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Adding Soft-Skills to the Hard Target of Adequacy:  
The Case for Rearticulation Based on a Multifocal Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to expand the definition of adequacy by adding soft skills as a measure of school productivity. The singular focus on academic standards inherent in education policy has prevented scholars from seeing the concept of adequacy through myriad perspectives and has contributed to a resegregation of schools. Education policy includes legal, historical, and political perspectives; research inquiries must accommodate these multiple foci. This study made use of multifocal analysis to investigate the development of the concept of adequacy in South Carolina. Conclusions suggest an expanded definition of adequacy has potential for addressing school financing policy, but also for making historical, political and legal contributions to educational and economic policies aimed at repurposing schools.

## Introduction

Today's education policy promotes a singular focus on academic standards and circumvents policy equilibrium among the multiple purposes for schooling. In particular, federal and state policy foci alternate between concepts of access and adequacy and fail to acknowledge additional policy perspectives. Education policy's evolution and implementation include legal, historical, financial, and political perspectives.

The links among finance systems, curriculum, instruction and assessment rest at the heart of adequacy studies. Studies of adequacy tend to dwell on analysis of sufficient allocation of resources in order to attain intended educational outcomes. Today's overemphasis on standardized testing as the sole, or even most important, outcome of public schools ignores myriad purposes for schooling. Among these purposes, the public directs schools to provide students with skills necessary for participation in the political system as well as training required to enter the workforce and participate in the economic system. The inquiry presented in this paper explores the multiple ways in which adequacy has been conceptualized. Throughout the investigation we are cognizant of the fact that adequacy is related to discussions of access and equity.

As budgets shrink across the nation, policy makers face demands for reorganizing public spending on education. Currently, some are concerned with the role education plays in preparing students to be competitive in a global market place (Friedman 2005; González Sullivan 2007; Metz ). One impetus shaping the schools' role in increasing competitiveness stipulates the development of soft skills (Cutler 2006; Gewertz, 2007). Our study is prefaced on the notion that a reexamination of adequacy helps the education community to think differently about the historical tensions that arise from the challenges of educating diverse student populations with

singular attention to achievement without considering the need to develop cross-cultural competence in a diverse world.

The purpose of this inquiry is to trace the many lenses through which the term adequacy has been conceptualized. We postulate that adequacy is a concept developed through an historical, discursive construction of community (Fischer 2003; Rorty 1999; Scheurich 1997; Yanow 1996). We offer a multi-focal view (Young 1999) of how adequacy is defined in multiple communities such as the academic community of educational finance researchers, the legal communities embodied in the Supreme Court and state courts' decisions. In addition we also show how these definitions are deployed in the politics of a specific locality, South Carolina, across time. We believe that this approach facilitates policy dialogue by providing descriptions of how different actors in policy discussions construct their arguments around adequacy. Specifically, we focus on the recent arguments surrounding the possibility of expanding the definition of adequacy to include soft skills, such as communication, problem solving, collaboration, adaptation, and cross-cultural competence (Gewertz, 2007; Levine, 2007; Uy, 2008).

Methodologically, we employ a “multifocal” policy analysis design (Young, 1999, p. 679). A multifocal approach monitors policy intent, implementation, and impact on individuals at all stages from multiple perspectives. Taking a multi-framed view enables researchers to troubleshoot and rethink traditional concepts (Young, 1999 p. 706). In this study, four methodological approaches offer insights that may have been under-considered or overlooked: (a) an analysis of scholarly literature in educational finance that explains the attempt to find a link between the definitions of equity and adequacy, (b) legal analysis of how courts have interpreted the concepts of equity, access, and soft skills, (c) an historical analysis that explores

the ways in which discussions around adequacy have intersected with discussions of soft skills and segregation in South Carolina from the late 1940s through the 1970s and (d) a political analysis of access and adequacy discourse impacting curriculum, instruction, and testing. Three questions guided the inquiry:

1. How is adequacy defined?
2. How have different communities located the responsibility for providing an adequate education?
3. How has knowledge and skills of students who have been the recipient of an adequate education been defined?

The choice of multifocal analysis is appropriate because it enabled researchers to better answer all three questions. The debate to define adequacy in public schools has taken place in multiple venues among some degree of competition between hard measures of achievement and civic demands for soft skills as an outcome of an adequate education. Each perspective contributes to policymakers' understanding of the concept and how schools might respond in order to provide an adequate education.

