

*A few excerpts from:*

## **Cultural Patterns And Technical Change**

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To make schools a successful medium for literacy, the people have to be educated in the meaning of literacy; their co-operation must be enlisted, and incentives must be found or created. (p. 256)

Experience has taught us that change can best be introduced not through centralized planning, but after a study of local needs. When this principle is not followed, the education program fails or even works harm. (p. 258)

When specific needs of a locality or culture are discovered, it is often still necessary to teach people to recognize them, and the desirability of improvement. In most areas people can not be motivated to adopt new ways on the basis of logical evidence of better results or of charts or scientific arguments. Most people fear experimentation, or fear excursions into the unknown, since only the tried is known and safe . . . . (p. 259)

In earlier sections of this survey, illustrations have been given of a variety of successful ways in which change has been introduced. In these illustrations dependence has been placed upon the actual experience which changes introduced into social groups. It is also possible to examine our present knowledge of psychological processes in the individual, which comes from clinical and experimental psychology, for principles which may be drawn upon in real-life situations.

It seems painfully evident that the most miserable living conditions (from the viewpoint of industrial nations) do not of themselves make technical improvements acceptable, nor make disruption and maladjustment less likely once change is introduced. Over and over again, we see that attempts to remedy such conditions chiefly by knowledge and logic (as seen by the agents of change) fail. Those failures can be better understood if it is recognized that explanation and logical interpretation *alone* are often ineffective in changing behavior because their application is blocked by the emotional satisfaction which the individual achieves through his present mode of life. The new knowledge can be put to use only as the old behaviors, beliefs and attitudes are unlearned and the appropriate new behaviors, beliefs and attitudes are learned.

An effective way to encourage the learning of new behaviors and attitudes is by consistent prompt attachment of some form of satisfaction to them. This may take the form of consistent praise, approval, privilege, improved social status, strengthened integration with one's group, or material reward. It is particularly important when the desired change is such that the advantages are slow to materialize - for example, it takes months or even years to appreciate a change in nutrition, or to register the effect of a new way of planting seedlings in the increased yield of an orchard. Here the gap between the new behavior and results, which will not reinforce the behavior until they are fully appreciated, has to be filled in other ways. (p. 276)

To summarize: The learning of desired new behaviors and attitudes can be achieved by the learner's living through a long series of situations in which the new behavior is made highly satisfying - without exception if possible - and the old not satisfying. (p. 278)

It is a matter of historical record that empirical use of the fundamental principles of mechanics long preceded the development of theoretical explanations. As we now seek to introduce people who have had no experience either with tools, or with the scientific rationale which produced them, to the whole paraphernalia of modern industrialized living, we can place explicit reliance on the understanding which will develop from the use of the new techniques and tools. Hence an immediate complete intellectual reorientation is obviously not a necessary requirement for successful technical change. (p. 279) (p.t.o.)

New information psychologically available to an individual, but contradictory to his customary behavior, beliefs and attitudes, may not even be perceived. Even if he is actually forced to recognize its existence, it may be rationalized away, or almost immediately forgotten.

So new information will tend to be assimilated in such a way as to produce the smallest effect in the whole meaningful interrelated structure of an individual's organized experience. This tendency to maintain order is of vital importance in giving consistency to perceptual life (otherwise human beings would be unable to recognize people, trees, dogs, etc., seen from different angles, in different illuminations, etc., as the same objects). But it also makes possible the assimilation of new facts in such a way as to obscure their newness, break their impact, so that there is no noticeable resulting reorganization of the system. (p. 279)

Finally, as an individual's behavior, belief and attitudes are shared with members of his cultural group, it may be necessary to effect a change in the goals or systems of behavior of the whole group before any given individual's behavior will change in some particular respect. This is particularly likely to be so if the need of the individual for group acceptance is very great - either because of his own psychological make-up or because of his position in society.

No knowledge of the way an individual of a given constitution and capacity may be able to accept or resist change can ever be used alone without giving due weight to the nature of the culture of which he is a part, and his position in the particular social group within which he lives. (p. 280)

As memory is selective, just as perception is, great attention must be given, in all educational efforts, to allowing for sufficient time and enough repetition so that facts which are less easy to assimilate are not lightly forgotten.

Sometimes a perception will be so dependent on an underlying set of fundamental beliefs that it will not be possible to change a practice without altering the whole structure of belief.

The agents of change have a wide choice of methods: they can attempt to influence the perceiving individual directly; they can alter the environment so that it will in turn alter his perception; they can create situations within which he will continue to remain in contact with the new situations; they can attempt to satisfy the needs and emotions which lie at the root of the existing behaviors in a way which will include the proposed change; they may create social support for the individual who adopts the new behaviors. Taken together, these methods involve working through many or all of the personality-forming agencies in a society - institutions, individual people, objects. Any programme aimed at successful change needs to be multidimensional.

Any programme of change which has been shown to work on a small scale or in a given type of community or culture must be carefully evaluated before any of the principles found can be applied in a different setting. It is particularly important to allow for the extensive qualitative differences which quantitative changes may introduce. A village is not a model for a province or a nation. (p. 286)

We need new methods of education which will leave the child's mind open longer, . . . methods which teach him that safety lies not in knowledge but in knowing what could be but is not known.

In all technical change, even when it seems to be concerned with tools, machines, and other impersonal objects, the individual person is both the recipient of change and the mediator or agent of change. His integrity as a person, his stability as a personality, must be kept ever in focus as the living concern of all purposive change. (p. 288)

As a general recommendation, then, it is possible to say that it is dangerous ever to make any plan, or to try to execute and plan without the active participation of members of the culture, of the particular professions, and of the administrative apparatus concerned; as soon as any planned change has a specific population group as its object, members of that group - through demonstration villages, pilot projects, etc. - must be brought into the planning. (p. 292)