

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES NEEDED IN OUR THINKING ABOUT EDUCATION

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With the caveat that learning is a lifelong activity that permeates all that we do in and outside formal classroom instruction, I believe that the anticipated goal of public school education is to prepare students to be and to become productive members of society irrespective of the career they may choose so long as their choice is legal, moral and ethical.

In truth, most roads from education are designed to lead to gainful employment or, in fewer instances, to one exhibiting entrepreneurship and becoming owner of his or her own business.

There are two routes to such gainful employment: direct to work following graduation or to work following one's seeking an advance degree which, unto itself, is not an end.

Such education must take place in an environment wherein all credible pursuits are treated with equal respect regardless of the potential for immediate or future remuneration as each resulting contribution in the work place is meaningful as a part of the whole and were it not performed would diminish the whole and be detrimental to us all.

Why? With the recognition that the globe figuratively is shrinking, it is critical that we recognize that America's comparative advantage, especially her economic advantage with regard to factors of production that once seemed insurmountable in many areas, has diminished appreciably or no longer exists.

The consequence? We no longer can afford to relegate anyone to second class status because they have not sought out the academic discipline that customarily is thought to be higher than another. Hierarchical societal stratification of one's chosen life's work must be eliminated and people's actions in preparation for that work judged relative to whether or not they are seeking to engage in an endeavor that will contribute to the good of society.

To stem this, we must ensure that education today incorporates the philosophy that the chosen fields of all students are of equal importance and that we further nurture varied interests and pursuits within a system that is structured to provide them an opportunity to seek the education that, through application, will lead to their achieving to the point that their quality of life is satisfying and that they can live dignified and fulfilled lives.

I see this taking place in one of or a combination of ways, as follows: (1) equipping students for pursuit of higher academic education that, if completed within established standards, will lead them to become responsible citizens in one or more fields that require advance degrees; (2) equipping students for careers that do not require advance degrees, but which most likely require advance certification; (3) also equipping students who wish advance degrees with a field that allows them to pursue profit as a means of self sufficiency while seeking their advance credential(s) and (4) ensuring that those who seek certification for quicker employment have the necessary prerequisite academic skills to master their chosen careers.

Provided that this is done without prejudice based upon race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or other demeaning categorizations, children should be allowed to demonstrate **their** predispositions (not chosen for them) and encouraged in them. This will result in each person excelling in areas in which he or she already is strong versus plateauing at a less than maximum level in areas where his or her primary strengths cannot be put to best use.

Result? All benefit. The synergisms that can be brought to bear when the fully maximized strength of a country can be applied toward achieving agreed upon goals will go a long way toward returning America (and thereby our states, communities and households) to that time of greatness when she truly was the world leader in so many areas.