

**A Comparative Analysis of Two Educational Reform Movements in America:
The Eight Year Study and a Nation at Risk**

by

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Dedicated to the Brazilian wives who leave their own projects behind for the professional realization of their husbands. Especially to those that, in order to make it in a foreign country, do what to them are meaningless tasks, but still encounter happiness in doing them.

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INTRODUCTION

Movements for reform have appeared numerous times in the history of American education. Each of these movements has had bases in social and economic conditions of the times, and in educational philosophy.

Another wave of reform is currently influencing American education. Critics have charged that youth have not been well educated. In fact, education has deteriorated dangerously. Much of this reform movement has been based on a document released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education to the American people in April, 1983. According to this report, the nation was at risk because of the mediocre performance of American students, therefore jeopardizing their future and the future of the Nation. In comparison to other industrialized countries, American students were no longer making the highest scores in achievement tests. This was happening, at a time when international competition was threatening the economic preeminence of America.

According to the data provided by this report, the overall educational situation of the country is critical. It stated that there is a small scientific and technological group who possess a superior quality of knowledge. The majority of the American population, however, is attending schools which are far from accomplishing the ideals of a democracy. Instead, "More and more young people emerge from high school ready neither for college nor for work"¹. The commissioners insisted that equity and high-quality education are not antagonistic ideas, and that they are indispensable for the socio-economic development of the society. Excellence must be achieved by students in all educational institutions through the establishment of high expectations and well defined purposes. On the individual level, excellence was defined as "performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace"². Based on these ideas, this document asserted an 'imperative for educational reform', recommending the

participation of the American people in this plan for a commitment to excellence.

However, a half century earlier in the 1930s, the progressive education movement was challenging the traditional system of education. This reform movement was also addressing both professionals and non-professionals on the basis of general discontentment with the American school system. Some were arguing that schools were neither preparing young men and women for participation in a modern and democratic society nor for their own satisfaction in a common life. Others were arguing that the school system was divided into pieces of formal education, working in discontinuity to the detriment of the improvement of the educational system. One of principal problems was said to be the relation between secondary schools and colleges. Students were more concerned with grades, credit accumulation, and diplomas than with the learning process itself. Furthermore, the expectations set for the high schools by the general society were directly related to the extent to which schools helped students to get into colleges. Progressive educators were convinced that secondary schools in America were without a central purpose beyond a mere preparation for a higher level of schooling. What was needed was a type of school that was able to prepare students who intended to go to college as well as those for whom high school graduation meant the end of their formal education. The discussions on these ideas resulted in an educational experiment conducted from 1933 to 1941, known as the Eight-Year Study and which was also calling for educational reform.

Many of the problems of education and society in both reform movements were similar. The students of the 1930s, as today, were said to be passive, disinterested, not self-directing learners, lacking the basic skills for further learning or for work, and much more. Schools were affirmed, then as now, to be inefficient in coping with the real needs of the American youth and in accomplishing the objectives of a democracy. High-quality teaching was required, then as now, and the involvement of the

American people was recognized as necessary for the achievement of reform in both of these movements.

Despite all the similarities between these two movements for educational reform and their common efforts for the improvement of American education, there are many differences and controversial aspects which deserve careful analysis. The present study will analyze these two distinct reform movements in American educational history, focusing primarily on two documents: 1) The Eight-Year Study of the Progressive Education Association (1933-1941); and 2) A Nation at Risk Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). The Eight-Year Study was chosen as the work most representative of the progressive education movement, which was considered by many to be the most influential reform movement of the middle third of the twentieth century. The A Nation at Risk Report was selected because it is considered by many to be representative of the contemporary reform movement in American education. Each of these movements will be analyzed, using the previously cited documents, as well as selected literature. For analyzing the Eight-Year Study, the collection of five volumes of Adventure in American Education plus some pertinent articles published in the 1930s and 1940s will be used. Also, because of increasing interest in this experiment, some articles of 1970s and 1980s dealing with the Eight-Year Study will be examined. For analysis of the contemporary reform movement A Nation at Risk Report and selected literature of the 1980s will be used.

Comparison and contrasts will be made of the social and economic circumstances undergirding each of these movements, as well as the philosophical assumptions implicit in each movement. In addition to the comparison and contrast of these two movements, this study will analyze basic assumptions, principles, plans and recommendations within the historical context in which they were produced and developed.

The value of this study resides in the analysis of the social, economic, and educational circumstances of the two periods of American

educational reform. It aims to examine the general context of these two periods, the conditioning factors that led to the development of the two plans for reform, and the points of relevance of both plans for the improvement of education. Research questions include: 1) What are the similarities and differences among the social and economic circumstances of the two periods?; 2) What are the stated or implied aims for education in the two periods?; and, 3) What are the social and economic implications of the educational reforms in the two periods?

It is hoped that this study should be of value to educators, historians, and others interested in acquiring a comprehensive view of two of the educational reforms in this country during the twentieth century. Specially, this study should be of interest and value to students of education and to educators who are coping with the problems of contemporary educational reform.

PART I. THE EIGHT-YEAR STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In the 1930s, an increasing number of students were entering American secondary schools. However, the curriculum of these schools was largely based on the traditional model, with the main objective of preparing students for college. For those not intending to enter college, there were vocational training programs based on the Smith-Hughes Act, passed in 1917. But, while the preparatory programs served well only about 20% of the high school age population, the vocational programs were not performing any better, because of the scarcity of occupational opportunities.

There were also growing demands for better secondary schools in order to help American youth to cope with the difficulties of that critical period of American history, the Great Depression. Moreover, it was increasingly significant that for five out of six who had entered high schools, the secondary level was to be their last experience of formal education. For this reason, secondary education needed to be improved in order to provide meaningful educational experiences for students who were going to college as well as those who were not.

However, any modification to the pattern of high schools should not result in the weakening of preparation of those who desired to enter a college. Reform efforts were rendered more difficult because college entrance requirements had been for so long determining the curricula for the secondary schools. These requirements were making schools too inflexible for a changing world. Secondary schools that were more flexible and responsive to the changing conditions were required.

These reflections about the necessity for the improvement of secondary education programs were guided by progressive educational theory, and resulted in the Eight-Year Experimental Study (1933-1941) conducted by the Progressive Education Association. Many educators realized that progressive education was developing excellent projects in the elementary schools, but were concerned about how these children would achieve at

higher levels of traditional education. While progressive influences were found in higher education, college admission requirements were inhibiting implementation of reforms at the secondary level. High schools represented, for many, a gap in the educational system of America.

In 1930, at the Annual Progressive Education Conference in Washington, D. C., two hundred people met to discuss issues related to American secondary education, and to consider ways that secondary schools could be reformed to serve better the youth of the country. The Commission on the Relation of School and College, was formed of twenty-six members from different areas, with Wilford M. Aikin serving as chair. All members agreed that American secondary education needed an accurate study based on the existing knowledge and an investigation into the needs of the people in this society.

The Commission established a plan for cooperation between secondary schools and colleges in order to determine the characteristics and functions of high schools and their relationship with colleges. Because the plan had been projected to begin in 1933 and to end in 1941, it was called the Eight-Year Study. Because of the involvement of about thirty secondary schools in the project, it was also referred to as the Thirty School Experiment. Important research questions involved finding out if the traditional college entrance requirements and examinations were indispensable for the success of the students in college and determining the real function of secondary schools in meeting important needs of American youth. Is there only one way to prepare high school students for college? Progressive educators believed that there are several ways to prepare students for college. The commissioners were interested in the kind of plans that would be developed by secondary schools if traditional college entrance requirements were removed. Would high schools develop a better program without these restrictions?

