

Education of the Whole Man
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Church Commissioner of Education

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President Smith, President Lee, and President Tanner, it is an anxiety-producing privilege for one to respond to your invitation to communicate with the priesthood about the Church Educational System, but it is proper to give time and attention to the needs of our youth engaged in education. We have, for instance, 12,000 full-time missionaries, who matter very much; 26,000 men and women in the service, who matter very much, also; but there are around 200,000 LDS students enrolled in hundreds of colleges and universities around the world.

Sixteen percent, or approximately 32,000, of those 200,000 are enrolled in the four post-high school institutions in our own Church Educational System, and this is a very important "fold." But there are 168,000 other LDS students, "which are not of that fold," ([John 10:16](#)) and they, too, need to hear the "voice" of the Master through our institute program.

The scope and variety of the Church Educational System is impressive: in addition to the students already mentioned, there are 13,000 LDS children and youth in dozens of Church elementary and secondary schools in Mexico, Chile, and in the Pacific; there are also over 175,000 students in our institutes and seminaries.

Letter of First Presidency

The basic guidelines for our Church Educational System have been well laid down by our Church leaders over the years and need not be repeated here. A new but basic document, however, is the letter of the First Presidency dated January 30, 1970, which urges Church members to have their sons and daughters attend post-high school institutions of learning near their home, so that our young can benefit from the influence of the home, especially during their first two years of post-high school education. That document also urges leaders and parents to make full use of our seminary and institute programs to supplement the home. In addition, the letter indicates that the Presidency, in their wisdom, believe the enrollment at BYU should not exceed 25,000. There are numerous considerations which, I believe, underlie the wisdom of the points in that presidential letter:

1. The density of Church membership occurs in America where states have highly developed and accessible public post-high school systems of education.
2. Members of the Church are taxpayers to local, state, and federal governments in America and their equivalents in Canada, and are fully entitled to send their sons and daughters to tax-supported institutions. The influence of Church members (whether as students or taxpayers) on our public institutions is needed now—more than ever.
3. The increased effectiveness of correlated Church priesthood programs, such as home teaching, family home evenings, of student stakes and wards, MIA, and the Student Associations now permits the priesthood leaders, in some instances, to cross the traditional geographical boundaries governing some Church programs, in order to support and to involve the young members of the Church.
4. Those of us who live in areas where there are highly developed public systems of post-high school

education, in the spirit of brotherhood, should defer to the needs of our brothers and sisters in other lands where, often, even an elementary education is not possible unless the Church assists in the process.

Internationalization of the Church

One of the great challenges the priesthood faces in our time is the internationalization of the Church. This is not an American church—it is the Church of Jesus Christ, who is the God of all people on this planet, and we must, as the scriptures urge, be as independent as possible so that the kingdom is not too much at the mercy of men and circumstances, or the tides of nationalism, or the mercurial moods abroad about America.

We have, for instance, more members of the Church now in Brazil than in all of the Scandinavian countries combined, plus Holland. We have as many members in Uruguay as in the state of New York, where the Church was founded. We have as many in Peru as we do in Missouri, where so much Church history was made. We have as many in Tonga and Samoa combined as in Nevada, and more in these two island clusters than in the state of Wyoming. We have more in French Polynesia than in Switzerland, and more in the Philippine Islands than Nebraska, through which our pioneer caravans passed. We have more in Honduras than in Norway.

Challenge for educational system

These comparisons are sobering and challenging not only for the Church Educational System, but for the entire Church. Thus, the transculturalization of curricular materials (which is more than translation) represents one of our greatest challenges. The scriptures urge the Church to speak to men "after the manner of their language," taking their various weaknesses into account that all "might come to understanding." ([D&C 1:24](#))

We want our Church Educational System to respond as much as we can to the special conditions in which our members live. Our seminary home study program, for instance, was organized especially for the benefit of young members who are isolated from their Church counterparts, and the response of over 7,000 to this program has been excellent!

Need for priesthood support

There are several specific things priesthood leaders and parents can do. First, priesthood leaders need much closer identification with our institute and seminary programs (through the Regional Representatives of the Twelve and stake presidents) so that two-way communication can exist concerning the needs of the young, the quality of teaching they receive, and, importantly, the need for priesthood support in recruiting top-flight men for careers in our diverse Church Educational System; men, some of whom we now have, such as the spartan seminary teachers who live with their families in small trailers on remote reservations in heat, wind, sand, in places with names like Many Farms, Arizona, or in blizzard country like Pine Ridge, South Dakota, in order to serve and to teach hundreds of the children of Father Lehi. One expression of appreciation from an Indian boy included these moving words: "Before I took LDS seminary I didn't have very much to live for . . . I had always felt that Indians could not do things as well as white people. Now I know that I am a child of God. I know that my people are of the house of Israel . . . The Church has given me a reason and purpose for living. There is more to living now than just worrying about what I will have to eat or what I will wear."

Elsewhere, in hundreds of homes and chapels every weekday, early-morning seminary students and

teachers rub sleep from eyes that often shine an hour later with appreciation.

Thousands of miles away in lush, tropical islands, our young members learn to read and write, and elsewhere many of our Mexican brothers and sisters are rapidly preparing themselves as schoolteachers to instruct their own.

