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THE CHANGED/CHANGING EDUCATIONAL SCENE

THE STATE OF THE ART

Invited by: The Commission on Children
White House Conference
1980

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Introduction

To a large extent, present expectations, reluctances, and confusion determine the nature of the future. In America, compulsory mass education has brought the whole society into its schools. Therefore, the future of the schools is essentially that of the society, so that to assess the "state of the art" in schooling is to assess the state of the art of society itself. Little wonder then that the schools have become a complex and confusing array of expectations, hopes, and fears. Yet, there is an organizing principle which has been in the forefront since the early 1950s: the equalization of educational opportunity for nearly every conceivable minority. Evidently, "all men are created equal" has continued to be an ideal in the face of glaring inequalities, and the American system of education has inherited all of the problems associated with attempts at integrating equality and excellence.

In what follows, a special attempt was made to organize--as much as possible--the content in terms of the requirements of the readership. To this end, the first section, entitled "Gaining Perspective," provides an overview of developments, expectations, issues, dynamics, culture shock, and future trends. The second section, "Emerging Needs and Issues," is more detailed in order to provide an indepth coverage of four competing categories of educational emphasis:

The Disabled/Handicapped Child
The Gifted Child
The "Normal" Child
Poor and Minority Children

Each of these sections has been further organized around subsections on legislation/litigation, issues, sources of stress, and impending changes.

No attempt was made to be comprehensive or definitive. In the final analysis, the paper was intended as a preliminary step on the way toward decisions which need to be made in the 80s. In effect, what is at stake is the decision-ability of all the various sectors of society, who see in their children the profound relationship which exists between education and the future.

Developments

In attempting to respond to a number of criticisms and developments regarding schooling, a special commission was appointed in 1964 by President J. Win Payne of the American Association of School Administrators. It reported in 1966, having identified the following nine imperatives in education:

To make urban life rewarding and satisfying,
To prepare people for the world of work,
To discover and nurture creative talent,
To strengthen the moral fabric of society,
To deal constructively with psychological tensions,
To keep democracy working,
To make intelligent use of natural resources,
To make the best use of leisure time, and
To work with other peoples of the world for human betterment.

Although these were not stated as goals for the schools, in one form or another they represented themes which touched upon an ever-expanding role for educators. As some have stated it, "The school has become a surrogate everything."

Closer to the reality of what was actually happening to and within the schools is a far more fragmented list of terms and movements, which included: minimal competency testing, humanization, responsibility education, individualization, accountability, value(s) clarification, moral development stages, back-to-the-basics, process-based, futurology or futuristics, schooling versus education, structure of the disciplines or structure of knowledge, self-paced, performance criteria, behavioral objectives, experience-based, Bloom's taxonomy, criterion-referenced, warm fuzzies, and TA for tots, to name a few. Many of these represent temporary or topical issues, but there are some continuing issues as well, and the latter are easily recognized: tracking, college-bound, social promotion, liberal/general versus vocational, subject matter curriculum, core curriculum, literacy skills versus life-survival, and so on. In addition, training the mind like a muscle, preparing students for life, helping them become good citizens, and helping them develop a positive self-concept merely extend the list of related families of questions, issues, and names. Interestingly, through time, the same thing at two different times for the same person may have appeared to be good, then bad, or vice versa. In any event, this only makes more vivid the realization that the school has become as complex in its appearances and processes as the society it reflects.

Expectations

Each of the above imperatives, fragmented movements, or continuing issues has carried with it a set of expectations which, when analyzed, turn out to be more contradictory than complementary. As indicators of how these various expectations have been resolved and prioritized, one need only look at the areas in which financial support has (or has not) been forthcoming and also, where litigation and legislation have impacted most.

In addition to the complex array of confusing expectations suggested by the imperatives and fragments, it should be noted that the purposes of schooling in America have always involved various emphases ranging from national interests to the individual child. The structure of knowledge movement in the 1950's was organized primarily to promote the interests of the United States in its space-age race with Russia.

Humanization, on the other hand, was aimed more at the individual child. Individualization attempted also to serve the individual child, but this movement anticipated and responded to a host of larger social issues as well with respect to minorities in a variety of categories. Accountability seems on the face of it to support the child's development of basic literacy skills, but it seems apparent that local, state, and national interests are also at stake. Expectations of and within the schools, therefore, are not the work of an educator who in isolation directs schooling for all time. Parents, administrators, board members, students, and teachers are caught up in a web of national, state, and local events and circumstances which precipitate change, which then gets reflected in the schools. It is just that now more than before, the complexity and rate of change have forced prioritization in more extensive ways.

Issues

The developments and expectations, though highly fragmented and diffuse, still provide a basis for determining certain issues which have surfaced through policy decisions, litigation, legislation, and financial support criteria. Those issues which seem to permeate the others, and which might therefore be called "generic," are:

> Equality of opportunity as it relates to excellence of achievement;
>
> Effectiveness in promoting growth for all as it relates to the efficiency with which it is accomplished;
>
> Whether or not there are the resources and support programs to accomplish the priorities that litigation and legislation have forced upon the schools;
>
> Whether or not certain support roles can be reassigned back to the parents and others in effective ways, given the expanding role of the schools;
>
> Whether or not exceptionality can be meaningfully addressed as part of regular school programs through accommodation, modification, and retraining;
>
> Whether or not the "normal" child has been left by default to fend for himself/herself; and
>
> Whether or not the educational community along with the groups to which it is accountable can make the necessary decisions to relieve its burdens without eroding its basic value and role.

These generic issues are intended to serve to maintain a general perspective as more specific issues are discussed below.

THE CHANGING SOCIAL SCENE

The Dynamics of Impending Change

Whereas long stretches of history seemed more or less predictable, recent social developments have tended to teach that it is the "unexpected that ought to be expected." Coupling this lesson with those things which have in fact unexpectedly occurred creates a social scene in which there is more emphasis on what might happen next than there is on what needs to be made to happen to systematically improve conditions. The "dynamics of impending change," therefore, encompasses an attitude which significantly influences decisions regarding education.

