

**Whether education, work  
and leisure must come  
in that order  
may be seriously  
questioned.**

# **Education and the allocating time in the future**

**By Edith L. Stunkel**

Writing a futuristic article is somewhat akin to describing an amoeba—the nucleus is there, but the potential configurations of the perimeter seem to increase exponentially with the length and scope of the projection. To continue the metaphor, the nucleus of this paper is future cohorts of older adults, and the amoebic perimeter is the nature and distribution of educational opportunity in U.S. society.

At the lowest common denominator, education is a way individuals expend their time. In industrial society, time has been reified into a resource which is allocable much in the way that labor, capital, and natural resources are. Thus, to state that education is one use of time implies that there are alternative uses. The role of education, then, cannot be separated from its coexistent alternatives—namely, work and leisure. Currently in the United

States, where we appear to be in a transitional period from industrial society to what has been variously described as post-industrial, post-affluent, and post-macho society,<sup>1</sup> education is still defined mostly in its relation to work. Education is an activity primarily designed for the young, with the expectation that the educated young will become productive members of the labor force. Out of a total federal education budget request of \$16.5 billion for fiscal year 1981, only \$120 million or .7% has been requested for adult education.<sup>2</sup> This focus on instrumental education, oriented toward future gratification as through payment for work, relegates education to a secondary role in a society where the primary orientation for adults is toward work. For youth, education is accepted as a major component of living; for adults, however, education is either considered just one of many alternative uses of discretionary time after work obligations are completed or it is viewed as a means to improve one's position in work. What type of society we are "posting" into will determine whether education will emerge as a primary delimitor of time or whether it will remain secondary or even tertiary in its claim on how societal time is structured.

Viewpoints about the future are often dichotomized into polarities such as optimists vs. pessimists, centralists vs. decentralists, or individualists vs. collectivists. More useful scenarios might be those characterized by the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Hobbesian future would entail such attributes as:

- heightened individual and group competition for income, wealth, position and power;
- increased inequality and concomitant social tension;
- economic crises in employment; and
- an expanding urban underclass.

The Emersonian future, on the other hand, depicts:

- societal and cultural growth with the human potential movement in the lead;
- alternatives to traditional work patterns;
- rejection or intolerance of excess consumption; and
- increased citizen participation, collective consumption and broadened educational opportunities.

In the Hobbesian future, values would revolve around economic power and leverage; constraint, control and exploitation would be widespread; and relative deprivation would be acutely felt. Values in the Emersonian future would be noneconomic or transcendent to economic want; friendship, leisure, education and cultural activities would provide substantial grist for the mill of nonmarket consumption.

Education will be a factor in either scenario, and its possible roles include creator or reflector of these emerging futures. Another way to describe the metaphorical amoeba introduced above is to contain in its nucleus the four basic components of society: population; technology, resources and values. The perimeter, then, will be shaped by the forces of these four components. A fifth major societal component into which education falls has been identified by Gappert as "the institutional and organizational arrangements of our society." This fifth component is the amoebic perimeter—its pseudopods. "These pervasive structures are subject to instability and impermanence, and their form and nature are plastic in relation to the other four components. The organizations and insti-

tutions of the society . . . are not only vulnerable to the variables of population, technology, resources, and values; they are also subject to social purpose, the public interest, and planned innovations."<sup>3</sup>

The Hobbesian future is positioned on the assumption of scarcity—scarcity of natural resources, jobs and positions at the top of the pyramid. In this future, education, and particularly post-secondary education, would have a dual thrust: to prepare those who will vie for the scarce positions at the top with the mental tools necessary for fierce competition, and to provide vocational training to the masses of individuals who will be spread along the base of the pyramid. In the Hobbesian future, there may also be a role for "progressive" education which, according to Entwistle "is still to think in terms of how to help the masses, slaves to the conveyor belt, to come to terms with their experience."<sup>4</sup>

