thousands of young people complete the elementary grades with appetites whetted for more learning, but all there is to learn is there are no jobs nor more education for them and consequently no futures. The collapse of hope this brings is fuel for the worldwide hostility that is smoldering or flaming up everywhere.

But, of course, it is not only in the developing countries that human aspiration is needlessly blighted. Even a country like our own, with its vast commitments to social development, retains its areas of chronic human frustration. In fact, as the summer of 1967 broke upon us, we re-discovered that the United States is undeveloped in many ways.

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[2]Fred M. Hechinger, "A Call for the Urban-Grant College, "The New York Times, October 22, 1967.

[3]Speech at University of California, Irvine, October 1964.

Ours is a country where, a few blocks from affluence and comfort, able men, young and old, stand on street corners, restlessly aware of a good life beyond their reach. It is a country where communities are frequently untidy, with resources short-sightedly used and ugliness triumphant as often as beauty. We grope sadly for each other -- father and son, teacher and student, white and black, old and young, rich and poor. And, even with a third of our population involved in our schools and colleges, we are dismayed to see how little connection there seems to between formal schooling and the capacity to solve domestic and international problems.

There is, however, a light shining through the darkness of hostility and deprivation.

...we do want more to prevent social ills than simply to alleviate them.

...we do know now that what one man enjoys cannot be separated from what another man suffers.

...we are questioning education that looks to the past alone, to routine, to ritual, and to rote.

In the community as a whole, a new concern, the keynote, perhaps, of a new era in human development, is manifesting itself.

...old slogans have taken on a living urgency -- removing deprivation, equalizing opportunity, human rehabilitation.

...new vocabularies identify the emerging realities -- model cities, medicare, compensatory education, rent supplements, creative federalism.

...more laws, as expressions of new concepts, hopes, relationships and commitments, have been passed than some people could have believed possible.

What next?

At the heart of our crisis of social relations, in rich and poor countries alike, is a weakness in methodology.

> . . . we cling to the belief that it is possible to enter the 21st century with the institutions of the 19th.
>
> . . . our schools teach the past while our communities wrestle with the problems and possibilities of a new day.

In buttressing the new conception of human development with an effective methodology, the university is sure to be important. It may well be that the university, prestigious, powerful, more free than most organizations in society of daily political strain, is the best agency for influencing orderly social change of the sort our time seems to require. Certainly we in the United States have a university system beyond any other in the world by almost any possible standard. Nowhere else does such a large proportion of the population receive higher education. Nowhere else is there so much scope and variety in what universities do: in subjects taught, research undertaken, development projects sponsored. Nowhere else are universities so deeply and creatively involved in community life.

The university community at home and abroad is looking for its own methodology of service, and, in the United States today, this means a methodology attuned to urban life. In the search for new approaches to the problems of the cities, it is tempting to explore certain areas

of past and present success for useful analogies. One such is the great saga, now more than a century old, of how universities helped turn American farms into the marvels of productivity they are today. The analogy is particularly tempting because the rural movement also changed and elaborated the character of community. Indeed, it is so tempting that it is important not to go too far with it without making sure how far it is truly applicable. Is the rural precedent, this great American social invention, perhaps the world's best example of informal education, really pertinent to contemporary urban needs, or is it only another panacea promising more than it can deliver?

Let us look at the rural precedent. It revolutionized American society by putting into practice a few straightforward principles.

. . . there is as much intelligence in the masses as in the elite, and educational opportunity will find and and release it.

. . . whatever people do, they can do better through education. Through education, they can turn out better products and achieve greater satisfaction in doing so.

. . . since most people cannot come to school, school must go out to them.

. . . education, which is learning for life, must involve the basic institutions --the family, the community, the school, and the church.

. . . new freshly developed knowledge is the wellspring of learning; hence the need for specially devised centers of research, the chain of agrocultural experiment stations stressing farm and family problems and solutions.

. . . one learns best by doing; hence the vast extension service and county agent system through which people could learn by first-hand experience how to apply new methods in farming, homemaking, and community activities.

