

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY  
AND CONSIDERATIONS OF STUDENT INTERESTS:  
THE BASIS ON WHICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROCEED

by

JOE KARMEL

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Department of Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction  
The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 20, 1998.

## ABSTRACT

A difficulty in achieving equal educational opportunity in the public school system is that there has been a tendency among educational planners to confuse the notion of equality with that of sameness, to the extent that schools tend to offer identical educational opportunities rather than equal educational opportunities. The promotion of an approach which aims to standardize teaching practices and student programmes, stems from an interpretation of equality which considers that conditions of equal educational opportunity are attained when the same conditions exist for everyone. Lacking in this approach, however, is any consideration of individual student interests, a consideration wherein the intentional striving of students to achieve equal access to the resources that promote academic achievement has essentially been overlooked in the judging of equal educational opportunity.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Research Question	4
Purpose and Focus of the Thesis	5
Applications and Limitations of the Study	8
CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY	11
The Basis on Which Schools Proceed	13
If Everyone Were Allowed to Succeed	15
The Right To Choice In Education	19
The Principle Of Conferred Benefits	22
Summary	25
CHAPTER THREE: INTERPRETING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL	
OPPORTUNITY	27
The Input and Output Interpretations	27
Alexander's Theory: Maximization of Benefits	29
Dworkin's Theory; Preferred Provision of	
Resources	30

Frankena's Theory: Relative Distribution	30
Coomb's Theory: Equal Access to the Equal Distribution of Resources	31
Summary	32
CHAPTER FOUR: CONDITIONS LACKING, CONDITIONS OVERLOOKED	35
Legislative Intervention: The Costs and Benefits	35
The Limiting of Student Options	37
Coercive Attendance	38
The Selection of Student Programmes	41
Intentional Striving	42
Summary	46
CHAPTER FIVE: QUESTIONING WHAT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED	48
The Ordering of Knowledge	53
Summary	58
CHAPTER SIX: The Circumstances of Change	60
Considerations of Interest and Productive Learning	64
Summary	68

CHAPTER SEVEN: LEARNING BY INTEREST: AN ALTERNATIVE	
TO THE STANDARDIZED CURRICULUM	70
The Structure of Public Schools	70
The Road to Ithica: Altering School Structures	74
Those With Whom We Share the Learning Environment	75
From Theory to Practice: A Five Year Plan	80
...and all the World's a Stage	81
Do all Roads Lead to Rome?	89
Programme Compatibility	97
Education and Future Career Opportunities	105
Summary	108
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION: WHAT IS AND WHAT	
OUGHT TO BE	110
What Ought To Be	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY	120
APPENDIX 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	128
APPENDIX 2: Pulling the plug on appeals to irrationality, immaturity and expediency	129

## VII

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Democratic societies have set for themselves some very ambitious goals. Establishing practices that promote fairness, equality, freedom, respect for human rights and dignities, are indeed praiseworthy goals towards which a thoughtful and caring society ought to strive. And in the attainment of these goals a society relies upon the support and assistance of the public education system. In this partnership it is a function of the schools to transmit the attitudes, the values, the beliefs, and the aspirations of society to the younger members of their communities.

And no where does it seem more important to reinforce and promote these practices than in the public education system, for inherent in these practices is the belief that "inequitable education tends to increase inequality of opportunity to secure economic and social goods, and deprives society in general of the benefits that accrue when all members are able to be full participants and contributors" (Coombs, 1994, p. 281). It is, in fact, a



corollary of this supposition, that all of society increasingly profits and benefits from equal educational opportunity (Strike, 1982, pp. 157-159), and a belief that public schools embody practices of fairness and equality of opportunity (Fullan, 1991, p. 14), whereby we justify the legislation of compulsory education.

And to continue to support current educational practices on the basis of these assumptions and beliefs would be understandable, were it not for an abundance of research to suggest that the ends of existing practices do not result in the equal distribution of educational benefits to all students, but rather in the gaining of advantages for a relative few (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bruner, 1971; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Fullan, 1991; Goodlad, 1983; Holt, 1964; Hurn, 1979; Kirkness, 1991; Noddings, 1993; Roland Martin, 1995). And such evidence does not support the existence of education which has as its ends the promotion of equal opportunity for the benefit of the common good of society. For the consideration of benefits for the common good is recognized as contributing to the majority and not a minority, and provisions of equal educational opportunity must include benefits for all and not just some.

Unless it can be shown that the interests of some are more important than the interests of others, and that the

success of a few will provide for an equal distribution of benefits for all, we must then be concerned that the ends of current educational practices are very much in contrast with the desired goals of public education, and that we have perhaps overlooked some essential elements in our conceptualizations of equality and hence equal educational opportunity.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The goal of providing equal opportunity in education is an inspiring notion, though the concept of equality is itself complex if not wholly troublesome. As educational philosopher Kenneth Strike (1995) contends, maybe equality requires treating people differently (p. 53). And, if this apparent paradox is in fact valid, then perhaps in our altruistic and egalitarian efforts to educate all learners with the same curriculum, under the premise of equity and nondiscrimination, we have mistakenly equated the notion of equality for that of sameness, thereby offering identical opportunities instead of equal opportunities.

If this were true, then the recognition of individual student needs to which we currently pay lip service - the rich diversity of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and individual differences - would be facilitated through the

practice of assimilation rather than through the process of accommodation. And if this were indeed the case, then it would also hold that present teaching strategies and a standardized curriculum may be at odds with our goals for equal educational opportunity.

### **The Research Question**

I feel there is sufficient reason to question the desirability of current educational practices, as the justification for compulsory education rests largely upon the supposition that education is beneficial to all persons who receive one. However, if this is not the case, and there appears to be credible evidence to suggest that this is so, that in fact conditions of equal educational opportunity are very much lacking in our public schools to the extent that current practices may actually confer upon some students more harm than benefit, then it is reasonable for educators to ask on what basis public schools proceed, and to question why we continue to teach what we teach, in the manner that we do?

Accordingly, in the following thesis, I critically examine both the means and ends of current educational practices as they relate to provisions of equal educational opportunity, by posing the following research question:

*How desirable are current practices in our efforts towards achieving the goal of equal educational opportunity through an equal distribution of educational benefits to all students?*

### **Purpose and Focus of the Thesis**

It is my intention to show that the harm resulting from educational practices which serve to support and reinforce a systematically standardized curriculum wholly outweighs the perceived benefits, and that the long and established practice of denying students the opportunity for making meaningful and relevant decisions about their education is unreasonable and unjust, and at odds with our goals for provisions of equal educational opportunity, as ultimately the ends of such practices will not bring about an equal distribution of educational benefits to all students.

I shall support the above claims with the development of two arguments. I will argue firstly, that if education is a basic human right, as acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 26), and that central to our notion of a human right is the promotion of the freedom to pursue one's own will (see Appendix 2 - Case, 1985, p.452) and the maximization of opportunities to promote people's interests (Peters, 1966, p. 179), then

compulsory participation in a systemically standardized curriculum necessarily compromises a student's opportunity for pursuing "the full development of the human personality" and "the strengthening of respect for human rights" to which the universal right to education is directed (see Appendix 1). Under such circumstances, I maintain that existing educational practices must be considered unjust, and a serious infringement of the basic right to education.

I shall argue secondly, that further lacking in the support of a systemically standardized and mandatory curriculum, is a reasonable justification for the basis on which schools proceed to demand that students study one thing and not another. Even a cursory review of the literature reveals extensive disagreement in virtually every area of educational research and practice regarding how best to proceed, on what basis, and to what ends (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bruner, 1971; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Holt, 1969; Hurn, 1979; Kirkness, 1991; Noddings, 1995, January; Roland Martin, 1995). As a society and a profession, it would appear that we possess no shared and epistemological agreement on the purpose of education, nor what knowledge or experiences are most necessary or most desirable beyond those of basic literacy, numeracy, and the acquisition of social skills.

Consider the questions posed by Aristotle more than 2000 years ago and the reader will find that the same questions still remain unanswered and virtually unchanged with the passage of time. In fact, so unchanged are the fundamental concerns of educators, the exact text used by Aristotle could easily be placed on the agenda of a "1997 Forum on Education", at any symposium in the world, without causing a noticeable difference. For these same issues are still the central concerns and focus of current discussions in education today:

How young persons should be educated, are questions which remain to be considered. As things are, there is disagreement about the subjects. For mankind are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed - should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training; all three opinions have been entertained.

(Aristotle, 1980, p. 542)

After I have given sufficient grounds for my thesis, I will then proceed to outline the conceptual framework for an alternative strategy which I feel will help to bring

about some solutions to the issues that have been raised, and to enhance conditions for the equality of educational opportunity to obtain in the public school system.

### **Applications and Limitations of the Study**

The following examination is necessarily broad in scope, for there is much to be considered in the process of increasing our understanding of what it means to pursue equal educational opportunity in our school system. We could not engage in meaningful discussion without crossing over a great many subject matters including: logic, ethics, reason, economics, politics, the study of liberal and vocational training, nor without giving some thought to the considerations of change and implementation, innovation and progress, rights and obligations, democracy and the rights of citizens, equality, diversity, respect for persons, freedom of choice, and the purpose of education.

My arguments apply to public schools and public education systems in North America in general, and therefore much of the following discussion will center around generalizations. However, as an educator, with experience in several schools and school districts, I know that there are no two classrooms alike, let alone a likeness among schools, school districts, and school

systems. Each is a distinctive microcosm with its own set of cultural values, rules, and codes of conduct (Sarason, 1982).

But, at the same time, there is also something recognizable about all schools, in all districts, and in all systems, such that when a combination of these particular conditions and circumstances present themselves, we are aware of something universally recognized as "school". It is in this sense that I address all public schools, in as much as there exists a generic similarity in familiar patterns and rhythms which establish a routine "dailiness" in the running of these institutions (Dryden, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 1984).

Much of what transpires on a day to day basis in the classroom can be predetermined by the presence of well established and highly recognizable school structures which help to define the teaching/learning environment. These common school structures - time, space, people, authority, and subject matter (Werner, 1995) - account for one of the main distinguishing features which tend to extend a franchised appearance to the practices of public schools.

And in addition to the school structures that appear common to all schools, there also exists another layer of established structures which help to define and ultimately



distinguish the cultures and practices of elementary schools from those of middle or secondary schools. Accordingly, where such generalizations do not apply to all public schools I sincerely apologize, for my intent is in the same spirit as the arguments of Plato and Mill, Noddings and Sarason; my intention is not to oversimplify the generic similarities of schools, but rather to call attention to the influences of their existence.

Hence, in acknowledging the presence of generalizations while at the same time maintaining the specificity necessary for the application of solutions, I have tried to strike a balance by opening with discussion on the educational practices of public schools in general, and then narrowing the discussion to focus on the problems and concerns as they relate to the practice of secondary schools in particular.

## CHAPTER 2

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

It can be argued that education in one form or the other has always existed, and as it appears to be the natural process of passing on the accumulated learning experiences from one generation to the next, and since humankind has devised no other, education should be valued and fully supported. But even if this were so, the question still arises as to whether the education that has existed and currently exists now within our schools is necessarily the education that ought to exist? For if a certain form of education appears to be unreasonable or unjust, then no amount of tradition or legislation will convince a person of reason that such practices ought to prevail.

I am of the opinion that current educational practices are unreasonable as well as unjust. I feel this is so because the ends of education do not result in an equal distribution of educational benefits to all students, and because despite evidence to indicate that not all individuals can achieve equally the benefits obtained

through education, we nevertheless continue to support and promote this education as being a process which is beneficial to all persons.

I feel if it can be shown under the existing provisions set forth as equal educational opportunity that some students routinely gained advantages over other students, and that this indeed was a recognized objective of education, such that the ends of these practices do not result in increased benefits to all students but only to some, then it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the educational practices which go under the name of "Equal Educational Opportunity" were not actually equal, but in fact very much unequal and unjust. And if sufficient evidence was shown to support this claim, then it would also not be unreasonable to suggest there is a need to question the basis on which schools proceed.

And such is the purpose of the following chapter; firstly, to show that current educational practices are indeed unreasonable, unjust, and generally at odds with our intended goals for provisions of equal educational opportunity and, secondly, to show that this unreasonableness and injustice is not widely understood and that the illumination and identification of these practices would serve as a good starting point for discussion and change.

I will begin by suggesting that we have made a grave mistake in our conceptualization of "equal educational opportunity" and subsequently in the manner in which we have organized our public schools around a narrow grouping of subject areas within the framework of a standardized curriculum. I will argue further that rigid adherence to a systemically standardized curriculum represents the aspirations and interests of only a minority of students, while essentially ignoring the natural diversity that exists among students' backgrounds, abilities, and individual interests, and is thus fundamentally in opposition to efforts to promote equal educational opportunity.

#### **The Basis on Which Schools Proceed**

There is an equal opportunity to attend school, but not to succeed in school. I see no level playing field existing in public education. It appears to me that what we have in reality is a straight and narrow pathway, bulldozed through increasingly rough terrain, on which only a very few students are able to tread. The rest of the students are tossed a compass without a map. Equal educational opportunities should not mean *identical* education for all learners, but rather an equal or *equivalent* opportunity to develop individual potential in

one's own area of interest and ability.

Our system does not provide equivalent educational opportunities for students not going on to university, even though they represent an overwhelming majority of the student body. The majority of school funding is directed towards a minority of the school population. The existing available options are perceived to be of far less significance and relegated to a vastly lower level of status. So low in fact, in British Columbia, the Ministry of Education does not even bother to sanction provincial testing outside of the "core" subject areas.

Schools condition children's opinions of success. If a student is destined to go on to graduate on the academic-technical program, he or she is considered successful and, therefore, "smart." However, should the same student decide they would rather concentrate on the industrial arts such as power mechanics or metal working, they are all of a sudden in a different category of graduates; the students who haven't quite made it - the "not so smart" students. It matters little if a student demonstrates excellence in mechanical ability or metalworking craftsmanship; they receive a pat on the back, not a scholarship.

This is unfortunate for we make these students feel inadequate, that they have somehow under achieved and not "lived up to their potential" (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990, p. 192). Most students never discover their academic potential, because they have never been given the opportunity to find out what it is. They do, however, understand their limitations, as there has been far greater opportunity for failure than for success.

#### **If Everyone Were Allowed to Succeed?**

Setting the prime educational goal in our public school curriculum to prepare students for a university entrance graduation certificate is a mistake (Noddings, 1992, p. xiv). Not only is it an undesirable goal, but it is also unattainable and totally impractical for most students in the public school system. And although it might be argued that there is not only one goal (i.e., university entrance), this goal is given the highest social status by educators, parents, and by other social institutions. By sending out the message that graduation, synonymous with university entrance, is the ultimate goal to strive for, we do a great disservice to the majority of our students because it is a goal that cannot be reached from the outset, and therefore morally unjustifiable. Let me explain.

Let's say Canadian high schools did an absolutely outstanding job of graduating students in June of 1998, and every high school managed to graduate every student, meeting all the requirements for university entrance. And suppose this became the trend. What would we do? We could not hope to accommodate everyone in our universities.

Take this example a little further and say that not only did the public schools do a tremendous job of getting students to university, but they also counseled the students in the "right" direction and all these students applied to the faculties of medicine, law, and engineering. And, playing out this scenario to its ultimate conclusion, let's say that the universities did an equally tremendous job, and in the year 2005 are ready to graduate 135,000 fully trained doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Where would we put all these professionals, these highly trained educated specialists, in our highly technological society?

The above scenario is perhaps a good example of the Universal Consequences test (Coombs, 1980, p. 31) - the consequences of everyone acting on the same principle - for the fact remains that what our society has come to value as the most desirable jobs attainable through the educational process has also become the measuring stick

for educational success, even though the opportunity cannot be available to everyone (Hurn, 1979). We can only support so many doctors and lawyers in our society, and therefore we limit access to these occupations by setting rigorous academic standards which rely on most people failing to reach these highly sanctioned goals. Our evaluation system in fact depends on most people failing to make the grade, for without the failure of the many there cannot be the success of the few. There would be little point in awarding A's to every student. If everyone could make the grade, we would simply raise the qualifications in order to restrict the number of applicants.

As Nel Noddings (1993) of Stanford University contends, "Learning as it is defined today is a rigged game. It is designed to separate and point up differences. It has little to do with the interests or needs of children" (p. 14). But that our system of education relies on failure in order to work has been well cited (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bruner, 1971; Kelley, 1993), though still not widely appreciated nor recognized for its ruthlessness.

There is a well defined and well understood principle at work in our schools, which Bowles and Gintis (1976) identified as the "sorting function" of schools - a "Law



of the Jungle" so to speak - where someone is going to win and someone is going to lose. That's how the "real world" works, and as the recognized training grounds for the real world, schools quite naturally reinforce this principle (Bruner, 1971; Doll, 1993). We have unwittingly built failure right into the fundamental structures of our education system in such a way that it appears to be equitable and therefore worthy of our support. The notion that students have an equal opportunity to succeed is upheld by a belief that public education has "levelled the playing field" for all students to compete fairly.

Against this background students are given to understand that they can succeed in the job market if they stay in school and get a good education. In this institution we are led to believe that everyone has the opportunity to be a winner. This notion is further reinforced because the image appears to be so correct and so matter of fact, that to reject this belief "would be unnatural, a violation of common sense" (McLaren, 1989; Apple, 1990). But while it may be true that individuals or particular groups of individuals who have more education will stand a better chance of success in our society, it does not follow that if everyone has more schooling, then everyone will be more successful. For the status quo will not have changed (Hurn, 1979).

