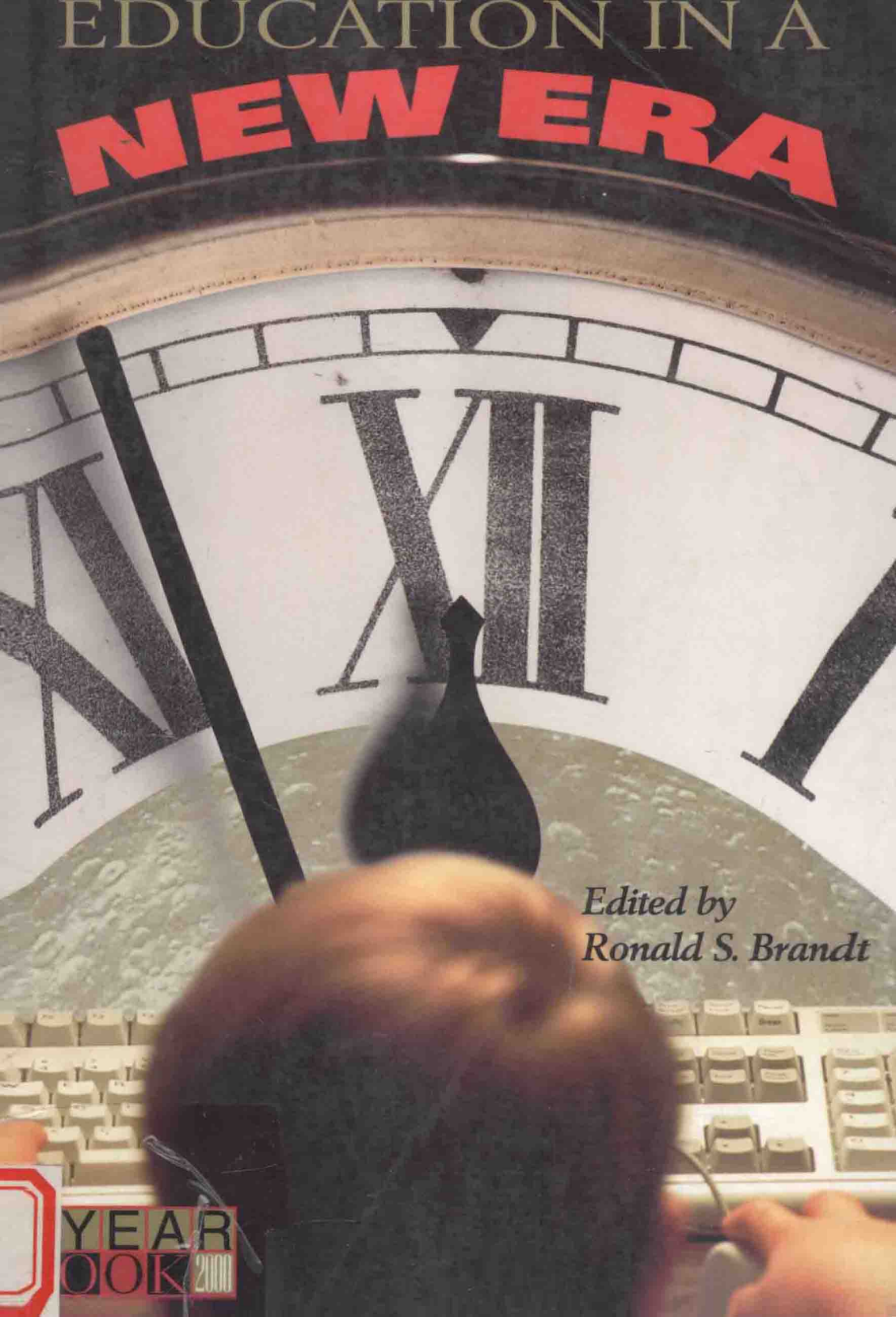
EDUCATION IN A NEW ERA



Edited by
Ronald S. Brandt

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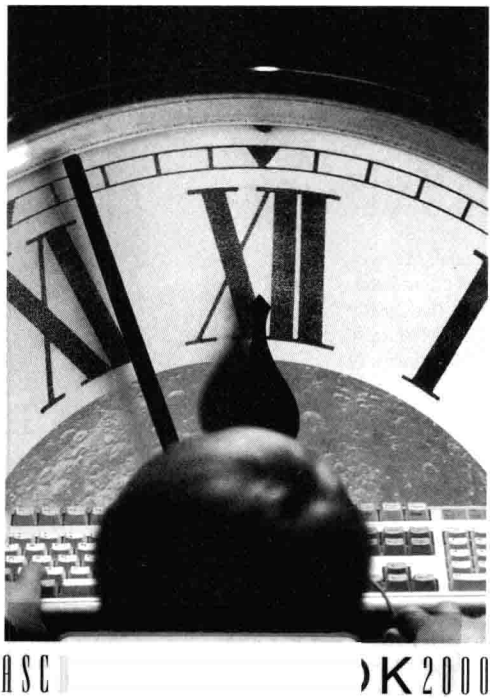

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Education in a New Era

Introduction: A New Century

Ronald S. Brandt, Editor

For decades, we have used "21st century" as convenient shorthand for an exciting future, a world very different from the present. Urging radical change in schools, reformers have warned that we should begin preparing students for life in an ultramodern era that was almost upon us. Not just a new century but a whole new millennium was about to begin. Educators, more than most, had to be aware of the forthcoming revolution. Our profession, we were reminded, has the awesome responsibility of equipping young people with the knowledge and skills needed in an ever more complex society. Our business *is* the future.

Now that the new century is here (or almost here, depending on how one counts), we are reminded that the calendar is a convenient but arbitrary symbol of passing time. Today is pretty much like yesterday, regardless of how we number it. Things are indeed changing, but in most cases incrementally, not overnight. Making a fuss about the brand-new year each January 1 can be fun, even motivating, but nothing in nature relates that event directly to the material world.

Of course, our observance of these occasions is not so much about nature as about ourselves. Both for individuals and organizations, pausing now and then to look back on past achievements and ponder future possibilities pays dividends. Alert businesses, school systems, and other institutions do it under the banner of strategic planning. No one can say for sure what *will* be, but reviewing their problems, capabilities, and opportunities, people decide what they *want* to happen, then create plans to improve chances that their aspirations will become reality.

This book is like that. Published as we enter an age that stirs our imaginations, it looks back to also look ahead. Its purpose is to divine

what may happen—as well as what should happen—in the education of children and youth, after thoughtfully reviewing what has happened so far.

The authors, chosen for their expertise in the topics they write about, were invited to highlight a few 20th century ideas, events, or developments they considered especially notable. Then, after considering the elements of experience that seemed most enduring, they were asked to envision what educators could expect, and commit to, in the years ahead.

