

Sectors

The horizontal structure of the AL Model

What are the key areas for which we should be preparing our youth? I might be going out on a limb, but I feel confident that the following categories are important in one way or another to everybody.

First and foremost is our **health**. Nothing is more fundamental than that, and nothing else matters much if you are suffering physically or mentally. Mysteriously, though, it has been given secondary status in our schools. It has not been neglected exactly, but it certainly lacks the attention it should have. Learning should be substantially applied within this context. This would not only make all subject matter personally meaningful, but also help alleviate many of the ills plaguing society. It goes beyond just making lifestyle decisions, since it includes perspective and priorities. In many ways it is about a philosophy of life. This is the foundation and springboard for our existence, and the fount of well-being within us all. It, therefore, merits an elevated standing when setting educational priorities.

Another important part of our lives is how we interact with other people. We are social beings, and thus active members of **communities**. Our own well-being often depends on those around us and the harmony or "feeling" in our daily environment. Our sense of safety, source of pride, and opportunities for socializing are usually derived from our immediate surroundings. Many of our most gratifying moments are when we give something of ourselves to others. Family is certainly part of this category, and often the source of happiness and fulfillment at the most fundamental level of our being. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to increase our children's functionality in that respect, and clarify how they can contribute to it, as well as elucidate their responsibilities in the social milieu.

An extension of that concept would be our roles within the nation as a whole. It is the more encompassing community within which we live. Governmental policies have a huge effect on our personal lives and the opportunities available to us, magnifying the need for a population apprised of its workings. Active participation is particularly important in a democratic system, because its potential can only be realized with an informed and involved citizenry. Popular sovereignty, which springs from the electorate's awareness, is what holds a

government accountable and keeps it responsive to the people. When the people have a sense of empowerment, they then have a much more confident and hopeful attitude. Discontent that can erode a nation's fabric is minimized. Everybody is affected when there is instability in the country, or a degradation in the political system. A government that serves the people's interests with liberty and justice for all is the foothold for the pursuit of happiness. Illuminating the scope of pressing issues and the vehicles for involvement are key contributions that education can bring to this relationship. It follows, then, that **Citizenship** along with **governance** and the **justice** system should be contexts within which students study.

Career paths and economic opportunity are the next focal points that should be emphasized in our schools. Practically all of us have a stake in **the marketplace**, whether it be the desire to spend most of our time in fulfilling jobs or enjoy financial security. Careers and prosperous endeavors are frequently the main reasons for many to pursue an education, after all. When people deem that opportunities are accessible to them, and they have been proffered the skills for grabbing them, then they tend to be more invigorated. Achieving an acceptable level of financial surety in a gratifying profession that suits one's identity and aspirations are primary goals for most people. In addition, a country's competitiveness and equitable allocation of resources are essential to an optimistic push into the future. A properly educated labor force with outlets for realizing its potential in a truly free and competitive marketplace are essential parts of the formula for national and personal success. This sector is in many ways the most traditional arena for which education has been preparing our youth, and that will continue in this new paradigm.

Next on the list is **Culture**. The expression of oneself, enjoyment of the arts, breadth of diversity, sharing of wisdom, expansion of understanding, and exploration of experience enrich our lives greatly in ways that cannot be quantified. Culture is also part of our collective identity. The United States is probably the most multi-cultural country in the world, and becoming even more so. Appreciation of that diversity, bonded together by common ideals expounded in our Constitution, would further elevate us in contradistinction to the fear and mistrust pulling us apart. American cultural achievements, innovation, broadmindedness, ingenuity, adventurism, sports, and humanitarian efforts should all be celebrated. Culture is the essence of civilization, which lasts long beyond the power struggles and pursuits for wealth that often consume the attention of

those times. Exploring and expressing that side of ourselves brings creativity and character to learning, and is fundamental to a well-rounded education. Culture enlivens the human experience.

The five arenas in life I just touched upon all involve two other supportive and contributory facets: **Research and Development**, plus **Production**. In order to better understand something, we have to actively delve more deeply into it. That entails a wide range of learning activities (i.e., observation, modeling, analysis, comparison, being exposed to various views, verifying sources, speculation, exploration, organization, experimentation, testing, evaluation, synthesizing, application, repetition, reflection, and the experiential). Research and development are the processes within the meaningful contexts. Once that has been accomplished, it is time to realize the learning through production. This is the point where learning has been internalized and is now ready for actualization. What we create contributes to the world, and is a form of expression or extension of ourselves.

The design of Actualized Learning, therefore, centers around the segmentation of schools into sectors that parallel significant arenas in our lives: Health (well-being), Communities (local environs, social interactions, and relationships), Citizenship (the national community), The Marketplace (economic/financial/workplace dynamics, and life-paths), Culture (self-expression and perspective), Research and Development (investigation/exploration and clarification), and Production (applied learning). By reconfiguring our schools so they have such focal points, they will become better aligned with the realities we encounter in life. These sectors are more than contexts for academic content. They are the reasons for studying subject matter. In other words, learning would become a process of acquiring tools for the attainment of important objectives.

Dividing our schools into sectors that resemble key areas in our lives would naturally enhance relevancy and expedite the connection to schema. It would provide recognizable conditions for the usage of subject matter, which is a tried and true strategy for learning. It would allow for mixing up the application of content in a variety of appropriate ways. And on top of all those benefits, it would facilitate a customized approach to learning, so students with different interests and learning styles could find what works for them.