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AUTHOR Passow, A. Harry
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ABSTRACT

The 1983 publication of "A Nation at Risk" began a new reevaluation of American schooling. The issues raised in that and several more recent reports are summarized and discussed in this preface to the ERIC volume, "Trends and Issues in Education, 1986." This paper offers observations and reflections on the issues presented in that volume and maintains that questions of educational reform must be considered in the context of a society which has undergone and continues to undergo drastic changes affecting schools and the schooling process. Recent changes and their significance are considered in the following areas: (1) equity and excellence; (2) early childhood and elementary education; (3) curriculum and subjects taught; (4) English; (5) sciences; (6) foreign languages; (7) vocational and career education; (8) adult literacy; (9) teachers and teaching; (10) special education; (11) gifted students; (12) urban and minority education; (13) education and information technology; (14) testing, measurement and evaluation; (15) guidance and counseling; (16) higher education; and (17) non-school education agencies. Educators must also ask whether America's schools produce persons who can fulfill their own potential, and, if not, what must be done to ensure that they do in the years ahead. (PS)

Issues and Trends in Education, 1986

Some Observations and Reflections

By

A. Harry Passow

Preface to
Trends and Issues in Education, 1986

Erwin Flaxman
General Editor

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PREFACE

ISSUES AND TRENDS IN EDUCATION: SOME OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

A. Harry Passow
Jacob H. Schiff Professor of Education
Teachers College, Columbia University

The Reform Movement

In April 1983, the publication of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) titled A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform began what has become known as "The Year of the Educational Reform Reports." A publication of the Education Commission of the States (1983) observed:

> Hardly a month has passed without the release of a major report by a prestigious group of citizens concerned about the nature of American education. And sprinkled between the major releases have been dozens of state task force reports, interim studies and articles about school renewal, effective schools, business-school partnerships or ways to meet the educational needs of a rapidly changing society. (p. 1)

A year later, a United States Department of Education publication titled The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education opened with the observation that: "During that year [1983], deep public concern about the nation's future created a tidal wave of school reform which promises to renew American education. Citizens, perplexed about social, civic, and economic difficulties, turned to education as an anchor of hope for the future of their Nation and their children" (p. 11). By May 1984, the Education Commission of the States counted at least 275 state-level task forces working on some aspect of school reform with governors, legislators and state education departments vying for leadership. The report noted that the comprehensive nature of the reform proposals gave promise for "significant long-lasting change." The reform efforts, the report noted, were "not narrow in origin, focus, support or goals" with task forces including "citizens, parents, students, teachers, administrators, business and community leaders, and elected and appointed public officials" (p. 15). It is doubtful that America's schools had ever been the focus of such widespread, intensive efforts to reform them, not even in the post-Sputnik era which was labeled "The Era of Curriculum Innovation."

While the flood of reports has tapered off somewhat, some are still being released. For example, during 1986, two reports were issued, both concerned with the reform of teacher education and the teaching profession. One was a report from a consortium called the Holmes Group (1986) titled Tommorrow's Teachers, which covered teachers as both a butt of criticism and the best hope for reform. The other was prepared by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986): A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century. The Carnegie Forum underscored a theme which was central in A Nation at Risk: the relationship of education to the economy.

In August 1986, The National Governors' Association's Center for Policy Research and Analysis (1986) issued Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education. Continuing a central theme from A Nation at Risk, the governors argued: "Better schools mean better jobs. Unless states face these questions, Americans won't keep our high standard of living. To meet stiff competition from workers in the rest of the world, we must educate ourselves and our children as we never have before" (p. 2). A former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Harold Howe II put it this way: "Frustration over the diminishing capacity of the U.S. to compete in worldwide markets has awakened new interest in the old idea that the quality of human resources is a key element in the efficiency of the nation's economy (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 168).

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) listed 13 "education dimensions of risk," including poor achievement test scores, declines in both the enrollments and achievement in mathematics and science, high costs incurred by business and the military for remedial and training programs, unacceptable levels of functional illiteracy found among both children and adults, failure of half the population of gifted students to match achievement with their tested ability, and poor performance by American students on cross-national achievement tests.

The National Governors' Association (1986) expressed its concerns about education by asking and answering what the report calls "seven of the toughest questions that can be asked about education in the U.S.A., questions which must be answered if there are to be better schools" (p. 2). These "tough questions" were as follows:

- Why not pay teachers more for teaching well?
- What can be done to attract, train, and reward excellent school leaders?
- Why not let parents choose the schools their children attend?
- Aren't there ways to help poor children with weak preparation succeed in school?
- Why are expensive school buildings closed half the year when children are behind in their studies and many classrooms are overcrowded?
- Why shouldn't schools use the newest technologies for learning?
- How much are college students really learning? (p. 2)

Other questions also come to mind as one reads Time for Results (National Governors' Conference, 1986): Are these the right questions that should be asked about education and schooling today? Are they the most important issues to address and resolve? Is the involvement of governors and legislators in shaping the direction and nature of school reform promising or worrisome for our schools? It is interesting to reflect on the Governor's questions when juxtaposed with the issues and trends identified in the following chapters by the ERIC Clearinghouses. What follows are some observations and reflections on the trends and issues from one viewpoint.

American Society and Schooling

In Time for Results Governor Alexander comments on

> how huge changes in the structure of America, its families and population, make our crusade for better schools even harder. In 1985, just 7 percent of our households had a working father, a mother who stayed home, and two or more children. Of all the children born in 1983, 50 percent will live with one parent before reaching age 18. We are told that by the year 2000, approximately one-third of our population will be "minority." Already more than half the students in many of the nation's largest public schools are non-white, and this percentage is certain to increase (National Governors' Association, p. 6).

These changes, plus a variety of other social, political, health, cultural, economic, and other factors, clearly impinge on education and schooling, but the proposals for school reform seem hardly to take cognizance of them.

In some ways, however, the changes taking place with respect to youth and adolescents are even more striking for their impact on education and schooling. A recent report noted that each year more than a million teen-agers become pregnant, 400,000 of them end their pregnancies by abortion, and "a U.S. teenager under age 15 is five times more likely to give birth than her peers in any other developed nation studied by the panel" (Viadero, 1986, p. 16).

Although adolescent drug and alcohol abuse seems to have levelled off somewhat, it is still a significant part of the epidemic which exists in American society at large and which has triggered a panic-like response from the federal government on down. In 1986, measures for dealing with controlled substance abuse was a major campaign issue.

Teen-age suicides continue to rise.

The dropout problem has not diminished and continues at an alarming rate. Moreover, the dropout rate is especially high among minorities and the impoverished, and the personal, economic and social consequences of dropping out of school are disproportionately felt by those groups. The unemployment rate of dropouts, for instance, is three times that of high school graduates.

While literature, studies, and debate on these problem areas grow and intensify, the poor showing of American students on standardized achievement tests and in comparisons with other nations is constantly recalled and every instance of bottoming out or levelling off is cited hopefully. Functional illiteracy--defined in different ways--is found among children and adults at rates which are considerably high for an industralized nation. The high rates of illiteracy are not limited to new immigrants with limited English ability but apply to native born Americans as well. Finally, the educational gap between advantaged and disadvantaged (i.e., racial and ethnic minorities and the poor) has not been narrowed despite concentrated efforts.

The Nature of School Reform

Somehow educators and the public seem not to be able to recognize the interconnectedness of these and other data. Nor are we able to arrive at consensus on what the goals and purposes of education in America should be, or what the appropriate functions of schooling are. The goals of education cited by the respondents of surveys taken by some of the authors of school reform reports tend to be broad and encompassing--"We want it all," both Goodlad (1983) and Boyer (1983) reported. Goodlad (1983) found that parents, teachers and students "see as important all four of those goal areas [intellectual, personal, vocational and social] which have emerged over the centuries and which had become well established in the rhetoric of educational expectations for schools decades before the 1970s" (p. 38). But, there are significant differences in the interpretation of what implementation of these goals means at the building, district, state, and federal levels, especially with respect to the personal and social goals.

