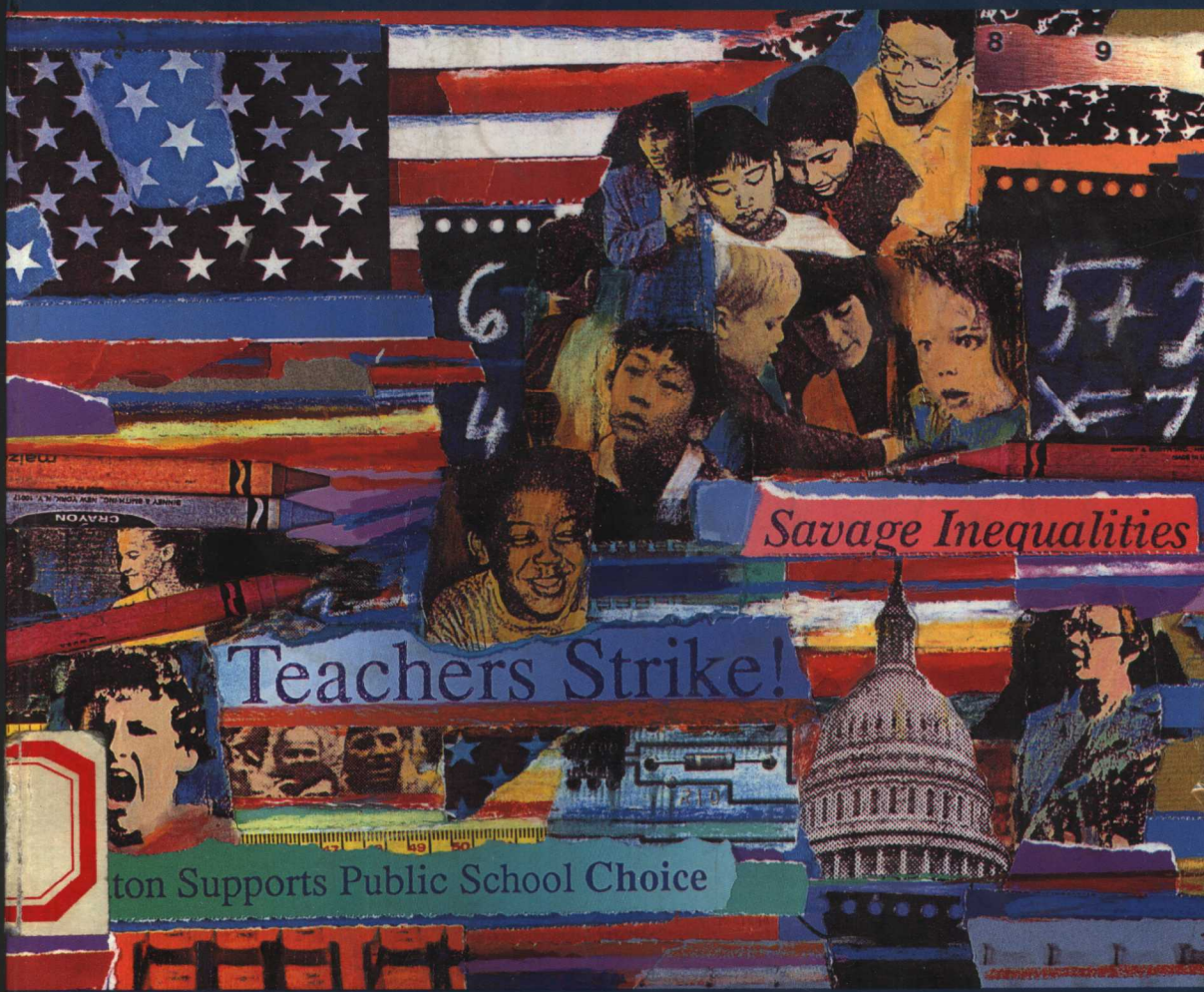
SIXTH EDITION

AMERICAN EDUCATION

JOEL SPRING



American Education

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Preface

THE MODERN VERSUS THE POSTMODERN TEXTBOOK

On American soil, the modern textbook was born in the seventeenth century with the publication of the *New England Primer*. The authoritarian methodology of the book set the tone for future textbooks. Students were required to memorize and recite phrases such as, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." The book was not designed to entertain, but was organized for memorization. Students probably found themselves nodding off to sleep as they tried to concentrate on the book's dull prose. It would almost seem that the birth of the modern textbook was accompanied by a license to torture students.

