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ABSTRACT

Recent reports on the state of American education are reviewed, along with the historical context of these reports. Common threads that run through the reports include: schools lack consensus regarding educational goals and priorities; the academic curriculum of the high school must be strengthened; ways must be devised to improve the performance of teachers; there is a need for cooperation with other institutions; and both equity and excellence are important goals. It is suggested that these issues are important at the postsecondary level as well. Similarities and differences between the present concern with education and that of the post-Sputnik period are discussed. In both the 1950's and 1980's, perceived international competition triggered the public interest in education. Preeminent among the differences is the current emphasis upon improving the education of all the children, not just the college bound or technically talented. Other major differences between the past and the present are as follows: we now know a great deal more about educational practice, and the current criticism of American education comes at a time of concern about many of the basic societal structures. Reasons that educators have lost unified leadership during the 1970s and 1980s are also identified. (SW)

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AMERICAN EDUCATION: THEN AND NOW*

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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During the past year the American public has been told in a dozen well-publicized reports and a half dozen widely reviewed (if not read) books that the American high school leaves a great deal to be desired. Beginning with the National Commission on Excellence fervent report, A Nation at Risk, and moving to the less rhetorically combative Twentieth Century Fund assessment of federal elementary and secondary education policy, Making the Grade, the documents accumulated and proliferated throughout the summer. The College Board told us what the essentials of the high school curriculum were. The Education Commission of the States group included both state and business leaders and expressed grave concerns about current educational practice in the high schools. By Labor Day the National Science Board Commission revealed that extant mathematics and science instruction was inadequate in American schools.

With the beginning of the school year four important books appeared documenting the difficulties schools encounter: Diane Ravitch's The Troubled Crusade, Ernest Boyer's High School, John Goodlad's A Place Called School, and Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's The Good High School. With the coming of 1984 Theodore Sizer's Horace's Compromise arrived.

Common threads run through the reports. These are:

- (1) Schools lack consensus regarding educational goals and priorities for their activities.
- (2) The academic curriculum of the high school must be strengthened, taught to everyone, and assurance provided by the high school that only those who have mastered it should be certified as full graduates.
- (3) Teachers are both the root of the difficulty and the primary means of solving the problem of poor student achievement. Therefore, various ingenious ways must be devised to improve the performance of existing teachers, to bring brighter people to teaching, to pay them more, to provide for more specialized careers within teaching. Presumably in some unidentified way these actions would make teachers more proficient in making children learn academic material more thoroughly.
- (4) Principals, the heroes of the effective schools literature of the late seventies, must become instructional leaders, not just bureaucratic managers. Their role in the current reports appears less central than that of teachers.
- (5) School districts should imaginatively investigate ways of cooperating with other institutions (business, industry, colleges and universities) and benefit from their resources, both material and intellectual. Families,

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religious and community organizations--all potentially likely institutions for cooperation with the schools--are rarely mentioned.

(6) Fundamental responsibility for elementary and secondary education remains a matter for states and localities in funding and administering their public school systems. The federal government can be looked to for basically the same kind and level of assistance presently provided with some modest expectations for increases, but the balance among the levels of government should remain roughly the same. None of the reports challenges the primacy of the public school system nor does any support either voucher or tuition tax credit plans.

(7) The dual challenges of quality and equality in education are not mutually exclusive, and the quest for both these fundamental goals must be a joint endeavor.

(8) The schools, especially the high schools, are currently unsatisfactory because youngsters emerging from them do not have the skills and attitudes necessary for full contribution to and participation in our society and economy.

(9) The schools can be improved.

Just HOW the schools will be improved remains obscure. Maybe it is too much to ask of committees, which are the authors of these documents, to reach agreement on not only the problem but also its means of solution. Surely it is astonishing that such diverse groups as these could agree so substantially on the problem itself. Nonetheless, if as they all assert, the problem is serious, then some effort at reasonable, practical solutions is needed.