For investigating these hypotheses, an experimental study was developed in which traditional college entrance requirements were set

aside. The basic question to be answered was whether or not any set curriculum could be defended as necessary for successful college performance. Almost three hundred colleges agreed to accept students from experimental high school programs without entrance examinations or traditional entrance requirements. Students who did not aspire to college entrance were graduated along with their college bound classmates.

In the experimental schools, evaluation of students was not carried on in the traditional manner of marks, grades, or the simply accumulation of facts. Experimental educators were more interested in students's growth, understanding, and attitudes. They were concerned with the students's intellectual development as well as their emotional, social, physical, and psychological development. Academic knowledge alone was not sufficient, as students were expected to act intelligently in their community. This belief was based on the assumption that knowledge is power.

"Education, therefore, must address itself to the task of creating a human society in which men and women may, by living and sharing in it, continue their own growth and discover new meanings in living."³

This quotation reveals the progressive belief in the power of education to operate changes in society. Education needs to be and can be improved in order to serve as a means for bringing about these changes. What they expected was a type of education that produces responsible citizens who would learn for learning's sake and for the well-being of the whole community. Education was to be understood as not merely the process of accumulating credits and units or the simple fulfillment of prescribed requirements, but "an enduring quest for meanings."⁴

From 1930 to 1932, the members of the Commission on the Relation of Schools and Colleges held several meetings to re-examine the high schools in this country. They found that traditional schools did not have a clear and central purpose for designing their programs; they did not give to the

students a meaningful understanding about the way Americans have been striving in their social, political and economic environment for centuries; they did not provide the students with democratic principles for a responsible adult life and for the welfare of the community; they did not transmit to the students the eagerness for learning and for developing their capacities beyond the mere necessities of everyday life; they did not know each individual student well enough to provide an effective guidance; they did not challenge the students properly; they did not develop students's creativity and ingenuity; they considered that the content of the curriculum was the most important objective to be achieved; they did not develop a significant and meaningful curriculum; they had been producing many incompetent graduates in English skills; they did not provide students with a sense of unity in their programs or a curriculum according to a central purpose. Rather, teachers worked independently in their specific fields without relating their subjects to others; consequently, students did not get the concept of continuity in their schooling. They also found that the principals in high schools usually did not administer their institutions in a democratic manner. Moreover, principals and teachers seemed careless about the primary purpose of education and a comprehensive evaluation of their work.⁵ On the other hand, students were leaving secondary schools without self-direction and discipline because of their lack of long-range purpose and meaning for community life. They also did not have a proper vocational preparation since the preparatory program in the secondary level dominated the entire curriculum. The result was that they carried along with them simply a diploma and an accumulation of credits and units frequently meaningless to their lives, but useful only for college entrance.

On the strength of this, a different kind of secondary school was proposed as the one that,

"... should be a living social organism of which each student is a vital part. It should be a place to which one

goes gladly because there he can engage in activities which satisfy his desires, work at the solution of problems which he faces in everyday living, and have opened to him new interests and wider horizons. The whole boy goes to school; therefore school should stimulate his whole being. It should provide opportunities for the full exercise of his physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual powers as he strives to achieve recognition and a place of usefulness and honor in adult society."⁶

They also asserted that schools should be places where the demonstration of a democratic society should occur because the school is the best way to teach students about American democracy. This assumption is based on their belief that the physical and social environment challenges the people by presenting them problems. These problems are translated into the needs, concerns and interests which drive people to action. They are convinced then that the central focus of the secondary school curriculum should be the problems that young people were facing in American society, and that these problems were central to students needs, interests and concerns. Moreover, they insisted in the correlation and interweaving of subjects plus an open-minded inclusion of materials from new fields not hitherto considered in a secondary school curriculum. Also, independent and self-directed study, students creative self-expression, and individual guidance should be considered as components for the accomplishment of these goals.

Based on the principle of continuity for growth, they were opponents of the "artificial barriers" among subjects, teachers, departments, and levels of schooling. Students should participate actively in the planning of study in a way that each unity be related to previous experience. This continuity would provide them with the vision of the whole educational experience and would promote growth. What they proposed was a unity of the whole educational process which would provide students with a feeling of a

coherent pattern about their school and college career. Also, in the light of their needs and interests based on the problems of their community, curriculum should present the relations among facts in order to help the students understand the notions of interdependence and interrelationship of the whole society. All these factors would contribute to a better and more complete vision of what would be the role of a socially responsible individual engaged in the reconstruction of his society through the problem-solving approach.

According to this new view, the educational process deals with an organism in its environment, i.e., the whole social life educates the whole person through an interactive relationship. As the whole child acts in his environment by thinking, feeling, moving, etc, he also contributes with his creative intelligence to the social life, which by presenting him some problems and needs, provokes his reactions through new actions and thoughts. Therefore, schools should remember the motto that "education is life", since schools can not function effectively separated from life, without risking separating the individuals from their true environment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was developed through a critical analysis of the ideas expressed in the volumes of the collection Adventure in American Education, published by Harper & Brothers, and some articles related to the Eight-Year Study, published by various authors in different journals.

The Adventure in American Education is composed of five volumes and was published in 1942. The Volume I is entitled "The Story of the Eight-Year Study", written by Wilford M. Aikin, the Chairman of the Commission on the Relation of Schools and Colleges.

The title of the Volume II is "Exploring the Curriculum". It was written by some of the members of the Curriculum Staff, H. H. Giles, S. P. McCutchen and A. N. Zechiel, who had the task of writing about the curriculum development occurring during the Experiment.

Volume III deals with evaluation, one of the most important problem faced by the people involved with the Eight-Year Study. Because this Experiment was concerned with developing students's character, social responsibility, ability to think clearly, good health habits, readiness for earning a living, artistic appreciation, philosophy of life and other intangible human areas, the Commission decided to create a Committee on Records and Reports, headed by Dr. Ralph W. Tyler for re-examining the existing tests and instruments of appraisal, and creating other means of evaluation in accordance with their objectives. The results of this work were reported in this book, entitled "Appraising and Recording Student Progress".

"Did they Succeed in College?" is the name of the Volume IV of this collection and it was written by Dean Chamberlin, Enid Chamberlin, Neal E. Drought, and William E. Scott. It is the follow-up study of those students from the first group who concluded their program in the Thirty Schools.

"Thirty Schools Tell Their Story" is the last volume of this collection. The experiences of the participant schools are reported in

this volume. As was stated by the authors, the merit of this experiment was in the reexamination of the schools purposes and functions in a democratic society rather than in the solutions that were brought about.

The articles for this study were selected from different journals. The purpose of these readings was basically to get a general view of the social, economic and educational environment prior and after the Study, to understand the interrelated factors which were significant for the experiment as well as to get a comprehensive idea of the impact of its findings in the American educational system. Moreover, these readings provided the important material for the comprehension of the reasons and consequences of this Experiment and of the acceptance of its approach to the educational problems. Thus, the publications used in this work ranged from 1932 to 1944, plus some of the 1970s and 80s.

Historical Analysis

The 1930s was marked by the so-called "Economics of Despair" (Foster, 1933) as a result of the Depression that permeated all of American society. The difficult economic situation by 1929, resulted in restrictions in both public and private segments of American society. Proposals were being made to stop the development of this economic paralysis. However, some ideas brought plans threatening to those principles upon which free public education was built. Many of the statements proposed that

"... the payment of tuition be required of all high schools attendants... schools should be concerned principally with the education of leaders, and that children with limited resources, either intellectual or financial, should be satisfied with a narrow factual education terminated at a relatively early age."⁷

This situation brought many problems for education because the scarcity of financial resources and, what was still worse, the cutting down of the schools expenditures and the conditions for the teachers to do a

good job. In some rural areas, shortened terms of school was a solution for the economic difficulties. In other places, schools were closed and in general, school building programs were ceased. Salaries were cut and many teachers went unpaid for several months.

