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ABSTRACT

The potential consequences of increased public support for private schools are investigated in this paper. It begins with an examination of two social purposes of education: political socialization (or the acquisition of a common language, knowledge of one's government, knowledge of the role of the citizen, and tolerance for varying points of view) and reduction of stratification (or promotion of equality). Next, the possible changes resulting from greater public aid to private school are suggested, based on the current situation of public and private schools, and on the incentives within various proposals for increased public support. Finally, the impact of these possible changes on the goals of education in a democratic society are assessed, with regard to political socialization, social stratification, and political and financial support for public schools. (Author/JM)

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THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF INCREASED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate the potential consequences of increased public support for private schools. It begins with an examination of two social purposes of education: political socialization and reduction of stratification. Next the possible changes resulting from greater public aid to private schools will be suggested, based upon consideration of the current situation of public and private schools, and of the incentives within various proposals for increased public support. Finally, the impact of these possible changes on the goals of education in a democratic society will be assessed, along the dimensions of political socialization, stratification, and political and financial support for public schools.

What are the potential consequences of increased public support for private schools in the United States? How could these consequences affect the political and social aims of education in a democratic society? To address these questions, this paper first examines two social purposes of education: political socialization and reduction of stratification. Then the current situation of public and private schools will be reviewed; this will provide a basis for analyzing incentives within various proposals for increasing public support of private schools, in order to suggest changes likely to result from a policy of greater public aid to private schools. These changes would have broad social and political consequences, both directly and through their effects on the political and financial support for public schools. The remainder of the paper is concerned with the connections among these various changes in the social and political purposes of education.

Political Socialization

Democracy requires the participation of citizens, and participation depends upon a common language, a knowledge of the purposes and procedures of the government, an understanding of the role of the citizen, and exposure to varying points of view.[1] Political socialization is the process by which citizens acquire this knowledge and experience. The goal of political socialization is to generate diffuse support for a system. Easton proposed that one means of generating this diffuse support entails recognition of a common good transcending the particular good of individuals or groups.[2] He and Hess have suggested that "no system can

attain or remain in a condition of integration unless it succeeds in developing among its members a body of shared knowledge about political matters as well as a set of shared political values and attitudes."[3]

In America, schools have long been taken to be the primary means of political education. One major purpose of the public school was to ensure literacy and instruct citizens about the liberties and principles of their government. On the birth of the idea of American public schools in the late 1700s, Freeman Butts has written:

> The problem facing the Revolutionary generation...was the welding into a cohesive, national whole the politically diverse regional, sectional, and state factions that had joined together in fighting the revolution. To this end, it was widely felt that the role of education should be to stress the common values of a republican government and a democratic society.[4]

The history of American public education is marked by a dynamic tension between the assertion of such common values and the expression of cultural pluralism,[5] but this concern with the political socialization provided by schooling has persisted. The correlation between years of schooling and political participation has long been recognized.[6] In their 1965 study of the political socialization of elementary school children, Hess and Torney conclude:

> The school is apparently the most powerful institution in the socialization of attitudes, conceptions, and beliefs about the operation of the political system. While it may be argued that the family contributes much to the teaching that goes into basic loyalty to the country, the school gives content, information, and concepts which expand and elaborate these early feelings of attachment.[7]

The education of children for a democratic society has embodied conflicting principles. For practical purposes, there has been "the need for a citizenry able to read, understand, and act according to law,"[8] and schools have rendered citizens able and willing to conform to social expectations. But another ideal has been that schools should also educate citizens for active participation in the democracy, an education which would include an understanding of the concepts needed to evaluate and, if necessary, reform the government and laws.

