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Norma T. Mertz, Major Professor

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Graduate Studies

# In Pursuit of Purpose:

# An Exploration of the Purpose of Education

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Education

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Laura J. Hopfer

December 2002

THESIS
2002b
.H68

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# DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: my husband, Wayne, who listened to my complaints, continually encouraged my efforts and was always there to bolster my spirit; our children, Kimberley and Kevin, who sacrificed a great deal to support my return to school and repeatedly offered words of reassurance; and my mother, Dolores Goble, who taught me the value of dreams.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to the members of my doctoral committee: Dr. Norma Mertz, Dr. Mary Jane Connelly, Dr. Valerie Copeland-Rutledge, and Dr. Colleen Gilrane. I want to thank them for their honesty, their encouragement, and their willingness to spend so many years seeing this dissertation to completion. Thank-you to Dr. Jeffrey Aper for helping to organize my non-statistical mind. My sincerest appreciation to Dr. Norma Mertz for her continued guidance and support throughout the years, she truly personifies the word mentor.

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purposes of education and to compare it with the perceptions of policy-makers as expressed in mandated accountability efforts. Through the use of a researcher-designed questionnaire, a random sample of K-6 elementary school principals and classroom teachers in public schools in one state were asked to share their perceptions of 12 identified educational purposes by rating and ranking those purposes. Questionnaires were returned by 612 (77.1%) educators; 323 school administrators, 288 classroom teachers and 1 respondent whose job position was not indicated. Data were entered into the SPSS program for analysis. Both parametric and non-parametric tests were used in the analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics were generated and relationships identified through the development of Cross-tabulation tables. Pearson's chi-square values were calculated to determine significant differences in response.

This study revealed high levels of concurrence between school administrators' and teachers' ratings of 12 identified educational purposes. Ranked highest were the purposes of Literacy and Knowledge with Democratic, Economic, Individual and Socialization following closely behind. Three of the purposes, Child Care, Social Mobility and Acculturation were rejected as purposes for education. Further, the results support the research and literature suggesting that multiple purposes are held for education. Beyond this, the findings also suggest concurrence between school administrators' and teachers' highest ranked purposes, Knowledge and Literacy, and those expressed by policy-makers in the mandating of standards and accountability.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since its inception, education in America has been guided both implicitly and explicitly by some purpose. Whether in Colonial America where education was guided by the need for a moral, bible reading community; the late 1800s where education served to acculturate vast numbers of immigrants; or post-Sputnik America when education's task was to ensure high levels of knowledge to secure its position in the competition for space, specific purpose has guided our system of education.

Over the years education has been under pressure to adapt to the needs of society and called upon to embrace multiple, and sometimes conflicting, purposes in order to address public or political concerns (Labaree, 1995; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Education has variously been required to promote vocational training, protect the labor market from high numbers of child laborers, safeguard society by producing good citizens, provide a dependable day-care service, cultivate the intellect, teach the young to reason, provide moral guidance, socialize immigrants and provide the basic building blocks of education found in reading, writing and arithmetic (Butts, 1978; Gelberg,1997; Goodlad, 1992; Goodlad & McMannon,1997; Tyack & Cuban,1995). "We apply schooling as a remedy for every social phenomenon which we do not like" (Counts, 1934, p. 260).

Education has become a means of defining national purpose and progress, and the restructuring of public schools a mode of changing society as a whole (Tyack, 1991). Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), warning that America's education was

deteriorating seriously and "our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technical innovation [was] being overtaken by competitors throughout the world" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, p. 6), a national perception that America's schools are failing has been the catalyst for numerous attempts at education reform. Referred to by Tyack (1991) as "planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems" (p. 4), educational reforms have been contemplated by numerous educational commissions, initiatives and task forces, and have been expected to serve many purposes.

> "A veritable explosion of initiatives have been launched to address one or more of the central problem areas of American schooling, including academic achievement in basic subject areas relative to students in other countries, functional literacy, preparation for future employment, mastering of higher-order skills and even preparation for citizenship" (Hentschke, 1997, p. 474).

