DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 045 464 SO 000 203

AUTHOR Gallagher, James J.
TITLE Changes in American Education and Their Implication for Church-State Relations.
INSTITUTION North Carolina Univ., Chapel Hill. Frank Porter Graham Center.
PUB DATE 67
NOTE 17p.; Appeared in "Church, State, and Education: A New Look," Chapter V, Unitarian-Universalist Association, Boston, Massachusetts, 1967

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.85
DESCRIPTORS *Catholic Schools, Church Role, Cultural Pluralism, Dual Enrollment, *Educational Economics, *Educational History, Parochial Schools, Religious Education, *Social Change, Social Factors, *State Church Separation, Success Factors, Urbanization

ABSTRACT

Since the schools reflect and follow social change, changes in schools can be examined by first looking at societal changes. Three major trends are: urbanization; the interdependent nature of society; and, formal education becoming the sole avenue to success. The implications of these trends on education, and Catholic education in particular, are discussed, with one conclusion being that dual enrollment (shared time) will become more extensive. With religious education being limited to weekends, Catholic commitment to secular public education will increase, thus easing a traditional tension. The challenge to society, however, is to maintain cultural pluralism in an age of interdependency. (JH)

Changes in American Education and Their Implications for Church-State Relations

James J. Gallagher

Education Improvement Program

March 1967

Recently, in defiance of Thomas Wolfe's famous dictum, I returned to some of my childhood haunts. Wolfe was right. To my dismay, I found a new glass and brick apartment house on the ball field where I performed remembered heroics with ball and bat. The school that I knew had many new and ugly protuberances with different shades of brick marking a number of additions to the basic structure. The activities and program inside the school only vaguely resembled those of the more peaceful world I grew up in. It came to me that I had had a taste of Orwellian personality destruction. Now those outward manifestations of my childhood were gone and could be recalled only by the fragile thread of my own fallible memory.

The dizzying pace of change in modern society can make even the most fervent reformer wish for some moments of peace and constancy. The average citizen, seeing his own past obliterated, can only react with some distress Instead of seeing the schools as consequences of societal movement, they sometimes see them as prime movers. The public appears to believe that if the schools can be kept from changing, then the whole process of rapid change might be settled down. But such dreams are illusory because the schools follow societal trends; they do not lead them.

When one wishes to study great changes in the schools, therefore, the first things to look for are great changes in the society. What trends are observable that change the outer world we live in that will reveal themselves, as well, in the educational system? This paper will discuss three major changes that seem to have widespread significance.

Major Societal Changes

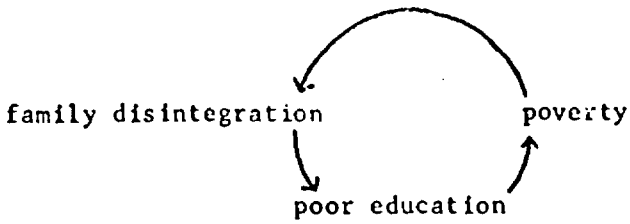
1. There has been a movement from an agricultural, rural and small town economy and civilization to a vast urbanized technology.

2. It is now hardly possible to obtain sizable success in our society without a large amount of formal education.

3. There has been an evolution from independent, or small, isolated groups of individuals operating more or less autonomously in our society to an interdependent system where all of the component parts interrelate.

While all of these major trends are readily observable to the casual observer, some of the implications that follow from them may not be, and this is the focus of the present paper.

In previous times when success had fewer prior conditions, athletics, entertainment and business fields were filled with examples of persons who not only did not have formal education but who may have succeeded because they took an alternate road. The public perception of this fact lessened the value of a formal education. But now, such paths and doors seem to be rapidly closing. One of the current common complaints of educators is that parents seem interested in their children's grade point average much more than in a good education. But the parents are really behaving quite ration They realize that their child's success in life is substantially dependent upon getting into higher education. The better the institution of higher education or the more prestigious the institution of higher education their children can enter, the greater the possibilities of success. In short, the penalties for academic failure seem much more manifest in modern society than in that world of our immediate past. The cycle noted below provides a horrible example of the extended cost of poor education.