A major part of the changing social scene results from the fact that many institutions which were historically stable are undergoing radical transformations. The family, church, community, and home--even the nation--no longer represent permanence and direction. With the uprooting of traditional values and behaviors, we find ourselves trying to find new responses and behaviors to cope with change.

The dynamics of impending change include: 1) an attempt on the part of uprooted human beings to find ways to respond to change in general; and 2) an attempt to analyze and direct change to stabilize its form and substance. These two attempts have each had a vastly different impact on the schools. The first attempt, for example, has forced changes in the schools on the basis of extremes in time. Some people have argued that the past offers the greatest hope in coping with change; hence, a return to the basics is suggested. Others have argued that the schools should shed their ties with the past and "modernize" or catch up with the present. Still others have argued that, given the rate of change and possible change in the future, the focus in the schools should be on adaptability of the child toward the future by means of future-oriented curriculum and instructional techniques.

The second attempt is perhaps more promising, since it places the greatest emphasis on people and their decisions rather than on historic approaches. However, in this case decisions are based on litigation and legislation, which may be arduous. The time involved in getting people to participate democratically in their own present and future creates voids through disagreement and disharmony. The result is a kind of culture shock.

Culture Shock

Culture shock, of course, can mean many things. From an educational perspective, much of the shock evolves out of the "duty culture" versus the "sensate culture" issue. The duty culture is characterized as having: 1) a heavy emphasis on structure; 2) a defined set of rules; 3) obedience; 4) a greater emphasis on punishment than on reward; and 5) an emphasis on conformity and what one ought to do, despite how one feels. By contrast, the sensate culture which derives from "this-worldliness" and what man can do for man, including himself/herself, is characterized by: 1) ad hoc relationships; 2) situational relativity; 3) consent; 4) greater emphasis on reward than on punishment; and 5) self-satisfaction and what feels good.

These two cultures do not exhaust but rather illustrate some major aspects of impending change. The illustration, however, has all of the earmarks of culture shock, in the sense that people are left with either rigid responses to everything in the name of certainty, or very flexible responses depending upon the situation, in the name of personal freedom. The implications for the schools are far-reaching.

Future Trends

Although directions for schooling and education are treated in greater detail in later sections, there are some broad trends which need to be considered when assessing the changing social scene.

1. There are and will be new and different kinds of freedoms for the individual, alone and in groups. These will show up in both mind-styles and lifestyles. In the future, however, these freedoms will be exercised in isolation from certain institutional frames of reference such as the family, church, et cetera, thereby adding responsibility for consequences to the right to make one's own choices. At this time, much of the joy associated with the new freedom is the joy of being temporarily liberated from the institutionalized structures of society. However, this joy is in part due to the fact that society itself has become service-oriented and therefore, in one form or another, takes

major responsibility for the consequences of individual acts. For example, the massive social service industry is dependent in a sense upon irresponsibility in order to justify its continued existence. The first major direction toward the future, therefore, is a freedom which will require individual decision-making in full view of individual responsibility for the consequences.

2. A new and more comprehensive view of the universe is being formulated. Belief systems and basic knowledge systems are being remarkably transformed, thereby forcing nearly everyone to reconsider the purpose and content of schooling, the direction of society, and the relationship of our nation to others on the basis of global concerns and interdependency.

3. There is already a great deal of evidence to suggest an entirely different set of relationships and resources for rearing and teaching children. Less of the rearing and teaching will be done through the traditional family model; more will be done through special agencies outside the home, media, and para-professionals.

4. There is and will be a greater emphasis on appreciation of multiculturalism, both within and across nations. This is part of a larger emphasis on and recognition of the value and reality of diversity.

5. There is a major change appearing on the horizon with respect to man's overall view of himself. From ancient times until now, man has moved from seeing himself as an effect only to viewing himself as a real cause, capable of both controlling and constructing reality.

6. There is a growing awareness of the fact that material resources are depleted through use and human resources are depleted through disuse. This trend tends specifically to shape and redirect the goals of education toward serving the lifelong learner rather than the "one-time, early-entry-early-exit" learner.

7. More emphasis will be placed on the use of technology for processing information so that other kinds of purposes might be served by human beings. In the schools, this will have the effect of moving teaching and learning in the direction of learning how to learn through problem-solving and decision-making rather than information retrieval.

However, these trends have to be viewed in light of a large and rather ominous threat to the mental health and general well-being of us all. With the new kinds of freedom will come, in some cases, a new sense of abandonment and loneliness. When coupled with the pressures of inflation, job insecurity, and other types of destructive stress, it appears certain that mental health problems will be more intense and more common among larger numbers of the population. Also, with new freedoms and a great many choices, people may be paralyzed by overchoice and indecision. An issue then is what might be called our "decision-ability," alone or as a group. It is perhaps in this latter sense that in the balance hangs the fate of individuals, institutions, and society as a whole. On the negative side, this means that there will be huge voids where only partial commitments have been made or, worse yet, none at all. For the schools, this could lead to greater standardization and inhibition of the effort to serve, for example, the exceptional child. Or, more generally, it could mean the virtual erosion of local control.

This is not a complete list by any means, but it suffices to show that even this much indicates the extent to which change is complicating the direction of education. With complexity comes one thing that has not been mentioned: problems in communication, due to new or changing language. Language changes how we think, feel, and act. But the changes in behavior may be slow in coming, so that even more litigation and legislation may be used to precipitate action. As is evident throughout society, however, litigation and legislation can cause a host of new problems and, at the same time, provide little assurance of adequate follow-through and evaluation.