Who or what should determine the purpose which public education must pursue? Although the United States Constitution delegates the power for making educational decisions to each individual state, traditionally these decisions have been delegated by the state to the local school districts and their officials (Kirst, 1989). The commission's release of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), warning about a "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 6) and America's need to "produce young men and women dedicated to the economic superiority of America in the age of multinational corporatism" (Burgess, 1984, p. 97) caused the states to reconsider their position relative to economic competition and education's operational funds, triggering state legislatures

to reclaim their power to make educational decisions at the state level (Kirst, 1989). Today, governors, legislators, state school officials and businesses set educational policy.

> "States have become concerned about economic competition, and state legislators have therefore felt compelled to step in and preempt local discretion. This shift from local control to increased state centralization, a growing legalization of the educational process, increased state monitoring and accountability activities are reflected within our system of public education" (Kirst, 1989, p. 65).

Unfortunately, educational policy is often enacted with little input from educators or those directly affected by policy decisions. "It is widely accepted in the political world that the schools are in trouble and the way to 'fix' them is to make teachers answerable to mandates and authorities distant from the sites of teaching and learning" (Gallagher, 2000, p. 503).

America's most recent venture at educational reform has come in the guise of educational standards tied to accountability systems. Based on the assumption that student performance is the most appropriate measure of accountability, and that data provided by standardized exams will contribute useable information to educational stakeholders (Linn, 2000), teachers, administrators and school systems are being held responsible for pupil achievement scores on standardized tests constructed by outside agencies. "We want success for the children and we see success from a score" (Skrla, 2000, p. 2). These educational standards are designed to specify "more intellectually demanding content and pedagogy" (Spillane, 1999, p. 547) designating levels of proficiency for each grade level and student on standardized achievement tests recognized and accepted as determinants of attainment of the educational standards. As Glickman (1998) acknowledged, "standards policies …affect nearly every student,

faculty member, and school in the country and have a bearing on how we define well-educated students, the curriculum to be taught and the ultimate purpose of our schools" (p. 47).

Since what is readily tested and testable by such exams is acquired factual information, it would seem that the implied purpose of education is the accumulation of factual knowledge and the measure of this accumulated knowledge is to be found in a test score. Theobald (1995) maintains that equating accountability with tests may "measure the acquisition and reproduction of factual information"; however, "it would be a shallow argument that sought to maintain that this ability somehow defines education" (p. 5).

Linking educational purpose to a perceived need to raise levels of academic achievement, standards of performance for public schools have been established based on needs expressed by business leaders, government officials and academics who dominate panels, investigations and the authorship of position papers (Kirst,1989; Sergiovanni, 2000). American business has endorsed this quest for knowledge and the formulation of standards for public schools as a necessary step in ensuring that the United States remains economically competitive in the world market (McNeil, 2000a; Skrla, 2000). Citing multiple studies that link the "educational level of a people and a country's ability to compete economically"(Jennings, 1987, p. 104), world-class standards and systems of accountability have been seen as the solution to our current educational ills (Gratz, 2000; Merrow, 2001, Theobald, 1995).

Should we pursue the singular quest for knowledge implicit in policies based upon standards and accountability, thus allowing the purpose of public education to be determined by world economics, marketing strategies and trends? Tyack (1995)

commented that in recent years "discourse about the purposes of education has been impoverished by linking it insistently to the wealth of nations" (p. 136). "When the purpose of education becomes narrowed to economic advantage, and the main measure of success is higher test scores, an easy next step is to regard schooling as a consumer good rather than a common good." (p. 140)

There is no doubt that successful education reform must be purposeful. Purpose denotes the starting point, suggests an ideal, and reflects values in order to provide a guide for the educational process (Ornstein,1988). Efficacy, or the power to produce desired results, occurs when those working toward a goal believe in the purpose(s) behind that goal and view the work as meaningful and significant (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983; Rosenholtz, 1987; Sergiovianni, 1989, 2000). Belief in purpose is proportionately linked to commitment to implementation (Macpherson, 1998) and has the potential to create a "critical mass of support among those committed to the implementation" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 132) of any school change or educational reform. But, what happens if the politics of educational reform do not coincide with educational values held by the school administrators and teachers; when those goals and purposes set by the system are not appropriately linked with a process for change and implementation; or when the direction of state mandates competes with those goals set by educational stakeholders at their individual schools? When reform requires the altering of thought and patterns of practice, belief in purpose and a sense of commitment can only occur when those required to implement the change both understand and accept it as being in the best interests of all involved. Unless educators are committed to the implementation of any given educational change, the resulting product is likely to be somewhat less than desired. In the process,

cooperative relationships, perceptions of personal responsibility for student outcomes, and levels of educator and student expectation will diminish (Sergiovanni, 2000). In our haste to incorporate standards reform, legislators and state education departments have failed to seek the opinions of educators, rather they have made the assumption that teachers and administrators either concur with the legislative presumption that the primary purpose of education is the acquisition of knowledge or that educators will summarily change their thinking, practices and culture to match that concept.

