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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses three levels of change in political and educational relations. Level one focuses on educational systems' service functions; level two involves adjustments of educational politics; and level three entails conditions of conflicts about education falling within states' general politics. Politicization refers to conflict expansion; under low politicization conditions, educational systems experience decentralization--a greater dependence upon societal norms than upon governmental intervention. Educational and political relations shift, however, when internal conflicts move beyond education's borders to become national issues--teacher/administrator conflicts in the United States, for example, leading to collective bargaining legislation. A second politicization source stems from states' redefining educational objectives. Further, one can conceptually distinguish internal educational from general state politics to provide process dimensions for comparative analyses of education and politics across different countries. Still, there remains a high correlation between the two. Selected references are included. (KS)

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Educational Administration and the Challenge of  
Change: Politics, Power and Policy

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## Abstract

This paper presents a theoretic framework for longitudinal and cross national comparative studies in the relationship between education, internal educational politics and general national politics. In federal systems the general politics of states or provinces can be added. It identifies degrees of politicization, two different sources of it, and its consequences for educational autonomy. It also notes the influence of high politicization on the legitimacy of the state.

## Change in education and politics

This paper attempts to provide a perspective on changes in the relationship between education and politics. Theoretical guidance for this perspective is found in the seminal work of E. E. Schattschneider, The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America (1960). Many of his conceptualizations may be less parochial than his application of them solely to the United States. So, the paper is an attempt to synthesize and generalize to some extent or, if one prefers, to theorize about relationships between politics and education.

I have elsewhere written about the three levels and views of change in education and politics (see especially Iannaccone, 1977). The first of these levels focuses primarily upon changes in the service functions of a nation's educational system. Here professional expertise although not absolute is usually predominant in settling issues and is characterized by routinization of decision-making processes and change via incrementalism derived from precedents reflecting underlying policy assumptions. Policy incrementalism and its related politics in education are commonly considered apolitical and the system is thought of as autonomous. These perceptions ignore the fact that its underpinning assumptions result from larger political conflicts of a previous period.

A second level of change involves adjustments of the politics of education itself, at least to some significant degree of its policy-guiding ideologies, structures of internal conflict resolution and its internal political processes. Here changes reflect to a significant extent public controversies about education, the politicization of

education, and demands that the education system be more accountable to forces outside of its system. The educational system experiences direct challenges to its conventional wisdom and professional expertise. Unlike the first level where conflicts requiring resolution mechanisms fall primarily within the educational system, the second level of change reflects more the conflicts between the politics of the educational system and the larger general politics of the state. In passing, these two levels are related to the distinction between administration for relevance and responsiveness respectively as defined by Sander and Wiggins (1983).

This paper gives less attention to the first level and more to the second and third. The third level pays primary attention to conditions of conflicts about education which fall largely within the general politics of the nation state. Such conflicts are least amenable to control by technical skills, professional expertise and educational research. They are fundamentally ideological in essence and involve the public creed of the nation itself, especially its basic domestic policy orientation in which education is only one sector, even when it is the largest and most significant. These conflicts are not only found within the general politics of the nation, but may also challenge the legitimacy of the state itself. This level is the high point of educational change and politicization. Expanded political conflicts around education appear to be increasing in much of the world.

### Politicization

In order to give particular attention to conditions of increased and decreased political conflict over time, following E. E. Schattschneider

(1960), politicization will be used in this paper to refer to "the expansion of political conflicts," in whatever area this expansion is found, whether in the internal politics of education, the general politics of the state, or across both.

Politicization may occur along three different dimensions: intensity, scale, and scope.

1. An expansion of the "intensity of political conflicts"--most often through the increased commitment of resources, e.g., time, money, energy, and emotion to these conflicts--may produce the politicization of an issue.
2. Second is the expansion of the "scale of conflicts," that is, an increase in the number and sorts of different individuals, groups, and organizations involved. This could well lead to our third sort of politicization.
3. The third form of politicization may be seen in the widening of the "scope of conflict" as questions, issues, and matters previously considered apolitical--even as illegitimate subjects for public policy--become redefined as proper material for governmental policy-making and hence political conflict. The inclusion of educational issues previously considered apolitical in the conflicts of the general political process of a nation together with the perception of these as legitimate issues for general politics is an example of an expansion of the scope of conflict. The obverse side of the coin of politicization of education through the expansion of the scope of conflict is the

breakdown and breaching of a society's institutional walls separating educational governance from the general politics of the state.

Thus politicization is the expansion of the intensity, scale and scope of political conflicts. It is the process through which yesterday's apolitical persons and affairs become political. The converse is also true. Depoliticization is the process by which one time politicized issues and areas become perceived as apolitical, separate from politics.