Inasmuch as the Hobbesian future is essentially a projection of current economic rigidities, educational in-

novations would be unlikely. The relationship between education and work would become exaggerated, and the discrepancy between the knowledge-demands from work and knowledge-supply through education would increase, thus exacerbating the social tensions projected to occur. "It is one task of education to enable man to live by and with work, and to derive self-fulfillment in the process. One of the difficulties is that **work, ever changing, is orientated to the present and future, while education gets its cues mainly from the past.**"<sup>5</sup> (emphasis added)

The impact of the Hobbesian future on cohorts of older adults is dolorous to ponder. The linear life pattern of education, work and retirement would become more rigid; scarcity of jobs, real or imagined, would create competition between young cohorts entering the labor force and older ones leaving it.

Trends in lifetime distribution of education, work and leisure for men are shown in Chart I. Since 1900, a decreasing percentage of time spent in work throughout life

CHART I

Estimated Lifetime Distribution of Education, Work and Leisure  
(U.S. Males, by Primary Activity)\*

Pre-School	Formal Education	Work		Retirement & Other	
10.0%	16.6%	Average Work Week:	66.6%	6.5%	
5 yrs.	8 yrs.	53.2 hrs.	32.1 yrs.	3.1 yrs.	1900
Life Expectancy: 48.2 yrs.					
8.3%	14.0%	Average Work Week:	65.5%	15.0%	
5 yrs.	8.6 yrs.	43.9 hrs.	38.3 yrs.	9.3 yrs.	1940
Life Expectancy: 61.2 yrs.					
				Est. Retirement:	5.7 yrs.
7.6%	15.5%	Average Work Week: 40.5 hrs.	62.3%	14.6%	
5 yrs.	10.5 yrs.	Average Vacation: 1.3 wks.	41.4 yrs.	9.7 yrs.	1960
Life Expectancy: 66.6 yrs.					
				Est. Retirement:	6.9 yrs.
7.4%	18.0%	Average Work Week: 39.1 hrs.	59.7%	14.8%	
5 yrs.	12.1 yrs.	Average Vacation: 1.7 wks.	40.1 yrs.	9.9 yrs.	1970
Life Expectancy: 67.1 yrs.					
				Est. Retirement:	7.7 yrs.

\* "Primary Activity" designates the main activity of a person during normal working hours.

From: Fred Best and Barry Stern, *Lifetime Distribution of Education, Work and Leisure: Research Speculations and Policy Implication of Changing Life Patterns*, 1976, Washington, D.C., Institute for Educational Leadership.

has been shifted to increasing years of education prior to entering the labor force and increasing years in retirement. The decrease in percentage of lifetime education between 1900 and 1940 was the result of a dramatic increase in life expectancy. Since 1940, however, life expectancy has remained relatively constant and the trends in lifetime allocations of work, education and leisure for men have been consistent. If current income transfer policies prevail, the demand for increasingly scarce jobs predicted in the Hobbesian technologically oriented scenario will widen the economic gap between workers concentrated in the middle and nonworkers at either end of the lifespan. An additional pressure on both young and old will be created by the demographics of an aging population and the resultant economic demands of a growing retired sector. An ironic result of eliminating mandatory retirement<sup>6</sup> may be the emergence of mandatory work for those who would have otherwise opted for leisure. Palliative measures to mitigate some of these tensions might include programs along the lines of Entwistle's "progressive" education; that is, educational programs which are expressive rather than instrumental, but which would lose their innovative character in light of their reactive origins.

Although the role of education in the constraints of a Hobbesian future might be best represented by the cell wall of a paramecium, education in the Emersonian future returns us to the amoeba. Unlike the Hobbesian future, where the form and location of education is assumed not to vary from present modal structures, education in the Emersonian future is expected to be innovative and diverse. The table of contents of this journal gives but a small sample of the diversity anticipated with the Emersonian scenario.