Emerging Needs and Issues

Introduction

Out of the preceding analyses, there are several different ways to identify major concerns related to education. The resulting issues might be so specific as to miss the proverbial forest for the trees. Therefore, what follows represents an attempt to focus on major areas of concern which have a compelling legal basis, or obvious lack thereof, and definite implications for the whole of schooling and education. This approach seems justified in light of the fact that what is at stake throughout our society is not a particular method or curriculum, but rather the very value of education per se. The future of education is deeply tied to the level of support and commitment which are provided above and beyond the litigation and legislation which have been used to establish the priorities. A major area of concern, therefore--one which is illustrative of several subareas of concern--is exceptionality. That is, to what extent are educators, parents, etc., dealing effectively with those children who cannot be educated in the "regular" way? This question results in a coalescence of issues related to equality, excellence, minimalism, effectiveness, and efficiency, not only for the exceptional child but for the "normal" child as well.

Also, even though these issues must be viewed in terms of national, state, and local levels, the final determinations about equality, excellence, et cetera, must be made in a partnership among parents, administrators, board members, students, and teachers. Keeping these things in mind will make the following more detailed analyses more meaningful in the context of the larger society and education of the total population.

Exceptionality: The Disabled/Handicapped Learner

Legislation and Litigation

The seventies heralded numerous advances in the area of educational programming and rights for disabled learners. In fact, however, many of the anticipated benefits have not been forthcoming.

New legislation promised education with normal peers "to the maximum possible extent"; individualized education programs which would provide specialized programming and accountability; assessment of needs based on unbiased instrumentation; informed parents who could gain access to all written material related to their child; and specialized training to prepare teachers to work with disabled learners in the "regular" classroom. One would

expect to see disabled learners in nearly all "regular" programs, individualized education programs which would include precise objectives, covering all areas of potential developmental need; formal systematic review and evaluation of educational programs; a reduction in the use of culturally biased instruments for assessment; and less use or elimination of labels which, in themselves, bring potential discrimination to children; psychological reports and individualized programs written in terminology which parents could easily understand and use; and long-term, continuous training programs for "regular" educators to teach disabled youth.

Steps have been made in each of these directions; however, the field has not progressed as far as it might have or as far as it might seem.

Issues

New legislation is not needed as badly as full implementation and evaluation of existing mandates. Public Law 94-142 and associated legislation have adequately defined the needs of the disabled learners and procedures for meeting them; however, the outcomes have not yet been realized.

The educational needs of disabled individuals and their families are concentrated on four basic issues:

The assurance that their rights are respected,

The structuring of materials and procedures to promote and assure parent involvement,

The assurance that instructional programming for disabled learners be individualized, normalized, and accountable, and

The assurance that all disabled learners receive free, appropriate educational programs from the onset of diagnosis throughout their development, regardless of age.

Sources of Stress

The impact of the new legislation is being keenly felt in a number of areas. Parents who were formally excluded in many ways from involvement in the education of their disabled child are now being asked to shift roles and assume an advocacy and developmental role. As part of the deinstitutionalization effort, for example, parents of severely disabled children are faced with the legitimate prospect of caring for their child's developmental needs. Similarly, teachers could previously have anticipated that disabled learners would be provided specialized education in self-contained programs. In fact, a major emphasis was placed on the specialized skills needed to teach the handicapped child. In a complete reversal of this position, educators are now required to accommodate many "special-needs" learners in the context of their regular classroom programs. In both instances, the populations having the greatest potential impact on the lives of disabled children were provided the "opportunity" without adequate preparation--a potential source of major stress.

In many ways the public schools were also placed in a highly stressful situation. Programs which were oriented around basic "niches" in arbitrary

classification systems are no longer to be viewed as necessarily appropriate. The traditional self-contained program for the educable mentally retarded child, for example, may not be deemed appropriate for large numbers of children who meet the historic criteria for placement in such a program. Instead, individualized programs were seen to be needed for each disabled learner. Yet, neither teachers nor administrators were prepared to design such programs at the time the legislation was enacted. Consequently, a "crash" training process was initiated. Oftentimes, an "expert" was brought in for a single day to prepare staff to write individualized education programs. The result was compliance at a great cost. The labor invested by teachers in creating and transcribing objectives was tremendous. Yet, it continues to be repeated. Such involvement might be warranted if a continuous planning and evaluation process were developed. Unfortunately, a review of individualized programs reveals numerous objectives which cannot be evaluated because they are not written in proper form or at a suitable level. In addition, the numbers of planning formats are approximately equivalent to the number of special education districts in the state. Very little uniformity exists for purposes of comparison. This erodes, or fails to produce, confidence among educators for lack of a standard of comparison.

The schools have also experienced a higher density of civil action in response to what was traditionally the school's prerogative. In the area of assessment, for example, there have been a few challenges with respect to the use of norm-referenced instruments to assess the ability and skills of learners for purposes of placement. Now, the courts are questioning the entire process. Even the selection and use of evaluative instruments must be individualized. The involvement of the courts in the management of the educational process has undoubtedly resulted in greater caution when dealing with students. In fact, the fear of potential litigation could inhibit educational personnel from performing even basic and legitimate tasks. Looking toward the future, the density of litigation could require that districts have an attorney available for consultation on a greater and greater number of decisions related to the educational process and programs for individual learners. If the use of such counsel were to become excessive, the delay could jeopardize the very rights the litigation was intended to protect or guarantee. And confidence and trust become further eroded by fear of possible litigation.

Finally, the schools are in a quandary over minimal competency testing and the use of it. For example, who should specify the outcomes? How should the results be used in relation to graduation requirements?

Clearly, the reluctance to use specific standards and measurable outcomes in the 70s has given way to a renewed emphasis on measurable achievement. In the area of special education, a unique problem has developed as a result. The child with disabilities is not likely to master all the competencies on a uniform exam. Will this student continue in the program until he/she reaches age 21 or be kept from obtaining the "rightfully" earned diploma through completion of his/her specialized program instead of the regular one?

Teachers and the public schools are continuing to provide comprehensive and high-quality educational services. However, both the schools and the parents of the disabled learners they serve are presently having to cope in stressful ways with the new behavior and activities generated in response to national trends in legislation and litigation just to assure the rights of disabled persons.