The separation between educational governance and general national politics appears significantly less clear than it was only a decade or two ago. This may be seen across the globe in western type representative democracies, in dictatorships of the right and in revolutionary governments of the left. In some of these instances the separation never appeared strong to begin with. However, with the development of this century's industrial state, modern western representative governments tended to institutionalize organizational walls between even publicly financed education and the central political processes of representative government. Nevertheless, the institution of public education, its organization, its governance and its finances are an expression of public authority, an arm of the state, part of the state apparatus. At least two different sources of conflict lead to a significant change in the relationship between the political and educational systems of a nation.

#### Two sources of educational politicization

Under conditions of low politicization the educational system itself appears to be structurally diffuse and open to the influences of a wide

range of different groups and interests at multiple access points to its internal deliberations. It is effectively decentralized and close in its education delivery decision-making to the delivery sites of the service in curricular and teaching methods. The walls between education and the society's other organizations and groups are both strong and porous, open to changes and not overwhelmed by them. Political conflict between education and the state seems very low; it is essentially a depoliticized condition. The politics of education and of the state act in response to their common societal context and cultural base, rather than either acting to politicize the other. Both the politics of the state and of education appear as dependent variables of their common society and culture rather than either functioning as intervening variable to the other. It suggests a greater dependence of educational processes on general societal norms and values than upon governmental intervention.

One source of change in these relationships is the inability of the system of educational governance to contain its internal conflicts allowing these to spill over into the realm of a nation's general politics. One example of this type is the expanding conflicts between teachers and administration leading to collective bargaining legislation and resulting modifications of the educational governance systems in the United States. The expansion of conflicts about educational issues which can no longer be contained by its internal conflict management subsystems requires their adjudication and resolution by the more central agencies of government. In the process, such educational issues and conflicts become part of the ongoing politics of a nation's central government.

Political conflicts within education about educational issues may become self-propelling conflicts expanding beyond their respective educational-governance systems to become issues and forces at work in the central politics of their nations.

A nation's system of educational governance is part of the apparatus of the state. Its internal politics is, in that sense, part of the most broadly conceived politics of the state. Its special nature derives (1) partly from its narrow focus on a particular sort of public service--education, and (2) partly from its peculiar structure of governance with its related ideology and special arrangements. But these features do not make the education system any less an expression of the state. Therefore the failure of established educational governance systems to contain their internal political conflicts requiring the intervention of the nation's central political mechanisms is an indicator of a loss of legitimacy of the broader state, or at least of a challenge to the legitimacy of the state.

A different source of educational politicization may be seen where the political processes of the central agencies of a state undertake to redefine the philosophy, goals, and objectives of education. Such redefinition appears, for example, with respect to the delivery of education to particular groups--previously ignored or discriminated against by the educational system. Then the government's expressed concern for equality appears most often as the apology for the direct intervention of the national government in redefining educational operations. The same rationale leading to this sort of educational politicization may be seen, for instance, in the 1963 efforts of the Jamaican government's 70/30 percent

quota system. Readers will be able to add other instances from their experiences.

This second source of politicization of education may be viewed as the opposite polar extreme of the condition described in the preceding section. There the failure of education's separate government seems to lead to its politicization. Here, instead, the maintenance of educational autonomy and the continuance of traditional education policies and procedures in the face of broader societal and general governmental changes--perhaps an extremely successful containment of educational conflicts--becomes politically dysfunctional. When, in particular, this second sort of educational politicization rests in large part on the argument that the educational establishment's bias and self-serving interests are the cause of its failure to serve all of the people equally, then the actions, or at least the putatively deliberate inactions, of the educational system serve as the public apologia for the politicization of education by the central government. However valid or invalid the apologia, if it is accepted by enough of the society, the institutional walls separating internal educational politics from the general politics of the society become significantly weakened and breeched.

It may be that when educational governments can contain their political conflicts and still respond to the perceived needs of a changing society, the educational system as an apparatus of the state enhances the legitimacy of the state. Conversely, when education's internal government becomes highly politicized or appears rigidly unresponsive to societal changes, the politics of the state cannot ignore its educational

problems. It then must grasp the nettle of educational politicization within the general politics of the state, risking the legitimacy of the whole in the attempt to reform and control education.

Whatever the sources of politicization, once the process of breaching the institutional walls separating educational government and its internal politics from the general ongoing political conflicts of the state is well underway, additional educational issues are likely to become similarly politicized. The expansion of conflicts about education in the general day-to-day politics of the nation will eventually surface questions about the legitimacy of education itself, its structure, internal politics, and governing philosophy. The walls which once appeared to buffer the internal politics of education from the general politics of the state may well become a faint conceptual delineation useful more to educational historians than to educational practitioners. But the politics of the state, too, pays a price for these increased and expanded conflicts. The continued expansion of these conflicts in the general politics of the state transmutes them into self-propelling political conflicts eventually calling into question the legitimacy of the state itself.

