

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THEIR FUTURE

Every society prepares its youth to become the stewards of the society in the future – that is how societies are perpetuated.

In primitive societies, this preparation centered around acquiring food, providing shelter, raising the young, and insuring security – the skills of hunting, farming, and herding; the methods of home construction with local materials; the practices of infant care; and rules of collective defense.

Men's and women's roles in these societies were usually highly differentiated, so the boys and girls each had their own sets of skills to learn.

The "training" was informal – participatory learning by watching elders and emulating their behavior – learning by doing.

As primitive societies grew and became more complex, the roles within the societies became more numerous and differentiated. There were still hunters, farmers, herders, mothers, and warriors – but there were new societal needs fulfilled by artisans, traders, shaman, rulers, counselors, and many others. Each of these differentiated roles required specialized training.

This training was accomplished by assigning youth to an expert who would, by practice, convey the skills of a specific role to the apprentice – learning by being mentored.

When these differentiated societies grew larger to form nation-states, the need for formal training emerged. This training was qualitatively different. It was a shift from learning by hands-on experience to learning at a more general level.

The student did not learn how to become a trader by trading; the student now learned about trading

in general and then applied that knowledge when the training was completed.

This was the emergence of formal education.

Notice the general trend throughout the centuries of social development – the more complex and differentiated a society becomes, the more formal and abstract methods of training of its youth.

Where are we now? At the beginning of the twentieth century, basic education consisted of reading, writing, and arithmetic – significantly, for all youth in our society. This was thought to be enough training to participate either in the working (blue collar) sector, or in the professional (white collar) sector.

We were comfortable with the status of education at the turn of the twentieth century – a basic curriculum, generally uniform methods of teaching, and universal availability to all citizens of school age.

Then, about mid-century, things began to change. The skill sets for blue-collar and white-collar began to merge, and, at the same time, there was a realization that universal availability did not, in itself, insure universal benefits. Once again, changes in society's complexity demanded changes in education.

This is where SOI comes into full perspective.

No matter what curriculum changes the greater society demands; no matter what advances there are in delivering curricular content, the students need the necessary intellectual abilities to acquire, assimilate, and manipulate the skills, concepts, and aptitudes that the society is currently requiring for full participation.