

## P R E F A C E

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Our leaders tell us that we live in precarious times and so we do. There have been acts of terrorism and rumors of acts of terrorism. The twenty-first century, our leaders tell us, has ushered a new and virulent threat to the civilized world and extreme measure are needed to deal with it. Security, both individual and collective, has been made the foremost concern of the day, even to the point of compromising civil liberties. The Patriot Act, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are some of the symptoms of this national nightmare. This is part of the political and cultural climate in which we are releasing the 2003-2004 volume of *Educational Change*.

Of course, the journal is primarily concerned with educational issues but who can doubt that these educational issues are intertwined with the entire social order and must of necessity influence it and be influenced by it in turn. Some of the above bear on the nature of citizenship and in some way all of the above are relevant to the issue of financing and taxation. Still all of these placed in the larger social context raise issues of civic-mindedness, character and leadership.

In view of these relations it might be useful to begin by calling attention to two observations that show and put in relief two central concerns for our social order. These two observations are so integral to the foundation of our political institution that they determine the nature of civilized life in the U. S.

The first of these observations is from Aristotle's *Politics*, a foundational text in western political thought. It is a concluding remark and a summary of the difference between "correct" and "deviant" constitutions. The second observation is from James Madison's "Federalist - 10," one of the 85 *Federalist Papers*, a foundational document in the development of U.S. political thought and institutions.

Aristotle's observation calls attention to the critical mark that separates the right types of constitutions from the perverted types. Madison's focuses on the knotty issue of taxation. Placing the texts of these observations side by side allows one to focus on the relation between institutional structures and consequences. It forces one to think about structures (patterns or forms) and how these bear on the issue of justice and fairness. These concerns are at the center of Professor John Yinger's essay on "State Aid and the Pursuit of Educational Equity: Lessons for New York," which is the opening piece of the present volume of *Educational Change*. In varying degrees one may find similar connections in the other contributions to the present volume.

Among the many ways that Aristotle looks at constitutions, one is from the perspective of whether a constitution aims at promoting the common good or only the good of the rulers. In Book III, Chapter VI of *Politics*, Aristotle crystallizes the critical difference between "right" types and "deviant" types of constitutions as follows:

"It is clear then that those constitutions which aim at the common good are right, as being in accord with absolute justice; while those which aim only at the good of the rulers are wrong. They are all deviations from the right constitutions. They are like the rule of the master over slave whereas the state is an association of free men." [Aristotle, *The Politics*, p. 189, Book III, Chapter VI, 1279a 16]

If one accepts Aristotle's view with respect to what makes a constitution "right," i.e. the "aim at the common good," then according to his analysis of causes the common good is the final cause (end) of the constitution. In turn it will determine the arrangements of the other causes, i.e. formal cause (form, shape, structure), material cause (matter or what the state is made out of, i.e. citizen - body), and the efficient cause (what brings it into being). Superficially one could say that the other three causes (formal, material, and efficient) are the means for the final cause or end. It should be clear that for Aristotle the

end or final cause of a correct constitution is not just any end but one which is in accord with justice. Applying Aristotle's causal analysis to constitutions would yield the following correspondences:

- (a) final cause -the common good
- (b) formal cause -structural arrangements such as procedures and methods for establishing sovereignty or offices
- (c) material cause -the citizen body
- (d) efficient cause -the founders or law givers

When we integrate these considerations with the following observation from Madison's "Federalist - 10" Professor Yinger's comments on school finance acquire a self-evident rationale that flow from our own foundational documents:

"The apportionment of taxes on the various descriptions of property is an act which seems to require the most exact impartiality; yet there is, perhaps, no legislative act in which greater opportunity and temptation are given to a predominant party to trample on the rules of justice. Every shilling with which they overburden the inferior number is a shilling saved to their own pockets." [*Federalist Papers*, p. 48.]

One way to approach Aristotle's and Madison's passages is to view them as two sides of the issue of justice, i.e. justice procedurally established by a right type of constitution which holds in check arbitrariness, force and fraud in the distribution of goods and resources and the same would go for retribution. Both statements assume some standard or criterion which is embedded in the statements themselves. In Aristotle we find the phrase "in accord with absolute justice" whereas Madison uses "trample on the rules of justice." In both cases the attempt is to indicate the correctness of justice in contrast to the deviance of injustice. The same underlying assumption seems to be

inherent in Professor Yinger's discussion of the New York State education aid formula. Professor Yinger's analysis relies on the diversity of educational outcomes and cost differences from school district to school district across the state. One consequence of this is that school districts are vying for the same scarce funds, the distribution of which relies on an aid formula that privileges the less needy school districts and harms the more vulnerable ones. Since these funds are ultimately raised through taxation it leads to the phenomena of factions articulated by Madison in "Federalist - 10":

"But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors, and those who are debtors, fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, activated by different sentiments and views." [*Federalist Papers*, p. 47.]