Moreover, political socialization necessarily brings together children from different family backgrounds, with varying economic, social, and cultural heritages. In a large, complex, and pluralistic nation, some understanding and tolerance for diversity among its citizens are crucial for maintenance of the democracy. John Dewey, writing in Democracy and Education, suggested that "development within the young of the attitudes and dispositions necessary to the continuous and progressive life of a society cannot take place by direct conveyance of beliefs, emotions, and knowledge. It takes place through the intermediary of the environment."[9] Diversity was one aspect of the school environment necessary for learning cooperation and for appreciating the rich cultural variety within the society: "An intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment."[10]

Attending schools with heterogeneous populations may improve understanding and interactions among diverse groups, and the presence of culturally diverse students is likely to raise issues and expose students

to opinions and perceptions that differ from their own. Exposure to diversity within the school, according to Dewey, helps children to learn means of coping with conflict in a constructive manner, a useful skill in our pluralistic society. In support of Dewey's contention, a recent study of attitudes toward dissent among West German youth showed that those exposed in school to controversial issues were more likely to be tolerant of differing points of view.[11]

Reduction of Stratification

A second social purpose of the common schools has been to reduce social stratification along lines of socioeconomic status, religion, politics, and ethnicity. Egalitarianism has been a part of the American democratic tradition, although equal status with respect to citizenship and civil rights has not always been a hallmark of public policy in practice. Still, schooling has often been hailed as an equalizer of sorts, offering an opportunity to those of lower social class or lesser economic means to rise above the socioeconomic status of their families.[12]

During the Great Society reforms of the 1960s, this benefit of schooling was exaggerated to such a degree that it was often argued that poverty and economic inequality could be eradicated through education.[13] After all, had not Horace Mann himself, a foremost spokesman of the public school movement written:

> Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the condition of men--the balance wheel of the

> social machinery... It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich; it prevents being poor.[14]

More recently, in evaluating the outcomes of the 1960s reforms, scholars have suggested that schooling cannot be expected to counteract all the inequalities present in other social institutions such as the family and the workplace; but equal opportunity in education may enable some at least to improve their situations. And schools are still expected to provide opportunity for some social mobility,[15] mitigating the effects of socioeconomic differences in children's family backgrounds.

Not only does stratification harm individuals and restrict their freedom, but it may prove detrimental to the stability of the state. When groups of people become isolated along lines of political or religious beliefs, interactions of different kinds of people and interplay of ideas wane, and loyalty to the smaller group or "column"[16] begins to take precedence over loyalty to the state. At this point, the conflict resolution needed for the survival of the state becomes more difficult to attain. As Clayton has suggested:

> The exchange of views with those of other columns is prevented; a concerted attack upon common problems is difficult to achieve.
>
> Misunderstandings and tensions between groups can readily develop. The grounds for national unity are diminished. Difficulties arise in understanding the points of view of others. Ethnocentrisms and latent hostilities are encouraged.[17]

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Now let us examine private schools in light of the public purposes of education discussed above, and consider the extent to which private

schools serve these purposes. This section will note the characteristics of the private school clientele, particularly focusing on the diversity of this population, because we have seen that diversity among students is important for the process of political socialization in a democratic system. We will also want to explore any barriers to access to private schools (or nonpublic schools, since I am using "private" and "nonpublic" interchangeably). If certain kinds of students cannot attend these schools, then there is risk of stratification between the private and public schools.

Characteristics

A study undertaken by the National Center for Education Statistics during the 1978-79 school year shows that nonpublic elementary and secondary schools enrolled 10.7 percent of the total number of pupils. While enrollments are declining in both the public and private schools, the rate of decline is less in the private schools, so the percentage of total pupils enrolled in private schools has increased slightly over the last few years. From the depression years of 1932-33, when the percentage of schoolchildren attending private schools was 7.7, the percentage rose to 13.6 in 1960-61 and then, ten years later, had decreased to 10.1 percent. Of private school pupils, 64 percent are enrolled in Catholic schools, 21 percent in schools with other church affiliations, and the remaining 15 percent are enrolled in non-affiliated schools.[19]

Diversity

Children served by the nonpublic schools are different from those served by the public schools, and this difference will have implications for potential social and political consequences of increased public support for private schools. For instance, nonpublic school enrollments are drawn from higher income groups than public school enrollments.[20] And among ethnic and racial groups, white families are more likely to send their children to private schools. For example, among secondary school students in 1978, 9 percent of white students attended private schools as compared with 2.9 percent of black students.[21]

Now, as James Coleman has noted:

> Public schools are not themselves perfectly integrated on these economic and racial dimensions, and there is already social self-selection within the public sector when people choose where to live.[22]

We do not have good information about the diversity present within individual public and private schools, because data concerning the populations within each sector in the aggregate cannot be extrapolated to individual schools. But we may note that if the current balance of enrollments among socioeconomic and racial groups were to remain the same after the enactment of a plan to increase public support for private schools, the increased support would on average benefit a whiter, wealthier group of families and their children.

