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## 1. Values: the 'What?' of the politics of education

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The purpose of this chapter is to examine how divergent values and belief systems are brought to bear in the politics of education. It will also illustrate the areas of schooling which seem most vulnerable to conflicts produced by opposing value systems, examining those areas over extended periods of history in the United States. We believe that in doing so we can highlight the content of the political struggles which scholars in the politics of education work to understand: the 'What?' of the field.

Appropriately, we begin with Easton's (1965) definition of a political system as:

... patterns of interaction through which values are allocated for a society and these allocations are accepted as authoritative by most persons in the society most of the time. It is through the presence of activities that fulfill these two basic functions that a society can commit the resources and energies of its members in the settlement of differences that cannot be autonomously resolved. (p. 57)

We could have begun as easily with Iannaccone's (1988) discussion of the place of political ideology in political conflict. He argues that:

... conflicts which escalate into realignment of coalitions and a redirection of policies, are reflections of 'intrinsically unresolvable issues about ... fundamental tensions inherent in American society.' Because continued political conflicts about such issues are likely to destroy a society, a substitution of conflicts takes place around a different mix of issues which promises a future solution to the problems posed by irreconcilable tensions. But precisely because they are irreconcilable, at least within the limits of their current circumstances and technology, the new mix of issues and related ideas provides an illusion of solving the old conflicts. (p. 58)

We will examine five questions which seem to us to have been the 'What?' of the politics of education throughout the history of public schools in the United States:

- Who should go to school?
- What should be the purposes of schooling?
- What should children be taught?
- Who should decide issues of school direction and policy?
- Who should pay for schools?

These questions continue unresolved, only having been decided one way or another at one time or another. We argue that the questions are unresolvable because they rest on underlying tensions among competing values. In other words, they cannot be resolved in a pluralist democratic system. The value tensions we will explore are linked to the value alternatives of choice, efficiency, equity, and quality (excellence), and we will argue that the tensions have surrounded public schooling since its invention in the United States. What people have fought about and what scholars of the politics of education have tried to understand are the ways in which major actors with competing value perspectives have tried to impose their perspectives on social policy. While a great deal of research in the past 25 years has been devoted to tracking the outcomes of conflicts over the five

questions, we hope to broaden the context with a longer historical perspective.

We intend, as well, to review these questions and their underlying value tensions within the research arenas of micropolitics, school district politics, state politics, and national politics. We do so with the understanding that other chapters in this yearbook will examine each arena in much greater detail.

It is worth noting, as a preface, that the inclusion of an entire chapter on this topic in a volume of this sort is a relatively new phenomenon. It is not that values have not been lurking in the background of the politics of education, but rather that a direct examination of their influence on political processes and outcomes is recent. Much of the politics of education research intended to illuminate the structures, actors, and processes of political decision. The value content of the issues was less well analyzed.<sup>1</sup>

One of the more widely used textbooks, *Schools in Conflict* (Wirt and Kirst 1992) does include a chapter devoted to the origins of demand inputs. The authors argue that stress in political systems arises from value conflicts among competing political agents. They then discuss the four key values of quality, efficiency, equity, and choice. They quote extensively from works by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt, citing particularly *Culture and Education Policy in the American States* (1989). In that work, after giving credit to Kaufman (1956), and Garms, Guthrie and Pierce (1978), Marshall *et al.* elaborate their terms. On the definition of *choice*, they say:

This is arguably the most basic of all American public values. It was the passionate belief of the American Federalists that good government is defined by its ability to preserve freedom of choice for its citizens . . . It was summed up by Thomas Jefferson in his declaration, 'That government governs best which governs least'. (p. 89)

About *quality* they say:

Given the primary role played by choice or liberty in the American political system, positive public policy actions must be justified in terms of their ability to enhance the quality of life for citizens. Indeed, governmental action to provide direct services is defensible only if the quality of the services provided is on the whole at least as good as could be reasonably expected to arise through private action. (p. 90)

With regard to *efficiency* they explain that:

Americans have had an intense love-hate relationship with efficiency as a public policy value since the founding of the Republic. The cruel efficiencies of totalitarian governments are recognized and feared. But the productive efficiency of American business and industry are just as frequently held out as a model after which to design public service agencies. Moreover, Americans feel a need for an orderly, predictable, and controlled system to contain private and interest group conflicts threatening the social order. Social unrest and the threat of anarchy fade when government provides for the orderly and efficient delivery of public services. (p. 91)

About *equity* they argue:

As a policy matter, equity is complicated. It is a matter of *redress* rather than one of *address*. That is, policy-makers cannot decree social equity, they can only create laws and social programs that relieve the effects of inequity *after* it has been identified. The need for governmental action cannot be recognized until some identifiable inequity has been shown to be serious and in need of remedy. Then action is only justified to the extent necessary to eliminate the identified inequity. (p. 92)

We return, then, to Iannaccone (1988) who asserts, 'Policy is thus viewed as resting upon value-laden public beliefs – interpretations of the American creed or dream – as you will' (p. 49) for our interest in examining the connections among values and political processes and outcomes.

### Who should go to school?

Although we risk overgeneralization, we assert initially that this question has been driven over time by a shift from 'choice' to 'equity' as the dominant public value influencing decisions about it. While we can find undertones of both 'efficiency' and 'quality/excellence,' the overall drift of public policy in the past 200 years has been to reduce individual choice in favor of social equity. At the base of the question are individual choices to go or not to school, to choose the persons with whom one wishes to go to school, and to choose the persons with whom one does not wish to go to school.

At the beginning, of course, the New England colonies defined the terms of resolution in favor of excellence, arguing that public provision of schools was essential for the quality of life of all persons in the social order. But implementation was a sometime matter, resting essentially on town choices to allocate funds. In other regions of the nascent country, choice was the dominant early value. The framers of the Constitution avoided what they saw as a series of potential conflicts by avoiding discussion of the question altogether. This is not to argue that children did not go to school, only that parents made the choices (perhaps under duress from religious leaders, or 'liberals', or business leaders). With the advent of compulsory schooling, choice gave way to equity as the dominant public value. But the conflict has lasted a long time, with compulsory school attendance laws still being debated and with some states only recently deliberating appropriate school-leaving ages.

With the rise in the salience of equity, the decision to expand (demand) school-going to everyone seems inevitable in hindsight. But conflict over the meaning of the question has been intense: witness conflict over school segregation, education of handicapped children, education of Native Americans, and the like. Although we believe equity has been the dominant value for at least 100 years, choice continues to influence policy. Whether parents can provide schooling at home, whether children who are violent or truant must be schooled, whether homeless children are entitled to schooling, are all issues which can stir substantial debate even now. With respect to higher education, the shift from federal grants and fellowships to student loans indicates that choice may have reappeared as a more powerful value than in the recent past.

In the micropolitical arena, the question of who should go to school has not had substantial investigation by scholars of the politics of education. Rather, sociologists, particularly those who have been concerned about such matters as class and race and the interactions between students and teachers, have had more to say about it. But there are examples of research which suggest that a more direct look at political ideology might help explicate internal school politics. In studying high school dropouts, Reyes and Capper (1991) explore the political ideologies of a sample of urban principals. Principals, they assert, determine in part the nature of dropping out by how the principals define *dropout* and what proximate causes they assign. Reyes and Capper argue, 'In sum the principals blamed the student, the school or community context, for the dropout of racially diverse students. None attributed student dropout to reproducing the status quo within society...' (p. 549). They conclude by saying, 'In summary, our findings confirm... that how a problem is defined can determine if and how the problem is addressed' (p. 551). In effect, how the problem is defined at a school determines who is to go to school.

More recent compendia have made similar arguments with respect to problem definition (issue articulation) research which might be carried out at the micropolitical level. Blase (1991) argues that, while micropolitical processes are complex and unstable,

school principals have much to do with problem defining. He argues that in an effort to achieve a deep awareness of self, school principals must examine their own political values and purposes, and assess the political values of others.

A recent issue of *Education and Urban Society* edited by Marshall and Scribner (1991a) is devoted to micropolitics. It is clear from this volume that conflict and accommodation at school sites will be a topic of research for many future scholars. We suggest that some of the investigative effort be devoted to uncovering value conflicts among the participants over the key issue of who is to be a student and who is not to be. We assert that conflict over the core values of choice, equity, efficiency, and quality exists routinely in and around schools in their attempts to decide who should go to school, notwithstanding the general dominance in national affairs of the value of equity.