Truly, careers in the Church Educational System offer full scope for all the idealism of the world, but accompanied with the saving gospel message.

Seminary and institute program

Seminary and institute classrooms represent some of the golden teaching moments for our youth in preparing them for crowning gospel ordinances. Where our young are committed enough, and fortunate enough, to be able to take institute classes and persist through graduation, their rate of temple marriage is 95 percent, which is a higher percentage than for our returned missionaries. Of course, the mere act of attending an institute represents self-selection, just as attending a Church school involves some self-selection. But if we are trying to identify paths that our youth can pursue that will give them a better chance of succeeding spiritually, attendance at seminaries and institutes is clearly a major tributary to the stream of spirituality.

Counsel on vocational planning

A second matter that priesthood leaders and parents should consider is the need to counsel all of our young more consistently and helpfully about the planning of their vocations and careers. This will be a continuing task; it is not something we can talk about once in a stake priesthood meeting and forget. One of the basic reasons for the pursuit of education is to equip oneself with marketable skills. The less advantaged national economies within which many of our members outside America live, and the shifting prospects with regard to where the career and job opportunities will be even in America—both suggest that some additional emphasis is needed in the direction of technical education, which bears on a middle group of skills. For some of our young, earning power, job opportunities, and satisfaction will be greater if they pursue the path of technical education in their post-high school years, including paramedical careers. Professional education in medicine, law, nursing, etc., is going to be needed even more than ever, but all of our youth need not be neurosurgeons, and the youth who becomes a craftsman should feel just as "approved" as his friend who is a microbiologist. Parents, bishops, and educational counselors will do well to approach career counseling, bearing in mind that the selection of a career is usually a matter of preference and not principle.

Education and capacity to love

A third suggestion: Education, when joined with service to others (for learning loses its moral authority unless it reaches out) is clearly related to the development of deserved self-esteem, which controls our capacity to love God, to love others, and to love life.

We can pursue learning without fear, for the gospel of Jesus Christ incorporates all truth, but it distinguishes between mere fact and saving truths. We can be patient with the imponderables, especially in view of the relevancy of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the social and political problems of our time, but we must do much more to help our young to see the preventive and prescriptive powers of the gospel for those very problems about which our young are rightfully concerned. For the gospel tells us that we have a real brotherhood that will last beyond the grave: it is not merely a biological brotherhood.

The gospel tells us that unchastity can cause inner spiritual "concussions" and "bleeding." Jacob described people in a time of gross unchastity as being in a circumstance in which "many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds." ([Jacob 2:35](#)) The gospel is relevant in its preachment of love at home, which is a solution to many problems ranging from aid to dependent children to alienation. And orthodoxy is vital because it increases human happiness, whether in preventing the misery that grows out of alcoholism or in treating the guilt.

Example and experience

A fourth observation: We will also do our young a great favor if our efforts to teach the gospel to them include not only teaching by exhortation and explanation, which are vital, but also by the eloquence of example and the confirmation of experience, for the latter two methods weigh very heavily on the scales of today's youth.

Importance of home

Fifth: The home will always be our most vital teaching institution. When the home fails, it will be difficult for the other institutions of any culture or society—political, economic, and even educational—to compensate for the failures in the home. If we poison the headwaters of humanity—the home—it is exceedingly difficult to depollute downstream. If we wish to make our efforts count in meeting the vexing challenges of our time, the ecology of effectiveness suggests of the home that truly, "This is the place!"

Spirit of cooperation

Within the basic correlation concepts, which stress the primacy of priesthood and home, I see a new spirit of cooperation moving in the Church. Those charged with programs that support the home—Elder Marion D. Hanks, who manages the Student Association; Elder Marvin J. Ashton, who manages Social Services; Brother James Mason, Commissioner of Health Services; and the staff of the Church Educational System—are approaching common, overlapping problems in the spirit of serving Church members, rather than letting organizational lines become immovable, bureaucratic walls, for, especially in saving souls, "something there is that doesn't love a wall." (Robert Frost.)

Commitment to education

Finally, let us assure our young that the cadence of the divine commitment to education and the quest for truth echo, like a drum roll, through the corridors of dispensational history—Abraham, a man of God and a brilliant astronomer, who pondered the planets and considered the cosmos in the loneliness of the desert; Jesus, the Master, who while yet a youth taught his elders in the seat of learning, having prepared himself intellectually and spiritually; Joseph Smith's School of the Prophets, where the enthusiasm for education overrode the discouraging circumstances of the moment; the schools and university that were started in this valley so soon after the wheels on pioneer wagons and handcarts had ceased turning.

Those who possess absolute truths need fear no ancillary truth but should pursue learning vigorously, since learning is good so long as we "hearken unto the counsels of God." ([2 Ne. 9:29](#)) When education is thus pursued by our young today, they should be assured by all of us that they are "about" their "Father's business," ([Luke 2:49](#)) and be witnessed to; that when man has reached the small "periphery of the spider web of his own reason and logic," he will find the ropes of revelation on which he can climb upward, forever! May we help our youth, I pray in the name of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ. Amen.