Higher education for American democracy

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)
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HIGHER EDUCATION FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY.

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On July 13, 1946, President Truman appointed a number of outstanding American civic and educational leaders to a Presidential Commission on Higher Education, charging them to examine the functions of higher education in the United States of America and the best means to perform these. On December 11th, 1947 the chairman of the Commission (George F. Zook) submitted the first volume of the report of the Commission to the President.

The six volumes of the report are all titled "Higher Education for American Democracy", and are, in order:

Vol. I. Establishing the Goals.
    II. Equalizing and Expanding Individual Opportunity.
    III. Organizing Higher Education.
    IV. Staffing Higher Education.
    V. Financing Higher Education.
    VI. Resource Data.

This bulletin contains a summary of the most important sections of the first of these - Establishing the Goals.
Higher Education for American Democracy

Establishing the Goals

The Preface finds reason for this in the unfulfilled desire and function of higher education to satisfy the increased diversity of needs of an increased number of students. These needs have been accentuated by problems caused by greater technological, social, and scientific complexity, requiring for their understanding and solution new skills, greater maturity, new understandings.

Chapter 1. Education for a Better Nation and a Better World.

America is a democracy, a society established and maintained by law and education. Education must provide equality of opportunity and understanding of goals. There will be diversity, but there should be certain common objectives. These are:

1. Democracy fully realized in every phase of living. Understanding among men is indivisible, and begins at home. The merits of democracy are to be proved by demonstration, not by words. Education for it must be the primary aim of all classroom teaching, and the development of the necessary qualities of character, ethical principles, and attitudes is a necessary part of "every phase of college life". High social aims must be a goal of education. The means and methods of democracy are subsidiary to its principles of equal individual rights and equal individual responsibility to ensure these for others. Young people must know its principles and its processes, be aware of its imperfections and its unfinished business, know it as an inspiring faith, to be translated into action.

2. Co-operation in international life must be accepted as a principle, and institutions perfected to give it scope. Communication of ideas must be free. Higher education has a responsibility for the diffusion of ideas to enable just human relations and mutual confidence to be established between man and man; students must be prepared for world citizenship, to understand how other parts of the world live and think. This is particularly important for Americans in regard to the East and to Russia. To do it effectively will require imaginative thinking, exceptional ingenuity, and concerted effort.

3. The solution of social problems which will require social research, social invention, and social technology.

The three objectives are regarded as minimum essentials. To realize them requires educating more to higher levels, and devising patterns of education to fit people for "responsible roles in modern society."

Chapter 2. Education for All.

Growth in numbers educated in high schools and colleges has been phenomenal, but educational attainments are still too low for effective individual living or the welfare of society. There are too many adults and youth without adequate educational attainments for a democratic society.

Economic barriers to higher education (family income levels), regional variations in wealth and fertility, racial and religious discrimination, restricted curricula deny to many equal chances to receive education suited to their abilities.
Specific recommendations are

1. To improve high school education and make it available to all normal youth.
2. To make education through the fourteenth year available in the same way as high school education.
3. To provide financial assistance to competent youth from the tenth through the fourteenth years. (Cost of supplies, board, living expenses).
4. Lowering tuition costs of higher education and increasing scholarships and fellowships.
5. Expanding adult education.
6. Removing all discriminating clauses which prevent free and equal access to education.

Number Who Should Receive Higher Education.

Using a comparison between scores on the Army General Classification Test of World War II and the College edition of the A.C.E. Psychological Examination, it is estimated that there should be, in 1960, 46 million young people in education above the 12th Grade, of whom 22 million will be in the 13th and 14th Grades, 12 million in the 15th and 16th Grades, and 6 million in graduate and professional schools.

It is estimated that 49% of the population has the mental ability to profit by 14 years of schooling; 32% to profit by advanced or specialised professional education.

To provide for these increased numbers, Federal and State financial aid to Universities is required, and so is a diversification of curriculum.

Chapter 3. Education for Free Men.

Specialisation in Colleges has gone hand in hand with diversification of courses, but education has too often neglected integration and failed to give a body of common experience and knowledge. Such experience and knowledge are means to a better personal life and a stronger social order.

The objectives of general education are to develop ethical behaviour of a democratic kind (leading to faith in our fellows), to produce informed and responsible citizens, to inculcate the idea of interdependence of peoples and personal responsibility, to give understanding of physical and social environments and of implications of scientific discoveries for human welfare, to give power of understanding of others' ideas and expressing one's own, to produce a satisfactory emotional and social adjustment, to develop individual health and interest in community health, to understand, enjoy, and be creative, in cultural matters, to provide knowledge and attitudes essential to family life, to enable the student to choose a satisfying and appropriate job, and to acquire and use the skills and habits of critical and constructive thinking.

The methods and courses used will be different from specialist courses. Their effect will depend on the quality and attitude of those who teach them. Campus activities should also be used for the same purpose.

There must be no separation of cultural and vocational education. These are not opposites; they make a unity. Each is interwoven with the other. Every man needs both. Individual counselling in such a scheme is essential to prevent mistakes in selecting from diversified courses.
Chapter IV. Education Adjusted to Needs.

A variety of institutions is needed to meet varying capacities and purposes. Community colleges are recommended, serving the entire community—adults, junior college students, and semiprofessionals (nurses' aides, medical technicians). Liberal Arts Colleges may also share in such work and encourage the development of such community colleges. Advanced courses, given in Senior Liberal Arts Colleges, will give the student depth in educational experience. Breadth must not be sacrificed to excessive specialization. The place for specialization is at the post graduate level. Professional schools should be adjusted to the requirements of society. It is estimated that in 1960 there will be 36% more people at work than in 1940. Nearly 1 million new teachers will need training between 1950 and 1960, 56,000 more doctors need training for work in 1960 than present programs will produce if continued on the same scale as at present, etc. (Similar analyses are given for dentistry, nurses, pharmacists and engineering.) Constant national manpower planning is required.

Professional training must not develop into technical training, and develop in those trained a sense of social obligation, an anticipation of new needs, and a readiness to plan imaginatively.

Graduate schools need to keep the research tradition, but to add more clearly to their work that of training experts in all fields as well as teachers for all levels of higher education. Graduate students should be encouraged by subsidy if necessary, not allowed to "live close to the ragged edge of existence as many of them now do."

Research programmes and training research workers is still a supreme obligation of a University. Social research must develop with physical research. There should not be competition for research men and women. Basic research must continue and expand, and the universities are best fitted for it. Financial assistance is essential for it, and should be part of a wider plan for assistance to higher education and its students. Industry should contribute also to basic research, the results of which should not be controlled; nor should its control or direction be in the hands of military authorities.

Adult education is a necessary function of the college, too often treated casually. This implies a broader concept of its functions. Methods must be fitted to students as much as content is, and there must be trial of new methods and techniques to improve results of current methods. Technical aids in higher education must be used more widely than at present.

Chapter V. The Social Role of Higher Education. (This summarises previous chapters, and adds:)

To perform the wider function envisaged for the increasing number of students will require greatly increased Federal aid. Improvement is "a primary call upon the Nation's resources."

"America's strength at home and abroad in the years ahead will be determined in large measure by the quality and the effectiveness of the education it provides for its citizens."