In addition to the fundamental matter of implementation--that is, concrete suggestions which will move our discussion beyond the staid world of academic criticism into the complex world of classrooms, children, and teachers--the studies gloss over other problems of a potentially divisive nature. Ideally, a commitment to educational excellence is a noteworthy goal; yet, divorced both from social reform in general and issues of student motivation in particular (there is noticeably little discussion on this latter point), that goal may be elusive for many. Upgrading high school graduation and college entrance requirements are at best problematic means of enhancing student motivation, and might, in fact, threaten the existence of numerous colleges whose enrollments are already tenuous. Moreover, how would students be served who failed to meet the requirements? Would lower and middle class families, the "silent majority" parents of the "average" child, readily stand for another barrier to their children's advancement? Further, programs emphasizing mathematics and science achievement have tended in the past to exclude women and minorities. The current studies neither offer assurance that new proposals will serve previously underrepresented constituencies nor do they recognize the unfinished agenda of achieving educational equity for minorities and for women.

Indeed, the current studies and reports make little mention of significant achievements of American education since the mid-1960s in promoting both equity and quality. The greatest gains in quality have not been in the group that the

studies are most interested in, namely high school students' performance in academic subjects. Rather the gains in quality have been with elementary students, especially young ones and particularly with minority children, whose early reading scores have increased substantially. Evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress reveals that throughout the 1970s, the decade much decried for its decline in academic rigor, nine year olds made regular gains in reading. The overall change was a gain of nearly 4 points; for whites the gain was about 3, but for blacks the gain was nearly 10 points. Both the federal operational funds and federal educational research funds have been concentrated on basic reading skills, especially for minority and low income young children, during this period. What we may be seeing here are the beneficial consequences of such programs as Project Head Start, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the research activities underlying the teaching of basic reading skills undertaken by the National Institute of Education. Not until the late seventies did the research agenda in education shift to address teaching and learning the more complex skills of reading comprehension associated with upper elementary and high school learning. Title I, which was authorized for grades 1 through 12, has never been fully funded, and its dollars have generally been concentrated on the primary grades. There have been no substantial federal programs at the high school level except vocational education, a subject not in high repute with the various commissions.

Finally, the reports reflect a tendency to turn the purposes of education away from broad and important social and personal goals toward narrow instrumentalist objectives. The problem, in general, seems to be one of generating educational values promoting life-long learning, which the reports all indicate they consider a fundamental goal, in an atmosphere which tends to stress only the external or comparative economic advantages of education. Are students expected to learn mathematics and science so that they can get ahead financially in the world? If so, what kind of mathematics and science instructor can we expect to find who will teach with those goals in mind for students while evidently rejecting them for him or herself by choosing a life of teaching, an occupation not nearly as economically enhancing as other jobs for which mathematics and science training would prepare them? Clearly we must recruit and keep capable teachers in the schools for reasons other than economic self-interest alone, and we must be able to articulate to the young some of the other reasons for the value of education besides simple economic advancement.

These reports all argue that students graduating from high school must achieve higher standards of literacy consistent with the demands of modern society. Education must be improved, the reports argue, because only with mastery of these higher order literacy skills can youngsters get ahead in our complex society, and the society itself needs better trained manpower. Little is said in these reports about the ways that literacy can enhance our humanity. To learn, to express, to decide, and to do--all elements in the definition of literacy for late twentieth century America--together permit us to become more autonomous individuals, able to transcend the narrow circumstances of our individual experience, less circumscribed by the conditions of social class, sex, and ethnicity into which we are born.

Lawrence Cremin has written of the power of "liberating literacy" to provide access to written materials that "can open people's minds to change, new ideas and influences, to new goals and aspirations," to systematizing and individualizing experience, and to creating a demand for more literacy.² With such literacy one has the capacity to undertake such valuable activities, although one also has the option not to. That "liberating literacy" does not in all instances open people's minds, systematize their experience, or create a demand for more literacy does not discredit it. The power to do so is there, and I can think of no other set of skills that would allow these options. That is the rationale for achieving literacy with all our high school students - not that they will eventually do all those desirable things--no school can be held accountable for that--but that they CAN.

