

American Dilemma: *The Neglect of Science*

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Most of America's youth, when asked what they plan to do as an adult, reply with aspirations to become a lawyer or doctor. The first thoughts that come to mind when these professions are brought up are involving the vast amount of money which can be earned. With the shift of morals in modern America from family and community to greed and wealth, it is not surprising that our youth has also been effected by this shift. The gearing of the education of the American youth has also changed, which is directly affecting the failure of the United States to produce a sufficient amount of scientists and engineers (Teitelbaum, 2003).

From an educational standpoint, the United States is not graduating nearly enough scientists and engineers from her universities. This is causing the national scientific capabilities in the U.S. to plummet and "the gap", which Shirley Ann Jackson refers to it as, of a lack of sufficient scientists is increasing. Scientists are necessary in the world today for the economy, health, and protection of the American people. The advancement of technology in the early 1990's has put a damper on the awareness of the crisis which America faces (Jackson, 2001). In order to save the future of America, it is an absolute necessity to educate the American youth with the importance of science and to devote more resources to this education so that scientists will not be scarce for generations to come.

Foreign competition is also illustrating the glaring problems which the United States currently has in the field of science. For the last decade, the amount of science and engineering degrees obtained by college-aged people in the U.S. has been decreasing. Although there has recently been somewhat of an upturn, the United States has failed to

reach levels of scientists which it had achieved in the early 1990's (Lemonick, 2006). However, overseas in such countries as Germany and Sweden, the amount of these degrees has been increasing. There has also been a continuous increase in the amount of outsourcing of jobs from the American people to scientists and other professionals alike overseas. The dependence of the United States on other countries can only lead to its downfall, which has been illustrated in the scientific world. In the past, many academics all over the world would come to the United States for college and find plentiful job opportunities as well. Lately, however, more and more foreigners have come to the United States for a higher level education and then left the U.S. due to the decline in opportunities for scientists. Gabriel Aeppli, a Swiss, M.I.T. educated scientist now works for University College London in Britain (Lemonick, 2006). Although the U.S. is still leading in most categories including published articles in journals, science degrees, and doctorates, other countries around the world are catching up as the U.S. declines.

In America's history, wartime has provided for the most advancement in science and technology. Although the United States is currently involved in Iraq, the same determination which was necessary during other conflicts, including the Space Race with the Soviets during the Cold War has been lost (Lemonick, 2006). During these times of war, the United States had become aware of the need for science to prevail and so a great deal of money was invested into laboratories and science. However, today, the lack of funding in laboratories is somewhat ignored. This approach of ignorance by the American public and government is digging an imminent grave for the United States.

The American youth needs to be geared more towards the fields of science rather than athletics and other professions which are not in demand. The media in America has

made athletes and movie stars into the role models for the youth, which along with greed, has inspired them to become involved in sports or Hollywood. The American children lack a prominent role model in science, except for Einstein who is remembered by kids for his puffy hair rather than his achievements and input on such works as the Manhattan Project. It is most certainly a responsibility for parents and teachers alike to educate the youth of the United States of the importance of science for the survival of their nation.

As a high school student, I feel that my surroundings have a great impact on my aspirations for a career choice. I am currently considering working in the field of biochemistry due to motivation which was sparked by my family and local scientists. My uncle works in the field of biochemistry and my father has a PhD in pharmaceutical science. The work that my uncle and father have produced has certainly been influential on my pursuit of a science-involved career. Another source of motivation for my pursuit of science was a presentation delivered by a scientist who works at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory during an induction ceremony at my high school. The presentation basically outlined his work on cancer cells and has motivated me to be involved in a career which could potentially save thousands of lives.

There is most certainly truth in the statement that the children are the future. The drop off in science in America has shown that the youth must be educated in the direction of joining the field of science. There is a necessity for scientists in a post 9/11 U.S. in order to keep the American people safe and protected. Scientists will also continue to provide advancements in technology, health, and the general welfare of their nation. The neglect which scientists have been treated with is less than deserved considering the fact that engineers and scientists are essential in any successful nation.

Bibliography

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