In view of these diverse factions that are the inevitable consequences of civilized societies, Madison opts for constitutional structures we know as federalism as a way of mitigating and controlling the undesirable effects of factions (usually destructive to popular government according to Madison). Without going into the specifics of Madison's argument it is important to add that constitutional structures of the kind envisioned by Madison were designed to serve as a bulwark and an obstacle to the mischief of factions. Of course disagreement about the effectiveness of the proposed structures was and is still inevitable.

The significance of these considerations with respect to Professor Yinger's analysis of the foundation aid formula is that it shows how such a structure works and makes explicit both its strengths and weaknesses. By tracing out the consequence of the formula (struc-

ture) Professor Yinger shows that it (formula) fails to accomplish its intended purpose (final cause) of “educational equity” across the school districts in New York State; and in addition to the failure of actualizing “educational equity” it also exhibits the state’s adequacy standards as being at such a pitifully low level as to call into question the state’s commitment to education.

Informally, one could give the following overview of Dr. Yinger’s analysis of the aid formula. The aim of state aid to school districts is designed to meet some established adequacy standard. If a district is unable to raise the required revenue to meet the established standard the state makes up the difference for those districts with inadequate funds which is due to an inadequate tax base. However, those districts with large tax bases need little or no aid. This is the rationale of the foundation aid formula and it fulfills its rationale if it succeeds in achieving its end, i.e. educational adequacy across the entire state. Dr. Yinger continues his analysis of the factors (constants and variables) that comprise the foundation aid formula so that one can appreciate the four critical decisions states must face in designing an aid formula which aims at achieving not only educational equity across the state, but also educational adequacy.

The first of these decisions is that “each state must decide how much spending is adequate,” [Yinger, p. 3] in order to achieve what is expected of the school districts. This is in accord with a principle articulated in the *Federalist Papers* that one must be provided with the means to achieve what is expected of it. The second decision deals with setting a spending level for adequacy that reflects the education cost not for an average school district but for each school district. Ignoring this issue will condemn high cost districts to an indefinite state of inadequate student performance. Dr. Yinger underscores the issue with this section’s closing statement that “One of the great challenges in education finance is to develop methods that are acceptable to policy makers and that accurately reflect educational cost variation.” [Yinger, p. 5] The third decision addresses the need for a required minimum tax rate. Professor Yinger suggests that without such a minimum

“the foundation level of spending will not be achieved.” [Yinger, p. 5] In part this is due to the behavioral responses of voters and school officials who use education state aid to cut “school property tax rate and property taxes” [Yinger, p. 8] as it is happening in 2004 in part because of such a late budget. Finally, the fourth critical decision is to determine “how to distribute the burden of paying for a program that brings all districts up to an adequate education.” [Yinger, p. 6]

Through the lenses of these four critical issues Professor Yinger examines the educational landscape in New York State and finds that (1) “the spending level accepted as adequate is far too low” [Yinger, p. 7], (2) “the education cost adjustments in the current state aid formulas are not satisfactory” [Yinger, p. 7-8], (3) “New York does not require school districts to levy a minimum property tax rate” [Yinger, p. 8] and (4) “the burden for financing state aid to education in New York is not distributed in a fair manner” [Yinger, p. 8-9].

Accepting the above key decisions and the educational landscape as characterized above Professor Yinger reaches a four prong approach to fix education finance in New York State: (1) “the state should set a high standard for an adequate education, (2) “the state should get serious about adjusting its aid for education costs, (3) “the state should require a minimum contribution from all school districts” [Yinger, p. 9] and the most problematic (4) “the state should improve the fairness of the education finance system not only by shifting aid away from the wealthy suburbs and other low-need district, by raising additional money with broad-based state taxes (especially the income tax) and reforming (or even eliminating) the STAR Program” [Yinger, p. 9-10].