Impending Changes

If the existing mandates are to be meaningfully implemented, the following must be considered:

1. Education is not a chronological but, rather, a developmental experience. The establishment of cutoffs based on age is extremely arbitrary. For example, defining handicapped children as "between the ages of 3 and 21" (House Bill 1463) suggests that consideration of educational needs of learners should be based on a fixed beginning and end when, in fact, public education should be assured at identification and continued as long as tangible benefits are documented.

2. Parents are not intrinsic educators. Without special training, parents are not going to be able to maximize learning in the home, nor will they be able to serve as advocates for their child. Parent training programs on rights and the process for achieving them, as well as for teaching their child, will be needed. Furthermore, reports and documents related to disabled learners must be written without jargon and educational/psychological terminology if parents are to participate in planning for their child. Advocates may be needed to attend and interpret staff conferences into "parent-talk."

3. Exposure of regular educators to principles of individualization will not necessarily lead to their being able to accommodate and plan for the disabled learner. Teachers must receive individualized retraining programs based on their past experience and education. Similarly, training programs should include continuous instruction rather than basic introductions. Finally, training programs must be evaluated in terms of tangible outcomes in the classroom if they are to be judged effective.

4. Classification by discrete handicapped conditions may be detrimental rather than helpful to program development and the individual learner. Children should be grouped for services based upon need rather than disability. For example, it has been ascertained that the needs of an educable mentally retarded child and a learning disabled child might frequently overlap. The labels, therefore, are unnecessary for educational prescriptive purposes and, consequently, should be dropped.

5. Individualized education programs, when completed, are not necessarily effective planning documents. To be effective, individualized programs must include objective criteria by which change can be implemented and measured. The plans must be evaluated not only in terms of their mere existence, but also in terms of quality and utility.

6. The present educational system does not necessarily serve all disabled children. In the absence of specialized teacher training programs with required certification standards, the severe and profoundly disabled child may not receive an adequate program. Multiply or severely impaired children may be educated in less than adequate programs for which limited accountability is available or required. Therefore, parents may be required to contribute to their child's purportedly presumed "free" education.

7. Implementing legislation that meets the needs of disabled persons is the final step. The final phase of any new program should be evaluation. It is now time to assess variables beyond compliance. Has the legislation led to the desired effects on the development of disabled learners? Are resources being used efficiently and effectively? Will the legislation stand as a portal to the future, or will new legislation be needed to assure implementation of the present programs?

Clearly, what has been said about the learning disabled/handicapped child encompasses issues, stresses, and impending changes with respect to equality, excellence, minimalism, effectiveness, and efficiency. Though the points of emphasis change, similar concerns emerge for the gifted child.

Exceptionality: The Gifted

Legislation and Litigation

By definition, exceptional children are those children who are unable to be trained or educated adequately in regular programs offered by the public schools. Sixteen states include gifted and talented students under this general definition of "exceptional." Currently, thirteen states mandate some form of education for the gifted, even though accompanying appropriations among those states vary considerably. Of the top ten states providing funds for gifted education, eight include gifted under their definition of exceptional children. Only Illinois and California, the remaining two, provide separate categorical funding for gifted.

The fact that the word "exceptional" first conjures up an image in our minds of a child who is mentally or physically handicapped is probably a reflection of the one billion dollars a year the federal government spends on special education for the culturally disadvantaged, physically handicapped, and those with learning disabilities. This year the budget of the federal office of Gifted and Talented will almost double, rising to $6.28 million, with another $10 million spent on the gifted under other federal legislation. Such sums seem trifling, however, compared to the one billion dollars mentioned earlier. One possible reason for this dollar disparity in special education is the presence in American society of a love-hate relationship with giftedness and talent. On the one hand, the gifted individual who has risen from a humble background is revered. It is a matter of pride to live in a society where talent can triumph over environment and family status. On the other hand, our origins as a country were derived from battling an aristocratic elite, so that there is suspicion of any attempt to subvert a commitment to egalitarianism. Elementary and secondary programs for the gifted are developed in a way that can be defended by administrators as giving no special favors, no tipping of the scales in favor of the socially powerful or the specially endowed.[1]

Looking at the history of trends in educational practice, it appears that there is continual vacillation between the need to be fair and the need to be effective. At times when the society seems threatened--for example, in the Sputnik era and, more recently, with respect to unsolved problems of

[1]John Gardner, Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too? (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

pollution, population, and energy--there is a leaning toward the productive use of all talent, including the gifted. In more placid eras, such as the post-World War II decade, equality tends to become a more appropriate goal. But, as Jefferson suggested, "There is nothing more unequal than equal treatment of unequal people." The political and social system is based on democratic principles. The schools, as an extension of those principles, purport to provide an equal educational opportunity for all children to develop to their fullest potential. However, legislation does not reflect this principle for the gifted. One could argue that it is undemocratic to refuse to allow gifted children the right to educational experiences appropriate to their level of development if the "equality" principle is to be applied uniformly.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools meant that educators and social and behavioral scientists placed the cause of the socially and culturally disadvantaged at the top of their priority list. Besides diverting interest away from the gifted, the advocacy movement for the socially disadvantaged actually contested at least two features of special programs for the ablest: 1) the use of intelligence tests as a means of identifying the gifted, and 2) grouping children in special classes for the gifted on the basis of their performance on tests. Since racial minorities traditionally performed less well at school than did white majorities, ability grouping was seen as de facto racial segregation. Once again American education found itself unable to reconcile its interest in the gifted with its concern about the disadvantaged. The dilemma was easy to resolve inasmuch as it reduced itself to a choice between battling for social justice or pursuing excellence. There was little doubt as to which of the two would better fit the mood of the 1960s.[2]

Issues

The late 1970s saw a renewed interest in gifted education, with a flurry of professional journal articles, books, and media coverage on the subject. By 1974 the office of Gifted and Talented was given official status by legislation, and there is every reason to expect federal support to be sustained for the years immediately ahead.