In the pursuit of excellence in our schools, setting higher requirements for graduation from high school, having students take more of the basic subjects such as mathematics and science, eliminating "soft" subjects, testing more frequently, lengthening the school day and school year are among the recommendations for achieving higher levels of academic performance. What caught the attention of the Governors' Association and involved them in the efforts to reform schools was the threat to the jobs of their constituencies. What Governor Alexander and his colleagues observed when they went to the Far East was "children who learn more languages and go to school more days than our children. In Korea, we see people in one of the most literate nations working seven days a week for $3,000 a year. Even in the poorest parts of China, we find children studying English" (p. 5). There are those who argue that there are economic, cultural, political and other factors as well as educational systems that account for the international trade deficit and the problems of competing with the Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese and other Asian economies, but the poor showing of American students on the international academic sweepstakes are still cited significant cause for the trade gaps.

American society has undergone and continues to undergo drastic changes which affect schools and the schooling process. At the same time, American schools have undergone and continue to undergo drastic changes which affect the processes of schooling. The California Commission for Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education (1975) commented then that "schools everywhere reflect a troubled society and a troubled youth" and that adolescents were "more mature physically and more aware of the world around them" (p. x).

There have been profound changes in the students, the families and communities from which they come, and the schools which they attend. These changes include those in the authority, power, interpersonal and professional relationships as well as the instructional processes. The perception of schools and schooling on the part of students and their parents has changed as well. Adversarial relationships between students and faculty, between faculty and administration, between schools and parents/communities have increased and the cooperative efforts have changed.

The Changing School

While there is debate concerning the accuracy of the depiction, Sizer's A Study of High Schools (1984) portrays a school which is very different from the one Conant (1959) described in his Study of the American High School. Sizer describes a deal or compromise made by teachers and students that they will not hassle each other so that the school will be an undemanding and calm place. In the companion volume, Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) use the metaphor of the high school as a shopping mall, a place where a large and varied student body is kept happy by a variety of educational opportunities which provide "something for everybody." The contrasts between the high schools Conant and his staff observed, schools in which students and teachers studied and taught in orderly classrooms, and those Sizer and his staff depicted are sharp and suggest different roles, functions, and relationships for all of the participants in today's schools.

For the past 15 years or so, school discipline has been at the top of the concerns of parents and school staffs. School violence and vandalism, absenteeism and truantism, rampant class cutting have been part of the secondary education scene to an extent which was unthinkable two decades or so ago. In some school systems, security guards are part of the "normal" scene. As Passow (1984) observed: "Some high schools are depicted as restricted prison-like communities; others as war zones in which a truce has been declared between students and teachers; and still others as thriving, living communities in which real learning flourishes. Of course, schools are all of these and more" (p. 92).

Whether or not Sizer's notion that teachers and students have to compromise in order to survive is accurate, there is no question that teachers and the teaching profession have changed in the past few decades. The emergence of what is sometimes described as "teacher militancy" with the growth of collective bargaining agreements has altered relationships among teachers, administrators, boards of education, and communities. Other factors, such as the women's movement, have resulted in changes in who goes into teaching and who remains. Minority teachers whose numbers were increasing have recently been decreasing to a point where they are a vanishing breed in many states.

Although America has always been "a nation of immigrants, particularly since World War II, a variety of national, ethnic, and cultural groups have swelled the immigrant ranks and filled the classrooms. Language and cultural diversity has increased, especially as minority groups have become more sensitive to their own cultural heritage and native languages. In addition to the flow of immigrants--both legal and illegal--there continue to be significant population shifts from rural to urban areas, from urban to suburban areas, from the south to the northeast and west, from the snowbelt to the sunbelt which have all resulted in more heterogeneous and diverse populations into what were once considered relatively heterogeneous neighborhoods and schools.

The Policy Analysis for California Education group (PACE, 1985) predicts that by 1990, minority enrollment in K-12 will be greater than 50 percent resulting in a "majority of minorities." Almost of a quarter of California's 5- to 17-year olds now speak a language other than English at home; students

with limited English proficiency, speaking 41 different primary languages, already comprise 11.9 percent of the K-12 population (p. 1). While most other states are affected less by their immigrant population than is California where an estimated 25 percent of the nation's immigrants are currently settled, the data remind us that the schools, their pupil populations, the communities in which they operate, and the society which they serve are different from those of a generation or two ago in many respects. Educational planners, researchers, and practitioners cannot ignore these changes.

Observations and Reflections on Trends and Issues

It is in this context of a changing school and society that education trends and issues must be considered. Many important educational issues must be thought about in terms of the current and emerging contexts. The observations and reflections which follow are prompted by the trends and issues presented by the ERIC directors and associates in the papers in the following chapters.

The Dilemmas of Equity and Excellence

Among other reform bodies, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) asserted its belief that a commitment to educational excellence "must not be made at the expense of a strong commitment to the equitable treatment of our diverse population. The twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling have profound and practical meaning for economy and our society, and we cannot permit one to yield to the other either in principle or practice" (p. 13).

In the attainment of these twin goals, a number of issues arise. The concepts, both ideological and pragmatic, of "uniformity" and "diversity" are especially prominent. Basically, the schism is between those who believe that there is a common body of knowledge and skills to be transmitted to all through a common curriculum, and those who believe in differentiated curricula and groupings to provide for the individual differences which exist among students. Arguing for the first position, Adler (1982) states: "To give the same quality of schooling to all requires a program of study that is both liberal and general, and that is, in several, crucial, overarching respects, one and the same for every child. All sidetracks, specialized courses, or elective choices must be eliminated" (p. 21). Others argue as strongly for the second position, asserting that all aspects of the educational process--goals, curricula, instructional strategies, staff, resources, grouping, and evaluation--must be differentiated to provide for the individual needs of students.

The dilemmas raised are ones with which educators have long grappled: do equity and excellence mean exposing all students to the same content? Should there be common standards or only minimum standards beyond which individuals are free to go? Do we differentiate instructionally and provide for diversification--or is any kind of differentiation to be avoided? Does equality of educational opportunity mean only equal access to knowledge or equal acquisition of the same knowledge?

One of the main themes found in the school reform activities of the states has been that of higher and more rigorous standards for students. Almost all of the states have raised the requirements for graduation from high school, increasing the number of academic courses students must take and reducing the electives and options available. Will mandating higher standards and assessing their attainment result in greater excellence or will it contribute to greater inequity if minority and poor students fail to meet the higher standards? What concept of excellence should guide educators and society?

Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Since the 1960s when Head Start and a variety of other pre-school and early childhood programs came into being to provide compensatory education for the disadvantaged, the education of young children has flourished, but not without controversy. Studies of provisions for early childhood education over the past 20-plus years have not fully resolved the question of whether early intervention is effective. Considerable data are available concerning the lasting effects of compensatory education progams for young children, but the findings are interpreted in different ways and are not considered convincing by critics of such programs. Part of the controversy stems from the tremendous diversity in the quality of such programs and from the differences in the purposes and programs provided.

Nevertheless, pre-school and early childhood programs continue to proliferate. The trends toward the downward extension of programs for pre-schoolers (mainly four-year olds) and the growth of publicly supported all-day kindergarten programs have raised a number of issues. One issue has to do with the benefits and dangers of such programs--whether youngsters are really helped or hurt by such programs in terms of their cognitive, affective and physical growth and development. Another set of issues has to do with the nature of such programs--what are appropriate goals for preschool education? There seems to be consensus that preschool and early childhood programs should not be downward extensions of elementary education. Should the curriculum be academically, affectively, therapeutically or otherwise oriented? How structured should the program be? Some early childhood educators urge that a major, if not primary purpose of early childhood education is to develop the skills and attitudes to become a student or learner--i.e., the program should stress meta-cognition and learning-how-to-learn skills plus positive attitudes toward learning.

One of the more interesting trends of recent years is a questioning of pre-school education on the basis that young children are being pressured too early and pushed too fast academically. Clearly young children have different needs: some require basic experiences to prepare them for more formal schooling while others are ready for enrichment. Overall, the research and evaluation data tend to support the importance of appropriate learning opportunities for young children, especially those who are disadvantaged and considered at-risk.