A review of what happened to rural society in America through research and informal education reveals several hopeful parallels to what we know about urban society. First of all, rural people wanted to make more of themselves. They wanted to earn more, to influence the centers of power, to help their children, to gain more comfort for themselves, and, if need be, to pull up stakes and find their way to another place and a better life. This kind of expanding aspiration gave the rural movement its original impetus. But aspiration remained aspiration only until rural peiple learned how much could be achieved by working together. Widespread participation gave the agricultural movement its dynamism for the long haul. Volunteers provided the motive force, although professional advisors helped give it direction. The early advisors were often people without formal credentials -- a help rather than a handicap because it kept them from seeming too formidable and made them more at home with those they served.

Of singular importance to the evolution of rural society was the manner in which education, both formal and informal, helped people to escape the limitations of their environment. Educational history offers no better example of how schooling outside the school can give people upward mobility.

Rural society advanced by means of a complex network of cooperation, at once local, regional, and national. A technique of demonstrated

usefulness in Iowa was certain to be tried in Kentucky soon. A new program in California would soon be tested in Indiana. The rural effort was an infinite number of local acts by local people, shaped into a national constituency, sometimes social and sometimes political, by the Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant Colleges.

The campus was the central clearinghouse for most of the new ideas and activities; it was the place where the pulse-rate of rural society could be measured. Only a limited part of the parent university -- the agricultural college -- worked full time at stimulating them, but the effects of fresh approaches and new information were felt locally, statewide, and regionally.

This is only the general outline of the rural precedent. Aspiration, participation, mobility, communications, coordination, and time -- these factors were made to function creatively in rural society through a vast interdependent system of informal education. Can they be made to function as effectively in urban society? A unique arrangement of institutions made them the ingredients of progress in rural life. Can we find the system of organization to help them do the same thing in urban life?

While there is much we do not know about urban problems and how to cope with them, we do know enough to be aware that there are some contrasts between urban and rural society that limit the analogy.

First, rural life built on the family. In every way, the family was central to the land-grant style of informal education. The farm family was at once a social, economic, and occupational group. This kind of family solidarity, grounded in interdependence and strengthened by the habit of cooperation, is seldom found in the deprived centers of American cities.

Second, the nature of work in rural America produced a mutuality of interest among rural families. It made them receptive to later cooperative activity. There is no such indigenous mutuality in the daily life of the urban ghetto.

Third, rural life entailed a dispersed society, physically and socially. The sharecropper hamlet may be a place of hardship, but it presents no such concentration of physical and cultural squalor as the people of our inner cities endure. We have not confronted anything like this before; especially, we have never seen any enclave of deprivation where race figured so importantly.

Fourth, there was a symmetry about the organization of rural society. It featured rather formal authority, embodied in counties, states, universities, and federal agencies, each free to act on a part of the total effort. There is no such clear-cut structure in urban society. Our cities have become jungles of competing interests, with power and responsibility divided and the citizen apathetic or cynical from too bitter an experience of social chaos.

Fifth, the progress of rural society bypassed the really poor, and even today, human dislocation remains extensive in rural life. Since the great rural development programs did not directly touch the truly rural poor, there may be serious limits on what they can teach us about helping the urban poor.

Sixth, education was a central influence in shaping the organization of rural life. Groups like marketing cooperatives came into being as they were needed. Education made its contributions in them and through them and side by side with them. No such tradition has grown up in urban society. And, whereas the land-grant college was the coordinator of rural development and the key element in the communications system of the society it served, the university is not much more than a prestigious presence on the sidelines of urban life.

Finally, and most tragically, the rural and urban situations differ in the kind of aspiration the people concerned can bring to the development effort; the urban Negro, the product of long economic and social confinement, has less of the optimism, and, consequently, less of the drive, that characterized both the rural pioneer and the city-dwelling immigrant of American success stories.

So much for the analogy and its limitations. W' at can be learned from them?

1. More conversation is needed between the university and the communit

Educational theory points to a future in which students will participate in the business of society as a natural part of their learning--a future, too, in which adults will periodically revitalize themselves for their work by coming back to the campus to exchange ideas with faculty and students. Meanwhile, government and university policy-makers are increasingly aware of a need to learn for themselves firsthand about urban life. There is a growing consciousness that to explore the alien folkways of the ghetto is to explore the essential nature of all intercultural relations; that to devise ways of taming the tensions of the inner city may be to learn something about how international hostilities can be mollified; and that to fail to achieve peace at home is quite likely to fail to achieve it abroad.