In the Emersonian future, a balance of expressive and instrumental education would emerge, and both types would be respected and valued for their unique contributions to social goals. Instrumental education would still primarily occur during the pre-labor force years of youth, although flexibility in the linear life pattern would increase educational opportunities for adults of all ages. The prototypical linear life pattern is characterized in Chart II; one alternative to this pattern, called the cyclic life plan by Best and Stern, is represented in Chart III.<sup>7</sup>

One point on which futurists generally agree is that lifespan leisure time will continue to increase. The differences revolve around how that leisure will be distributed. As discussed above, Hobbesian-type futurists predict a compression of work into the middle years, for a linear variation of Chart II; Emersonian-type futurists are open to such arrangements as depicted in Chart III, as well as shortened work weeks, shortened work years (longer vacations, job sharing, a growing permanent part-time labor force, sabbatical plans, and phased or gradual retirement). This author has elsewhere proposed the abolishment of the term retirement<sup>8</sup> on the basis that the terms disability, unemployment, earned or unearned leave better describe the conditions of post-work leisure for older persons. Semantic discrimination is a subtle barrier to increasing options not only for older adults but for younger ones as well. Instrumental educational opportunities are essentially nonexistent for the person whose social status does not entail the possibility of employment. Conversely, expressive education is virtually denied younger adults in a society which does not value leisure coequally with work for those cohorts.

Yet another Emersonian-type future allocates the increases in lifetime leisure in such a way that two distinct classes of citizens emerge: "a small elite of cybernetic engineers would be responsible for the production and distribution of goods, and the remainder of the population would be limited to consumption. 'The life styles of the majority would be oriented toward a highly diversified form of expressive behavior—a veritable greening of America.'"<sup>9</sup> Within this scenario, demand for innovative expressive educational opportunities would lead to a wide variety of alternative structures and methods and the interface of the cyberneticists and the consumers could lead to innovative educational technologies. The locus of instrumental education might be shifted to the workplace itself, leaving the institutions of education as we now know them to cater to the expressive consumers. In this scenario, a clear distinction is made between production of **goods** and delivery of **services**. While a number of variations are possible in delineating the economic and social differences among goods and services, education might be a leader in the shift of the current service "industry" from an instrumental orientation to an expressive one. Such a transformation would offset such critics as John McKnight who pointed out the irony of an economy based on services: "Full employment in a serving society depends upon more people who are understood as lacking, disabled, deficient . . . A society of fully employed servers needs more people in need . . . Increasingly, a serving society depends on young and old people who can be defined as problems rather than productive participants. The young and the old have become the raw material of a serving economy."<sup>10</sup>

These are just a few of the alternative futures which can be contemplated, based on past and current trends in education, work and leisure. While it may seem we have been comparing apples and oranges, it is just as likely we are dealing with paramecia and amoebae. In the Hobbesian futures, alternatives emerge as "either/or": independence or dependence, wealth or poverty, understanding or ignorance. In the Emersonian futures the scenarios are inclusive, representing "both/and": interdependence, sufficiency, and responsibility. While it is enjoyable to create these scenarios, it is important to realize that what we do now as individuals and collectively will create these futures.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Gary Gappert, *Post-Affluent America: The Social Economy of the Future*, New York, New Viewpoints, 1979.
2. U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging *Memorandum*, Vol. XII, No. 1, Feb. 4, 1980.
3. Gappert, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
4. Harold Entwistle, *Education, Work and Leisure*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 7.
5. Nels Anderson, *Man's Work and Leisure*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1974, p. 77.
6. The 1978 Amendment to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1977 removed the age ceiling for practically all federal employees and raised the protected age to 70 for nearly all other workers. It is generally anticipated that the age-70 ceiling will ultimately be removed also.
7. Fred Best and Barry Stern, "Education, Work and Leisure: Must They Come In That Order?" *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 100, No. 7, July 1977, p. 8.
8. Edith Stunkel, "Let's Abolish Retirement," *The Futurist*, Vol. XIII, No. 5, pp. 325-8.

