DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 059 005 RC 005 952

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TITLE Local Control Over Formal Education in Two American-Indian Communities: A Preliminary Step Toward Cultural Survival.
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 14p.; Paper for presentation at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting to be held in Chicago, April 5, 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Community Involvement; Cultural Factors; *Educational Development; Educational Research; Governmental Structure; Leadership Qualities; Policy Formation; Religious Factors; *School District Autonomy; *Social Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The possible causes underlying the differential response to local control over education in the American Indian Ccommunities of San Juan and Santa Clara, both of the Tewa branch of the Pueblo Tribe, are reported in this paper. Results are described for the 10-week study (summer 1969) that consisted of observations of community reactions to proposals for changed conditions and in-depth interviews with the community political and educational leaders. According to the paper, Santa Clara has progressed much further toward controlling its schools than San Juan. It is noted that the primary factor probably responsible for the difference in degree of receptivity to local control over formal education between the 2 communities is that San Juan has maintained a theocratic government while Santa Clara has instituted a political system in which secular and religious roles are separate. Other major factors include (1) a communication gap between San Juan's traditional governing body and the more progressive citizenry, (2) the absence of consolidated leadership among the general citizenry in San Juan to generate consensus over major issues, and (3) the allocation of final decisions to those San Juan community leaders who are least aware of modern demands. Conclusions concerning the Indian role in formal education are presented. (PS)

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LOCAL CONTROL OVER FORMAL EDUCATION IN TWO AMERICAN-INDIAN COMMUNITIES: A PRELIMINARY STEP TOWARD CULTURAL SURVIVAL *

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Underlying present governmental and private objectives to institute local control over the schools on Indian reservations is the hope that such a policy will make formal education more relevant to the American-Indian child. This paper reports on a preliminary investigation of the possible causes underlying the differential response to local control over education in the two Indian communities of San Juan and Santa Clara.

Both San Juan and Santa Clara belong to the Tewa branch of the Pueblo tribe on Indians. Consequently, they share a very similar history, geographic position and cultural evolution. While members of both pueblos have an interest in controlling their schools, Santa Clara has progressed much further toward actualizing this goal.

In order to determine which factors contribute to the difference in approach to formal education between San Juan and Santa Clara, the author spent the summer of 1969 as a participant observer in these two communities. Interviews were conducted with a broad cross-section of the residents and with the communities' political and educational leaders regarding their commitment to local control over education.

Examination of the personal testimonies and present life styles of the members of the two communities reveals that the primary factor probably responsible for the difference in degree of receptivity to local control over formal education between the two communities is that San Juaners have maintained an essentially theocratic government; Santa Clarans, on the other hand, have instituted a political system in which secular and religious roles are divorced from one another. As a result, Santa Clara has not had to cope with certain conditions which appear to have interfered with San Juan's potential for educational change. Among these are: 1) a communication gap between San Juan's traditional governing body and the more progressive citizenry; 2) the absence of consolidated leadership among the general citizenry to generate consensus over major issues; 3) the subsequent allocation of final decisions to those community leaders who are least aware of, and/or interested in, modern demands. It is probable, that , in contemplating the prospect of local control over education, San Juaners suspect that the basic conditions which impaired previous educational projects would again prevail. First, acceptance and legitimation of a major policy such as local control over education would have to come from the community's social and political leaders. As a result, the program's implementors would be chosen by, and subject to the pressures of, the community's traditional governing body. Secondly, organizing San Juaners around a project such as local control, (which promises only far-range results), might be a difficult goal to accomplish in a community which has not developed a sense of risk-taking gained from experience in long-term projects. In Santa Clara, on the other hand, the governmental system has allowed for a more open communication regarding

*Paper to be presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting to be held in Chicago, April 5, 1972.

secular issues and has provided support for experimentation in improving the pueblo's conditions. Hence the motivation to undertake innovative projects could develop. This innovation has been reinforced by the fact that communal decision-making has been satisfactorily realized. With a backlog of many successful experiences, Santa Clarans see control over education not as an end in itself but as a means of extending their authority over another institution in order to make their community a totally self-governing entity.