Most authors found that making such projections was difficult. Mindful of spectacularly erroneous predictions about airplanes, television, and computers made by experts in the past, they were hesitant to go out on the proverbial limb. Nevertheless, each has made a conscientious effort to peer into the mist-enshrouded vistas of days to come.

With or without soothsayers, we can safely make two broad generalizations about the future: (1) Technological change will continue at a rate difficult for people to keep pace with; and (2) Technological changes will produce social, political, and economic changes that will demand responses from educational institutions. These statements may be obvious, but they are laden with implications.

The challenge of technological change is sometimes portrayed as the need to keep abreast of technology itself. Science classes need access to the sophisticated equipment used in universities and industrial laboratories. Mathematics classes need graphing calculators. Automotive repair is no longer a matter of replacing spark plugs and points but requires systems for computer analysis. In fact, computers are now considered a basic tool for learning almost any subject. But computers become obsolete in a few years. Paying for, as well as making wise use of, all the improvements in tools that our society routinely generates is indeed a challenge, especially for schools, where such tools do not pay for themselves in increased productivity.

But in the long run, technological change has more significant indirect than direct effects in education. Nearly everyone recognizes that invention of the automobile led to the building of suburbs. Mass commuting has contributed to many problems, including deterioration of large cities. For education, these problems have translated into issues associated with *urban education*.

Other examples abound. Modern forms of transportation, along with other technological developments such as radio and television, have enabled people to migrate from developing nations to more developed areas, producing educational responses such as *multicultural education* and *bilingual education*. Advances in medicine have saved children with severe disabilities—children who might not have survived in former times—and educators are now required to educate these children regardless of cost. With machines performing physical tasks, most work no longer requires muscle power. Such a change led to an expanded work force that includes more men and women who previously had not worked outside the home. The changing work force has meant that children's lives are different from those of earlier generations, creating new challenges for educators.