### The Right To Choice in Education

In my introduction I claimed that current educational practices were unjust to the extent that they may infringe upon the fundamental right to education. I maintain that there exists a relationship between equal educational opportunity and the universal right to education which is rooted in the principle of "Respect for Persons" - a principle which presupposes a certain minimal equality among all persons:

capable in some measure of overriding established hierarchy...it is grounded in the fact that each [person] speaks from his own particular point of view, having perceived interests that no one else can presume to know...and which cannot be assumed to be interchangeable with anyone else's...because the actions and determinations have a different significance when seen, as it were, from the receiving end...To respect someone as a person is thus to treat his own view of himself seriously. (Benn, 1988, pp. 104-105)

Furthermore, I suggest that the relationship between equal educational opportunity and human rights also has to do with freedom, particularly freedom of choice, and thus I am drawn to the conclusion that considerations of equal educational opportunity and respect for the right to education are conditional upon freedom of choice.

Having arrived at this conclusion, I contend that equal educational opportunities can be best realized when all students are provided with opportunities to be equally interested in the subject materials being offered. Students whose interests are being met in the classroom have an advantage over students whose interests are not being met, as without the presence of interest there is little motivation for students to fully participate in and contribute to the learning environment. The result being that uninterested learners are unlikely to intentionally strive to take full advantage of the kinds of educational goods or resources which promote successful academic achievement.

Students who are interested in what is being taught tend to learn quicker, easier, and with greater satisfaction and enjoyment than those who are not interested in what they are learning, and are only there because they feel they have to be (William James, 1890/1980, p. 275). Satisfaction and enjoyment in learning, however, are not the prerogative of an academic elite; all students have a right to be interested in what they are learning.

However, as it stands now, only some students are interested in what schools teach (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1995; Fullan, 1991), while a great many

students have little actual interest in what schools teach (Holt, 1964) and are there for a variety of other reasons which we shall discuss further in Chapter Four. But it would seem to make sense that students who are uninterested in what schools teach, will likely remain so until schools teach what is of interest to those children. Thus, if we could infer from the literature a simple principle, it would be to the affect that, if schools were to teach what is of interest to children, children in turn would be interested in what schools teach.

And although the above principle is straightforward and logical it is still problematic, as schools are not designed to interest children; they are designed to be in the best interest of children, which is not the same thing and, in fact, challenges the very notion of a right.

As Peter's (1966) reminds us, the whole purpose of a freedom or right is "to promote people's interests" (p. 179). Consequently we must challenge assumptions and beliefs about any educational process in a democratic society that limits the right to freedom of choice, particularly when inclusion in that process is mandatory but we can assure neither the equality of opportunity nor allow each individual to pursue "the full development of [their] human personality", to which the fundamental right to education is directed (Article 26, paragraph 2). And

without conditions that encourage the individual to intentionally strive for successful academic achievement, the right to education, and in turn equal educational opportunity, cannot properly be achieved.

### **The Principle of Conferred Benefits**

The justification for a mandatory and systemically standardized curriculum, based upon a theory of conferred benefits which the recipients can neither understand nor judge, is unreasonable and unjust. For if the recipients of this conferment are unable to acknowledge the benefits derived from education, what then confirms that education is beneficial to all learners?

The principle of conferred benefits is not reason enough to justify the legislation of compulsory inclusion in current educational practices, for it must also be considered that education is a fundamental human right and implicit in a human right is the liberty to choose whether or not to exercise that right. The only morally justifiable reason for limiting a human right can only be for the same reason that the right was proposed and acknowledged in the first place - which is to respect the will of every individual through a policy of noninterference in their lives, other than for reasons of preventing harm unto themselves and others.

There is a principle more fundamental than the principle of conferred benefits which takes precedence when both are applied to justify or interpret the reasoning behind certain actions. The principle of "Respect for Persons", or what William James referred to as the "Sovereignty of the Living Individual", suggests that freedom is limited to those acts which, at the very least, do not harm others (cited in Kilpatrick, 1951, p. 139).

Mill's point of view is consistent with that of James, and he suggests that:

Acts, of whatever kind, which, without justifiable cause, do harm to others, may be, and in the more important cases absolutely require to be, controlled by the unfavourable sentiments, and, when needful, by the active interference of mankind. The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people. (1861/1980 p. 293)

Essentially then, the principle of harm is the rightful reasoning underlying the principle of respect for persons and the acknowledgment of human rights, not the principle of conferred benefits. This point is further illustrated by considering the following example.

Suppose the world was starting anew and the reader was the only person on earth. Under these circumstances there would be no need of establishing the principle of respect for persons or acknowledging human rights, for such rights would already exist as natural rights, or as John Locke suggests, "Unalienable Rights", given by the nature of the universe (cited in Kilpatrick, 1951, p. 51). Until such a time as there was a second person that could interfere with the natural rights of the reader, there would be no need to recognize the existence of human rights, for the freedom is already present in nature and only remains to be limited.

It is based on the principle of respect for persons that we receive the universal declaration of human rights, and hence Magsino's claim that there must be evidence of misuse to justifiably limit a human right (see Appendix 2, p. 451). In education this means that the burden of proof rests upon schools to show that by allowing students greater freedom to choose what it is they would like to learn, based on their individual interests, it would be more harmful than mandatory participation in the standardized curricula to they are currently subjected.

To my knowledge schools have not demonstrated the incapacity of students to make use of their liberty to choose what they wish to learn. Where is the evidence that current educational practices, with their required courses,

tests, letter grades, and lock-step progressions, benefits all children? And where is the evidence to support the justification that compulsory inclusion in education results in an increase of benefits to all members of society?

### **Summary**

"The justification for liberty" maintains Case, "is the value of pursuing one's own will. If an action does not reflect the intentions and volitions of that person, then it is not his/her will. As such, it is not the proper object of a right to liberty" (see Appendix 2, p. 452). I agree with Case. I feel that current educational practices appear to lack essential elements by which we recognize and judge human rights.

In addition, Case reasons that "age-based restrictions are empirical generalizations and are not equivalent to moral entitlements" (p. 451). The only defensible reason for exclusion from a human right, he adds, "must be the very reason we have for ascribing the right in the first place" (P. 452). Furthermore, Magsino claims that any moral justification for the limiting of a human right or freedom requires "demonstrable incapacity to make acceptable use of one's liberties" (p. 451), which Case maintains be demonstrated in the following manner:



Anyone who upholds a categorical distinction is committed to the following [principle]:

Class or group X can be treated differently than class/group Y with regard to exercise of right R only if there is a reason for doing so that is both relevant to R and characteristic of X but not of Y. In other words, proponents of a different status for children's liberties must provide a condition that is empirically representative of children (and not of adults) and morally relevant to the exercise of freedoms.  
(p. 446)

It is not an entitlement of any person or groups of persons to interfere in the plans or projects of any other simply because they disapprove of the choices or consider other choices more worthwhile. And, as Case (1985) concludes with regards to education, "merely being worthwhile is not sufficient justification" (p. 453). In other words, the conferring of benefits deemed to be more worthwhile does not entitle one to interfere with the will of another human being no matter how worthwhile the perceived benefits may be.

## CHAPTER 3

## INTERPRETING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The notion of equal educational opportunity is an ideal and as such open to interpretation. The literature offers several interpretations of equal education opportunity that are worth examining. Educational philosopher Jerrold Coombs (1994) has analyzed some of the more persuasive of these interpretations, and suggests five interpretations that may be useful to examine further. Adding Coombs' own interpretation, I feel that there are at least six that we should consider, and I would like to proceed to examine each of these interpretations more closely with regards to Strike's theory suggesting that equality may require that we treat people differently.

The Input and Output Interpretations

There are two commonly held views of equal educational opportunity that may help us to understand the criteria for determining its presence in our school systems and to what extent:

The notion of equal educational opportunity has been given an 'input' interpretation by some, and an 'output' interpretation by others. According to the input interpretation, equality of educational opportunity is achieved when the same quality and range of educational programmes is made available to all students. The outcome interpretation suggests that equal educational opportunity obtains only when educational arrangements produce approximately the same level and range of educational achievement in every social group. (Coombs, 1994, p. 282)

Conceptualized in this manner, supporters of the input interpretation may feel quite justified in believing that a certain level of equality in educational opportunity has been achieved through the equal distribution of school resources and by the systemic implementation of a standardized curriculum for all students. Supporters of the output interpretation may also feel that they have had some success in achieving equality. Although still a long way from reaching complete parity, many traditionally marginalized groups have begun to show better representation across the spectrum of social activities. We have seen an increase in participation at virtually all levels in our institutions among women, religious and ethnic groups, First Nations, etc. But as Coombs concludes:

Although both of these interpretations have a certain degree of plausibility, neither is adequate. The input interpretation fails to take account of educationally relevant differences ... the range of educational programmes may unjustifiably benefit the members of one group more than members of the other...[The output interpretation] is inadequate because it fails to take due account of the fact that educational achievements are not the sort of things one can confer on persons; they are gained only through intentionally striving for them.  
(p. 282)

Alexander's Theory: Maximization of Benefits

Coombs (1994) interprets Alexander's theory of equality of educational treatment as conditions where "no further allocation of additional educational resources would make any difference to the educational achievement of any student" (p. 284). Although Coombs agrees that this would indeed result in a "just distribution", he feels it is impossible to know when no additional resources of any kind would make a difference, and that such a theory would only be feasible if there were access to virtually unlimited resources such as those of time and the attention of teachers. Because of this scarcity of educational resources, Coombs suggests that we settle for a "less ambitious" interpretation.

Dworkin's Theory: Preferred Provision of Resources

Dworkin's theory of preferred provisions essentially implies "that we should distribute educational provisions in such a way that no student with full knowledge of how educational provisions were distributed would have reason to want to trade provisions with any other student" (Coombs, p. 284). The difficulty Coombs finds with this interpretation is that a student may not wish to trade provisions, but still object to a student obtaining a greater amount of educational resources.

Frankena's Theory: Relative Distribution

Coombs translates Frankena's theory for educational equality to mean that resources should be distributed "in such a way as to make the same relative or proportional contribution to every student attaining a set of educational achievements which for her or him would count as having a good education" (p. 284). Like Dworkin's theory, this interpretation places the student at the centre of the judgment which, in my opinion, is a step in the right direction. The difficulty, of course, that Coombs finds is that there is no way to ascertain "the relative contributions of different kinds of resources to the educational achievements of students having very different interests and talents" (p. 284). Another

difficulty that I have with this interpretation is that what a student feels is a very good education for him or her, may only be one in which they feel that parents, teachers, and counselors, have given the greatest priority and status to, and one that will be considered worthwhile by society. I am afraid that this interpretation does not consider society's tremendous influence, nor the influence of future career choices upon present educational choices.

Coombs' Theory: Equal Access to the Distribution of Educational Resources

By combining the essential elements of the preceding interpretations, Coombs constructs a further interpretation which focuses on educational resources. He argues that the provision of equal access to the distribution of educational resources - "conditions or objects which facilitate desirable educational achievements" - would serve as a better interpretation of equal educational opportunity (p. 282). Coombs suggests that although equal access to resources will not ensure successful achievement, it will at the very least increase the chances of success. But he also points out several difficulties with the application of his own theory which he considers to be limiting factors.

One such limitation centres around the fact that ultimately what constitutes equality of access to education is essentially a value judgment, and as such unlikely to gain universal assent. Coombs concludes that the best contribution of this interpretation may not actually be to identify a particular set of conditions for claiming equal distribution of educational resources, but rather "to make clearer the nature of the value judgments that are required for applying the principle of equal access to education" by using what Hart calls the 'defeasible' concept (cited in Coombs, p. 285). The defeasible concept involves identifying conditions that are essentially lacking, and that necessarily take away from achieving our claim.

### **Summary**

To this point then, we have looked at several interpretations of equal educational opportunity and taken from each one the essential elements for considering yet a further interpretation (see overview on p.33). But simply combining these elements into a single model may not in itself be sufficient.

The application of Coombs' interpretation to conditions of equal access which are lacking, I feel could enhance our efforts by determining considerations which

Table 1. Interpreting Equal Educational Opportunity

**Strike**  
*Equality of Differences* ————— **Appreciation of Differences**

**Input**  
*Program Availability*

**Output**  
*Academic Achievement* ————— **Relevant Differences**

**Alexander**  
*Maximization of Achievement* ————— **Limited Resources** ———— **Conditions Lacking**

Time  
Teachers

**Dworkin**  
*Preferred Provisions of Resources* ————— **Essential Elements**

**Frankena**  
*Relative Distribution* ———— **Proportional Distribution**

Diversity ———— **Conditions Overlooked**

Interests  
Talent

**Coombs**  
*Access to Equal Distribution of Resources* ———— **Educational Achievement**

Defeasible Concept ———— **Intentional Striving**



Coombs suggests may have "heretofore been overlooked". For if we can identify characteristics of those elements which necessarily take away from efforts to achieve equal access, we might then begin identifying the characteristics of elements which contribute to equal access as those perceived to be opposed to the characteristics of unequal access. And while the absence of opposing or "subtractive" elements may not in themselves be sufficient to guarantee conditions characteristic of equality, the increased presence of the former will certainly indicate a lack of conditions necessary for the latter to prevail.

In chapter four we shall look more closely at this strategy of identifying elements that have been overlooked and those that are lacking, and see how these principles can be applied to a further interpretation of equal educational opportunity.

## CHAPTER 4.

## CONDITIONS LACKING, CONDITIONS OVERLOOKED

**Legislative Intervention: The Costs and Benefits**

Kilpatrick (1951) reminds us, freedom is not absolute, and that "the principle of equality precisely limits the principle of liberty" (p. 140). In other words, in any society or institution in that society that values equality, there must be a balance that determines the extent of the freedom of the individual from infringing upon the rights of all members of society. Often such a balance occurs in the form of government legislation.

In Canada, as in other democratic nations, the right to education has been legislated and "protected" by law. But whenever a law is created it also serves to limit the freedoms of individuals within that society. It is reasoned, however, that *the benefits derived from the enactment of a certain law are worth the costs of the freedom surrendered.*

The laws which make education compulsory for every member of our society represent a limiting off individual freedoms for the sake of the common good. Adherence to

legislation calling for mandatory education is seen as benefiting all members of society, for it is widely held that with an education each individual will increasingly prosper socially, politically, and economically which, in turn, will lead to the creation of a more prosperous and thus better society for all persons.

In a democracy, the intervention by the state for the establishment of laws which necessarily restrict individual freedoms and rights, is tolerated and deemed justifiable on the basis that the enactment of such laws gives no advantage, either by kind or degree, to any particular individual or groups of individuals within our society; only to society as a whole, and in equal measure.

There are, however, many who would argue that current educational practices do in fact provide advantages for certain individuals and groups of individuals within our society, and hence do not operate on a basis of neutrality for the welfare of all (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bruner 1971; Dewey, 1963; Hurn, 1979). I, too, have put forth the argument that students who are interested in what is being taught maintain advantages over students that are not interested in what they are learning.

I have argued that to ignore the rights of children to choose, by enforcing outside plans or expectations upon

them, is a violation of the rights due to them as a person. As teachers and adults we deeply resent interference in our own plans. Therefore we must acknowledge the same rights of noninterference in the aspirations and projects of students unless in following such plans, we can show evidence that their own interests or the interests of others are at stake and in danger of harm. To do otherwise is unjust and I shall continue to expand upon this point.

### **The Limiting of Student Options**

There are those who would argue that whether or not education is a right, the fact is that students, especially those in secondary school, already have a great deal of choice in what they choose to study, and are free to elect subjects that lead to the type of graduation programme in which they are interested. Furthermore, they argue that the very fact that students remain in school beyond the age of mandatory schooling, on a "voluntary" basis, is evidence that students are making the choice to continue on in school and to select a course of study that is of interest to them.

And to a certain extent this is so, for students do choose to continue on in school beyond the point, that is required of them by law, and there are in fact several

options from which students may choose in their courses of study. However, I will argue that social arrangements whereby the influence of unwritten rules, expectations, perceptions, and obligations, dictate the actions of individuals in ways over which they have no control (Apple, 1991; McLaren, 1989; Ogbu, 1985), cannot truly be said to constitute respect for democracy, human rights, or persons. Under such conditions, the facilitation of student options and choice is an illusion, and the continued existence of such practices unjust.

### **Coercive Attendance**

There are at least four reasons for attending school which, strictly speaking, are neither compulsory nor voluntary actions, but which act to restrict student options and unduly influence student choices:

Reason #1: *In which there are no acceptable alternatives to schooling.*

Having no acceptable alternatives to schooling is one reason for attendance. It is quite astonishing to realize that in a democratic society we offer no acceptable alternative to schooling. For high school students under the age of sixteen, there is a choice between going to school or going to jail. A rather harsh punishment, but

incarceration in youth detention programmes for repeated or prolonged truancy is one of several strategies for dealing with noncompliance, and often in conjunction with removal from the family to a treatment facility and/or a sentence of juvenile probation. For students over the age of sixteen, since it is no longer mandatory to remain in school, the only alternative is dropping out. And while it is still unacceptable, dropping out is the most widely utilized alternative.

According to the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1995), about one out of every four Canadian children choose this "option". But the point must be emphasized that these are not students with low academic abilities or a history of school-related difficulties; indeed they are among the best and the brightest. The majority of these early school leavers cite boredom with school and a preference for work as the main factors for leaving school.

Only 8% of [early] school leavers cited problems with school work as their main reason for leaving, and just over 10% reported average grades of D or F. More than 30% of high school dropouts had A or B averages when they left school.

(Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1995, p.1).

Reason #2:     *In which students attend school out of fear.*

A second reason for "voluntary" attendance has to do with the fear of jeopardizing one's future lifestyle. In a recent study of Ontario schools Michael Fullan (1991), found that at least 50% of high school students are uninterested in school but go simply because of future considerations for employment and prospective earning. Fullan's research essentially shows that one out of every two students remaining in school do so fearing unemployment or poverty as the other alternative.

Reason #3:     *In which students attend school to secure a successful future.*

A third reason, which is essentially a corollary of the second reason, is based on a belief that schooling offers, to quote John Dewey, "'The opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group" in which one is born" (cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 14). In other words, schools offer our students hope - hope for political ascendancy, economic success, and social well-being - without which there is only despair and the fear of doing without, of not belonging, and of remaining unsuccessful.

