

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

IJS-31 THE PARTICIPATORY POLITICS
OF CURRICULUM REFORM

c/o Institute of Current
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22nd November, 1972

Mr. Richard Nolte
Executive Director
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Dear Mr. Nolte:

Enclosed you will find an essay which was presented as a paper to the Working Party on the Whole Curriculum of the Schools Council of England and Wales (See IJSs 11 & 12 for information about the Schools Council).

This Working Party was given the brief to consider the whole range of learning experiences offered to pupils between the ages of thirteen and sixteen and to recommend changes for the future.

As part of the Working Party's work, it organized a retreat at Ditchley Park near Oxford to discuss the various strands of the debates which have emerged in its deliberation. I was invited to participate in this weekend meeting and to present a paper, which resulted in the attached essay.

Both the general thesis and specific recommendations of the essay provoked a great deal of dispute within the Working Party. And it is quite unlikely that any of the ideas in the essay will be incorporated in the Working Party's report when it is published in 1974. But because of the controversy which the paper provoked, I think it may be of interest to you.

And although the paper argues the irrelevance of exercises such as those indulged in by the Working Party on the Whole Curriculum, I must preface it by indicating that the very existence of the Working Party suggests that the British are much more sensitive to the future needs of the educational system than many other countries. And the fact that the Committee was willing to entertain my views demonstrates an openness which augurs well for the future which concerns it so.

Sincerely,



Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.
 Fellow
 Institute of Current World Affairs
 November, 1972

NOTES ON THE PARTICIPATORY POLITICS OF CURRICULUM REFORM

In this relatively brief essay, I shall argue that attempts at curriculum reform presently take place in an institutional context which is inhospitable for meaningful change and that any attempt at significant curriculum reform must be preceded by changes in how decisions are made about the curriculum. My conclusion will be that we must have a network of participatory institutions where the general policy control over institutional activities is vested in those whose interests are most immediately at stake; however, I shall also claim that this process of participatory decision-making must be tailored to the character of the interests involved and the problem at issue. The arguments which lead to this position will necessarily be sketchy within the constraints imposed by my decision to be brief. But the outline of the various moves in the discussion should be clear.

I claim no special novelty for what follows. Indeed, my position has been held by many others in various institutional and historical contexts. And I myself would make similar arguments in regard to the control of and therefore strategies for the reform of almost all other social institutions. But I shall try to relate the general argument for a participatory democratic system to the particular problems of curriculum reform in educational institutions in a manner which might put the task of curriculum reform in a proper perspective.

I. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

When one is about to make the sort of argument I am it is often useful to clarify at the outset some of the language which will be used in the argument. Therefore, I shall sketch what I mean when I use a few of the concepts which are important to my position; but I shall just sketch and only occasionally justify my use of a concept in a particular way. To emphasize the "sketchiness" of this statement of concepts, I shall only list them and then provide brief comments.

- A. POLITICS I have in mind Harold Lasswell's aphorism about politics as the process concerning who gets what, when, where, and how. This is the process for allocating "goods" of whatever variety; and the goods at stake in the curriculum process range from money to knowledge to status and self-perception. But I should clearly indicate that I am interested in not only how the goods are allocated but how they ought to be allocated; not only in the final allocation but in how the process affects those in it and how it can be changed to modify its effects in a positive way.

- B. CURRICULUM Here I mean the collection of learning activities to which students are exposed by those who are self-consciously engaged in providing education. Note that I do not say "self-conscious activities," because I think that much of what sociologists call the "hidden curriculum" must be construed as part of the curriculum to be considered by the reformer. However I do, for the purposes of this paper, limit my consideration to those activities led by people who think they are engaged in teaching, or other self-aware presentations of learning experiences. This limitation ought not exclude a whole range of non-school activities and the people engaged in them -- especially the media. So my conception of curriculum -- by definition the target of curriculum reformers -- is relatively broad and likely to become broader as many people become self-aware educators. And I should add that the qualification of "self-consciousness" is not meant to underestimate the impact of those who are not conscious of their roles; it is just that the first target of the reformer must be those who are aware of their function in the educational process. Then the next important step will be to make the unconscious educators aware of their position; but the implications of this stage must await another discussion.
- C. CURRICULUM PROCESS When I use the language of process I want to indicate that I consider curriculum development to be a dynamic and flowing operation -- it flows in terms of time, geography, and people. And when I say that curriculum development is a non-process, as I shall in a moment, what I am really saying is that people are not aware of the process and the effects of their decisions in this process, not that the perceptive observer cannot divine a process of development; or, to put the point in another way, what most people see as the curriculum development process -- e.g., educational research, governmental curriculum development institutions, teachers colleges, teacher workshops, occasional hours out of class -- is only a partial and/or unreal view of a process as it operates. The view is disjointed, and the so-called process itself has little real impact on the life of those in the classroom.
- D. REFORM I talk about curriculum reform and not revolution, because I think that what most of us have in mind when we talk about changes in education, no matter how radical, are changes which are really part of a long tradition of educational evolution. And in so far as anyone is seriously using the language of revolution, then he ought to look to