The question of who should go to school has been hotly contested in school districts in the past 25 years. Major conflicts have centered on issues of race and school desegregation (Crain, 1968, 1989, Kirby *et al.* 1973, Willie 1984). Political scientists have examined the political structures and processes that drove decisions which did or did not desegregate schools and have examined the consequences in terms of white flight, resegregation, and housing patterns. As Crain (1989) argues, 'In our analysis of education, we rarely consider that the local school system is a very powerful actor - it is a major employer and builds most of the city's buildings' (p. 318). Other emerging district issues include treatment of truant and whether city police will apprehend them, integration of social service delivery systems (Melaville and Blank 1993), questions of academic qualifications as requisites for participation in school-sponsored activities (pass to play), and youth violence.

Here we believe that the core value of equity is in contest with values of quality and efficiency. The costs in time, money and lost academic performance are weighed against the expressed obligation to give every child in a system an equal opportunity to succeed. It is not clear to us how these contests will develop nor is it clear that current work in the politics of education is sufficiently advanced to explain them, although Bidwell (1992) has laid out the components of a possible scheme for thinking about urban education as a field of policy action. Further, Schwager and others (1992) have given us an analysis of the complex implementation effects of district policies about retaining children in grade. They argue that an interaction of district cultural beliefs and organizational procedures produces different rates of retention in grade depending on the size of the school district, even when the formal policy is the same. This produces different answers to the question of who should go to school, since grade retention is shown to be linked to dropping out.

State action on this question, lately, has been anchored in both efficiency and excellence (Firestone, 1990). Raising high school graduation standards, either by extending required courses, or by instituting some form of 'leaving' exam, is justified in terms of excellence, as is the 'pass to play' rule in some states. Providing state money for increased efforts at early intervention, either through the schools, or through other agencies in cooperation with schools, is justified in terms of long-term efficiencies.

Federal action has been in a slow drift toward equity, intensified, perhaps, in the past 25 years. For example, inclusion and equal educational opportunity are symbolic of a national mood which values schooling for all children and youth. Yet, the countervailing value of choice continues in the federal shift from grants to loans for college students, and in, for example, the US Supreme Court's reluctance to enter suits over school finance.

Overall, we suggest that the prevailing value behind decisions about who should go to school has been equity. Although periodic incidents and decisions have been flavored by

efficiency and choice, most decisions most of the time in most political systems have reflected a preference for equity.

### What should be the purposes of schooling?

This is, of course, the most significant question in the group, because, without a clear answer to it, the other questions are much more contentious. But, as a nation, we have not answered this key question. Having said that the purpose of public schooling is to advance the interests of the public as represented by the state, and to prepare a coming generation for success in the future, we have engaged in serious debate about what those ideas mean. The debate is not new of course, having its origins in the earliest proclamations. In 1642 the Massachusetts Bay Colony set down a simple purpose:

It being one chief object of that old deluder, Satan to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded by false glosses of saint-seeming deceivers, that learning may not be buried in the grave of our fathers in the Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors . . .

Matters did not remain simple. The 1754 catalog of Queen's College (Columbia University) asserted that the 'chief thing that is aimed at in this College is to teach and engage the children to know God in Jesus Christ . . .' By 1784 the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts asserted, 'Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; . . .' Above the Boston Public Library is engraved, 'The Commonwealth requires the education of the people as the safeguard of order and liberty.'

In 1749, in *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*, Benjamin Franklin added to the debate:

As to their studies, it would be well if they could be taught everything that is useful and everything that is ornamental. But Art is long and their time is short. It is therefore proposed that they learn those things that are likely to be the most useful and most ornamental. Regard being had to the several professions for which they are intended.

In 1848 Horace Mann was prompted to write,

Now surely nothing but universal education can counterwork the tendency to the domination of capital and the servility of labor . . . It [education] does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich; it prevents being poor.