Reason #4:     *In which students attend school out of a sense of duty.*

A fourth reason has to do with attending school, trying to get good marks, trying to be a good student, trying to be respectful of school rules, policies, and so forth, out of a sense of duty to one's family and to those significant others for whom they feel respect and a sense of identity. It is a desire to please parents and friends and make these people proud to be associated with their efforts and achievements. Conversely, leaving school early, poor achievement, poor behaviour, would necessarily reflect badly upon those associated with that person, such that it brings shame or disappointment to all concerned.

#### **The Selection of Student Programmes**

"There is all the difference in the world between choosing between alternatives and 'opting' for alternatives based upon available options" (Peters, 1966, p. 197). Voters are not unaware of this difference. Often voters vote for a certain candidate or party not because they feel that that particular candidate or political party expresses their views, but simply because out of the options available, that particular candidate or party is least likely to interrupt or interfere with that voters plans or projects.

Along similar lines, passengers in a burning airplane could be offered a choice either to jump with a parachute



or go down with the plane. Neither of these options express the wishes of the passengers but, of the available options, parachuting appears to be the least harmful.

In the case for education, the situation is much the same. Of the available options students often choose one in which the chances of survival are the greatest, such as courses which involve the least amount of Mathematics, or ones which don't require homework or don't involve the writing of essays, or even courses that suit their time tabling schedule. Students also frequently choose areas of study and make course selection on the basis of career opportunities, or what they understand from parents, teachers, and peers, to be the best use of their time in terms of where they see themselves after completing school.

### **Intentional Striving**

Public schools continue to operate on the combined principles of hope and fear: the hope of economic success, political ascendancy, and social well being, and the fear of doing without and of not belonging. In education, the choice to attend school is not possible unless a student is willing to defy common sense, and to reject the advice and endure the disappointment of parents, peers, and the school community. In actual fact, a strategy of

incentives and deterrents - a "carrot and stick" strategy - appears to be the principle motivating force behind many students currently choosing to remain in school.

The idea of dangling a carrot from a pole or stick, just in front of a donkey's nose and slightly out of reach of its grasp, is a strategy frequently used as an incentive to encourage the animal to move forward in the hopes of reaching the carrot. Conversely, if the carrot incentive doesn't work to entice the animal, the stick can then be used as a device for persuading the animal that it is truly not in its best interest to refuse to comply. And although the carrot may appear as quite an innocent motivational strategy in comparison to the harshness of the stick, both strategies are ultimately aimed at coercing the animal into doing what it does not want to do.

Furthermore, while it might appear quite obvious that children are not to be treated as donkeys, it is not obvious as to why we employ the same strategies and motivational devices in their education. Dangling career and lifestyle opportunities enticingly out of reach of most students' grasp is as alluring as the "innocent" carrot while the fear of unemployment, insufficient income, and relegation to a level of social insignificance are capable of inflicting blows more painful and more

enduring than any that could be delivered by want of a stick.

I believe that public schools must provide more carrots and on shorter poles if they are to succeed in increasing equal educational opportunities to all students. Students need a greater variety of educational programmes, driven by student choice, so that there exists equal opportunity to be interested in the resources that schools offer. The incentive to remain in school and to strive intentionally and continuously for educational achievement and success must be accompanied by considerations of interest, enjoyment, a sense of wonder, and personal fulfillment, rather than simply by considerations of future employment, a lack of options, and a sense of obligation (Ohanian, 1996; Meier, 1996).

Intentional striving is brought about naturally through intrinsic motivation. Such motivation occurs when students feel empowered to make decisions and choices that genuinely affect issues relevant to their education and to their future plans and projects.

The human facilities of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral choices, are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is the custom makes no choice...He who lets the world, or his portion of it,

choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties....Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and to develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.  
(Mill, 1861/1980, p. 294)

Over time, and without conditions which provide for a range of alternative options and the promotion intentional striving, students can acquire a feeling of hopelessness, resulting in total apathy towards school and learning in general. And apathy is a condition that can be replaced only by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is restored when a well thought out plan takes the imagination by storm, whereby the individual can again see the potential and the opportunity to succeed to heights limited only by boundaries set of their own imagination and efforts, not by barriers over which they have no control (Ogbu, 1985).

Coercion is not a condition conducive to creating equal educational opportunity. Unless students perceive a just and reasonable cause to be genuinely interested in the educational resources and career opportunities offered through the education system, and unless they have the freedom to make appropriate choices concerning those

opportunities, our best intentions to provide equal access to the distribution of educational resources will necessarily fail to encourage intentional striving on the part of students.

### Summary

At this point I think it will now be clear to the reader that I consider any future interpretations of equal educational opportunity must necessarily recognize conditions that may be lacking, and conditions which may have been overlooked. Of the conditions lacking, I have emphasized the lack of *Choice of Student Options*. I have further supported the claim that through this lack of choice, *Intentional Striving* is unlikely to occur, and that the vital importance of this characteristic of learning has been overlooked in our judging educational achievement.

I have argued that public schools have an obligation and responsibility to provide all students with equal educational opportunities, and that these opportunities be "directed at the full development of the human personality", which is a fundamental human right and one which Canada, like many other democratic nations, willingly assumes responsibility for (Mill, p. 104). It is the responsibility of the state to provide conditions

whereby such a right can be realized, and without jeopardizing the "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to which all persons are entitled".

If we could find any evidence that could convince us that support for undemocratic arrangements provide for a better quality of human experience in education, then I would agree we have legitimate cause to promote the efforts of current educational practices. But, according to Aristotle (1980, p. 542), "two principles are characteristic of democracy, the government of the majority and freedom". And Jefferson (cited in Kilpatrick, 1951, p. 52) similarly suggests that "it is to secure these rights that governments are instituted".

## CHAPTER 5

## QUESTIONING WHAT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED

It is difficult to be a student of Education in the 1990's and not be aware of the wide differences of opinion regarding what public schools are currently doing, and what researchers and those who reside outside the field claim they should be doing. This discrepancy between what is and what ought to be is one of kind, and not degree. These writers are not simply suggesting variations to the same theme; they are advocating a whole new theme. Simply put, they are expressing an outright rejection of prevailing philosophies and educational practices that currently order our schools.

Of significant importance to practitioners in the field, is how we account for such differences of opinion, and precisely on what basis schools should proceed. Without the assurance of knowing why we do what we do - for what purpose and to what ends - teachers must remain cautious and somewhat suspicious of the conventional wisdom that guides educational practices.

There exists far too many contradictions and far too many unanswered questions about the way our schools run that simply don't measure up under the scrutiny of sound

reasoning for teachers not to consider that perhaps we are destroying the very educational experiences we seek to promote by continuing to teach in the manner that we do, as indeed our methods often appear to be at odds with our goals.

Some modern writers credit public schools, and in turn public education, as serving generally two main purposes: (1) the acquisition of various academic or cognitive skills and knowledge, and (2) the development of the essential social skills and knowledge needed to successfully engage in the social, political, and economic functions of society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1990; Schlechty, 1990). However, as earlier inferred, there appears a growing number of writers and practitioners who would argue that these ends are wholly insufficient, and lacking in meaningful purpose.

And whereas the aim of public education must necessarily concern itself with the welfare and the prosperity of the state, it should not be at the expense of, or in conflict with the interests of the individual, nor should it continue to function independently of the greater concerns for humanity. A few examples have been taken from the literature to acquaint the reader with these arguments:



Nell Noddings, Stanford University:

It is obvious that our main school purpose is not a moral one of producing caring people but a relentless, and as it turns out, hapless drive for academic adequacy...a reordering of priorities is essential. (1995, January, p. 63)

Jerome Bruner, Harvard University:

I believe I would be quite satisfied to declare, if not a moritorium, then something of a de-emphasis on matters that have to do with the structure of history or physics, the nature of mathematical consistency, and deal with it rather in the context of the problems that we face. We might better concern ourselves with how those problems can be solved, not just by practical action, but by putting knowledge, wherever we find it and in whatever form we find it, to work in these massive tasks. (1971, p. 21)

James A. Beane, National College of Education:

What possible integrity could there be for any kind of knowledge apart from how it connects with other forms to help us investigate and solve the problems, concerns, and issues that confront us in the real world? Furthermore, what kind of integrity do the disciplines of knowledge now have in young people's minds? (1995, p. 620)

Seymour Sarason, Stanford University:

We have learned a lot about the contexts that facilitate productive learning....To foster productive learning, you start where the child is: his or her interests, questions, curiosity. Ignore those aspects, start where you want to start, "pour in" what you want the child to learn, pace the instruction according to a predetermined curriculum and the pressure of a school calendar, ignore the inevitable and brute fact of individuality - proceed in that way and you have the prescription for making wanting to learn a sometime thing, if that. The modal classroom is a dull, uninteresting, boring affair both for students and teachers. (1996, p. 274)

It is possible to quote from the literature at great length those writers whose opinions run contrary to conventional educational practices, and though they all voice different concerns, essentially they are about the same thing; the need to readdress both the means and the ends of education. Reflecting on the above statements, one has to ask how is it that such highly educated people, indeed those who appear to have done very well and who have largely profited from their inclusion in the system now see fit to criticize this same process and hold views of education in such juxtaposition to those that currently prevail?

The questioning of common educational practices is important to our understanding of the thesis question, for what constitutes equal educational opportunity is a philosophical question and, by definition, one which educators must ask each generation, over and over again. Given the overwhelming amount of literature surrounding the need for change, of which the above quoted authors represent only a small handful, there appears an urgent need to re-examine that which we have taken for granted in education as being of sound theory and practice.

Even though the legislation of compulsory education has essentially made the assumption for each of us that education is inherently desirable for all citizens, I contend that we should not begin our examination, in the words of Popkewitz, by assuming "that existing practices are reasonable" (cited in Werner, 1991, p. 18). In fact, I feel it would be more prudent to follow the advice of the infamous detective, Sherlock Holmes, who at the beginning of each new case cautiously reminded his companion, Dr. John Watson, to "assume nothing" and to "leave no stone unturned" in their investigation. In other words, it would be irresponsible and unprofessional to simply assume that our current system of education offers something of equal benefit for each person, and to such a degree that inclusion should be without choice. It

is in the spirit of Holmes' advice then - assuming nothing and leaving no stone unturned - that we proceed with our investigation.

I have come to the conclusion that our best intention to create equal educational opportunity will necessarily fail to bring about any meaningful and lasting change in accepted educational practices until we acknowledge some very fundamental errors on which we have based our educational theories. The notion of setting university entrance as a prime educational goal and the confusion of identical educational opportunities with those of equal opportunities, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, are two such errors. The undervaluing of the respect for students' freedom of choice in the right to education, as presented in Chapter 4 is another oversight. But further to our understanding of current educational practices, there exists perhaps an even more significant error from which these miscalculations and others that we have yet to discuss have sprung.

### **The Ordering of Knowledge**

There are those who would argue that some types of knowledge are more desirable and of a higher order than others, and that this type of knowledge should be the kind that is promoted in our schools. Russel Kirk (cited in

Holtz et al., 1989, p. 48), for example, claims that schools should be spared "the assaults of utilitarianism and egalitarianism" in favour of "the training of the mind and conscience through certain well-defined academic disciplines."

The Liberal Arts versus Vocational Training debate is well known, and one which perhaps epitomizes our notion of compromise. For what is often seen as an encroachment on the traditional turf of a liberal education, has been what Socrates referred to as an "illiberal" education, promoted by those who see a need for developing more than simply the abilities of the mind to engage in theoretical reasoning, logic, and critical thinking (Bruner, 1971; Dewey, 1932; Holt, 1969, Noddings, 1995; Roland Martin, 1995).

It is not within the scope of this paper to wade into the depths of the liberal vs. illiberal education debate. However, central to my claim that we have confused the means and ends of education with those of learning, is the belief that a liberal education is of greater value to society than an illiberal education; the idea that the development of the mind is more important than the development of either the body or the soul (Cruickshanks, 1997). But what I feel may be accomplished by touching on this area of discussion, is to demonstrate that the hierarchical ordering of knowledge in our curricula is both an irrational as well as counter

productive strategy for pursuing equal educational opportunity in the public school system. The pedestalization of a liberal education is a prime example of point made earlier in this chapter regarding doing what we do in education without actually knowing why we do it, but taking for granted that there is a good reason for continuing to do so. To demonstrate this principle it is necessary to turn back the clock two thousand years to whence came the idea of a liberal education.

The traditional meaning of the word "liberal", as applied to education, denoted a distinction between the education of free men and that of slaves who, not unlike domesticated animals, were trained to perform specific tasks and therefore not educated for their own good, but rather for the employ in which they were intended. Illiberal education was thus for those who needed to work for a living, while a liberal education was offered to those free men who possessed the leisure in which to *intentionally* strive to live well.

Accordingly, education was categorized as "liberal" or "illiberal" (Aristotle, 1980), with the latter constituting "any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul less fit for virtue", including "all paid employments for they absorb and degrade the mind" (p. 542). However, it is not only the nature of the subject by which education was

judged to be liberal or illiberal, but also by its intended use. In order to be considered liberal, education must serve the ends of leisure in the pursuit of excellence. Otherwise, "if done for the sake of others", even a potential liberal art becomes, "menial and servile" (Aristotle, p. 542). Hence we cannot simply categorize a subject as a liberal art only by its nature; it must also be determined by its intended use, which must be to each individual living well rather than for the purpose of earning a living.

In other words, those subject areas such as Mathematics, Philosophy, Science, Rhetoric, and so forth cannot of themselves be called liberal if they are intended to make oneself in a better position for gainful employment. Thus the study of Law, Medicine, or Mathematics, for the purpose of making a career and earning a living as a lawyer, doctor, or engineer is, traditionally speaking, the ends of an illiberal or "vocational" education and not of a liberal one, as we must take fully into account not only the means but the ends.

Put another way, the future doctor who, while studying Medicine, also learns the art of Woodcarving for his own enjoyment and towards furthering his knowledge in that area for his own satisfaction, is, by definition, in pursuit of a liberal education through his hobby rather than in his

principle area of study at the university. By the same measure those students who currently study subject areas in high school, which have been relegated to a vocational status such as: Cooking, Typing, Drafting, Metal Working, etc., but who have no desire to pursue those ends as a career, and are learning simply for the sake of enjoyment, self-interest, satisfaction, and otherwise increasing their understanding of the art, may be said to be receiving a liberal education.

Traditionally speaking then, those who promote the notion of a "Liberal Arts" curriculum of Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Literature as constituting a more worthwhile focus of study, do so under false pretenses, recklessly and needlessly applying an order to knowledge that is wholly unjustifiable and without good reason (Noddings, 1992, p. xii). For what higher purpose does the division of knowledge serve by dividing it into subclasses of illiberal and liberal or, as often referred to, academic and vocational? I cannot imagine that the benefits of such naming can outweigh the costs to the individual in society who feels that they have achieved less through study in an area of personal interest relevant to their happiness and well being as a person.

However, if advocates of a liberal education are intent on "restoring" tradition to our schools (Roland



Martin, 1995, p. 358), then a "reordering of priorities" is certainly well called for (Noddings, 1992, p. xii). In fact, in the process, it would be quite necessary to rename and reorder the nature of subject disciplines in our current high schools curricula, such that vocational electives are recast as liberal arts, since they meet the criteria of the traditional meaning of the word, while those "academic" or liberal subjects be appropriately renamed illiberal, as they do not fit the criteria. And if we did so, what situation would result? Would we then value more highly vocational training as it is now a liberal art, or would the former distinctions become meaningless altogether?

### **Summary**

I concur with Jane Roland Martin who, after surveying the means and ends of current educational practices, concludes that:

We need a new curricular paradigm...one that integrates thought and action, reason and emotion, education and life; one that does not divorce people from their social and natural contexts. (1995, January, p. 358)

But such a realization will require that schools refrain from routinely and blindly following educational practices

that take away from the joys and wonderment of learning, that schools value equally the contribution to society of many types of learning and, finally, that schools desist from the arbitrary ordering of knowledge which helps to preserve conditions of inequality within educations and occupations.

We need to begin considering new means to new ends and to a new understanding of equal educational opportunity within the public school system. And such is the purpose of the next two chapters. In chapters 6 and 7 we shall explore the notion of change and attempt to discover what these new means and new ends in public education might look like.

## CHAPTER 6

## THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHANGE

There has been much written on the *whys* and *whats* of educational change, focusing primarily on a multitude of shortcomings and problematic issues as reasons for considering reforms. In fact, what has been discussed in the preceeding chapters is essentially just that; the supporting rationale, justification, and purpose for change. However, despite the abundance of literature on educational reform, there is very little written with regard to exactly how these changes should occur. I have not become acquainted with any alternative approach which outlines precisely how to address the whole broad issue of change, such that we can realize any great advantages over that which already exists within traditional educational practices.

To date our efforts towards change in education are confined largely to rhetoric, offering few concrete plans of action and little that is tangible with which to proceed. It is as Derksen reports, "the classroom teacher is hard pressed to find practical models of how [change]

will work", while further on he asks, "what has been done in the classroom which the teacher facing the reality of Monday morning can build upon?" Finally, he concludes, "teachers need to examine programs which demonstrate what works" (cited in Werner 1991, p. 14). And Derksen's findings are consistent with those reported in the literature (Dryden, 1995; Giroux, 1985). John Goodlad (1983), former Dean of the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, writes that "both the theory to guide and the technology to expediate program development are at best weak" (p. 468). The reason for the lack of exemplars is perhaps as William James (1890/1980) noted a century earlier, that "it is easier to define the ideal [education] than give practical directions for bringing it about" (p. 274).

In Chapter 7 I will introduce an alternative approach to the means and ends of public education, outlining a "Monday Morning Plan," with "practical directions for bringing it about." It is my belief that the considerable absence of acceptable alternatives is a vital element lacking not only in considerations of equal educational opportunity and the achievement of educational success, but to all manner of educational change.