As has happened in the past, reform reports tend to focus on secondary education as the institution needing "drastic change." However, from time to time as criticisms arise regarding the inability of students to read, write, and spell; to master mathematics and science; to think critically; and to

perform satisfactorily in general, elementary education also comes under scrutiny. In September 1986, Secretary of Education Bennett issued First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America (1986), a document which he described as the first major national report on elementary education since 1953. Some readers of First Lessons were surprised yet pleased by Bennett's conclusion that "American elementary education is not menaced by a 'rising tide of mediocrity.' It is, overall, in pretty good shape. By some measures, elementary schools are doing better now than they have in years. Yet elementary education in the United States could be better still" (p. 1).

Bennett recommends that elementary schools develop a well-defined set of curricular goals and use the whole curriculum for teaching all students to read and write; provide hands-on science experiences; teach students civic, historical, geographic, and cultural literacy through social studies programs based on history, geography, and civics; provide instruction in the arts as integral parts of the program; enable students to grasp the uses and limits of computers; and include instruction in health and physical education. None of these recommendations are very different or controversial. Nor is his advocacy of a strong "reciprocal relationship" between parents, who are "children's first and most influential teachers," and the schools, recognizing that "we face large changes in the structure of the families in which our children are raised" (p. 8). The controversy over Bennett's report centers on his proposals for the development of character and morality; his commitment to phonics in the teaching of reading; his proposal that social studies, not social science be taught; and some of his suggestions for enlarging total instructional time. Among his suggestions for enlarging the total instructional program. Bennett proposes that schools set priorities and permit parents to choose among them:

> Schools need not all assemble the curriculum into identical packages or give precisely the same weight to every element. So long as a minimum "core" is taught by every school in the district, who not encourage diversification and specialization, much as "magnet school" programs do today, and then permit parents to select the curricular emphases and instructional strategies they favor for their chidren. (p. 41)

Bennett's discussion of elementary school professionals--the principal and the teachers--seems to concur with the recommendations of other reports that teachers be involved in significant areas of decision making. One of his Study Group members is quoted in this regard: "Teaching has many of the same characteristics as other professions, including mastery of a body of knowledge. Yet it is denied important rights and responsibilities, such as setting its own standards for judging performance. We tell teachers what they should do, rather than listening to them define what needs to be done" (p. 47). There is little argument that "elementary schools are not established simply to provide protective custody for children" (p. 53); that schools must develop student self-discipline; or that textbooks must be tools for learning, not "a dumping ground for facts" (p. 62). Bennett concludes that "if our communities demand excellence as a goal in their elementary schools, and if principals and teachers are given the necessary resources and professional autonomy, excellence will result" (p. 65). In sum, the Secretary of Education's verdict on elementary

education is that we have the will and the imagination to make elementary schools even better.

When the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1986) recently reported on how poorly American children write, there was a clamor for the schools to start doing better. While the elementary schools may not receive the same kind of overall attention given to secondary schools, colleges and universities, elements of their programs are continually critiqued and the focus calls for change so that we can compete with other nations. There may even be calls for change because significant segments of our pupil populations are not being served as well as they might--such as the disadvantaged at-risk children, the handicapped, the gifted; or areas of their education are not being attended to--such as their affective development.

In this connection, well over 80 percent of Chapter I programs are focused on early childhood and elementary education. Controversy continues regarding the nature of students who participate and the basis for selection--should student selection be based on poverty or low achievement or both? Since a majority of programs are aimed at improving the basic skills areas of reading and mathematics, which curriculum and instructional strategies are most effective with which pupils under which circumstances? Should compensatory education be aimed at remediation or development or both? How shall compensatory activities be integrated with regular instructional activities? How shall schools deal with the issues surrounding bilingual education, including instruction in the child's native language and those with limited or no English? Is there value in teaching conceptual and thinking skills as separate areas of study? Are there cognitive strategy training models which are appropriate for disadvantaged students? To what extent and in what ways should individual diversity--cultural, gender, or economic differences among students--be taken into account in designing instruction for them? Are we putting disadvantaged children at further disadvantage by labeling them as such and placing them in special educational programs? What kinds of programs and services will provide for the affective development of disadvantaged students? Millions of disadvantaged children and youth are in need of compensatory educational services and probably fewer than one-half are involved in Chapter 1 programs; how can all of the students who need assistance be provided with it whether or not supported by federal aid? Closing the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged remains one of American education's greatest challenges, and while research and experiences have provided considerable insights and understandings regarding the nature of appropriate compensatory education, the entire field is subject to a great many controversies.

Discipline/Subject Curriculum Areas

For educators, a perennial curriculum issue involves questions of what should be taught to whom; when, how, under what circumstances; using which materials and resources; and how should it be organized and evaluated. For almost a century, beginning with the report of Committee on Secondary School Studies (better known as the Committee of Ten) in 1893, there have been reports regarding the curriculum. Sometimes these reports have dealt with the curriculum in terms of specific subjects or courses, and sometimes these reports have dealt

with the more general questions of curriculum content, scope, sequence, and integration. The Committee of Ten's report covered the overall secondary school program, proposing ten units of constants and six of electives. The Committee's nine subject area subcommittees spelled out in detail what was to be taught, when to begin, how often, and for how long. Thus taken as a whole, the report of the Committee of Ten dealt with the overall program as well as the substance and methods of the nine subject areas which could be part of it.

In the early 1950s, with Arthur Bestor's Educational Wastelands (1953) in the vanguard, there was a call for abandoning "life adjustment" and "progressive" education and a return to basic academic disciplines and systematic intellectual training. The launching of Sputnik in October 1957 resulted in a decade that was called "The Era of Curriculum Innovation," during which there were calls not only for students to take more mathematics, science, foreign languages and other subjects, but for the development of courses based on the structures of the disciplines with a concern for inquiry training as well. A concern for the disadvantaged and passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 led to major efforts in curriculum and instructional materials development, especially in the area of reading and mathematics at the elementary school level.

Then, in the 1970's, controversy over "curriculum relevance" resulted in the development of alternative and optional curricula, a far cry from the recommendations of a decade before. As one national committee put it: "Every adolescent should, with proper guidance, be able to select those forms of schooling and learning most congenial to his basic learning style, philosophical orientation, and tastes" (Brown, 1973, pp. 99-100).

When the flood of reports appeared in 1983-84, most had a good deal to say about strengthening the curriculum in the sense of courses or a program. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) complained that: "Secondary school curricular have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main course" (p. 18). The Commission's recommendation was that all students be required to take Five New Basics which form "the core of the modern curriculum" and consist of four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science. College-bound high school students were urged to take two years of a foreign language in addition to those taken in the earlier grades. Since its report devoted only a short paragraph to what each of the subject areas should equip graduates to do, the matter of curriculum content and organization are barely touched. In addition, the Commission urged that the "high school curriculum should also provide students with programs requiring rigorous effort in subjects that advance student's personal, educational, and occupational goals, such as fine and performing arts and vocational education. These areas complement the New Basics, and they should demand the same level of performance as the Basics" (p. 26). Since the New Basics occupy 13.5-15.5 units, the time available for these other subject areas is somewhat limited unless the school day is extended in accordance with another recommendation.

Other reports also laid out curriculum priorities. Most included a common core of general education not unlike that of National Commission on Excellence in Education. They criticized the curriculum tracks (academic/ college preparatory, general, and vocational) commonly found in high schools as being inherently discriminatory, creating second-class citizens, and contributing to social inequality. Alder's Paideia Proposal (1982) recommended common objectives and a common curriculum for all K-12 students involving three different modes of teaching and learning to acquire organized knowledge; develop intellectual skills; and enlarge understandings, insights, and aesthetic appreciation. Sizer's Horace's Compromise (1984) recommended organizing high schools into four curriculum areas: (1) inquiry and expression, (2) mathematics and science, (3) literature and the arts, and (4) philosophy and history.