#### The legitimization crisis of the state

The pattern found in education is also found in other aspects of public policy and public services. Throughout the industrialized world we are experiencing a decline of confidence in public authority and in public institutions identified with the state including education. Students following the Habermas' (1975) thesis on the legitimacy crisis

tend to explain this loss of confidence on the contradictions inherent in modern capitalism and its relations to the state. It is argued that modern capitalist democracies tend to face those inherent contradictions with the promise of reforms. Reform policies through their associated political rhetoric tend to raise expectations and felt needs which they subsequently cannot meet. The public authority is weakened by that at the same time as it must try to solve the problem posed by these current demands. The state then seeks to resolve this dilemma through strategies which are intended to compensate for its loss of credibility. Three strategies of compensatory legitimation are used:

- (1) an increased reliance on the state's juridical authority,
- (2) appeal to the sacred values held by the society, and
- (3) the attempt through contrived but very limited mechanisms of greater public involvement to persuade people to follow the lead of established officials.

One of the earliest recorded instances of the last of these strategies may be found on the Iliad as the Greek kings debated in open council before their men in the continuation of the Trojan War, a strategy designed to feel out the mood of the rank and file, but even more to persuade them to continue the war.

In a preceding private political deal the Greek elite created a scenario of the leaders' airing in public the theoretical range of policy alternatives available. They never expected to choose one of these, that of giving up the war and returning to the homes from which their policies of almost ten years had taken them. The leaders' participatory

events, however, got out of hand, and the Greek host began to act as if they really had been asked to decide. They started to let the ships to return home! So mechanisms to expand the participation of the governed in government will increase the legitimacy of a democratic state only if the regime heeds the message transmitted by those governed. When that message implies the abandonment of the regime's recent policies and the admission that the previous promises are not attainable except at costs the general society is unwilling to pay, then the regime loses legitimacy and is in great danger if it persists in its policies. Given these conditions, if the society cannot replace the regime and redirect public policies, then indeed a crisis of legitimacy of the state results.

Given the tendency of modern Western societies to deify Science as "the Truth," the use of pilot projects and experiments becomes the modern equivalent of an appeal to the sacred world. This too is not a new strategy. The political hazards of such an appeal were once well understood. The ancient oracles protected themselves against the danger of popular wrath by the classic ambiguities within which they wrapped their pronouncements. In spite of their awareness of these facts, the rational seekers of truth of the classical age stumbled over the appeal to expertise defined by their era as philosophy, an expertise operationalized in Plato's Philosopher Kings. D. W. Brogan once wrote:

It is a dangerous and idle dream to think that the state can be ruled by the philosophers turned kings or scientists turned commissars. For if philosophers become kings or scientists commissars, they become politicians and the powers given to the state are powers given to men who are rulers of states, men subject to all the limitations and temptations of their dangerous craft (Brogan, 1949).

Finally, at least since the late stages of the Roman Republic the strategy of falling back on the courts has been one of the last resorts if not the ultimate legal refuge of officials whose policies no longer enjoy public favor. The juridical function of the state capitalizing in part on "the law's delay" often does provide a cooling-out period, especially for increased intensity of political conflicts. The time thus gained for the society's gestation of public policies produced by the established regime may increase its legitimation. If, through its experience with implementation of the regime's policies, the society feels the results to be positive or at least innocuous, then the cooling-out function of the juridical strategy has worked to cool off conflicts. If, however, the experience confirms the general society's sense of discomfort with the new policies, then these unpopular policies persisted in by the regime will make it also unpopular and will fuel the fires of the politics of discontent with the regime.

So, these three strategies are, indeed, indications of efforts at compensatory legitimation. They also show that the increased politicization of educational issues often become an aspect of the politicization of the state. Whether this politicization is best understood as endemic to the modern industrial state or as a reflection of policies and regimes which have become unpopular is an empirical issue. Indeed, most of what I have presented in this paper are essentially testable hypotheses for comparative education or longitudinal studies.

#### The usefulness of separating internal from general politics

Conceptualizing the distinction between education's internal government

with its politics and a nation's general politics is useful in dealing with the politics of education. The conceptual distinction between educational governance and general national governance can be operationally applied by our considering whether the more salient issues in a nation studied are generally found within education's special politics, within the nation's general politics, or largely in between the two.