The implication which seems to emerge from this preliminary investigation is that the contribution of community control over education in traditional Indian communities apprently lies in the opportunity for local residents to define which skills and aspects of Indian culture should be included into formal education to make it more relevant to their values, present needs and future goals. The psychological and practical foundation to initiate reform can then be expected to develop among American-Indian students. Formal education might thus become a more meaningful institution in Indian communities.

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I THE PROBLEM

A basic problem underlying all educational programs in the War on Poverty is the understanding that without specific skills and behavior, the culturally different cannot attain a higher socio-economic level than they now have. The American school system has therefore attempted to develop particular capabilities in minority group members in the hope of thus aiding them toward economic improvement.

For members of groups whose values and social system resemble that of the dominant society, adaptation to the school's norms will take place relatively easily and successfully. However, among American Indians generally, tribal structural characteristics and values serve to set their members against the norms which prevail in the dominant culture. Tightly integrated institutions, a pervasive religious order stressing particularism, a deep-rooted belief system emphasizing subjugation to nature, and an extended family structure direct the individual's orientation and commit him to the fate of his group.

In order to help the Indian student adjust more successfully to American schools, social scientists and educators have developed academic programs which stress such approaches as bilingualism and individualized instruction. Indian students however regard these solutions as superficial and continue to view the educational system as a basically alien structure. As a result, they remain unmotivated to learn those skills taught in school which would aid them toward improving their social and economic position.

Recently, preliminary guidelines for instituting complete local control over the schools on Indian reservations were developed by governmental officials in the hope of thereby making school more

relevant to the Indian child. Underlying this reasoning are the following assumptions:

actual community control of education by adult generation → greater relevancy of own behavior → sense of efficacy developed by adult generation → transferance of sense of efficacy to children → greater motivation to achieve among students

This paper reports on an investigation of the dynamics involved in the first two assumptions of the above premise. Although this article does not deal directly with the effect of self-governance on personal efficacy, it does investigate the possible causes underlying the differential responsiveness to local control over education in two Indian communities. As such, it provides an initial step toward determining which conditions relate to decentralization of formal education.[1]

II THE SAMPLE

Two Pueblo communities- San Juan and Santa Clara- were selected as locales for the study because the need for educational change in this tribe is particularly apparent. Although the Pueblos are similar to other tribes in the United States in terms of size and economic activity, their unemployment rate is higher, often reaching 89% of the total population (Smith, 1968b, p. 88). In addition, the age distribution in these communities shows a marked clustering at the upper and lower ends. Few young adults are therefore present in the pueblos to serve as role models and the youth are often left to

[1] For a more direct examination of the nature of the relationship between community control and sense of personal efficiacy among American Indians, the reader is referred to a more extensive work by the author entitled, Local Control over the Schools in Two American Indian Communities: A Preliminary Examination of Structural Constraints and "Internal Control" Attitudes.

their own devices. Deprived of economic resources, recreational facilities and adequate stimulation, they often turn to alchohol and acts of delinquency. In these communities then the problem of how to motivate the youth to remain in school and use their education to improve their social and economic situation takes on particular importance.

Both San Juan and Santa Clara belong to the Tewa branch of the Pueblo tribe of Indians. Consequently, they share a very similar history, geographic position and cultural evolution. While members of both pueblos have an interest in controlling their schools, Santa Clara has progressed much further toward actualizing this goal. For example, although both communities presently have Advisory School Boards to which the Bureau of Indian Affairs has relegated increasingly greater power, Santa Clara has exploited this opportunity for local control much more than has San Juan. Moreover, when the federal government recently presented both communities with the option of subcontracting for complete local control over their schools, only Santa Clara considered accepting this offer.

III METHODOLOGY

In order to determine which factors contribute to the difference in approach toward formal education between San Juan and Santa Clara, I spent the summer of 1969 as a participant observer in these two communities. I conducted my research while assisting on a ten week study directed by Dr. Alfonso Ortiz[2] for the Association on American Indian Affairs regarding the degree of receptivity among San Juan

[2] I am deeply indebted to Dr. Ortiz, himself from San Juan, for having made this opportunity possible for me.

residents toward total community control over education. The study was undertaken to determine for the Association the conceivability that such a program could be carried out by the community.

