Education and Decision-Making

This issue of *Educational Perspectives* reflects a search for direction and commitment in the area of educational decision-making. The focus is upon Hawaii's public school system. Demands for change are heard daily by Hawaii's educators. Understanding the forms of authority and responsibility for decision-making and the process of decision-making itself is essential if change is to be brought about effectively and efficiently.

Back in 1922 John Dewey wrote that "conflict and uncertainty are ultimate traits" of human action. Those contributors to this issue who have written out of their experience at centers of decision-making indicate that Dewey's comment is inclusive of education.

The struggle for consensus through which conflict and uncertainty are transformed into purposeful human action proceeds in the face of different meanings attached to ideals and ideas, customs, traditions and institutions. In order to achieve consensus on and commitment to the way in which various authority roles are to be organized, sharing and comparing experiences and ideas are essential. This issue of *Perspectives* reflects, serious effort to that end. The articles contain considerable insight into the formal and informal power structure of Hawaii's public school system. With this knowledge, and a familiarity with the possible strategies of decision-making, change and improvement can be effected.

Although Hawaii's highly centralized educational system is by no means totally monolithic in the sense that all authority and responsibility must be exercised at the top, it is a system in which policy and decision-making is generally believed to be the prerogative of those at the top. But several of the following articles give evidence of a re-distribution and broadening of authority and responsibility. This re-alignment of power is related to the increasing differentiation in structure and function not only of the educational enterprise but of the rest of Hawaii's society as well. Urbanization and industrialization demand more complex patterns of human action and new intermediate levels of authority and responsibilities. Political and economic power have been substantially re-distributed since World War II; the power to make policies and decisions in education is likewise being re-distributed.

Historically, it was primarily education that offered the non-Caucasian in the Islands the promise of improved status, security and acceptance. In more recent times the aspirations of the Island's people have been closely linked to politics. That politics and education have become interwoven is not surprising; that the understanding of the inter-relationships of politics and education has not kept pace is regrettable. Hopefully the following articles will contribute somewhat to that understanding and stimulate greater interest in this area of educational concern.

At best, however, only a small beginning in the above mentioned concerns is possible within the scope of this issue, for this issue does not include an analysis and reflection upon the various roles in decision-making of teachers' organizations, Parent-Teacher Associations, accrediting associations, research agencies, newspapers and of foundations. Neither has the role of the College of Education been included. The College is in a transitional phase and its role in policy-making needs exploration and clarification. Perhaps a future issue of *Perspectives* will be devoted to creating a better understanding of these less "visible" centers of influence. Also included might be a survey of the indirect influences on policy matters of the private prestige schools in the Islands.

Unless the sources of authority are known and understood, and unless roles and responsibilities for decision-making are clearly delineated, we will invest our confidence and hopes in public education blindly. Although humanizing and liberating educational programs will not follow automatically from an understanding of the kinds and sources of power affecting education, hopefully, continuation of improvement in educational programs will be enhanced by such understanding. This issue is dedicated to that aim.

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