The change from a rural, small town economy to an urbanized technology has had many impacts on our society. Among these must be listed the downgrading of the importance of the key unit of that society, the family. Instead, the welfare of the larger societal whole becomes increasingly important in the urban technology. Whereas, formerly the family was regarded as untouchable as a unit, we now see substantial cracks in that philosophy. For example, a family or even a small group having a religious commitment to non-treatment of medical disorders may be forced to take vaccinations to protect against communicable diseases when that family mixes with other groups. The family which was the major transmission force of value systems seems to be losing this role, but the comparable facet in the urban society seems yet to be determined. (Perhaps the schools?)

Perhaps the most striking change is the move from a kind of independence and autonomy for individuals and small groups to the interdependent system of modern society. In previous days, it was possible for individuals and small groups to say, "It is none of your business," and have the statement accepted on face value. Thus, if a small group of persons in our past society went on strike, or established their own private educational system, or raised the prices of the goods they were selling, they were in a position to tell the rest of the society they were intruding in things that did not concern them.

In this period, numerous autonomous groups were established. They established domains of their own in which they posted a KEEP OUT sign to other members of the society. Some examples of these domains would be the medical profession whose preserve was perhaps more jealously guarded than any other, various religious denominations and groups, labor unions business, etc. Among those trying to establish a domain for themselves would be the American educators. They were not too successful in this attempt, however, because the power and authority guiding education was outside the hands of the profession. One of the rules for establishing autonomous power is, of course, to keep the power within your own group.

In contrast to the opinions and values of the immediate past, one can perceive a completely different mental set and attitude developing i modern society. In this case, with all of the major elements in the soc linked together in an interrelated and interdependent nature, anything done by one component in the system obviously affects the other parts of the system. No longer can the head of a longshoremen's union call out a of the workers in all of the port cities in the country and then turn to the rest of society and say, "This is none of your business." No longer can the heads of the major steel industries say that they are going to raise prices and turn to the rest of society and say, "This is none of your business." No longer can groups like the legal or medical professi refuse entrance to their domains on the basis of race or creed and say t the rest, "This is none of your business." No longer can a major religi group take a position on birth control and turn to the rest of society a say, "This is none of your business."

The bold truth now becoming apparent is that all of these actions o various previously presumed autonomous groups really do influence everyo

else. And as a result, each group's business is everyone's business. The raising of wages and prices is a matter of concern to everyone, not just steel and labor. No major action of any sort can be legitimately isolated in the domain of one particular group. The society's action in approving such major social reforms as Medicare indicates the lessening desire of the public at large to accept as inviolate the domains of special groups such as the AMA.

Therefore, the right of any group to a special preserve or domain would seem to be a thing of the past. The public will always have some say in the business of any of the major component parts of the society. One of the comments that was made at the time of public intrusion into the determination of medical policy is that medicine is too important to be left to the doctors. The statement can be broadened to say that law is too important to leave to the lawyers; education is too important to leave to educators; and politics is too important to be left to the politicians.

Since we now have a growing understanding of the interdependent nature of our society, we can grasp more fully how substantial harm to any compone of the system really brings harm to all aspects of the system, and vice versa. Thus, we can observe that unions no longer become overjoyed at injuries to capital. The previous luxury of prejudice against a component part of the society can no longer be accepted since harm to any substantial segment such as the Negroes or the Jews obviously brings harm to the total social fabric. Therefore, tolerance is not only morally right but, perhaps much more important for behavior, it is economically right. It is no coincidence that we currently have a President who seeks a consensus on policy, for some societal consensus and approval will now seem required for any major subgroup action.

Societal Changes Applied to Education

The three major changes noted in the society--namely, the move from a rural to an urban society, the recognition of the interdependent nature of society, and that success in modern society demands formal education--all have had a direct impact on the educational system. Perhaps the change that has had the greatest overall impact is the realization of the prerequisite of formal education for adaptation to a complex society. This realization, hardly more than a generation old, has transformed education from a poor outsider, forced to take the leavings in both resources and personnel, into the core of modern society. This revised valuation on the importance of education in the society has resulted in many other changes, the most notable of which is the level of financing. A second noticeable trend has been the increasing willingness of high aptitude students to consider education as a potential career.