#### Finance Lens

The concepts of equity, adequacy, and equality of educational opportunity have been examined through the lens of school finance with scholars relying on the use of state constitutions and judicial analyses to discern the implementation of these concepts. King, Swanson and Sweetland (2005) argue that equity is an ethical value that influences school finance and includes issues such as factors of condition and appropriateness of treatment. The provision of educational resources can be described by three principles of equity: (a) horizontal equity, (b) vertical equity, and (c) equality of opportunity (Berne & Steifel, 1984). The concept

of horizontal equity assumes that when no differences exist between individuals, they should be treated the same. In discussions of school finance, horizontal equity assumes equal dollars allocated per pupil or equal funding through equal tax rates. Vertical equity refers to different treatment of individuals as a result of justifiable or relevant differences. One justifiable basis for differential treatment in educational funding is providing services for students having special needs. Equal opportunity as defined by Berne and Steifel (1984) is the condition in which no differences in treatment exist based on characteristics such as race, gender, national origin or other characteristics that would be considered illegitimate. Until recently, all equity studies have been based on horizontal equity or equality of opportunity; equity claims have been brought based on funding disparities available to high-spending districts versus low-spending districts (Guthrie, 2008; King, Swanson & Sweetland, 2005; Verstegen, 1988).

In practice, equity, or equalization, became a policy focus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the work of Cubberley (Guthrie, 2008). Cubberley's work advocated for the elimination of revenue generating inequities that resulted from the unequal distribution of property wealth. Carey (2002) notes that state funding formulas fall under four categories: (a) flat grants, (b) foundation plans, (c) power equalization, and (d) full state funding. South Carolina makes use of a foundation plan to distribute revenue to school districts. The purpose of a foundation program was to provide equal access to revenues at comparable property tax rates at least up to a per-pupil spending level as defined by the state. It was assumed that the foundation amount was the dollar amount needed to ensure that students learned what was expected of them. Guthrie (2008) and Verstegen (2002) argue that there is little alignment between the cost of state education programs and the established foundation amount although both note that foundation programs did improve the equity of state finance systems.

To further the goals of equity, many state finance plans have provisions that provide additional funding to school districts who educate students with certain characteristics such as, students with disability, low income students, gifted and talented students and English language learners (Carey, 2002). To accomplish this, states make use of weighting systems that are designed to provide for the additional costs of educating students based on the aforementioned needs. In practice, states begin with a basic value for each student. That value is increased incrementally based on incidence or severity of the disability. These funds are included in the allocation for the general fund to each district. A potential problem of this weighting system is that these funds are used at the discretion of the district and may not be applied to fund programs to assist students for which these monies were generated. Weighted per pupil funding is a part of the South Carolina education finance system. Currently, there are 14 weighting classifications in place in South Carolina with additional monies distributed for exceptional children, grade level, homebound education, adult education, and career and technical education (SC ST § 59-20-40).

A final component of state education finance systems is the use of categorical funding. These funds are provided by state, federal, and local sources. Funds are allocated based on conditions similar to those that are used to determine weighted per pupil allocations. These funds are typically considered to be entitlement programs because funds are provided based on incidence. The provision of categorical funds is subject to full state and federal funding. The difference between categorical funds and weighted per pupil allocations is the strict regulation that these funds must be used for the purpose for which they were allocated. These funds represent the first incidence of federal funding for public education in the United States. In considering new methods to finance public education Rodriguez (2004) notes that categorical funding has furthered biases about the ability of students in underrepresented populations to

learn and succeed in schools. She contends that correlational studies examining the relationship between student achievement and incidences of poverty and special education have resulted in tracking and lower expectations for students who receive categorical funds. Because schools have misinterpreted the use of these funds and have categorized children based on their participation in programs to provide greater equity, a degree of segregation, both racially, socially, and based on ability exists in our schools. She notes that the goals of equity and adequacy are better served by using funds to improve the process by which we educate all children toward proficiency goals.

According to King, Swanson, and Sweetland (2005), policy analysts and the judiciary have recognized that the equal distribution of resources will not close the achievement gaps that currently exist in public schools among ethnic and socio-economic groups. In fact, this problem may be exacerbated because the amount of resources distributed equitably is not sufficient to provide the instructional resources required to eliminate those gaps. Therefore, consideration of equity issues has been examined from the perspective of adequacy. While equity is input focused, adequacy is conversely output focused (Clune, 1994; Ladd & Hansen, 1999).

Adequacy is defined as whether the amount of funding provided can produce the desired level of student performance (Brown, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2003; Guthrie & Rothstein, 2001; Odden, 2003; Picus 2001; Reschovsky & Imazeki, 2001). In adequacy analysis attention is not drawn to the total amount of money spent per pupil, but rather what that money buys and if resources provided allow schools to meet state mandated goals (Verstegen, 1988). Due to dramatically increased educational accountability expectations over the last two decades, schools must assure that all children achieve at state mandated levels. With the emphasis on standards-based education reform, the focus of school finance has shifted to adequacy.