Currently, part of the Education for the Handicapped Act (better known as PL 94-142) does not include gifted. Advocates for the gifted have made several attempts, however, to amend the definition of a "handicapped" child to "exceptional" child, thereby including gifted in the definition and in the mandate to provide an appropriate education for these children. So far, all attempts have been unsuccessful and are likely to remain so, due to the tremendous implications for schools in simply meeting the mandates of PL 94-142 for handicapped students.

Two states have nevertheless determined that gifted students fall under the definition of handicapped in PL 94-142. Though they are not allotted any federal funds to serve gifted children, both Pennsylvania and North Carolina utilize state funds to provide for their gifted students in much the same manner as they do for their handicapped students. Teachers in these states are required to write Individualized Education Plans (I.E.P.'s) for

[2]Abraham J. Tannenbaum, "Pre-Sputnik to Post-Watergate Concern for the Gifted," The Gifted and the Talented, NSSE Yearbook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 15.

gifted students, and a court case in Pennsylvania has been decided in favor of the gifted student, based upon the student's right to an "appropriate" education and guaranteed right of due process.

In Illinois' Erwin case, a father of a gifted child in McHenry County has brought suit against the school district for not allowing his son the opportunity to be educated to his full capacity. The case has not been decided, but many armchair legal scholars feel the courts will be unwilling to tackle the issue of what constitutes being educated to one's full potential.

There can be little doubt that attention to individual competence among the handicapped has dramatized the need to individualize education, with every child receiving a fair share of what is uniquely appropriate for him, regardless of how deficient or proficient he is in mastering the curriculum content. Eventually, PL 94-142 may include the gifted, but most experts believe it will be several years before this might occur. Such action, however, would advance the cause of actualizing the belief that democracy in education means recognizing how children are unlike each other, and doing something about it.

Aside from the basic issue of equality of opportunity as it applies to the gifted, exceptionality, as in the case of the disabled/handicapped child, involves a host of related issues.

1. As already shown, the gifted child's rights have not been assured through legislation.

2. It cannot be presupposed that parents are equipped to help the gifted develop in appropriate ways.

3. Boards of Education may not be sensitive to the special plight of the gifted, especially at a time when litigation and legislation have focused on other minorities.

4. Administrators and school program planners may see the needs of the gifted as being satisfied by more (and better) of the same thing the "normal" child receives without considering a difference in kind of program.

5. Training programs for teachers of the gifted appear to be woefully lacking in specialized development for proper diagnostics and prescription of individualized learning activities.

6. Evaluation is lacking in determining effectiveness, and little leeway may be granted for effectiveness experimentation at a time when efficiency is a top priority.

7. Finally, school environments may turn out by default or by design to be hostile to the gifted child. Minimalism and equality may be serving to isolate, in negative ways, conspicuous excellence in achievement.

These and other similar issues need attention, especially as one views some of the planning for the gifted which is (and has been) under way.

Sources of Stress

In 1978 the State of Illinois issued a first draft of a five-year planning document for gifted education. The development of such a long-range plan which encompassed detailed roles and strategies for educating the gifted held promise for more significant institutionalization of such programs. Seven major elements included in the plan were a position statement, planning tasks, goals, objectives, programs, budgetary considerations, and strategies for change. For a variety of reasons, both political and philosophical, the document has yet to be adopted in order to become Illinois' "bible" for gifted education for the next five years. The Illinois State Board of Education is currently undertaking the task of modifying the five-year planning document, which, according to Dr. Adrienne Samuels, President of the Illinois Council of the Gifted, presents an unsatisfactory and watered-down commitment. Whatever happens to the specific tasks outlined in that document, however, the State Board of Education has taken a stand in three policy areas of gifted education which will affect the direction of the field in Illinois for the next several years. First, the State Board has determined that local school districts can apply for reimbursement funds to run the following types of gifted programs: 1) programs in intellectual ability and 2) programs in specific aptitude or talent.

Those programs in a specific aptitude area can include programs in specific academic areas, creativity, or the arts. Second, in order to receive reimbursement funds, local education agencies must develop a plan for articulating a gifted program, K-12, and document systematic movement toward implementation. Finally, the State Board has authorized Area Service Centers throughout Illinois to provide direct services to "low incidence," highly gifted students.

In these policy areas, the Illinois State Board of Education seems determined to reconcile gifted education and accountability which has come to mean measurability. The new definition of giftedness, though not substantially different from the former one of six specific categories, appears to narrow the scope rather than expand it. Programs for the intellectually gifted are infinitely easier to measure and justify to the state legislature. Creativity programs, for example, are much more nebulous to define and smack of the do-your-own-thing programs of the 60s. The State Board's charge to Area Service Centers to provide direct services for highly gifted students, therefore, clearly demonstrates the specific type of Illinois gifted student one can expect to occupy the limelight in the coming years.

Minimum competency testing, for example, is just one more addition to the vocabulary of the accountability movement of the last decade. In a very real sense, education for the gifted is in direct contrast to the movement to establish minimum competencies. Gifted education seeks maximum competencies. Because dollars for all educational programs are scarce these days, school districts which are gearing up to spend their dollars on establishing minimum competencies are not likely to be providing programs for their gifted students.

Impending Changes

Educators are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate that the extra cost of any special program is compensated for by the greater range of benefits produced by the program. A compelling case can be made for the cost benefits of gifted programs. Even if it is assumed that only modest benefits result from additional assistance to the gifted and talented, the

the potential impact of these students upon the society makes any gains of substantial importance.

Nevertheless, a systematic methodology should be developed that can evaluate the benefits of programs for the gifted, just as procedures have been devised to provide similar evidence for programs for the mentally retarded.