The rural to urban movement seems clearly related to the movement in the public schools away from local school board control and towards greater and greater influence from the state and national level. When the country was made up of a large number of isolated communities with limited patterns of migration between the units, no one questioned the philosophy of local control of education. Few perceived any dependence between the isolated units of an agricultural and small town society. Now, the greater needs of the society encourage less tolerance for the deviations of local schools or states, particularly when these deviations are in the direction of a limited education more fit for the agricultural past than the technological future.

One of the more notable trends in this movement away from control at the local level has been in the field of curriculum preparation. The huge

curriculum reform movement of the late 1950's and early 1960's, sponsored by private foundations and the National Science Foundation, took the point of view that modern students need to know important ideas in the various subject fields. Further, that it was asking the impossible of thousands of high school teachers or elementary school teachers on their own, or with very limited resources, to be able to organize and produce such an insightful collection of concepts and systems. Indeed, for many years we have been asking teachers to compose a sonata when all that we have any right to expect of them is that they adequately perform the sonata composed by others who possess special and unique 'composing' talent

The high cost of innovations involving capital outlays for laboratorie novel school buildings, special resource units, etc. has meant that such changes are being financed more and more at the state and federal level. With this change in the financial pattern of support comes a meaningful change in the control of innovative techniques. With the exception of a few wealthy suburban school districts who still possess the financial punch to participate in and initiate such programs, much of the leadership and program development has been done far away from the local board and the local school administrator. The dangers of producing a single national curriculum in any area, say civics, have been enough to give many people pause as they see this trend developing. One of the unsolved current problems is how to maintain desirable elements of diversity while, at the same time, providing for a solid program base for any child in the country.

The increased perception of societal interdependence has played an important role in the public's acceptance of other educational changes. It is quite clear that if Pennsytucky neglects its responsibilities and

does not educate its children well, this is going to influence not only Pennsytucky but the surrounding states as well. Not only is there the inevitable migration from the less favored state which means, in effect, that the responsibilities for compensating for Pennsytucky's failures fall at the feet of other states. It also means the Pennsytucky is liable to have a limited economic and social growth which, in turn, will influence negatively its surrounding states and the nation as a whole.

Thus, it is no longer possible for a state to turn to the other states and say, "It is our business how we educate our children, and you are not supposed to pay any attention to what we do." It does make a difference. Similar problems face the private sector of education who, in many ways, face the same problems as the states. They also will be held to a greater degree of accountability to the rest of society than they have previously been used to.

Other direct implications of the three changes noted above are the changes in financial needs and the consequent changes in how public education gets financed.

Educational Technology

It is hard to believe that only a generation ago educational technology consisted of a balky 8mm. camera that was moved around the school building, or sometimes the school system. Upon this rickety relic were shown rather well intentioned films of minimal dramatic impact.

The modern school system has been flung pell-mell, and relatively unprepared, into a new and complex field where the well equipped school is expected to have closed-circuit television, learning laboratories, videotape

loops, programmed learning devices, autoinstructional films, etc. The era of computer-based autoinstruction is just around the corner and is already being experimentally investigated in a number of areas. One of the consequences of this movement into technology is the substantial increase in capital outlay in education. Education is becoming more expensive, not merely because of increasing demands of personnel for higher wages, but also because of the complicated hardware that is a part of the modern educational system.

Another implication of educational technology is that it provides one further trend towards centralization since it makes little sense for each school system to have its own computer-based learning system, and it makes a great deal of sense to tie in with established larger systems. Such a tie-in could be seen in the regional Midwest television operation and will be more apparent when the communications satellite system creates the opportunity for transmitting educational materials on a regional or nation-wide network.

Professionalization of Education

One of the key definitions of a professional of any sort is that he is able to do things that the ordinary citizen cannot. The more his services are in demand, the greater the status and prestige of that group of professionals. When all a teacher could be observed to do would be to teach youngsters to read out of McGuffey's Reader and be limber enough to run down recalcitrant eight and nine-year-olds, then teaching had little status. The ordinary citizen could take a quick look at this situation and say, rightly or not, "I could do that if I wanted to," or "I could get my younger sister to do it."