In general, the reports urged more stringent requirements in and "strengthening" of the traditional academic subject areas, fewer "soft non-essential" courses, reduction or elimination of vocational courses, elimination of the general track, and reduction of elective and options. Only the second volume of the report of the National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, Educating Americans for the 21st Century: Source Materials (1983) provided detailed recommendations concerning content scope and sequence for K-12 mathematics, science and technology. Thus, unlike the post-Sputnik reformers who tackled the substance of the curriculum--the content, methods, materials, and organization--and proposed new curricula in most discipline/subject areas, the reformers of the 1980s simply urged, as did the National Commission on Excellence in Education, that various discipline/subject based professional groups continue "to revise, update, improve, and make available new and more diverse curricular materials" (p. 27). The many important issues involved in each of these curricular areas are left to other groups to deal with.

There are a number of issues regarding curriculum in various subject areas--considerable diversity regarding nature and purpose, framework and conceptualization, organizing basis, content, etc. For example, Brubaker, Simon and Williams (1977) have identified five conceptualizations of social studies curricula, including: (1) social studies as knowledge of the past and a guide to good citizenship, (2) social studies in the student-centered tradition, (3) social studies as reflective inquiry, (4) social studies as structure of the disciplines, and (5) social studies as socio-political involvement (p. 201). Each conceptualization implies different objectives, a different content scope, and a different sequence of activities. To recommend or to require three or four years of social studies says nothing about what those years shall consist of nor does it resolve the many curriculum issues in that subject area. As Patrick notes in Chapter XIII, to recommend "a core of common learning" does not answer such questions as "What core content should all students be expected to learn through education in the social studies? Why should they be expected to learn it? How should it be organized and presented to students" (p. 3). Even when there is agreement the core content should be anchored in the social science disciplines, there is disagreement regarding which academic disciplines as well as the selection of content and its sequencing. To what extent should students experience a variety of perspectives of social scientists--historians, geographers, sociologists, political scientists, economists, and others? What

curriculum organization will provide optimum linkage between the past and the present? Should content be organized chronologically? conceptually? thematically? by problem area?

A California State History-Social Sciences Curriculum Advisory Committee (1985) has recommended that the curriculum should provide for "an upward spiral of recurring themes and concepts at gradually more challenging levels...focusing attention on the vitality of history, the development of civic skills, the importance of broad perspectives, the significance of the role of geography, and understanding of our nation's pluralistic society" (p. HS-7). The suggested curriculum also aims to help students "learn to apply abstract reasoning and hypotheses--testing skills, be able to distinguish among relative values, make choices that benefit themselves and others, and have the opportunity to involve themselves in democratic processes" (p. HS-4). The implementation of these goals raises a number of issues: What basic beliefs and ideals about America are to be taught? Which values are to be discussed? How do schools deal with charges of teaching "secular humanism" and all that is implied by that term? What is meant by critical thinking as applied to the substance of social studies? How is cultural pluralism to be understood? How is indoctrination to be avoided? To what extent are local norms and values to be honored when they are in conflict with broader society norms? How will schools deal with the celebration of the bicentennial of the Constitution? Should schools teach students to question national policies and societal traditions? Are teachers able and willing to explore controversial issues with their students?

English

In the the field of English, three language arts curriculum models seem to represent the contemporary thinking of English teachers: (1) the heritage model in which "the point of learning literature and language is to join one's culture and to participate fully in the life of this larger source of meaning;" (2) the process model based on the notion that "children develop best when allowed to develop at their own respective paces, in directions of their own choosing, toward values they discover on their own," and (3) the competencies model which "aims at establishing observable competencies through a curriculum based on discrete, carefully defined tasks which students will master, each at his own rate" (Fancher, 1984, pp. 61-62). Each of these provides different answers to questions concerning content, methods, and materials. In Chapter III, Suhor contrasts the models of English as content (knowing) and English as process (doing) and discusses a number of issues regarding "the selection of appropriate materials and the processing of those materials via oral and written language." His own preference is to view "English as the ordering of personal and vicarious experiences through language." A wide range of issues are still being debated regarding the "body of information that can illuminate content and process instruction in English;" the rationales for and approaches to teaching grammar, including questions of which grammar; the writing process and writing process instruction; the nature and extent of providing different students with different kinds of literature and literature of different quality; optimum ways of "connecting the world of the student with the world of ideas." There seems to be no disagreement that students read with different degrees of competence and comprehension; how should these differences be dealt with--by different goals, content, pedagogical strategies, or none of these? What do "four years of English" mean in this context?

Sciences

In the areas of science and mathematics, the addition of studies in environmental education and technology indicates recent trends and extends the problems and issues. The significant changes which have taken place in the world during the past three or four decades, the opportunities and the problems created as a consequence of these developments, and the new knowledge and the new techologies for processing such knowledge, have all had an impact on the curriculum and teaching of science, mathematics, and related areas. Even before Sputnik in 1957, there had been a concern for the identification and development of America's resources of specialized talent in science, mathematics, and engineering; and worries about enrollments, achievement, teachers and teaching, and pursuit of advanced training (Wolfle, 1954). Sputnik inspired frenetic efforts to catch up and surpass the Russians by upgrading curricula, improving the quality of teachers and teaching, providing counseling and financial aid to those who would enter the fields of science and engineering. These efforts have fallen off in the intervening years although from time to time they have been revived. The introduction of the "new mathematics" in the 1960s was followed by considerable debate, especially as mathematic achievement declined and the need for remediation increased. Were the mathematicians and educators who created the new curricula so wrong? Is the question one of more mathematics or of a different kind of mathematics? If all students should have 12 years of mathematics as Adler (1982) and others advocate, what should be the nature of that mathematics? How do the introduction and availability of calculators and computers affect mathematics instruction?

The "new" curricula in science have also experienced an uneven history. They have focused on science and technology content and processes differently from the traditional treatments. Ecology, food production, health, space, expendible resources, and a variety of other persistent societal problems have become the organizing bases for science programs. Some states have introduced separate courses in technology. In their chapter, Howe et al. observe that "most curricula do not reflect the present state of science and mathematics, the 'information age,' cognitive research on learning and instruction, and the effective use of technology as it relates to the curriculum." Interdisciplinary studies even within the areas of science and mathematics are scarce. Reformers frequently point out that American children do not do particularly well on cross-national studies of science and mathematics achievement. The curriculum patterns--e.g., studying physics or biology over a period of years rather than a single year, or the amount of practical or laboratory work—found in many other countries differ from those common in the United States. If implemented (which seems highly unlikely in light of the time which has elapsed since the proposals were made), would the plan of action proposed by the National Science Board Commission (1983) "for improving mathematics, science and technology education for all American elementary and secondary students so that their achievement is the best in the world by 1995" (p. i) achieve that goal? Are its proposals which call for "sweeping and drastic change: in the breadth of student participation, in our methods and quality of teaching, in the preparation and motivation of our children, in the content of courses, and in the standards of achievement" (pp. v-vi) simply the rhetoric of reform advocates or should they be taken seriously by educational planners?

Language

America, a nation with significant diversity in native languages other than English, seems to be notoriously poor in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Intermittently, there has been a concern about the nation's inadequacies in the area of foreign languages. Sputnik gave a push to foreign language instruction, and foreign language teaching in the elementary school (FLES) became popular in addition to drives to improve instruction at the secondary levels. A minimum of three years of study of a foreign language for college-bound students was one of Conant's (1959) recommendations. Language laboratories proliferated schools at one point only to go the way of much technology after a period of time.

While there has been concern about the quality of teaching and learning and the size of enrollments, there have been two parallel developments that have had or should have had an impact on language instruction. One of these developments has been the large number of students entering schools for whom English is not the native language and who have only limited English fluency, if any. This has been the impetus for the bilingual education, which has in recent years become increasingly controversial, even to the point where there have been drives to make English the "official language" and to eliminate or reduce bilingual programs. The second is widespread instruction programs in the child's native language in settings other than public schools, sponsored by religious or ethnic groups (e.g., Jewish, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.). Thousands of children and youth are taught languages other than English in these settings but their language proficiency is seldom acknowledged by the school systems. When educators discuss the teaching of foreign languages, teaching of English as a second language (TESOL), or bilingual education, usually they focus on only those languages and that instruction which takes place in the school's program.