other modes of change, even if he is looking for educational revolution. If I were really in the revolution business, I would be writing training manuals for cadres in the hills, not essays about curriculum change; and I would strongly suggest that other people interested in systemic revolutions do the same. Having made this point, I should balance it by strongly stating my own belief in the futility of incremental educational changes. For reform to be meaningful it must be dramatic and systemic, not tinkering with one part of a system (or subsystem) and then another. So I use the language of reform, but some people may call my suggestions demands for revolution. And I should admit that many of my reforms are designed to create a consciousness which makes certain sorts of revolutions more plausible.

- E. EDUCATION This is the concept which is most difficult to state briefly but which most requires some clarification, no matter how cursory. I would be willing to accept the basic criteria for the concept of education suggested by R.S. Peters -- the worthwileness of "knowledge" pursued, free participation by the student (and the teacher, I would add), and contribution to a student's cognitive perspective. But my elucidation of each criterion would be rather different from Peters; for example, and most importantly, I would break down the concept of cognitive perspective into three different types of perspective, which I would call cognitive, aesthetic, and social perspectives and then would emphasize the role which creativity plays in each. But I cannot develop this position here, I can only note it. These criteria together make up a concept of education but this concept would be consistent with a number of particular conceptions. I would not be willing to accept Peters' particular conception of education as initiation, because I believe this conceptual model is inconsistent with the criteria for education and with a value perspective which I shall indicate in the argument of this essay. My particular conception would be that of a traveler in a foreign land. Suffice it to say that my particular conception of education emphasizes the active participation and consultation of and by both teacher and taught. But I must strongly state that I believe a clear conception of education is an integral part of any curriculum design and reform.

So you now have in hand a conceptual inventory which will provide a framework for my argument. I shall have to elucidate other concepts -- especially that of democracy -- in the course of my argument, but you now have the key ideas for my further comments. Let me indicate my own

recognition that the accounts of the concepts which I have just offered are subject to dispute, but in the interest of moving on to the substantive issues of curriculum politics, I have asserted rather than argued the appropriateness of my use of the concepts. Now to the politics of curriculum development.

II. THE PROCESS OF CURRICULUM AS IT ISN'T OR THE NON-PROCESS AS IT IS

I see the politics of curriculum going on at two levels, with only sporadic and discontinuous contact between them.

At the school level there is a great deal of variation among particular schools, but for the most part curriculum is seen by those in the school -- teacher and taught -- to be determined from the outside. In terms of what is self-consciously taught, the external constraints in most countries include fairly specific curricula and/or external examinations. The force of the latter constraint varies directly with temporal distance from the actual events, but the overwhelming character of this examination constraint on all of those within an educational system is quite impressive. So the room for change at the school level, in the eyes of most people there, is severely limited.

There is very little perception at the school level of the hidden curriculum: the styles of teaching and learning, the family environment, the peer group influences, the impact of the mass media. And in so far as there is any perception of these influences it exists as a feeling of impotence whenever the self-conscious curriculum runs counter to these "hidden forces."

Although from country to country there is a great deal of diversity in response to curriculum problems by the most local institution, I believe it is safe to report my own general impression that in most schools there is little happening in the way of self-conscious decisions about curriculum. And in so far as these decisions are taken with any awareness, they are taken by very few on an ad hoc basis. (There will always be exceptions to this observation; but these exceptions tend to be rare, with the possible systemic exceptions of Denmark and Sweden.) My evidence for this observation is strictly personal and anecdotal, but I know of no more systematic evidence which contradicts it.