Things got worse by the twentieth century. At least earlier textbooks were not contaminated by a false sense of being scientific and by the managerial approaches of modern corporations. In their quest to be scientific, educators stripped textbooks of language that did not fit into preconceived word lists. Adding the final touch to making modern textbooks the most boring reading in the world, publishers introduced concepts of team management to the writing process. Individual authorship was replaced with teams of technical writers working under the direction of an editor. The author supplied the ideas and the book was written by the team. Created in this manner, textbooks sunk to their lowest levels.

The postmodern textbook breaks with these traditions. While still being concerned with instruction, the postmodern textbook avoids an authoritarian approach to knowledge and a format designed for memorization of content. In "From the Ivory Tower to the Bottom Line: College Textbook Publishing from an Editor's Perspective," Naomi Silverman outlines five characteristics

of the postmodern textbook.[1] First, the postmodern textbook is concerned with creating a dialogue between the student and the text. While information and data are transmitted to the reader, on another level the meaning of the text is in the interaction between the reader and the text. Second, postmodern textbook writers do not claim they are presenting an "authoritative, neutral, objective, unchanging source of knowledge." In fact, a problem with modern textbooks is that they appear to be presenting truth to the reader when an official canon of truth does not exist in most fields of knowledge. Third, the postmodern textbook is viewed as an original piece of scholarship as opposed to a compendium of supposedly objective information. Authors provide their own interpretation and synthesis of material. Fourth, the postmodern text places knowledge in a context through the discussion of a history of ideas and the impact of social and political forces on the material. And last, the author is concerned about telling a story through the introduction of anecdotal and narrative material. The postmodern textbook provides the student with the opportunity for critical thinking and intellectual enjoyment.

My revision of *American Education* reflects Silverman's ideas regarding the postmodern textbook. The book is organized to raise questions in the mind of the reader and create a dialogue with the text. The goal is to have the reader think about the material—not to memorize for a multiple choice test. Most sections of the book contain my original interpretations of the material. Rather than a separate section on the history of education, I have woven historical material into each chapter. The historical background provides a context for understanding the ideas and information being presented. And finally, I use a narrative style in many chapters with a reliance on anecdotal material. My goal is to have readers think about the field of education and derive intellectual pleasure from engaging in a debate with the text.

CHANGES IN THE SIXTH EDITION

Multicultural Education

Based on my experience teaching undergraduate courses in multicultural education, I added a new Chapter 6, "Multicultural Education," to the Sixth Edition of *American Education*. In teaching multicultural education I found it useful to distinguish between the educational problems confronting immigrants and those confronting cultures that are dominated by American-European culture, such as Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans. Consequently, Chapter 6 opens with a section discussing the experience of new immigrants which is followed by a discus-

[1] Naomi Silverman, "From the Ivory Tower to the Bottom Line: College Textbook Publishing from an Editor's Perspective," *Perspectives on Textbooks and Society*, edited by Philip Altbach et al. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992.

sion of the educational problems confronting dominated groups. The remaining sections discuss possible educational solutions facing new immigrants and dominated groups including: "Ethnocentric Education," "Issues of Language," "Bicultural Education," and "Multicultural Education."

Inequality of Educational Opportunity

Issues involving segregation and second generation segregation are now discussed in Chapter 5. In addition to my previous discussion of the struggles for equal educational opportunities by African Americans, I have added to Chapter 5 sections titled: "Native Americans," "Mexican Americans," and "Students with Special Needs."

Education and the Job Market

The discussion of the relationship between education and the social structure in Chapter 4 was updated by eliminating dated material on social mobility and income, and replacing it with discussions of the labor market in the 1990s and the interconnection between education, the new labor market, and the global economy. In addition, Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* generated a great deal of discussion about the inequality of educational opportunities between school districts. Consequently, I added a section to Chapter 4 on "Savage Inequalities." And, because of the recent debate on eliminating tracking, I added to Chapter 4 a section titled: "Should Tracking and Ability Grouping Be Abolished?"

The Profession of Teaching

Besides updating material on teachers and teaching, I added a section to Chapter 2 on recent changes in the professional model of teaching titled: "Teachers as Researchers and Scholars." I finely tuned material in other sections of Chapter 2 to produce two new sections titled: "The Working Conditions of Teachers" and "Teacher Burnout." Reflecting current trends that affect classroom practices, I added two new sections to Chapter 10 titled: "National Standards" and "Critical Pedagogy."