There is a great deal of evidence from other states that children who are identified as gifted and placed in special programs tend to achieve better. In one study, gifted first-grade students who had been placed in special programs were compared with equally gifted pupils who remained in the regular classroom. The children in special programs gained an average of two academic years during a single nine-month period, while the gifted children in regular classes gained only one year.[3] Similarly, bright children who have been allowed to enter first grade early learn more during their first year of school than equally bright children who have remained in kindergarten.[4] More such documentation is needed, especially in Illinois. Armed with facts such as these, there is a better chance to compete favorably with the minimum competency movement and other accountability measures seeking legislative dollars.

Another change which is likely is that some type of Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.) will probably be in use in a majority of states in the coming years. While the formal, highly detailed document called for in PL 94-142 may never be used in gifted education, more and more administrators are designing simpler I.E.P.'s or adopting the concept of an I.E.P. which takes into account the rate, content, schedule, type and depth of experiences, preferred learning style, and specific strengths and weaknesses of each individual gifted student. One would like to believe that good teachers have been doing exactly this for years, perhaps not in any formal way, but at least intuitively. The I.E.P., much like the daily lesson plan, holds teachers accountable.

Another important change concerns the delivery of services to the gifted. The key word here is research. A great amount of work needs to be undertaken in several areas, the most important of which is still the nature of intelligence. The work done to date on left-brain/right-brain specialization provides some clues as to why the selection of the top 20% as gifted on an IQ test often excludes 70% of the top 20% on tested creativity. Much more needs to be undertaken in this area, including designing learning activities which integrate left- and right-brain functioning. Until the field of gifted education reconciles the intellectual/creativity issue, it will always be divided into two camps. More importantly, there can be no doubt that countless gifted or potentially gifted students are not identified because of inadequate knowledge about their characteristics and poor instruments for identifying them. Moreover, integration, not separation, of hemispheric functioning should be the goal. Creative children should be encouraged to be creative, but also to make use of their logical-analytical side for certain types of key decision-making. The reverse is true of the student who scores high on an IQ test but cannot get in touch with his/her more metaphoric/spatial intelligence.

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[3]Ruth A. Martinson, Educational Programs for Gifted Pupils (Sacramento, California: California State Department of Education, 1961).

[4]School Board of Broward County, Florida, "A Study of Early Entry into First Grade, 1973-74" (Fort Lauderdale, Florida: School Board of Broward County, 1974).

In addition, little is known about the long-term implications of various types of precocity. Would it be possible to identify children who might, with appropriate educational opportunities, become leading scientists, artists, mathematicians, poets, etc.? In retrospect, the evidence suggests that most individuals who demonstrated intellectual superiority in adulthood were also precocious in some domain in early childhood. Prospective evidence, however, is not available.

The list of needed research in gifted education is voluminous, including, but not limited to, these further suggestions:

1. Better methods for identifying and nurturing giftedness among ethnic and racial minorities and gifted females;

2. Experimentation with new models of instruction utilizing settings other than the regular classroom; and

3. Development of self-contained curriculum units that have conceptual validity and which provide specialized experience and insight to gifted students which they would not be able to obtain through the regular classroom.

Through recent research efforts, there is a great deal of new information about early sensitive periods for learning and the kind of responsive environment parents can provide for "developing" intelligence in their children, 0-4 years of age. Many researchers believe that the personality established and the type of learning opportunities available will facilitate or inhibit the development of inherited intellectual capacity. There is the choice of planning to provide the most nourishing environment possible within current knowledge or allowing this important interaction to occur by chance. In either case, interaction will occur and intelligence will develop. Whether that development leads to actualization or loss of human potential may depend on the job done by educators in helping parents recognize critical development periods and provide caretaker activities to guide their children toward becoming healthier, more intellectually able, more sensitive, more motivated, self-directed learners.[5]

The "Normal" Child

From all appearances, society (if not the world) has considered "being normal" as a non-distinctive aspect of the way things ought to be. Perhaps normalcy has served as the backdrop against which distinctiveness can be measured. To be normal is not to be handicapped, not to be gifted, not to be socially or culturally disadvantaged; it is, rather, to be a part of a majority by means of which exceptions can be more clearly defined. Yet, in light of the discovery of greater numbers of exceptionality traits, the term "normal" seems less and less appropriate and becomes its own category of minority discrimination.

[5]Barbara Clark, Growing Up Gifted (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1979).

Legislation and Litigation

It has been argued that 99% of all school programming has been developed and mandated for the generally normal child. The percentage may not be precisely accurate, but up until the 1950s, compulsory mass education was general rather than specific, in terms of school population.

"School codes" and all related school legislation provided for the existence and operation of the schools as well as for their continued "recognition and supervision." Even voluntary systems such as the regional accreditation organizations--for example, North Central Association--have established themselves as quasi-legal bodies in terms of their effects. It may be assumed and substantiated that mandated programs, instructional methods, evaluation procedures, and school-related policies have been designed with the average or normal child in mind. In fact, the bell-shaped curve, used to distribute achievement scores, is a so-called normal curve. Statistics as a field of knowledge establishes measures of variance in relation to measures of central tendency such as mean, mode, and median. This reflects the orientation of the schools and society toward the middle, average, and/or normal group.

However, when one speaks of the "normal" child, he/she is viewed not so much as an individual but rather as a representative of a group. Programs which have been mandated and implemented tend, therefore, to be generic rather than specific to the needs of each "normal" child.

Issues

As indicated, the period since the 50s has been one of advantage for the disadvantaged, particularly those with social/cultural and learning disadvantage. Also, as pointed out, there are serious arguments on behalf of the gifted in terms of extending the benefits of special programs, training, et cetera, to them. A critical issue, therefore, is "Why does the focus on the individual through I.E.P.'s not include the normal child?" Perhaps what needs to be recognized is that the ultimate minority is the individual child of whatever category--exceptional or normal. Obviously, this point raises a host of additional issues, the most basic being, "Are all men (women, children) to be equal in opportunity?" and will the society support this principle to the inclusion of the normal child? For example, will society decide that it is worth the cost to treat each child as a minority even when this minority is a majority, especially at a time when the value of schooling per se is at stake?