These examples are grossly oversimplified, of course. Each phenomenon has many causes, not just one. I cite them only to make a point: The technological changes going on around us, along with those to come, will produce effects beyond their immediate terrain.

If we were to survey the many ways evolving technology is changing the world, we would come up with a long list, ranging from exploration of space and ocean depths to investigation of the human brain. Surely, though, the aspect of technology that we are most aware of these days—and the one that contributes to all the other advances—is the information revolution. Looking back centuries from now, people will undoubtedly see the computer as a major milestone in human history, comparable to invention of the printing press and the harnessing of fossil fuels.

At this point, we have only glimpses of how life will eventually be different because of computers. Personally, I enjoy the convenience of banks, bookstores, and travel agencies online; I routinely use e-mail; and I frequently search for information on the Web. Equally important, I note that every agency I deal with—even my church—has begun to inquire about communicating electronically instead of on paper.

As for educators, most of us have not yet grasped the enormities of how the information revolution will affect education in the long run. We struggle to buy more machines, connect them to one another and the world, and use them within the existing system. But the rest of society is undergoing a transformation inconceivable at this point to all but

the most visionary, and education will slowly but surely change along with everything else.

We wish we could provide a blueprint for the ways society will change, and what those changes will mean for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other aspects of our profession. Such predictions, unfortunately, are impossible. All we can do is offer informed speculation, trusting that what we have written will encourage our colleagues not only to ponder future prospects but also to work for the possibilities they value the most.

From the Editor: Please note that throughout the yearbook, phrases such as "America," "our country," and "our nation" refer to the United States.

1

Governing the American Dream of Universal Public Education

Chris Pipho

When the 20th century began 100 years ago, public education in the United States was already moving toward a more centralized system of governance than our forefathers had envisioned. Early legislation adopted by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, although it emphasized family responsibility, also established the principle of publicly supported universal education (Good, 1963). The state's interest in education, which can be traced back to this era, has gradually turned into state control.

The major reason for expansion of state dominance is growth of the New World, both economically and geographically, which—with its waves of new immigrants—presented great challenges to the American dream of universal public education. Families remained the central focus, but these were families who had already bid farewell to ancestral ways. They were eager to learn the English language and the basic skills needed for new jobs. And they were quick to adopt democratic principles, which meant that all citizens could control, through voting

and representative government, how even their neighborhood school was to be run. No central government and no central religious order controlled the curriculum; families were free to choose parochial schools or private academies. Most important, all children had access to a public school, where they quickly learned a new culture and language, often brought home to parents and grandparents to be shared around the evening dinner table.

Although these immigrants recognized the need for education, they were often forced to put family survival needs ahead of it. School attendance in rural areas was seen as secondary to harvesting the crops. In cities, child labor was often needed to put food on the table. To address these varying levels of education compliance, states developed a uniform set of educational offerings and expected all citizens to comply with them. Laws for compulsory attendance and length of the school year followed; next came more consistency in teacher training through certification laws.

Each succeeding generation and national group brought new problems and new state demands. The story of governance in American public education, then, is one of meeting these challenges and producing new solutions. Ironically, the solutions that one generation of policymakers adopted often became problems for the next generation to fix. Today, some see states so deeply involved in education rule making that they possess a monopolistic stranglehold on education. To advocates of free enterprise, the obvious solution is a market approach: charter schools, vouchers, and choice. This chapter traces some reasons for our current situation and considers how governance may change in the years ahead.

STATEHOOD AND CONSTITUTIONAL CONTROL

By the time Arizona and New Mexico became the 47th and 48th territories to enter statehood in 1912, state constitutions generally contained a clause on public education. Except for Iowa, all states use a constitutional clause to describe their governance needs; Iowa uses an education code (Ziebarth, 1998).

Governance—who makes what decisions and how—was a key part of state constitutions and centralized control over education.

Families were considered a part of this mix through provisions for state and local boards of education and for local superintendents of education. The most central provision in state constitutions is the clause calling for each state to maintain a free system of public schools open to all children of the state. Also included is a funding or finance clause and a separation of church and state clause. The latter forbids appropriating or using public funds to support sectarian schools and requires public schools to be free from sectarian control (Ziebarth, 1998).

Because the constitutional provisions are so central to managing education, public dissatisfaction with education eventually finds its way back, through governance questions and court action, to state constitutional concerns. In the last two decades, advocates pushing for vouchers for students in public and private schools have seen the constitutional provisions for separation of church and state as a major roadblock. The existence of charter schools has likewise raised many questions about the legal duties of state and local boards.