Restructuring and the Politics of Education

Restructuring continues to be the magic word in school reform, and, consequently, I added to Chapter 7 a section on "Charter Schools" which, in combination with previous sections on "Site-Based Management" and "Choice," rounds out a discussion of the issue. Because of the recent criticism of the educational bureaucracy, I refined existing material in Chapter 7 to produce a new section titled: "The Educational Bureaucracy." Also, in response to the restructuring agenda, I added two new sections to Chapter 8 on "The Politics of State Education" and "The Nationalization of State Policies."

With the election of President Bill Clinton in 1992, I had to change my discussion of educational goals for the 1990s in Chapter 1 and on national educational politics in Chapter 9.

Teacher Liability

Recent court decisions were added to Chapter 11 along with a new section on "The Liability of Teachers."

Joel Spring

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PART ONE

The School and the Social Order

CHAPTER 1

The Purposes of Public Schooling

"They should stick to teaching these babies that 1 + 1 = 2, instead of what daddy and his boyfriend are doing in the bedroom," shouted Neil Lodato, a construction worker, outside his daughter's school in Queens, New York. Lodato was joined by other parents protesting the 1992 requirement that their local elementary school teach tolerance toward gays and lesbians. "I learned about [gay couples] on the street, that's where she should too," Lodato screamed. Diane Kirsten, the mother of a second grader, was one of the few parents in the crowd supporting the requirements of the new 443-page multicultural curriculum guide called "Children of the Rainbow." Kirsten told a reporter that the hysteria over the new curriculum was caused by "fear and anger and homophobia."

Across town, the Chancellor of the New York City school system, Joseph Fernandez, was trying to decide what to do with the rebellious Queens school district. Raised on the streets of New York, Fernandez admitted in his autobiography that as a teenage dropout in Harlem he frequently snorted and injected heroin. Wanting to save other children from the past he experienced, he dedicated his career to school reform. Previous to the "Children of the Rainbow" controversy, he was embroiled in a struggle over the distribution of condoms in high schools as a means of preventing the spread of AIDS. The condom distribution plan was bitterly protested by religious groups that opposed birth control and by groups wanting the schools to emphasize sexual abstinence.

The "Children of the Rainbow" curriculum was originally planned to increase tolerance between the large number of cultural groups living in New York City. Many interest groups, including those representing the gay and lesbian community in New York City, pressured the school system to have their concerns represented in the new curriculum. Consequently, the authors of the 443-page volume included one small section of less than a page which recommends that as early as the first grade students should be introduced to different family structures, including "two-parent or single-parent house-

holds, gay or lesbian parents, divorced parents, adoptive parents, and guardians or foster parents." In addition, teachers were asked to present students with "the positive aspects of each type of household." Among the books recommended for use in the classroom were *Daddy's Roommate* and *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Both books show pictures of gay couples, including a drawing of two men in bed.

Standing on top of a truck outside Fernandez's office, Mary Cummins, the president of the local Queen's district board of education, led a demonstration against the curriculum. "It is bizarre," she said, "to teach 6-year-olds this [referring to the gay and lesbian content of the curriculum]. Why single out [homosexuals] for respect? Tomorrow it will be skinheads." Religious beliefs were given as the main objections to teaching tolerance toward gay and lesbian families. Catholic, Pentecostal, and Baptist churches along with Orthodox synagogues protested that homosexuality was a sin and it should not be tolerated. Some parents thought first graders were too young to be introduced to the topic of gay and lesbian lifestyles. Others thought that these were issues better left to the family and that schools should focus on teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Criticism even came from those who supported building tolerance for gay and lesbian lifestyles. Well-known political activist Kenneth Toglia, who himself was raised in a lesbian household, objected to the book *Heather Has Two Mommies*. "You never," he said, "call your mother's friend mom."

The controversy swirling around "Children of the Rainbow" highlights the issues involved in the purposes of public schooling. One of the current goals of many public school systems is to instill tolerance in students. This is certainly the goal of "Children of the Rainbow." Of course, not all members of society define tolerance to include gays and lesbians, and many do not even accept the goal of instilling racial tolerance. In general, most of the goals of public schooling create some form of controversy. For instance, some people argue that the purpose of schools is to instill moral values in children, while others argue that moral education should be a function of the homes. Traditionally, public schools were charged with the duty of educating good citizens. But some religious groups object to the inclusion of flag salutes and recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance in the school curriculum because they consider it a worship of graven images and therefore a violation of the precepts of the Bible. In addition, there is the problem of who defines good citizenship. While public schools are given the goal of educating good workers, there is a dispute over whether this means training students to be compliant employees or to be active union members. The political and economic content of schooling is disputed by people with differing political and economic philosophies. Every goal of public schooling has the possibility of creating some form of public controversy.

