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Social Change and Educational Outcomes: An Interview with Harold G. Shane

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suppliers and the building would indeed be built. The image of the future that people had in their heads played a crucial role in actually determining the future.

People often "cannot" do things because of a lack of ideas rather than a lack of muscle power, tools, or money. Armed with the right ideas about what to do, the "impossible" may quickly become possible. To get the right ideas, we can invest in the research required to develop them. In short, if we really want to do something that seems very difficult or "impossible," we invest time and effort in the development of ideas directed at achieving our goal. History is full of instances where an "impossibility" was simply a case where people did not see how something could be done. In recent years, governments have shown that the allocation of funds for research and development is an effective means of removing the obstacles that have made desired goals seem "unattainable."

Firmly convinced that ideas can move mountains, futurists are extremely interested in the systematic development of ideas. Better ideas will make it possible to improve the human condition. Armed with powerful ideas, the people of the poorest underdeveloped nation in the world might become the richest in less than a single generation. With the right ideas, the people of the world might soon throw war, poverty, famine, and disease into the ashcan of history.

Ideas about the future world—sometimes referred to as "images of the future"—may be especially important. People think that their actions are based on past events and present realities, but their images of the future may play an even more critical role. Images of the future are the blueprints that we use in constructing our lives, and the blueprints may be more important than the materials we work with (our bodies, families, financial resources, etc.) in determining our success and happiness.

Just as a building can be built if people believe it will be, a desirable world might be created if it can be imaged properly, that is, if people can develop a consensus about what a desirable world would be like and how it might be achieved. To develop such a consensus, futurists believe, ideas about the future world should be systematically generated and studied, and that implies the development of the study of the future as a major human activity.

Social Change and Educational Outcomes:

RUTH C. ENGS is an associate professor in the Department of Health and Safety Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405.

Harold G. Shane, University Professor of Education, Indiana University, is one of the leading educational futurists in the United States. He is the author of more than 450 articles and books including the Phi Delta Kappa bestseller, *The Educational Significance of the Future*. For many years he has worked with national and international organizations including a turn as president of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. He is a warm and energetic gentleman who appears far younger than a person with 40 years of teaching experience.

Engs: Dr. Shane, what trends do you see in the future of health education during the next 20 years?

Shane: Before we discuss the trends in health education, we first must understand that these trends are intimately related to societal developments in the world as a whole. It is impossible to discuss one field unless we examine what is happening in the economic, social, and political realms.

Our biggest problem is a continuing crisis in energy resources. Depletion of our own natural resources plus the huge price increases from foreign oil exporting countries almost certainly will force us, one way or the other, to live more simple lives. Many scholars have concluded that we are about to enter a period of transformation in industrial production, economic growth, and human welfare provisions, all of which have expanded enormously during the past 40 years. Some of the things we take for granted today, such as unlimited gasoline for our automobiles, may

be difficult to obtain. Also we probably will not have the same amount of purchasing power that we have had in the past.

Mass transportation and a tendency for people to move closer to their work could be a likely development, and some individuals will move back to the rural areas and small towns if more labor-intensive farming results from energy problems.

Engs: What changes may we anticipate in family life?

Shane: Changing parental attitudes toward children also are beginning to surface—attitudes which probably will continue into the next century. A recent Yankelovich poll suggests that nearly half of the parents with children 13 or younger are unwilling to make sacrifices for them and that many consider rearing children as an option rather than as a social responsibility. They feel that children have no obligation to them in the future and they also have little desire to push their children academically. This reluctance on the part of many parents to make financial sacrifices to further the education of their children could cause a further decrease in enrollment at higher educational institutions in the 1980s.

Furthermore, women often are delaying their childbearing. However, it is likely in the early 1980s that women born during the baby boom of the 1950s will have children of school age thus creating an enrollment increase at the elementary school level. Current trends, however, are that most women will limit their children to no more than an average of two.