Many recent commentators on these reports have observed similarities between the present concern with education and that of the post-Sputnik period. They are correct, I believe, in pointing to some similarities between the public attention given to education in the late 50's and the public interest in education now. In both instances perceived international competition triggered the public interest; in 1957 the Soviets put something in the sky that at the time we could not put in the sky, thereby convincing an unreflective public that their science and technology were better than ours. Today much is made of the vaunted Japanese economic triumphs, and credit is often given to the rigorous Japanese educational system for producing a work force that is producing so well. The implication is that if we had a more Japanese-like educational system, then we would have a healthier economy. Several steps in logic are skipped to reach that conclusion, but such is the impression with which we are left. Whether the international competition is Russian satellites or Japanese automobiles, the public senses that it is in the midst of a crisis, and one way out is to improve the educational system in this country, a system that is perpetually in need of improvement. Thus, some modest federal support is sought to increase funds for education, particularly in areas that seem responsive to the crisis. That brought us the National Defense Education Act of 1958, a bill which provided most of its funds to support higher education students and faculties in the fields of mathematics, science, foreign languages, and engineering. Today, when the federal government has become more in the habit of supporting elementary and secondary education than it was in 1958, there is some likelihood that legislation will pass providing direct assistance to school districts and states to enhance their academic offerings, especially in mathematics, science, and technology. From the point of view of the school systems, the major federal activity in the fifties was not through NDEA but rather through increased National Science Foundation appropriations for development of curricular materials, initially in physics and mathematics and subsequently in other sciences and finally, in the politically disastrous social sciences with Man: A Course of Study (MACOS). It may be that NSF again will play a leading role at the federal level in stimulating improved education in mathematics and science at the elementary and secondary levels. A final similarity between the post-Sputnik period and the present is that both educational crises occurred during Republican administrations, which had been brought to power by a conservative political mood in America.

Yet despite these similarities there are also profound differences, and

they are probably more important. Preeminent among the differences is the current emphasis upon improving the education of all the children, not just the college bound or technically talented. This time the deficiencies are seen as more fundamental, affecting the entire population, embedded more deeply in the society, than were the problems of the late fifties. Then remediation could focus on one segment, namely the scientific and technical personnel, while generally improving the college preparatory curriculum. Now we worry at least as much, if not more, about the repairman who is a high school graduate but who is unable to read his instructional manual. He, too, must receive a better high school education, as well as those high school valedictorians whose SAT scores are lower than those of their predecessors. This additional and appropriate concern makes the solution or improvement of schooling immensely more difficult. Before the attention concentrated upon youngsters who in general were not disaffected from school, who were accustomed to doing reasonably well, if not well enough. Now we are undertaking efforts to reach students for whom school in general and often high school, in particular, has been an unsatisfactory and disheartening experience. That is an altogether different task, to help them to learn effectively, and requires many more skills than simply transmission of academic material. The challenge to educators is immensely greater than simply developing a curriculum for children who have already been successful in learning.

A second major difference between the past and the present is that we now know a great deal more about educational practice than we did a quarter century ago. Our knowledge derived from both educational research and from practical experience in education is much better organized, codified, and--even to some extent--disseminated than it was twenty-five years ago. At that time in our introductory education courses we still said confidently, "Education is separate from politics." No informed person would say that today! Despite the immense and often accurate criticism that has been made of educational research, we are today much more knowledgeable about reading cognition, teaching strategies, organizational enhancements and detriments to learning, youngsters' moral development, effects of television on children's learning than we were in the mid-nineteen fifties.

Perhaps the most fundamental gain we have made in understanding educational practice is that we are much less likely to be cocksure that we in the universities have the answer that the benighted practitioner needs, if only he or she would have the wit to recognize our excellent solution to their problem. We in the universities have less hubris, a consequence of some of our failures to improve schools (we sometimes said "to fix schools") in the 1960's and early 1970's when we believed that if we ran schools, they would be better. We know now that the issues are much more complicated than we had originally thought, and that simplistic solutions or even complicated ones devised in our libraries and studies require substantial modification in the arena of practice. Collaboration between researchers and practitioners in the understanding and resolution of dilemmas of educational practice is never easy, but it is necessary, and gradually we have come to understand that both have beneficial insights to give to the other. Our increased understanding of educational practice, rooted as it is in both the social and behavioral sciences and in the craft knowledge of teachers and administrators, is revealed in the evolution of

the field of evaluation during the last two decades. Originally used rather leaderly and without much imagination or common sense, evaluation of educational programs has matured so that it is both a source of knowledge regarding education generally and of specific educational practices. Sometimes evaluations can even give us a real understanding of why the practice works or doesn't.