9. James F. Murphy, "The Future of Time, Work and Leisure," *Leisure-Sharing*, Sacramento, California Legislature, Nov. 1, 1977, p. 3.
10. John McKnight, "Valuable Deficiencies," *Flint*, March 1978, pp. 12-13.

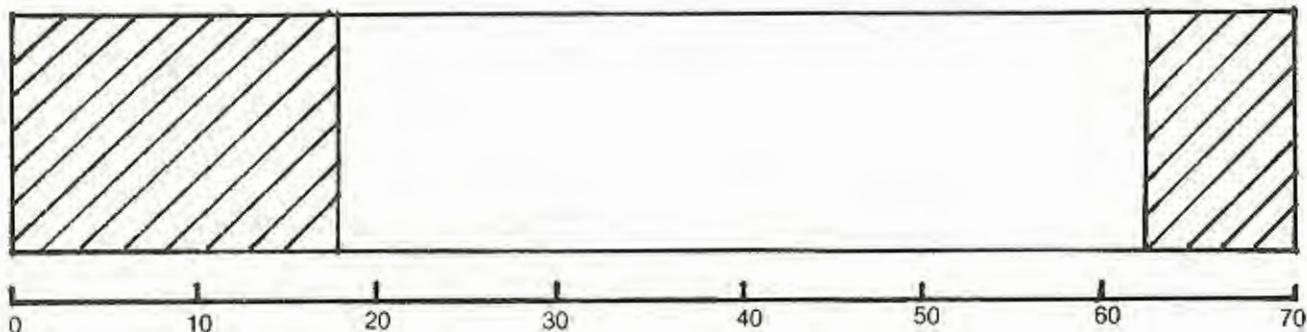
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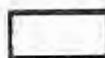
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CHART II

Linear Life Plan



Age in Years

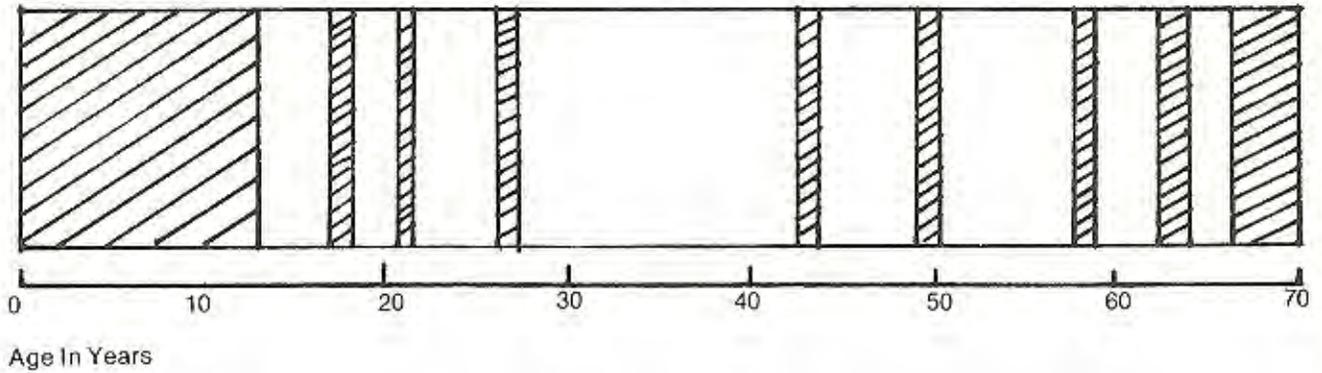
 Worktime

 Education and Leisure

From: Fred Best and Barry Stern, "Education, Work and Leisure: Must They Come In That Order?" *Monthly Labor Review*, 100: 7, July 1977, p. 8.

CHART III

Cyclic Life Plan



Worktime

Education and Leisure

From: Fred Best and Barry Stern, "Education, Work and Leisure: Must They Come In That Order?" *Monthly Labor Review*, 100: 7, July 1977, p. 8.