School administrators and teachers bear direct responsibility for making reform work (Sarason, 1990). "Principals, teachers and parents can be incredibly successful in ignoring, or rendering impotent, those changes they do not understand or do not want" (Goodlad, 1992, p. 238). Mandated change and policy command educators rather than engaging them. This control, gained by sheer authority, is bound to have non-productive consequences (Bailey, 2000; Norris, 1994).

The opinions of the stakeholders in education, namely school administrators and classroom teachers, are missing voices in the educational reform movement, in particular in the call for educational standards (Bailey, 2000; Barth, 1993; Cuban, 1988; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1998). With little regard for those charged with implementation, legislators and state departments of education have hastened to incorporate standards for reform and elaborate testing programs to reinforce these standards. They have forged a pathway for change, yet failed to seek either validation or acceptance from those who will be called upon to administer those reforms and whose values, beliefs and ideals may be in conflict with those driving the reform. If disparate conceptions of the purpose of education are held by teachers and administrators on the one hand, and policy-makers on the other,

there is a "fundamental and profound basis for conflict" (Rosenholtz, 1987, p. 537). Conflicting goals and purpose can seriously compromise the integrity and sharply impair the effectiveness of the educational environment of our public schools (Labaree, 1997).

Research on perceptions of educational purpose is extremely limited, in particular, research on the perceptions of educators who are charged with realizing this purpose. Although the *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* (Rose & Gallup, 2000) has been conducted yearly since 1965, the 2000 survey was the first to incorporate questions to determine public perceptions of the purpose of public education. Describing this portion of the survey as based upon a review of relevant literature, the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll asked the telephone respondents to rate seven perceived purposes for education on a scale from 1-10 with ten (10) being of "highest importance" and one (1) being "not at all important". The seven purposes were:

- To prepare people to become responsible citizens
- To help people become economically self-sufficient
- To ensure a basic level of quality among schools
- To promote cultural unity among all Americans
- To improve social conditions for people
- To enhance people's happiness and enrich their lives
- To dispel inequities in education among certain schools and certain groups

(Rose & Gallup, 2000, p. 47)

Interestingly, respondents rated all of the seven purposes as important, with means for each of the seven ranging from a high of 9.0 to a low of 7.5. Potentially, the population included educators but no attempt was made to distinguish them or their answers from other respondents. Further, although developed from a review of relevant literature, the statements of purpose were limited and failed to include ones related to knowledge acquisition, development of basic skills, child care, issues of morality, or other purposes

clearly and frequently identified in the literature. (Burgess, 1984; Butts, 1978; Butts & Cremin, 1953; Gutek, 2000, 1986; McNeil, 2000 a/b; Skrla, 2000; Spring, 1986; Timar & Tyack,1999; Tyack,1980; Tyack & Cuban,1995).

In *A Place Called School,* Goodlad (1984) reported on his attempt to "examine events that occur within schools and the meaning these events have for those in the school and community" (p.16). Although his study was not specifically focused on the purpose of education, as part of a survey, a random sample of teachers, parents and secondary students from 38 schools was asked to respond to questions related to four pre-determined functions of schooling. These four functions were defined as:

(1) Intellectual/Academic, embracing all intellectual skills and domains of knowledge;
(2) Vocational, geared to developing readiness for productive work and economic responsibility;
(3) Social and civic, related to preparation for socialization into a complex society; and
(4) Personal, emphasizing the development of individual responsibility, talent and free expression (p. 37).