The basic constitutional provisions have stood the test of time for almost a century. But some experts see the steady incursion of vouchers, charters, and parent choice, especially when court decisions support them, as bringing about fundamental state constitutional changes in the future.

The Move to Centralization

Nowhere is the move to centralization more evident than in the reduced number of school districts since the turn of the century. The United States now has 15,000 districts, compared to 150,000 in 1900. With vast rural lands homesteaded at a time when transportation was difficult, thousands of one-room schools were built, each with its own school board. Such small, locally governed schools met the education demands of large families and the need for schools to be within two miles walking distance from homes.

The one-room school reached its zenith in the 1920s and '30s. Teacher training was often hurried and superficial. Faculty members at the teachers colleges (former normal schools) talked about "60-day wonders": Students who had graduated from high school in May took courses for 60 days in the summer, and were given responsibility for an

entire school in September. The county superintendent supervised them, they had one-day workshops on some Saturdays during the year, and they returned for annual summer sessions until they were awarded a two-year degree.

In the years following World War I, conditions began to change. As cities expanded, high schools, junior high schools, and kindergartens became commonplace. Demands for higher-quality education prompted state legislatures and local school boards to respond to their constituents' needs. Both compulsory attendance ages and length of school year were expanded significantly. By midcentury, the collection of dropout statistics was added as another measure of quality.

PROFESSIONALIZATION AND BUREAUCRACY

The chicken-and-egg dilemma of what caused educational governance to become more centralized is an interesting question. Schools have always been asked to serve the changing needs of society and families. But did family demands bring about higher levels of teacher-administrative training and state certification regulations, or did the advent of larger schools (with a decline in the rural economy and growth of the urban economy) bring on a need for better-trained principals, superintendents, and teachers? Above all, when the cycle of certification, job specialization, and unionization got under way, did it feed the call for more bureaucratization in the name of serving families and the state? Sprinkled in was the proliferation of national commissions, professional organizations, and university-based education "experts" like John Dewey and James B. Conant. All these contributed to the gradual professionalization of teaching, the growth of colleges and laboratory schools, and the governance "omelette" that we have learned to live with.

Adding to the mix were families and communities who wanted to control the teachers' and administrators' lives (with rules on smoking, alcohol, and marriage), plus many other issues that often brought warring parties to the state board of education, the legislature, or even the courts. Each ruling contributed to the growing centralization of control.

Some interesting collections of people, organizations, and ideas shaped the history of education governance. The state of Oregon

produces one of these stories. In 1925, a landmark school court case, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, pitted the Ku Klux Klan against parochial and private education. The Klan wanted compulsory education restricted to public schools, because private schools taught private ideas to defenseless children. The court decision upheld the right of parents to control and direct their children's education. The court, however, also upheld the right of the state to reasonably regulate, inspect, supervise, and examine schools, including teachers, and to require compulsory attendance (Tyack, James, & Benavot, 1987). The ruling confirmed not only the rights of parents but also the prerogatives of the state.

The Federal Government's Impact on Local Governance

States are responsible for education, and the federal government is relegated to a supporting role. But throughout our history, the federal government, using money and pork barrel politics—sometimes led by prominent congressional members—has dramatically influenced education. These efforts were not always aimed specifically at education but rather at supporting agencies that could improve life for large populations in our society. Creation of the land grant colleges is one example. As their mission—to supply scientific research and practical education to a growing agriculture and manufacturing segment of society—was expanded through the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, extension teaching directed to rural families became one of the largest adult education efforts ever undertaken by a country. Schools became vehicles for some of these education programs. When the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 added vocational education to the mission of land grant colleges, high schools became the agency to deliver such programs. Teachers were prepared, curriculums were written, and local and state boards administered combined federal, state, and local programs. During the 1920s, these programs and 4-H clubs expanded rapidly, and county and state fairs were added to improve society. Vocational education, including home economics, influenced city schools, so school boards everywhere found themselves governing a wider variety of programs, each with broad public support. School board meetings were probably rarely if ever devoted to discussing the federal intrusion into education

governance. Instead, local boards accepted federal initiatives along with federal dollars because these initiatives met local needs.

