Perspectives in Education—1962

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Dr. Clopton speaks from a unique perspective in this article: thirty-five years in Hawaii as an educator in many different capacities. He received his doctorate from Northwestern University in 1946. At the University of Hawaii he has served in various roles. He is Professor of Education and is now the Chairman of the Department of History and Philosophy of Education.

To view the educational scene in 1962 with proper perspective is a task of rather awesome proportion. In discussing such a topic, one might well examine first the terms—not so much to define as to elucidate. Inquiry into the derivation of a word often serves to clarify ideas selected as referents. Here we note that *perspective* derives from the Latin word *perspicere,* which in turn is a combination of the preposition *per,* meaning "through" or "into," and the verb *spicere*, meaning "to look at." Perspective denotes, then, the activity of "looking through," or "looking closely into," of "examining, viewing, or beholding critically."

Apparently the English derivative *perspective* first came into use in the sixteenth century as a mathematical term. Dee, in 1570, wrote that "Perspective is an Art Mathematicall which demonstrateth the manner and the properties of all Radiations, Direct, Broken, and Reflected."

One can, without difficulty, see the connections between this definition and the more modern technical definition of perspective as "the art of delineating objects upon a plane surface so that the drawing produces the same impression of apparent relative positions and magnitudes, or of distance, as do the actual objects when viewed from a particular point."

Another step takes us then to the common meaning of perspective today: "the appearance presented by visible objects, in regard to relative position, apparent distance, etc." One further step enables us to dispense with the concept of "visible object," and to define perspective as "the relation or proportion in which the parts of a subject are viewed by the mind; the aspect of a matter or object from a particular mental point of view." (All quotations are from the *New Oxford Dictionary.*)

No matter what subject we concern ourselves with, the *meaning* we attach to it is a matter of *relationships.* The broader, more abstract, or more inclusive the subject of our inquiry, the more imperative that we seek to ascertain relationships, that we identify and maintain the *point of view* which, in the terms of our definition, establishes or determines the nature of the relationships, discernible from that particular coign of vantage.

It is significant that the name of the journal which is being launched with this issue has *perspectives* in its plural form. While any matter must be seen in perspective if we are to derive meaning from our observation, a subject as intricate and as complex as education must be viewed from *many* points of view, must be seen in many perspectives; furthermore, the resulting meanings must be constantly coordinated, arranged and rearranged to provide ever deepening insights and understanding.

Even when our examination is limited to so circumscribed a geographical area as Hawaii, it simply is not possible to make any sense out of what we see until we have viewed the situation in a series of complementary perspectives.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Anything approaching a clear understanding of the educational scene in Hawaii requires the long perspective of history, since Hawaii is, along with Massachusetts and Illinois and Kansas and California, in the Western European tradition. But there are aspects of the Hawaiian picture which are baffling even to persons who have a grasp of the history of educational thought in its broader outlines.

The administrative organization of Hawaii's public schools, for example, with its high degree of centralization, is much easier to understand when one recalls that the system of tax-supported public schools came into existence in 1841, the year Kamehameha III promulgated the first constitution. This was barely two decades after the first efforts to reduce the Hawaiian language to written form —but, significantly, two decades during which virtually the entire population, adult as well as youth,

had mastered the rudiments of literacy. The king and his chiefs, under the tutelage of Protestant missionaries from New England, were forging a modern constitutional government for a tiny kingdom numbering far fewer than 100,000 people. No other plan than a centralized administration, headed by a minister in the king's cabinet, would have been even remotely feasible.

Even a slight acquaintance with the circumstances attendant on the transition from Kingdom to Republic in 1893, from Republic to a United States Territory in 1898, and from Territory to State in 1959, enables one to understand the background of the centralized pattern of educational administration so different from that in the other 49 states.

We understand more about Hawaii's schools when we assess the many surveys which have been made of the school system. The first report was made by the commission appointed by President McKinley to inspect the Hawaiian Islands before the Organic Act was drafted. The Commission reported that the school system was already thoroughly American in spirit and in practice and recommended that no changes be made in the schools when Hawaii came under the United States flag.

Later recommendations were made by the Federal Surveys of Education in 1920 and 1930, and by the Community Survey of 1940. It is important, in understanding organizational and operational revisions, to be acquainted with the Draper-Hayden survey in 1947, with the Stanford survey conducted in 1957, as well as with recommendations which have been offered by self-appointed "survey groups" from time to time.