The major argument usually advanced for foreign language teaching is the one Clark refers to in his chapter:

> Proficiency in foreign languages is crucial to the United States' political as well as economic ties with the rest of the world...it is now a vital practical endeavor for every American student whose goal is the effective use of foreign language in real-life situations.

A number of issues have been posed for educational planners. Which students have or should have as a goal "the effective use of foreign languages in real-life situations?" What kinds of real-life situations? Those who will be engaged in international economic ventures or those who will be involved in business or other activities in settings locally where languages other than English is spoken? Which languages? Is second language proficiency in general the goal or is the goal only language proficiency in a second language with practical use? A few years ago, Russian was the "prestige" language to be learned; since then, Chinese and Japanese have risen in prestige and importance. In real-life situations, Spanish is probably the dominant language; should it, therefore, be the second language taught?

Bilingual education and teaching English as a second language have become significant components of compensatory education programs, especially as large numbers of youngsters, children of legal and illegal immigrants, enter school with limited or no English proficiency. While several reform reports stressed the importance of learning English, the Twentieth Century Fund report (1983) was perhaps the most direct in advocating that federal government declare the development of literacy in English language as the most important objective of education, and recommending the bilingual education funds be used instead "to teach non-English-speaking children how to speak, read, and write English" (p. 12). The significance of being literate in English in order to succeed in America is not seriously questioned by any of the proponents or opponents of bilingual education. For some, however, it is paradoxical that there should be concern about second/foreign language learning on the one hand, but unwillingness to recognize the validity of sutdents' native language proficiency. For others, the ignoring of research regarding the significance of the mother tongue in language acquisition is troublesome. Thus, it is of interest to find that language educators and linguisticians are becoming increasingly involved in content-based English language instruction, the teaching of English through the language of subject matter content, particularly science, mathematics, and social studies.

In every other subject area--e.g., the arts, health and physical education, home economics/family life education--there are basic curriculum issues. The "back to the basics" movement and the mandating of a common core curriculum and increased requirements have raised serious questions about the significance of "non-core" studies and have often placed limitations on their availability even as optional studies. There are, as noted above, significant issues which have to do with uniformity and diversity regarding subjects to be studied and the content and processes within those subject areas.

Vocational and Career Education

Certainly since the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, vocational education has become an integral and firmly established part of secondary education. Nevertheless, it seems to have been continuously enmeshed in controversy regarding its validity and effectiveness. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 represented a major federal effort to expand and improve vocational education. In the early 1970s, the federal government sponsored a major project in the area of career education which supposedly encompassed vocational education but was intended to include much more. The need for an effective education-work policy was one of the significant themes of the reform reports of the 1970s. But, vocational education did not fare very well in the reform reports of the 1980s. For many, vocational education remained an unfulfilled promise. For others, it was not just a failed dream but a positive act of discrimination for many students who participated in such programs.

As Boyer (1983) pointed out, a number of factors cast doubt on the value of vocational education including a tenuous link to job opportunities ("job prospects for graduates of vocational programs are not much better, overall, than they are for students in nonspecialized curriculum," p. 12), the programs lack up-to-date and adequate resources, educators are unable to keep up with

shifting labor practices, and, perhaps most important, vocational students are short-changed academically. Boyer's proposal, unlike some of the other reformers of the 1980s, was not to abolish vocational courses and programs but rather to eliminate "discriminatory labels and a tracking pattern that assume some students need no further education and that cut off their options. We would also eliminate the narrow 'marketable' skills courses that have little intellectual substance, courses that give students 'hands-on' experience while denying them a decent education" (p. 127)

Tracking and ability grouping have been the focus of considerable controversy for the last 70 years or so. Several of the recent reformers (e.g., Adler, 1982; Boyer, 1983; and Goodlad, 1983) have condemned tracking--the practice of placing students into academic, vocational, or general programs--as providing a second-class education for those not in the academic track, depriving them of equal access to knowledge. Their recommendation is to abolish the three-track system and provide instead for, as Goodlad put it, "a common core of studies from which students cannot escape through electives" (p. 297).

It was against this background that The National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education was formed in January 1984 to undertake a study on the assumption that "recent national study reports have not adequately dealt with the role of secondary vocational education" (p. vii). Its report, The Unfinished Agenda: The Role of Vocational Education in the High School (1985), was seen as filling "the gap left by other educational commissions in the interest of achieving a more balanced perspective on secondary school reform" (p. vii). Vocational education, the report asserted "is both a body of knowledge and an educational process, but the educational process has not received the degree of attention it deserves. Vocational education's potential to respond to diverse learning styles has been underutilized" (p. 4). The Commission identified and examined "existing problem areas" and made a number of recommendations, some of which dealt with access to vocational education, equity of educational opportunity, improvements in the content of vocational courses and development of an integrated curriculum, upgraded teacher recruitment and preparation, and more relevant standards and accountability.

Whether The Unfinished Agenda is indeed "a new vision for the critical role of vocational education in the secondary schools" which "should produce changes and improvements toward the end that the diverse needs of American youth for improved learning and career development opportunities are fulfilled" (p. vi) is debatable but it is an effort to deal with many significant issues concerning the role and function of vocational education. Vocational educators argue for the importance of vocational courses and career education for a sizable portion of the high school population. Is there a career-related curriculum which should be part of the common core of studies for all students? How important is vocational education in keeping youngsters from dropping out of school? Are vocational programs without "intellectual substance" as some of its critics claim? Do courses which give students hands-on experience deprive them of a "decent education" or are such courses the means for providing a relevant education? Is it possible for schools to deal adequately with the changing workplace and the development of new technologies? When he introduced

the concept of career education in 1971, the then-U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney Marland, Jr., asserted that all education should be career education and that career education should be an integral part of all general education. Fifteen years of career education curriculum development has followed. How should career education be conceived in the light of the criticisms and recommendations of the reformers?

Adult Literacy

As Miller and Imel point out in Chapter I, "Adult illiteracy is a complex, costly social problem. Each year, an estimated 2.3 million persons join the existing pool of those 27 million adults who are functionally illiterate." How is this possible in one of the world's most developed nations? However functional illiteracy is defined or conceived, it represents a significant problem for illiterate individuals and society at large. What can schools do to upgrade student literacy and thus prevent adult illiteracy? Are the volunteer programs which are intermittently organized an effective means for combatting adult illiteracy? What can research contribute to an understanding of adult learners which can be used to prevent or alleviate illiteracy?

Teachers and Teaching

In its findings regarding teachers and teaching, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) reported "that not enough of the academically able students are being attracted to teaching; that teacher preparation programs need substantial improvement; that the professional working life of teachers is on the whole unacceptable and that a serious shortage exists in key fields" (p.22). In retrospect, these were some of the kinder observations about the quality of teachers and teaching made by the reformers of the 1980s. The Commission included seven recommendations aimed at improving the preparation of teachers and making "teaching a more rewarding and respected profession" (p. 30). These recommendations, which deal with selection and preparation of teachers, inducements for recruiting more able students into teaching, inservice continuing education for teachers, appropriate compensation, career ladders, master teachers, and employment of qualified individuals without pedagogical experience, have the the focus of many state legislative activities.

Two important reports have been issued recently, both of which have been widely discussed and debated: a report by a group of deans of schools of education called the Holmes Group (1985) titled Tommorow's Teachers, and another by a Task Force of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) titled A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century. The Holmes Group set five major goals for its members: (1) To strengthen the liberal arts foundation and "make the education of teachers intellectually sound"; (2) "To recognize differences in knowledge, skill, and commitment among teachers" through changing the structure of the teaching profession; (3) "To create honest standards of entry into the profession of teaching"; (4) "To connect schools of education with schools"; and (5) "To make schools better places in which teachers can work and learn" (Murray, 1986, pp. 30-31). Probably its two most controversial recommendations are (1) the removal of professional studies from the undergraduate curriculum and placing them entirely at the graduate level, and (2) eliminating the undergraduate major in education.