An interesting development in the literature is the attempt to find a link between the definitions of equity and adequacy. One researcher notes that, although the new focus is on adequacy, policymakers should not abandon the goal of equity that was set in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Odden, 2003). Furthermore, equity may result from implementing a strategy of adequacy because it will require a leveling up of low-spending schools and school districts. An adequate school finance formula must provide sufficient money so that schools may teach all students to specified levels. All students must be able to meet state proficiency targets. Therefore, a system that is designed to provide adequate funding should also meet standards of equity (Picus, 2001). Because districts are used to providing differential resources based on disabling conditions, poverty, and other factors, adequacy is really a form of vertical equity (Underwood, 1995). Finally, adequacy may be thought of as vertical equity in its ideal (King, Swanson & Sweetland, 2005; Underwood, 1995).

Koski and Levin (2000) state that adequacy as a means to reform education finance is attractive to policy makers because it links funding to the production of high educational outcomes for all children. As such, this idea calls for the simultaneous reform of accountability systems that measure school productivity, the process by which schools educate students to desired outcomes, and means by which we fund schools so that sufficient resources are sent to schools. This is particularly attractive in times of concern over the quality of the workforce. The measurement of adequacy to date has made use of four methods: successful schools, professional judgment, state of the art or research based, and econometric modeling (Ladd & Hansen, 1999). These models rely on state standards with regard to the outputs of the system of public education which may be comprised of intellectual, professional, and political pursuits

(Umpstead, 2007). Scholars note the problematic nature of the measurement of adequacy due in large part to the differing goals inherent in each state system of public education.

The constitution of South Carolina requires perhaps the least restrictive requirement for the provision of a system of public education (Umpstead, 2007). According to Article IX Section 3 of the state constitution, “The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free public schools open to all children in the State and shall establish, organize and support such other public institutions of learning, as may be desirable.” In spite of this language, the *Abbeville* court did require a basic quality requirement in the adequacy lawsuit in South Carolina (*Abbeville County Sch. Dist. V. State*, 515 S.E 2d 535, 540, 1999). Further the court interpreted the educational competencies with which all students should be equipped as preparation to enter the workforce (Umpstead, 2007).

This ruling recognizes the dual goals of education that are enumerated in law in South Carolina. The Education Accountability Act (EAA) of 1998 (revised 2008, Act 282) established the defined minimum program in South Carolina. This stipulated content standards that were to be taught to all students in the public schools and the means by which those standards would be assessed. Content standards were established in the areas of English Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies and science. The act established a system of criterion referenced tests and a system by which schools were rated with a requirement that these results be communicated to the citizenry. As part of the revision of the act, South Carolina is in the process of implementing a new testing system and establishing new norms for the rating of schools. The Education and Economic Development Act of 2005, Act 88, added the requirement that public schools in South Carolina equip student with workplace competencies in addition to the content standards established in EAA. These two acts provide the basis for the measurement of student outcomes

that is commonplace in the estimation of adequacy. The inclusion of workplace competencies in South Carolina adds a new dimension to the measurement and conceptualization of adequacy and adds to the complexity of measurement.

The *Abbeville* plaintiffs argued that South Carolina fails “to present a ‘culturally relevant’ instructional program addressing the peculiar needs of ethnicity.” Though the Court did not agree that this failure, if it was one, amounted to a constitutional violation, both the argument and the ensuing discussion points to the need to address the soft skills, which is the argument in this paper. Further, the court spoke to the need to prepare all children to become productive citizens, surely a reference to the soft skills. “The evidence shows students in the Plaintiff Districts are scoring well below the state average and are not gaining the skills they need to experience ‘a chance at life’ and the opportunity to become productive citizens.” Though not specifically stated as such, plaintiffs referred repeatedly to the soft skills. For example, they argued that issues such as poverty “lie outside the traditionally accepted scope of education policy, and require interventions beyond those traditionally produced by schools.” The *Abbeville* Court ordered the creation of early childhood intervention programs to provide these interventions. And the Court recognized that some children need more and different experiences in education in order to succeed. “The stairway that is one child’s avenue to achievement and success is simply an obstacle to one unable to climb.”

### Legal Lens

Whether or not there is legal support for educational focus on soft skills outcomes is open to debate. But there is some evidence that the law recognizes that test scores and academic achievements are not the only benefits of education. In this section of the paper we will mention a few of the examples that can be discussed relative to legal reasoning and legal support for the

soft skills in education. It should be noted that some of the examples below are not from majority holdings, but rather from dissents or dicta. Dissents may reveal important lines of legal reasoning that may one day become majority view.

The Supreme Court has recognized the importance of education to a democratic society and of the intangible benefits that flow from education. In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) the Court quoted from *Sweat v. Painter* (1950) “those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement.” The “*Brown*” Court called education “the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment.”

References to the soft skills often come in the state school finance cases. In *Rose v. Council for Better Education* (1989) the Kentucky Supreme Court listed seven capacities to be used in defining an adequate education for all children in Kentucky. At least three of these capacities may be said to address soft skills: “(iv) sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness; (v) sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural or historical heritage; (vi) sufficient training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently.”