I was able to question a broad cross-section of the residents regarding their commitment to local control over education. I also conducted in-depth and repeated interviews with the community's political and educational leaders in which we discussed how this program could be implemented. At the same time, patterns of governance, manipulation of economic and environmental conditions, and emotional and practical reactions to proposals for changed conditions were observed 1) when I was permitted to be present at particular tribal activities, e.g. religious dances, trading transactions, ceremonial occasions in the home; 2) when I participated in local activities as a fellow community member (e.g. canning peaches for the winter with the women, making rings with the children, doing clerical work for the members of the local Arts and Crafts Guild).

IV PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Examination of the personal testimonies and present life styles of the members of the two communities reveals that the primary factor probably responsible for the difference in degree of receptivity to local control over formal education between the communities is that San Juaners have maintained an essentially theocratic government; Santa Clarans, on the other hand, have instituted a political system in which secular and religious roles are divorced from one another. As a result, Santa Clara has not had to cope with certain conditions which appear to have interfered with San Juan's potential for educational change. Among these are: 1) a communication gap between San Juan's traditional governing body and the more progressive citizenry; 2) the absence of consolidated leadership among the general citizenry to generate consensus over major

issues; 3) the subsequent allocation of final decisions to those community leaders who are least aware of, and/or interested in, modern demands.

In comparing the historical development of the two communities it seems that a more conservative structure was maintained in San Juan because no reason arose in this pueblo to counteract traditional rule. First, the departure in San Juan of discontented residents allowed traditional leaders to maintain a benevolent rule in the pueblo. Secondly, the consistently equal allocation of authority to the representatives of the two major socio-religious groups remaining in the pueblo provided all with a sense of equity and apparently mitigated against rejection of the system by the inhabitants of San Juan.

In Santa Clara the rule of the native priests was historically more rigid than in the other pueblos. Dozier (1966) attributes the greater demand for conformity to traditional values by Santa Clara's officials to the fact that dissident groups were often compelled to remain in this community because, unlike other pueblos, they did not have free land in which to expand. As a result, those individuals wanting to undermine the traditional nature of the community had to do so by changing conditions in the pueblo rather than fleeing from them. Toward the end of the nineteenth century a dissident group did, in fact, attempt to change the rigid religious rules by simply refusing to participate in them. The result of the secession by one element of the community from ceremonial affairs was that other basic institutions (e.g. the family) took on roles previously played by religious officials. The lack of participation in ceremonial activities, and the substitution of allegiance to other than religious institutions, apparently minimized involvement in, and firm commitment to, the traditional structure. This secularization was reinforced by the formal

allocation of political power in 1935 to a neutral, rather than religious, order, thereby institutionalizing a more modern organization of government into the community.[3]

VI EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because of the difference in political development, educational change has been slower in San Juan than in Santa Clara. In 1965, for instance, when a Headstart program was established in San Juan, it received only minimal response from community members. This lack of interest resulted because there had been little communication about Headstart from representatives of the pueblo's traditional governing body to the community's parents. Since the decision-making process in this Pueblo is usually handled privately among the religious leaders, most parents felt skeptical about attending the meeting organized to determine commitment to Headstart. The members of the traditional governing body do not represent a broad cross-section of the community in terms of education, age, occupation or even residence. Thus, unaided, they were unable to assess the value of a Headstart program for the community.

In Santa Clara, where a more secular governmental system has been insitutionalized, the same leadership vacuum and communication impasse as in San Juan do not exist. When the opportunity to establish a Headstart program became known in Santa Clara, all community members were invited to develop the center. Informants reported that because they were allowed to participate in structuring the program, many were willing to contribute much of their time to make it a success.

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[3] This is not to imply that the compartimentalization of religious and secular responsibility which has been attained in Santa Clara has reduced the prestige of the community's religious leaders. Rather, it has increased their status by making them the sole guardians of a very exclusive aspect of the pueblo's social system.