Finally, though a list of issues, parallel to those for exceptionality, could be drawn up--such things as parent training, assurance of rights, teacher training, evaluation, et cetera--it suffices to say that as legislation, litigation, and financial support are forthcoming on behalf of exceptional children, the normal child becomes more and more conspicuous.

Sources of Stress

As support for the exceptional child increases, there will be two major sources of stress: 1) there will be more interest on the part of the normal child's advocate (e.g., the parent) to determine whether or not he/she is exceptional; and 2) since the parents of normal children represent a

majority of the people and, therefore, a majority of taxpayer support, they will not tolerate being overlooked in terms of their children. Hence, support may be withdrawn for exceptionality.

Another source of stress is the recognition that, despite a recent turn in education toward vocationalism, a general type of literacy is still needed. To couple these two types of education properly, however, may mean the abolishment of the "early-entry-early-exit, one-time" approach to education. That is, whereas the exceptional child may need specialized developmental education, the normal child may need a specialized, lifelong type of program combining vocational and literacy curricula. This could change the entire structure of the schools and the principle of compulsory mass education.

Furthermore, there is a source of stress which focuses specifically on the lack of confidence developing toward the schools. In this age of accountability, people are looking for evidence about whether or not the schools are doing their jobs. SAT scores and other data from national educational assessment research have led people to believe that the schools are fostering or at least allowing illiteracy in the basics. This results in greater pressure on the schools to redirect their efforts toward measurable outcomes. But this in turn tends to encourage external controls through such things as legislatively mandated minimal competency testing. At another level, there evolves then the stress of trying to stabilize state or federal control alongside local control.

Finally, as teachers have demanded more dollars for salaries and benefits, there is greater stress created because taxpayers do not think the teachers are doing a good job; yet, this attitude on the part of taxpayers may result in fewer resources at a point in time where more are needed to help each individual become more competent.

All of these different types of stress can work against the motivation needed to make the difficult decisions facing society in the 80s.

Impending Changes

Once again, what has been said about changes in the larger society and those related to exceptionality can be extended to the normal child. However, there are three specific changes which need mentioning for the normal child:

1. Since the bulk of the work force and consumer group comprises so-called "normal" people, changes in jobs and careers impact dramatically on the "normal" group. It is estimated that a large percentage of what are now basic occupations will disappear. This means massive retraining and educational programs for a majority of the people. What will be the role of the schools, given this eventuality?

2. Another major change, one which has permeated nearly all aspects of contemporary lifestyles, concerns technology. This could be a separate paper by itself. The urgency associated with education and technology, however, is ever more imposing. Not only do people's skills have to be re-evaluated in light of it but also, instruction and learning may be transformed as a result of it. This, too, raises the question of the school's role in

responding, as well as the role of technology as part of the school's response.

3. Without special support, both human and financial, the "normal" child if left to his own devices toward the future may become part of a majority which experiences mental health problems. With the deterioration of family, home, church, and community, mental illness is likely to become a major problem. Given that the normal child is in the majority, what should the school programs look like in order to better serve their mental health needs?

Before proceeding to the last subsection on "exceptionality: children of the poor and the minorities," it is well to consider the fact that the prime motivation for looking at exceptionality was in this area. Social and cultural disadvantage sensitized American citizens, the legal system, and educators to the issue of rights. Rights for the learning disabled/handicapped and the gifted evolved out of this context. At one and the same time, therefore, social and economic equity tends to compete with programs designed for achievement minimums and academic excellence, not to mention the "silent majority" of normal students. This pressure in itself is enough to stagger the imagination of the boldest educator when it comes to the philosophical questions involved, the policy issues, the operational problems, and the formulas to be used for equity among all children. Looking at poor and social/cultural minorities last, therefore, will put back into perspective the historic, landmark developments since the early 50s which serve as a catalyst for mixing an incredible array of variables toward the future.

Exceptionality: Children of the Poor and the Minorities

Legislation/Litigation

There is no denying that the children of the poor and the minority groups received increased allocations of educational resources in the 1960s and 1970s. However, in spite of this, one cannot be optimistic about the goal of equalizing educational opportunity in the United States. It is necessary, however, to acknowledge the gains of the children of the poor and the minorities in the last two decades. Timpane argues that, to the extent that federal educational policy has had any central focus at all, it is probably toward equalizing educational opportunities.[6] No single federal program approaches, of course, the magnitude of the $2 billion dollar plus appropriations under the Title One section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended. There are also a number of smaller federal programs such as those for bilingual students, Indian students, and students of migratory families which are, in essence, programs for the socially and economically disadvantaged. It can also be argued that programs such as the school lunch program primarily assist the socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. In fact, few federal programs do not call for increased aid to either poor students or poor school districts.

However, there are signs that this increased federal funding, which was so helpful to the children of the poor and the minorities in the 1960s and 1970s, may not continue into the 1980s and 1990s. The "greying of America" will cause increased amounts of federal funding to be allocated to social and health-care programs for the elderly rather than to programs for youth

who will constitute an increasingly smaller portion of the population. Increases in defense budgets, if only due to the enormous energy costs in the defense budget, seem inevitable. Such reallocation of funds will reduce available federal resources to be spent for education. Similarly, increases in the federal budget for energy development and a national health-care program will compete forcefully for federal dollars. However, the most important limiting factor in future federal spending will likely be the concern over the role of federal spending in relation to inflation. Programs of "austerity" and "belt-tightening" designed at the federal level to curb inflation must fall heavily on the children of the poor and the minorities who have been the principal benefactors of federal educational spending over the last two decades.

