

# EDUCATION

## Democratic society requires people to be educated

### Human-relation skills are important for professionals

Education is a booming business; a multibillion-dollar industry to be precise. And business cannot thrive without education. Indeed, their roles in modern society are so intertwined that is becoming increasingly more difficult to discern their individual functions.

From Hellenic times hitherto, education has been the fundamental institution in socioeconomic and political development. Today, however, because of the demands of our economic system in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, education has been transformed into an appendage of economic production; it has become a business in itself.

The effects of the business of education are ubiquitous in the news media. From the No Child Left Behind national policy to Bill Sizemore's upcoming ballot measure proposing to tie teachers' salaries with students' academic performance, the main purpose of the business of education is to serve the interests of business.

Within this context, the individual development of the student is relevant only insofar as his/her ability to earn higher wages is concerned. Thus, proficiency in English and math, insufficiently measured by rote standardized tests, become the gauge with which to determine educational

success. Alas, this limited assessment is tantamount to evaluating the skills of an athlete based on the size of his muscles.



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In essence, it's not what we know that matters the most, but how we use it. If knowledge is power, as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) proclaimed, then it'd better be used wisely; otherwise, it can be dangerous as well — and history is fraught with examples.

An obstinate proponent of comprehensive education, the oil mogul J. Paul Getty (1892-1976), was one of the most successful businessmen in American history. His book, "How to Be a Successful Executive," advocates the importance of developing a multi-dimensional human being.

He says, "The executive whose education has been almost entirely professional is not well equipped to understand the broader social implications of business."

The implicit message is that successful professionals often are endowed with important types of learning that cannot be measured by inane standardized tests, e.g. excellence in human-relations skills.

It's not only large corporations that benefit from a well-rounded work force; small businesses and nonprofit organizations do as well.

Northwest Human Services, for instance, a local nonprofit agency providing quality medical care and mental-health and social services to our community, thinks that the desired educational level of its staffers ought to be

measured not only by academic credentials but also by the overall individual development of its professionals, regardless of their function in the organization.

Upholding the core values of community, cooperation, compassion and commitment to service, the agency relies on the humanistic aspect of education that is often overlooked by the demands of specialization. As a result, its clients respond with a consistent flow of positive feedback about their personal experiences with staffers and services.

In addition to the value and importance of education in the business world, there also is the sociological need to educate responsible citizens. A large democratic society such as ours requires its people to be well-informed in various

categories of knowledge, not only marginally literate in a couple of disciplines so that the individual can fulfill an economic function. To be educated is a civil duty and a social responsibility.

Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to education," and (2) specifies that "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality..." Hence, it is the responsibility of the business of education to ensure that both clauses are fulfilled; and by doing so, the education of business will naturally ensue.

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