Despite all these conditions, there was a belief that education could be one of the best ways to help people rebuild society and cope with the changes in development. John K. Norton, Chairman of the Joint Commission on the Emergence in Education, created in January, 1933, illustrated this view by saying:

"Only education can develop leaders of sound training and larger social vision. Only education can create a level of understanding among the masses of the people, consistent with a planned social evolution under democratic control... Undisciplined, uneducated human beings will perish amid the pitfalls of the civilization which the machine age is producing unless education comes to their rescue."⁸

What education needed, many agreed, was a clear redefinition of its aims and purposes upon which the whole process depends. For some education was to be engaged in the production of leaders who could be the ones to help society get out of those conditions of demoralization, skepticism, ignorance, misinformation, selfishness, and all those forces which restrained the development of democracy. For others, it was believed that the average American needed to be well informed and intellectually prepared for participating effectively in the reconstruction of the society without destroying their ideals of fraternity and liberty. Thus, discussions on how better to prepare Americans for these difficult times were developed among professionals and non-professionals.

During the Winter of 1931 and 1932, in several conferences sponsored by the Progressive Education Association, college deans and presidents discussed the characteristics they saw in the college students. According to B. P. Fowler (1933), college students were classified as:

- a) immature, "who have neither the skill nor the curiosity upon which a sound educational structure can be reared."⁹
- b) passive "in their attitude toward the opportunity the college affords."¹⁰
- c) too obsessed to get the diploma. They did not really care for learning but for the accumulation of 120 semester hours.
- d) not curious, alert, self-directing learners, and inquirers. And also,
- e) because the lack of creative imagination in school, they did not respect intangible values; rather, they neglected whatever are not testable and possible to be weighed - the abstract ideas, for example.

"Not surprising, when you recall that the high-school curriculum, even today, places a higher premium on foreign languages and mathematics than it does on the social studies and the fine arts. The fact that a preparatory school for boys or a college for men has introduced a course in the expression of art, or even in its appreciation, is front-page news. Yet we expect our young people to possess the priceless gift of originality."¹¹

- f) They did not have the ability to budget their time because of their lack of a concise philosophy of self-direction.

"There seems little chance of such an untimely end for these young folks if one were to visit our high schools and preparatory schools and see the throngs of seniors regimented in classrooms and study halls, waiting for a bell to ring or for the next day's assignment to be given them."¹²

- g) They lacked a clear conception of what social responsibility is about.

"They recognize the fact of the present-day trend toward interdependence and cooperation, but they act quite indifferently to the immediate social problems of their own

college environment... They can talk together better than they can act together"¹³, and

h) They lacked the basic skill of reading and writing.

One of the causes of these problems was attributed to the kind of schools that existed at that particular time. Schools were much more concerned with units, credits, marks, courses, final examinations, information-getting and mass promotions than with

"producing an individual boy or girl who has been helped to develop his power of analysis, his skill in choosing and organizing ideas, his habits of self-directed study, his ability to act cooperatively for the common good, his sense of inferior and superior values in education and in life."¹⁴

In fact, the critical situation and economic difficulties were threatening all the good ideals which had guided American in the past. By 1933, President Roosevelt had established a plan to combat the Great Depression, the New Deal. This project also attempted to solve the drastic problem of unemployment. The teaching profession was also affected by unemployment because many institutions found in the reduction of staff a solution for dealing with the stringent measures of economy.

According to Ralph W. Tyler, 25% of the adults and almost 100% of adolescents had difficulties in finding employment in the decade of the 1930s¹⁵. This was in contrast to the situation at the beginning of this century. In 1910, about 18.4% of the adolescents were employed. But in 1930, because of the demand for better trained workers and other causes, only 4.7% had an opportunity to work. Legislation about child labor was also being discussed around that time, leading to approval by the U. S. Supreme Court of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

As a result of these factors, the emergence of a legion of unemployed adolescents in 1930 brought a pressure on education. The percentage of students in high schools jumped from 17% of the age 14 to 17 years old, to more than 50% in 1930. As an alternative to formal schooling, there were

the opportunities for the adolescents in the New Deal through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for those who quit school because of lack of money and a need for work. Work activities such as reforestation and improvement of the wildlife habitats were set up in rural areas. Adolescents from ages 18 to 25 received money, food, clothes, and some training in technical skills. There were also those who wished to go back to school but who could not afford it. Opportunities were offered by the National Youth Administration which provided funds for the continuation of schooling. The consequence of all these factors was a legion of 5,000,000 students enrolled in high schools in America around 1930. A new type of education was demanded for these youth who needed urgently to cope with these problems and to help them to participate in the reconstruction of society. This situation called for educational programs suitable for those who did not plan higher levels of schooling. On the other hand, there were a number of the youth who still aspired to attend college. Curriculums were to be designed to serve both groups, and at the same time prepare everyone to understand the society as a whole and their functions within it.

Moreover, it was clear that the overall crisis generated by the Depression demanded action from the Federal Government. Consequently, people needed to be aware of the causes and resolutions of these decisions.

"If Americans love their liberty, if they hope to make the democratic experiment succeed, if they wish to avoid servitude in the future, it is imperative that the knowledge of the people begin as soon as possible to approximate the knowledge of the leaders..."¹⁶

An imperative to education was then, offered. However, the basic studies like the three Rs, languages, history, sciences, and mathematics were no longer enough for the youngster. They needed a more complete understanding about the society in which they lived.

Burton P. Fowler stressed the "need for a knowledge of one's own personality and the techniques of adjustment"¹⁷, as important factors to be

cared for by our schools. Just a well-administered guidance program would not solve the problems of thousands of youngsters who need help. Teachers need to be involved and become more sensitive to the student's personalities and their emotional needs. Moreover, Fowler recognized the many changes that were in process but defended the idea that immediate reform could lead to chaos. What was needed was a cooperative effort to bring the American high school up to date and to the new frontiers of social reconstruction.

According to Wilford M. Aikin¹⁸, despite of the amazing development of the American high schools in the first three decades of this century, in which the numbers of students jumped from less than one million to almost ten millions, only three of six who entered the high school graduated. From this number of graduates, only one went on to college, and of those who entered college, only one of six graduated. For the others, high school was the end of their experiences in formal education.

The emergence of a new plan

Discussions had been held by educators and other interested citizens, seeking solutions to these problems. At the Annual Progressive Education Conference held in Washington in April, 1930, many people with especial interest in education assembled to discuss the ways in which American high schools could serve better their youngsters. After two days of debate, they concluded that unless secondary education could be freed from college entrance requirements, any attempt to reconstruct high schools would be impossible. A suggestion was then brought to the Board of Directors of the Association for the establishment of a Commission to study this issue.