In my mind the best way to increase equal educational achievement and equal access to the distribution of educational resources, is to increase the motivation of students such that they intentionally strive towards the "full development of the human personality" as intended in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26, paragraph 2). I think this can be accomplished by taking into consideration all that we have discussed: (1) developing school environments that encourage and promote the right to education and the freedoms associated with that right, in accordance with the notion of respect for the aspirations and interests of all persons irrespective of their age or status in society (Benns, 1988; Mill, 1821/1980), and as conceived by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by (2) adopting educational philosophies which encourage productive learning (Dàrling-Hammond, 1993; Holt, 1969; Sarason, 1996), and a caring society, concerned for the collective well-being of all (Mill, 1821/1980; Noddings, 1993, 1995, May; Roland Martin, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). (3) Creating school structures that will accommodate and promote diversity (Strike, 1982, p. 167), (4) whereby students are encouraged to further explore their own interests, (5) thereby providing conditions wherein students will intentionally strive to achieve educational success (Coombs, 1994).

Any new approach towards increasing equal access and achievement must take into consideration all of the above and also avoid the "mistakes" of the past: (1) the over emphasis on achieving university entrance status and increasing prospects for employment as the primary goals of education, (2) regarding the same opportunities as constituting equal opportunities, (3) confusing the means and ends of education, (4) labeling and distinguishing knowledge as liberal or illiberal, and (5) attempting to restructure that which is not worth restructuring.

I suggest in searching for solutions to our difficulties that we might keep in mind a popular adage that seems to characterize the efforts of public education to date: "You can please some of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't please all the people all of the time." However, I do not think I would be amiss in suggesting that we have come to expect more of our education system than simply pleasing "some of the people some of time." It is time I think to rewrite the last line of the saying such that it reads, "you can't please all of the people all of the time - *unless sufficient alternatives and options of equivalent status are provided from which people can freely choose according to their individual interests and aspirations.*"

Of course this revised saying may not roll off the tongue quite as easily as the original and as such lose its emphasis. But perhaps this is not so bad. Maybe in doing so, we could re-establish the principle so that in education we can expect to please *all* of the people at least *most* of the time. It is based on this revised principle that I, in any case, shall proceed to outline my approach as one strategy for increasing the chances for equal educational opportunity to exist in the public school system.

#### **Considerations of Interests and Productive Learning**

Public schools are not designed to interest children. Otherwise, at the very least, they would try to accommodate their captive audiences by offering a variety of educational options and alternatives, if only because they must realize that everyone cannot be expected to learn the same information, in the same manner, in the same span of time, and with the same results (Piaget, 1977). Given the age of the clientele and their natural affinity towards learning through playing and doing, one could almost take it for granted that schools would naturally offer high interest, high activity-oriented, relevant learning experiences in order to ensure maximum participation and motivation for all students, rather than

cope with the overwhelming disinterest and apathy that would result from offering low interest, low activity learning experiences (Erikson, 1977). Given what we now know about how children learn (Sarason, 1996, p. 274), one would take it for granted that we would have taken the above principles into account when designing our system of education. But, the truth of the matter is, we haven't and the resulting delusion and confusion are the consequences.

But what an astonishing notion this idea of teaching student interests. Why should schools teach what interests students? With all that we have discussed, I conclude that the reason must be because schools are not only about getting an education, they are also about *productive learning* which, according to Sarason:

is far more than an exercise of memory, or of acquiring knowledge and skills with the aim of satisfying the requirements of others...at the expense of personal significance...To foster productive learning, you start where the child is: his or her interests, questions, curiosity. (1991, p. 274)

And Sarason is not alone in his appreciation of the role that interest and, in turn, relevancy play in motivating children to take an interest in school and in



learning. Educators from the time of Plato until the present day have noted the much neglected element of personal interest in the process of education. Michael Fullan (1991), in a study of schools in Canada and the United States, found that students give up on learning when they are not interested, and simply drop out of school (Chap. 2). Similar findings were reported by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1995), who cited boredom as a chief factor in most students' decision to drop out.

A quarter century ago John Holt (1964) wrote in the introduction of his then controversial book, *How Children Fail*:

Most children fail in school...they fail because they are afraid, bored, and confused. They are afraid, above all else of failing, of disappointing or displeasing the many anxious adults around them, whose limitless hopes and expectations for them hang over their heads like a cloud. They are bored because the things they are given and told to do are so trivial, so dull, and make such limited and narrow demands on the wide spectrum of their intelligence, capabilities, and talents. They are confused because most of the torrent of words that pours over them in school makes little or no sense. It often flatly contradicts other things they have been told, and hardly ever has any relation to what they really know. (p. xiv)

At the end of his book, Holt concludes what many others have:

The alternative - I can see no other - is to have schools and classrooms in which each child in his own way can satisfy his curiosity, develop his abilities and talents, pursue his interests, and...get a glimpse of the great variety and richness of life (p. 180).

In view of all that has been written to date, regarding the shortcomings of current educational practices, I cannot help but think that the only reason to reject the notions of productive learning as envisioned by the likes of Dewey, Einstein, Holt, and Sarason, and themes of caring as articulated in the writings of Mill, Montaigne, Noddings, and Roland Martin, would be because of fear. We are afraid that if we centre our classrooms around the curiosities, questions, and interests of children, if we focus our curricula on issues of poverty, world hunger, abuse, racism, environmental destruction, that there will not be enough of an emphasis on academic disciplines, and consequently students will not get a "proper" education. The fear that students will lose out on a proper academic education is a valid concern as long as schools continue to promote the notion that a Liberal Arts or "Academic" education is superior, or at least a more desirable education and of greater personal and

societal worth than an Illiberal or "Vocational" education.

### **Summary**

To be sure what I have written will be challenged; that my claims are too strong, and that the circumstances for change which I have proposed, must ultimately be limited to what can be realistically accomplished under the existing circumstances. But, having heard these objections, I maintain that these limiting conditions are only a given under the present set of circumstances. They are not fixed realities; they are only relative to our existing system of education. If we alter the system, we then alter the relative realities which define that system.

In other words, if we change the circumstances under which our schools operate, by making changes to the fundamental philosophies and structures of our institutions, we also change the existing conditions of that reality. There is no reason to believe that there exists certain unalterable conditions, inherent in all public education systems, that must necessarily be present in every set of circumstances. If we create another set of circumstances, we also create a new set of realities which define it.

The circumstances which I envision treat the interests of the individual as the means to productive learning and equal educational opportunity, and hold as its ends the aspirations of the individual to seek happiness, understanding, and respect for all persons and things. Promoting such a vision will require that we focus not on the teaching of subject areas, but rather on the exploration of mutual interests of the teacher and his/her pupils. Focusing on mutual interests will first require a reassessment of the school structures which have evolved to support and promote current educational practices.

It is the task of curriculum planners, philosophers, and students of educational change to design conditions that promote and support diversity, but which can coexist with, rather than attempt to replace, traditional approaches in education. We must avoid an either/or type of strategy. Planning for diversity and choice must be central to all future educational considerations, such that students, teachers, and parents over time can see the obvious benefits and form the opinion to change in their own minds. There must be no notion of forcing change; diversity of opinion must not only be tolerated but, in a democracy, encouraged.

## CHAPTER 7

## LEARNING BY INTEREST:

## AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE STANDARDIZED CURRICULUM

**The Structure of Public Schools**

Essentially there exists only one model of education throughout our public schools system where predictable and accepted patterns or rhythms, of what Lieberman and Miller (1989) have referred to as the "Dailiness of Teaching", are dominant and highly visible characteristics. When a certain combination of conditions and circumstances are present, we can recognize a particular institution as a hotel, a theatre, a hospital, a restaurant, or a school. Particularly so if there exists a kind of uniformity between each location. Public schools by design have a type of uniformity about them, such that they tend to have a franchised appearance to their physical being and function that very much distinguishes them from other types of institutions and schools.

Public schools represent the "MacDonaldsization" of the education industry, if you will. A teacher or student can walk into any public school, in virtually any industrialized country in the world, and feel a sense of

familiarity with the surroundings. They will immediately recognize the layout of the school with its individual classrooms extending off a central hallway running the length of the building. They will recognize the decor of the classrooms with their desks and tables, chalkboards, and bookshelves. They will expect to find an adult at the head of each classroom, surrounded by two dozen or so children busy with work assigned and evaluated by that adult.

A visitor to the school will take comfort in finding a predictable orderliness to the classroom activities, wherein textbooks, pencils, pens, and paper are the common and essential equipment. They will recognize and know the items on the curricular menu by heart. There will be the usual standbys: Science, Socials, English, Mathematics, as well as the usual daily specials: Art, Physical Education, or Music. They will recognize all the sounds, sights, and daily rhythms of period rotations, recesses, lunch breaks, homework, gym class, and in a short time feel at home in that environment. And although they may never have set foot in, nor clapped eyes on a particular school, they know well what to expect when they enter its doors. There will be few surprises, for familiarity, continuity, consistency, uniformity, standardization, are the franchised trade marks of public schools, as recognizable

from the distance to teachers and students as the Golden Arches of that other North American institution is to its patrons.

This franchised, or perhaps "standardized" model is supported by a few basic and "traditional" school structures. Walt Werner (1995) contends that school cultures are built around three basic components: core pedagogy, norms, and structures. Of these three components of school cultures, he predicts significant possibilities for change occurring through the altering of school structures, which include the considerations of: time, space, people, authority, and subject matter. Werner suggests that in education we have reached a "threshold", beyond which educators find it difficult to effect significant and lasting change without accompanying changes to the fundamental structures of public schools.

It is not enough to provide professional development opportunities or some time for discussion when the context in which teachers work is not conducive to, and may even contradict, aspects of desired change. Implementation is not a matter of focusing on the practices of individuals without also modifying institutional values and regularities. (p. 18).

These same school structures put in place in order to facilitate public education, have in turn become a significant impediment for schools trying to adapt to the reforms currently demanded of them. They act to constrict the realm of possibilities for the acceptance of change. As Werner (1991) again observes:

Unless discussion focuses on the interplay among organizational structures and norms, and forms of [change], teachers take them for granted and do not realize the extent of the problem involved. [Change] is then interpreted in light of, and modified to fit with, existing conditions. (p. 18)

And "the likely consequence", observes Hargreaves, "is that in the main it will endorse and gloss what [educators] already think and do. It will reinforce and rationalize the existing culture of [education], not transform it" (cited in Werner, 1991, p. 18).

Consequently, under the present circumstances, without the type of structural support necessary to promote, support, and maintain new efforts, it is not feasible to introduce any type of radical or alternative approach and expect favourable results. We must, in fact, consciously avoid introducing any new approaches to education unless we can be reasonably certain of successful implementation, for as Fullan (1991) warns, "nonimplementable programs



probably do more harm than good when they are attempted" (p. 104). If we are, therefore, to realize any sort of chance for the successful implementation of alternative approaches to education, we must alter existing circumstances such that they are receptive to and conducive to the facilitation of such changes.

### **The Road to Ithica: Altering School Structures**

In starting out on the road to change, I am reminded of a scene in an old film involving three of the most unlikely sailors ever to put to sea. In this situation Larry, Moe, and Curly, better known as "The Three Stooges", are shipwrecked in a storm and wash up upon the shores of Crete. Having lost their bearings in the ordeal, they inquire from a wandering goat herder as to the best route to take to get to Ithica. Upon trying to explain to them in which direction it would be best to start their journey, and after realizing that there really was no best route, the old goat herder thoughtfully concluded, "You know boys, if I were you, I wouldn't start from here!"

In education we could well take the goat herder's advice. For in our situation, unlike that of the despondent trio, such advice would be quite practical. And if we keep in mind Popkewitz's and Werner's quote,

that "to start where school is cannot mean to imply that existing practices are reasonable", the message is quite similar - we could use a new starting point for our efforts - a new set of school structures and a new philosophical orientation to help us on the road to Ithica.

What must initially follow in order to provide support for the Learning by Interest approach, or any other alternative approach that we might consider, is the capacity of the school to accommodate diversity among students, student programmes, and teaching/learning methods, simultaneously. The altering of school structures (time, place, people, authority, subject matter) in conjunction with the moral, philosophical, and curricular considerations that we have discussed, will create opportunities for such modifications to be applied in the following considerations of secondary school models.

#### PEOPLE

##### **Those With Whom We Share the Learning Environment**

For a start, in the learning by interest approach we must be able to group teachers and students according to their individual interests. As it exists now, secondary

schools generally populate their classrooms in roughly the same manner. In each classroom there is one adult teacher who is responsible for directing the activities and efforts of up to thirty or so children whose responsibilities, in turn, essentially consist of taking direction from the one adult. The method of matching students and teachers is generally based on age appropriate criteria, in which the teacher and students are assigned to the same classroom based on the age of the child and the corresponding grade level or subject area taught by that particular teacher.

Pre-selection, that is students requesting a certain teacher or teachers selecting certain students, is allowed only under certain circumstances and in certain subject areas in secondary schools, such as in the elective or senior academic specialty areas. However, random grouping in the core curriculum areas (i.e., Mathematics, Science, Socials, and English) is generally deemed a reasonable approach to classroom assignments, based on the principle that the considerations of all students are treated "equally", and all teachers are deemed equally competent to teach the students in those assigned areas.

Given the previous interpretations of equal educational opportunity, a largely random pairing of teachers and students was a reasonable strategy to follow.

However, with the added consideration of interests, random or casual classroom placement is a less appropriate method of selection. In order to maximize the potential benefits of learning by interest, it is necessary to alter the way in which we randomly pair students and teachers, and instead match teachers and their pupils according to their areas of mutual interests as we do in elective and senior academic subject areas.

Before presenting the reader with a concrete example, I think it would be helpful to remember that the associations I am suggesting are common to most manner of things that we do, except in the normal course of public education. Generally in most learning situations that we engage in, we find that it is most advantageous to group people together according to their interests. Ballet lessons for example, or instruction in Karate, Gymnastics, Swimming, Accounting, Music, First Aid, Dance, and so forth are all arranged according to the interests of the learners and the teacher. There is no notion of forcing an individual to study things in which they are not interested. In non-school related activities we seem to understand that forced learning will be counter productive not only to the individuals concerned, but also to those with whom they share the learning environment.

There would be little use, for example, in having a stamp collecting club or an Olympic swim team if a good many of the members had no interest in collecting stamps or swimming competitively. The first order of business would be to ask those who do not wish to be there to leave so that the rest of the members could get on with their business. In these areas we recognize that only by grouping together people who share similar aspirations and interests can we create the best possible environment for the best learning and teaching conditions to occur. A good learning environment depends not only on the insights and directions of the teacher, but also on the pretense that the learners themselves will encourage and excite each other and, in doing so, help to further each others interests and knowledge for the common good as well as for their own benefits.

It is only through interest that these groups can continue to function. Without a common interest, there would be no reason to come together. I am often amazed to hear of elementary school teachers arranging their daily schedules such that activities like Arithmetic and Language Arts, where they feel the greatest amount of attentiveness and concentration are required, are programmed for the morning periods when children's attention spans and concentration levels appear to be the

highest, while less mindful activities, such as Art, Music, or Physical Education, are planned for the afternoon periods when apparently children's attention spans and abilities to concentrate are lower. They speak so matter of factly of this impending decline in attention, it is as though it were a normal physiological condition that naturally occurs among all children during the afternoon.

What I find most amazing about this attention deficit phenomenon is that at 3:00 o'clock, precisely when, according to the above theory, students are the most restless and apparently the least able to concentrate and apply themselves, these same restless and inattentive individuals rush off to music lessons, dance lessons, theatre classes, etc., where they apply themselves diligently and voluntarily to lessons far more rigorous, far more demanding, and often requiring greater discipline, self-control, and determination than any number of school subjects. One cannot help but notice the startling contrast in energy levels between school and extracurricular activities no matter what time of day. Are we to suppose that if school was to be held on a Saturday morning that we would encounter greater enthusiasm than if those same classes were held on a Thursday afternoon? I believe that the apparent decline

in the capacities of students to learn in the afternoon, has little to do with short attention spans or lower levels of concentration and much to do with the utter lack of interest in what is being taught. It is as Sarason (1996, p. 274) says, if we ignore the interests of children and teach what we want to teach, learning becomes only a "sometime thing, if that." I feel, that after surviving the morning grind, students see the afternoons simply as the downhill stretch and move out of the working mode, not at all unlike the elation experienced in the adult working world by employees with the arrival of Friday afternoons.

#### SUBJECT MATTER

##### **From Theory to Practice: A Five Year Plan**

There is still much more that we could consider on the subject of classroom groupings, however, it is time to move from the theoretical to the practical, and to examine just how the strategy of grouping students and teachers according to their interests might work in a public school setting.

Suppose, for example, we were to adopt a five year plan, and in the first year of this plan we were to invite students in grades 8 and 9 to think about what it is they

would really like to learn about in school - where their interests, aspirations, and curiosities lie. These interests would then be added to a pool of interests which would be considered as possible teaching/learning activities offered to students in the upcoming years. At this same time, schools would begin to recruit any new teachers keeping in mind the interests expressed by students. The objective would be to match potential teachers with students who share similar interests in a particular area outside of those currently offered within the standard curriculum.

To continue with this example, let's say that of the six new teachers recruited, four were hired expressly because of their abilities and desires to teach in areas that students had expressed interest in learning. With four such matches in place, we could create in the second year four new corresponding courses of study, open to any grade 8 or 9 student who had expressed a desire to pursue studies in one of those four areas of interest.

### **...and All the World's a Stage**

Learning about anything well, requires that the learner understand as much as possible the many elements and variables affecting that particular interest. One of the ways to become more familiar with an area of interest



is to study that interest from different points of view. And one method of studying something from different points of view is to analyze it through various subject areas, such as those we are all familiar with at school.