A third fundamental difference between the present and the past is that the current criticism of American education comes at a time of profound concern about many of the basic structures of American society while the previous one came at a moment of great public confidence in our country. Then we were acknowledged to be a leading world power, and our assumption was that this leadership rested not only on the prowess we had demonstrated in World War II and in the immediate post-war years but also on the moral fiber of our people and our economic system. Today that world leadership is at least queried, if not challenged, and we are much less uniformly hopeful about our abilities to solve all the dilemmas that plague us. Our young people and the education system that prepares them for adult life, however, remain a source of concern to us, but not one on which we permit ourselves the same hesitant pessimism that we sometimes reserve for ecological issues or nuclear proliferation.

The fourth and perhaps most fundamental difference between the 1950s and the 1980s, however, is the condition of educators themselves. What is most striking about the educational climate of the past thirty-five years is the remarkable immunity that school people felt from the criticism swirling around them. Their immunological systems held during much of the fifties and sixties but began to decline in the seventies and eighties as educators finally became sensitive to public criticism. This immunity rested on two critical variables: enrollment increases and unified leadership.

One issue transcended all others for school people in the 1950s: burgeoning enrollments. Elementary and secondary enrollments had been relatively steady from 1930 to 1950 at 28 million, but largely as a consequence of the dramatic increase in the birth rate during and after World War II and partly as a consequence of increased retention in high schools, enrollments grew to 42 million in 1959/60, to 51 million in 1959/60 before peaking in 1975, and beginning their decline to the current 47 million. If enrollments grow, so must faculties, facilities, and funds. Thus, educators' concerns focused on problems of expansion: accommodating the many new children, finding the teachers to instruct them, constructing the building to house them, finding the funds to support this enterprise. Educators saw many of THEIR problems as solvable by money, and many of THEIR problems were.

If educators had had time to notice, however, they might have observed that the birth rate had peaked in 1957, and the children now entering elementary school were part of a declining, not increasing, cohort. Further, ten years had now passed since the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, and school desegregation issues were moving inexorably onto the national agenda, no longer issues limited to recalcitrant southerners. But these were signs that could be ignored when pressure to pass bond issues grew.

What could not be ignored, however, was the change in the stance of the federal government toward education. It was beginning to mobilize on school questions, something it had not done before. Driven largely by concerns for civil rights and their obligation to make sure that the US Constitutional guarantees were provided to all citizens, these federal officials in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were found, of all unlikely places, not just in the Justice Department but in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Office of Education, traditionally a rickety, arthritic operation. Now headed by a dynamic Commissioner, Francis Keppel, and staffed by a committed coterie of young policy makers, the Office of Education went to work to gain passage of a federal aid to education bill that specified aid to districts with concentrations of children from low income families. This was not the bill that educators most sought; they would have preferred one with many fewer federal strings attached. But in the passage of that bill the stage was set for fundamental changes in educational leadership in America. No self-respecting, aspiring school person, one who sought positions of leadership in the field, would have dreamed of working in Washington at the Office of Education before the 1960's. After that many did, and "federal experience" was a prominent category on resumes of ambitious educators.

School people lost their positions of unified leadership in the seventies and eighties for several reasons. First, their autonomy was reduced as federal and state funds and regulations governed their decisions. Much more was said of the federal regulations' restrictiveness than of the states', but both were an issue. For example, the federal government never required children receiving Title I funds to be given separate instruction in different classrooms ("pull out," as it was called), but often states encouraged local districts to follow this practice since it reduced auditing difficulties. Whoever it was, federal or state, and for whatever reason--most of the activities that the federal government sought to have implemented at the local levels were administratively complex and often politically freighted--local school people perceived themselves much less as captains of their destiny.