A new sense of the need for universities to be involved in the communities around them is indeed stirring. Yet many of our strongest public institutions disperse adult education and extension resources so thinly that too little help is given in their own neighborhoods. It is not unusual for them to fly an instructor 500 miles to teach an extension class of 25, to another college town at that, yet do little at home.

2. More interaction is needed between the university and the lower schools. On this relationship depends the economic and social mobility of all our people--and we must not forget that mobility is sometimes the only answer to the problems of the deprived; if their circumstances cannot be improved where they are, they must be enabled to move, physically, vocationally, culturally.

Only a total view of the city's educational system--the kind of total view that calls for university leadership--can provide the specialized facilities and imaginative approaches demanded by desperate conditions. There must be counseling, remedial teaching, career ladders for deprived youth. We must find out how to combine formal and informal learning in these things, and we must involve young people with educational institutions in their own neighborhoods--for example, bringing the most enterprising into the university extension service. It is up to the universities to take the lead in all this, in a sympathetic new fellowship with the schools.

3. There is a need for both full-time and part-time workers in the urban field. The case history of rural development reveals a pattern of full-time professional leadership in the agricultural schools supplemented by the part-time and after-hours efforts of non-professionals. Admittedly, the urban task is so enormous and the interdisciplinary requirements are

so great that the university as a whole must support the service. Yet the rural experience with the agricultural college commends the idea of setting up special academic units dedicated to the solution of urban problems.

The specialists, of course, will not supplant the human resources of the community. While it is not likely that the singular relationship of the extension service to farm people can be duplicated in the cities, there is a place for an extramural faculty of volunteers in urban areas. There are many people who would help if they were asked--representatives of the inner city people, college students, civic workers. The potentialities of volunteers must be imaginatively appraised. Ties need to be strengthened with libraries, art galleries, technical institutes, community colleges, business training centers, and the mass media.

4. <u>There is a need for a special summer program in the cities</u>. Preoccupied with avoiding violence, we have neglected to consider the simple waste the summer means to hundreds of thousands of urban youth. Given only rudimentary planning and resources, these boys and girls could advance their basic skills, learn something of their natural environment at camps, ponder career alternatives, and be given job experience. If we can believe the evidence of the Peace Corps experience (and I think it reveals quite as much about contemporary youth as the history of the hippies) thousands upon thousands of high school and college students

would be glad to leave their beaches and tennis courts to take part in the work. Why not let them?

5. <u>There is a need for more study of education as public policy.</u> Education is undergoing its own revolutions today. Educational technology may transform the very meaning of a school and college within the decade. New satellite technology extends this meaning into the world community. Yet, how many of our academic disciplines have made it their business to review and project the policy implications of education for national and international life? We recognize, for example, that education must make its contribution to urban planning. Yet the schools turn out a mere trickle of urban planners. We are entering the era of human development without training the people who will be needed to fill the human service professions it is creating a market for. No wonder every urban program shuttles new people in and out and those who plan a project are likely to leave before the action starts!

There is need for more analysis of this sort of problem. All of us believe that the university can help to make industrial society stable and humane. But we must avoid fads disguised as innovations. We must talk more about what is working and what is not. To be sure, cities differ, and the ways to better them will differ as well. But we face a national effort in every sense of the word. We must give this effort

time to gather momentum. Sixty years were to elapse before the initial work in research and education of the rural movement began to function effectively. While the swiftness of change today can in no way be compared with that earlier time, we need a new measure of steadfastness for the urban movement. Universities, on and off the campus, can provide it and sustain the tasks to mature effectiveness.

My message wraps up three conclusions:

First, while analogies are helpful, they will not easily give us the methodology necessary for improving the quality of urban life.

Second, the rural precedent teaches us something of the desperate need we have of a design--at once local and national--for urban development; a stable and coherent design. Without one, there cannot be the focusing of the public will vital to success. Without one, the typical pattern is large aims, high expectations, quick starts, and ...a dull thud.

Third, the community itself has become the classroom. How communications media and institutional systems may fuse in a new conception of community education, in which everyone teaches and everyone learns , is a question which bears on the outcomes of modern society. What has happened in rural America in the last hundred years may not show us exactly how to do it; what it does show us is that it can be done.

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