In the following Autumn, the Commission on the Relation of School and College was created, with Wilford M. Aikin, Director of John Burroughs School serving as chair, the other members were:

- Professor Walter Raymond Agard - University of Wisconsin
- Mr. Willard Beatty - Superintendent of Schools, Bronxville
- Mr. Bruce Bliven - Editor, The New Republic

- Dean C. S. Boucher - Chicago University
- Mr. A. J. Burton - East High School, Des Moines, Iowa
- Miss Flora Cooke - Francis Parker School, Chicago
- Mr. Harold Ferguson - Montclair High School
- Mr. Burton P. Fowler - Tower Hill School
- Miss Josephine Gleason - Vassar College
- Dr. Thomas L. Hopkins - Lincoln School
- Dr. Leonard V. Koos - University of Chicago
- Dr. W. S. Learned - The Carnegie Foundation
- Dr. Robert Leigh - Bennington College
- Dr. John A. Lester - The Hill School
- Dean Max McConn - Lehigh University
- Mr. Clyde R. Miller - Teachers College
- Dr. Jesse Newlon - Lincoln School
- Dr. W. Carson Ryan, Jr. - Director of Education, U.S. Indian Service
- Dr. Harold Rugg - Teachers College
- Miss Ann Shumaker - Editor, Progressive Education
- Dr. Eugene Smith - Beaver Country Day School
- Mr. Perry Dunlap Smith - North Shore Country Day School
- Miss Katharine Taylor - Shady Hill School
- Dr. Vivian Thayer - Ethical Culture School
- Dr. Raymond Walters - President, University of Cincinnati
- Professor Goodwin Watson - Teachers College
- Dr. Ben D. Wood - Columbia University

The Eight-Year Study then began its effort to reform American secondary education.

The experiment One of the first steps taken by the members of the Eight-Year Study was to establish a plan for cooperation between schools and colleges. After an analysis of about two hundred secondary schools suggested by the educational leaders for this Study, the participating schools were selected by the Directing Committee. This special Committee, made up of school and college representatives and who were in charge of the general responsibility for the supervision of this Study, selected the following secondary schools for participation in the experiment:

High School, Altoona, Pennsylvania.
 The Baldwin School, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.
 Beaver Country Day School, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.
 Bronxville High School, Bronxville, New York.
 Cheltenham Township High School, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.
 Central High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
 Chicago University High School, Chicago, Illinois.
 Dalton School, New York City.
 Denver High Schools, Denver, Colorado.
 Eagle Rock High School, Los Angeles, California.
 Fieldston School, New York City.
 Francis Parker School, Chicago, Illinois.
 Friends' Central School, Overbrook, Pennsylvania.
 Germantown Friends School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

George School, George School, Pennsylvania.
 Horace Mann School for Girls, New York City.
 John Burroughs School, Saint Louis, Missouri.
 Lincoln School, New York City.
 Milton Academy, Milton, Massachusetts.
 New Trier Township High School, Winnetka, Illinois.
 North Shore Country Day School, Winnetka, Illinois.
 University High School, Oakland, California.
 Ohio State University Demonstration School, Columbus, Ohio.
 Pelham Memorial High School, Pelham, New York.
 Radnor Township High School, Wayne, Pennsylvania.
 Roosevelt High School, Des Moines, Iowa.
 Shaker High School, Shaker Heights, Ohio.
 Tower Hill School, Wilmington, Delaware.
 Winsor School, Boston, Massachusetts.
 Wisconsin High School, Madison, Wisconsin.

Almost all of the Nation's accredited colleges and universities fully approved the whole plan, with some reservations from Harvard, Haverford, Princeton, and Yale, which required students to take College Entrance Board Examinations.

Under this plan, colleges and universities agreed to accept the students from the cooperating schools, who were selected according to criteria providing a more complete picture of the candidates. The Committee on Records was in charge of creating instruments to evaluate better the students's abilities to carry on higher education responsibilities and commitments. In addition, each principal from the cooperating schools was asked to recommend candidates who in their opinion had the necessary abilities to work successfully in college. In accordance with these new approaches and improved evaluation techniques, concise information about the history and performance of the students during their school life was carefully collected. Indeed, the full and complete record of each student would provide the basis for better guidance and a fuller comprehension of the student's individuality, thereby making a smoother transition to college. Thus, under the supervision of the Directing Committee, schools and colleges were brought together with a basic intention of providing students with a feeling of unity and coherence in their school and college careers.

Proposed changes Because people involved in the Eight-Year Study doubted that the success in college was dependent upon a specific set of subject matter, they encouraged schools to construct their curriculum based on the needs of the youth in the community and in accordance with the schools's specific objectives. They also believed that there were different ways to be followed by students for the development of their skills, abilities, and powers, and for their adequate preparation for college work.

"They [Thirty Schools] questioned the basic assumption upon which college-school relations were based: that only by the study of English, foreign language, mathematics, science, and history could a student be prepared for the work of the liberal arts college".¹⁹

Despite of the democratic procedure of the Commission, they achieved the essential purpose of the Study. In general, schools stated their concerns through the following objectives: development of a wide range of interests and of an increased appreciation for aesthetic experiences; effective methods of thinking and acquisition of significant information; development of good work habits and study skills; development of social attitudes, social sensitivity, and better personal and social adjustment; development of physical health, and a consistent philosophy of life. The uniqueness and requirements of each school were assured by the commissioners, and each of them developed its plans and decided about its desired changes.

"... Of the proposed changes the following indications can be given: In most instances the social studies, science, literature, and the arts were moved into the foreground of the picture with substantial enrichment of factual material. In a number of cases a core curriculum was established centering in one general field of knowledge, usually the

social studies, with which the work in other fields is being integrated."²⁰

A new approach to the subject-matter was proposed. The organization of subject-matter was to obey to the principle of continuity, encouraging students for a life-long process of learning. By rejecting the idea of the traditional fragmentation of knowledge into various subjects, the commissioners stressed that subjects should be presented in relationship with others in order to facilitate the idea of unity and continuity.

"... Chemistry has its biological, geological, or astronomical implications that should not be overlooked if the whole of science is to have significance. Similarly, such cultures as those of South America and Asia should have a place in history courses, for comparative study, as well as those of Europe and the United States. Mathematics and foreign languages also, would be reorganized in a manner to enable the pupil to get a 'long' view of these fields of subject matter."²¹

Basically, the schools were concerned with developing the following changes in their students: a) acquisition of a greater mastery in learning, i.e., accuracy in ability in reading and comprehension, in writing clearly, in being able to see the relations of facts, and careful organization and summary of ideas; b) commitment to a continuous process of learning beyond the exclusive idea on accumulation of credits, requirements, grades, and getting a diploma; c) appreciation and training in various arts by providing opportunities to release creativity. Such activities would include: painting, music, drama, writing, reading, inventing, independent and individual thinking, and so on; and d) acquisition of social responsibility and participation in common affairs. This ability would be developed by studying the problems of American civilization as well as of the modern world where students would get a better insight into the interdependence and interrelationship of facts and events.

In general, they suggested the reexamination of curriculum materials and their reorganization. Also, the removal of boundaries among subjects, the cooperative efforts of teachers from different areas and departments, and the addition of other needed subjects that have been excluded from the traditional curriculum.

As R. W. Tyler (1935) pointed out, it is much easier to establish a plan of evaluation to appraise a static program than to design one that attempts to appraise a continuously changing plan of education, which major focus was the individual's needs, interests, attitudes, ability to think and solve the problems².

Also recommended was a very careful development of guidance which included the following points: a) understanding of individuals and social needs; b) adjustment of schools activities and curriculum to these needs; c) continuous and complete recording of each individual student as possible, for further analysis; d) orientation of students about their school and college career; and e) continuous encouragement of the development of their abilities towards their goals.

It was also recognized that a very high quality of teaching was required to accomplish all the suggested changes. Thus, encouragement was given to efforts to improve the teaching profession.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Under the direction of Dr. Ralph W. Tyler, Chairman of the Department of Education at the University of Chicago, a College Follow-up Study was done to investigate the college work of the first class from the Thirty Schools who entered college in September, 1936. This study was developed by a group of four experienced college administrators. About two thousand students entered approximately three hundred colleges which were involved in the Experiment. However, selection of the colleges had to be made for the Follow-up study, and this was done in accordance with the following points: a) numbers of students from the cooperative schools enrolled in the college; b) types of colleges: State Universities, Men's College, Women's College, and Coeducational Endowed Colleges and Universities; and c) availability for cooperation in the Follow-up Study.