In *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* (1973), the Supreme Court decided that education is not a fundamental right under the U.S. Constitution. Nevertheless Justice Powell in writing the majority opinion questioned some of the social science research reviewed by the Court: “educational quality measured only in terms of reading scores – a measure much too narrow since it excludes such effects of money as to whether or not a child learns to play a violin or swim.” What we might characterize as a court’s support for the soft skills often comes in

language supporting educational preparation for citizenship in a democracy. In *Rodriguez* Justice Marshall in dissent called the majority holding “a retreat from our historic commitment to equality of educational opportunity and as unsupportable acquiescence in a system which deprives children in their earliest years of the chance to reach their full potential as citizens.”

In the history of the United States Supreme Court there have been dissents to the majority opinion that signaled in advance important and substantial changes in the law. (Hoffer, P.C., *et al*, 2007). A famous dissent was written by Justice Harlan in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the infamous case in which a Louisiana state law to require separate railroad cars for whites and blacks was upheld as Constitutional. *Plessy* defined race relations in the United States for more than half a century, until the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. But Justice Harlan wrote in dissent in 1896:

In respect of civil rights, common to all citizens, the Constitution of the United State does not I think, permit any public authority to know the race of those entitled to be protected in the enjoyment of such rights...I deny that any legislative body or judicial tribunal may have regard to the race of citizens when the civil rights of those citizens are involved...Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. (*Plessy*, 1896)

In the topic under discussion in this paper, there is an interesting dissent from the majority opinion in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007), a complex and controversial ruling regarding the use of race in school attendance assignments and a school board’s right to exercise a multitude of options in achieving diversity. In dissent, Justice Breyer uses language that we would liken to the use in this paper of “soft skills” as he defends and lists multiple reasons supported in the law for the pursuit of diversity in

the schools. In addition to educational achievement supported by research he cites, Breyer refers to words in *Swann v. Charlotte –Mecklenburg (1971)*, a school busing case, of “a democratic element: an interest in producing an educational environment that reflects the ‘pluralistic society’ in which our children will live. Breyer continues, “It is an interest in helping our children learn to work and play together with children of different racial backgrounds. It is an interest in teaching children to engage in the kind of cooperation among Americans of all races that is necessary to make a land of three hundred million people one nation.” In his dissent Justice Breyer cites many cases following *Brown (1954)* and writes that “Moreover, this Court from *Swann* to *Grutter* has treated these civic effects as an important virtue of racially diverse education.” (41)

In Breyer’s dissent in *PICS* we read forceful arguments for continuing to stress in the law the importance of the “soft skills” as a purpose of education and as a worthy and democratically necessary consideration in future cases concerning both financial adequacy and racial integration in education. Perhaps this dissent, like that of Justice Harlan in *Plessy* will be prophetic of the future of the law. This paper supports that notion for a fundamental reason, “justice as fairness” (Rawls, 2001); and for the reason Justice Marshall provided in his dissent in *Milliken v. Bradley (1974)*, “for unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together.”

### Historical Lens

The concepts of educational adequacy and access have been employed in different ways throughout South Carolina’s history. Insight into the history of adequacy policy may offer direction to current attempts to expand the definition of adequacy by adding soft skills. This section explores the ways in which discussions around adequacy have historically intersected

with discussions of soft skills and segregation in South Carolina from the late 1940s through the 1970s.

In many ways South Carolina's history of school desegregation dominates such a story throughout the South. The defense of segregated schools, common in the first half of the twentieth century, was eventually replaced with the racially moderate "New South" mindset that championed economic development (Lassiter, 2006). However, in more subtle ways the history of South Carolina history is different. There was less public defiance of the courts as was common in Alabama and Mississippi. Instead there was a continual effort by a stable group of state leaders to offer the appearance of compliance while maintaining white hegemony (Baker, 2006). As in other southern states, at the heart of these efforts to slow integration were discussions of adequacy.

Below we will describe how in South Carolina's efforts to defend segregation the government during the late 1940s and 1950s argued that equal facilities met the states obligation of adequacy and denied that it was the state's responsibility to compel school districts to take part in personality development, one facet of soft skills. Then we discuss the ways in which parents invoked adequacy arguments during the late 1960s and 1970s in order to bring the focus to "color blind" achievement that also side stepped the soft-skills that would result from a more robust integration.

### *Soft skills, Adequacy and Access in the 1950s*

In the summer of 1951, Thurgood Marshall sat in a courtroom in Charleston, South Carolina. Marshall was in South Carolina to advocate for a group of parents who had filed suit against the school district of Clarendon, SC. In the original suit, parents argued that the district should provide school buses to black children. The district owned 30 school busses yet none

were used to transport the 6,531 black students; the busses were reserved for the 2,357 white students. When the parents had petitioned the district for a bus they had been told, “We ain’t got no money to buy a bus for your nigger children” (Edgar, 1998 p. 522). In 1950, a white judge in Charleston and the NAACP urged the plaintiffs to file a lawsuit against segregation in general as a violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment (Baker, 2006). The case was heard in the federal courts in Charleston in May of 1951.

