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It is my opinion that there has been a larger breakthrough in the concept of Community Education than in any other sphere of education today. The reluctant and somewhat hesitant steps towards the acceptance that the pace of life in this technological age is every increasing are beginning to be felt. The fact that we are now accepting that it will probably be necessary to retrain the majority of the working population of this country at least twice in their working life means that a great deal more expertise is now needed in Options and Career Guidance than ever before. I find very exciting the move towards accents in life skills. The old concept that the final goal in education is the attainment of a University Degree from the granting of which all job prospect problems are solved, is no longer the answer. Teachers are becoming more and more bound to take an active part in what goes on in commerce and industry than ever before in order to keep themselves and their pupils, of whatever age, up to date in the rapidly changing skills of life today.

Since the advent of higher unemployment more students are staying on at school and this is changing the whole concept of 'Sixth Form' education. Now not only are the usual 'O' and 'A' levels being undertaken but one now finds Vocational Studies are being called for; indeed, some authorities are stressing the need for Vocational Sixth Forms. Students can now be seen studying at school or under the auspices of their school, such aspects as City and Guilds trade work, Youth Training, and Work Experience, frequently travelling from school to school in order to take a specialised subject; a complete 'break away' from the very rigid style of education one tends to associate with 'staying on at school'.

This country has always featured very badly in the youth training field compared with, say, West Germany, for example, but I believe it to be improving fast. I trust that when the current recession is finally over we will not allow ourselves to slip back from what we have achieved.

Apprenticeship training, the well tried system of educating our tradesmen, is being gradually re-structured partly because it has been found to be far too expensive and partly because of the need to be far more flexible. This must surely be a good thing.

The concept of Community Colleges, where the classroom door is seen to be opening to all ages, is another interesting development. One sees more and more examples of adults and children sharing classrooms. With falling school rolls and more and more adults needing to retrain, this is surely a most sensible way to utilise our resources. I have seen many examples of old and young working quite happily together on many subjects. An excellent example of this is in Computer Skills, where the old are learning from the more adaptable young. The social consequences of this are immense. I am convinced that the more the generations are involved together, the greater the understanding, and with that comes more tolerance and recognition of each others' problems.

Colleges of Further Education are another area of education which is rapidly breaking through the traditional barriers. Using the systems of 'Open Tech.', which is geared to the needs and time of the student and accepts skills already acquired as an 'entree' to courses, rather than sticking to the principle of the 'must have 'O' levels before going on' brigade, is changing the whole concept of Further Education. Once we have solved the professional problems in the distinction between instructing and lecturing, the possibilities of this system are endless.

The whole field of Youth Training is giving opportunities to youngsters nowadays who would never have considered, or who could never have been able, to take extra training after school. I have yet to be convinced that it was necessary to hand the whole programme over to the Manpower Services Commission, who, with the best will in the world, appear to be out of their depth when it comes to the monitoring of standards of training. I hope it will be realised that unless these standards are maintained, and what better way of doing so than by using tried and tested bodies like our Colleges of Further Education, we could lose those Colleges. If that happens, standards are bound to fall.

Finally, the whole field of Youth Clubs which operates under the banner of the Local Education Authority has changed. Not so long ago, one associated Youth Clubs with table tennis, drama and discos. Now, activities are on a much broader pattern, with activities ranging from the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme, Outward Bound schools, a comprehensive range of sports, Youth Orchestras, and a growing involvement in community work. The clubs themselves are nearly all now known as Youth and Community Centres, with Community Education Tutors in charge, who are also responsible for the day-to-day running of a

host of other activities such as Mother and Baby Clubs, Old Folk Clubs, Drop In centres for the young unemployed, and for many other aspects of community work.

Some people see education in the future taking place more and more in the home with everything one needs being provided by a computer linked with a national network. I sincerely hope that this will never happen. Education and life skills are about people communicating. The closer one is in a community the more one understands the other's point of view and the more tolerant one becomes. I hope that as we gain more expertise, we will never forget the old values of relationships which are to me what community education is all about.