Second, it is much easier to be a leader when your enterprise is growing than when it is shrinking. When one is closing schools, reducing staff ("Riffing" as it came to be known), and presenting smaller budgets as a consequence of taxpayer dissatisfaction (expressed in various state propositions) as well as lowered enrollments, one is in a situation of much more conflict than when one presides over a growing activity.

Third, in 1950 a school superintendent could assume that he (almost never "she") was one of a select minority in his community who had completed college. On a national basis he was right, for in 1950 only 6 per cent of Americans twenty-five year of age or older had completed college and only one third had finished high school. Therefore, the educator was the expert, and not likely to be challenged in his professional judgments by the majority who had substantially less educational expertise than he. Today such a professional educator is a victim of his and his colleagues' success. Now nationally nearly 70 percent of adult Americans have completed high school, and 17 percent have finished college. Persons with extensive educational experience themselves are much more likely to challenge professional judgements of educators than those

without it.

Fourth, the unity of educators has been demonstrably threatened by the spectacle of the split between teachers and administrators in contract negotiations and strikes. The public assumed, sometimes incorrectly, that teachers and administrators were on the same team, that they had the same goals: the education of the children. No one outside education noticed much when the umbrella organization of elementary/secondary education, the National Education Association, established in 1857, began to split off in different departments and then different associations. The Department of Superintendence of the NEA was created in 1870, and it ultimately became in 1937 the American Association of School Administrators, an organization totally separate from the NEA and on some issues, completely opposed to it. New York City recognized the United Federation of Teachers as a bargaining agent for its public school teachers in 1961 and for four autumns in the 1960's New Yorkers and the nation were treated to the sight of teachers striking, sometimes supported by the community interests in opposition to those of the Board of Education and sometimes the reverse. In recent years as administrators have sought to stretch tight budgets, teachers' organizations have fought hard for the sanctity of the seniority principle as the one guiding who will stay and who will leave teaching. No matter that the senior teachers are not trained in mathematics and science, where shortages exist, seniority should be the governing principle, the teachers organizations say. The largest teacher organization, the NEA, has vigorously resisted efforts to test teachers in either academic or pedagogic areas and to use those tests as determinants of either employment or certification. Despite that opposition some systems have tested their teachers, and the results have been disheartening. Substantial portions do not demonstrate mastery of high school level academic skills. Parents begin to wonder what has happened to a system where such priorities govern. No leadership, they conclude.

Unlike their colleagues in education in the Sputnik era, educators today do not feel immunity to public criticism. We educators may not be suffering from a progressive disease, but there is no question that our condition is one of vulnerability, not immunity. And, indeed, I would not argue that educators should be immune from criticism, should not feel the press of public concern for their performance in educating the young. As educators, we must be sensitive to criticism, but we must also find ways of expressing to ourselves and to the public what we can be expected to do and to provide evidence that we are in fact doing it. Educators' confidence in their ability to formulate what their institutions should be doing and to demonstrate that they are in fact doing it has been severely shaken during the past decade.

Three implications seem to me to follow from this review of the reports and of the historical context in which they have been written. First, to a remarkable degree the focus in the reports is upon teachers. In previous years we have hesitated to square our shoulders forcefully and say that in teachers lay both the failure and the solution. We have looked either to curriculum or technology, either separately or together, to compensate for the "teacher problem." In these reports we recognize that without the support of teachers, no fundamental improvements will occur. Now we are not concerned with the moral

fiber of teachers, as we have been in earlier decades, but rather with their working conditions, their cognitive achievements, their pedagogical skill. All of us recognize, I suspect, that teacher pay is inadequate, but there is less agreement about what forms of career ladders, differentiated staffing patterns, increased entry level salaries would be most effective in securing competent teachers.