When Marshall rose to speak in the courtroom he did not solely focus on school busses or buildings, instead his argument also recognized that segregated schools eliminated access to important soft-skills and therefore racialized and classed children in South Carolina. The plaintiff’s case relied on the use of experts in social psychology, child psychology, educational psychology and anthropology. Each testified on a different dimension of the harmful effects of segregation. Referencing these testimonies Marshall concluded “A feeling of distrust for the minority group is fostered in the community at large--a psychological atmosphere which is most unfavorable to the acquisition of a proper education. This atmosphere, in turn, tends to accentuate imagined differences between Negroes and whites” (Harry, 1952 p. 105). In today’s terms the NAACP was arguing for an education that included multicultural competence, a soft skill, as justification for access to common public education.

Marshall’s focus on the social and psychological outcomes was partly due to the fact that the state’s attorney, Robert M. Figg, in the opening statements had conceded the point that the two systems were unequal. However, Figg also noted that the state was in the process of improving black schools and therefore providing an adequate system of education. The state also challenged the contention that the states’ responsibility for the provision of adequate education included the development of social and psychological outcomes. As Baker (2006) pointed out,



Figg, “declared that the courts could not compel local school authorities to gear their educational program to the “personality development” of students” (p. 95).

The court eventually sided with the state. The majority opinion chose to focus on the rights of states to structure education as it saw fit. The court also asserted that as long as the equality of rights is preserved it is up to school officials, not the courts, to structure delivery systems. The Majority opinion asserted that the question of whether or not a “mixed school will give better education and better understanding of the community” was a question of policy and fell in the realm of the legislative process and not the judicial process (Harry, 1952, p. 111).

At the same time as the state was using an adequacy argument in court, the white political and business leaders were quietly working to ensure the stability of segregated education. One of the architects of this approach was James F. Byrnes. As governor in the early 1950s he worked to develop policies and strategies that would anticipate the federal orders to integrate.

Byrnes had been the U.S. Secretary of State, a Senator and a member of the U.S. Supreme court. At a young age he had been the protégé to SC’s post-Reconstruction Governor Ben Tillman who had been the architect of the disenfranchisement of African-American voters. One of the central objectives of Byrnes’ governorship in South Carolina had been the preservation of the separate but equal doctrine. According to Baker (2006) Byrnes inaugural address in January, 1951 instructed the crowd “if we demand respect for state’s rights, we must discharge state responsibilities. It is our duty to provide for the races substantial equality in school facilities” (p. 94). However, unlike Governors in other states most of this work occurred through policy rather than the bully pulpit.

Edgar’s (1998) history of SC pointed out the legislators responded to the governor’s call for “preparedness measures” by passing the state’s first (3%) sales tax to provide increased

funding for public education (p. 523). The tax translated into \$124 million for construction and busses intended to improve African American schools. In addition Byrnes advocated for the consolidation of school districts. In 1950 there were 1200 school districts in South Carolina by the mid 1950s there were 102 (Byrnes, 1958). This spending and consolidation effort was called the education revolution specifically aimed at the maintenance of “adequate” separate systems.

In 1951, the legislature also established a 15-member segregation committee known as the Gressette Committee. The committee was charged with “coordinating state policy and recommending lawful ways of preserving school segregation” (Baker, 2006, p. 94). One of the first outcomes of this committee was to strike SC’s constitutional requirement to provide public schools (Edgar, 1998). Over the course of the 1950s, the committee secured the passage of more laws designed to fight integration such as repealing of the “state’s compulsory-education law and giving the school boards the right to sell or lease school property” (Baker, 2006, p. 113).

In the 1950s, as the constitutional definition of the state’s responsibility in the provision of public education was jettisoned, the definition of adequacy was destabilized. No longer could an argument be made for an adequate education that included soft skills such as identity development and cross-cultural competence. If adequate public education was going to re-emerge as social value in South Carolina it was going to have to side step integration arguments promoting social benefits, that is, soft skills.

#### *Achievement, Adequacy, and Integration in the late 1960s and 1970s*

Lassiter’s (2006) description of the New South pointed out during the late 1960s and into the 1970s, the resistance to desegregation in the south was reframed. Across the South the common understanding that named the schools as the battleground in the defense of the “Southern way of life” was beginning to lose traction. In its place a new metropolitan white

middle class articulated a new adequacy discourse that centered on achievement for the purposes of “Sunbelt” economic progress. This discourse animated a grassroots movement of white parents who claimed to pursue a third way of integration in the service of protecting their children’s schools and the region’s economic goals. In doing so the white middle class call for racial moderation:

saved public education from the radical path of massive resistance, but only by replacing the civil rights agenda of social justice with an ostensibly race-neutral discourse of regional progress and individual meritocracy liberated from history itself. (Lassiter, 2006 p. 30)

Folded into the civil rights agenda was the recognition of the importance of soft skills such as cross-cultural competence. As the civil rights agenda was supplanted by a focus on measurable outcomes of individual learners the importance of these soft skills, that were harder to measure, waned. In South Carolina, the traction of this discourse was unevenly distributed among the regions in South Carolina. The result was different definitions of adequacy and integration in different areas of the state.