The same tendency manifested itself in 1968 when the Pueblos were presented with the option of establishing an Advisory School Board in their communities; San Juan was unable to fully exploit this opportunity while Santa Clara was. In San Juan, although a deep-rooted ideological connection seems to exist between the traditional governing structure and the members of the Advisory School Board, there is no functional interlocking of responsibility between the leaders of the two institutions. The credibility gap which prevails regarding political decision-making undermines full legitimization of the Advisory School Board. At the same time, the attempt by School Board members fo follow, in a vacuum, the demands of the pueblo's governmental representatives impedes the proper functioning of the Advisory Board. Similarly, the professional people hired to run the school are totally unaware of relevant political and social occurrences and thus cannot carry out their duties effectively.

In Santa Clara, the Council decided to share the responsibility of creating an Advisory School Board with the teachers and parents of the community. The ideals advocated by the Council at the initial stage of the School Board's existence continue to manifest themselves: the Board meets with the principal and parents once a month to discuss problems and give and recieve recommendations. In addition, selection of Advisory School Board members differs significantly from that in San Juan. Board members in Santa Clara are chosen according to their experience in working with children rather than on the basis of their ideological affiliation. As a result, a sense of professionalism and cooperation exists which allows for efficient functioning.

VII INFLUENCE OF HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON PRESENT APPROACH

The Headstart and Advisory School Board incidents illustrate the relative indifference on the part of San Juaners toward establishing

complete local control over education in their community. It is probable that, in contemplating the prospect of complete local control over education, the community suspects that the basic conditions which impaired previous educational projects would again prevail. First, acceptance and legitimation of a major policy such as local control over education would have to come from the community's social and political leaders. As a result, the program's implementors would be chosen by, and subject to the pressures of, the community's traditional governing body. Secondly, organizing San Juaners around a project such as local control, (which promises only far-range results), might be a difficult goal to accomplish in a community which has not developed a sense of risk-taking gained from experience in long-term projects.

In Santa Clara, on the other hand, the governmental system has allowed for a more open communication regarding secular issues and has provided support for experimentation in improving the pueblo's conditions. Hence the motivation to undertake innovative projects could develop. This innovation has been reinforced by the fact that communal decision-making has been satisfactorily realized. With a backlog of many successful experiences, Santa Clarans see control over education not as an end in itself but as a means of extending their authority over another institution in order to make their community a totally self-governing entity.

VIII APPLYING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH TO A POLICY FOR INDIAN SURVIVAL

An examination of the historical and social conditions within San Juan and Santa Clara serves not only theoretical but also definite social purposes. First, it indicates which aspects of pueblo life curtail the community's potential to develop viable educational programs.

This information is important to develop appropriate guidelines for future self-governance which speak to, or realistically circumvent, these limitations. Secondly, the preliminary analysis opens up the possibility to investigate further the relevant trends which will define the future structure of San Juan and Santa Clara. This provides a basis for using one community as a model of development to the other. Thirdly, talking to the political leaders of San Juan in particular about the possibilities and methods of implementing local control over education provided an opportunity to make them aware of the reasons for past failure and the need to establish more open lines of communication in their pueblo. Finally, conducting such research helps to uncover the varying purposes that local control over education serves among different American Indian communities. As such it suggests the degree of flexibility that must be built into such a program in order to insure a different mode and rate of development within individual Indian tribes.

For Santa Clarans, the school constitutes only one institution over which they desire control in order to attain total self governance.[4] In San Juan, community control over formal education constitutes a more preliminary step. Here it might be a means of teaching individuals how to transcend the limitations of the pueblo's conservative political structure and eventually lead the community toward total self-rule. The author does not mean that formal education should motivate residents of the more traditional pueblos to reject their cultural and religious heritage. Rather, local

[4] Santa Clarans want the opportunity to police their territory, to try their citizens according to their own legal codes, and to run their own hospitals.

control could provide pueblo members with the opportunity to define which skills and aspects of Indian culture should be included into formal education to make it more relevant to their values and needs.

The conclusion which seems to emerge from this preliminary investigation is that the contribution of community control over education within traditional Indian communities lies not primarily in the opportunity for local residents to determine financial and administrative matters. Rather, it rests first in the opportunity for them to control how, and what, subjects are taught so that formal education can prepare their children for developing viable communities. Formal education can contribute to American Indian survival only if Indian children identify with the school as a relevant part of their environment. The psychological and practical foundation to initiate reform can then be expected to develop among American Indian students. Formal education might thus become a more meaningful institution in Indian communities.

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