What is/are the purpose(s) of education in the United States? President Bush (1991), in *presenting America 2000: An Education Strategy*, said:

Education has always meant opportunity. Today, education determines not just which students will succeed, but also which nations will thrive in a world united in pursuit of freedom in enterprise. (p. 1)

If we want America to remain a leader, a force for good in the world, we must lead the way in educational innovation. And if we want to combat crime and drug abuse, if we want to create hope and opportunity in the bleak corners of this country where there is now nothing but defeat and despair, we must dispel the darkness with the enlightenment that a sound and well-rounded education provides. (p. 2)

Think about every problem, every challenge we face. The solution to each starts with education. (p. 2)

In the same document, the report of the meeting of the Governors of the several states and the President in Virginia at the education summit in 1990 is excerpted as:

America's educational performance must be second to none in the 21st century. Education is central to our quality of life. It is at the heart of our economic strength and security, our creativity in the arts and letters, our invention

in the sciences, and the perpetuation of our cultural values. Education is the key to America's international competitiveness. (p. 59)

What are the purposes of education? Over time they seem to be whatever we decide we want them to be at the moment, aside from a general belief that national happiness is at stake if they are not met.

We are not surprised, then, at the corollary debate over whether the schools are any good (Berliner 1993, Hawley 1985, Timar 1989). As a nation we cannot possibly agree on that issue, given our inability to agree on the prior question of purpose.

We wish we could sort out the valences of the competing values of choice, efficiency, equity, and excellence in the debates over purpose. However we do not think that we can within the scope of this chapter. We do not have the wisdom of hindsight except to assert that the debates have been contentious.

### **What should children be taught?**

In general, we believe that the question of what children should be taught has been decided around the competing values of excellence and equity, although, on occasion, the value of choice appears to have driven the debate. As is true for all of the important questions, this one has been debated in various forms for more than 100 years. In the late 1800s the American curriculum can be described best as in disarray. Choice prevailed at all levels in the absence of any general agreement about what should be taught. Teachers taught what they knew, proprietary schools taught what they could sell, parents and students demanded different curricula depending on social status, regionalism, religion and the like. The Committee of Ten of the National Education Association (NEA 1894) attempted to solidify the national curriculum around subjects which were thought to prepare high school graduates for success in college. About 25 years later the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools (1918) published *The Cardinal Principles of Education*. This document argued, in effect, that the high school curriculum had to be modified substantially to allow successful completion by large numbers of students who had not been in high schools in the late 1800s. The debate was thus joined between those who argued for excellence and those who argued for equity. Both groups had abandoned choice as a preferred value. The debate is engaged in the same terms today.

At the level of micropolitics an uneasy compromise has been reached with the tacit acceptance of various forms of tracking, so that excellence can be celebrated for the children who are thought to be able to benefit, and some form of presumed equity offered for less able students (Oakes 1985, Powell *et al.* 1985). While these practices may be racist or discriminatory, they allow schools to function without continual rancorous conflict. Other compromises are known to occur (O'Reilly 1988), but are not well documented as outcomes of value conflicts. Obvious compromises include a school faculty agreement that some teachers can teach phonics while other teachers are permitted to teach whole-word approaches, or to teach reading through whole-language experiences, or to avoid teaching some subjects altogether. The closed classroom doors and the loose internal coupling of most schools permit value conflicts from surfacing. But value differences persist.

Within school districts, Boyd (1976, 1978) has reminded us how complex and interesting the political contests have been over what should be taught. He has given us a model for understanding how the contests are waged. Both Peshkin (1978) and Page and Clelland (1978) provide vivid studies of the ways in which communities can mold what is taught so that it reflects the dominant values of the community. Although we do not

know with certainty, it is reasonable to speculate that most local curricula reflect the values of key actors (Boyd 1982, 1987, Burlingame 1988), whether those values are equity, excellence, or choice. Probably few 'pure' cases exist, but Boyd's (1978) model might be useful for additional research on the problem.

