

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 013

UD 017 309

AUTHOR Iannaccone, Laurence
TITLE Using Research in School Reform.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents; Change Strategies; *Educational Change; *Educational Policy; *Educational Research; Government Role; Policy Formation; *Political Influences; Research Needs; *Research Problems; *Research Utilization; Social Action; Social Change

ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that there is an underlying political revolution in educational governance. Furthermore, there is a need for concern with the changes needed in the roles of researchers and state policy level policy makers in order for research to play a significant part in helping shape reform in education. Given the present political conditions there are unusual dangers for researchers trying to serve state policy makers. The initiative for educational changes has shifted from the local district to the national government and subsequently to state leadership. The legislative patterns of recent years have increased further the separation between responsibility and operation. Increased centralization at the state level is combined with the creation of multiple new points of access in educational governments ranging from teacher negotiations to site level parent advisory committees. This is the context within which the state policy maker is asking the educational researcher to provide data for his predetermined solutions. The researcher is asked to make antithetical policies work despite their inconsistencies. The central question for the educational research community concerns the nature of the research community's role in educational policy making.
(Author/AM)

* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

USING RESEARCH IN SCHOOL REFORM
Squad, Defuse Carefully Before Opening This Package.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

by

Laurence Iannaccone
Graduate School of Education
University of California, Santa Barbara.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Laurence
Iannaccone

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM"

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT
OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

not only in the United States but elsewhere there is increasingly heard the sweetest sound of the strangest Siren song ever sung in the stormy world of educational political conflicts. It comes to as unlikely a crew of mariners as ever set sail on these stormy waters, the educational researchers. The dulcet tones from the political sea-nymphs promise a new Utopia, in which educational researchers appear almost like Plato's philosopher kings—but not quite. In that slight difference lies a world of meaning fraught with danger for the mariners and, quite possibly, for the politicians too.

I proceed here on two assumptions:

- 1) We are in the midst of a political revolution in educational governance topping over two decades of increasing politicization--witness collective bargaining. Continued conflict in education is now forcing the states to carry the burden of initiating changes.
- 2) We are concerned with the changes needed in the roles of researchers and state level policy makers in order for research to play a significant part in helping shape reform in education.

As to the first assumption, I have been on record, in print subject to public peer review, predicting the increased politicization, the pressure it would place on state legislatures, and attempting to explain it for a little over a decade.¹

I have some suggestions to make to you about the second point. Given the present political conditions there are unusual dangers in researchers trying to serve state policy makers. I will offer an alternative view to that presented by Pittenger and Deasy (1977) for a fruitful relationship between policy makers and researchers.

There is an increasingly strident demand by a growing number of state policy makers and researchers to the educational research community that it either be silent or learn the language of the policy maker, pay attention to the legislative process and speak the politician's language (e.g. Pittenger and Deasy, 1977, p. 7). That language is defined by the politician's ethnocentrism and need to persuade the voters. For the

*This paper was developed from notes originally used by Mr. Iannaccone as respondent to the papers at the 1976 AERA Annual Meeting Symposium, "Research as a Tool in Facilitating and Assessing State Wide School Reform Policies".

UPO 17309

politician this, of course, is "English". The history of recent state school reform provides the context for these political positions. The educational research community should understand that the attempt by policy makers to define the role relationship between them and the researcher is a political act.

The Context: Recent School Reforms

In the symposium of the 1976 AERA Annual Meeting on "Research as a Tool in Facilitating and Assessing State Wide School Reform Policies" a paper by Mary Hall and William T. Hall asked "why contemporary reform movements appear to be spearheaded by state-level commissions, boards and agencies" (1976, p. 27). Not accidentally the initiative for educational change has in the last decades shifted from the local district to the national government and subsequently to state leadership. Policy assumptions have changed consistent with these structural shifts. These policy assumptions, which functioned as the givens for incremental policy development until approximately the mid nineteen fifties, have now been severely challenged. For example the belief in the unitary community and hence the melting pot function of public schools has been challenged by concepts of pluralism and a search for cultural diversity. The religion of localism has been shaken by centralizing implications in concerns for accountability and state planning. The traditional belief in administrative neutral competency has undergone significant erosion (Iannaccone, 1977, pp. 277-286). When such fundamental value questions are reopened for political clash and resolution it is predictable (and was predicted, Iannaccone, 1967) that the resolution will have to fall back on the fundamental constitutional bases of educational government.