We do know that many private schools currently are explicitly segregated along lines of religion or gender, and other similarly segregated patterns might emerge with various schemes of increased public support to private schools. For instance, if parents are given the

choice, they will tend to select schools for their children which reflect their own values and religious and political views. In fact, supporters of vouchers, one form of public support for private education, often expect that new schools will conform to one particular political leaning or another. In a school where certain issues are never discussed, or where differences of opinion on an issue are not presented or explored and may be rigorously suppressed, students may fail to learn the basic mechanisms of democratic governance. For example, as Sigel and Hoskin suggest,

> if a citizen fails to understand how principles such as freedom of speech relate to a democracy, his solution for the treatment of dissenters becomes highly idiosyncratic, depending more on his personal attitude toward a given dissenter (or subject of dissent) than on any guiding principle.[23]

While public schools have not been given high marks for their efforts in helping students to achieve a good understanding of democratic principles and their practical applications,[24] the variety of religious and political beliefs conducive to such learning may be more readily found in some public schools than in the many private schools which espouse a particular set of doctrines and whose students are apt to have rather similar beliefs and perceptions.

Barriers to Private School Access

The financial burden of tuition places the most obvious restriction on access; if a family cannot afford the tuition, which may range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand annually, it will clearly be

difficult to send the children to a private school. Children are not always barred from attending private schools because of financial hardship; scholarship aid is now used by some students enrolled in independent secondary schools. Another barrier to access may be transportation. Private schools may simply not exist in many geographic areas, particularly in rural areas, so that the only choice other than the public school may involve the expense and possible unhappiness of sending a child away to school, an option not always available to or desired by everyone.

Admissions criteria in nonpublic schools may range from somewhat to highly selective, based upon the child's ability, personal characteristics and achievements, or family ties or religious affiliations. Students who have had less opportunity to develop skills and activities, or who do not espouse certain religious beliefs may be at a disadvantage when attempting to enroll at a private school.

These factors mean that public schools have, and are likely to continue to have, a disproportionate share of poorer children, social or political "misfits," and others with disadvantages and special needs than the private schools have. In general, those benefitting from increased public support for private schools would be whiter, better off financially, and less apt to be educationally disadvantaged, so that the existing differences between the populations of the private and public school sectors would be encouraged rather than reduced.

PROPOSALS FOR INCREASED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Having considered the current situation of private schools with respect to the public interest in education, let us now turn to the proposals for increased public support for private schools. In this section, the forms public support for private schools might take are briefly outlined, and then the various arguments that have been used to support proposals for increased public support to private schools are analyzed. Next, a short section describes an interesting historical analogy: the consequences of substantially increasing public support for private schools in the Netherlands. The section ends with a short discussion of the regulations for public aid to private schools.

Forms of Increased Public Support for Private Schools

Proposals for increased public support for private schools may take various forms. Legislative entitlements and indirect public subsidies currently in effect, which are one form, are considered in the next section. Tuition tax credits represent another possible form of public support for public education, one enjoying considerable current popularity in many policy discussions. Under this mechanism, a parent who pays tuition to a nonpublic school is allowed a credit for part of the expense against taxes owed to the government. The amount of the credit and the portion of expenses that can be credited vary in different proposals.[25] Another often-proposed means of public support of private schools is a system of vouchers. Under such a system, parents would be provided with a certificate, the voucher, for each child for a given sum that could be applied toward tuition at any school of the parent's choice.[26] Features

of voucher proposals vary considerably with respect to issues of finance, regulation, and provision of information.[27] Other forms of increased public support for private education are possible, although recent policy proposals for change in school finance have generally taken one of the many possible forms of vouchers or tuition tax credits.