The politics of curriculum in the school is one of acquiescence and submission: it is not a situation where there is awareness of participation in a process but instead a feeling of being processed by forces beyond the control of those in the system. And I believe this is the feeling of all of those existing at this level -- teachers, students, administrators, parents, and those who must deal with the graduates of the system (these receivers are often called "consumers," a term which only too clearly shows the current similarities between schools and factories.)

The second level of the educational operation is that of those who deal with the overall organizational system. In any given country, there are a number of concentric systems which make up the overall system. For example, in the UK there is the Department of Education and Science, the local authorities, divisions within the larger authorities, networks of supporting institutions such as teacher training colleges and curriculum research groups, and the schools. In the US, the UK pattern is complicated by federal and state systems and their components. In Germany the federal complications are accentuated by a confederal system with great powers at the state level, fragmented jurisdictions at the national level, and almost no authority at the school level.

But for my purposes I shall simplify my comments by contrasting the systems level with that of the school. I justify this simplification strictly in terms of economy of report and the likelihood of similarity of view of the higher levels from the perspective of the local institution and the likelihood of similarity of view of the local level from the loftier perspectives. But I recognize that intermediate organizational groups will have to share and therefore deal with conflicting perspectives within themselves.

The important characteristic of the process of curriculum politics at the systems level is its view of the local institution. No matter where I look, no matter what the institutional and organizational arrangement is, I find the people at the systems level hold a common view of the local institutions: conservative, incompetent, and unresponsive to the progressive views of the systems level reformer. Therefore, the problem of curriculum change is usually set in terms of outfoxing the retrogressive vixens at the local level. And the strategy for reform is always one of accepting as given the constraint of the existing institutional arrangement but bemoaning it all the time. Yet when the grand reform schemes of the systems curriculum innovator do not succeed, this result is invariably because of the recalcitrance of the system and those in it -- the stubborn principals and headmasters, the bureaucratic inspectors or civil servants, and especially the unimaginative teachers and disinterested students.

This view from the top leads to curriculum strategies which emphasize new books, materials, films, and other items which can be packaged together and delivered to the teacher (or preferably to the student) in a foolproof bundle. Or it culminates in a massive program of teacher training (or retraining) to enlighten the benighted so that they too can see and thereby spread the newest version of the truth. But most importantly, the attitude which informs this view draws a predictable response: the teachers, students and administrators turn out to be just as dense as expected; and for good measure they become quite resentful of the officious curriculum intermeddler.

At the risk of overstatement, I would claim that this picture of both the local and systems level provides at least the shape of the reality of the process of curriculum development as it now exists in the countries I know -- especially the US, the UK, Israel, Germany, and probably, though to a lesser extent, the Scandinavian countries as well. The important point is the feeling of impotence characteristic of both levels of the curriculum process -- at the local level there is a feeling of constraint from powerful external forces; at the systems level there is a feeling of frustration with an unresponsive audience. It is this feeling of impotence in the system as a whole which leads me to characterize the politics of curriculum development as a non-process -- no one feels as though he has a role in decisions about the curriculum. Everyone is done to, not doing. And I do not distinguish here among teachers, pupils, parents, administrators, and the public at large, because I do not believe there are any strong distinctions in attitude. The alienation, to use a much overworked but appropriate concept, which this feeling of impotence breeds must be taken as a given of contemporary educational institutions; but a given which itself must give if there are to be any real advances in the direction of substantive curriculum change. Any attempt to deal with this impotence will require more than just incremental changes in courses and pedagogy; it will require substantial institutional change. And it is to this change that I now turn.

III. CHANGING THE SYSTEM BY CREATING A PROCESS OF PARTICIPATION

The changes which I shall suggest in the overall educational system are based upon a perception of the problems of the existing system as I have just outlined them. But it is crucial to appreciate and admit the fact that all suggestions for change are offered from the perspective of a value context which provides the criteria for identifying what is wrong as well as suggesting what is right. This value framework is often communicated in the language of democracy, a language which I consider to be appropriate and valid. But comments with reference to democracy must be supported by a clear statement of the principles which we have in mind when we invoke the concept. Only by stating these ideas clearly can we inquire about any limitations imposed by the educational system. And finally only then is it possible to examine the potential of a curriculum process consistent with the concepts of democracy and education.

When I invoke the concept of democracy I am using it as a shorthand for three principles: 1) the principle of guaranteed representation of the individual interests of all of those in the population affected by the decisions of the institution in question; 2) majority rule as the principle of decision-making; and 3) protection of minority interests in the process of decision-making and thereafter. Although these three principles do not necessarily lie together happily at all times, they do express the core of the norm of democracy as it emerged from the Nineteenth Century and remains today. Each of the principles requires an extensive argument for justification, but all share one fundamental

justification which is based upon a conception of the individual and his role in society.