The protest over "Children of the Rainbow" highlights the potential conflict between public and private goals for education. Public goals for education are announced by agencies of the government. In this case, the public goal of building tolerance for gay and lesbian families was given by the

Board of Education of New York City. On the other hand, private goals are the reasons parents have for sending their children to school. Parents who threatened to withdraw their children from school because of "Children of the Rainbow" rejected the public goal given by the Board of Education. The next section of this chapter will deal with the differences between public and private goals for public schools. In the remaining sections of the chapter, I will discuss the controversies involved in the major *political, social,* and *economic* purposes of education. Among other things, this discussion will provide a brief history of the schools and an understanding of the multiple roles of public schools in contemporary society.

PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE GOALS

A great deal of confusion and conflict can occur over the difference between public and private goals in education. A parent might send his or her child to school to learn basic intellectual skills while considering moral and social training a function of the home. On the other hand, the school might assume the responsibility of producing moral, socially responsible citizens. This situation has the potential to create conflict between the parents and the school over the content of moral and social training, and the goals that should control the education of the child.

If the school in question is a public school operated by the government, then the problem becomes even more difficult. Government-operated schools by their very nature have the responsibility of carrying out the wishes of the general public and not those of private individuals. This means that the education of a child in a public school is subordinate to the general educational goals of the government. The public school serves public purposes.

The fact that the public school serves public purposes is inherent in the very idea that governments should establish and operate educational systems; government educational systems were set up to serve public—not private—goals. How the goals were established is a political question, and will be linked to concerns about social and political stability, reform, and economic development. Therefore, parents who send their child to a public school to achieve purely intellectual goals might be frustrated and concerned about both the time spent on government goals for education and the content of those goals. Certainly, in the history of American education one of the greatest arenas of conflict has been between private moral and religious beliefs and the values taught in the public schools. Other issues have also created bitter dispute. Educating children in public schools for citizenship has always been an area of conflict, a conflict concerned with content and purpose. Similar conflicts occur over the use of public schools to pursue economic goals.

Although private goals are subordinate to government goals in public schools, they cannot simply be dismissed. It is important to understand them because of the potential conflict between private goals and public schools,

and because of the larger issue of whether the public schools serve the interests of the individual.

One of the more recent surveys of private goals was conducted by John Goodlad for his study, *A Place Called School*. Goodlad surveyed the educational goals held by students, teachers, and parents, and divided them into vocational, social, intellectual, and personal goals. These categories differ slightly in meaning from those used in the remainder of this chapter to describe the public goals of schooling. Goodlad defines *vocational* to mean preparation for work; *social* to mean preparation for the social life of a complex society; *intellectual* to mean academic skills and knowledge; and *personal* to mean development of individual responsibility, talent, and free expression.

The most striking conclusion one reaches in looking at the results of Goodlad's survey is the difference between private and public goals. The dominant public goals for education in the twentieth century are economic. These economic goals include preparation for work, the control of the labor market, and economic development. In Goodlad's survey, *vocational* is the word closest in meaning to *economic* and it was chosen as the least important goal by teachers and parents. All teachers in elementary, middle, and high school grades selected vocational as the least important goal after intellectual, personal, and social goals. Parents of elementary and middle school children selected vocational goals last, and parents of high school students chose vocational as third, after intellectual and personal goals. High school students, on the other hand, selected vocational as the most important goal, whereas it was the second choice for middle school students.

Nothing gives greater evidence of the potential conflict between public and private goals than the fact that the number-one goal of teachers and parents is intellectual. Students maintain this as their number-one goal until high school, when it moves into second place after vocational. This means that the majority of parents send their children to school primarily to learn academic skills and knowledge. Although on the surface this seems reasonable and a commonsense conclusion, it is in conflict with the major public goals that have been used to justify the establishment and maintenance of public schools. In fact, parents rank personal goals as second in importance, leaving social and vocational at the bottom in relative importance.

The differences between public and private goals should be kept in mind by the reader as she or he studies the following pages. What the public official wants the school system to achieve can be entirely different from what the individual citizen wants. Also, differing attitudes and perceptions can develop about what is happening within public school systems.

The following discussion of the public goals of schooling is divided into political, social, and economic goals. In general, political goals refer to the attempts to use educational systems to mold future citizens, maintain political stability, and shape political systems; social goals include attempts to reform society, provide social stability, and give direction to social development; and economic goals involve the use of the public school system to sort and select talent for the labor market, develop human capital, and plan economic devel-