Challenges to the existence of private schools were rebutted in the United States Supreme Court case of Pierce v. Society of Sisters in 1925, when parents were assured the constitutional right to satisfy the requirements of compulsory attendance laws by sending their children to either a private or a public school.[28] But since most private schools have been church-affiliated, attempts to provide public aid to nonpublic schools have been blocked on the grounds that such aid would violate the First Amendment principle of separation of church and state. The idea of granting public monies to private schools is not new, although the arguments in support of such action have varied over the years. Let us consider some of these arguments.

Analysis of Arguments Used to Support Proposals for Increased Public Support for Private Schools

During the late 1960s, as private school enrollments declined and costs rose, private school administrators, requesting public support for their schools, argued that the increased tuitions necessary to keep their schools open would drive away most of their pupils. Because they were educating about 10 percent of schoolchildren, they reasoned, driving their students away from the private schools and having them enroll in public schools would create an untenable pressure on the public schools and the

funds supporting them.[29] They and others have argued that the private school sector performs a service in the education of many young people, whose education would otherwise constitute a larger drain on taxpayer dollars.

Parents of children in private schools have argued that they are paying a double tax for their children's education, since their taxes go to support the public schools and at the same time they pay tuition to private schools. Nonetheless, public schools and private schools are not identical. As Daniel Sullivan puts it:

> First, many nonpublic schools are largely operated by various religious groups and are not necessarily perfect substitutes for publicly produced schooling. That is, while it frequently may appear that people are paying a positive sum for a service they can receive free, it may in fact be that they are purchasing a service not provided by the public schools, namely religious instruction. Parents may also be concerned with whom their children attend school and be willing to pay for a select set of classmates. Finally, some parents may simply desire a substantial amount more of some educational services that are communally provided.[30]

As noted earlier, public schools provide social benefits which may not be duplicated in the private schools, particularly with respect to political socialization. Others point out that the public already pays for part of private school costs through the legislative entitlements and indirect subsidies discussed below, and that it is not clear whether the kind of schooling provided to children in private schools serves the public interest or whether it may generate social costs that exceed the cost of educating private school students in public schools.

Another argument is proposed by some who contend that private schools are more cost-effective, since expenses per pupil are lower. One report,

for instance, noted that while private elementary and secondary schools account for about 10 percent of the total number of such students, they generate and spend only about 6 percent of the total amount expended for elementary and secondary education.[31] The implication is that public funds would be better spent in support of private schools than in public schools. The difference between public and private schooling expense is not clear-cut, however, and we must consider the true costs of schooling, not merely expenditures. Facilities and equipment in private schools are often donated or available without cost through sponsoring churches. Some teachers are drawn from the ranks of religious orders and are not salaried, and lay teachers' salaries are often considerably lower in nonpublic schools. Public schools are mandated to provide certain programs and services, which are often very expensive.

An important consideration of private school costs is the considerable public subsidy already extended to nonpublic schools. Some analysts suggest these subsidies amount to as much as one-quarter of actual private school revenues.[32] Private schools receive some public monies in the form of legislative entitlements. Private schools are eligible to participate in school lunch and child feeding programs, and recent amendments to federal assistance programs require that materials and services acquired by public schools with these federal funds be shared with private school pupils. For instance, a majority of private schools participates in Title IV-B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which supports library resources, instructional equipment, testing, counseling, and guidance services,[33] and some private schools

also take advantage of their eligibility for Title I funds, programs for disadvantaged children. Furthermore, indirect public subsidies, such as nonprofit status, currently benefit most private schools.

Another set of arguments for increased public support for private schools concerns choice in education.[34] Many assert that parents' right to choose schools for their children is circumvented when the nonpublic choice necessitates a great deal more expense, which parents may not be able or willing to afford. Increased public support for private schools would provide some parents the opportunity to exercise choice in the selection of a school which they did not previously have. The desire for such choice among some people is understandable. Parents may believe that a private school offers a better education, or at least one better suited to the particular needs of their child. No one method of schooling has been found to be the best in all situations for all children,[35] and the desire for some diversity and educational choice is clear.

But the notion that private schools can best provide that desired diversity is less clear. There may be ways to develop the desired educational flexibility within the existing public school structure. Or, perhaps the public support proposed for private schools could be redirected to public schools with beneficial results; new programs could be developed to meet the desires of parents for some flexibility and choice in methods of instruction and curriculum. Depending upon how such choices within the public system were developed, this strategy might have the advantage of retaining some of the social benefits inherent in a more common schooling experience.