The justification of these principles of democracy can be articulated best in neo-Kantian language: they rest on a conception of an autonomous and free individual, whose autonomy and freedom require that he have control over important decisions which affect his life. The principles of democracy are modes of control which are consistent with this demand; but of course the democratic system entails certain compromises of this autonomy -- especially the majority principle as it affects the minority -- but these compromises are justified in terms of the maximum autonomy consistent with social life. And the critical exception of the role of the minority after majoritarian decisions is explicitly dealt with by the third principle, which limits the compromise of individual autonomy. Democracy is justified by its consistency with the Kantian imperative: it treats men as ends in themselves, not means to other men's ends.

Although most Western societies would accept the three principles of democracy and the justification for them which I have suggested, it has always intrigued me how willingly most of them and their members suspend the application of these principles in three spheres: economics (or business); religion (specifically in formal churches); and education (particularly in schools, and here I include universities). I shall not comment on the first two examples; I only note them in passing. But the last example is directly on the point of this essay. Why should democratic principles not govern decisions about education?

The answer usually given to those who propose democratic principles of governance in education is that the primary constituency in the institution -- the students -- is not in fact capable of self-government, for if these students were capable, they would not be in school in the first place. The answer is seldom put this baldly, but in its more ambiguous or genteel forms, it usually reduces itself to this very simple statement. The problem with this position is that it assumes that the lack of knowledge and expertise in a particular area of competence disqualifies students from all decisions about their life in a substantial chunk of their existence. And it also assumes that the only choice is one between student control and teacher, parent, and/or adult community control. The fear of democracy in decisions about education disqualifies a whole population from being ends in themselves and at the same time narrowly construes those with interests to be represented in the decision making process.

Another assumption underlying the protest against democratic policies in educational decision making is that the concept of education itself is inconsistent with democratic procedures. Usually the conception of education which informs this objection is a Lockian Tabula Rasa where the blackboard has no claims on the way lines are made by the chalk. But if one has a more sophisticated view of the concept of

education -- a description which I believe to be appropriate for Peters' criteria with my elaboration -- which informs a more complex particular conception of education based upon values common with the concept of democracy -- perhaps my traveler in a foreign land -- then there is certainly nothing inconsistent between the process of education and democratic decision-making procedures for deciding policies for the educational process. A conception of education which highlights the importance of active participation by teacher and taught in the process of education is certainly not going to proscribe the active participation of all parties to the process in making decisions about its substance.

Having said that the concept of education and my particular conception of education are in no way inconsistent with the application of democratic principles in educational decision-making, let me clearly state that the educational context does logically require modifications in the operation of the democratic principles in the educational context. Specifically the role framework of the concept of education -- the assumption that there are teachers and students and that the latter have something to learn from the former -- dictates different responsibilities for each and therefore different rights of decision in regard to various types of issues. What I mean here is that the teacher/student paradigm which is a logical underpinning of all conceptions of education entails the vesting of the right of decision about certain substantive curricular issues in the teachers. I want to explore some of these limitations on democratic principles more fully in a moment. At present I wish to indicate only that the educational context may affect the procedures for democratic decision-making but in no way justify the suspension of them across the board or in particular questions. People who go to educational institutions to learn -- and I think there may still be some -- do not give up their rights as individuals, they do not metamorphasize from ends to means. Pupils may not be full-fledged ends in themselves, to continue the use of Kantian language, but means to other people's ends -- i.e. teachers' goals -- they are not. "Developing ends" are ends nonetheless.

A further point which I would offer as an argument against those who would suspend democratic decision-making procedures in education would be that made by John Stuart Mill in REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT: one of the best ways for people to learn is for them to be responsible for themselves and to participate in the full range of decisions which affect their lives. At the national level this participation may be necessarily indirect and irregular because of the numbers of people involved. But the political education of the people requires a strong system of local government where people can participate directly in the decisions which affect them. This argument is based on intuitive insight, not logical necessity; but I believe these insights to be as valid today as they were in Mill's time.