One analytic use of the conceptual distinction between educational and general politics is to consider whether and to what degree present conflicts are internal, i.e., where most of the discussion is concerned within the political mechanisms, issues and processes of adjustment of the educational system. In Canada, for example, an issue which has elsewhere led to the politicization of education through the direct intervention of central national governments, i.e., the sorting process in education by means of which social statuses are allocated, remains a central function of that educational system more than in many other countries. It is a continuing central issue in the internal politics of the educational system. It is also an example of what Sander and Wiggins (1983) define as "Administration for Relevance," a concept giving "primacy to the cultural considerations of educational administration" (pp. 12-13).

In contrast at the other extreme stands the case of revolutionary eras, e.g., Nicaragua, where educational issues have become so interwoven with the political issues of a revolution that attempting to distinguish internal educational politics from the general politics of Nicaragua would be esoteric pedantry. These sorts of cases are examples

of what Sander and Wiggins (1983) define as "administration for responsiveness, a concept attending to meeting the social objectives and political demands of the community" (pp. 10-11).

Degrees of educational politicization: A comparison concept

The intensity, scale and scope of the general politics of the state are not constants. They too display variation. It is therefore possible to comparatively classify the political conflicts of a given state at a point in its history as at least roughly high, moderate, or low, and similarly to classify its politics of education. Further, by conceptualizing educational governance with its own politics as an apparatus of the state distinct from its general politics and central governmental structures, one can better assess conditions of increased or decreased political conflicts in each and examine how each interacts upon the other. One can use the construct of legitimacy to note variations over time in each: both educational governance and that of the state. Finally, the same conceptualizations can provide process dimensions for comparative studies and analyses of education and politics across different countries. The strength of these dimensions lies in their being relatively content free process dimensions rather than substantive content categories. Of course, that is also their limitation. More substantive, social value laden concepts are also needed to provide a more complete theoretical basis for longitudinal and cross national comparative research.

Some other conclusions

There are two different sorts of political cleavages in and around the general politics central to a nation state. The one separates

coalitions contesting for control of the policy-making and implementation apparatus of the state is more visible or more frequently observed and commented on. This predominant political cleavage may be seen, for example, in the two-party conflicts of the United States, the multiple party conflicts of Parliamentary democracies, or in the less apparent but often more severe conflicts within one-party systems focusing on central committee alignments. The second sort of cleavage is the separation of the organized political coalitions from the larger politically inactive spectators. This one is less visible and often neglected. The size of the politically uninvolved spectatorship is so overwhelming in its potential influence to change the calculus of political conflicts that when even a small percent of the audience throws its resources into political conflicts, the predominant line of cleavage in the normal political conflicts must also change.

Political conflicts are about something. The predominant line of cleavage, the axis around which contesting coalitions compete, distinguishes policy issues over which the coalitions conflict and take different positions. The active coalitions are agreed on the saliency of which issues they consider worth fighting over. Others of the society not engaged in the predominant political conflicts are not all apathetic nor impotent. These include many groups and divisions of the society for whom other issues resting on different social divisions are much more important. When these people see no way to insert their prime concerns into major political conflicts underway, they tend to remain in the audience. Or they remain in the audience if affairs which interest them

more progress tolerably for them without the benefits and costs of politicizing the issues that are more important to them. Such issues remain apolitical.

We have seen that education may be found among apolitical issues. Or it may play a major part in the general politics of a nation. Other things being equal, it seems that the stronger the legitimacy of the state, the clearer the institutional separation will be between its general, central politics and its internal educational politics. The converse supports this conclusion, too. It is in the states in which the governing regime is least secure and where the cult of personality looms (Mobutuism) that education is fully politicized, is isomorphic to the state. And in these cases, too, the legitimacy of the state is itself in crisis on the eve of revolution (Somoza's Nicaragua) and upon recently experiencing revolution (Mao's China).

The politicization of education may be a cause of an effect of the politicization of the state. When the dominant regime in the general politics of a nation seeks to strengthen its legitimacy through the politicization of education, it must weaken the institutional walls that make education a distinguishably different and separate apparatus of the state. It may weaken the walls through direct restructuring of the educational apparatus of the state or through successive and more frequent interventions, as in the United States. As a government does this, it decreases the social distance between the politics of education and the state itself. Each distinct apparatus of the state that is taken over directly by the regime increases the regime's responsibility

and its risk of failure. At the same time, the social perception of a difference between the government and education and the state diminishes. Political crises of the regime inevitably becomes crises in the legitimacy of the state.

The movement of educational politics from the apolitical realm of the spectators into the center of the political contests of the nation seems to be related to the transfer of political power from one regime to another.

Whether this is so and whether depoliticization is similarly likely to be mutually dependent with regime changes cannot be asserted confidently. It would take longitudinal studies purposely crafted to focus on such questions. Without such studies it may be impossible to ascertain whether the politicization of education more frequently is preceded by or more frequently follows the increased politicization of a nation's general politics. It is clear that the correlation between general and educational politics is very high.

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