Engs: What will be the impact on family life of the growing number of working mothers?

Shane: Approximately 51% of all women with children under the age of

An Interview with Harold G. Shane

Ruth C. Engs



18 and almost 30% of all mothers with children under 6 now work outside the home. Barring severe unemployment problems, by 1990 most women with young children probably will work outside of the home and this will create an even greater need for child care centers which now serve 31% of our "under six" children!

Another trend which is occurring is a change in family lifestyles. No longer is the nuclear family with mother, father, and children typical of our society. Approximately one in three marriages ends in divorce and about 40% of all children under 18 will at some point in their lives be in a single parent home. This trend may continue into the next century, but I believe it will top out in the mid-80s.

Engs: What can you tell us about the "graying of America"?

Shane: As a nation we are aging. Approximately 11% of the population today is over 65 years of age and this will increase to about 20% by the year 2000. At that time the median age of all Americans will be about 40—up from 28 in 1979–80. This obviously will cause pressure on the Social Security system, particularly since there will be one pensioner for every two workers in the latter years of the 80s. Heavy taxation to support Social Security at present is likely to become heavier—a develop-

ment which, in turn, would reduce further the expendable income for individual wage earners.

Engs: What is the likely influence of U.S. financial problems on education?

Shane: Because we will almost certainly be spending time, money, and effort on the energy situation, because there will be less tax money available with our present slow-down in economic growth, because of an aging and more financially conservative popula-

News break: Today hundreds of people gathered in an Illinois town to witness the unearthing of a time capsule which was planted 50 years ago. The 2030 relics consisted of many items pertaining to health and the teaching of it. The people from this period of time obviously were very health conscious. It seems as though health was taught through the school system and a variety of public agencies.

According to journals and textbooks, health education began in the preschool and continued sequentially throughout life. An abundance of well preserved audio-video tapes were disclosed which dealt with an innumerable array of health topics. It is speculated that the tapes were created for use during the nightly news report. It is interesting to note the medical and therapeutic techniques employed to cure such diseases as cancer and diabetes. Evidently, people with lung cancer and other lung related disorders were kept on a strict diet which forbade the use of cigarettes. History books of today explain cigarettes as a narrow cylindrical paper filled with crushed tobacco leaves designed for smoking.

A great concern for the fulfillment of the elderly's health care plans were instituted which aided the elderly in the upkeep of their total being. Magazine advertisements illustrated the beauty and wisdom of the elderly. Pamphlets designed to guide young people in creating a better relationship with the old were also found. Research concerned with curbing the major illnesses of the elderly focused on eliminating the birth of such illnesses in the young.

Parenting was highly stressed. Parents were given tax exemptions for each child after proving fulfillment of courses relating to parenting. Motor vehicles called buses contained video screens which presented a series of topics on parenting. Nutrition, immunization, and family planning were among video tapes found amidst the relics of this computerized travel system.

Tomorrow evening we'll have more news on the contents of this time capsule.

Today in the world of sports...

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tion, education and other service-related areas temporarily may take a back seat. More vocational and practical education programs should emerge along with greater provisions for continuing education. But areas such as music, sports, and, yes, even health education, may be considered to be too costly for the next five or six years and be curtailed in the school curriculum unless they can be shown to be in the national interest.

I would like to believe—because we will not have as much to spend as in the 60s and 70s—that problem-preventing educational measures will become more popular. Health maintenance organizations along with national health insurance may become institutionalized as a way of preventing a drain on our remedial health-care system. A need for health educators in these organizations could emerge if it becomes more widely recognized that saving money by preventing illness is better than the cost of treating it.

I would be less than honest, however, if I did not point out that the rapid expansion of health education and other important school functions seems unlikely in the next several years.

Engs: What you say does not sound very encouraging for school health education, but how about community health education?