As those familiar with the history of teacher education know, these are hardly new proposals and their most significant themes are ones which have recurred certainly since the Carnegie Report in 1920. For example, the issue of the balance between the general/liberal arts education and the professional education studies in the preparation of teachers--what Borrowman (1977) called the "liberal" and "technical"--has regularly surfaced for decades. What is new is the packaging of the proposals and the strategies for getting them implemented, capitalizing on the current reform reports' depiction of the poor quality of teachers and teacher education as a central cause for the current crises in education. Since 1983, governors, state legislatures, and state education departments have been busily engaged in reforming teacher education programs (both preservice and inservice), teacher certification, career ladders, merit pay, teacher salaries, and other elements of teaching.

In Chapter XIV, Ashburn raises three crucial questions about teacher preparation. What characterizes competent teachers? What is the curriculum for developing competent beginning teachers? How is competence of teachers measured? These are perennial issues concerning teacher preparation although there has been an increase in the intensity with which they have been studied in recent years. The Holmes Group and Carnegie Forum reports make recommendations which are intended to deal at least in part with these issues.

The Carnegie Forum report focuses on the workplace in relation to teacher education for, as Ashburn puts it, "few individuals with the capacity for competence will want to work in a setting which does not appreciate, support, or allow competence." In Chapter IV, Ellis et al. examine two related issues: (1) teacher selection and the problems of attracting achievers and leaders into the profession, and (2) enhancing school effectiveness through collegial observation and feedback. They argue the "theme common to both issues is that the key to attracting and retaining capable people to teaching lies in transformation of teachers' work environment--replacing the bureaucratic model of schooling with the professional model" (p. 1).

There are many "players"--state agencies, colleges and universities, boards of education, unions and professional organizations, community organizations, etc.--involved in improving school effectiveness by improving the recruitment, selection, education, induction, retention, and continuing education of staffs. Progress toward resolving the many issues concerned with upgrading the quality of teachers and of teaching will depend on the strategies used to involve these groups in recognizing and making decisions concerning the issues.

Special Education

Disadvantaged Students. One of the most significant pieces of legislation affecting special education was passage in 1975 of P.L. 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, requiring that all handicapped children between ages 3-18 be provided with an appropriate education in a least restrictive environment. The requirements that whenever possible special education students be "mainstreamed" (i.e., placed within regular classrooms for as much of their education as possible) and that each special education student be provided with a cooperatively developed individualized education plan (IEP) have raised a number of issues regarding their implementation.

A significant issue involves the designation of children for categorical special education programs. Disadvantaged children tend to be overrepresented in such programs. Poor children, children from racial and ethnic minorities, and children with limited or no English are more likely to have learning problems and, as a consequence, be referred to various special education programs rather than provided for in the regular classroom.

The issue also involves the relationship between special education and regular education, whether they are separate and distinct parts of a dual service delivery system or components of a single education system. There are those who worry that regular education teachers lack the training and professional insights to provide adequately for special education students within their classrooms. Others argue that individualization of instruction is essential in all educational settings, and that much of teaching of special education students should take place in the less restrictive environment of the regular classroom with only special needs of such students provided in separate settings.

Other issues in the area of special education deal with the nature of appropriate educational and developmental experiences for at-risk children under age three and with the transition of special education students from secondary school to work. The at-risk infants pose special problems regarding appropriate interventions and coordination with other agencies. The issues concerned with the transition of special education students from school to work are particularly complex since they involve employers, changes in labor force needs, competition for scarce jobs, etc.

The reform reports have had relatively little to say about special education. The stress on excellence in education, with less than adequate attention to equity issues, results in special education students "not [being] considered worthy or needy of educational attention." Possibly this position is due to the reformers' perception that special education is "a separate, parallel enterprise that is only distantly related to general education" (Lilly, 1987, p. 325). Shephard (1987) suggests that the reformers "ignored special education because attention to the educational needs of a low-achieving group runs counter to the new emphasis on excellence and higher standards.... Higher standards for all students will exaggerate the tendency to refer difficult children to special education" (p. 320).

Gifted Students

With the emphasis of the reformers on "excellence in education," one would have expected that the gifted would receive special attention but, in fact, explicit attention to this population is minimal. There seems to be consensus that the gifted are exceptional, but beyond this, there is less agreement than might be expected. Although gifted education is often associated with special education, the gifted do not share in the same kind of financial or policy support as the handicapped. There are a variety of issues involved in all aspects of gifted education--conception and definition of giftedness, identification procedures, provision of appropriate differentiated curriculum, filling of counselling needs, selection and education of teachers of the gifted,

provision of adequate learning environments, etc. There are continuing debates about the issues of appropriateness of acceleration versus enrichment, special classes and programs vis-a-vis instructional modifications within the regular classroom, whether such provisions contribute to elitism, how to deal with underachievement, what constitutes a balance between the cognitive and affective development of the gifted, etc. While gifted and talented students are often perceived as "precious natural resources," efforts to provide them with special programs, opportunities, and resources for them have waxed and waned in cycles over the years.

Urban and Minority Education

Almost every issue of concern to American education is present in intense form in the vortex of urban education. Urban education does not consist only of disadvantaged students, but it is the education of those students which causes the greatest concern. While Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (replaced by Chapter I of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act in 1981) was not limited to urban schools, it was in those schools that the largest concentrations of poor and minority students were found. It is in those schools where the "effective schooling" studies were done: inquiries into the functioning of schools in which achievement exceeded the predicted levels.

There are a host of issues concerned with various aspects of what has become known as "compensatory education." What should be the basis of selection of students for programs and service--poverty or poor academic achievement or both? What should be the focus of instructional services? What are the consequences of pull-out programs on the overall development and achievement of disadvantaged students? Should programs and services be concentrated on schools with high poverty levels or poor achievement? Are there optimal curricular or instructional strategies available to guide planners? Can we teach thinking and conceptual skills to disadvantaged youngsters as generic skills? Does research provide clear guidance regarding instructional strategies to be used with low-achieving students? To what extent should cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity be taken into account in designing instruction and curriculum? Are there special counseling needs for disadvantaged students? How should Chapter I programs be integrated with the remainder of the school's programs? Some 15 years ago, Passow (1971) wrote: "What the crisis in urban education has done is to stimulate a total rethinking of the educative process--the goals, the means, the resources, the strategies, the relationships. The 'tinkering approach' having proved less than adequate, the 'do something, try harder' stance having failed, we may now be ready for more comprehensive reforms based on sound research, theory, and experience." (p. 40). In the intervening years, "more comprehensive reforms" have not yet materialized so that the issues concerning urban education continue.

From the range of available issues, Flaxman and Riehl, in Chapter XVI, identify three which are significant concerns for urban educators: (1) preventing school dropouts, (2) improving secondary education for Hispanic students, and (3) attracting and retaining high quality teachers for urban schools. They indicate how these issues are not limited to urban schools but are more intense and critical in those settings.

The school dropout problem is, of course, not a new concern but one which has taken on new significance in terms of its consequences. Recent research has shifted from study of the characteristics and behaviors of dropouts to study of the school context and how it interacts with student variables to affect dropping out. Vocational and general tracks have apparently not contributed to keeping students in schools to the extent that it was thought they did. If low academic achievement and behavior problems in school are the most significant predictors of dropping out, what school actions will raise achievement and reduce behavior problems? Can potential dropouts be identified and early interventions provided them? To what extent are school dropouts actually school pushouts? What programs will help students return to school and become involved in programs and opportunities sufficiently different from those which helped drive the student out of school in the first place? What effect will the drive for educational excellence, increasing graduation requirements, and raising standards have on the dropout rate? Will it, as some reformers argue, raise school achievement and curtail dropping out?