When questioned about the function most emphasized at their school, 78.5% of the elementary teachers surveyed and 52.2% of the secondary teachers reported intellectual development as the function most emphasized. When questioned about what they thought schools *should* emphasize, elementary teachers reported they "would prefer more emphasis on the personal function [and] less emphasis on the intellectual function" while secondary teachers stated a decided preference for emphasis on the intellectual function (Overman, 1980, p. 70). When the respondents were asked to indicate their perception of level of importance for each function, "90% of all surveyed stated that *all* functions should be considered important or very important" (p. 69). However,

elementary teachers and parents considered the Vocational function to be of the least importance while secondary teachers and parents considered the Personal function to be of least importance.

The results of these studies, while limited, were similar and suggested an adherence to, if not acceptance of, multiple purposes for public education. Further, the latter study suggests some discrepancy for teachers between what is operationalized (in the school) and what is desired. At the same time, however, neither study allowed for a clear identification of the purpose(s) valued and operationalized by teachers and school administrators.

## Theoretical Framework

The framework for the study is drawn from conceptual perspectives, paradigms, of the role and functions of schooling. Drawing particularly on the descriptions articulated by Feinberg and Soltis (1998) and Foster (1986), each of these paradigms represents a different way of viewing schooling, and each "carries with it certain assumptions about the social system and the place and purpose of education within it" (Ballantine, 1989, p. 17).

Feinberg and Soltis (1998) identified 3 different perspectives for viewing schools: Functionalist, Conflict Theorist, and Interpretivist. *Functionalists* perceive schools as agencies designed to "socialize students to adapt to the economic, political, and social institutions of that society ...[and] share the basic economic, political, and cultural practices and norms of that society" ( p.6). The function of schooling becomes the

maintenance and continuation of the society and the molding of students to fit into it thus preserving the traditional heritage and extending it for the preservation and advancement of a democratic society.

Recognizing the dominance of functionalism in public schooling, *Conflict theorists* view schools as oppressive agencies of society controlled by those with social and economic power in the society, designed to maintain, legitimate, and reproduce the current social and economic order while perpetuating the domination of some groups over other groups (Feinberg & Soltis, 1998; Foster, 1986). Conflict theorists view education as a means for the "competitive accumulation of skills that will be useful in achieving material and technological dominance" (Foster, 1986, p. 69) for those already privileged in the society. They believe that schools should nurture in students both an understanding of the oppression brought about by groups in power and a disposition to change it.

Finally, the *Interpretivists* also perceive the role and function of schools to be the socialization of students, but focus on the individual. Viewing school as a social construct developed through ideas shared by others and within which individuals must construct and interpret their own meaning, Interpretivists believe that schools should be concerned with human intentions, existence and history while valuing the actions, biography, and languages of the individual (Foster, 1986). For interpretivists, to understand and make sense of schooling requires understanding individual actions and intentions since "organizations are inside people and are defined completely by them as they work out ideas in their heads through actions in the practical world" (Greenfield, 1983, p. 1).

These paradigms of the role and function of schools guided the study and provided a lens for looking at the educational purposes(s) that emerged from the literature and that might conceptually emerge in the study. Considering the 12 educational purposes that emerged from an examination of the literature and research and formed the survey used, (See Appendix A), 5 of the 12 clearly fall within a functionalist perspective, Acculturation, Democratic, Economic, Knowledge, Literacy and Social Mobility, and one more, Vocation, potentially falling with the functionalist or conflict theorist perspective depending on one's interpretation of the purpose. As identified:

- to promote cultural unity and a common American heritage (Acculturation)
- to prepare students to become responsible citizens (Democratic)
- to provide information and develop skills necessary for students to become economically self-sufficient (Economic)
- to provide for student knowledge acquisition and intellectual skills (Knowledge)
- to ensure students have the basic skills in reading and writing (Literacy)
- to provide students with guidance in identifying and preparing for a specific occupation (Vocation)

In addition to the purpose of Vocation, three of the emergent purposes identified in the literature would seem to fit within a conflict theorist perspective:

- to provide a system that delays childrens' entry into the work force (Child Care)
- to provide students with the skills and abilities necessary to analyze and address social conditions (Reform)
- to provide students with a means of moving up the social and economic ladder (Social Mobility)
- to provide students with guidance in identifying and preparing for a specific occupation (Vocation)

Finally, 3 of the 12 purposes would seem to fit within an interpretivist perspective:

- to help students reach their maximum level of talent development (Individual)

- to develop in students the core values of a moral society (Morality)
- to teach students to interact effectively with others (Socialization)