Matters other than administrative patterns also come into clearer focus when viewed in historical perspective. It is one thing to know, for example, that Hawaii's public schools have had a single salary schedule since 1941, but quite another to know some of the difficulties that had to be overcome and some of the compromises that had to be made in order to get it. Why, for example, was it necessary to grant Class III salary status to all high school teachers who were in service in 1941, even when teachers on other levels (and high school teachers subsequently employed) had to have a year's professional preparation beyond the bachelor's degree to qualify for Class III? To what extent may this circumstance have influenced high school teachers' attitudes toward further college course work?

How does it happen that in a system which for more than 30 years has required five years of preparation for professional certification, more than a third of the teachers have less than the required background for teaching? Again, rather recent historical developments help to clear up the mystery. Since no requirement has ever been retroactive, there are still a few survivors among public school teachers from the era, no more than 42 years ago, when students graduating from the eighth grade could choose whether to go to high school *or* to Normal School. Those who chose Normal School graduated and received teachers' certificates at 17 or 18 years of age, with a total of twelve years of schooling. A much larger number survive from the following period, embracing most of the twenties, when the period of Normal School training was two years following graduation from high school.

But what of the obviously younger teachers who do not hold professional certificates? What of the act passed by the legislature in 1960, directing that uncertificated teachers who had served ten years on Temporary Teachers' Agreements be granted permanent tenure? To understand such situations it is necessary to know about the loss of teachers to more lucrative occupations during the war years, about the increase in school enrollments so rapid that it was impossible to prepare teachers rapidly enough to meet the need, and about the consequent necessity to employ as teachers not only those who met minimum Class III requirements, but even a few who had virtually no college preparation at all.

Even more important for gaining sound insight into some of our current educational problems is the ability to see in broad perspective the evolution of certain social attitudes and dispositions, and valid appraisal of these, in turn, requires knowledge—and the perspective—of certain economic and social institutions.

It is easy enough, for example, to be indignant that Hawaii spends proportionately less on secondary education than do most of the other states, and a great deal less on higher education. It is not unusual nowadays for people to speak of "paternalism" with harsh overtones of condemnation, and to impute ill-will or lack of social conscience to those among us who are still honestly convinced that "things were better" in the days when a small minority qualified to do so made the important decisions of politics and social policy. Seeing the situation in perspective need not make us complacent, nor weaken our determination to bring about improvements, but it can enable us to understand how the present situation came about, and thus to work more intelligently and more effectively toward betterment —without carrying an unnecessary load of bitterness and resentment on our shoulders as we do so.

If we know enough about social

and economic developments in these islands during the half century preceding the great depression of 1930, we might conclude that paternalism was a phase through which we had to go—and fortunately it was, primarily, an enlightened and benevolent paternalism, strongly influenced by a sense of individual responsibility, attributable undoubtedly to our missionary heritage.

We need to see, also in perspective, the sequence of events which in the last thirty years or so has amounted to nothing less than a social and political revolution — a revolution which in effect has been a telescoped and accelerated version of the social and political revolution through which the nation as a whole has gone in a period three times as long. When we see things in this perspective, we can understand more clearly why high school enrollments in Hawaii once lagged behind those in other parts of the United States. When graduation from high school was a general expectation elsewhere, it was still an exception here.

We can also understand—without approving—the effort to curtail high school attendance in the early thirties, when one fifth of the pupils completing the ninth grade were denied admission to senior high schools, when those who did go to high school had to pay tuition. Incidentally, when we use the perspective which brings into focus the social and political revolution already mentioned, we can also understand why these restrictions were so short-lived.

When we bring together the insights afforded by these perspectives, it is easier to understand some of the problems of gaining acceptance for the ideal of secondary schooling for all youth, of providing facilities, of preparing teachers, and of securing financial support. Having had so much farther to come in so much shorter time, Hawaii has been subjected to a relatively greater strain in order to close the gap.

Historical perspective also enables us to understand—without agreeing with—the attitude which prevailed until fairly recently that secondary, and more particularly, higher education was something provided *for* those who could profit from it—a sort of *largesse* made possible by the generosity and good disposition of the large taxpayers. The concept of higher education as an investment of its own funds by the entire community, made in the interests of the total welfare of the state, has evolved in Hawaii only in very recent years.

These are only a few examples —but perhaps they are sufficient to illustrate the point that historical perspective is indispensable to any clear conception of the educational situation in which we find ourselves in Hawaii in 1962. Essential as it is, however, historical perspective is not sufficient.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

We cannot fully sense the shape and complexion of our own educational problems, even when we see them in historical perspective unless at the same time we look at them closely in comparison with the educational problems and progress of other areas and other peoples. We need to keep in view the situations confronting other American communities, and to be aware of the ways in which these communities are coping with their problems.