Benefits have also accrued to economically disadvantaged children at the state level. Over twenty states have established programs of compensatory education for the socially and economically disadvantaged, e.g., large state compensatory education programs exist in Illinois, California, New York, New Jersey, and Ohio. Illinois leads all the states in allocating over $200 million state dollars to school districts on the basis of a poverty weighting in their state grant-in-aid formula. In some states, children of the poor qualify for additional state aid on the basis of low test scores and in other states they qualify for aid on the basis of low family income, presence on welfare lists, or related socioeconomic measurements. Illinois and Minnesota are unique in that they allocate additional state funds to school districts based upon the concentration of poverty children in the district rather than simply on the basis of the number of poverty children in the district. Thus, children of poor and minority families may continue to make progress in gaining resources at the state level. However, while prospects for support are probably better than at the federal level, there are some ominous possibilities even at the state level. For example, an end to federal revenue sharing with the states would put a strain on the overall state budget that might result in cutbacks in these programs. In addition, the ability to legislate and maintain state compensatory programs is often a function of the voting power of urban representation in the state legislatures, a voting power which may be weakened by population shifts indicated by the 1980 census. Even without this loss of power, urban interests that defend state compensatory programs do not always win. For example, Illinois recently reduced its weighting for poverty students in districts with the heaviest poverty concentration. Also, state compensatory education varies greatly. While Illinois allocates over $200 million for compensatory education, the neighboring state of Wisconsin allocates less than one million for similar programs. While the preceding events represent immediate threats to programs, the long-term threat to the gains of children of poor and minority families comes not from contemporary changes but rather from conflicting social values that compete with the equalization of educational opportunity.

Issues

As we enter the 1980s, it is apparent that many historic goals and values in the United States which remain very deeply rooted are in direct conflict with the goal of equalizing educational opportunities. Egalitarianism usually manifested in helping the children of poor and minority families is

[6]Michael Timpane. The Federal Interest in Financing Schooling, 1978, Ballinger Publishing, Cambridge, Mass.

now challenged by the conflicting demands of libertarianism and economic efficiency. Libertarianism in American education is exhibited in several trends:

1. the demand for greater freedom of family choice in schooling,
2. the desire to maintain local control of education, and
3. the movement for greater tax relief and containment of public spending.

Each of these goals, while laudable in and of itself, threatens the goal of helping children of poor and minority families. Family choice in the form of voucher proposals, for example, would encourage social stratification. This might, perhaps, result in increased economic efficiency, but it will be achieved only at the expense of children of poor and minority families who will be relegated to public schools, while the children of the wealthy receive the benefits of state-subsidized, private schooling.

Impending Changes

Local control has long been a rallying cry of wealthy school districts, whereas it would be far less meaningful to a poor school district. Dependence upon local-district wealth, rather than dependence upon the wealth of the state as a whole as distributed through state grants-in-aid, might increase local control, but it would be an empty statement in poor school districts. Liberty without economic substance is a threadbare toga to wear to a forum where freedom is the topic of discussion.

New actors are entering the libertarian stage with none being more popular than the movement to contain public spending which includes spending for education. Containment or possible reduction of state revenues directly threatens the education of the children of poor and minority families. It is true that providing local property tax relief primarily threatens the maintenance of quality education in the wealthy districts, but, by contrast, providing relief from state income and sales taxes threatens poor districts, since they are the largest recipients of state aid. Tax shifting could certainly occur without jeopardizing the equalization of educational opportunity, but general tax relief cannot be reconciled with equalization of educational opportunities. Minor tax relief could be accomplished by effective management and business efficiency in the schools, but major tax relief can be purchased only at the cost of lower levels of public schooling, and a cost that will primarily be borne by the children of poor and minority families.

The goal of economic efficiency might also endanger equalization of educational opportunities. The maintenance of very small schools with high per-pupil costs, the classic cases of diseconomies of scale, is a practice that is certainly not economically efficient. However, this practice may be essential to providing equal educational opportunities in isolated rural areas in a state. Increasing the pupil-teacher ratio may be an economically efficient procedure, but it may spell disaster for a child of the poor or minority families who needs more individual attention from teachers than do the economically more fortunate children from white, middle-class homes.

It has been contended that "public finance is the clash of values with dollars attached." If true of general public finance, then it is an even more accurate description of the continuing revolution present in public school finance. The literature of public school finance provides ample evidence

that ancient social philosophical value conflicts in American civilization are heating to the boiling point.[7]

In practice, professionals do compromise and, thus, keep the educational boiler from exploding. Contrary to popular belief, from the perspective of public finance, there has never been, nor is there now, a totally egalitarian system of education; but then there has never been, nor is there now, a totally libertarian system of education, at least not along the lines of European education. And, it must be recognized that Americans do not have a particularly economically efficient system of education. We currently "muddle through" and will continue to do so because we are unwilling to deny our nineteenth-century egalitarian birthright in order to attain economic efficiency, or even to surrender solely to our eighteenth-century birthright--liberty and freedom of choice. Many would agree that the egalitarians made important gains in the 1960s and 1970s. It is by no means clear, however, that those gains will continue into the 1980s and 1990s. To the contrary, the social pendulum may now be swinging toward the libertarian side of a social clock that ticks relentlessly on through the centuries. DeTocqueville warned that America would forever be caught between equality and freedom. The dilemma may not be as negative as it appears, however, since social democracy might turn out to be more of a sham than liberal democracy has ever been.

Postscript

The paper is its own summary. A postscript seems appropriate, however, in order to place in balance all that has been said in relation to a basic value question.

Americans are noted for their ingeniousness in finding ways to pay for what they value. If they won't pay for something, it is probably because it is not valued. Therefore, all of the issues raised earlier in the paper are meaningless unless decisions related to them are attempts to restore the value of being educated for each individual child. The type of education can be debated if the debate is rooted firmly in the recognized need for an education.

[7]Walter I. Garms, James W. Guthrie, and Lawrence C. Pierce. School Finance: The Economics and Politics of Public Education, 1978, Prentice Hall; Stephen Lawton, "Political Values in Educational Finance in Canada and the United States," Summer, 1979, Journal of Education Finance; G. Alan Hickrod, Ben C. Hubbard, and Ronald L. Laymon, "Towards a Political Theory of School Finance in the United States," October, 1974, Journal of Educational Administration.