Although we have no wish to promote the standardized curriculum, it does have the distinct advantage of being accepted and valued by the general public and the educational community. For this reason perhaps the easiest and the most expedient way to demonstrate the role that interests could play in contributing to the serious demands of academic study, is to relate the exploration of these interests to subject areas in the standardized curriculum. Ultimately, however, I feel that once people become more familiar with the notion of studying interests for interest sake and not simply as a novelty, a comparison to the existing standardized curriculum and subject areas will be unnecessary and largely unimportant.

If the reader will consider briefly the transition from horse drawn vehicles to motorized vehicles there is an analogy which could be useful to our understanding of the changes which I am proposing. When motorized vehicles were first introduced they were merely regarded as a novelty, and not something for serious work. But as these vehicles were improved and refined, their potential advantages became more evident. While motorized vehicles

were being developed and adapted to the various uses that horses or oxen traditionally filled, it was necessary to constantly compare their potentials in terms of "horse power".

And for many years the horsepower of a vehicle was an important standard by which to judge performance and to satisfy existing calculations for assessing work potential. A century later, however, horsepower does not largely figure into the considerations of prospective vehicle buyers and, in fact, many buyers do not even understand the relationship between the performance of their vehicle and the calculation of horsepower. Buyers today are often more aware of other measures of performance such as, cubic centimeters, cylinder size, and litre uptake capacity, acceleration speed from zero to sixty, and so forth. The owner of a vehicle no longer requires a confirmation in "horse power" to appreciate if the job is being done efficiently.

Returning to our discussion, if we consider that vital to a well-rounded understanding of Theatre, for example, is the acquisition of knowledge about the language of the performance - its subtleties and innuendoes, knowledge about the times and the context of the story, and knowledge about the actual staging of the performance such as: costuming, stage sets, sound and lighting, special

effects, choreography, music, seating, advertising, or financing, one can see that there is plenty of scope for serious academic input. And this is exactly what we shall attempt to do. We shall endeavour to enhance and enrich the study of Theatre by using and giving credit in subject areas that contribute to a greater understanding and enjoyment of a particular area of interest.

Imagine a typical high school student getting out of bed in the morning and actually looking forward to going to school because of what they would be learning, rather than simply to see their friends. What would that look like? What it would be like for a high school student to start school on Monday mornings without that sinking feeling creeping in and thinking, "Oh god, I still have a whole week to go until the weekend!"

The reader can imagine a grade nine student waking up on a Monday morning in September and going to school to study not English, or Socials Studies or Shop, but rather to study Theatre. This student is going to get up and spend a whole day learning something he or she has a great interest in and has asked to learn - an entire day learning with other students who actually want to be there, and a teacher who is inspired and encouraged by the enthusiasm of his/her pupils' ambitions.

Furthermore, this student will have the opportunity to get up each day and look forward to studying and learning about his/her interest every day of the week for an entire semester. But what this looks like, and how it would be possible to study Theatre all day long and still learn what is "required" and necessary for "graduation", will require some further explaining.

I believe that through the study of Theatre, it is possible for a student to attain credits in English, Social Studies, or Humanities and, depending on that student's special interests, credit in an elective area as well. How would this work exactly? Well, let us suppose that the Theatre production was based upon the story of Gulliver's Travels for example. To really understand the underlying story, it is necessary to understand the sarcastic context in which Jonathan Swift was writing (1726/1980, Part IV). To do this, it would be helpful to put oneself in Jonathan Swift's shoes, so to speak, and to see the events of 17th and 18th century Europe through his eyes; exploring the ideas of state, government, constitution, justice, and democracy, and the many other considerations consistent with our notion of Social Studies.

Being familiar with the concepts and learning outcomes of the Social Studies curriculum, a teacher could devise a

social study, such as that shown on the following page (p. 87) which could enhance a student's understanding of the theatrical production while also satisfying the aims of Social Studies. Learning history through the study of Theatre is derived of the same principle as learning about history through the study of Art. Art History has evolved as a legitimate and fascinating way of looking at the developments of humankind.

In the same manner as Social Studies, such strategies could also be applied to satisfying the requirements of elective areas. Theatre students with an interest in costuming, for example, could make a thorough study of the dress and the fashions during 16th and 17th century Europe and combine this historical research with Home Economics to make the necessary costumes and receive credit in the elective area of Textiles and Clothing. The same would be true of electives in Music, Dance, or Shop.

Similarly a student could receive credit in an area like Photography by applying the study of Science, History, and English to the understanding of the evolution of the camera and how pictures influence the way we think about our world and how we express ourselves (p. 88). The same applies to Human and Environmental Issues, where the understanding of the concerns in disputes over logging, fishing, pollution, global warming, world hunger,

Table 2.

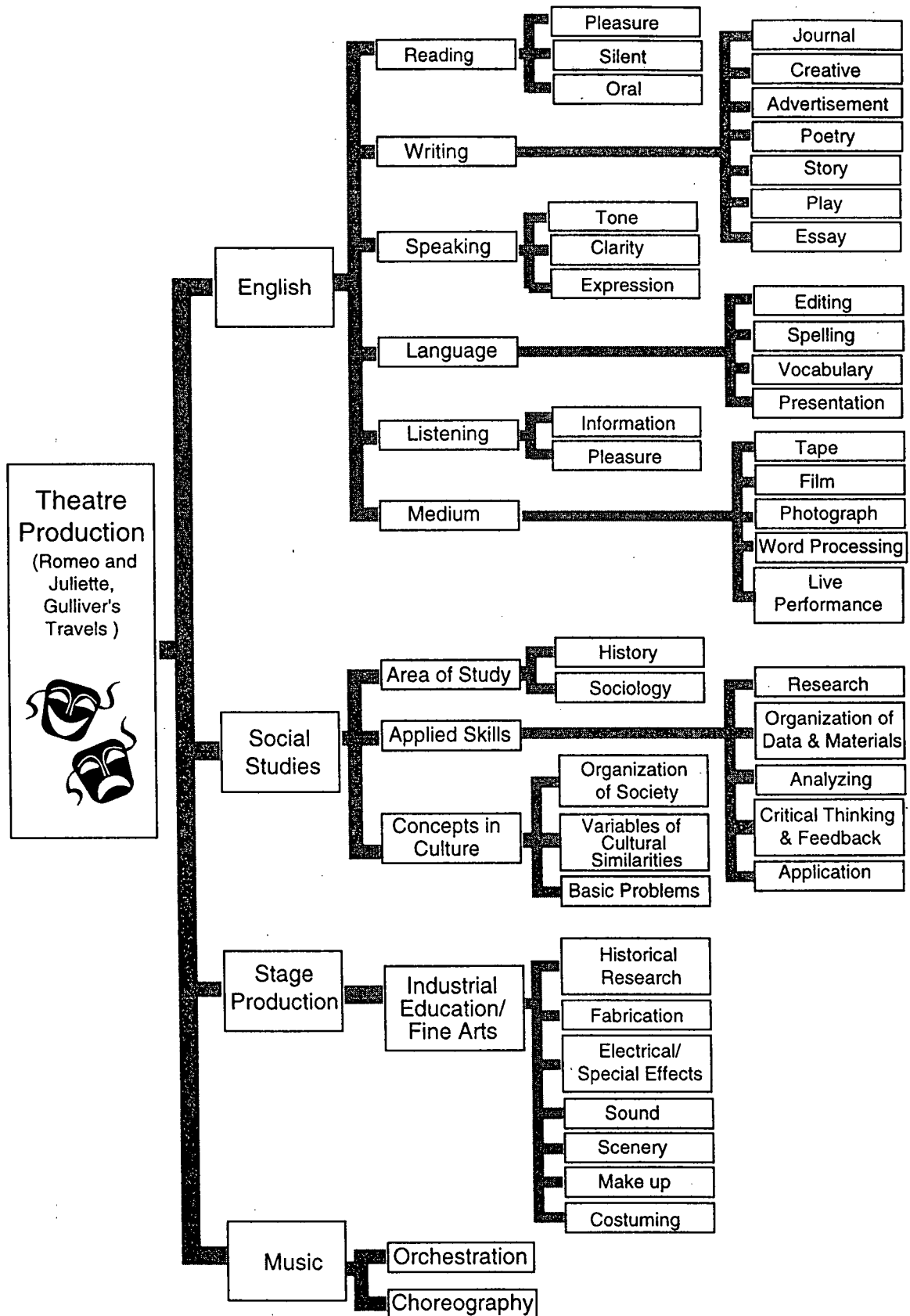
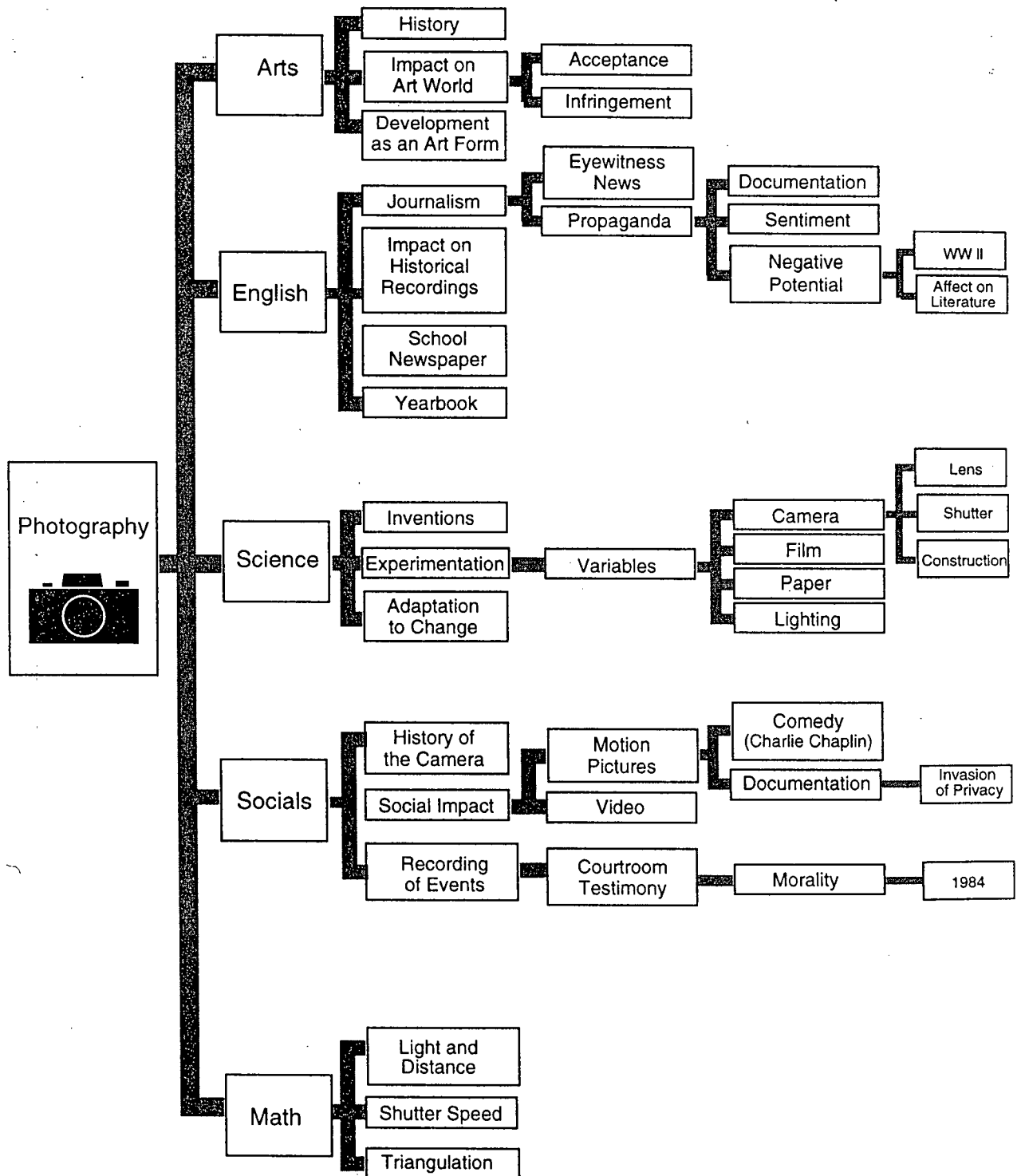


Table 3.



child labor, and so forth, demands that students understand the social, political, and scientific implications of such activities on the world.

### **Do all Roads Lead to Rome?**

A question frequently asked by colleagues regarding students choosing areas of interests is, "Would we let the student choose to study just any interest?" In other words, are all interests worthy of serious academic study? The answer to the question is both yes and no. Yes, provided that the particular interest can be matched with that of a teacher's who will act as an advisor for the student. No, if there is reasoned evidence to show that such a pursuit may be harmful.

Suppose, for example, there are students who have requested to pursue studies in Outdoor Pursuits and among these students several who would love to learn more about bicycles and to participate in a bicycle touring trip as a part of their schooling. It would, I think, be very difficult to make a case for this activity being harmful. But let us remember that we have suggested students should thrive from the schooling experience; not simply survive. So our first consideration should not be defending our choices from concerns of potential harm. Instead it would strengthen our position to show reasoned evidence that the



study of bicycles and bicycle touring could contribute to a purposeful and meaningful academic study.

Such "evidence" could be demonstrated in two ways. First, if we look at the model on the following page (p. 91), we can see many subject areas that could potentially and logically contribute to an in-depth study of this two-wheeled marvel of industrialization. "The Role of the Bicycle in Society" is a theme which could be approached quite effectively from several points of view. I have, in this example, highlighted four areas of traditional social study: Social Impact, Competing Resources, Economic Implications, and Geography, as potential strategies for understanding the bicycle from a Social Studies point of view.

After identifying several possible learning strategies, we could then illustrate just how they would actually contribute to our study in detail. Detailing the flow chart is our second piece of evidence. If we consider, for example, the heading of "Social Impact" as shown at the top of the chart on page 91, we could show the relevancy of the bicycle towards increasing our understanding of the socio-economic implications in our appreciation of social history.

This we have done on the following page (p. 92). Here the reader will find a brief overview highlighting

Table 4.

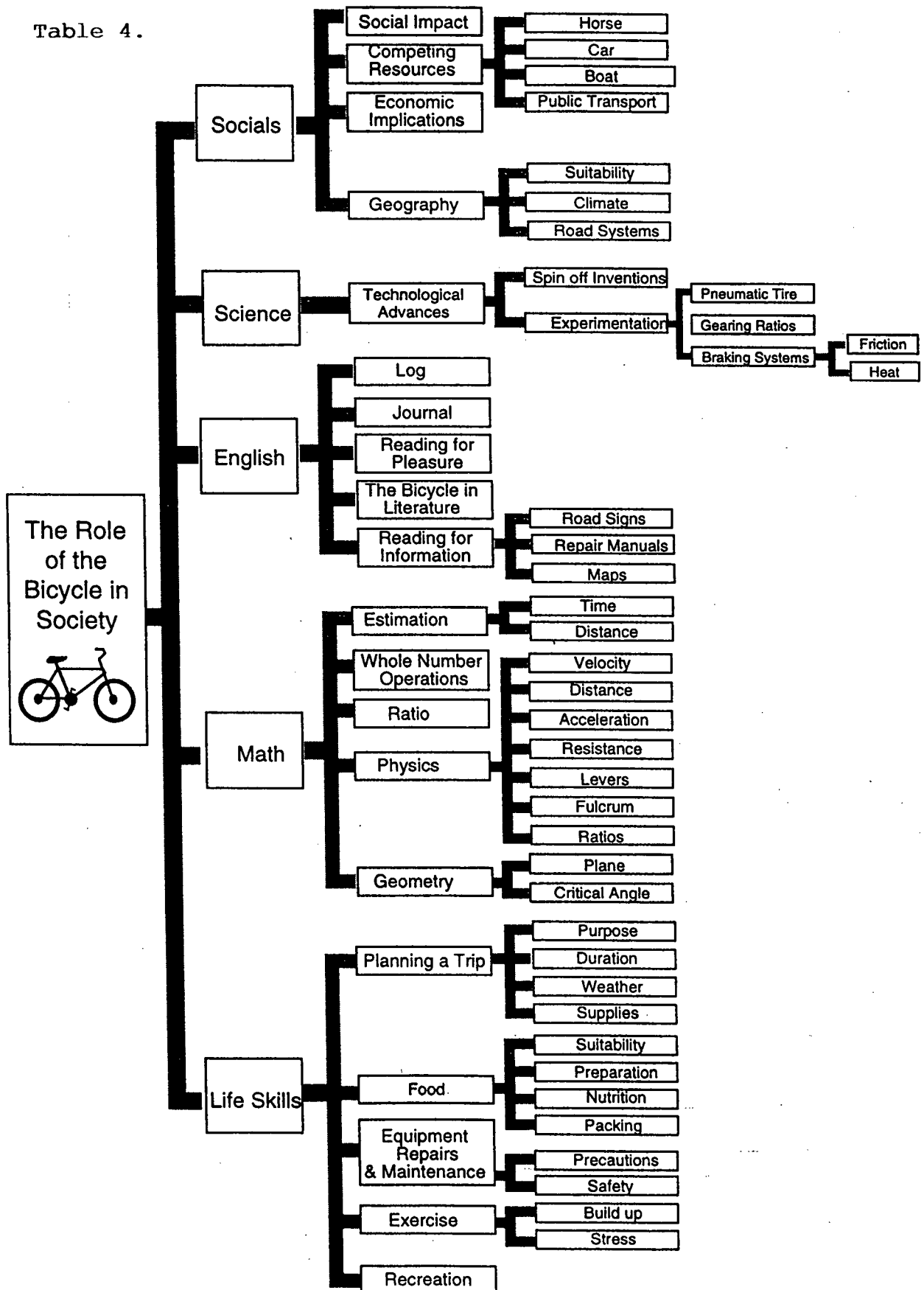


Table 5.

### **The Bicycle in History: A Brief Overview**

From a historical point of view, the common bicycle merits a special place in our study of history as an intriguing technological and social phenomena. Consider if you will the following capsulized points:

18th Century - The velocipede (a predecessor of the modern bicycle without pedals) is considered "faddish nonsense" and without any conceivable use in modern society.