In Hawaii there is a special need for us to cultivate this particular perspective. We have tended to be ambivalent in this regard — on the one hand capitalizing on our isolation from the rest of the country and emphasizing the "unique" and "peculiar" aspects of our problems, and on the other hand, assuming that "an expert is someone who comes from 2,000 miles away," and at times subordinating our own judgment to the counsel of persons whose expertise seems to be a function of the distance of their home base from Honolulu!

We do need to look at our problems with reference to what goes on in Hagerstown and Newport and San Francisco. We need to compare our educational problems and our projected solutions with those in centers in which significant educational experimentation is taking place. We need to send many more educators than we ever have sent to make extended observations of team teaching on the elementary level, and of new plans of curriculum organization and new methods of instruction in secondary schools, such as those in Jefferson County in Colorado, or in some of the newer high schools which are experimenting with various versions of the "Trump Plan." We need to send not only observers but exchange teachers to school systems that are using various devices—language laboratories, teaching machines, and different kinds of programmed learning.

Our purpose in doing these things should not be to find *the* answers, or to bring home solutions, but to seek new vantage points from which we can view our own problems in perspective, and in so doing derive meanings which can be combined with the insights we gain in looking at the same problems in other perspectives.

We need to see our own situation from a point of view from which we can also take accurate account of what is coming out of the increasing number of university centers in which significant research is carried on, and in which more and more promising plans

for curriculum organization are being evolved. We need to study and to evaluate the possibilities for our own situations of such developments as the physics curriculum and instructional materials developed by the Physical Science Study Committee with headquarters at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Biological Science Curriculum Study at the University of Colorado, the work done on the Chemical Bond Approach Project at Earlham College, the Chemical Education Materials Study at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California, and the revolutionary proposals for teaching mathematics being made by the University of Illinois Committee on School Mathematics, the School Mathematics Study Group at Yale, the University of Maryland Mathematics Project, and similar undertakings at Ball State Teachers College and Florida State. We need to validate our own thinking about our own problems by continually checking it against the best thinking that is being done elsewhere.

It is obvious that we are improving in our ability to use comparisons to bring our own problems into focus—that is to say, we are more disposed to employ the perspective of comparison than was the case a few years ago. We need, however, to refine our techniques still further, and to cultivate even more of a disposition to use this particular perspective.

What we have hardly done at all is to seek to see our educational problems from the points of view of those of other nations. A perspective that would link our problems with the evolving situation in the nations of both Europe and Asia might be rewarding indeed. We have tended to be complacent about our own relative advancement, to assume that the chief reason for concerning ourselves with the problems of other areas is either to confirm our own superiority, or to put ourselves in a position to render to less advanced nations assistance out of our superior wisdom and advanced practices. A few of us are beginning to realize that a comparison of our own situation with that of one or more of the "underdeveloped" nations of the Orient, for example, can be invaluable in bringing our problems into clearer focus, or even to seeing them in an entirely new light.

In the struggle to replace curriculum organization and materials which may have been more or less appropriate to an earlier stage of our own social development, but which are inadequate or irrelevant to our present needs, we can profit by contemplating the educational situation in India, where a system of schooling was transplanted from Britain with little consideration of the needs or resources of Indian culture. As we face the problems of building one nation out of people from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds without neglecting the potential contributions of these backgrounds to an emerging and dynamic culture, we can gain insight by studying the different means by which such countries as Malaya and Indonesia are seeking to cope with problems similar to, but even more complex than, our own.

When we are concerned, as we must be, with the function of education as an instrument of social change, we can locate rich resources for our own theoretical considerations in the fascinating spectacle of some of the most rapid and complete social changes the world has ever witnessed in the Pacific Islands to the west and south of us. Or if our concern be with the possibility of using education deliberately as a tool for social and ideological reconstruction, what more telling example can we find than Communist China? If we seek light on the possibility of teachers as an organized group wielding influence in affairs of the state even out of proportion to their numbers, the example of Japan can be informative. Our own problem of church-state relationship in relation to public schools—by no means a settled issue, as witness recent controversies in the Congress—can be brought into sharper focus when viewed in comparison with the similar problem in the Islamic nations of Southeast Asia.

As with historical perspective, the list of examples could be multiplied endlessly. The point made here is that our own problems come into focus only when seen in perspective—and the whole field of comparative education offers innumerable points of vantage from which we can gain this perspective.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Certainly we need to view our educational scene from the vantage point of what is known about psychology. Actually we know very little about human learning—but when we view classroom practice from the point of view of what little we do know, much of it is distressingly bad.

We do know, for example, that children who continually experience failure in their school work learn to expect failure, and that eventually they stop trying and lose all interest in learning. Conversely, we know that the child who is not allowed to experience —or to recognize—failure does not learn how to cope with the failures he will inevitably encounter if he survives childhood. Yet we see all about us cases of some children whose school experience is

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