The main difficulty here is that the private desire for educational choice often conflicts directly with the public desire for students to share in a common schooling experience. As Daniel Sullivan notes:

> If what is sought is for real pluralism and diversity to become a characteristic of America's schools, and if it is believed that competitive forces can help this aim, then more than merely preserving the existing nonpublic schools is necessary. In the absence of substantial reorganization of the public sector along more competitive lines, public aid sufficient to cause a large expansion of the nonpublic sector--public schools--must be forthcoming. For this goal to be desirable, the gains from such pluralism must outweigh possible losses from a weakening of social solidarity.[36]

Some clearly feel that the gains from pluralism would outweigh the losses. Coleman argues that not only are public schools no longer truly common institutions, but also that the public interest in common institutions is not an overriding one in contrast with helping disadvantaged children receive better education and offering opportunities for alternatives to poor public schools.[37] His argument may be less persuasive, however, if it is likely that proposals for public support of private education will primarily assist advantaged children, as we have suggested earlier. Others are less willing to dismiss the benefits of a common socialization so lightly,[38] imperfectly developed though they may be in practice.

Several proponents of increased aid to private schools suggest that the current balance of enrollment will change as a result of increased public support so that a greater number of disadvantaged families will be able to exercise the option of nonpublic education. Currently the costs of private schools place them out of reach of many families of lesser economic means. If tuition at private schools could be effectively

reduced through a voucher or tuition tax credit scheme, they argue, then families of lower socioeconomic status would have greater access to the choices offered by private schools. As James Coleman writes:

> The principal arguments of those who favor aid to private schools are that: (a) private schools provide better education; (b) attendance at private schools is available only to those who can afford it; therefore (c) reducing costs of private schooling will make the better education of private schools more equally available to families of different incomes.[39]

It is difficult to know if and by how much the character of the current private school population would change, but several aspects of various proposals for increased public support leave questionable the assertion that access to the private school sector by other than its traditional clientele will be easier and more ready. One clear and important difference between public and private schools lies in the accessibility of each for various kinds of students. We have already noted that private schools have barriers to access for certain groups. In addition, the plans for increased public support for private schools may in themselves generate further barriers to access. Let us consider whether increased public support of private schools is likely to reduce the existing barriers and examine the likelihood, too, of new barriers inherent in the proposals.

Most proposals for increased public support to private schools have focused on the financial barrier to access to private schools. Most voucher plans would alleviate some of this barrier, although it is likely that the voucher would not be large enough to negate entirely the problem of restricted access to some of the more expensive schools. A tuition tax

credit would probably offer less in the way of easing tuition barriers. Since parents must have a high enough income to incur a tax liability in order to benefit financially from a tax credit, the tuition tax credit would primarily relieve some of the financial burden from those families already receiving a good income. While some proposals have suggested that families with little or no tax liability could receive a tax refund in lieu of the credit, low income families would be prevented from taking advantage of even a tax refund if they were unable to accumulate the money to spend on the tuition initially, because the tax credit or refund would not be available to families until the year following the tuition payment. Another difficulty is that schools, knowing that parents of their students could receive tax credits and could better afford the cost than previously, might increase their tuitions in response,[40] or reduce the amount of scholarship aid otherwise provided. Increased tuitions might lead to some improvement in the services and education a private school offers, but would not ease the current financial barriers to access.

Reducing the financial barriers to private education does not necessarily mean that ease of access is ensured. For example, problems of access to information and transportation may create barriers to exercising the option of attending a private school. In some proposals for public aid to private schools, such as a voucher plan, extensive and costly information is a crucial component of the success of the program. Qualitative aspects of schools are difficult to characterize and abuses in advertising need regulation, and, in addition, despite every effort and good intention, information dissemination is often not fully effective in

reaching all of those who need it.[41] In one modified voucher experiment in San Jose, California, one-quarter of the residents were unaware of the existence of the voucher demonstration, despite a four-year spate of publicity through mailings, newspapers, radio announcements, neighborhood meetings, and information counselors.[42] Even for a more simply administered program such as a tuition tax credit, it is possible that many potential beneficiaries will be unaware of the workings and alternatives made available by the program. Transportation represents an additional barrier; it is particularly problematic in the case of a voucher system, yet it may also pose problems for access to the choice that is ostensibly made possible under a system of tuition tax credits.