The academic achievement, high school graduation, and college entrance rates of Hispanic students are among the lowest, and the dropout rate is among the highest of any group. Enrolled mainly in vocational and general programs, only a fraction of those Hispanic students who do graduate are apparently academically prepared for higher education. Many Hispanic students have only limited English proficiency. Urban schools seem unable to meet the needs of Hispanic students and they perceive the curriculum as irrelevant. The special counseling needs of Hispanic students are often not met; they often receive neither academic nor career guidance. Although many Hispanic youth work during high school in order to help their families, this work experience is neither recognized nor integrated into the students' programs. Their vocational education experiences appear to be of dubious value. Thus, a large majority of Hispanic student are at-risk for dropping out. How can schools be reorganized to serve Hispanic students better? What kinds of curriculum modifications are needed? Will mixed ability groupings in small, diverse academic and support units improve the academic achievement and self-esteem of Hispanic students? Will educational alternative programs help alleviate or exacerbate the problems of Hispanic students? Of what value is bilingual education to high school Hispanic students?

Attracting and retaining a high quality urban teaching force is part of the large problem of improving the quality of teaching. Flaxman and Riehl in Chapter XVI suggest that the quality of urban teaching could be improved by better preservice programs, better recruitment practices, and better work conditions so that competent teachers will have a better chance to succeed with urban students. Will the proposals for reforming teacher education--such as those of the Holmes Group or the Carnegie Forum--help the urban teaching force, or will they make it even more difficult to recruit and retain a quality teaching force? The issues of attracting and educating minority teachers have not been dealt with adequately in most of the reform proposals. Nor have the special skills and competencies needed for success with urban children and youth been clearly defined. What kinds of support services are required to reduce teacher stress, prevent teacher burnout and give them a chance of success with the at-risk student in the urban setting?

In some areas, large numbers of American Indians are enrolled in urban schools and are part of the culturally diverse pupil populations. American Indians and Alaska Natives have the highest dropout rate of any ethnic group and the achievement gap between their performance and that of white students widens as the students progress through school. The separation rate of American Indian families is higher than the rest of the population and Indian child welfare has become a matter of serious concern. A long history of discrimination suffered by American Indians seems to have contributed to their children being among those students most seriously at-risk.

The educational condition of Mexican American children, part of America's fast-growing Hispanic minority, is not much different from that of the American Indians with respect to low academic performance, low number of school years completed, high dropout rate, and high rates of illiteracy. They tend to be enrolled in over-crowded, poorly equipped schools which may or may not be in urban areas. Because of housing patterns, the schools have minority enrollments of more than 50 percent. Many of the Mexican Americans have limited English proficiency. In high schools, they are generally found in general or vocational programs, seldom in academic tracks. Mexican-American enrollments in higher education are among the lowest among minorities.

A third disadvantaged group, which often overlaps with minority status as well, are the children of migrant worker families. With a high rate of transiency, migrant children have serious schooling and related problems. While they have many problems in common with urban student populations, each of these disadvantaged groups has cultural or ethnic characteristics which contribute to special needs. Many of the issues--how to raise school performance, reduce illiteracy, cut the dropout rate, increase college going, and generally enable these groups to enter the socioeconomic mainstream--are similar to those of urban populations.

Education and Information Technology

From time to time, a new medium is introduced which, its advocates believe, will surely revolutionize education. Presently, it is microcomputers but, as Ely notes in Chapter VIII, "Some of the same patterns were evident when educational radio, silent and sound motion pictures, slides and filmstrips, overhead projectors, language laboratories, and programmed instruction were introduced to the educational establishment" (p. 2).

The National Science Board's Commission (1983) observed that the United States, which had "dramatically and boldly led the world into the age of technology," was now failing to educate its children for the coming decades" (p. xii). In its report, Educating Americans for the 21st Century, the Commission links mathematics, science, and technology as basic subjects to be studied by all students: "Students must be prepared to understand technological innovation, the productivity of technology, the impact of products on technology, and the need for critical evaluation of societal matters involving the consequences of technology" (p. 44). The Commission also noted that: "Computers are revolutionizing many areas of our lives; they may well do the same for education" (p. xii). In its discussion of new technology currently available to educators,

the Commission included computers, educational television, computer-based telecommunications, videodisc systems, and robotics.

Thus there are two aspects of technology of interest to educators--technology as a subject to be studied (e.g., one-half year of computer science is one of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's Five New Basics) and technology as an instructional resource. Boyer (1983) talks about (1) learning about computers, (2) learning with computers, and (3) learning from computers.

Whether the focus is on technology as subject matter content or technology as an instructional resource, there are a number of issues which must be confronted. If, as the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) recommends, students should "understand the world of computers, electronics, and related technologies" (p. 26), of what does that world consist? Should the study of technology be required for all? Should technology be taught as a separate course or set of courses, or should it be part of other academic or vocational subjects? With respect to technology as an instructional resource, what are appropriate uses? Will high quality software be available for all intended uses? What new skills are required for teachers to use educational technology appropriately and effectively? How can equity be assured in the access to new technology so that the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged does not widen? Will technology be used to customize and individualize instruction or simply to facilitate instructional management without differentiation? Some predictions foresee greater linkages between technology at home and that in the classrooms--particularly videocassettes, cable television, and computers. Will these occur and how will they they affect teaching and learning? As Ely cautions in Chapter VIII, technology relates to all fields and disciplines: "When technology becomes an issue in itself, we should recycle our concerns back to the beginning by asking, 'What is it we want to do? Who are the learners? How will we know when we are successful?'"

Testing, Measurement and Evaluation

Coupled with the proposal of most reform groups to raise standards is a recommendation for more and more frequent testing in order to establish greater accountability for students and teachers. In addition, coupled with the proposals to get better teachers is the recommendation for more testing of teachers at all stages of their preparation and certification.

State after state has responded with mandates for minimum competency testing at more and more grades. A variety of issues are raised by this trend. Are testing programs driving the curriculum? Do the tests have content, curricular, and instructional validity? Do the tests measure knowledge acquisition without assessing higher order thinking skills? Do the tests really contribute to raising standards? To what extent, if any, do the minimum competencies become perceived as the maximum competencies? Do the minimum competency tests discriminate against specific racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups? Do testing programs contribute to the dropout rate?

Testing is used for a variety of selection purposes--e.g., to select students for various grouping and tracks, for remedial and enrichment programs,

or for counseling. A number of districts, however, have barred the use of group intelligence tests since they are considered discriminatory against racial or ethnic minorities. Other districts prohibit the use of tests of personality, values, critical thinking, and other affective areas. Are such tests discriminatory or is it the purposes and ways they are used which warrant questioning their value and/or validity? Do we know enough about the assessment of individual differences to provide differentiated programs and select youngsters for them?

In the wake of the reform reports, more and more states are testing teachers for initial certification and a few are testing teachers already in service. The most widely used test is the National Teachers Examination (NTE), although several states are developing their own tests. Two areas of knowledge are usually tested--general and professional. What general knowledge and what professional knowledge should be included? A basic issue is whether the tests, either the NTE or state-developed, are related to success in the classroom; is there any relationship to a score on the NTE and the individual's teaching competence? Does the test indicate at least minimal teaching competence? Should a paper-and-pencil test replace evaluations based on observed performance in determining whether to continue the appointment of teachers already in service?

Guidance and Counseling

According to Walz in Chapter II, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in and demand for counseling services, much of it in the areas of mental health, family counseling, and adult counseling. Most of the counseling and guidance services still take place in school and colleges, and deal with personal, educational/academic, and vocational/career counseling. Over the years, there has been continuing controversy concerning the value and effectiveness of such counseling, whether populations are better served by individual or group counseling, whether those individuals and groups most in need of such services are receiving them, and whether counselors have the skills and competence to meet their clients' needs.