There is, we believe, a resurgence of earlier overt conflicts, particularly in state-level political arenas. Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) proffer the most thorough explication of how such conflicts result in very different choices among states. Among their seven major policy domains which engage state legislators, three are about the question of what should be taught: approaches to student testing and assessment, approaches to curriculum materials, and approaches to the definition of school program. They show that states differ across the four values and across the seven policy domains. But individual states, they argue, have general preferences among the values. They argue also that there are general value preferences shared by all the states. On that point they say, 'It was surprising to find so little priority given to approaches that would enhance the choice value' (p. 94). They say also, 'Note, for example, that educational *quality items were ranked first in all... domains...*' (emphasis in the original: p. 93) and '*Receding support for educational equity is clearly evident in the data*' (p. 94: emphasis in the original).

The overt conflicts are perhaps best represented by state debates over high-stakes testing. As states attempt to attach serious consequences to various forms of the tests, the content of them, the cut scores for passing, and the consequences of failure. As Ellwein, Glass and Smith (1988) show, each of these debates is subject to various forms of political compromise at each juncture.

The more recent emergence of state conflict over the inclusion of values in Outcomes Based Education represents other instances (see the 1994 conflicts in Kentucky and Pennsylvania for example). We are not certain how these debates will continue, but the conflicts seem anchored in definitions of excellence and equity. Some attention is being paid to efficiency as states discover the high costs of new, and presumably more equitable, forms of testing. But states, as Boyd (1987) and Astuto and Clark (1986) argue, will probably continue to base policy on excellence as they debate the question of what students should be taught.

Federal political debates have the same flavor. Whether the issue is crystallized in multiple attempts to articulate the national goals (see for example the *Reaching the Goals* series produced by the various goals work groups of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education, [1993 and various dates]), or by the multiple attempts to establish national curricular standards, the federal drive for excellence seems well established unless it becomes enmeshed in technical wrangling (US General Accounting Office, 1993). Iannaccone (1985) was one of the first to suggest that a sea change had occurred in federal political values, and that excellence had replaced equity as the preferred symbol.

Whitt, Clark and Astuto (1986) agree and argue that public preference for the excellence symbols is high and likely to remain so. The 1993 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of public attitudes seems to reaffirm continuing public support for high curricular standards and the teaching of traditional values such as honesty, democracy, tolerance, patriotism and the like (*Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1993). This is not to argue that excellence as a preferred value has replaced equity entirely, only that equity now has to be viewed as a mitigating concern, rather than as the primary one, in federal debates about what children should be taught.

What is happening, then, is what has happened throughout our recent history. The American political debate over what children should be taught plays out at several levels,

and continues to revolve around the competing values of equity and excellence.

### Who should decide issues of school direction and policy?

This is a most interesting question, about which research in the politics of education has had much to say. Over the past 100 years or so some trends are apparent. As a country we have debated the appropriate role of citizens in the governance of schools. Governance of local school systems changed from a diffuse and decentralized mode in the late 1800s to a generally centralized and professionalized mode by the 1950s. Since the 1960s modes of governance in local school systems have become more diverse, serious questions have been raised about the political health and viability of locally elected school boards, and new forms of governing are being tried. We cannot even speculate on the outcome, except to remind readers that somewhere in the debate lie competing values of efficiency and equity. Efficiency may be represented by those who argue that local school boards, as now constituted, are not up to the task of governing a complex modern school system. Those who favor equity insist that the public's right to govern its schools in whatever ways it sees fit, and in however confusing or messy a way, must be protected.

We have seen also the increased capability of both state and federal agencies to intervene in local school systems. Their interventions have changed the character of decisions about schools. Finally, we have come to understand that schools are political arenas as well, and that while influenced by districts, states and the federal government, teachers, principals, and parents contend with one another over who will be in charge.

At the micropolitical level we have an increased understanding of the rules of political conflict (Bacharach and Lawler 1980, Ball 1987, Blase 1988, 1991, Marshall and Scribner 1991b, Malen and Ogawa 1988). But we do not have a particularly good idea of the content of these conflicts, and whether the conflicts are about matters of political ideology. We suspect that they are, and perhaps more often than on occasion (Iannaccone 1991, Spring 1988, Wolcott 1977). Even in its original use by Iannaccone (1975), micropolitics is concerned 'with the interaction and political ideologies of social systems of teachers, administrators and pupils within school buildings' (p. 43). So we suspect that struggles among teachers, parents and administrators are about important issues, however they may be disguised. Iannaccone (1991) suggests that teasing out those issues may be difficult, but worth the effort in the context of research on reform.

