

Education and World Affairs in the Sixties

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Ready or not, American education will have the opportunity and obligation in the Sixties to play a much larger and more important role in world affairs.

This is said with full regard for the considerable contribution which our educational institutions have made in the international realm since the end of World War II, and for the rapidly mounting impact which world events have had upon virtually every aspect of their operations—their curricula, faculties, student bodies, budgets, administrative procedures, and organizational structure.

In the past year, for example, 53,000 foreign students from almost every nation in the world were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. Likewise, many thousands of our own students, teachers, and scholars went abroad to learn, to teach, to pursue research, or to serve as specialists.

Many curriculum improvements have been made. Great new emphasis has been given to the study of foreign languages. New "area institutes" have been established. International research efforts have multiplied. A variety of other improvements have been made in the interest of strengthening American competence in world affairs.

Besides these internal improvements, the manpower and facilities of our educational institutions have been drawn upon by federal agencies, private foundations, and others to assist other nations, particularly the newer, less developed ones, to make progress toward their economic, educational, and social goals.

All of these activities have imposed heavy burdens and inconveniences upon the colleges and universities, but they have also brought rich dividends. These accomplishments of the Fifties, however, as impressive as they are, will be overshadowed by the greatly

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expanded requirements of the Sixties. The reasons are not hard to find.

In the late Forties and Fifties, two "new frontiers" were added to U.S. foreign relations: namely, economic assistance and military assistance. As important as these have been and will continue to be, they are not in themselves adequate to meet the international needs and obligations of the United States in the coming decade. A third "new frontier" must be added in the Sixties—a frontier concerned with human development, with educational, scientific, and cultural affairs.

Military strength buys valuable time for the free world, economic assistance can help narrow the menacing gap between the massive poverty of less developed countries and the high living standards of the advanced Western nations. But in the long run, the peace of the world and the preservation of free societies will depend upon the development of individual human capacities and upon the development of

a vast "common market" of ideas, knowledge, and cultural interchange.

This urgent need for stronger efforts in the educational and cultural field has now come to be recognized and emphasized, more than ever before, by our diplomats and educators, by international journalists and businessmen, and not least of all, by many members of Congress. The fresh emphasis upon the development of human resources in President Kennedy's new foreign aid proposals and the actions which he and Secretary of State Dean Rusk have taken to elevate and accent the role of educational and cultural affairs as a component of U.S. foreign relations, testify to the importance now attached to advancing this "new frontier."

Fortunately, we already have a strong start in this direction and firm foundations to build on. The far-sighted Fulbright program, initiated in 1946, and the Smith-Mundt Act which followed, provided the basis for a steadily increasing international interchange of students, scholars, leaders, and specialists. Likewise, the growing attention of the International Cooperation Administration to educational development, and the activities of the U.S. Information Agency have provided valuable experience to guide future steps.

These programs and other federal activities relating to international educational and cultural affairs must now be strengthened, improved in quality, and unified into a well-integrated pattern. But the Federal Government can do only a small part of the total job. Most of the burden will fall upon our educational institutions, which, along with foundations and various other non-governmental organizations, constitute the nation's main "resource base" for carrying out such activities.

Among the overseas activities that will draw heavily upon the talent of our schools, colleges and universities in the next few years are these:

1. Assisting new nations to develop effective educational systems.
2. Staffing a variety of technical assistance programs in underdeveloped countries.
3. Teaching English as a second language in the many countries now asking for such help.
4. Supporting imaginative research and development efforts, experimental and pilot programs aimed at improving the quality of educational

programs and the efficiency of educational processes.

5. Strengthening research activities abroad in the natural and social sciences.
6. Helping new nations to design sound economic and social development plans and to strengthen their public administration for carrying out such plans.

While sending more personnel abroad, our colleges and universities will also be called upon to receive more foreign students at home, and to provide them with more relevant and effective programs of study.

While all this is going on, U.S. schools and colleges also will have to redouble their efforts to improve the competence of our own population in the realm of foreign affairs. The typical school and college curriculum is still far from adequate in the treatment of international matters. Foreign language instruction has received welcome new emphasis in recent years, spurred in part by the National Defense Education Act of 1958, but here also further improvement is urgently needed.

If our educational institutions, foundations, and other organizations are to make their most effective contribution, they must strengthen the means for coordinating their efforts, and there must be more effective working relations between the Federal Government and the academic community.

These needs were clearly and emphatically set forth in the recent report on "The University and World Affairs," prepared by a distinguished group of educators and laymen.

In these times of repeated international crises, the average citizen often finds himself frustrated by the feeling that there is nothing he can personally do to contribute toward a peaceful and better world. But on this "new frontier" of international scientific, educational, and cultural affairs, we can stand on our tiptoes and look beyond the immediate crises to the positive conditions of peace which are already being built through the channels of educational and cultural exchange. And on this frontier there are abundant opportunities for the individual citizen, the individual school system and community, the individual college and university, to make really substantial contributions. And unless a great many such efforts are made in the years ahead, it is hard to see how the seemingly endless succession of crises will ever end.