"... The follow-up was carried on in 38 colleges of four types: the northeastern men's colleges, the northeastern women's colleges, coeducational endowed colleges and universities, and middlewestern state universities."²³

The College Follow-up Staff established a set of criteria for determining their judgement of the students's performance in college. They tried to identify all the factors for getting a complete picture of the students: their intellectual competence; cultural development; practical competence; philosophy of life; character; emotional stability; social adjustment; social sensitivity; physical development and fitness. Each criterion was extensively explored and broken down into other details. Sources of evidences were listed and judged adequate for each criterion. Records, honors and prizes, reading materials, tests, questionnaires, interviews, samples of the students's work, library use, papers, and many other factors were used as sources of evidences.

Approximately two thousand one hundred eight students from the Thirty Schools were extensively studied. From this number, one thousand, four

hundred seventy-five students were selected to be matched with the graduates from the traditional schools, in order to determine if the traditional college-entrance programs were the only programs that would insure the success of the graduates in college.

"Success in college, as defined in this Study, included grades earned; certain 'intellectual characteristics' which are not necessarily measured by grades; citizenship in the college community as indicated by extent and quality of interest in extra-class activities; and the attainment of personal goals as revealed by the nature of vocational orientation, concern about the contemporary scene, attitudes toward and relation to contemporaries. In effect, these criterias represent success as judged by college standards, by the students' contemporaries, and by students themselves."²⁴

For the matching process, the pairs of students were matched as closely as possible to each other according to their socio-economic backgrounds and scholastic aptitude and interests tests. The major difference was that one of the pair came from the traditional type of school, and the other graduated from one of the thirty experimental schools.

The results of this comparison showed that the students from the Thirty Schools were not handicapped in their college work, rather they seemed well prepared for performing well in college. Among many different aspects that were compared, students from the experimental programs earned a slightly higher grade point averages than their counterparts, with the exception of foreign languages, where students from the traditional programs excelled. Members of the experimental group showed higher level of intellectual curiosity, more precise and systematic thinking, gained slightly more academic honors each year, earned more non-academic honors in areas such as athletics and the arts. They generally had a higher degree

of participation in arts and in student's organizations, except religious and 'service' activities, they presented the same ability as their counterparts in budgeting time, even though the two groups had similar problems of adjustment. Students from the Thirty Schools approached their solutions with more efficiency and had more resourcefulness to meet the new situations. They also presented a more clear idea about their career orientation and more sensitivity to world affairs.

"... they show that by every known test in our toughest and most respected universities and colleges, such as Harvard, Yale, Michigan, Chicago, Bryn Mawr, the progressive school graduates did as well as, or better than, the boys and girls who had prepared for college in the stereotyped manner."²⁵

What is most significant, however, is that the more progressive the high schools were, the greater were the differences between the two groups.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on these findings, the committee concluded that the traditional college preparatory program was not the only method nor necessarily the most satisfactory method of preparing youngsters for higher levels of schooling.

"... If colleges want students of sound scholarship with vital interests, students who have developed effective habits of thinking, and who yet maintain a healthy orientation toward their fellows, then they will encourage the already obvious trend away from restrictions which tend to inhibit departures or deviations from the conventional curriculum patterns."²⁶

In general, it was suggested that the remedy for the overall problems that were affecting the youth of America involved the interference of the environment in the satisfaction of individual needs. Understanding of their own needs and interests in relation to the environment, as well as understanding of their personality, emotions and inclinations would help them to be adjusted in the society and to become effective participant in the solutions of problems. The students' needs should prevail over subject matter. Indeed, schools should function effectively in helping students understand their social environment and their social responsibilities. Moreover, the curriculum should include relevant issues dealing with problems encountered in their homes and their communities.

The failure of the high schools was said to be based on the lack of recognition of the partnership between individuals and the environment where they live. The needs of individuals change as the world changes. Educational activities should therefore consider the individuals and their surroundings and provide them with all the needed abilities for dealing with the changing world. Curriculum development, an appropriate program of

evaluation, guidance, and teachers' techniques were to be developed to accomplish these goals.

**PART II. A NATION AT RISK:
THE IMPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

INTRODUCTION

During the early 1980s, a growing debate developed among American leaders and people in general about the quality of education. Many believed that the United States was in an economic decline, as compared to other developed countries such as Japan. Therefore, America stood to lose its position as the leading power. According to his analysis, Eulie (1982) predicts that, by the year 2000, Japan will have economically surpassed the United States. Thus, the American anxiety can be illustrated in the words of Eulie:

"Not only do we face competition from Japan, but we, who have long believed ourselves to be Number One in terms of a standard of living, now find ourselves in fourth or fifth place behind Switzerland, West Germany and some of the Scandinavian nations."²⁷

Once again, education was affected by the overall economic situation. Public schools had undergone massive budget cuts, specially during the Reagan Administration, when military expenditures were given special attention (Wallace, 1982). However, according to the 14th Gallup Poll (1982), respondents recognized the importance of public schools, by placing them among the top considerations if more money from Washington were available. Military defense ranked fourth in the public opinion. Moreover, the traditional American faith in education was once more affirmed in the 1982 poll. According to the public, the development of the best educational system in the world is the guarantee of American success in the future. The development of the strongest military force was ranked in the third place, following the development of the most efficient industrial system in the world.

However, Americans realized that their academic excellence was declining. Also, education was believed to be inadequate for preparing the youngsters for the technological society and the changing world where an

increased demand exists for a highly skilled workers in many new fields such as computation, laser technology, and robotics. In this regard, it could be interesting to recall that the contemporary tension occurred between liberal education and vocational education. As Goodman (1982) pointed out:

"... the pressures exerted by a technological culture are forcing liberal education to the fringes of learning activity... The principal complaint seems to be that a liberal education lacks relevance to everyday concerns, like earning a living. More specifically, work centers on solving problems while conventional learning in the liberal arts and sciences aims generally at the transmission of ideas - which may only incidentally result in solutions to problems."²⁸

The report "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform," released on April 26, 1983 as an open letter to the American people by the National Commission on Excellence in Education brought all these ideas up for discussion. The basic purpose of this document is to alert the whole nation about the present educational situation of America and to restore the understanding about the real concept and functions of education in a democracy. The ways they found to realize that are established upon the concept of excellence in education and the idea of transforming America into a "learning society." Excellence would be attained by schools through the projection of goals which students could accomplish in terms of making the most of their capacities and talents. Thus, in order to achieve excellence schools should maintain a rigorous academic standard. Grades, the high school and college graduation requirements, the examinations, college admission requirements, subject-matter, and homework can carry on the idea of the expectations the schools take for granted.

The commissioners emphasized the American tradition in the belief in education. Also, the Commission developed its work grounded on the idea

that everyone can learn, and that the inborn eagerness to learn should be nurtured by an adequate system of education. They insisted that people in this country have historically recognized that education is the foundation for the future of their country. Moreover, education has been understood by Americans as:

"... the foundation for a satisfying life, an enlightened and civil society, a strong economy, and a secure Nation."²⁹

Based on a principle derived from Economics, the commissioners argued:

"Citizens know intuitively what some of the best economists have shown in their research, that education is one of the chief engines of a society material well-being..."³⁰

Also, they affirmed:

"Americans like to think of this Nation as the preeminent country for generating the great ideas and material benefits for all mankind."³¹

Meanwhile, the commissioners found that for many people today the educational system is "... doing the minimum work necessary for the moment."³² Also, they added that the chief cause of this attitude is low expectations of educational institutions, which set their goals at the "minimum requirements."

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The "A Nation at Risk" report from April 26, 1983 will be used in this study as the significant document for the analysis of the movement towards the educational reform in process in contemporary America. The report was produced by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in accordance with the initiative by the Government through its Secretary of Education, for reexamining the educational system in America.

