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EDUCATION—TREATMENT FOR POVERTY

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I am not treating this subject as we would normally treat a controversial policy issue. As a member of the policy group and as a member of the Extension Service, I am presenting a position. My position is that as policy educators and as Cooperative Extension workers, we have a function to perform in the area of education as a treatment for poverty.

It has been well proven throughout the world and in the United States that the level of education is closely and positively related to per capita income. A survey of the countries of the world shows that nearly every country which has a relatively high per capita income has a relatively high level of education or, stated conversely, nearly every country which has a relatively high level of education has a relatively high income. Even some countries which lack physical resources have relatively good incomes if they have a high educational level.

We are familiar with the estimates of T. W. Schultz that investments in the United States in primary and secondary education yield a 30 percent return.¹ We are familiar with the data showing that over a lifetime college graduates earn 100 to 150 thousand dollars more than high school graduates (Table 1).

TABLE 1. MEDIAN INCOMES OF PERSONS IN SELECTED AGE GROUPS BY YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED, UNITED STATES, 1961

Group	Median Income
Grade school graduate (45-54)	\$4,708
1-3 years high school (45-54)	5,317
High school graduate (25-34)	5,175
High school graduate (45-54)	5,988
College graduate (25-34)	6,640
College graduate (45-54)	9,130

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, September 1963.

¹T. W. Schultz, "Underinvestment in the Quality of Schooling: The Rural Farm Areas," *Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies, 1964*, Farm Foundation, 1964, p. 23.

Thus, there is ample proof that education is a cure for poverty in a nation where employment opportunities exist. As Sylvia Porter has said, "Education is the ladder of opportunity." Of course, the physically and the mentally handicapped will continue to require relief, but how far we can afford to go with special programs for those who are not handicapped is still open to experiment.

We are familiar also with the rising percentages of students who graduate from high school and college each year. Nevertheless, we have poverty groups which are continuing to perpetuate themselves. From these groups come the higher proportions of dropouts and delinquents. They have not been fully reached by our advances in education. Here the question is how to break the poverty cycle.

A child who comes from a home where he has heard only one-syllable words and has received little discipline is at a serious disadvantage when thrown into competition in the first grade with children who have much more adequate backgrounds. Unless he has superior ability, he often becomes discouraged and frustrated. He may become a dropout at the first opportunity. I do not wish to imply that lack of discipline is always associated with poverty but in some urban areas it is.

We likewise know that delinquency traits become evident in a child at a very young age. Professor Sheldon Glueck of the Harvard Law School states:

Our basic research shows that about 50 percent of the delinquents we studied began to show clear signs of maladjusted behavior at the age of 8 or under. Virtually 90 percent showed these signs at the age of 10 or under.

Now we have found it possible to arrive at some idea of the child's delinquency potential even before those years by identifying certain pathologic aspects of his family life. The studies we have carried out show that this can be done at the school-entering age—between 5½ years and 6½. At the present time we are working at and, we hope, succeeding in studies to identify pre-delinquents at an even earlier age, by combining parental factors and certain childhood traits.

If these problems are to be attacked so that education has its chance to improve the children of these groups, then it means working with these parents and their preschool children. Many of these groups can be reached only by going beyond the traditional approaches.

Last year at this conference, Superintendent Willis of Chicago discussed the need of a program for city children similar to our 4-H

programs. Many of you now have programs which include non-farm youth. Additional programs of this type are needed.

Members of this group have prepared a series of publications indicating the need for training and retraining programs in the skills for those who do not receive adequate schooling.

If education is to be a cure for poverty, four program areas need strengthening. They are:

1. Preschool nursery programs to help the children in disadvantaged homes get a more equal start in school.
2. Parent development and training programs, particularly for mothers, on how to keep house and raise a family.
3. Youth development programs such as 4-H programs.
4. Training and retraining programs in skills for youth and those who must shift occupations in later life.

In the past we have placed much emphasis on the development of our physical resources. The technical and social changes taking place in our society have led to a shifting of emphasis to human development. Greater recognition of the need for training programs for youth who do not go to college and for those who have to shift jobs and the passage of the Opportunity Act and the General Education Act have added emphasis to the human development side of education. While I do not wish to make any prediction relative to these particular acts, I do believe that greater emphasis will continue to be placed on human development.

While these problems are most acutely concentrated in the cities and more fully recognized there, they also exist in certain of our rural areas. We need imaginative programs to reach the low-income rural areas as well as the urban areas.

When a situation develops in our economy which requires relief, funds are appropriated to provide relief. However, as the problem continues, society begins to raise the question of how the relief cost may be eliminated or reduced. This is the situation in regard to our general relief programs at present. The leaders of our society are asking, "Cannot more people on welfare be made into independent, productive citizens?"

To extension people interested in public affairs, these problems are of concern. Certain of these problems fall within the areas of competence of the Extension Service. This is particularly true of parental development and training and youth development.

Some of our home agents have worked out ways of reaching these low-income mothers. It means starting back with some of the approaches we tried with low-income farm families, plus many others.

If we can only increase the number that break out of the poverty cycle by a small amount, the cost will be justified. With our present social structure the gains of shifting a few more individuals from relief or delinquent institutions to productive citizens is great. All we have to do is to look at the figures.

In summary, education is a cure for poverty but not all of it can be dispensed in the traditional packages. It must be geared to the problems and needs of the people that are still being by-passed. Involved, therefore, is a policy issue of what kind of new educational approaches we should develop, if any, and how we can be more effective in helping the low-income groups in our society.