19th Century - The bicycle is seen as a fashionable leisure activity for "gentlemen". Social clubs dedicated to bicycle touring are established in major European cities. International cycling competitions evolve, spurring the relationship between sports and new industrial technology. The cost of a new bicycle is equivalent to one year's wages for a working man (two and a half years for a working woman).

20th Century - The bicycle is eclipsed by the increasingly popular motor car for gentlemen of the leisure class. Women demand radical changes in leisure clothing to accommodate the open-legged riding position on the bicycle. "Decent women" are forbidden by their husbands to ride bikes. The bicycle and women's slacks become symbols of women's emancipation and independence. The City of Chicago boasts the fastest bicycle-powered fire engine on the continent.

World War I - The bicycle makes its debut as a "silent messenger" for deliveries and communication behind enemy lines.

Post World War II - The advent of cheap and plentiful supplies of Middle-Eastern oil brings about a sharp increase in the use of automobiles in North America. The bicycle in Canada and United States (not Mexico) is reduced in status to a toy; something that only children use.

1950's - China takes over as the world leader in bicycle transport and manufacture. The bicycle becomes the symbol of the working man's transportation in Europe and Asia.

1960's - The bicycle in Canada and the United States is considered quite unfashionable or "uncool" by urban high school students. They would rather walk long distances to school rather than ride a bike.

1970's - The Middle-Eastern oil crisis and the corresponding increase in gasoline prices spawns renewed interest in the use of bicycles. Many new designs and models hit the consumer market.

1980's - Governments offer tax incentives to promote bicycles as a fuel efficient alternative for urban commuters. City councils begin serious discussions regarding special bicycle lanes and pathways in urban centers.

1990's - Increasing interest in the bicycle as an "environmentally friendly" source of transportation with global implications for addressing the problems of air pollution, global warming, heart disease, the increased dependence on fossil fuels, easing traffic congestion, and so forth.

1997 - Interested grad students and teachers try to persuade administrators, school boards, and thesis committee members that bicycle touring is relevant to the understanding of modern history and fulfills all the requirements of the Standard Curriculum and the demands of serious academic study.

some key events of the bicycle in history which will form the basis of a historical approach to studying the bicycle. Similar overviews showing the significance of the bicycle could also be prepared in the areas of Geography, Economics, and Civil Rights.

In much the same manner, students could engage in the study of the bicycle from a Scientific or Mathematical point of view. A second look at the chart on page 91 also reveals the bicycle as a rolling piece of Physics - a Mathematical problem on wheels so to speak. As an innovation of Science and Technology, the bicycle could be approached from the point of view of several areas in the Physical Sciences: Matter and Energy, Industry, and Transportation.

Attempting to rebuild or modify old bicycles, or improving them beyond their original manufacture and then taking them on a cycling trip, could involve many learning outcomes as recognized under the existing headings of Applied Skills, Scientific Attitude, Scientific Knowledge, and Independent Thinking. With a little imagination and creativity, it is possible to mix and match many of the traditionally valued learning outcomes, areas of study, and applied skills, etc., to create a sound academic study in almost any area of interest students may care to pursue.

I have suggested that alternative curricula should seek to coexist with existing curricula rather than try to replace them. By acknowledging the goals and expectations of existing curricula we accomplish three things: (1) we gain the confidence and support of the educational community, (2) we increase the likelihood of successful implementation and continuation of the alternative curricular approach, and (3) we have a basis for increasing programme compatibility, thereby allowing students and teachers increased freedom to move easily between approaches without any significant loss of credit or educational status.

On pages 95 and 96 are two further examples of student interests that could conceivably come under one of the headings of Outdoor Pursuits as offered in the second year of our five year plan. The third, fourth, and fifth years of the Five Year Plan would gradually see an increase of similar Learning by Interest programmes, offered simultaneously alongside the Standard Curriculum and interchangeable with all the standard subject disciplines. Such expansion would require that we focus on three main areas of implementation: (1) the recruitment of teachers with compatible teaching interests, (2) working with teacher preparation programmes to promote teaching and curriculum strategies that promote the needs and

Table 6.

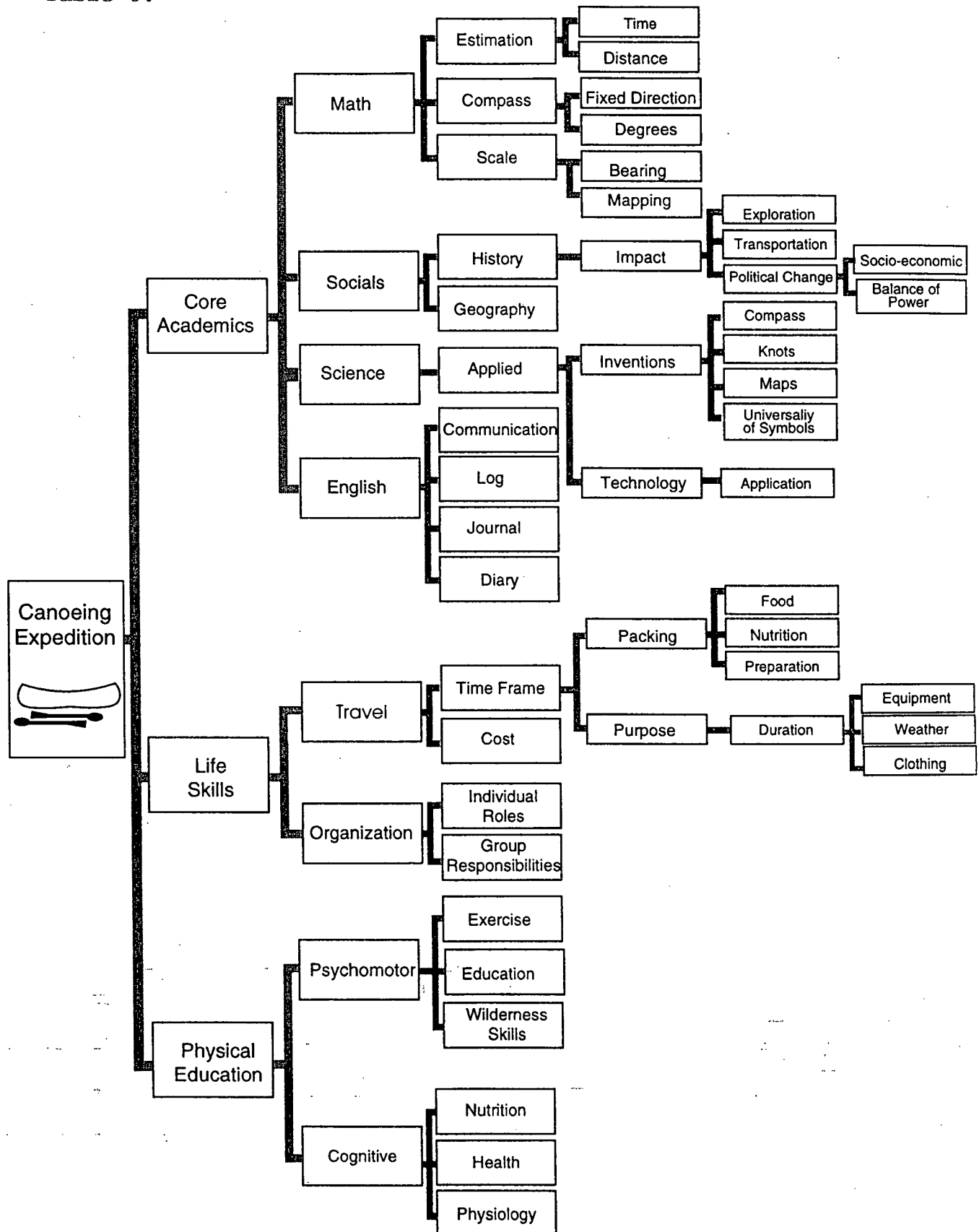
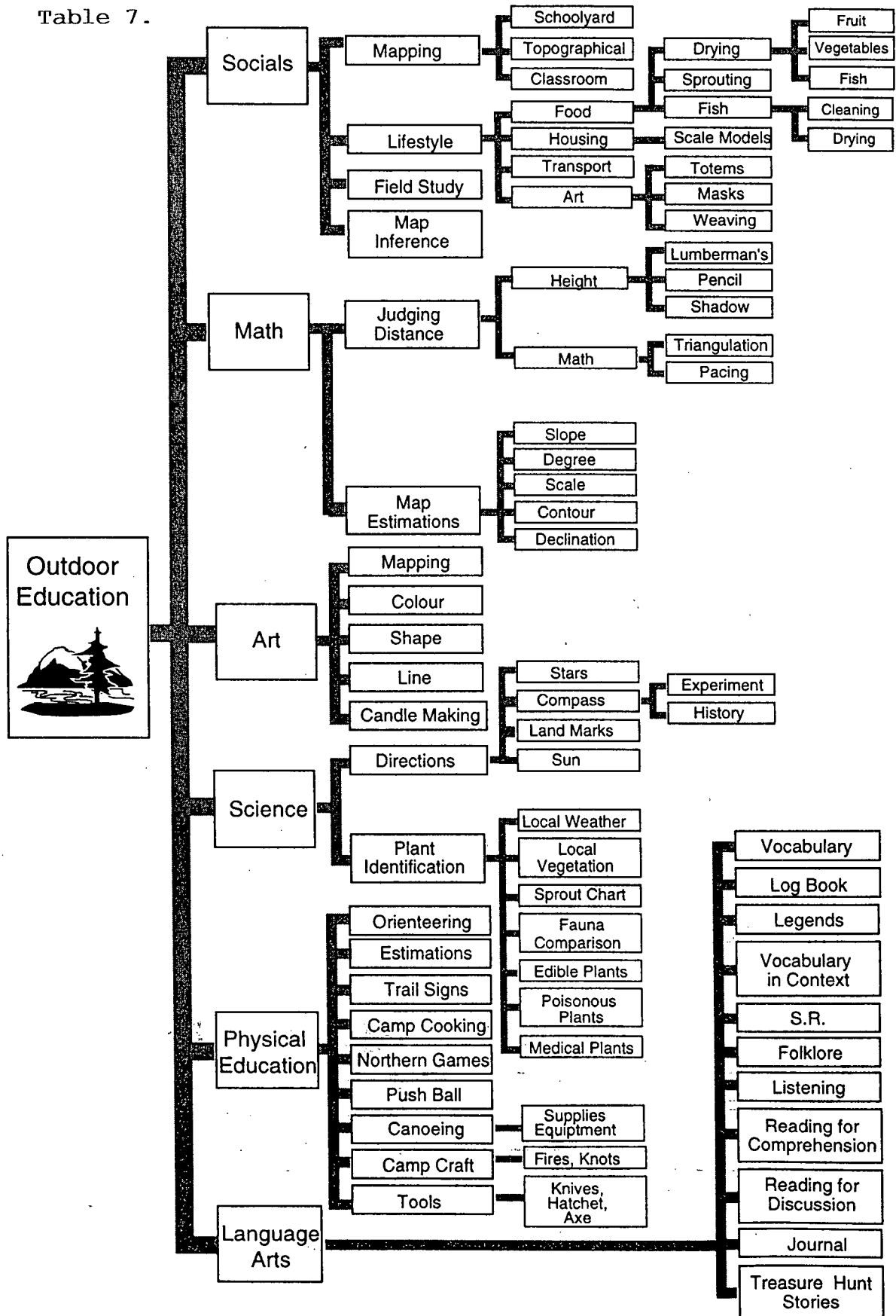


Table 7.



expectations of the Learning by Interest approach, and (3) increasing the number of choices open to students by altering non-accommodating school structures to accommodate all those students who wish to pursue the Learning by Interest approach as an equal and equivalent alternative to the Standard Curriculum.

#### TIME

##### **Programme Compatibility**

Although I have stressed that it is important to devise new approaches that will coexist with, rather than attempt to replace existing approaches, such coexistence should be accommodated by modifying the time structure of schools rather than through any modifications to the orientation itself. If we can realize a more effective use of time, I believe there exists the potential to maintain a simultaneous and compatible coexistence of diverse curricula, while at the same time actually increasing the quantity and quality of classroom instruction and student programmes rather than detracting from existing practices.

Key to maintaining and promoting a successful coexistence of diverse approaches in education is



programme compatibility. Programme compatibility depends very much upon the presence of two conditions: (a) the freedom to move in and out of either approach without experiencing a loss of educational credits or status, and (b) the physical ability to do so without experiencing a loss of valuable school time.

The structure of time impacts significantly upon the use of space and the people filling those spaces. In doing so it also has the potential to increase both the quantity and quality of classroom instruction regardless of which approach we decide to use. I believe there is sufficient evidence to show that the quality of instruction in our existing high school classrooms could be greatly enhanced by reducing the number of students seen by a teacher in a single week (McGivern, 1989; Nye, 1982; Rike & Wendlant, 1987; Whittington, 1985). A significant reduction in the teacher-student ratio, from an average of 190 different students per week (27 students per class X 7 classes) to a maximum of 27 students per week, could easily be achieved by facilitating two simple changes to our timetable and teaching responsibilities.

First, many high school teachers, and especially those teaching grade 8 - 10 courses, are quite capable of teaching with competence in more than one subject area. A teacher could, for example, teach a combination of

English, Social Studies, and Physical Education or, perhaps, Science, Mathematics, and Home Economics. Secondly, the school year could be broken into a trimester with three subjects per semester. The current school day would allow for two,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour periods in the morning plus a 2 hour lesson in the afternoon, or perhaps a third,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour lesson in the afternoon and a  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour period for group work, study block, or seminar discussion for Government exams, etc. A single teacher could then assume responsibility for a class of 27 students, in three subject areas, for an entire term, as shown on the chart labeled "Standard Curriculum Timetable - Option A", on the following page (p. 100).

Under this revised time structure, teachers would be free to combine periods and lessons, thereby erasing concrete divisions between subject disciplines. This structure would also enhance the facilitation of major classroom projects, field studies, and special events, since the relative independence of any one classroom would no longer directly impact upon previous concerns around the scheduling of exams, multiple homework assignments, or the usage of any other classroom in the school building. Such a framework would accommodate both the Learning by Interest as well as the Standardized Curricular approaches, allowing for full or partial adoption of

Table 8. High School Time Table - Option A

**STANDARD CURRICULUM**

	Fall Term (15 weeks)	Christmas Break	Winter Term (12 weeks)	Easter/Spring Break	Spring Term (12 weeks)
Daily Schedule	Semester 1		Semester 2		Semester 3
8:45 Period 1 (1.5 hrs)	Mathematics		Social Studies		French
10:15 Break (15 min)					
10:30 Period 2 (1.5 hrs)	Physical Education		English		Sciences
12:00 Lunch (1 hour)					
1:00 Period 3 (1.5 hrs)	Elective		Elective		Elective
2:30 Seminar (45 min)	Student directed time for school, community or individual educational needs. Seminar options include: Band, Government exam review, Student Council, Homework, Computer Lab, School Newspaper, Peer Tutoring, English as a Second Language, Learning Assistance, etc.				
3:15 Dismissal					

**Structural Advantages of Timetable:**

- Compared to a full year 5x8 rotating timetable, there is an 85% reduction in the amount of students seen by one teacher in a term and a 60% reduction in students compared to a 4x5 semester system time table, if a teacher assumes responsibility for 27 students in three different subject areas per term. However, even with teachers rotating classes in each period, there is still a reduction of approximately 60% on a 5X8 timetable, and a 25% reduction on the 5 x 4 semester timetable.
- Less time required for classroom administration, allowing for more time to be spent on classroom instruction or classroom activities.
- Greater flexibility for engaging in class projects, field studies, subject integration, etc., and increased potential for creative and spontaneous learning experiences.
- Fewer subjects to prepare for, less homework, and fewer exams for students at any one time.
- Less confusion surrounding rotating timetable, classroom changes, multiple teachers.
- Sizable breaks between terms for students and teachers.

either curricular approach as best suits the situation.

By altering the internal time structure of the school, and thus the classroom, we impact upon the structures of space, people, subject matter, and authority, in such a way as to allow the compatible coexistence of two rather diverse teaching/learning approaches. However, we are not finished the job yet. Up to this point, the revised time tabling (as presented on p. 100) has only accomplished the task of not disturbing the traditional Standardized Curriculum while allowing other approaches to exist simultaneously. In other words, except for lengthening the periods and shortening the semester (the total hours of instruction stay the same) teachers and students wishing to stay with the Standard Curriculum are essentially unaffected by the change. Students can still take all the traditional subject areas and rotate from teacher to teacher and classroom to classroom. Teachers can still teach in their traditional subject areas and teach more than one group a day. Grading and evaluation remain unchanged, and the rhythm of the day, although modified, is essentially in place.

But, what we also accomplish with this structural change, is the creation of the necessary environment to support the Learning by Interest approach in a manner that will help to increase the opportunities for its successful

implementation. If we look at Time Table Option B on the next page (p. 103), the reader will see that we are free to devote the entire day to the study of interests, without affecting the smooth running of the school day and without competing with any other programme. Students and teachers can easily move between subjects and interests. Thus we have satisfied the first of the two conditions necessary for programme compatibility; we have created the physical ability to move in or out of programmes without loss of school time.

Our second condition of compatibility requires that we maintain equivalent status and credits in all student programmes (or at least a reasonable number of programmes as to offer students sufficient choice), such that all credits earned are interchangeable and can be applied towards graduation. Even though I have argued that an emphasis on university entrance is an undesirable goal for many students, it is still necessary to make this goal available to those who may never use this option, as we have no sure way of knowing in advance which students will eventually seek university entrance.