## Statement of the Problem

The current standards and accountability efforts would seem to suggest that for policy-makers the primary purpose of education is the accumulation of knowledge (Cizek, 1999; Linn, 2000; Scheurich, Skrla, Johnson, 2000; Sacks, 2000; Theobald, 1995), implying consonance with a functionalist perspective of schooling. This notion is reinforced by the state's identification of academic standards and the mandating of testing based on students' abilities to accumulate facts. As officials of the state, school administrators and teachers are called upon to implement state directives and policy while at the same time implementing school reforms that hold them accountable for the application of state-directed standards. If the opinions and beliefs of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education conflict with those underlying the standards set by the state, commitment to the implementation of these required mandated standards is likely to be impaired.

Research specific to the perceptions of school administrators and teachers about the purpose of education is limited or absent. In the absence of such empirical data, we are unable to examine the relationship between their perceptions and the perceptions of policy-makers about the purpose of education, and therefore to consider the effect of such perceptions on policy implementation.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education and to compare it with the perceptions of policy-makers as expressed in mandated accountability efforts.

## Research Questions

This study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What do public school administrators perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
2. What do public school teachers perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
3. What is the relationship between the perceptions of public school administrators and those of public school teachers regarding the purpose of education?
4. What is the relationship between public school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the purpose of education and those expressed by policy-makers in mandated accountability practices?

## Significance of the Study

Little is known about the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education in public schools. This study was designed to add to this limited body of knowledge and to begin to build a targeted data base. Current education policy and reform, with its implicit functionalist educational purpose, are often set by persons or committees far removed from the site of implementation. Failure to include the implementers in the drafting of policy may result in disparity between what is being mandated and what is being done. If there is a disparate conception held by

teachers, school administrators and policy-makers, there is a "fundamental and profound basis for conflict" (Rosenholz, 1987, p. 537). This conflict could have long-lasting and far-reaching implications for public education. This study was intended to speak directly to this issue and to provide necessary information for policy-makers and educators regarding any differences in conceptions of purpose that may exist.

## Assumptions

Two basic assumptions undergirded the study: 1) The participants accurately and truthfully reported their perceptions and opinions, and 2) The information gathered by this study was representative of the public elementary school teachers and administrators in the state.

## Limitations and Delimitations

The study was delimited to a random sample of elementary school teachers and administrators working in public schools in the state of Tennessee. Thus the findings are limited to that population and may not be generalizeable to middle school or high school administrators and teachers, to those school administrators and teachers working in private institutions, or to teachers and administrators in other states.

Survey methodology affords the opportunity to reach a relatively large number of respondents and thereby gain a breadth of responses. In making the choice to seek breadth, depth is sacrificed. The results of the study are enriched by the breadth of the study and limited by the absence of depth.

Circumstances dictated the gathering of data during the final weeks of school preceding summer break. This is a hectic time for educators and a potentially poor time to seek responses. The timing of data collection may have limited and influenced the responses and the response rate, particularly from school administrators and classroom teachers in urban schools, thereby, limiting the results of the study.

## Methods and Procedures

A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to survey a random sample of K-6 administrators and teachers in elementary schools within the state of Tennessee. The school administrator and one teacher from each of the 397 randomly selected schools provided a respondent pool of 794. Data from returned surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and descriptive statistics were generated. Parametric and non-parametric tests were used to determine possible relationships among school administrators and teachers and to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the responses given by school administrators and those provided by classroom teachers. See Chapter 3 for a detailed description of the methods and procedures used in the study.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. **Regular School:** as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics in their Common Core of Data, a public elementary school that does not focus primarily on vocational, special, or alternative education.

2. **Standards:** the identification of student performance and proficiency expectations that outline levels of minimum competency as well as levels of mastery.
3. **Accountability:** the concept that teachers, school administrators and school systems should be held responsible for pupil achievement, this achievement being measured by standardized tests constructed by outside agencies.

## Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One contains the introduction and background to the study, the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, significance, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, a summary of research methods, definitions and organization of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of the related literature and research divided into three sections. The first section explores the literature from a historical perspective. The next section reviews literature as related to the purposes of education implied in the accountability literature. In the third section, research efforts to identify the purposes of education are reviewed. Chapter Three provides a description of the design, methods and procedures used in the study. Chapter Four contains the presentation of data and analysis of findings. Chapter Five offers a summary of the findings of the study, a discussion of those findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations for future studies.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

> "Education is always influenced by the time and place in which it occurs. Education never exists in a vacuum or in the abstract; it always goes on in a particular society at a particular time in history". (Callahan, 1962, p. 107)

### Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of the literature and research related to the purposes of education and to changing perceptions of those purposes. First, the literature regarding educational purpose is examined in historical perspective. The next section reviews literature as related to the purpose of education implied in the accountability literature. This is followed by a review of research efforts to identify the purposes of education.

Over the years, as we faced change in American society and various groups have attempted to further their interests and promote their cause, the purpose of education has been revisited, if not revised. At least seven themes or purposes for education have been recognized in the literature and appear to be repeated and or fused cyclically, depending upon the needs of society at the time. These purposes are listed below in no specific order:

1) To support a competitive economic system; preparation and training for entry into the workforce;
2) To develop a democratic society, encourage civic responsibility, and train individuals to become capable citizens;
3) To develop basic skills and knowledge;
4) To allow individuals to realize their full intellectual and developmental potential, develop critical thinking skills and enrich their lives;

5) To serve as a social leveler; maintain social mobility; provide a means of "sorting" or maintaining a class system;
6) To provide a daycare system for children; to keep children out of the workforce;
7) To introduce and develop the core values of a moral and literate society. (Ballantine, 1985; Butts, 1978; Center on National Education Policy, 1996; Goodlad, 1984; Labaree, 2000; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995)

America's current call for the restructuring of public education includes a call for higher standards and greater accountability which leads one to question to what end those standards and accountability are to be directed.

## Purposes in Historical Perspective

### Colonial America

In the America of colonial times, education's primary purpose was to instruct children in the rudiments of literacy while at the same time reinforcing and maintaining the accepted system of societal stratification.

> Seldom was it argued in colonial times that the aim of education was to empower every individual to make the most of himself as a person. The first system of education set up in America served to maintain the class distinctions imported from Europe. Not all children actually received an education, but the principle was established that a commonwealth must rest upon an educated citizenry even if the education amounted only to bare literacy. (Butts, 1960, p. 36)

This bare literacy described by Butts facilitated reading of the Bible, the development of moral self, the propagation of virtue and the development of understanding of the laws within the colonies (Butts, 1978; Butts & Cremin, 1953; Goodlad, 1984; Gutek, 1991; Pulliam & VanPatten, 1995; Riles, 1971; Spring, 2000).

> Education was considered to be essential to maintaining religious piety and social stability. The purpose in teaching reading and writing was to ensure not only that

> individuals read the Bible and religious tracts, but also that they became good workers and obeyed the laws of the community. (Spring, 1986, p. 2).

The majority of education occurred in the home and "it was upon the foundation of the non-formal agencies of the family and the household that the formal education structures were built" (Gutek, 1991, p. 2).

Although no true system of education was instituted throughout the colonies, education was strongly influenced by the predominant religions of each area. Regional differences were based upon what Gutek (1991) termed "their intellectual inheritance" and the "commercial impact upon the region"(p. 2). Believing that Satan easily corrupted the ignorant, parents in the New England colonies were required by law to educate their children, focusing on their ability to read and to understand the principles of religion and the laws of the Commonwealth. Southern colonies, existing around an agricultural base with rigid social class distinctions, maintained an educational system for the upper-class white children that emphasized a concept of chivalry and management of the basic agricultural unit. Education of lower-class whites was often vocational in nature and functioned relative to the needs of a plantation system economy. No attempt was made to educate slaves or the children of slaves. The Middle Atlantic colonies, being infused with multiple cultural and religious groups, developed educational systems as deemed necessary and approved by their community leaders. This sometimes resulted in multiple small schools within each community (Gutek, 1991). Butts and Cremin (1953) described these regional differences in education as "basic patterns of economic, class, and

sectional distinctions" and maintained that although slight differences may have occurred dependent upon region, education was still "dominantly religious in purpose and content" (p. 98).