Some articles, including Gallup polls, published in different magazines in the United States between the years 1979 and 1989, will also be used in the present study. It is expected that these publications will reveal the social, economic, and intellectual environments in which the ideas of the report emerged. Also, the articles will provide a general view of the debates on the issues of contemporary educational reform.

Historical Analysis

The report "A Nation at Risk" was the result of the eighteen months work of the National Commission on Excellence in Education created on August, 1981, by the Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell, who appointed the following members:

David Gardner, President of the University of Utah - Chairman
 Yvonne Larsen, San Diego Board of Education - Vice Chairman
 William O. Baker, Bell Telephone Laboratories
 Anne Campbell, Former Commissioner of Education in Nebraska
 Emeral A. Crosby, Principal at Northern High School in
 Detroit, Michigan
 Charles A. Foster Jr., President of Foundation for Training
 of Economics in San Francisco, California
 Norman C. Francis, President of Xavier University in New Orleans,
 Louisiana
 A. Bartlett Giamatti, President of Yale University in New Haven,
 Connecticut
 Shirley Gordon, President of Highline Community College in Midway,
 Washington
 Jay Sommer, Foreign Language Department in New Rochelle High
 School, New Rochelle, New York
 Robert V. Haderlein, Former President of the National School
 Boards Association in Girard, Kansas
 Gerald Holton, Professor of Physics and History of Science
 at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
 Annette Y. Kirk, Parent of Mecosta, Michigan

Among the diverse programs created for studying American education in the 80s, the National Commission on Excellence in Education was the one which caused significant impact. It was organized to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in public and private schools, colleges and universities, with emphasis on the teenagers. Also, it attempted to analyze educational problems and to present the appropriate solutions. Moreover, by seeking to generate an educational reform the commissioners believed they were pursuing the idea of excellence in education. Their intent was to report their findings to the public in order to make their practical recommendations worthwhile to the American education.

The Commission's basic concern was related to the America's international competitors based on the assumption that because today we live in a "global village," it is natural that we compete with each other.³⁵ Moreover, by comparing American economy and production with that of other industrial countries, a gradual decline in American dominance is apparent. Besides that, the industrial and commercial development requires new training, new ideas, and knowledge. Therefore, it supports the concept that education is an investment for the "information age" because it equips people with the new raw materials for the international commerce that are "knowledge, learning information, and skilled intelligence."³⁶

The words of Roger B. Smith, chairman and chief executive officer of General Motors, (in Hurwitz 1982), illustrates this idea:

"A new generation of business leaders recognizes that it must take on far greater responsibilities in a modern society. It must continue to compete in the traditional marketplace where goods and services are sold, but it must also enter a new marketplace, the marketplace of ideas, where the forces that shape society have always been determined. Only leadership with many and varied talents can hope to be successful in such an ideological marketplace."³⁷

People need to learn and train constantly to prepare themselves for this coming era, the commissioners say in the report. It is only through education that people can really participate in decision-making and in the "common culture."³⁸

The message released by the Commissioners stresses the importance of education as the foundation of American leadership and the source of American productivity, security, and civility. However, by referring to the shortage of Math and Science teachers, Levin (1982) quotes Simon Ramo, who was participating in an event promoted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education:

"... Understanding the relation of education to national security, international competition, technological industry strength, and economic growth cannot be expected to exist in every decentralized area and every level of government... It requires federal government leadership and support to build and preserve these resources."³⁹

The Commission intends to generate the leadership needed for an effective dissemination of its findings and recommendations throughout the country for the establishment of its ideas and reforms.

The report The result of the work accomplished by the 18-members of the National Commission on Excellence in Education was published and addressed to the American people with their recommendations for educational reform. As sources of information, the Commission used: papers from experts; evidences testified by professional and non-professional people in meetings, symposium, and group discussions; existing studies, programs and approaches to the contemporary educational problems; and letters and concerns from the public in general.

The alarming data⁴⁰ provided by the report affirm that:

* By comparing American students with others from different industrialized countries on 19 achievement tests, U.S. students were never first. In fact, seven times, they ranked the last position.

* There are 23 million of functionally illiterate adults in America. And, 13% of American teenagers and 40% of minorities are also considered functionally illiterates.

* Since the Sputnik era, there has been a decline in the average scores on the Scholastic Attitude Test (SAT) among high schoolers. And, the number of those who got superior scores also, have dropped.

* Average scores on subjects such as Mathematics, Sciences, and English have declined considerably. Among U.S. 17-years-olds, 40% can not infer from a written material; just 1/5 can write an essay; and only 1/3 can solve a more complex math problem. In fact, between 1975 and 1980, remedial mathematics programs have increased by 72% in American four-year colleges. Remedial education programs also have been developed by business and military leaders, who are complaining about the inabilities of the youngsters in the basic skills and in carrying on the training programs properly, because of academic deficiencies.

* Also, the average achievement scores of graduates have declined.

The tasks of the Commission were: to assess the quality of education in American institutions; to compare American education with education in other industrialized countries; and, to study the college admission requirements and their relation to the achievement of the high schoolers; to identify the successful programs for college students; to analyze the contemporary changes and their relation to the student's achievement; and, to define the problems to be overcome in order for excellence in education to be achieved.

For reexamining the curriculum, the Commission analyzed the pattern of courses from 1964 to 1969 and compared it to the pattern of courses from 1976 to 1981. They found a lack of central purpose in the schools. In many schools, curriculum has been transformed into a kind of "cafeteria-

style" program⁴¹ in which confusion about the importance of the subjects is the rule. Other problems that they reported in relation to the curriculum were: the extensive but inconstant choices high schoolers make regarding their course programs; and the frequent student migration from vocational and preparatory programs to a "general track", in which about 25% of their programs are composed by such courses as

"physical and health education, work experience outside the school, remedial English and mathematics, and personal service and development courses ..."⁴²

Besides all that, the commissioners discovered a decreasing amount of homework required for senior high school students; weakness of the course requirements in high schools in subjects such as sciences, mathematics, geography, and foreign language; increasing preference by the students for electives; a decline in the level of selectivity by some colleges and universities; an increasing disinterest in reading; a decreasing quality of many textbooks; the declining of the expenditures for textbooks and other materials; the little amount of time students spend in schools and besides that, poor quality of management of classroom time and deficiencies of schools to teach students study skills. Moreover, they reported that courses for teaching preparation need to be improved, and also that there is an eminent shortage of teachers in important subjects such as mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages as well as in special education. David Goodstein (1989), who is a professor of physics and applied physics, reinforced the problem of the shortage of science teachers, and emphasized the importance of this subject for effective participation of the people in the modern democracy. He recalls the Jeffersonian ideal of democracy

"... an informed, educated public is indispensable to a functioning democracy. Furthermore, many of the most important political issues we face cannot be understood without an understanding of science."⁴³

In order to generate public awareness for the educational problems of the Nation and a response to their findings, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released the report as an open letter to the American people, according to the suggestion made by the Chairman of the Commission David Gardner. They affirmed that the Nation is at risk:

"... competitors throughout the world are overtaking our once unchallenged lead in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation... The problem has many causes and dimensions; education is only one of them. But education is the primary factor undergirding our 'prosperity, security, and civility.'"⁴⁴

This "clarion call", as asserted by the Commission member Gerald Holton when referring to the open letter, warns the American people about the situation, asking them to participate. Unless every citizen is committed to the idea of excellence in the public schools, Americans can not recapture the promise of universal schooling, as articulated by the Commission:

"All, regardless of race or class or economic status are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost ... all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself."⁴⁵

However, the document attests that students are graduating from high schools ready neither for work nor for college. This fact generates a kind of frustration among Americans in general. The information about American education reported by the Commission generated strong concerns about the quality of U.S. schools, as well as promoting interests of groups such as

the Twentieth Century Fund, the College Board, and the Task Force on Education and Economic Growth.