The politics of governing local school districts has been the focus of much attention by researchers. From early in the development of the politics of education, inquiry into the question of who decides has, more indirectly than not, surfaced questions of values. Berube and Gittel (1968) offer views of a struggle that was over parent influence, but about deeper ideological differences. Levin and his colleagues (1970) explored in depth the issue of community control of schools. Fein (1970) placed the issue squarely in the middle of ideological conflict. He wrote, 'But it is when the issue is political-ideological reform that the debate sharpens . . .' (p. 86). Clarifying his perspective, he argued that the liberal critics of public schools were in a quandary over how to deal with particularistic ideologies as presented by African-American parents. 'These several [universalistic] beliefs are directly at odds with the theses now propounded by defenders of community schools' (p. 90).

Mitchell (1974, 1980) has argued that school board members value differentially, and that their values are important to the outcomes of policy debates. Crain (1968) suggests that the values of school board members may have been one of the key variables explaining



the outcome of community conflict over school desegregation. Others (Cahill 1964, Kimbrough 1964) have made the same point. In fact, Cahill (1964) wrote, 'In the second place the political values of the participants encouraged them to select particular *kinds of political change* [emphasis in the original] for attention. In this case, differences in the value perspectives of the participants generated corresponding differences in patterns of selection' (p. 68). Heineke and Brand (1994) have completed careful analyses of the public speech of school board members, and have discovered conflict which arises out of value differences among incumbent school board members.

We can say with some certainty, then, that conflict over who should decide in local communities is important because it is conflict over whose values will influence school policy. Certainly the work done by those who use dissatisfaction theory begins there. These researchers (Chriswell and Mitchell 1980, Danis 1981, Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970, Lutz and Iannaccone 1978, Weninger and Stout 1989) have attempted to understand how shifts in dominant community values produce electoral conflict over school board seats, replacement of school superintendents, and major changes in policy directions in school districts.

Although we cannot be certain, we can speculate that the core values discussed in this chapter influence local political decisions in at least two ways. It may be that community values (equity, efficiency, for example) play an important role in structuring the rules of political conflict. It may also be that the values influence actions of key players, independent of the rules of political conflict (Boyd 1976).

The work of Tallerico (1989) and others (Cistone 1982, Danzberger *et al.* 1986, Danzberger *et al.* 1992, Lutz 1984, Lutz and Gresson 1980, Stout 1982) all suggest that the rules of political conflicts in local school districts are established as a function of community values articulated in various ways. Whether the values we have been discussing are the best ones to assess in trying to understand the complex political life of school districts is unanswerable in this space. Tallerico (1989) suggests that the push and pull of activist school board members interacting with school superintendents 'are powerful predecisional social processes that create the conditions and shape the choices of alternatives upon which policies and practices are constructed . . .' (p. 227).

At the state level, values appear to influence the rules of the game in much the same way. State legislatures may be open or closed, public- or private-regarding, accessible or inaccessible, structurally complex or simple, reliant on staff or not, and show differences in a variety of means and methods for controlling the flow of policy debate (Fuhrman and Rosenthal 1981, Marshall *et al.* 1989, Mazzoni 1993, Mitchell 1988, Stout 1986). Whether a reflection of the political cultures of the states or other variables is not clear, but it is clear that state policy makers are influenced by values when establishing rules of operation. So issues of who should decide are first decided by values which govern the debate about who can even be part of the debate. The most recent development has been the enthusiastic reinclusion of business leaders in framing state education policy (Proseminar on Education Policy 1991, Ray and Mickelson 1990).

State legislatures have, as well, worked to define the question of who should decide by attempting to change the structures of local decision-making. As creatures of the states, local school boards are inventions of legislatures, even though many local school boards predate admission of states to the Union. A variety of mechanisms has been proposed to break what many see as the obstructionist stranglehold of local school boards. Charter schools and vouchers are only the most recent efforts by state legislators to bypass school boards and put decisions more directly in the hands of parents, teachers, or both. Other mechanisms may become attractive as well (Danzberger *et al.* 1992) if charter schools and

vouchers become politically too difficult. Whether prompted by efforts to increase equity, excellence, or efficiency, choice seems to be the public symbol attaching to the proposals.