Economic and Technological Influences

Societal needs, pushed along by technological changes in transportation and communication, have probably affected the governance of education more than most people realize. A farm-to-market road system and a state highway system were not designed to change education, but paved roads and school buses made consolidating school districts possible in the 1930s. A better-educated populace, produced in part by the land grant colleges and the normal schools (established to produce more qualified teachers), changed the fabric of American families. The first college graduate in a family provided a new goal for younger siblings and extended family members to emulate. The benefits of further education became more widely accepted—leading to identification of more education needs.

The Great Depression of the 1930s slowed down some expectations, but also added many new opportunities for realizing the ideal of universal education. Because of the depression, families could no longer take care of their own needs and increasingly had to turn to state and federal governments for assistance. The funding of education, which to a large extent had rested on local property taxes, took a severe hit as land values plummeted and businesses failed. More than 5,000 rural schools closed in 1932. Many never opened again, and town and city schools were called upon to absorb the rural students.

Professor John K. Norton of Columbia University said in 1935 that the early years of the depression "had been the most disastrous in education history" (Norton, in Good, 1963, p. 513). Student enrollments were increasing, but teachers were being laid off or were working unpaid. Taxpayer groups were growing, which in turn probably forced the growth of professional education organizations and teacher groups to fight tax cutbacks. New state funding mechanisms replaced some of the lost local tax revenues. Even the federal government got into the local funding picture in 1934 when President Roosevelt's Reconstruction Finance Corporation loaned the city of Chicago $22 million so it could pay salaries owed to teachers for the previous three years (Good, 1963).

A Hidden Governance Structure

New education programs were affected, but little thought was given to who was going to make decisions about education and who was to be accountable for these decisions—key elements in a visible governance structure.

While the average citizen was struggling to move out of the Great Depression, the education establishment gained visibility and influence in universities, colleges, and urban school districts. Many factors contributed to this increased visibility: new federal programs, expanded teacher education and educational research, growth of professional education organizations, and the academic specialization needed to support the increasing number of high schools and junior high schools.

A symbiotic governance structure around public education gradually evolved, a relationship that most parents or other citizens had not envisioned. It was led by well-known education professors who depended on an expanding state education system, like John Dewey at the University of Chicago and a bevy of similar professors at Columbia Teachers College and other major universities. Their students replicated and expanded their influence and became leaders in the model urban school districts in positions such as curriculum coordinators, supervisors, department chairs, superintendents, and principals. They exercised great control over public schools in the name of improving education for families and students. They authored the college and high school textbooks, conducted research, devised organizational improvement strategies such as the Dalton and Winnetka plans,[1] and advised state education agencies that were also growing in importance.

Partly because of their efforts, states strengthened teacher certification rules, and as rural schools faded from the scene, the two-year elementary teaching certificate became the norm and the four-year B.A. or B.S. degree the goal. Teacher organizations persuaded local districts to establish salary schedules based on length of service and degrees earned, replacing personally negotiating with the local board of education. Education started to look more like a profession.

These successes, however, may have planted the seeds of discontent for later generations to handle. One can argue that this hidden governance structure was needed, that the populace supported it, and that

it produced good education results. True, but as the goal of professionalization moved forward, the original goal of free and universal education for all children may in some respects have been moved to the background. Did the profession get overprofessionalized? Good question, but who should answer it? And in what decade might the true answer be found?

World War II Brings Big Changes

Had World War II not occurred, the directions taken by the "professionalization" gurus of the 1930s might have produced lasting results. Unfortunately for them, the events following Pearl Harbor put education in a holding pattern.

It was an unusual time in education. Everyone focused on the war effort. Schools closed when the federal government issued ration books to all citizens. Elementary school students used school time to collect metal for scrap drives and milkweed pods for navy life vests. In high schools and colleges, men teachers were drafted or enlisted midyear. Senior classes in some high schools finished the year with only girls because the boys had enlisted on their 17th birthday. In my one-room school, an emergency teacher was found whose husband had been drafted. Because she had no car, a senior citizen was hired to drive her to school each day. If governance concerns existed during these years, they were not evident.

Near the end of the war and in the years that followed, the federal government offered discharged veterans and those still in the service opportunities to further their education and receive credit for service-related training. Most notable was the Serviceman's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill), which gave monetary assistance to those who wanted to attend college. Large numbers of veterans swelled enrollments and in turn changed the maturity level of student bodies. The military services created the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) to formally give college credit for training and college courses taken while people were in the military.

High school dropouts and others who had never attended high school were also included in these programs. The University of Iowa (developers of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills) was contracted to develop