Both the Kantian and Millian arguments create a strong burden of proof on the shoulders of those who would suspend the application of democratic principles in the educational sector; a burden of proof which I have yet to hear overcome. And the burden of proof carries over to those who would want to amend some of the procedures usually associated with the democratic principles I have identified. Since I have suggested that there may be some modification of these procedures, I must more carefully justify these modifications; and this justification must be related to the concept of education in a manner which is not inconsistent with the Kantian moral imperative and the Millian insight about the educative value of democratic participation. I shall attempt to provide such a justification by suggesting the outlines of a decision-making structure for an educational institution and particular procedures for decisions about curriculum.

I shall talk about a decision-making structure for an educational institution, not the system for a university or a primary school or a secondary school. I believe that age differences are relevant to the decisions which are vested in overall decision-making bodies and those which are delegated to more particular committees; and particular modifications perhaps should be made in the light of evolving insights from developmental psychology. But I believe that the overall suggestions are applicable at all ages, from kindergarten through postgraduate courses.

All local institutions of education should have a governing council which has the right and responsibility to make general policy decisions for all of those affected by the activities of the institution. This formulation requires a judgment about "affected," which has bedeviled democratic theorists for centuries. But I believe one can make global judgments about the affected category which would include a relatively diverse group: students, teachers, parents, employers, the state, and the community at large. Therefore, I would argue that any governing council must have representation from all of these sources in order to represent the breadth of interests at stake. However, some of these people are more directly, intimately, immediately, continuously, and fundamentally affected than others: students, teachers, and parents, in that order. Therefore, I would argue that any governing council should be composed of half plus a few of students, teachers and parents in order to provide a coalition majority among these groups, with students and teachers having somewhat greater representation than parents. Representatives of employers, the state, and the community at large should balance out any council. A governing council so composed should have authority to make broad policy decisions about the life of the institution: e.g., admissions procedures, disciplinary rules, and the general substance of the curriculum. Of course in all of these areas

there would and should be important external constraints operating: e.g., moral and legal protection of individual rights in the larger social system, the criminal law, and examination systems. But hopefully the institutional mechanisms for controlling these constraints would be democratically designed and monitored and thereby distinguishable from their local counterparts only in size of constituency. And the development of governing councils for schools such as the one I have described would be the first step toward creating the broad base of democratic institutions which would put these apparently external constraints under democratic control.

If one posits an educational institution with the policy board composition I have suggested and which is governed by the three democratic principles I elucidated earlier, there is still the problem of adjusting democratic procedures to the demands of the educational process. I would suggest that this adjustment could be accomplished in two ways: first by delegation of certain educational decisions to tailor-made groups; secondly by the use of the democratic decision making process as part of the formal educational process in the curriculum.

The delegation approach would be implemented by placing decision-making authority in special committees designed to deal with particular problems which are likely to arise regularly in educational institutions. I shall illustrate the role of such committees in two areas: student discipline and curriculum decisions. The adjustments of the democratic process would be made through changes in composition of committees, not in the suspension of the democratic procedures of these committees. What I am suggesting is the modification of the first principle of democratic decisions -- one man/one vote -- to one of interest representation on a proportional scale which looks to the way in which interests are put in jeopardy and/or enhanced in the decisions taken. This modification is not in theory inconsistent with the treatment of each individual as an end in himself; it instead attempts more clearly to identify the mode through which each individual pursues his "endness" in terms of the interests involved. And this modification and its institutional implications provide an attempt to minimize the impact of educational constraints on the operation of all three democratic principles.

In the sphere of student discipline, I would argue that the students themselves should have predominant say. I would argue this case for -- indeed especially for -- kindergarten pupils as well as postgraduate students. Here I believe that John Stuart Mill's observations about the educative value of making one's own decisions is important. The committee which has delegated to it the right of decision about rules for student discipline should be predominantly composed of students (perhaps 75% of the membership) with only token representation of the other

interest groups who sit on the overall governing council. This example shows the extreme of student participation which I would envisage in the democratic government of the process of education, because it is the area of most complete student interest and least immediate external interest.

The example of delegation which is most interesting within the context of this paper is the committee for making decisions about what is taught and how it is taught in the school. Let me clearly indicate that the type of decision I would see delegated to this committee is one of approval of particular courses of study and the general purposes of particular courses: for example, the choice between presenting learning experiences in European history and American history; or the use of open plan learning techniques instead of seminars. Overall decisions about whether or not to have history in the curriculum would be made by the governing council itself, for this decision is completely a value decision into which no expertise of a professional sort enters, or at least in so far as it does, such consideration is definitely secondary. Whereas decisions about the teaching of European instead of American history or open classes instead of seminars do raise questions about staff resources, and pedagogical methods available -- albeit still within an essential value framework -- which do place expert judgment at a higher premium and therefore ought to be decided in an institutional context which places greater weight on "expert" opinions.