Proposals of increased support for private schools generally have not addressed these problems of access to private schools, problems which create barriers to choice for less fortunate students.

Still another argument for increased public support for private schools urges that the public school system constitutes a monopoly, preventing the healthy competition that would naturally foster increased quality. For instance, Coleman views private school tuition as a protective tariff that prevents private schools from competing with public schools.[43] He particularly deplores the protection afforded "the worst public schools, those public schools that would be most depopulated by families' freedom to choose."[44] As I have noted, it is unlikely that any of the current proposals for increased public support of private schools would offer freedom to choose for families of low socioeconomic status, those most likely to be in the "worst public schools." Public

support of a two-tiered system, improving the quality of education offered to one group at the expense of the other, would violate the principles of equity crucial to our democratic system and promote stratification between the sectors. Increased public funding of private schools must be shown to offer more equal opportunities for all children before it will be in the public interest to support such a plan. Instead, it may be appropriate to take a more direct approach to improve quality, to offer greater choice in public education, to explore ways parents can more actively participate in school policy determination, or whatever is seen to be the problem at hand.

An Analogy for Far-Reaching Consequences: The Dutch Case

Recent directions and methodologies of educational research have brought a great deal of attention to measurable educational outcomes, such as aptitude and achievement testing, but not enough is known of the outcomes of education that derive more from the process and experience of schooling, such as political socialization, preparation for participation in a democracy, and opportunities for social mobility. We might consider similar experiences in other countries. For instance, in the Netherlands, both public and private schools are government-assisted. Prior to the Primary Education Act of 1920, 69 percent of the children there were enrolled in public schools. In the aftermath of that legislation, which established a formula for grants to nonpublic schools, public school enrollments began to drop; by 1959, 28 percent were attending public schools, 41 percent Catholic schools, 27 percent Protestant schools, and 1

percent "other" schools.[45] Some observers have contended that this system of support within the Dutch schools encouraged a permanent division of the population into three worlds -- Protestant, Catholic, and neutral -- a segmentation carrying over into economic, political, and social life following school.[46] Because of the intervening economic, social, cultural, and political differences between countries, we cannot conclude that precisely the same results would prevail in our country, but the historical analogy is useful to consider for its relevance to the U.S.

Regulation

A major issue with respect to any of the proposals for increased public support for private schools is the amount and cost of the regulation required. Because regulation usually accompanies public support, many potential proponents of increased public support to private education are opposed to such plans. For instance, private school administrators are often reluctant to relinquish control over such areas as admissions, discipline, and curriculum in exchange for public funds. Many private schools are currently subject to some state regulation, but its impact is minimal. Proposals for public support of private schools have usually included some kind of eligibility requirements for participating schools, which may involve certification of employees, designation or prohibition of certain facets of the curriculum, or regulation of admissions policy. Advocates of such proposals often suggest that regulations could be designed to protect the public interest by attempting to assure fair market practices, access to schools, safety,

non-discrimination, and a situation whereby the social benefits of education, such as literacy, political socialization for democracy, and opportunity for social mobility, would still be forthcoming.

The attempt to fine-tune the educational marketplace to such an extent through regulation often results in a proposed system not unlike the existing public schools. The detailed regulations proposed would often be costly to implement; also, the determination of regulations is ultimately a political process, in which political practices may distort the intent of legislation. Thus, while it might be possible to minimize the barriers to access to the private school sector through regulation, such regulation in the extreme might obviate any differences between the public and private sectors. Clayton noted that in the Dutch case, "the educational differences between the two types of schools, save for matters of ecclesiastical doctrine, are narrowing to the point where some thoughtful people begin to wonder whether the dual system is worth its cost."[47]

POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Yet another aspect of proposals for increased public support of private schools must be considered -- the issue of changes in the current political and financial support for public education. This section will explore the nature of such political and financial support and suggest the social consequences of changes in that support resulting from increased aid to private schools.