Proposed changes Thus, what the commissioners are proposing is the development of the talents of all to the limits of their capabilities. All students should have the opportunity to improve themselves in ways that test and stretch their limits for achieving excellence. This notion also implies that everyone can attain individual excellence. Thus schools and colleges should help the students to reach excellence by projecting higher expectations and strengthening the standard academic requirements.

Although the idea of developing excellence in education is the central purpose of A Nation at Risk report, it had already been stressed before. Sendor (1982) in explaining the contest called the Future Problem-Solving, said:

"... The competitors differ widely, but they do share one goal: spurring students to excellence through public recognition of their achievement."⁴⁶

Moreover, competition in this regard, seems to be used as a means to develop excellence. Quoting Anne Crabbe, Sendor states:

"Competition is a motivating factor to get students to do things that are good for them. Like it or not competition is a way of life."⁴⁷

Based on this discussion, a question could be asked: Is the contemporary cultural and economic environment conditioning the ideas of excellence and competition or they are really worthy ideas for education?

According to A Nation at Risk report society is committed to excellence when it adopts the ideas of continuous development and improvement, and promotes learning for preparing its citizens for the changing world. The content of the curriculum of schools should then be organized to fulfill the diverse needs.

"... We must demand the best effort and performance from all students, whether they are gifted or less able, affluent or disadvantaged, whether destined for college, the farm, or industry."⁴⁸

Because changes have been so fast, people should be able to accomplish the emergent needs of the nation. Thus, the process of education should be understood as the commitment to life-long learning for better preparing people for the new careers and citizenship. The idea of the transformation of America into the "learning society" is tied to the idea of excellence. In other words, a truly democratic society should provide its individuals with a system of education and an adequate environment for learning, in which all people from childhood to adulthood have the opportunity to attain the development of all their capacities and talents to their fullest.

"In a world of ever-accelerating competition and change in the conditions of the workplace, of ever-greater danger, and of ever-larger opportunities for those prepared to meet them, educational reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society."⁴⁹

Only with all these in mind, education will be able to contribute to the prosperity of the country. Indeed, the commissioners proposed practical changes for fostering the students's enthusiasm for learning and the development of their talents towards excellence. They recommended a strong curriculum; rigorous standards for academic performance and conduct; higher expectations; rigorous requirements for admission; challenging materials; supportive environment for learning; greater amount of time for learning and efficiency; improvement of teaching preparation and of the concept of the teaching profession. The commissioners asked for support from the Federal Government, State and local officials, educators, administrators, scholarly, scientific and learned societies, professionals,

businessmen, industrial and labor councils, and the public in bringing about their recommendations for educational reform.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the 18-months of work, the National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded that an educational reform should be established for the realization of the ideals of a democratic Nation, for its prosperity, and above all, for the preparation of children "for more effective lives in a far stronger America"⁵⁰. Thus, the commissioners designed a plan for reform by making recommendations to attack the most relevant problems in the following areas: the content of curriculum of the high schools; the standards and expectations of schools, colleges and universities; the time devoted to learning; teaching; and leadership and fiscal support.

Regarding the curriculum, they recommended that the core of the modern curriculum of the high school consist of the Five New Basics: English throughout the four years of school; mathematics, science, and social studies during three years; computer science in the time span of six months. For the college-bound students, they recommended an additional, two years of foreign language. Because this discipline requires about four to six years of learning, it should be offered above the elementary level. During the eight years of elementary education, students should have all the opportunities to develop their special talents and develop an enthusiasm for learning. Also, it should provide a sound basis for further studies at the high school level, such as language arts and writing skills, problem-solving and computation, science, social studies, foreign language, and arts. Besides the New Basics, the high school curriculum should offer subjects dealing with fine and performing arts and vocational education.

The commissioners also, urged college and universities to raise their admission requirements and to determine the courses required, students' performance and achievement on standardized achievement tests in the areas of the New Basics, and foreign language when needed. Standardized achievement tests should be applied in the transition of levels of schooling, especially from high school to college. They believed that

grades are indicators of academic achievement. Also, they recommended the use of upgraded and updated textbooks as well as new instructional materials as long as they

"... reflect the most current applications of technology in appropriate curriculum areas, the best scholarship in each discipline, and research in learning and teaching."⁵¹

The Commission considered the wise use of the time an indispensable factor, if excellence is to be attained. They suggested more homework for high schoolers; instruction in study and work skills; increasing length of the school day; a student code of conduct for avoiding wasting of time with discipline; attendance policies with incentives and sanctions; and protection of the teachers's activities from any disturbances.

The commissioners established the following criteria for candidates for teaching: high academic standards, aptitude for teaching and competence. They also recommended better salaries and respect for the teaching profession. Promotions for superior teachers, encouragement for average teachers, as well as improvement or termination for those with poor performance were recommended. Career ladders for teachers were also recommended by the Commission.

In regard to the shortage of teachers in the fields of mathematics, sciences, and English, they recommended the invitation of nonschool personnel such as recent graduates, industrial specialists and retired scientists for school work. Also, for these critical areas, salary incentives should be offered to attract professionals. The Commission also suggested the retraining of teachers by utilizing competent professionals from these areas, and the designing of teacher preparation programs and supervision by master teachers.

The Commission asked for the promotion of leadership, assistance, help and support from authorities and professionals for the accomplishment of these recommendations. Also, citizens, parents, and students were challenged to take action towards the improvement of American education.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Commission on Excellence in Education has concluded from its study and data that there are many causes for disappointment in education by contemporary Americans. They identified problems related to the curriculum, lack of a central purpose, excessive permissiveness, and too many electives. They also found weakness in the student's self-direction in the use of time; decline in test scores; lowered academic standards; and a lack of good teachers as important causes for this general discontent with education in this country.

On the other hand, the commissioners recommended strengthening the requirements in high schools and colleges. Academic standards should stimulate excellence. In other words, the educational goals should push students to their intellectual limits. This process also needs an environment where the students learn that education is a continuous process that should help one to keep pace with a changing world throughout one's lifetime. Therefore, through education, one can be better prepared with the resources and skills for a successful life. Moreover, education can help the whole country be more competitive by producing knowledgeable and skillful citizens. Schools should therefore produce an educated and efficient work force capable of succeeding in the job market. Failure to do this would result in disadvantages for American business and the market in general. Indeed, economic competition is an important stimulating factor for this educational reform movement.

One solution the Commission recommended for present educational problems is their attempt to define the content of the curriculum. The curriculum is organized to focus first on preparing students for college level work, employment, and to develop citizenship. Only then can it focus on self-awareness, spontaneity, and creativity. These objectives are, on the other hand, tied to the needs of the economic system. By strengthening requirements, the commissioners believed that an educational system could

be developed which would help the nation recover its dominance in the contemporary world.

GENERAL SUMMARY

After reviewing and analyzing pertinent literature, some ideas or concepts were found to be useful in understanding better these two important movements for educational reform in the United States. In general, both assure us that Americans still have faith in the power of education to solve their problems. However, this faith has led to different approaches as illustrated by these two movements. Many important points should be stressed in discussing the Eight-Year Study and A Nation at Risk Report, such as:

1. The Eight-Year Study was done during a period of great social-economic-educational stress known as the Great Depression. A Nation at Risk was reported as a response to a national crisis, particularly in education and economic health of the country.