The committee which decides curriculum questions should be structured to allow those with expertise to have a stronger voice than the rest; however, this does not mean that the layman and the uninitiated should be excluded from the curriculum decision-making process. I would argue that teachers should have the most substantial minority membership on such a committee with students, parents, and community representatives having much smaller minority memberships. This curriculum committee organization would place the experts in a strong position, but it would still require them to persuade their colleagues in the other groups (and this would include student colleagues) that their judgments are correct.

This requirement for justification and persuasion seems to me to be the most important contribution which democratic procedures for making educational decisions can make to the process of curriculum change and most distinguishes this participatory model from the present systems. It also makes the constraint on pure democratic procedures, which the composition imposes, less severe and more justifiable. The justification for the constraint is the logically authoritative role of the teacher in the teacher/student paradigm in the educational process. But the procedure recognizes the assumption of authority in subject matter and pedagogy in the paradigm and asks for explicit justification in terms of disciplinary expertise and pedagogical approach for each particular

decision -- a procedure which is wholly lacking in most educational institutions as we know them today. This is the reason that a democratically principled committee such as the one I suggest is likely to lead to curriculum improvement, if the norm for such improvement is set by the conception of education which I outlined. Justification will require analysis and clarification of the reason for particular educational moves. Such a process should prevent the worst from being done, even if it does not guarantee the best. So in the procedure for meeting the demands which the democratic principles place on all social institutions, perhaps a new and better set of decisions about substantive educational issues will emerge.

The second mode of adjusting democratic principles to the educational context, which I mentioned earlier, is that of incorporating the decision-making process into the curriculum of the institution. I can deal with this mode only briefly and superficially. The gist of my suggestion would be that the process of decision-making necessarily raises a whole series of value and behavioural questions which could (and ought to) become the subject of a number of educational exercises within the formal curriculum of the educational institution, especially in the humanities and social studies. The challenge to democratic educational institutions would be to develop new means of integrating the process of participation into the process: for example, by focusing on the value conflicts involved in a particular decision to increase the time spent on reading at the expense of the time spent on math and using the problem as the basis of a learning experience in history (by comparing with other historical periods) or social studies (by critically analyzing the values involved). Such a mode of adjusting the democratic process to the educational experience (and vice versa) might become the occasion for the development of many new approaches to learning in the humanities and the social sciences.

Although the possible benefits of new democratic procedures in educational institutions are many, there will be problems as well. And one deserves special notice: the threat of local majorities to the interests of local minorities. In spite of the inclusion of protection of minority rights as the third principle of democracy, which should operate in participatory, democratic educational institutions, one cannot just assume its operation. Realistically, the protection of minority rights cannot be left to these local institutions. A central, systems level institutional framework will have to be developed to protect these minority rights. The exact character of this institutional device will vary from system to system, but it must certainly include an explicit code of individual rights and a system-wide mechanism for enforcing these rights from outside of the local institutions. Details of such an institutional framework cannot be worked out here; but the problem and the outline of its solution seem to me to be quite relevant to our comments about a democratic educational system.

I should clearly point out that the relationship between democratic educational institutions and the substance of curriculum reform is contingent, not necessary. There are no guarantees of progress entailed in the democratic educational system. To make educational reform happen will require more than institutional change: it will require effective participation in a new open system, a point to which I shall return in a moment. But at the very least the moral demands which democratic principles place on all social systems will have been met. No mean achievement in itself.

And a system open at its base is more likely to become open throughout its range. This systemic openness is most likely to lead to the generation of many and varied alternative solutions to important educational problems. So when one solution is found to be inadequate, more will be visible for testing. And testing all potential solutions will receive just because the system is so open to challenges by all of the interests involved. The possibility of testing is a logical necessity of the open system suggested; the actuality of it is another matter. It is this process of curriculum innovation and challenge which finally must concern us.

IV. CURRICULUM REFORM IN AN OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

If one were to have such an open educational system with its participatory politics of curriculum development, most curriculum reformers would not know how to comport themselves. They are too used to bemoaning the closed system and their inability to get a hearing. One possible response of the reformer to this new situation would be to retire from it and leave new educational approaches to the institutions themselves. This response would have the virtue of forcing the local institutions to be free by depriving them of external crutches. But I believe such a response would be unrealistic, because these new, open educational institutions and the various interests represented therein will need all of the expert help they can get.