However, the increase in educational technology lends substantial credibility to the claim of professionalization of education. It takes a great deal of skill and know-how to blend together the software, or lessons, with the hardware, or the collection of special media devices that are appearing in the modern classroom. The ordinary citizen may tend to view some of these new gadgets with alarm; they will also view the person who is able to use them with increased respect.

There was something sad about some of the educational groups in the immediate past passing resolutions to the effect that the general public should respect the teaching profession more. The profession is now respected and hon ored more because, in many ways, they are doing much more.

The modernization of the school system also has moved the system itself away from a primitive model of individual teachers in individual and isolated classrooms all reporting to a single principal who, in turn, reported to a superintendent. Such a simplified system has very little place in a modern society that recognizes the needs of large corporations or institutions such as the U. S. Army to have all levels and grades of differentiated roles for persons in the system.

There are many different kinds of roles to be played in the modern school. There are remedial reading specialists, psychologists, speech correctionists, curriculum supervisors, librarians and many many more. It seems quite reasonable that to meet the complex goals of the modern school, such educational role differentiation is inevitable. The quick way in which these changes have taken place, however, leads some people, who would never question the need for such role complexity in a corporation like General Motors or the NASA program, to refer to such changes in the schools

as 'frills.' They are 'frills' only if one wishes to keep the country schoolhouse type of educational system that their grandparents knew.

Another clear implication of this role differentiation is that a much higher level of financial support for the educational system is required for these goals to be accomplished. It is not necessary for all of these changes to be viewed as desirable. It is important from the standpoint of this paper merely to recognize that they exist and then to apply value criteria to them.

Church-State Problems

One of the oldest problems in American education has been the attempt to resolve the knotty church-state issues. Among the many ideas that nineteenth century American democracy has promulgated has been the notion that general education can be, and should be, separated from religious education. This revolutionary notion has never been wholeheartedly accepted by church groups, and the Catholic church has been one of the most persistent in its claim that such a separation was bad for the child and for society. The issues that are highlighted by a clear and aggressive policy of the Catholic church exist in muted tones with other church factions.

There have been many pitched battles between parochial and Protestant liberal forces stemming mainly from a wide variety of attempts from parochial sources to influence the nature of public education or to divert public education funds for parochial purposes. These moves have been well documented and are rarely denied. They represent a head-on collision of differing value systems. There would seem to be many reasons to suggest that the nature of the church-state issue is changing and molding itself to the major societal changes noted above.

Let us view the current situation through the eyes of the intelligent Catholic lay citizen. From his standpoint, he is being squeezed hard from two different sources. First, there are the growing demands for greater financial support for the public school systems for the reasons noted above. These same rising costs also cause the church to ask him to raise his support of the parochial school system. He might accept these dual burdens with more equanimity if he saw some clearly identifiable advantage accruing to his children for attending the parochial school. Instead, what he sees is an educational system in serious trouble with impossible class loads, limited modern equipment, a distinct limitation on the number of specialists available to help the classroom teacher, and limited training in modern methods on the part of the staff.

Does the Catholic child come forth from his education a better person morally or with a richer personality than if he had attended public school? The Catholic lay citizen again may be excused for having his doubts. In the absence of clear cut evidence, observation of the behavior of the students from parochial schools shows it to be remarkably similar to that of students attending public school. The lay Catholic might well reach a decision that he is supporting two school systems, and there is, at least, a reasonable doubt that his children are attending the better of the two.

The Catholic church and the lay citizen have a number of avenues by which to respond to this difficult situation. They can, and have, consistently voiced opposition to any increase in school taxes or in other funds going to the support of public education. A rather different approach is to try and retrieve some of the cost now being poured into public education by diverting some of it to parochial education. Attempts to liberalize many of the new federal bills to support education so that they would include the private sector represent a significant effort in this direction.