It is possible that competition from private schools would spur public school improvement. The proposals alone for increasing private school support seem to have caused public schools to evaluate themselves more carefully. But any public school improvement would be hampered by diminishing funds. Let us consider the reasons.

The total educational budget is not likely to be increased if support for private schools is increased, so such a program would divert funds from public schools. However, the public school budget will diminish out of proportion to the switch of enrollment from public to private schools for two reasons. First, a great deal of support will go to those currently using private schools, who had not previously been subsidized to such an extent. Second, traditional elements of political support for public schools will probably be diminished.

Political and financial support for public educaiton are intertwined, political support being necessary for budget allocations and appropriations. Where schools are still locally financed, or where communities are permitted to supplement state funding, the passage of bond issues and referenda for education is determined at the polls. At state and federal levels, politicians may garner votes based upon their stands on educational finance, and their votes on various issues may be influenced by political lobbying of constituent groups or financial backers.

The salience of political issues to voters, and the resources available to them, will determine the extent of their political participation. A majority of American voters has supported public

education, regardless of whether they have children in the schools or not. Such support is indicative of a strong belief in the social benefits of education. If the level of political activity of a citizen with respect to an issue depends upon the salience of the issue for that person, parents and educators are more likely to take an interest in actively promoting educational programs, because they anticipate both public and private benefits. If more parents enroll their children in private schools, there is likely to be less interest in active promotion of the interests of the public school sector. Moreover, while lower income and black voters tend to support referenda more often than their counterparts, both also participate less frequently in elections and other political activity.[48] Many political activities, from lobbying to meeting with elected officials, take a great deal of time and money; thus, people with greater resources can influence policy to a greater degree. If wealthier and whiter parents send their children to private schools, public schools may lose some of their stronger political support.

In the past, middle class parents who desired to improve their children's education have worked to improve the public schools. Working to better one's own condition involved working to better everyone's condition, and their efforts benefitted many children, regardless of their religion, economic means, or social status. If public aid to private schools were to be increased, middle class parents would have greater incentive to send their children to private schools. Then, instead of using their resources and working toward the improvement of education for all children, their private interests would better be served if they

worked to increase the amount of the tax credit or voucher. This situation would further separate private from public schools, drawing even more public funds away from those who do not have access to private schools, further stratifying the two sectors, and reducing the parents' devotion to the common good.

Another source of political support for public schools has been teacher unions. In general, private school teachers are not organized, and a shift in enrollment and support from public to private schools might considerably weaken the teacher unions. Many feel that these unions are too strong as it is, that their influence in setting regulations for teacher certification, student-teacher ratios, and so forth, is not always in the children's best interest, and these people would not be disturbed by the idea of weaker unions. But it should be recognized that a reduction in the power of teacher unions would also mean an effective unified lobbying force for education would be weakened. Our political system is increasingly becoming one in which organizations must form highly developed coalitions in order to affect policy and assure consideration of their concerns in competition with other interests for access to limited resources.[49]

We should also consider the changing patterns of political support in education even in the absence of aid to nonpublic schools, for policy change in finance will affect a dynamic system, not a static one. Kirst and Garms predict that shifting social and demographic patterns will place education in a weakened political bargaining position for funding increases. They note that the number of people for whom education is a

salient issue is declining, and that the only populations for whom school enrollments are increasing, such as Hispanics and low income citizens, have little political influence over budgets. Education is also expected to face increasing competition for its funding from defense, energy, and programs for senior citizens, particularly because of the dramatic increase in the number of older people in our country, combined with their propensity to be active participants in elections.[50] Thus, increased public support for private schools is likely to draw funds away from a public school system already facing probable cuts in real financial support.