2. The Eight-Year Study represented an attempt to challenge some of the philosophical assumptions of traditional American education, e. g. subject centered versus student and problem centered; traditional college entrance requirements versus experimental programs designed on cooperative planning involving students, teachers, and others; traditional methods of evaluating students (stimulus response, etc.) versus evaluation on the basis of a broader student-society centered objectives. By reacting to the traditional approach to education and the autocratic school administration, the experiment adopted other concepts such as: the individual-environment relationship which responds to individual needs, concerns, interests, and social demands; the school-society relationship compounded by young people and adults living and working collectively; the democratic life and education which promoted changes in school administration, community-school relations, teacher's and parent's responsibilities, and the student's role in the school-society. On the other hand, A Nation at Risk Report reinforced what was already prescribed for the students, asking for

strengthening of requirements, higher test scores, and accomplishment of the objectives of a society essentially scientific and technological.

3. While the Eight-Year Study was based on the existing knowledge about education, developing its conclusions on the basis of a concise educational theory, A Nation at Risk report seems to develop its recommendations in accordance with the indictments of a nation which is primarily in economic risk. Also, the recommendations of the Eight-Year Study appeared as a result of a careful experimental study developed by specialists, administrators, teachers, parents and students, who all together tried to understand and practice what is expected in a democratic nation. They agreed that in a democracy, instead of a lesson given by the teachers, the young people needed to develop their critical or reflective thinking through the presentation and discussion of the problems which must be confronted by them in their daily life. On the other hand, the recommendations of A Nation at Risk report were made by the leadership of the government and business, to whom high scores and efficient citizenship were equated with excellence in education.

4. The Eight-Year Study was designed to conduct an in-depth, longitudinal study of the effectiveness of experimental programs compared with traditional programs as criteria for college entrance. It was committed to scientific procedures based on newer concepts of teaching and learning. A Nation at Risk Report was conducted in a time span of eighteen months of examination of the quality of American education on the basis of what they found in schools, in the meetings they organized, in concerns expressed by the public, and in studies already made. Furthermore, economic motives were largely emphasized by defining the real objectives of the public school to be to help America to be more competitive and to fulfill the demands that come from the world marketplace. Instead of considering the idea of "growth" as the primarily goal of education, the contemporary reform called for "excellence". Moreover, this idea called on social Darwinism to support the concept of the survival of the

'academically' best qualified, or those who can and will develop their abilities and talents to desired levels.

5. While the Eight-Year Study was based on actual reform recommendations for the schools which could have led to significant change in educational practice, the recommendations of A Nation at Risk really do not lead to any sort of fundamental change in American education. It is merely more of the same: a longer school day; more years of traditional subject-matter; longer school year; and more public support for traditional education.

6. In regard to curriculum revision, the criteria used by the Eight-Year Study were the demands that came from society plus the student's needs and concerns generated in their relationship with the environment. However, by society they did not mean merely the Nation at large, but they called attention to the social, cultural, vocational, economic, industrial, and recreational resources that come from the communities in which the students live. On the other hand, A Nation at Risk Report stressed primarily the needs of the Nation as a whole, and its concerns and functions in the international competitive market. As a result, the curriculum is organized a priori for those who have determined what is good for America. The ideas of obedience to authority and submission to the existing order are also implied. Words by W. H. Kilpatrick (1935) make an excellent point in this regard:

"When we in education see that the social-economic system thwarts and hampers us in the pursuit of our highest ethical and educational aims for those under our care, it becomes our duty to join hands with others to change that system to something better."²

7. The implications of the Eight-Year Study for American education have been largely ignored or rejected. A Nation at Risk report, while often referred to as supporting educational reform, is not reform at all in any true sense of the word, but is merely a statement of support for the

status quo. It represents a rejection of social and individual objectives for education in exchange for economic objectives.

8. It seems that A Nation at Risk Report does not give the special attention to the intimate relation between school and society as the Eight-Year Study does. While the latter considers schools as institutions intimately involved and interrelated to the society as a whole, the former assumes that if teachers and students work harder, society would be better prepared for the future and its citizens better equipped for the changing world. It seems that little consideration is given to the fact that the internal practices of the schools are greatly influenced by the larger society. In this regard, it is worthy to recall the words of John Dewey:

"The educational system is part of the common life and cannot escape suffering the consequences that flow from the conditions prevailing outside the school building. When repressive and reactionary forces are increasing in strength in all other institutions - economic, social, and political - it would be folly to expect the school to get off free"⁵³.

NOTES

- ¹A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 12. The same dissatisfaction is found in the Eight-Year Study. According to its report, "Graduation from high school found most boys and girls without long-range purpose, without vocational preparation, without that discipline which comes through self-direction, and without having discovered for themselves something which gives meaning to living". W. M. Aikin, The Story of the Eight-Year Study, Adventure in American Education. Volume I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 10.
- ²Ibid., p. 12.
- ³W. M. Aikin, The purposes of the eight-year study, Educational Record 16 (January 1935): 114.
- ⁴W. M. Aikin, The experiment as directed by the progressive education committee, The North Central Association Quarterly 9 (January 1935): 352.
- ⁵W. M. Aikin, Adventure in American Education. Volume I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 18. According to the author, "the primary purpose of education is to lead our young people to understand, to appreciate, and to live the kind of life for which we as a people have been striving throughout our history". The subject-matters are important but, the understanding of the whole society and the objectives and drives which have motivated American people through History are still more important.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 17.
- ⁷J. K. Norton, Activities of the joint commission on the emergency in education, The Phi Delta Kappan 13 (October 1933): 74.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 74.
- ⁹B. P. Fowler, Is the high school moving ahead?, Progressive Education 10 (7) (November 1933): 364.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 364.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 364.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 364.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 364.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 365.
- ¹⁵R. W. Tyler, Reflecting on the eight-year study, Journal of Thought 21 (1) (1986): 15.
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- ²¹W. M. Aikin, Relation of secondary school and college, Progressive Education 9 (October 1932): 443.
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- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 206-7.
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- ²⁶W. M. Aikin, Adventure in American Education. Volume I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 113.
- ²⁷J. Eulie, Teaching economics: Challenge for the 1980s, The Clearing House 56 (November 1982): 106.
- ²⁸D. M. Goodman, Making liberal education working in a technological culture, Liberal Education 63 (1) (1982): 68.
- ²⁹A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 17.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 17.
- ³¹Ibid., pp. 17-18.
- ³²Ibid., p. 14.
- ³³C. Piphio, Stateline, Phi Delta Kappan, 64 (September 1982): 5.
- ³⁴A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 5.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 6.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 7.
- ³⁷S. Hurwitz, Civic partners: Business and liberal education, Liberal Education 68 (4) (1982): 333.
- ³⁸A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 7.

- ³⁹D. Levin, What to do when your science and math teachers abandon their classrooms, The American School Board Journal, 169 (September 1982): 22.
- ⁴⁰A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), pp. 8-9.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 19.
- ⁴³D. Goodstein, Democracy suffers when schools can't teach physics, The Gainesville Sun, December 10, 1989, p. 4G.
- ⁴⁴M. Goldberg, and J. Harvey, A Nation at risk: The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, Phi Delta Kappan 65 (September 1983): 15.
- ⁴⁵A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 8.
- ⁴⁶E. Sendor, Harness competition and hoopla to hook kids on academic excellence, The American School Board Journal, 169 (June 1982): 17.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 17.
- ⁴⁸A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 24.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 13.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 36.
- ⁵¹Ibid., p. 29.
- ⁵²W. H. Kilpatrick, Social philosophy of progressive education, Progressive Education 12 (May 1935): 293.
- ⁵³J. Dewey, in James M. Wallace, The assault on public education: A Deweyan response, Phi Delta Kappan 64 (September 1982): 57.

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