Education is constitutionally still a state function locally administered. So while national government intervention could stimulate and point to resolution of fundamental educational issues, it cannot provide an adequate resolution of these without constitutional revision. Instead the resolution of value conflicts in the case of education requires state power so long as the present federal system exists.

A second strand shaping the relations of state policy makers and educational researchers is seen in the sequence of attitudinal changes toward education among state policy people, particularly elected politicians. Their perception of education as unwilling to change has supplied an explanation of this attitude change. The sequence typically has been one of legislative disdain for administrators and support of the "poor" teachers at first. This has later given way to the sense that both teachers and administrators were unreliable. Then the legislature typically has taken the position that it is "the big school board".

This legislative adoption of "the big school board" role increases the social distance between policy making and the school site. The educational task by its nature requires a large degree of discretion at the operational levels. These are school sites and teacher-pupil transactions. As one consequence of the increased social distance the chances for a

divorce between responsibility and operations increase. Bitter hostility follows. Policy makers distant from the scene of operations seek to control them through legislation using the accountability shibboleth specifying simultaneously means and ends. School people attack state policy as unworkable. State policy makers attack school people as saboteurs of state policies.

Social scientists should easily see that the conditions for increased bureaucratic regulation result. So the recent record reads. There has been a rapid increase in the production of regulations. Recent reform legislation seeks to decrease the slippage between policy and implementation by reducing the discretion of the Local Education Agency (LEA). The state can and, I believe, will continue to reduce LEA power. Its attempt to decrease slippage by specifying means and ends in schooling is doomed to failure. That slippage is rooted in the combination of social distance and discretion needed at the operational level for learning. The stepped up output of legislation will heighten the tensions between state educational policy makers, LEA elites, and the local school clients.

Most important the rapidly increasing educational legislative reforms will be ill considered, poorly drawn, untested, and inconsistent, piecemeal solutions to crucial dilemmas of American society. These characteristics may already be seen in the California educational legislation of the last three years. For example, the legislature produced a mandate for a state-wide exit examination for high school students completely by-passing the LEA. Other legislation required that the high school diploma be defined in terms of some test or other but delegated separately to each LEA the determination of tests and cutoff scores. In the same state collective bargaining at the LEA level was recently mandated as citizen advisory committees at the school site level become the omnipresent rider included on virtually all financial legislation other than general state aid. Recent laws increase access to decision-making for pupils, teachers, parents, neighborhood groups, technical experts in collective bargaining and evaluation. What the legislation never states is from whom power is taken and more important whose responsibility is thereby diminished.

In sum the consequences of the frenetic legislative patterns of recent years increases further the divorce between responsibility and operations. Increased centralization at the state level is combined with the creation of multiple new points of access in educational governments ranging from teacher negotiations to site level parent advisory committees.

To the delight of my evaluation colleagues the most rapidly growing state policy reform is the movement toward competency based instruction. This solution is being legislatively mandated at the same time as state politicians are seeking to control expenditures in education. That language is politicianese for not spending more on education. Simultaneously these states are mandating collective bargaining. This will focus on bread and butter issues and job security in an era of declining enrollment. I agree with Pittenger and Deasy that commitment to competency based instruction would be an instance of "school reform...not modest efforts...changes in the organization and structure of the public school not just changes in

any program or set of programs" (1977, p. 4). But true reform, reorganizing the structure of the public schools, will take not less but much more money than current operations do. The requirement for additional training, the cost of specialized help for literally restructuring the organization and the many adjustments needed by such a vision cannot be accomplished cheaply. Legislatures and state policy makers may be willing to talk about the reallocation of resources but they never indicate from whom you take the dollars. State politicians engaged in educational reform have blundered into the classical error of rulers faced with dilemmas they do not understand. They cut the Gordian knot. They promise no increased taxes. Then, like petulant frustrated children, they attack the university. Note for example the irrational outbursts of the California governor,

This is the context within which the state policy maker is asking the educational researcher to provide data for his predetermined solutions. The researcher is asked to make antithetical policies work despite their inconsistencies.

