

Section I

AN INTRODUCTION TO ANTHROPOLOGY AND EDUCATION

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Professional educators today face many problems. These problems are produced by such factors as the complexity and heterogeneity of American culture, the rapidity and inco-ordination of cultural change, the effort to provide equality of educational opportunity for all children and youth, the increase in the birth rate, the competition for the tax dollar, current ideological conflict, and conflicting theories of education. Educational problems center in such areas as the cultural role and objectives of education, the organization and administration of the school, the content of education, methods of teaching and learning, the evaluation and guidance of the student, and public relations and the provision of adequate financial support.

In the solution of school problems, professional educators have for some time utilized knowledge from such disciplines as biology, psychology, history, philosophy, and sociology. More recently increasing attention has been directed toward anthropology as a resource for conceptual knowledge and research methods which can contribute directly to the improvement of education. Anthropologists and educators have recognized areas of common interest and concern and have begun to work together on common problems. These co-operative efforts have been limited thus far, but this symposium is an indication both of the significant progress that has been made and of future possibilities. This introductory paper attempts to define some of the problem areas in education where anthropology can make a contribution. The overview by George Spindler, following, maps out some areas in anthropology that are relevant to these problems and surveys the articulation and historical contacts of the two fields.

Education is the instrument through which cultures perpetuate themselves. It is the process through which the members of a society assure themselves that the behavior necessary to continue their culture is learned. Since education is a cultural process, it is important for educators to have a clear conception of the meaning of culture. Confusion over this meaning is an important factor in confusion and conflict concerning the proper role of the school. Here is a basic area where anthropologists can make a significant contribution.

The school is concerned with the transmission, conservation, and extension of culture. Cultural transmission and personality formation are perhaps the two most important functions of the school. The anthropologist deals with enculturation, acculturation, and socialization. A knowledge of these processes as they occur in a variety of cultures can help educators to secure a clearer conception of their roles and provide them with a reservoir of tested experience from which they can draw ideas and techniques that may be useful in American schools. An understanding of the relationship between culture and personality will shed light on the nature-nurture conflict in education and contribute to improved guidance and counseling procedures.

For some time there has been considerable conflict in the United States concerning the role of education in the extension and improvement of American culture. This conflict became acute during the depression period and has been intensified by the current concern about communism. George Counts dramatized the issue when he wrote *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* The problem here concerns the role of the school in cultural innovation. This is another area where the interests of anthropologists and educators converge.

The school is only one educative agency in American culture, and perhaps not the most important. The family, church, young people's organizations, and the media of mass communication all play important roles in the education of the child. In many instances, out-of-school agencies, particularly the mass media, compete with the school for the attention of the child and produce behavioral changes which are contradictory to those which the school is trying to establish. In other instances, out-of-school agencies reinforce the efforts of teachers and other school personnel. If formal education is to be effective, teachers need to understand the role and influence of nonschool educational experiences. Content from anthropology can help greatly toward this end.

Education involves the changing of behavior in a desirable direction. The school is an educational institution specifically established to produce desirable changes in behavior. Educational objectives consist of descriptions of behavior which the school seeks to produce. The over-all objectives of the school are defined by a description of the behavior of the ideal citizen, including his knowledge, values, skills, and abilities. In a heterogeneous culture such as ours, the description of the ideal citizen is difficult, and confusion and conflict concerning educational objectives result. Anthropologists can help educators to develop a conception of the ideal cultural man and can assist in identifying the core values which Americans seek to preserve and perpetuate in an age of conflict.

The school program of study consists of those areas of experience and content which are essential to the development of the desired characteristics of behavior which have been chosen as objectives. The contents and experiences included in the school program are selected from the total range of possibilities which exist in the culture. Intelligent selection can be based only on considerable cultural insight and understanding. If those

who make the school curriculum do not understand the changing culture of which they are a part, deadwood will be carried indefinitely in the school program, and there will be important gaps in what is taught and learned. Harold Benjamin showed the proneness of schools to perpetuate outmoded content and experiences in his satire, *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum*.

The complexity, heterogeneity, and rapidity of change in modern culture make the selection of curriculum content particularly difficult. Anthropologists can help educators to understand better their community, nation, and world. The techniques of community study developed by anthropologists can be used by teachers to study their own community.

Methods of teaching and learning are perpetual problems in education. How can methods be used in the classroom that will transfer directly to effectiveness in living outside the school? What methods are most appropriate to the development of democratic citizenship? How can spiritual and moral values best be developed? How can the school produce sound character and wholesome personality? These are questions that many teachers are asking today. Anthropologists can help teachers understand how imitation, participation, communication, and informal methods are used to further enculturation in other cultures. They can also contribute to an understanding of the relationship between cultural motivation, incentives, and values and school learning.

A number of educators and social scientists have been concerned recently about the effects of the cultural experiences of an individual on his performance in intelligence tests. This has resulted in an effort to develop a "culture fair" intelligence test. Teachers need to be helped to see the significance of such activities in the furtherance of equality of educational opportunity.

Closely related to the question of the meaning of the I.Q. is the question of grouping. To what extent is homogeneous grouping in the school compatible with the values of democracy? What is the significance of the variety of cultural backgrounds of American children and youth for grouping and educational methods generally? The heterogeneity of American culture provides an excellent opportunity for the development of intergroup understanding and the improvement of human relations. In this area the concept of race is of special importance. Anthropologists can help clarify the meaning of race and the relationship between race, intelligence, and culture.

Finally, educators have become increasingly concerned about the development of intercultural and international understanding. A number of educators and anthropologists have participated in UNESCO's activities in this area. Educators need to be helped to develop more effective techniques for the study of the ways of living of people of other cultures. In many instances comparative culture studies in the school tend to reinforce prejudice rather than to increase understanding and appreciation. In addition to intercultural and international understanding, educators are concerned with the role of education in the international technical assistance programs. American educational methods are now being exported

to other nations. To what extent is this possible and desirable? How can American educators contribute most effectively to the improvement of the ways of living of people of other cultures? These are pressing problems where anthropological knowledge and research can again make a major contribution.

The papers and discussions included in this volume are addressed to some of these problems, and others will emerge out of the cross-disciplinary interchange within the group discussions. It may be anticipated that future studies and similar conferences will provide approaches unanticipated at present.