A very sizeable group--possibly as many as 2.5 million youths, according to Walz in Chapter II--can be considered "at risk of being alienated from school, society, and work." The bases for considering youth at-risk are many and include suicide, pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, chronic truancy, juvenile delinquency, and unemployment. When academic underachievement and school discipline problems are added, the at-risk population becomes staggering. To whom will youngsters turn for assistance and support--counselors, peers, teachers, families, other agencies? Do counselors really play a significant role in assisting at-risk students? Counselors have been accused of discriminating, consciously or unconsciously, against minority youth; is there a basis for these charges? The traditional approach to vocational/career guidance has shifted with the growth of theory regarding career development; are counselors able and do they have the resources to provide effective career guidance to all students? Should various populations such as minorities, women, handicapped, or older adults, receive priority delivery of guidance services, especially career guidance? How effective are the new approaches to career guidance--self-managed, networking, group counseling, computers, systems designs?

Higher Education

The reform reports of the 1980s, aimed primarily at the high school, began to move on to higher education, raising a whole series of questions about the roles and programs of colleges and universities which are as comprehensive, varied and inclusive as those for elementary and secondary education. Included among these issues are questions about the philosophy and purpose of higher education in America today; the curriculum (how much should be liberal arts/general education-based and how much career oriented/professional studies-based); appropriate standards; who should be admitted (e.g., should greater efforts be made to attract and retain minority and "non-traditional" students); the distribution of scarce resources; the development of non-traditional programs; staffing patterns (full- and part-time; traditional and non-traditional); faculty assessment (reappointment, promotion, and tenure); balance between teaching, research, and service; relationships with corporations, government, and industry); provision for at-risk students; etc.

Many of these same issues apply to the two-year community colleges as well. The purposes and functions of community college have varied. They have included providing occupational preparation for careers requiring less than a baccalaureate education, the first two years of a baccalaureate program, remedial studies, continuing education, adult education, and community cultural services. The shift which took place some 20 or so years ago from "junior college" to "community college" represented a fundamental change in goals and purposes. Institutions were no longer simply two-year versions of four-year institutions, catering to academically weaker students or ones who wished to start higher education nearer to home. Instead, community colleges had a clear purpose of their own for a constituency which was quite distinct.

Community colleges have traditionally been "open door" insitutions and, in some states, are perceived as extensions of the common school without the compulsory attendance requirement. This open access policy raises fundamental questions regarding the limits, if any, which should be set in admitting students. Should higher admission standards be set even if they appear to discriminate against some groups? Should functionally illiterate students be accepted in all or only some programs? Should remedial classes be provided and, if so, should they be compulsory? What bases should be used to assess the success of the community college? Should community colleges maintian the comprehensive curricula presently available, or should they set priorities among these various curricular as resources decline? What are appropriate bases for making decisions regarding priorities? How can the programs of community colleges and secondary schools be articulated so that both institutions would improve? Should the community college offer programs that serve a social cohesion function, leading students, as Cohen puts it in Chapter IX, "to a sense of their nation's heritage, shared understandings, community values, a common language."

Non-school Education Agencies

Education and socialization take place in a variety of settings other than schools--families, religious institutions, libraries, museums, youth groups, the

media, etc. As the National Science Board's Commission (1983) observed: "Much that affects the quality of formal education occurs outside the classroom and beyond the control of the school" (p. 59). While there is increasing activity involving the creation of partnerships between business-industry and the schools, these seem to deal primarily with securing financial and personnel support. There is relatively little attention being given specifically to the schools and education in non-school settings. (For an exception, see Fantini & Sinclair, 1985.) How can schools relate to and capitalize on the formal and informal learning opportunities which exist outside the classroom structure? The reformers of the 1970s put a heavy stress on community-based experiential learning which moved learning out of the classroom into the community, a step toward articulating learning opportunities with those of the non-school educative agencies.

Some Concluding Observations and Reflections

These personal observations and reflections on trends and issues in education are made some three years after the current wave of school reform was initiated. Educators, politicians, governmental agencies, community groups, corporations, and other groups are all involved in school reform and many of them are "taking credit" for having moved schools and colleges toward higher levels of excellence, usually defined in terms of higher test scores. Some comments on this perception seem in order.

1. Crises in education and calls for reform in American education seem to be perennial. Historical traditions must be brought to bear to understand better the current trends and issues. The problem with the ahistorical approach taken by many erstwhile reformers is that they may not correctly perceive the situation nor ask the right questions. In all of the reform reports of the 1980s there are scarcely any references to the reform reports of the 1970s which undertook similar analyses of the "ills of American education" but came to very different conclusions and recommendations scarely ten years apart.

2. As suggested at the outset, calls for reform may not match the conditions of schooling which need change at the moment. Although he made his own recommendations for improving American education, Goodlad (1983) described the current proposals for curriculum reform as follows:

> The "obvious" and "logical" solutions to the schools' curricular inadequacies being bandied about today are those that were most frequently bandied about yesterday and the day before that. Essentially, they involve a "get tough" approach combined with a dose of elitism. Course requirements in basic subjects are to be extended; textbooks are to become "harder," with less watering down to the lowest common denominators of student abilities. (p. 29)

Noting that reformers are "quick to assume that declining high school test scores can be attributed to shortcomings in the educational system," Peterson (1983) suggests that other factors may be at work "such as increased use of drugs and alcohol, a rise in the percentage of students who live in single

parent households, and declining employment opportunities--and no one has been able to establish that changes in the classroom, independent of changes in the larger society, are to blame for drops in test results" (p. 4). Nor, it might be added, has it been convincingly established that the drop in test results is the critical cause in America's declining industrial and commercial fortunes.

3. For the past two decades or so, the change process has been systematically studied. It is clear that there are limits on the changes which legislative mandates, commission recommendations, and other external agencies and groups can effect. Ultimately, changes in curriculum and instruction depend on changes in people. A major issue which tends to be ignored by reformers other than by exhortation and directive is the question of how to bring about real changes in curriculum and teaching, changes which will enable us to achieve the twin goals of equity and excellence more meaningfully than would be manifested by higher test scores.

4. Although there is considerable rhetoric regarding the need for educating our children and youth for the future (e.g., Educating Americans for the 21st Century), we seem not to be clear about what kind of future. In addition to the questions we have been asking, perhaps there are some others. For example, toward what goals and ends should our education be directed if we are to prepare our children for the future? Toward what knowledge, skills, understandings, values, insights, self-concepts? Will our nation be at less risk if we increase the number of courses in science, mathematics, and technology our students take, or must the curriculum provide a qualitatively different kind of mathematics and science, one which has moral and aesthetic as well knowledge dimensions? How do we educate creative, productive individuals who are also concerned with ethics, morality, and social responsibility?

Although we find it difficult to comprehend the real meaning of the "knowledge explosion," we are constantly informed that such an explosion is occurring. How do we deal with this knowledge explosion in the curriculum, other than by telling students that it is happening? What criteria do we use to select content and processes for inclusion in the curriculum from this exponentially increasing knowledge base? Should we teach youngsters about the nature of knowledge? About theories of knowledge? About how knowledge is produced?

In a world beset with problems--the possibility of nuclear annihilation, terrorism, widespread hunger and disease, environmental pollution, totalitarianism, disinformation, and daily and continuing crises of every kind--what kinds of curricular experiences will nuture consciousness, concern, personal responsibility, and commitment in our students so that they will not blindly ignore these threats to the survival of humankind and will use their talents toward the resolution of these problems?

How do we teach individuals the skills of cooperative behavior? What kind of education will help students to become issue-oriented, willing and able to understand the vital issues which individuals and societies face and to attempt to come to grips with them? What kind of an education will nourish the learning-how-to-learn skills, the higher order thinking skills, the creativity, the motivation needed by our youngsters to function in today's society and into the next century?

These personal observations and reflections on the trends and issues in American education suggest that it is not that we have been asking the wrong questions and confronting the wrong issues but rather that we might think of asking some additional ones. America needs intelligent, skilled, caring, compassionate, creative individuals not only to compete industrially with Japan, West Germany, or other nations, and to compete militarily with the U.S.S.R., but because our nation believes a society is not healthy unless each individual fulfills his/her own potential. Our educators need to ask whether our schools are really producing persons who can do so and what must be done to ensure this in the years ahead.

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