The federal government's attempt to define the question of who should decide needs to be analyzed by governmental branch. The courts seem to have been much interested in ensuring the rights of children and parents to participate significantly in decisions about schooling. Decisions which constrain professional discretion and expand student and parent discretion have come down with regularity in the past 25 years. The most obvious examples are drawn from decisions about the rights of children with handicapping conditions and who is to define an appropriate educational environment for them. We interpret these as decisions grounded in equity, and beginning certainly with the *Brown* decision.

Congress seems to be moving in several directions. Beginning with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, parent participation (an equity value, we believe) in school decisions has been promoted. Recent efforts to promulgate national curricular standards, prompted by efforts to establish national goals for schooling, seem anchored in concerns for excellence. But the obvious trade-off is argued to be with respect to equity if the curriculum standards are ethnocentric, or biased in other ways. A second trade-off is argued to be with choice. If schools are to adopt national standards and a national curriculum, buttressed by national tests, the argument is that the basic choice of parents to decide what children will be taught will have been eroded. By helping to promote the New American Schools Development Corporation and other innovations in school design, Congress also seems to be promoting both choice and excellence. Thus, it is hard to determine whether any value is predominant in Congress as a body.

The Executive Branch, certainly since the election of President Reagan and mitigated only partially by President Clinton, seems solidly to favor excellence and choice. Clark and Astuto (1986) have described these developments in detail.

Overall, the federal government seems increasingly willing to suggest that it should have a significant role in decisions about important matters. By establishing standards and the frameworks for debate at other levels, the federal government has substantial influence over who decides.

### Who should pay for schools?

As is true with other important questions, we assert that over 200 or so years of our history, the question of who should pay for schools has been generally driven by political values. In the case of finance, we believe that equity has been the preferred value. Although the earliest laws placed the burden for financing schools on the commonwealth, practice was far different. The schooling of children and youth has only gradually (in the long term) come to be accepted as a general public responsibility. Earlier efforts to fund schooling through parent obligations, lotteries, philanthropies, and the like gave way, over time, to levied taxes. Although Guthrie (1988) warns, 'It is virtually impossible to predict the valence of public concern for a policy-related value at a particular point in the future' (p. 386), we think that equity will continue to be a powerful force influencing the answer to the question. But aside from that very broad, and admittedly risky, prediction, debate over who should pay has intensified in the past 25 years.

At the micropolitical level, there is virtually no research to suggest the criteria used within a school to determine the non-budgeted source and use of funds. Bake sales, teacher purchases of materials, entrepreneurial principals, gifts from parents, student councils,

friends of the school, and business partners are all means and sources of extramural funds. Research by scholars in the politics of education is needed to understand how allocations of these revenues are made, both within schools and, either formally or informally, between schools. Although weighed against budgeted funds, such revenues are probably not significant. A story in *Education Week* indicates that the Council for Aid to Education estimated the value of gifts and services in 1990-91 to public schools by foundations, corporations, and individuals to be \$300 million, or less than 1% of annual school expenditures (*Education Week* 1992). Nonetheless they may represent important advantages to certain kinds of school communities, and the value of such gifts may rise in the future.

Mostly under threat of legal action, state debates about who should pay are driven by questions of equity, with some attention paid to questions of efficiency. Excellence is given symbolic prominence, but not sustained financial support. Whether adequacy (as a proxy for quality) can become grounds for either judicial or legislative action is undetermined, but adequacy has begun to appear as a political symbol (Jordan and Lyons 1992). The value preferences of legislators change, however, as allocation, rather than aggregation, decisions are made. Allocation decisions, it is argued, are driven first by quality, then by efficiency, and then by equity (Marshall *et al.* 1989).

The national value preference with respect to the question of who should pay seems to be the choice. Although the federal government's allocation decisions are not unlike those of the states, the question of who should pay has been decided for the most part by the courts. In the *Rodriguez* case (1973), the Court seems to have said that the federal interest in answering the question of who should pay for schools must defer to state decisions, thereby affirming state choice as the preferred value. The decision, of course, did not challenge the federal government's right to collect taxes and to disburse them to schools. Both efficiency and equity values underlie federal efforts to generate revenue. But the effects of court decisions are far greater than the small financial contribution made by Congress to public schools.