Ultimately, we should consider what problem we are trying to address and whether increased public support for private schools is the best solution to that problem. If the problem is financial difficulty in access to the kind of schooling parents desire, then a plan such as tuition tax credits, which would give greater benefit to families who already have financial access to private schools, does not really address the problem. Some observers have hinted that proposals for increased public support of private education are "directed only obliquely and partially to the educational fortunes of children."[51] One suggested that political support for such aid appears to be based upon a desire of politicians to gain support of the Roman Catholic voters.[52] Detractors of such proposals have also been accused of failing to think first of children's education and it would not be surprising if opposition were based in part upon fear of layoff and loss of power among public school personnel. Given the political and volatile nature of the issue, it will

be important to determine whether a proposed solution addresses a problem that can and should be solved through the public means.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When we consider changes in the public finance of schooling, we will want to investigate the potential effects of such change on the broader social and political system. Two primary social benefits of schooling in our society are political socialization of citizens and reduction of stratification along the lines of religion, politics, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, which otherwise might be more pronounced.

We have seen that nonpublic school enrollments are drawn from higher income groups than public school enrollments, and white families are more likely than some minority groups to send their children to nonpublic schools. Thus, if the current balance of enrollments remained the same after increasing public support for private schools, the increased support would probably benefit a whiter, wealthier group of families than the public schools serve. Further, since 85 percent of nonpublic school children attend church-affiliated schools, the aid would primarily benefit groups attending schools that espouse a particular set of religious beliefs.

It has been argued that a program of increased public support for private schools would alleviate some of the current barriers to access to those schools for economically disadvantaged groups. I have suggested that those who would benefit from a program of tuition tax credits, vouchers, or the like are more apt to be middle class families who would then also be likely to move their political support to the private sector

of education. This situation would leave the most disadvantaged children in the public schools, and at the same time it would reduce much of the political and financial support for those schools, greatly stratifying the two sectors. Also, further social stratification along religious or political lines might result from increased public support for private schools, because of greater incentive to attend nonpublic schools, which often espouse a particular set of beliefs.

These potential social and political consequences of increased public support for private schools must be considered as proposed changes in school finance are reviewed. Some current public benefits of schooling may not be realized if changes are made, and the loss in benefits should be weighed carefully against any potential gains.

NOTES

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10. Dewey, Democracy and Education, pp. 25-26.

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15. Levin, "Educational Vouchers and Social Policy," p. 16.

16. A. Stafford Clayton, Religion and Schooling (Waltham: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1969), p. 171.

17. Clayton, Religion and Schooling, p. 172.

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19. Nehrt, Private Schools in American Education, p. vii.

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22. James Coleman, "Private Schools, Public Schools, and the Public Interest," The Public Interest 64 (Summer 1981): 19-30.

23. Roberta S. Sigel and Marilyn B. Hoskin, The Political Involvement of Adolescents (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981), p. 101.

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25. For a more detailed presentation of tuition tax credits, see Catterall, "Tuition Tax Credits for Schools."

26. For a more detailed discussion of vouchers, see Levin, "Educational Vouchers and Social Policy."

27. Levin, "Educational Vouchers and Social Policy," p. 6.

28. V. T. Thayer and Martin Levit, The Role of the School in American Society (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1966), p. 377.

29. Catterall, "Tuition Tax Credits for Schools," p. 1.

30. Sullivan, Public Aid to Nonpublic Schools, p. 53.

31. Nehrt, Private Schools in American Education, p. vi.

32. See Sullivan, Public Aid to Nonpublic Schools. Also see Dennis J. Encarnation, "Public Financial and Regulatory Treatment of Nonpublic Education," this volume.

33. Nehrt, Private Schools in American Education, p. 11.

34. For a more complete analysis of the issues involved in educational choice, see Henry M. Levin, "Issues in Educational Choice," this volume.

35. Sullivan, Public Aid to Nonpublic Schools, p. 74.

36. Sullivan, p. 76.

37. James Coleman, "Private Schools, Public Schools, and the Public Interest," pp. 29-30.

38. Cf. Levin, "Educational Vouchers and Social Policy."

39. Coleman, "Private Schools, Public Schools and the Public Interest," p. 20.

40. Catterall, "Tuition Tax Credits for Schools," p. 2.

41. Levin, "Educational Vouchers and Social Policy," p. 11.

42. Levin, "Educational Vouchers and Social Policy," p. 12.

43. Coleman, "Private Schools, Public Schools, and the Public Interest," p. 28.

44. Coleman, "Private Schools, Public Schools, and the Public Interest," p. 29.

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51. Catterall, "Tuition Tax Credits for Schools," p. 4.

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