We have nearly two and one-half million teachers in the United States, and it is the height of folly to believe that only the best and the brightest can be recruited to teaching. To expect to recruit and keep the best and the brightest in a field that is regularly maligned through criticism, where average annual salaries for experienced persons with master's degrees are less than \$20,000 and where the work is very hard strikes me as highly unlikely. After all, how many of us here were once elementary and secondary school teachers? I suspect a good many, and I further suspect that many of us left because of those three factors: we got tired of the public criticism of our efforts, we wanted and believed we needed more money; and the work load was enormous. Therefore, the issue for the future rests upon recognizing the centrality of teachers, and not believing that they can be obviated through curriculum reform or tricky technologies. Both improved curriculum and technology can augment their effectiveness, but both must be oriented to augment, not obviate. We must also actively recruit able persons to the field, not necessarily expecting all to remain for their entire professional lives. Most of all, we must provide working conditions, including forms of career ladders, that will make teaching substantially more attractive for the long career than it now is. One simple but effective incentive for improving working conditions of teachers would be to require that all administrators spend a portion of their day in classroom teaching.

Second, the group in American society which has been the first to move on these reports are the state legislators, sometimes leading their governors and sometimes being led, and occasionally working relatively synchronously. State government is taking the lead in trying to bring about the changes these reports implicitly seek. The states are attempting to bring about changes using both their budgetary, their legislative, and their regulatory capacities. Their proportion of local school budgets has increased some but not dramatically in the last twenty-five years, but the specificity of their legislative directives and of their regulatory rulings is burgeoning.

Third, taken together these recommendations and proposed actions reflect a diminished public confidence in the evidence that educational institutions provide of an individual's academic achievements, namely diplomas, degrees, and certification. Put baldly, the public is skeptical of the claim that receipt of a diploma, degree, or certificate implies that a person is educated. The public is seeking confirmation of that education in a much narrower and ostensibly objective base, namely test results. We see evidence of enthusiasm for testing in reports of poor performance of high school students and graduates and of beginning teachers. We see unprecedented resistance against its misuse by Gregory Anrig, the head of the nation's most prestigious and responsible testing service, the Educational Testing Service, who recently refused to permit ETS' tests to be used for maintaining or denying the certification of experienced teachers. Every June at commencement at Harvard University the various deans

present to the president of the university their candidates for the different degrees, and the president in a ritualized response welcomes each of the classes "to the company of educated men and women." Harvard's assumption is that the person who has completed degree work in one of its faculties is educated. Increasingly the American public has come to question that assumption about the judgments of its high school, college and university faculty and administrators.

What, then, do these observations imply for those of us in higher education? First, I believe that we must recognize that many of the assertions made in the reports about secondary schools may apply to us. Certainly in the plethora of programs that characterize the curriculum of post-secondary institutions there is little agreement about either the content of a liberal education, once considered the sine qua non of undergraduate education, nor even its desirability. The University of Chicago's Charles Wegener may write in a compelling fashion about the necessity of providing a liberal education, which he defines as "an effort to create a habit of reflection as an integral part of life of the mind,"³ but the substantial growth that has occurred in post-secondary education in the last twenty-five years has been in vocationally-oriented subjects. Questions of educational goals, standards, and levels of attainment are often debated but rarely acted upon.

Undergraduates can no longer be assumed to be a homogeneous, academically secure group. For example, more than half of all college freshmen and sophomores are now attending community colleges. More than half of all the students entering the community colleges read below the eighth grade level, and of this group, more than half are reading below the fifth grade level. Since the community college students also are likely to be older undergraduates, we cannot blame current deficiencies in the high school for their preparation but rather must assume that their poor reading results from high school work completed some time ago, a time presumably when high schools were more rigorous. We have no good data that indicate that this academic deficiency is corrected before graduation. Such reading levels are clearly a hindrance to doing good academic work, and they are not limited to the community colleges. We also see evidence of substantial increase in remedial courses being offered in four-year colleges. Although comprehensive data on the amount of pre-collegiate, remedial work being offered is difficult to acquire since undoubtedly much of it is incorporated into existing college courses, Verne A. Stadtman reported in 1980, "To make up for student deficiencies, 85 percent of American colleges and universities now offer compensatory or remedial education programs, and the presidents of 75 percent say that such programs are more important now than they were in 1969-70."⁴