A question of some interest to future research in the politics of education may involve the politics of the delivery of integrated social services for children and youth. As argued in Gardner (1992) and Jehl and Kirst (1992), new forms of delivery of social services to youth are both possible and desirable, but problematic in their implementation. But implementation raises a set of questions about who should pay. These are both interagency and intergovernmental in character. Some services will be provided by municipalities or counties, paid for by general tax revenues; some may be provided by states. Some may be provided by school districts and some by the federal government. And so it can go, with various crosscuttings of sources of funds and mechanisms for delivering services. Thus the issue becomes much broader than that of who should pay for schooling. It becomes one of who should pay for general child welfare, particularly as child welfare can be shown to have significant influences over schooling. We believe that the politics of this question can be a focus of future research.

Although we cannot predict the value preferences of the future, public attitude may reflect a growing concern for equity. The 1993 Gallup Poll (Elam *et al.* 1993) suggests several threads of public concern for equity. In significant percentages, citizens favor allocating the same amount of money for all students, 'even if it means taking funding from some wealthy school districts and giving it to poor districts' (p. 142). They are moderately willing to pay more federal taxes to improve inner-city schools. They favor the provision by schools of a wide variety of social services. While citizens favor being able to choose schools within public school systems, they reject vouchers for private schools.

Stout (1993) contends that the issue is joined between those who argue for one or another free-market strategy and those who argue that strong government intervention is needed. Jennings (1992) has suggested that we may have emerged from about 20 years in which efforts to make schools better have not been accompanied by efforts to make them more equal. Although the general direction of the answer to this question has been to prefer equity, and although we have said that we believe it will continue to be so, we offer it as a large and inviting arena for research.

### Concluding remarks

Lasswell has characterized politics as 'who gets what, when and how' (1936). Easton (1965) has depicted the political system as determining the authoritative allocation of resources and values for society. The politics of education ultimately resolves distributive questions in a material sense, as well as in terms of the citizenry's competing values, attitudes, and ideologies.

As Guthrie (1988) explains, 'The United States political system must accommodate individuals and groups whose values and belief systems at their roots often conflict with one another' (p. 373). In this chapter we have attempted to document the evolution of the politics of education by reviewing five questions which both: (a) reflect some of the most enduring value conflicts pertinent to education, and (b) capture the broadest concepts underlying scholarship in the field:

- Who should go to school?
- What should be the purposes of schooling?
- What should children be taught?
- Who should decide issues of school direction and policy?
- Who should pay for schools?

We have focused on the values of efficiency, quality, equity, and choice. Wherever possible, we have illustrated the conflicts surrounding each with reference to the work of politics of education scholars. And we have included examples from the political arenas of schools, school districts, statehouses, and the federal government.

In tracking the development of the field in this way, it becomes clear that the contested nature of these questions persists. Major issues are not settled, nor are major conclusions without controversy. The nature of 'good' education, who should govern, who should benefit, and how it should all be financed are questions whose answers are neither commonly understood nor agreed upon. Research on the politics of education has made substantial progress in unraveling the complexities of competing value systems and education, yet it is evident that our understandings of these interrelationships will remain incomplete. While we have taken a broad historical perspective on these issues, ensuing chapters revisit many of these questions with more specific attention to the past 25 years of politics of education scholarship.

### Note

1. For example, Scribner and Englert (1977) did not discuss values of political ideologies in their introductory chapter of the NSSE Yearbook on politics and education. There is only one indexed reference to values in the Yearbook, and Iannaccone's (1977) chapter is the only one in which political ideology is discussed at any length. The more recent and massive bibliographic study of the field by Hastings (1980) does not index 'values' nor does it index 'political ideology'. Reading individual entries in the volume reveals that some attention was paid to the interaction of values and politics, but not as a direct question for examination. *The Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Boyan 1988) provides only one index reference to 'values' and that reference attaches to a discussion of models of organization, not to politics and education. The five chapters on politics and policy are essentially silent on political ideology as a force in educational politics. Our effort to place the contents of research in the politics of education within the framework we have chosen may, therefore, seem forced on occasion. We make no apologies for that.

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