I would argue that in a system of open and participatory institutions the appropriate stance for the curriculum reformer would be quite aggressive. Since the system itself vests the right and responsibility for substantive decision in the democratically governed institutions themselves, there may be less antagonism to the ideas suggested from outside. This attitude on my part may be the Prussian in me getting the better of my populist instincts, but I believe the best contribution that open systems can have is strong and determined leadership. Techniques of persuasion are not those of abdication or dictation. As long as the right and the power of the audience to say no is clearly institutionalized, there is no reason not to use every wile and charm to support one's case for reform and change.

Energetic intervention by the curriculum reformer will be desirable on another ground as well. Effectiveness of decentralized and democratic institutions will require the best sort of professional advice from within and without the local system. One of the greatest problems facing local, participatory institutions in all fields of concern is the paucity of professional advice and assistance equal to the scope of the problems and the power of bureaucracies which they face in central systems. Existing agencies for curriculum development and reform can contribute to solving this problem in the sphere of education. But new institutional approaches will be needed as well. Local and independent sources of professional advice will have to be developed to provide consultative services to these new units of participatory democracy. In the field of law we have a possible model for the provision of this service in the American experience with neighborhood law offices. A model more directly related to educational problems is that of the Center for the Study¹ of Student Citizenship, Rights, and Responsibilities in Dayton, Ohio. This Center combines a number of advisory and advocacy roles at the local level and attempts to encourage the development of participatory institutions in education. But to make a system of participatory institutions educationally effective, one will need a network of local agencies which provide a wider range of advisory services to all of the participants in the educational process. Very important among these services would be those of neighborhood curriculum advisers. Perhaps an extension of the operations of the British teachers' center into an educational service center might provide a helpful approach. Of course to accomplish curriculum change throughout the system, there would have to be a large network of these independent advisory bodies serviced by systems-wide institutions. And in order to achieve maximum effectiveness within the educational system and to have the greatest impact on the social system as a whole, such professional advisory services in education should be offered within the context of local institutions providing professional advice ranging from law and social security to health care and economic development. But the minimum requirement for effective operation of participatory educational institutions would be educational advice sources located locally and independent from the systems bureaucracies.

So a constructive role for the curriculum reformer in the open and participatory system will require an active involvement in the life of the local institutions through the development of new modes of delivery of curriculum ideas into the system.

1. See "Community Power and Student Rights: An Interview with Arthur E. Thomas," Harvard Educational Review, Vol.42, No.2, May, 1972, pp 173-217.

CONCLUSION

But until we have an open system of educational institutions with participatory politics of Curriculum change, we are quite unlikely to have a very receptive audience for substantive suggestions about curriculum innovation. It is for this reason that I have become very skeptical about curriculum packages, methodological suggestions, and new techniques (which are usually quite old) when they expect to work in arthritic institutions. I am not suggesting that curriculum reformers in universities, colleges of education, research councils, and the like should close up shop. I am only suggesting that they could better spend their time in the present trying to change the institutional framework with which they must deal. For only if this institutional context is changed is there any real likelihood that their wares will be used.

Finally, I should reiterate my belief that the likelihood of curriculum reform even after an institutional reformation such as the one I suggest will be just that: a likelihood, not a certainty. The relationship between institutional reform and curriculum innovation will continue to be contingent. But I would guess that the heightened consciousness of interests at stake in the educational process which should emerge from the suggested decentralized and democratic institutional structure should lead those participating in the process to be quite receptive to suggestions for improvement in the curriculum. Not only will they be aware of their interests at stake, but they will also feel responsible for dealing with these interests themselves; a responsibility which should encourage an enthusiastic search for new approaches to old and new problems.

Although the acceptance of curriculum innovations in this brave new world will still be contingent, not necessary, we must clearly understand that the condition for the creation of this receptive audience is necessary, not contingent: and that is profound institutional change. Substantive educational change will still require the planting of hundreds of thousands of seeds in order to have a few hundred flowers bloom (to paraphrase Chairman Mao, a few revolutions ago). But no seeds have a prayer until we enrich the institutional soil by opening it up to the air and light of participatory politics of curriculum reform. This cultivation is our first task.

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