We in the colleges and universities are not inclined to stress the diversity of our 12.4 million students. Many of us know, but do not emphasize, that 42 percent of undergraduates are part time students, that the majority of students enrolled for credit are 22 or older, that the majority of our students are women.⁵ Probably a disproportionate share of these students are not majoring in science, engineering and the humanities but rather in more applied fields. While there is much academic strength in this new group of students, they are welcomed and even sought as undergraduates because many institutions believe that their facilities and faculties are underutilized, and that they need more

students. Under such pressures to increase enrollments, academic achievement, traditionally defined, is frequently not the most salient characteristic of the group. Such a fact is not important--in fact, it is a tribute to the institutions to encouraging more persons to engage in formal education--IF the institution assures that through its instructional programs the students will achieve the levels of academic performance associated with entering the "company of educated men and women." Too often we educators have been willing to take tuition dollars and count their FTE registrations, but not to make the effort to assure that as a consequence of studying with us, students make the gains in cognitive achievement associated with collegiate performance. In this respect we have much in common with our colleagues in high school faculties and administrations.

The secondary school reports look to teachers as crucial in both the evolution and resolution of the academic problems of the students. We in higher education may well search our faculties for the leadership necessary to bring students with enormously varied academic preparation to satisfactory completion of their college work. Like the secondary school teachers, many of our faculties are concerned about working conditions, too, but for them the issue is frequently that they do not feel prepared to handle the variety of remedial needs presented to them. A PhD in comparative literature is not necessarily good cognitive or psychological preparation for one who is expected to move persons in their twenties from grade 8 reading levels to appreciation of Balzac.

Perhaps the most fundamental problem that we on faculties of high schools or of colleges and universities face is finding solace in helping others to learn, especially if that learning is achieved with difficulty. We take pride, instant and immediate, in our students who win National Merit awards or Rhodes scholarship. Probably in those cases more is attributable to the student him or herself than to the teaching from us that he or she has received. But there is no comparable pride in the success of a student who moves from very poor reading to reasonable standards of comprehension, and yet that accomplishment while significantly that of the student, is usually achieved with some direct intervention of the teacher. The reward structure for all teachers beyond the elementary level places greater prestige on working with good students, rather than working effectively with a range of students. From high school teaching on we have believed that we were working with a select population who had mastered the previous material. In the past many of them had, but such is not true today, and if we on faculties and administrations only value the work of our colleagues who work with the gifted, we will miss a fundamental calling.

Such is not an argument against the need for research and for expanding the frontiers of knowledge. That also is surely necessary, but it is not the activity which engages most of us most of the time. Therefore, it ought not to be the one which drives our system of prestige as determinedly as it presently does. Those of us on faculties of the high schools and of the post-secondary institutions have much in common in our pedagogical perplexities, and it would be wise for us to learn from each other, both how to be more effective with our students and how to take greater pride in doing so.

To conclude: the central educational debate today focuses upon the high

schools and their ability to educate their students successfully. Much of the concern about high schools--their lack of consensus regarding goals, their weak academic curriculum, the difficulties of their teachers and administrators, their need for cooperation with other institutions, the growing significance of state action, the concomitant need for equity and excellence--applies to post-secondary institutions as well. We in higher education may well wish to attend to these issues currently being debated at the high school level before the glare of public attention turns to us.

Footnotes

1. See Archie E. Lapointe, "Statement to the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education," Washington, D.C., January 31, 1984.
2. Lawrence A. Cremin, American Education: The National Experience (N.Y.: Harper Row, 1980), pp. 492-93.
3. Charles Wegener, Liberal Education and the Modern University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 94.
4. Verne A. Stadtman, Academic Adaptations: Higher Education Prepares for the 1980's and 1990's Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), pp. 21-22.
5. K. Patricia Cross, "Traditional Education and Non-Traditional Students," address presented to conference, "Today's Challenge: Mainstreaming the Non-Traditional Student," Florida State University, Tallahassee, January 20, 1984, page 2.