The ability to interchange school credits can be accomplished if we take into consideration the Standard Curriculum when mapping out our courses of study, offering areas of interest in subject combinations that will

Table 9. High School Time Table - Option B

**LEARNING by INTEREST**

	Fall Term (15 weeks)	Christmas Break	Winter Term (12 weeks)	Easter/Spring Break	Spring Term (12 weeks)
Daily Schedule	Semester 1 (Teacher A)		Semester 2 (Teacher B)		Semester 3 (Teacher C)
8:45 Morning Session	Theatre English French		Photography Science Social Studies		Outdoor Pursuits Mathematics Physical Education
Lunch	<i>and choose one of:</i> Shop		<i>and choose one of:</i> Journalism		<i>and choose one of:</i> Environmental Education
Afternoon Session	Textiles Music or Dance		Art School Annual		Outdoor Education Journalism
2:30 Seminar -	Student directed time for school, community or individual educational needs. - Seminar options include: Band, Government exam review, Student Council, Homework, Computer Lab, School Newspaper, Peer Tutoring, English as a Second Language, Learning Assistance, etc.				
3:15 Dismissal					

**Structural Advantages of Timetable:**

- Compared to a full year 5x8 rotating timetable, there is an 85% reduction in the amount of students seen by one teacher in a term, and a 75% reduction compared to a 4x5 semester system time table.
- Less time required for classroom administration, allowing for more time to be spent on classroom instruction or classroom activities.
- Optional arranging of daily schedule and courses of study, allowing for greater flexibility for engaging in class projects, field studies, subject integration, etc., and increased potential for creative and spontaneous learning experiences.
- Fewer subjects to prepare for, less homework, and fewer exams for students at any one time.
- Less confusion surrounding rotating timetable, classroom changes, multiple teachers.
- Sizable breaks between terms for students and teachers.

fulfill the requirements of the Standard Curriculum necessary for graduation. Students, along with their parents and counselors, would determine what credits are required for graduation within the Standard or University bound curriculum that are also offered through the Learning by Interest option. Some interests, such as those in Photography (p. 88) for example, could earn participants credits in the core curricular areas of Social Studies, Science, or English, and in the elective areas of Fine Arts. Other interests, such as those we have seen in Theatre (p. 87), might extend credits in Social Studies and English, or perhaps a single course in Humanities and two elective courses in areas such as: Music, Choreography, Fine Arts, Dance, Industrial Arts, Home Economics, or Drama. Still, other interests, such as those in Environmental Issues, might offer only core curricular credits in English, Mathematics, Socials Studies or Science.

In some cases, the interests of certain students and teachers may in fact be one of the standard subject areas such as Mathematics, or Biology, or Physics, or English Literature. The combination of options are limited only by practicality and imagination. What we have accomplished by considering the structural, philosophical, and moral conditions of schools, is to increase the

opportunity for students to study areas of their own choosing, by expanding the realm of practicality and by encouraging the use of imagination and creativity.

### **Education and Future Career Opportunities**

There is still one aspect of education that was introduced earlier which needs to be discussed further. The nature of the Learning by Interest approach lends itself perfectly to students compiling portfolios and dossiers of projects and experiences in which they have engaged over the course of their studies, which could increase opportunities for employment as well as help encourage them towards career considerations. For example, a student could study Photography over a period of two or three years and continue to add to his/her portfolio and dossier by working with different types of cameras, in a variety of situations, and under different sets of circumstances. The student may, for instance, combine Photography with an interest in Theatre, and use his/her skills in Photography to help with video taping rehearsals, helping to produce hand bills and posters to advertise the production, taking cast pictures, making scenery, helping with special effects and lighting, and so on. The same student could be encouraged to do write-ups for the school and community newspapers or the high school



annual, taking pictures of team sports, special school events, community happenings, student identification cards, graduation pictures, and so forth. In addition, this student may choose to combine his/her interests in Photography with interests in Environmental or Political Issues, gaining experience with on-location filming, interviewing, and news reporting.

From the experiences gained in school a student could realize the opportunity to distinguish him/herself from the multitude of other students who offer also experience in grade 10, 11 or 12 English, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Physical Education. This student would actually have the experience of applying these learned skills to something. And these experiences would be documented in their portfolio and dossier. When the time arrives for that student to seek employment, whether it is part time while going to school or full time following high school, that student would not have to enter the work force like so many other students seeking their first job placement by applying to the local fast food restaurant, convenience store, or service station for a "no experience necessary" entry position.

A student who has had the opportunity to study and pursue an interest in Photography, Theatre, or Environmental/Human Issues over the course of four or five

years at high school will, upon graduation, have had exposure to a variety of different job and career possibilities. Consequently, rather than searching the classifieds for restaurant and gas station jobs, that student would be naturally drawn to seeking employment or career opportunities at a camera shop, photography studio, local newspaper, or perhaps a public relations position with a local theatre company or news station.

Such a student would be able to walk into a camera shop or photography studio and, with his/her portfolio tucked under their arm and several years of "on the job" experience, demonstrate a knowledge of the camera: the different types of cameras they had built and used in class, the many applications they had applied that knowledge to, which camera was used for which project, the pros and cons of using a Pentax, Cannon, or Nikkon camera, which type of film to use in certain situations, how to develop that film for the best lighting effects, how to improvise when called for, and so on.

In the final analysis, students who have had the opportunity to explore their interests and gain practical experience from these areas of academic study, have essentially developed marketable talents while studying something that was of great personal interest and satisfaction. What we have in the end is a knowledgeable

student, eager to learn more, encouraged to learn more, and ready and willing to contribute his/her skills to community life. That student is not one of several thousand high school clones who have reached a level of competence in their native language, and demonstrated adequate skills in Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies.

### **Summary**

Consider, if you will, the possibilities available in a medium sized high school of 600 to 1000 students where the Learning by Interest approach is offered. If only half of the forty or fifty teachers in that school teach in one or two areas of their interests, it would mean that students would have the opportunity to pick from forty or fifty different learning experiences, in addition to those offered on the standardized curriculum. During the course of their high school years, students would have the opportunity to explore a dozen different interests while earning credits for graduation. A student could also choose to study in greater depth two or three areas of interest, which could conceivably lead to career opportunities or lifetime interests.

Rather than shaping alternative approaches to accommodate existing circumstances, we must instead create

alternative circumstances in order to support and promote the alternative approach. The creation of such circumstances involve taking school structures, along with philosophical and moral considerations, in new directions. Considerations of compatibility between people, subject matter, and time tabling are key conditions for increasing the chances of successful implementation and continuation of alternative approaches to public education.

## CHAPTER 8

## CONCLUSION: WHAT IS AND WHAT OUGHT TO BE

Throughout this discussion I have concentrated primarily on identifying the weakness, oversights, contradictions, mistakes, and the confusion regarding the basis on which public schools proceed to provide equal educational opportunities to all students. And this, of course, was the primary purpose of our examination - to begin to identify conditions lacking and conditions overlooked in our considerations of equal educational opportunity. In the process we have discovered that the notion of equality is not formed of a single idea, but of many ideas encapsulating certain values, beliefs, and claims, which are constantly evolving. We must, therefore, constantly question our understanding of equality as it applies to education, searching for elements overlooked or lacking in our interpretations of the concept to ensure that existing conditions in our schools are consistent with those expectations of society. Any inconsistencies will give rise to claims of inequality.

The concept of equal educational opportunity evolving at the present time demands that the system work well for all and not just some, to the extent that the attainment

of a democratic society is believed to be largely dependent upon the existence of equal educational opportunity (Goodlad, 1983, p. 2), and the notion that "inequitable education deprives society in general of the benefits which accrue when all members are able to be full participants and contributors" (Coombs, 1994, p. 281).

Since the inception of public education, the notion of equal educational opportunity has existed as an ideal, and when an educational ideal is proposed educators are entitled to ask in what manner can it be achieved? In other words, can everyone get this education? And if it cannot be achieved in part or in whole, then it is the rightful responsibility of educators to attempt to identify and examine the shortcomings and to encourage critical assessment that may result in either modifications to or a rejection of the existing proposal.

The difficulty in achieving equal educational opportunity, however, is that there has been a tendency among educational planners to confuse the notion of equality with that of sameness, such that schools tend to offer identical educational opportunities instead of equal educational opportunities. The promotion of an approach which aims to standardize teaching practices and student programmes, stems from an interpretation of equality which considers that conditions of equal educational opportunity

are attained when the same conditions exist for everyone. Lacking in this approach, however, is any consideration of individual student interests, a consideration wherein the intentional striving of students to achieve equal access to the resources that promote academic achievement has essentially been overlooked in the judging of equal educational opportunity.

Central to the notion of a standard system of education is the acceptance of a standardized curriculum, one which assumes that there is an essential body of basic knowledge which must be mastered through a process of formal schooling. Furthermore, this knowledge must be acquired through mandatory study in a particular group of subject disciplines. I have argued that strategies which serve to streamline and consolidate our system of education also contribute to its inability to accommodate the diverse needs and interests of all learners.

The lack of diversity offered among student programmes discourages equality of opportunity for all learners to achieve academic success, such that the ends of current practices do not result in the equal distribution of educational benefits to all students. I have argued that current practices proceed contrary to the goals we desire of public education and, therefore, to promote compulsory inclusion in education as being beneficial to all

learners is unreasonable and unjust.

The accommodation of diversity in our schools is dependent upon a tolerant attitude. Tolerance requires an awareness of and respect for the diversity of thoughts and actions among persons which may not coincide, and may even conflict, with one's own. In his book Liberty and Learning, Kenneth Strike (1982) makes the following compelling argument for the recognition and accommodation of tolerance and diversity in society:

A lack of tolerance will reduce cultural variety and in doing so will narrow the cultural resources for producing those novelties on which the renewal of human thought depends....Individuals seeking to take responsibility for the direction of their lives need a rich and varied set of options from which to choose....Thus, a rich and diverse culture with ample opportunities for novelty to occur is a resource both for the life of intellectual communities and for individuals seeking to make rational and responsible choices. (pp. 166 - 167).

Strike proceeds to make a further and equally persuasive argument with regards to the relationship between the nature of school curricula and the ends to which it might serve a society:

School can easily become a device whereby cultural diversity and novelty are



reduced. Schools operate in the direction of producing cultural and intellectual uniformity. It thus seems important that schools do not operate in such a way that they gratuitously suppress novelty. But we do this when we compel students from traditions at odds with some component of the curriculum to attend to it, nonetheless....We should not be so confident in [the curriculum] that sources of novelty outside of these traditions are unnecessary....It is [necessary] to support diversity, and to provide a society with sources of renewal.  
(p. 167)

There is merit in what Strike has observed. Tolerance is an important step towards the recognition of diversity. But I do not believe that simply tolerance is what we are ultimately seeking in education. Tolerance is only a half way measure between intolerance and compassion; between recognition and acceptance. What we are seeking finally is not tolerance, which often leads to indifference, but compassion which brings empathy and the ability to care.

A quarter of a century ago Noddings (1972) claimed that, "with rare exceptions, [schools] are not supportive places for students with any genuine or intrinsic interests" (p. 60). Some years later she added that, "too many of us think that we can improve education by merely designing a better curriculum, finding and implementing a better form of

instruction, or instituting a better form of classroom management. These things do not work" (Noddings, 1995, p. 368). For as Holt (1964) observed, "If the situation, the materials, the problems before the child do not interest him, his attention will slip off to what does interest him, and no amount of exhortation or threats will bring it back" (p. 158).

The observations of both Holt and Noddings are in my opinion insightful, as public schools were never designed to facilitate the interests of children. Historically the ends of education were meant to serve the interests of the state and the social and economic welfare of society at large, rather than the interests of the individual. More recently, however, there has been a growing perception that education must increasingly provide for the interests and aspirations of the individual. This emerging view, as expressed in the following observation of Jane Roland Martin (1987), challenges both the means of current educational practices, as well as the ends of a standard liberal arts curriculum:

The liberally educated person will have the knowledge about others but will not have been taught to care about their welfare. That person will have some understanding of society but will not have been taught to feel its injustices or even be concerned about its fate. Our educated person is an ivory tower

person: one who can reason but has no desire to solve real problems in the world; one who understands science but does not worry about the uses to which it is put; and one who can reach flawless moral conclusions but has neither the sensitivity nor the skill to carry them out effectively. (p. 206)

### **What Ought To Be**

I have proposed that educators consider the creation of a new set of circumstances in which the means and the ends of education serve the needs of the state as well as the interests of the individual, a set of circumstances which will support simultaneously the coexistence of diverse educational approaches from which students then have the right to choose. The ability to facilitate diversity and provide students with adequate choices in education are necessary and essential elements lacking in our considerations of equal educational opportunity that must become a focus of future educational planning if schools are to move closer to realizing this goal.

At the present time the strategies of standardization, uniformity, and conformity are embedded in our school systems to such a degree that genuine choice within public education is virtually nonexistent, and those choices that do exist are of degree rather than kind. Consider for example the notion "Schools of Choice", one of the most recent attempts in our efforts to acknowledge the need for

freedom of choice in education with regards to student interests and the selection of student programmes. To begin with, the name itself is a misnomer. From the start there is virtually no genuine choice involved. It has already been decided that all children will participate in a formal, state approved, school programme. That's the law. But then after giving children no choice in going to school, we purport to give them a choice of school programmes which they haven't asked to participate in and, furthermore, a choice of school subjects that they have expressed no real interest in studying.

This indeed is an absurd notion of freedom of choice. We offer no viable alternatives to schooling and yet speak freely of choice. How can there really be genuine choices when there are no genuine options from which to choose? The fundamental right to education makes it clear that all learners be allowed to pursue a course of education that is "directed to the full development of the human personality" (Article 26), which by way of reasonable deduction must also include the freedom of the individual to choose courses of study in areas of individual interest.

I have considered the words of Nel Noddings (1992) who wrote, "The first step towards weakening the hegemony of academic disciplines is to cease teaching them for their

own sake except for those who show the passionate interest in them...Pedagogy should begin with the purposes, interests, and capacities of students" (p.150), and I have reflected upon their meaning in my thinking of the problems we now face.

Currently schools teach disciplines and try to create interest in these subjects areas by looking for the relevancy that will hook students and motivate learning. What I have proposed is that if we want students to be interested in what is being taught, then perhaps we are approaching the teaching - learning process backwards. Why not teach what is already of interest to students and, where appropriate, use the traditional subject areas to enhance and enrich the learning experience? In this manner the hook is already in the student and the motivation to learn is intrinsic, or as William James (1890/1980) observed, "the more interest the child has in advance of the subject, the better he will attend" (p. 275).

Learning was never meant to be systematized or standardized. No standardized system of education can ever presume to dictate the growth of individual human personality. It is even more inconceivable that a system, which must cater to the needs of millions of children, should rely upon a single standardized curriculum and a

single dominant model of school structures and expect to meet the diverse needs of all learners and in equal proportions.

Nature relies upon diversity to ensure the success of life in this often harsh and competitive world. Public schools by contrast have traditionally chosen conformity, standardization, and assimilation as strategies to pursue the same goals. Current restructuring strategies aimed at consolidating and streamlining our system of education contribute to its demise, as uniformity and conformity limit the capabilities of a system to adapt to change. And I would suggest that the strategy of diversity, upon which mother nature has come to depend upon for billions of years, may serve as a better blueprint for success than the comparatively recent paradigm of public education.

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APPENDIX 1

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Article 2**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

**Article 26**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

APPENDIX 2

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*Eighth Concurrent Session*

**PULLING THE PLUG ON APPEALS TO  
IRRATIONALITY, IMMATURITY AND EXPEDIENCY**

Roland Case

*University of Alberta*

The topic of the paper is the justificatory grounds for interference with the liberty of children and, in particular, the self-regarding (i.e. paternalistic) grounds for compulsory education. The title of the paper mentions three explanations most frequently offered in support of what Kleinig calls the received doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Roughly, this doctrine states that children, as a class, have no or, at best, few rights to liberty. Where children are seen to have *prima facie* rights, the doctrine holds that interference with them is more easily justified than interference with adult liberties. We have inherited this categorical discrimination essentially unchanged from Mill. In the case of adults, he held:

the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient reason.<sup>2</sup>

Almost immediately following, Mill added:

It is, perhaps hardly necessary to say that this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood.

It is consistent with this tradition that, for example, the Criminal Code of Canada makes it an offense to deprive a parent or guardian who has lawful possession of a child from possession of that child. This is so even if the child is escaping from someone who mistreats him or her.<sup>3</sup> A comic, yet touching affirmation/repudiation of this inferior status is represented in the



*Philosophy of Education 1985*

film *Irreconcilable Differences*. After being innocently used and manipulated by her parents, ten-year old Casey institutes divorce proceedings because, in her words, "You both treat me like a chattel."<sup>4</sup>

For my part, I wish to take up this theme. There are irreconcilable differences between the proffered defences of virtually wholesale exclusion of children from certain liberties and what would count as adequate justification for this received doctrine. Ultimately I argue that entitlement to liberty should not be categorical (i.e., it should not be based on a particular status such as adulthood or (full) personhood). Rather, entitlement should be conditional. It should be based on the presence of the relevant factors in particular instances. In the last section of this paper, I argue that the relevant justificatory factor associated with liberty is the authenticity of a particular choice. And on this grounds, many school-age children often qualify. However, before developing this alternate conditional position, purported justifications of the received categorical doctrine will be examined.

Anyone who upholds a categorical distinction is committed to the following:

Class or group X can be treated differently than class/group Y with regard to exercise of right R only if there is a reason for doing so that is both relevant to R and characteristic of X but not of Y.

In other words, proponents of a different status for children's liberties must provide a condition that is both empirically representative of children (and not of adults) and morally relevant to the exercise of freedoms.<sup>5</sup> This means, for example, we cannot justify compulsory education for children solely because they may be better off because of it. The possibility of benefit-enhancement/harm-avoidance does not differentiate between children and adults. (Surely, many adults would be better off being educated.) Nor, for example, can we justify compulsory education for children on the basis of age. Although age differentiates between adults and children, it does not justifiably discriminate between them. While more will be said about age-based limitations, there is nothing about age, *per se*, that is relevant to the exercise of rights. The three most plausible arguments offered in support of categorical exclusion of children are based on (i) lack of rationality (proponents of which include Locke,<sup>6</sup> Hart,<sup>7</sup> Magsino,<sup>8</sup> and Sutton<sup>9</sup>); (ii) lack of mature faculties (proponents of which include Mill,<sup>10</sup> Gerald Dworkin,<sup>11</sup> Habibi,<sup>12</sup> and Sutton<sup>13</sup>); and (iii) an appeal to expediency (a position implicitly held by many of the above).