Such a device as shared time begins to transfer some of the responsibilities of educating Catholic youth to the public schools. The Catholic citizen's argument is that he is contributing twice to the public cause. First, through supporting the public schools and, second, through supporting the removal of a significant number of students from that public system. The rebuttal to this point has been that it was his free choice to remove his children from the public school and that he could, if he chose, send them to the public school. He is paying for his right to seek differential treatment for his child as are all other parents sending their children to private school.

It is probably most fortunate for current public education that he does not choose to exercise that free choice and send them to public school. The mere thought of the parochial schools suddenly shutting down and delivering all their charges into the public educational system is enough to turn most school administrators' spines to jello. Yet, one hears this threat mentioned more frequently in debates on this topic.

It is quite likely that the financial problems will settle the whole issue in favor of some cooperative arrangement. The manifest idiocy of maintaining two parrallel and costly computer-based learning systems should be obvious to all. But there are other reasons for suggesting that there will be a greater interchange of activities between the two systems that have to do with the growing interrelationship of societal units or components Just as society is no longer willing to allow a substantial component part, such as an individual state, to operate in substantial opposition to the rest of society, it will not allow church schools to deviate markedly either. Society cannot afford to allow the parochial schools to fail too

badly in providing a decent education for their students since the rest of the society will pay in many ways for a substantial failure of the parochial schools. Neither does it seem likely, however, that the parochial schools will receive any substantial amounts of state or federal aid without the application of federal regulation and control.

There is a substantial question here as to who should be more concerned over the results of spending public monies on private groups. Should it be the special interest group who attempts to extract money from the general fund or the persons representing the general public?

Most of the observable pressures in the society today are towards greater homogenization of the various parts of the society. This means that special interest nationality groups and special interest religious groups would expect to see a gradual erosion of their influence over their constituency. Recent voting patterns seem to support this generalization. The parochial schools, by accepting governmental financing, are, in the long run, accepting governmental regulation and control. It is much more likely that the society as a whole will have a greater influence on the smaller special interest group than vice versa. Thus, those who have wished to see a decline in the influence of the Catholic church in educational matters seem very likely to have their wish granted.

One likely consequence of the present situation would seem, at the present time, to be some form of enlarged shared time operation in which the Catholic students would attend the public schools for a number of their subjects such as physics or chemistry or mathematics initially. Perhaps later on the social studies and language arts would be added.

It is not at all inconceivable that the Catholics might review their entire policy and reach a decision to reduce their religious education to a week-end program much as the Protestant sects have done and allow the public schools to do the secular education. The burdens of this shared system may be, in some degree, relieved by the increasing support one could get from this segment of society for public education.

In a battle that has gone on for such a long period of time with powerful adversaries on both sides, the luxury of contemplation of total victory has been given to few. It may now be time, although there are many skirmish and struggles remaining, to consider what the nature of 'total victory' might mean for the liberal forces who have resisted the encroachment of parochial influence for so long. Would total victory or the complete erasure of parochial education be such a desirable consequence?

If diversity of viewpoint has value to a society, then some way must be found to institutionalize or insure diversity or it will surely disappear in a gray mass of societal consensus. The Communist nations were the first to recognize explicitly that all business in the society affected everyone, and so concluded that all business was the concern of the State. The tenden for a centrally controlled program to reduce diversity in this case, as in many others, has been well documented.

One of the great challenges of this and the next generation is to find a way to recognize the interdependent nature of our society and still keep alive the diversity of interests and viewpoints which keeps that society in dynamic movement instead of settling into a dull, dead conformity.

How do we keep the concerns of the other portions of society a lover's touch and not a strangling bearhug? The issue is a live one in education

and necessitates a careful look at the entire private sector of education that faces a progressive decline unless deliberate attempts are made to preserve them and their influence. Otherwise, at some future time one can easily project a single monolithic educational system with all of its attendant dangers.

It may be too cynical to suggest that the technological advances will have more to do with changing church-state relationships in education than will serious consideration of the moral issues involved. Nevertheless, a substantial case can be made for the notion that moral judgments do not shape events but rather explain events away after they have been shaped. At any rate, any attempt at solution to the current church-state problem will have to take into account the major forces described in this paper.