Shane: Again, depending upon how much tax money it has after coping with problems related to energy, unemployment, inflation, and the transportation needs of its population, a community is likely to determine if there will be sufficient funds to hire individuals for health education and prevention programs. If there is a continued shortage of tax money, a health educator at a public health department might be given a low priority. On the other hand, early childhood education and child care centers will probably attract financial support as more women enter the world of work. Let me suggest that there could be a need for health education consultants in the early childhood field.

Engs: What trends in the area of human sexuality, drugs, aging, nutrition, chronic diseases, and stress reduction education do you see?

Shane: In the area of human sexuality, because individuals will be having fewer children, I believe that a healthy normal baby will be prized by parents and considered very important by soci-

ety. Prenatal surgery may become more common and education for preventing birth defects such as the avoidance of harmful substances during pregnancy—radiation, cigarette smoking, and over-indulgence in alcohol—along with a well balanced diet for both mother and child during pregnancy and the first year of life will be emphasized. Since most women probably will continue to plan small families, contraceptive education could become more acceptable in some schools but not by any means in every community!

Engs: What about drugs?

Shane: As for drugs, other than alcohol and marijuana which are easy to manufacture and to grow, various psychotropic substances may not be as commonly used in the future as individuals find that they are spending most of their energy, money, and time to “make ends meet.” However, all societies since early times have used substances to relax and to escape from the reality of everyday life, so it can not be expected that our society will be any different and that psychotropic substances will be eliminated from use. Since people will continue using some form of drugs, education in the safe and responsible use of these substances will be of continued importance.

Engs: Please comment on chronic diseases and on nutrition.

Shane: In the area of chronic diseases, continued education for the prevention of heart disease and cancer will be emphasized as these—barring a medical breakthrough—will still be major causes of death. Nutrition education may increase in importance as less processed food is manufactured. Such a decrease could occur because of the energy used to manufacture it, and the increase in “fast food” places may decrease if people have less money to spend. Cooking may never go back to the “old style” in which meals are prepared by hand—using fresh vegetables rather than those bought frozen, quick thawed and then cooked. However, I’d like to think that some old style cooking practices can be encouraged in our schools.

Engs: Can you expand your earlier remarks on aging and education?

Shane: Aging education will probably increase as the population grows older. It will be important for children and youth to have an idea about the normal changes of aging in their par-

ents and grandparents. The “youth cult,” so common in the 70s, should pass into history! More older individuals also will go back to school in order to retrain for new jobs or as a leisure-time activity.

You also asked me about education for the reduction of stress. If in fact we are spending more time maintaining a more simple standard of living and in attempting to cope with environmental changes, some of the outlets we may seek, such as walking or bicycling to work, or growing some of our food in the backyard, may, in fact, reduce some of the stress which we encounter at present because of our highly technological lifestyle.

Although economists and sociologists differ in some details as to the state of America’s socioeconomic health in the next decade, most expert opinion supports a period of increased stress in the immediate future as our problems remain and perhaps increase.

Engs: The immediate future on the whole does not look very good for our field judging by your comments. How would you summarize the situation?

Shane: To sum up what I have said, we very well may be entering a period of technological “devolution” during the next 20 years. This is the reverse of the unwise uses to which science and technology sometimes have been put. Our main concerns will be the ever-decreasing resources such as our oil supply, a possible depression in the early 80s, and an aging population.

There also are reasons for optimism! We are increasingly aware of our problems and have begun to diminish pollution, restrain extravagant use of finite resources, improve the lot of poorer Americans, and survive tense world problems and the ominous threat of sophisticated weapons being used in areas such as the Middle East.

The real riddle is us, to paraphrase Pogo of cartoon strip fame. You may recall that he said, “We have met the enemy and he is us!” Do we have the will, the values, the vision to handle our problems? These are not insolvable problems, but they require social decisions and *action*.

With respect to health education, I am optimistic! The times *require* citizens who are mentally and physically healthy and I believe Americans will deem our *human* resources to be as important as our material resources and will support and extend health education in the years ahead.