Revolutionary Era

As America neared the years of revolution, Cremin (1977) has suggested that changes began to occur in educational purpose with the focus shifting slightly away from a religious framework and more toward providing the socialization, civility and personal learning skills necessary to the development of a democratic society. "In a democratic society, the nonbeliever as well as the believer must be accorded the right to be considered capable of good moral conduct and of good citizenship" (Butts & Cremin, 1953, p. 152). Thus began the movement for separation of church and state, "so that all Americans could become equally good citizens in the eyes of the civil law and of the state" (p. 153).

The American Revolution redefined the nation and called for a truly American education designed to "create cohesive and independent citizens" and promote "learning in the populace" (Cremin, 1977, p. 43). Education during this time period reflected the beliefs of such educational theorists as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Noah Webster, all of whom expressed the desire to "educate citizens who could effectively participate in a republican society" (Gutek, 1991, p. 38). This obligation to educate responsible citizens called for "A new concept of [a] politically motivated public school based on liberty, equality and public virtue" (Butts, 1978, p. 8). Education was meant to "prepare citizens to protect the basic freedoms guaranteed under the Bill of Rights;

promote social, economic and political equity [and] promote public good through public education" (Butts, 1978, p. 11).

Butts and Cremin (1953) maintained it was Jefferson's belief that the major purpose of education was to "serve the general welfare of a democratic society by seeing to it that the knowledge and understanding necessary to exercise the responsibility of citizenship were made available to all" (p. 165). "Jefferson proposed a system of free public schools which would (1) give every child in the commonwealth a basic education, and (2) give the brightest children the chance to continue on through secondary school and university" (p. 189). Indeed, "many Americans began to believe that a public system of education was needed to build nationalism, to shape the good citizen and to reform society" (Spring, 1986, p. 28).

Education continued to provide the tools and knowledge for the improvement of moral reasoning as it prepared America's citizens and political leaders (Butts, 1978). Depending on the McGuffy reader to provide lessons in morality by presenting ethical messages within each assignment, educational purpose was expanded to include the need:

- To create and perpetuate a nation dedicated to particular principles
- To develop a citizenry capable of self-government
- To ensure social order
- To equalize educational opportunity for all
- To provide information and develop the skills essential to both individual economic enterprise and general prosperity (Glickman, 1998, p. 175).

Nineteenth Century

The early 1800s were a time of immigration and urbanization that encompassed an emphasis on factory, shop, or market place jobs (Butts, 1960; Butts & Cremin, 1953; Cremin, 1977). People became more mobile. No longer finding it necessary to remain in

close proximity to family or homesite, they were willing to relocate in order to obtain or maintain a job. The newfound mobility of American citizens coupled with the high influx of European immigrants drastically increased the numbers of children within the cities. Although attendance was not mandated, public education was touted as a means of acculturation for immigrant youth and the solution to "vast numbers of ragged children haunt[ing] the streets" (Butts, 1978, p. 45). Although varying somewhat from region to region, public education was seen as the means of moral and social instruction which would acquaint children with the basics of literacy and provide cultural and political information while promoting a "moral and social influence to keep youth from future acts of crime" (Spring, 2000, p. 12). Cremin (1977) has argued that immigration and urbanization influenced a major change in the educational role of the family and the purpose of education, which shifted in an attempt to provide:

- Literacy in standard American English
- Basic skills in math, literature and history
- Introduction to society
- Skill in reasoning, argument, and criticism
- Basic work ethic
- American political knowledge
- "virtuous character, abiding patriotism, prudent wisdom" (p. 83)

Given a republican form of government, political leaders decided that a commitment to the implementation of an educational system designed to emphasize equality, democracy and the principles of freedom was necessary. Horace Mann championed the idea of "common schools". These common, public or free schools would be open to all children whose parents or guardians lived within the particular school district, supported by a school tax and governed by the state and local governments and

would use English to teach the children of "all" the people how to "live together and govern themselves" (Butts, 1978, p. 82) while embracing an ideal to "establish common values and loyalties and weld groups with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds into a common American identity" (Spring, 2000, p. 60). Expected to provide "the basic knowledge and skills essential to enable students of diverse backgrounds to assume the responsibilities of citizenship" (Callahan, 1962, p. 128), common schools were to be non-sectarian, providing morality without teaching to the beliefs of a particular religion, and were meant to prepare citizens to use political power intelligently while enabling them to "transcend the accident of birth" and acquire economic power (Warren, 1973, p. 1). Designed to do more than give intellectual training, common schools would be expected to

> promote progress and prosperity, reduce poverty and prevent crime, provide citizenship training, character education, and a means by which every child might advance up the economic and social scale as far as his talents would carry him (Butts, 1960, p. 41).