*Greenville: White Middle Class Achievement Discourse*

A good example of this shift from massive resistance to moderate racial politics can be found in the voluntary mid-year integration of Greenville County (Lassiter, 2006). The decision of Greenville to peacefully integrate their public schools fits a pattern. Across the South at the dawn of the 1970s, areas that were fast growing, metropolitan and had a growing white middle class tended to seek solutions to the integration directives that would not require devaluing of public education. Greenville in the late 1960s was a rapidly growing metropolis of 240,000 that “represented both the textile past and the Sunbelt future of South Carolina” (Lassiter, 2006, p.

255). The citizens had recently elected their first Republican Mayor who had promised that his four children would “remain in the public schools and attend the schools assigned” (p. 255).

The business and political leaders organized a Citizens Committee to develop an integration plan that would assure peaceful integration. Even though there were vocal opponents to the integration plan most of the whites in Greenville mobilized to support the plan and avoid an “outbreak of violence that would tarnish their city’s reputation” (p. 256). The dominant discourse was decidedly color blind and focused on achievement and economic development. The Chamber of Commerce’s slogan was “THE IMPORTANT THING IS EDUCATION!”

*Popular Discourse: Public Schools are Inadequate*

In other parts of South Carolina during the 1970s the push for massive resistance to integration was still strong. National and state level leaders encouraged much of this resistance. For example, the achievement discourse that was building in the upstate was being co-opted by state leaders as early as 1963. As Baker (2006) notes, in December of that year an adviser to the Gressette Committee, Robinson, wrote that “we need to press for a state-wide I.Q. and achievement tests administered in all of our school. This difference in achievement between the two races may be our last line of defense” (p. 162).

At the national level Senator Strom Thurmond and Congressman Albert Watson urged their constituents to resist total domination of the schools by the federal government. In 1970 Watson criticized state and regional leaders, such as those in Greenville, who did not remain steadfast in the “fight against judicial tyranny” (Lassiter 2006, p. 256). The proponents interpreted steadfastness as a resistance to the social influences promoted by integration advocates. In sum, the resistance believed that if public education was to be integrated then it would become inadequate to meet the academic and economic development needs of the white

population. The result of steadfastness, the proponents argued, would be that public education must be abandoned.

For example, between 1960 and 1970 the percentage of school-age whites in Charleston “who attended private school in the city, rose from 34 to 68 percent” (Baker 2006, p. 160). After the courts ordered all districts in South Carolina to eliminate dual school systems in 1970, enrollment in private schools in the state rose by 34% (Baker, 2006). Much of this growth in private school enrollment was encouraged by local officials. Edgar (1998) noted that in many parts of South Carolina in the 1970s once “black enrollment passed one third of a school’s student body...whites withdrew their children and enrolled them in private academies” (p. 545). At the same time, editorials appeared in newspapers in different communities that attempted to characterize public schools as inadequate. For example, an editorial in *The Times-Democrat* in July of 1971 read:

The growth of the private schools in the Orangeburg area and elsewhere is as normal as night following day ...Their academic standards cannot be questioned...and their graduates have made admirable records in institutions of higher learning all over the country. (as quoted in Till, 2007 p. 171)

South Carolina’s history from the 1950s through the 1970s reveals how concepts of adequacy, access and soft skills, specifically cross-cultural development played significant roles in the definition of public schooling. Each of these concepts have been articulated and rearticulated in different ways, at different times and in different places based on the politics of the time. In South Carolina today, these discussions of in/adequacy of public schools continue to be rearticulated. There are many current discussions around the need to invest in public schools to maintain our competitiveness in the regional and global economies (Moore, 2008).

Yet, there is also a popular argument in South Carolina that public schools are wholly inadequate to the needs of the parents of South Carolina (*Education in South Carolina*, 2008).

### Political Lens

This political study of SC's emerging assessment and economic policies' impact on students and stakeholders utilizes discourse analysis as its method. The terms, *politics* and *policy*, share more than a common Greek root; both depend on the use of language to persuade and shape the expressed intent and practices of the polity (Henig, 2009; Spillane, 2008). Political discourse analysis offers insight into the vocabulary used to promote policy development as well as highlights the ways in which policies are compromised in the political process (Henig, 2008, 2009; Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Spillane, 2008; White, 1994; Woolley, 2000). The objects of political discourse analyses can range from media deconstruction to parsing of official documents such as meeting agenda and minutes (Anderson, 2007; Moses, 2007). In this paper, the interplay of federal and state education policies are examined for their discursive political influences on public schools' intended curriculum foci of achievement and/or social skills development. The analysis spotlights the intended policy for schooling as opposed to the *hidden curriculum*; a term that "... refers to *the unintended outcomes of the schooling process* [emphasis in the original]" (McLaren, 2007, p. 212).