The Researcher's Role

I listen to criticisms of the educational research community. They "use jargon," "lack policy making sophistication" and "are irrelevant to the policy maker's definition of his problem." The criticisms are usually accurate. Were these criticisms more than merely accurate the accompanying simple solution, that the educational researcher learn legislative language, could be lightly laid aside or accepted. The difficulty is they only superficially brush the basic dilemmas confronting policy makers and researchers in defining a fruitful transaction.

The difference between my position as to the central issue and that typically held by the policy maker may be seen in the difference between the titles and second assumptions of this paper and that of Pittenger and Deasy. The policy maker characteristically views the researcher as an applied researcher, one whose function is to make operations conform to state policy. Pittenger states his second assumption as a concern for "the role research can play in helping state level policy makers shape and pursue their vision..." (italics mine).

I have no quarrel with applied research or researchers. Nor do I question the right of anyone, policy makers or others, to hire technicians and experts to help them pursue their visions or goals. Indeed, as a consequence of recent collective bargaining legislation in California, teachers' organizations and school boards are, to use their terminology, getting their hired guns for the negotiating. But clarity is needed in ² distinguishing between the role of applied research and policy research.

Following Etzioni, let me distinguish them. As Etzioni says "applied research accepts specific assignments from clients and tries to serve their needs largely in their terms" (1971, p. 8). The researcher's tools and methodologies are used by him to carry forward that client's specified solution. The political functions of a free society are better conducted when all interested parties use the best expertise available to shape and pursue their vision of a better society, whether through reform or in opposition

to it. Research divisions in large scale organizations testify to the importance and legitimacy of such activities. Forensic research, the mobilization of facts, figures and opinions in advocating policy positions has its uses. So, too, does the work of making policies operationally feasible. Neither of these applied roles critically questions the policy premises they serve, nor should they. This is well understood by decision-makers in such organizations. Some years ago, for example, a state leader declared at a meeting of professional groups with state policy people that his organization was "against that position and our research division will find reasons for the association's opposition". The politician's invitation to the educational research community falls much better on the ear than does the statement of the professional association leader. The difference between that position and the one expressed by most policy makers ranges along a continuum varying in clarity of objectives, level of sophistication, and the constitutional roles of the actors (state official versus lobby leader). But is the content of the message different? Mr. Pittenger says, "I have some hunches about the kind of reform...[needed]... based in part on the accumulated tradition... in part they stem from my experience of what works in the world of politics... the role of research is to put solid ground under those hunches" (Pittenger and Deasy, 1977, p. 5).

The central question for the educational research community is not whether researchers should hire out their services as applied researchers. This is a legitimate transaction. The central issue is the nature of the research community's role in educational policy making. I submit it is quite different from the applied role.

"Policy research ought not to take on specific assignments but to concern itself with the problems of the social unit (or units) to which it relates" (Etzioni, 1971, p. 8). Etzioni heightens the contrast saying, "Applied research is by definition, instrumental. Policy research is inevitably critical" (1971, p. 9; italics in original). As I have said elsewhere "the policy researcher in his proper role is seen as playing a part which has the function of providing reality checks for policy makers, providing alternative approaches to policy problems, and having the responsibility of challenging the assumption of policy makers and agencies" (Iannaccone, 1975, p. 323). In fact, Etzioni views the policy researcher as having the responsibility "to pry the policy maker loose from his antiquated assumptions" (Etzioni, 1971, p. 9).