# I. IRRATIONALITY

Proponents of the irrationality view assert that (i) children have not reached the "age of reason" and (ii) entitlement to liberty is dependent on

## Roland Case

attainment of this prescribed level of rationality. The initial plausibility of these claims begins to dissipate when the concept of rationality is examined. To begin, a basic distinction can be made between what has been termed formal and substantive rationality.<sup>14</sup> To be rational in the formal sense means, simply, that the individual has a reason (any reason) for acting. Substantive rationality implies more. It requires that the action or decision be judged reasonable in light of accepted standards or norms. In the case of formal rationality, it seems that most children clearly meet this requirement. This is true even if it is interpreted as implying the possession of a disposition to have reasons for one's conduct. The fact that we frequently characterize children's behavior as actions implicitly corroborates this point. As Danto suggests: "without reasons there would be no actions, since reasons are presupposed by the very existence of an event being an action."<sup>15</sup>

The reported irrationality of children must therefore be substantive and refer to a failure to meet standards in quality of reasoning. These standards may be concerned solely with means-end deliberation (i.e., what Aristotle called practical reasoning) or they may also include an assessment of the desires, interests and wants which are the motivations for action. In the case of the former, as practical reasoning, the concern is solely with the efficacy of the deliberation in selecting means appropriate to the satisfaction of the want. There is, *ex hypothesi*, no concern over the goals. Obviously this is the sense of rationality Hume had in mind when he taunted: "It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger."<sup>16</sup> I doubt that proponents of the irrationality view would be satisfied with this interpretation.<sup>17</sup> I take it that much of the motivation for restricting the liberty of children stems from concerns about the types of interests/desires children are wont to pursue.

A more acceptable interpretation of irrationality would include consideration of the reasonableness of the motives. There are, in turn, two ways to establish standards of reasonableness of this type and they are suggested by Brian Barry's distinction between want-regarding and ideal-regarding interests.<sup>18</sup> Ideal-regarding interests refer to what a person could and should want based on what are perceived to be ideals for that person (e.g., knowledge, virtue, autonomy). Want-regarding interests refer to what a person really wants when all of his/her desires, interests, ambitions and so on have been considered. Rationality in the ideal-regarding sense is consistency of actual wants with ideals of what ought to be wanted. An example of irrationality in this sense is the student who desires to be an accountant when he/she ought to pursue a more ennobling career in philosophy. Want-regarding rationality is consistency of a particular want with the balance of that person's wants. An example of irrationality in this sense is the person who wishes to have a sexual affair even though it will likely jeopardize those things which mean most to him/her (e.g., trust, spousal

*Philosophy of Education 1985*

happiness, family cohesion). In essence, ideal-regarding rationality is what perfectly rational persons would choose. Clearly, no one is going to argue for this as the minimal standard of entitlement to liberty. We will presume, then, that the rationality criterion can be described in terms of choosing/acting in a manner consistent with the balance of the person's wants. I take it that this is what Sutton has in mind when he describes rational choice as the "blending of desires with the intelligent anticipation of the consequences."<sup>19</sup> Can this interpretation satisfy the empirical representativeness requirement? Viewed in its minimal sense, merely as a capacity, it is not at all convincing that children are deficient. As one philosopher writes:

Even a five-year old is a master of a complex language, has a personality structure and an awareness of his own identity, and is quite capable of implicitly invoking a generalization principle to protest unfair treatment by a parent or teacher.<sup>20</sup>

In a similar vein, Robert Young claims:

Children are far from always being too immature or irrational to know, and to be able to express opinions, when their interests are affected.<sup>21</sup>

In short, if the grounds for entitlement are simply a capacity for want-regarding rational choice, then many school-age children qualify as title-holders. If a stronger claim is implied, namely a dispositional trait, then Sutton and others run the difficulty of categorically excluding many adults from a right to liberty. Many "average" adults are disposed to act on impulse, habit and compulsion. I can think of countless activities (e.g., smoking, overeating, getting drunk, wasting money, procrastinating, whimsical risk-taking) that are "irrational" for most participants. Yet we do not consider that sufficient grounds to interfere with an adult's decision to do such things. Put simply, the problem is that either the "average" child is not irrational enough or the "average" adult is not rational enough. In summation, I suggest no plausible interpretation of irrationality will supply the distinction that proponents need to differentiate children's rights.

## II. IMMATURITY

Appeals to the immaturity of children often collapse into a concern over the ensuing lack of rationality. For example, Habibi laments children's lack of "perception, rationality, discrimination, judgment and planning."<sup>22</sup> However, there are interpretations of immaturity distinct from irrationality which focus on undeveloped psychological/mental states. Here again, Habibi talks of nascent individuality and character formation.<sup>23</sup> In an article,

*Roland Case*

subsequent to the one cited in the previous section, Sutton shifts emphasis towards an immaturity argument. Conceding that children are "in some sense rational," he claims they are not full persons.<sup>24</sup> On this latter point, there is a tendency to equate immaturity with lack of personhood. While it is analytically true that an "immature" person is not a "full" person, the notion of what constitutes being a person must be spelt out with adequate precision if a more compelling claim is intended. Significantly, in concluding his account of the concept of person, Daniel Dennett observes that while his conditions are necessary, the degree to which they must be met is inescapably normative:

Human beings and other entities can only aspire to being approximations of the Ideal, and there can be no way to set a "passing grade" that is not arbitrary.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than attempt to equate immaturity to the more global, less manageable concept of personhood, I will consider three plausible candidates representative of the concerns lurking behind the immaturity appeal:

- (I) children are weak-willed (i.e., they are uniquely impressionable and vulnerable because they have little or no will of their own);
- (II) children are blind-willed (i.e., they do not have a "free" will but are driven by whatever desire/want is strongest);
- (III) children are impermanent willed (i.e., while they have wills of their own, their ambitions/aims are likely to change significantly as they grow up).

The third suggestion meets neither of the conditions for categorical exclusion. The implications of immaturity as impermanent will are (I) that unlike children, adults are stable and have relatively set aims and aspirations; and (II) that permanency of interests over extended time is relevant to entitlement to liberty. Empirically, it is not clear that the first presumption is an adequate portrait of the average adult. One of Hart's objections to Mill is that Mill attributes normal adults with the "psychology of a middle-aged man whose desires are relatively fixed, not liable to be artificially stimulated by external influences; who knows what he wants and what gives him satisfaction."<sup>26</sup> Lack of this type of permanency could be leveled against all adults who do not have the settled consistency of middle-age. On the second presumption, the likelihood that adults' aspirations are less prone to change than children's is not a convincing reason for denying children the right to pursue their current desires and preferences. It is often retorted that present interference is necessary to develop children's ability to fulfill the desires they will have as adults. There are a number of difficulties with this defense. One, treating childhood

*Philosophy of Education 1985*

substantially as means to adulthood is not to treat children with respect. As Pekarsky<sup>27</sup> and Kleinig<sup>28</sup> remind us, childhood is a period having characteristic needs and interests of intrinsic value independent of any role in preparing for adulthood. Two, It is not obvious, except in cases of immediate harm, that our interventions are likely to secure the desired results. On the contrary, the resentment that may accompany being required to do things frequently eclipses, if not exceeds any benefit. It is an interesting question whether those who benefit from compulsion wouldn't have benefitted eventually if left on their own. Certainly, in the case of schooling, we may insist on compulsory attendance, but we cannot impose an education.

While the remaining two candidates, weakness and blindness of will, are relevant to the exercise of liberty, they are not sufficiently representative of children to justify categorical exclusion. Many children are strong-willed. Often they are perfectly clear about what they want and are determined to persevere in the face of opposition. Even for those who are not characteristically strong-willed, the fact they are susceptible to external influence is not sufficient reason for blanket exclusion. In law, we do not deny someone his/her liberty merely because the suspect is prone to illegality. We insist on proof beyond reasonable doubt of specific illegality. Although, as we will see, we may accept the presence of outer-impulsion as grounds for conditional interference, fairness requires rejection of mere vulnerability to external influences as sufficient grounds for categorical exclusion.

In support of the blind will appeal, Sutton suggests that pre-adolescents are unable to critically evaluate their inner wants.<sup>29</sup> As such they do not possess free will. Even if we accept Sutton's assertion that Piaget's developmental stage of formal operations is a bellweather of children's ability to evaluate their wills, this means many children, beginning around eleven years old (and some younger), possess the requisite capacity. In addition, there is intuitive and, perhaps, more valid evidence that children are capable of exercising free will even earlier. If children's behavior was always the product of unassessed urges, then we could not hold them responsible for their behavior. It is because we believe they often "know better" or "should have known better" that we can punish them for their actions. The salient difference between conditioning and disciplining rests upon the ability of the recipient to see the rightness and wrongness of acting on certain desires. In short, if we are prepared to discipline children, we have already recognized the freedom of their will.

### III. EXPEDIENCY

One final argument for the categorical exclusion of children from liberty stems from an appeal to expediency. This view holds that for practical

*Roland Case*

purposes, perhaps because the incidence of harm is significantly large among a particular group, and since it may be impossible or, at least, extremely costly to identify potential victims, it is reasonable to categorically exclude the group as a whole. Magsino uses a version of this line of argument as the reason for the exclusion of children from option rights. However, he acknowledges that deprivation of such fundamental freedoms requires "demonstrable incapacity to make acceptable use of one's liberties."<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, he assumes, but does not establish, that children have this demonstrable incapacity. Clearly, the onus is on the intervenor to substantiate the claim. Notice also, the argument from expediency does not hold in cases of interpersonal and parental paternalism. Having first-hand knowledge of a child and being able to supervise him/her individually means that a categorical exclusion from all *prima facie* option rights is obviously untenable on these grounds.

Where the appeal to expediency is appropriate is in the area known as legislative paternalism.<sup>31</sup> In such cases, it may be necessary to establish a legal age at which certain entitlements are officially recognized. However, it must be remembered that age-based restrictions are empirical generalizations and are not equivalent to moral entitlements. Therefore where practical or legal constraints dictate use of age or other statistical norms, a number of qualifications are required before the practice is justified. One, the disenfranchisement should be localized to criteria related to the activity under consideration and not refer to the overall capacity of the individual. For example, fifteen-year olds would not be allowed to drive cars, not because they are too young to enjoy legal rights, but because statistically they make bad choices while driving. The same principle now applies to repeated drunken drivers. This type of provision would entitle groups such as children, mentally disabled persons, and mentally disturbed persons who, in the past, were dismissed as categorically incompetent to exercise discretion in matters not specifically legally prohibited. Two, the ascertainment of the normative cut-off point should be carefully scrutinized. It must be demonstrated that statistically few persons below the cut-off point meet the criteria and most persons above the cut-off satisfy the minimal requirements. Three, provision must be made for individual exemption from the generalized restriction based on ability to demonstrate competence. For example, in discussing the fairness of adult suffrage, Schrag reports that six percent of eighth graders have the sophistication in political discourse of the top half of the adult population.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that competent young persons below the guaranteed legal age of suffrage ought to be allowed to demonstrate voter fitness and be granted early franchise. Four, as Dworkin argues, legislation should impose only the minimal interference necessary to safeguard well-being.<sup>33</sup>

These limitations on legal paternalism significantly alter the notion of categorical exclusion. I suggest that although age-based restrictions may

look like categorical exclusions, they are not justified unless they have the effect of generalized conditional exclusions.

#### IV. AUTHENTIC CHOICE

The received doctrine, at least as defended by appeals to irrationality, immaturity or expediency, is suspect. Instead, I propose that children be recognized as titleholders to the same basic liberties as adults and that the grounds for overriding these *prima facie* rights are the same for children and adults. In support of these claims I will briefly explain what I take to be the most defensible grounds for entitlement to liberty.

The key, as Feinberg suggests, is to determine whether a choice really is attributable to an individual, rather than to evaluate its wisdom or worthiness.<sup>34</sup> For Mill, each person is the proper guardian of his/her welfare. It is not one person's prerogative to interfere just because he/she disapproves of another's choice. In fact, Mill's defense of liberty was expressly to fortify the individual against the wills of others. Significantly, a decision which emanates from an individual but does not represent the person in any faithful way is, in an important sense, foreign to that person.<sup>35</sup> The justification for liberty is the value of pursuing one's own will. If an action does not reflect the intentions and volitions of that person, then it is not his/her will. As such, it is not the proper object of a right to liberty. This is consistent with Vlastos' principle of just-exceptions. It states that the only defensible reason for exclusion from human rights must be the very reason we have for ascribing the right in the first place.<sup>36</sup> In self-regarding situations, this would mean that a necessary condition for denial of liberty is evidence that the individual's choice is in some way attenuated--it is not, in a full-bodied sense, his/her choice but is attributable to other causes.

Attenuation arises either where acting on a particular decision will not secure the intended objective or where the intended objective was not freely chosen.<sup>37</sup> More specifically, attenuation of intention of choice occurs because person X, although voluntarily choosing C, did so not fully intending the eventual outcome. This occurs either because deliberation concerning choice C failed to predict important mediating events or consequences, or was based on mistaken beliefs, or because the choice of C was largely undeliberated. Attenuation of volition of choice occurs because person X, although intending C, did not do so freely. This occurs because the normal functioning of the person's choice-making mechanism was overridden. Either (i) the normal consistency in prioritization of goals was absent (e.g., self-deception, chronically undisciplined); or (ii) the mechanism for selection among goals was internally short-circuited (e.g., stress, personality disorder, internal compulsion, mania); or (iii) the mechanism for selection

## Roland Case

among goals was affected by foreign intervention (e.g., hypnosis, brainwashing, threats, peer pressure).

The upshot of this account is that interference with children's liberty can only be justified to the extent that one or more of these attenuating conditions can be shown to be present. The received doctrine must be replaced by recognition that the choices of children do count. In the case for compulsory education it means merely being worthwhile is not sufficient justification.

1. John Kleinig, "Mill, Children, and Rights," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 8 (1976): 1-3.
2. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *Three Essays*, ed. Richard Wolheim (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 15.
3. Reported in John McMurty, "Response to Winchester - Yes, Children Need Liberation," *Interchange* 10 (1979): 35.
4. Reported in John Peery, "Children and Others Strangers," *Maclean's* 97 (October 22, 1984): 78.
5. I take these formal requirements of empirical representativeness and moral relevance to be relatively uncontroversial. At least implicitly, they have been defended by S.I. Benn according to his principle of noninterference, by H.L.A. Hart and his theory of a natural right, by Brian Crittenden in terms of the moral status of human beings, and by Victor Worsfold and Thomas Sutton in light of Rawlsian principles of justice.
6. John Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government," in *Two Treatise of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1965), sec. 55-58.
7. H.L.A. Hart, "Are There Any Natural Rights?," *The Philosophical Review* 64 (1955): 175-191.
8. Romulo F. Magsino, "Freedom and Rights in Schools: Towards Just Entitlements for the Young," *Educational Theory* 29 (1979): 171-185.
9. Thomas L. Sutton, "Human Rights and Children," *Educational Theory* 28 (1978): 108-110.
10. Mill, p. 15.
11. Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism," in *Morality and the Law*, ed. Richard A. Wasserstrom (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. Inc., 1971), p. 117.
12. D.A. Habibi, "The Status of Children in John Stuart Mill's Theory of Liberty," *Educational Theory* 33 (1983): 65-72.
13. Thomas Sutton, "The Task of Education," in *Philosophy of Education 1981*, ed. Daniel R. DeNicola (Normal, IL: The Philosophy of Education Society, 1982), pp. 257-267.
14. D. Clayton Hubin, "Prudential Reasons," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 10 (1980): 69-70.
15. Arthur C. Danto, "Constructing an Epistemology of Human Rights: A Pseudo Problem," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 1 (1984): 25.
16. Henry D. Aiken, ed., *Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy* (New York: Hafner Press, 1948), p. 25.
17. There may be proponents of the received doctrine who would be satisfied with a practical rationality argument. In that case, I would challenge the empirical representativeness condition. It strikes me that many children in the elementary grades are extremely shrewd in devising ways to get what they want. Conversely, adults are often unable to see what must be done to accomplish their goals.
18. Brian Barry, *Political Argument* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 173-186.
19. Sutton, p. 108.
20. D.G. Brown, "The Rights of Children," *The Journal of Education* 17 (1971): 15.



*Philosophy of Education 1985*

21. Robert Young, "Education and the 'Rights' of Children and Adolescents," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 8 (1976): 29.
22. Habibi, p. 64.
23. Ibid., p. 66.
24. Sutton, "The Task of Education," pp. 264-266.
25. Daniel Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood," in *The Identity of Persons*, ed. Amelle Rorty (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), p. 193.
26. H.L.A. Hart, *Law, Liberty and Morality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 33.
27. Daniel Pekersky, "Education and the Mirth of Childhood," in *Philosophy of Education 1981* (Normal, IL: The Philosophy of Education Society, 1982), pp. 148-156.
28. Kleinig, p. 5.
29. Sutton, "The Task of Education," pp. 264-266.
31. Rosemary Carter, "Justifying Paternalism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1977): 133-145.
32. Francis Schrag, "The Child's Status in the Democratic State," *Political Theory* 3 (1975): 450.
33. Dworkin, p. 114.
34. Joel Feinberg, "Legal Paternalism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 1 (1971): 113.
35. Ibid., p. 124.
36. Gregory Vlastos, "Justice and Equality," in *Human Rights*, ed. A.I. Melden (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 83-84.
37. This account of attenuation of choice is based on a conception of action contained in S.C. Coval and J.C. Smith, *Law and Its Presuppositions* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, upcoming), Chapter 1.