South Carolina's political contributions to the concepts of student access to education share the rest of the US's ambivalence about who shares classrooms with whom (Stout, Tallerico & Scribner, 1995, p. 5). From the earliest schooldays in many parts of the country, public schools were blatantly limited to White males with little or no educational opportunities for anyone else. Interestingly, parts of the South embraced education for everyone, but in separate schools and classrooms; both the sexes and the races were separated (Leloudis, 1996). Such

separation also extended to children with disabilities, such as schools for deaf, blind, and so-called *crippled* pupils. Many scholars of US public schools' curriculum history point to major social changes in schooling derived post-Depression and especially post-World War II (Anyon, 2009; Kliebard, 1995; Rury, 2002; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). One of the post-World War II educational changes included a renewed perception of the meaning of civic development as a purpose of public schooling. In this redefinition of the democratic ethic for public schools, the argument developed that civic purposes required diversity in the student body in order to develop a more competent polity in a democratic society (Allport, 1954; Rury, 2002). While a social benefit argument was used in presenting the case for co-education of the sexes, the movement for racial access to public schooling was founded particularly on the theory of social contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Social Contact theory promotes the idea of societal benefits derived through pupils' exposure to other students different from them, such as educating different races side-by-side rather than apart from one another (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stearns, 2004; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). Thus, the social contact thesis played a significant role in the Civil Rights movement from the US Supreme Court's decision, known as *Brown*, demanding the racial integration of schools (1950s and 1960s) through the mainstreaming and inclusion of students with disabilities (1970s) as well as progress in coeducation of the sexes (1970s). The nature of political discourse surrounding successful arguments for permitting access of previously excluded groups to public education rests heavily on narratives about friendships developing among students who may not have known each other without meeting in their classrooms (Itkonen, 2009). However, research on racial relations in classrooms suggests that mere contact is not sufficient for the development of social harmony or competence (Dickinson

& Freeland, 1983; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). As a result, a number of curricular strategies emerged in the effort to promote awareness and better interaction in diverse classrooms (e.g. Banks, Banks & Banks, 2006; Gay, 2000; Ogbu, 2003). Furthermore, in the realm of education policy, the notion of access as social contact morphed as the discussion of educational opportunity expanded.

Stories of friendship and hope as the primary goal of educational opportunity gave way to the back-to-basics movement of the 1970s. The political shift owes social science a nod as the then largest study on schooling's effects, the 1964 Coleman study, was overwhelmingly interpreted as schools do not matter in test results (Henig, 2008). Much discussion ensued as to what might matter in provision of opportunity to learn (Fuhrman, 2003; Porter, 1993; Schwartz, 1995). Opportunity to learn included multiple measures of curriculum, instructional time, teacher competence, resources, and school culture (Reichardt, 2002; Schwartz, 1995). The progression in federal and state educational policy from the 1970s to date illustrates an increasing concern with measuring and accounting for the academic outcomes of schools (Adams & Kirst, 1999; King & Mathers, 1997; Lindle & Cibulka, 2006; Resnick, 1980).

The pressure on measuring schools' academic productivity includes a recurring dance among various interest groups who compete for portions of the public school curriculum (Bennett, 1996; Costa, 2006; Henig, 2008; James, 1991; McLaren, 2007). At least part of this dance involves cautions about the unintended consequences of too much testing without attention to what is taught (Hamilton, 2003; Wiliam, 2000). The counterargument to the over-testing complaint is that well-designed assessments force instruction to the agreed-upon curriculum as opposed to allowing teachers to deviate to non-essential subject matter (Haycock & Juang, 2001; McDonnell, 1994, 2005; Shepard, 2008). Still others argue that assessments narrow the purposes



of schooling to only measurable achievement ignoring the civic role of public schools (Bennett, 1996; Costa, 2006). For example, one of the unintended outcomes of an extreme focus on academic achievement includes a practice that emerged in some states during the 1990s, known as *triage*, which involved disaggregating scores for specific groups of students (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Haycock & Juang, 2001). Although starting in 2001, US federal policy required the disaggregation practice for four specific groups (English Language Learners, non-White racial and ethnic groups, students in poverty, and students with disabilities) with the aim of reducing achievement gaps, the negative side of educational triage is restricted curriculum, cheating in the form of teaching-of-the-test, and neglect of students that have already achieved testing targets (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Card & Rothstein, 2007; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Popham, 2004, 2006; Seashore Louis, Febey & Schroeder, 2005). In short, based on policy definitions, accountability's schooling practices can segregate groups of students and restrict access to curriculum with the goal of achievement overwhelming social access or equity in opportunities to learn.