Professor Yinger’s article zones in on a topic which has become for New York State the issue of the day to the point of even preventing the passage of a state budget. It is apparent, given the recent court rulings, that New York State has ignored its obligations to the education of its children. If the state continues on the same path one can expect conditions to deteriorate even further. Perhaps it is too much

to suggest that by redeeming education the state might also reclaim and revitalize its cities and their civic life.

Another aspect of educational financing at the university level is treated by Professor Lars Mazzola in the article “Chasing Down Funny Numbers: More Than a Part Time Job.” In his humorous but sad analysis he deals with the insidious phenomena of Part-Time faculty as (once thought of as a temporary stop gap measure) carrying a considerable burden of the work of educational institutions without being an integral part of these institutions either in terms of compensation, recognition or influence. Dr. Mazzola compares the plight of Part-Time faculty to “resident aliens” while their compensation to “less than the janitors.” The data Dr. Mazzola provides speak loud and clear. A chart that compares salary differentials among the various ranks within the SUNY system shows the Chancellor with a yearly salary of \$315,000.00 and the lowly Part-Timers teaching 12 credit hours per year with a salary of \$8,400.00. The ratio between the highest and the lowest is 25:1. According to contemporary economic theory an ideal ratio is about 10:1. This is only one of the many intriguing facts with which Professor Mazzola confronts us while he engages us to reflect on the changing landscape in higher education in which more and more teaching is done by low paid Part-Time faculty.

Dr. David Granger examines the stance of the positivist placing it in dialectical relationships with that of the skeptic. His purpose is to tease out and inform the human condition. By using Stanley Cavell’s perspective, he tries to argue that there are critical consequences for educators who could benefit both by avoiding the smugness of the positivist and the defeatism of the absolute skeptic. This ties one to the tradition of John Dewey in which teachers pursue their profession engaged in a lifeworld riddled with conflict and uncertainty while “responding to the best possibilities of this person or thing.” [p. 22] This cognitive stance or attitude recognizes and acknowledges “that the demand for hard evidence or proof where certain matters are concerned is unreasonable, even pathological, disparaging to the human condition and our everyday lifeworld.” [p. 22 ]

Professor Barbara Lowe comes from the same perspective but focuses on the possibilities that can arise in educational contexts when educators acquire the “habit of using intelligence fully.” Her salutatory message is that human beings do not apprehend their surroundings (animals and other objects) in a disinterested, detached and psychically distant state. This characterization is only a construction (a posture that is useful in science) however in educational contexts it would, as Professor Granger suggested, put students into metaphoric cages with teachers poking and prodding at them. In view of this Professor Lowe characterizes the relationship between teacher and student as transactional, mutually open to new beneficent connections and possibilities in an uncertain universe that defies predictability, yet amenable to the intervention of the “habit of using intelligence.”

The contribution by Daniel Patrone on “Contingency, Phronesis, and Character Education: A Restatement of the Value of a Traditional Liberal Arts Education” is a reaction to David Granger’s article, “Back to the Future: Coming to Terms with the Claims of History and Expediency in Recent Character Education Initiatives,” which appeared in the Spring 2001-2002 volume of this publication. Professor Patrone argues against what he considers to be the underlying claims that drive and support David Granger’s analysis of traditionalism. The first of these claims is that traditionalism “is incompatible with what is good in contemporary society and current moral thinking,” and the second claim is that valuing “traditions as traditions is to ignore and to perpetuate what is rotten in human history.” [p. 58] These claims view traditional morality as “monistic, absolutistic and universalistic” [p. 58] and supposedly, traditional morality “violate[s] our fundamental, pluralistic, democratic values.” [p. 58]

However, Professor Patrone indicates that one (traditionalist) need not be committed to a “fixed constellation of beliefs, principles, values or virtues,” in short an absolutistic morality, the stance implicit in Professor Granger’s analysis. Dr. Patrone contends that such an interpretation is only one of a number of possible views of traditional morality. He then proceeds to argue for a view that starts from an Ar-

istotelian standpoint and tries to avoid the problems which Professor Granger's interpretation of traditional morality uncovered.

In addition, this volume of *Educational Change* contains the winning essays of the fifth and sixth New York State Foundations of Education Association Annual Essay Contest. The winners of these were John Kung, a graduate student at Queens College, and Joyce E. Stotts, a graduate student at Nazareth College, respectively. The Association has decided to temporarily suspend the contest with the hope of revisiting and restructuring it at a later date. This volume closes with a review by Anthony Roda of *The Art of Humane Education* by Donald Philip Verene.

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