I suggest the research community can never relinquish its critical stance despite its consequent inevitable unpopularity with policy makers. The research community's public character, in contrast to the private arrangement any of its members may make, places civic obligations upon it, from which it can only escape at the price of losing its character. It holds uniquely the responsibility for critically challenging generally accepted premises, even those of elected officials. Its basic obligation in a free society is to turn real world dilemmas into researchable problems.

Let us reexamine the pleasant meadows between the researchers and the state policy makers as they now appear in light of the foregoing discussion. That meadow land is a mine field for all who walk therein. The politician and the researcher who attempt to sell the public on the belief that major

changes in education can be made without significantly increasing the cost is ignorant or lying.

A fruitful transaction between the roles of researcher and policy maker requires that both learn not only the language but much more: the other's world and its assumptions. As in the case of the Music Man, "you gotta know the territory". The message the research community must present is that of caveat emptor to the policy maker in search of applied researchers who masquerade as independent critical voices. The buyer must beware of what can be bought. The transaction can be honest only when it is clearly the applied researcher role that is bought. When, however, the applied researcher masquerades, or is paraded by the policy maker as an independent critical voice, the transaction is the prostitution of research.

The research community has the obligation to help policy makers understand the difference between honest applied research, critical policy research, and the prostitution of research. The policy maker should never forget that in prostitution neither the buyer nor the seller shapes the game. The pimp shapes it. The politician's brokers, agency specialists or legislative consultants, are the individuals who shape the relation between policy makers and researchers. They must know what research exists or how to find it. They must understand the territory of the researcher. They should be aware of the critical independent stance needed by the policy researcher. Only as policy makers make sure that these brokers operate with integrity and knowledge can the relationship between the policy maker and the researcher become a fruitful transaction.

FOOTNOTES

¹The policy makers appear unaware of the growing body of research precisely on such issues as raised in the latter half of the piece by Pittenger and Deasy, 1977. These include Iannaccone, L. 1966; 1967; 1972. Also bibliographic essays such as Kirst, M. W. and Mosher, E. K. 1969 and Wirt, F. M. 1970 and 1972 appear unknown to them and their staffs.

²In the interest of space I have ignored the role of researchers whose subject is policy without immediate concern to influence policy and the role of the former researcher become politician. Each of these deserves attention and is worthy of respect.

REFERENCES

- Etzioni, A. 1971. "Policy Research," American Sociologist 6:8-12.
- Hall, M. and Hall, W. T. 1976. "Great Expectations: Contemporary Statewide Schooling Reform and Some Victorian Antecedents". 1976 AERA Annual Meeting Presentation.
- Iannaccone, L. 1966. "Future State Politics of Education" in Struggle for Power in Education. eds. F. W. Lutz and J. J. Azzarelli. New York: Center for Applied Research in Education.
- Iannaccone, L. 1967. Politics in Education. New York: Center for Applied Research in Education.

- Iannaccone, L. 1972. "Increasing Irresponsibility in Education: A Growing Gap between Policy Planning and Operational Groups" in State, School, and Politics, ed. M. W. Kirst. Lexington, Mas.: Heath, 1972.
- Iannaccone, L. 1975. "The Field Study in Educational Policy Research" Education and Urban Society, 7:3 (May), 220-237.
- Iannaccone, L. 1977. "Three Views of Change in Educational Politics" in The Politics of Education, ed. J. D. Scribner. Chicago, Ill.: Un. of Chicago Press.
- Kirst, M. W. and Mosher, E. K. 1969. "Politics of Education." Review of Educational Research. 39:5 (Dec.), 623-40.
- Pittenger, J. C. and Deasy, R. J. 1977. "Using Research to Translate State Policy into Practice". The Generator, 7:1 (Winter)
- Wirt, F. M. 1970. "Theory and Research Needs in the Study of American Educational Politics." Journal of Educational Administration, 8:1 (May), 53-87.
- Wirt, F. M. 1972. "American Schools as a Political System: A bibliographic Essay." In Kirst, M. W. ed. op, cit. 1972.