Yet, other political opponents emerge if testing is to include measurement of any kinds of values or social aims (Boyd, Lugg, & Zahorchak, 1996; Harp, 1994a, 1994b; McQuaide & Pliska, 1993; Lindle, 1995). Public educational curriculum and assessment policy erupts into political debates when religious groups or libertarian groups perceive attempts to expressly measure social competence as an affront to religious or individual freedoms (Baez & Opfer, 2000; Lugg, 2000; McCarthy, 1996). Nevertheless, many interest groups are interested in pro-social development and that interest is expressed in federal and state policies as character education and/or student deportment and behavior management (Gartin & Murdick, 2001; Glanzer & Milson, 2006; Howard, Berkowitz & Schaeffer, 2004; Vessels & Boyd, 1996). The

lesson seems to be that social aims may be important part of the curriculum, instruction, and intentional agenda of public schooling, but assessing individuals' competence as a measure of accountability may be politically untenable.

The political tension among the multiple policy intents for public education seesaws between social and academic goals with implications for assessment and accountability. The past decades' increasing focus on accountability has created an evolution of the political discussion about *access* to education with a focus on who attends school with whom to a greater concern with *achievement* and the measurable content of the curriculum.

### Conclusions and Implications for Practice

The purpose of this paper was to examine the concept of educational adequacy from myriad perspectives in order to better understand the development of the concept and to discern in what way adequacy may be best conceived in the current context of SC education. Through the use of multifocal analysis, the authors described the research using four lenses: (a) historical, (b) legal, (c) political, and (d) finance. In so doing, it was hoped that a more thorough answer could be provided to the questions:

1. What is adequacy?
2. Where does the responsibility lie for providing an adequate education?, and
3. What should students who have been the recipient of an adequate education be able to know and do?

The acquisition of soft skills has been postulated to be a necessary outcome of an adequate education.

In describing the difficulties associated with social science research, Reeves (2006) noted education is multivariate. By this, he means that social science research is confounded by the fact that there are nearly innumerable factors that influence outcomes and that researchers face difficulties in accounting for or controlling those factors. Such is the case in education. Schools do not exist in a vacuum. They are situated in communities and populated by teachers and students who each have beliefs about the purposes of education and expectations for the outcomes of schooling. The historical lens illuminates how the segregationist past of public education in South Carolina has shaped our discussions of adequacy over time. By focusing on the debate the adequacy of dual systems to ensure that schools would not be integrated, this history illustrates multiple ways in which soft skills have been a point of tension in adequacy debates. The legal lens expands this concept by examining the responsibility for the provision of an adequate education that is stipulated in the law. Further, a legal perspective provides the basis for how one may begin to measure adequacy because it reports on judicial interpretations of laws and policies that shape schoolings' purposes and outcomes. The political lens further expands one's understanding of adequacy because it provides an examination of the discourse surrounding issues such as access, curriculum, and accountability. As such, the political lens provides the necessary background to understand how decisions were made about who should be educated, where children should be educated, what we may expect in terms of achievement from children in different circumstances, and how we may measure the performance of schools. Lastly, the finance lens focuses on the use of resources to achieve the stated goals of education. This lens begins to define questions of sufficiency and efficiency in the provision of adequate education. Multifocal analyses illuminate dimensions of educational policy for practitioners' understanding and use.

From a practical standpoint, the theoretical development of the concepts of equality, opportunity, access, efficiency, and adequacy that has been described in this paper has impacted educators because these concepts have been translated and operationalized to the more relevant concepts of academic standards, soft skills, social benefits, economic growth, and integration. Of course, the problem with that statement is that there is not widespread agreement regarding what level of rigor is needed in terms of academic standards, nor of how to measure soft skills, nor that an adequate education has been the economic engine that has been postulated historically or in the scholarly literature.

Given these multifocal understandings, an adequate education entails a more complex level of proficiency in academic content beyond a minimum basic education. Adding soft skills to basic academics yields abilities in communication, reasoning, and may be more likely to prepare students to pursue further education as required by their chosen career path. South Carolina has taken legislative and judicial steps toward requiring soft skills as a desired outcome of education, as articulated in the *Abbeville* court and through the 2005 legislation known as EEDA.

All four lenses contribute to the understanding of adequacy. The responsibility for the provision of an adequate education rests specifically with the state but also with practitioners who make use of the four lenses to understand and implement policy. Soft skills, workforce preparation, and academic achievement are indicators of an adequate education in South Carolina according to the court's interpretation in *Abbeville* as well as requirements in EEDA. In an increasingly diverse society, the ability to problem solve, to function as citizens, to understand differing points of view, and to accept differences are critical to personal endeavors as well as the state's and region's economic future. While these skills may be difficult to measure or to

provide in an efficient manner, fairness, dignity, self-awareness, justice, and tolerance are certainly skills that further the common good of this society.

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