Since the states delegated the responsibility to establish and maintain common schools to the local districts, opposition from those who "viewed mass education as 'agrarianism' or 'socialism' calculated to disturb the traditional class arrangement of society" (Butts & Cremin, 1953, p. 195), those who "feared that public schools would deprive their youngsters of both the language and customs of the older culture" (p. 196), and those who maintained that religious authority should retain control of schooling hindered the rate of establishment in some regions. The New England states quickly moved to implement common schools, the Middle Atlantic states preferred to spend funds on private and parochial alternatives, while the Southern states, considering

education a private matter, and citing issues regarding race relations, did not establish common schools until after the Civil War (Gutek, 1986).

By 1870, 20% of all U.S. citizens lived in cities having more than 10,000 residents. The rapid growth of cities precipitated a dramatic increase in child labor and criminal acts committed by children (Butts, 1978). Considered a direct result of immigration, overwhelming poverty and the extensive use of child labor in the factories, 14 states enacted compulsory education laws as a "counteraction to the exploitation and dislocations arising from the urban and industrial conditions of modernization" (p. 103). Compulsory education laws attempted to address looming social issues by:

- fulfilling the need for civic education and cultural assimilation of immigrants
- educating the poor in cultural and moral standards
- promoting the political standards of the community
- developing national unity
- guaranteeing that available jobs were given to adults rather than children.

(Butts, 1978)

The aftermath of the Civil War heralded the industrial age and a marked shift to a market economy. American cities were inundated with immigrants, their cultures, and languages. Lack of cultural awareness and weakened communication manifested itself in problems within the business community. Leaders within business and trade called for and influenced educators to add an emphasis on written communication, calculation and business vocabulary skills to an educational curriculum already burdened with providing basic skills and overseeing the development of civic responsibility and moral character. In addition, Americans looked to education to solve the social problems associated with high numbers of immigrants, poverty, safety, inappropriate sanitation and corruption in

cities. Seen as a way to solve the problems created by society, the primary purpose of education became that of social reform (Tyack, 1974; Zais, 1976).

In response to changes in public education that arose from the attempt to address societal issues, and arguing against these changes, both the 1894 Committee of Ten and the 1895 Committee of 15 declared that education was not meant to be an "agent of reform" (Burgess, 1984, p. 91), nor should it be expected to assume responsibility for teaching things for which the family, world of business, church or civic group should be responsible. According to these committees, the purpose of education should be the "training of the mind" and " the elements of all good knowledge and of virtue [and] teaching children and youth to define themselves by the common values of their culture" (p. 91). Public schools, they argued, should be expected to teach American cultural heritage and the basics of education, which in turn would develop an equality of opportunity for all (Burgess, 1984; Ornstein & Hunkins,1988; Tyler, 1968).

Despite the reports of both committees, during the period 1895-1925, "business was the dominant force in the shaping of America's educational system" (Gelberg, 1997, p.21). Education meant better jobs and provided a means for social mobility while providing stability, efficiency and development of vocational needs (Gelberg, 1997; Tyler, 1968). School administration, adopting methods proven effective by business, called for schools to become more "standardized, efficient, and manageable" (Gutek, 1986, p. 202). Citing confusion, inefficient governance and inappropriate organizational patterns as concerns, smaller rural schools were closed and large, urbanized public school systems began to be established (Gutek, 1986).

America's transformation from a predominantly agricultural society to that of an industrial society produced changes within the economy of the nation and the philosophy governing educational purpose. As America urbanized and industrialized, there was a call to make education more responsive to the needs of occupations and to provide training in the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out specific jobs. Business and industry began to place even higher demands on education resulting in the introduction of broad programs for vocational training and substantial extra-curricular programs, thus "Educational purpose tended significantly to broaden" (Cremin, 1977, p. 94).

> Workers and farmers were concerned about making their education more useful in their jobs; and businessmen and industrialists were interested in better-trained employees. Social workers were interested in helping the poor and the immigrants to improve the quality of their urban life; and the poor and the immigrant sought to acquire the skills required in industrial jobs. (Butts, 1978, p. 210)

"The nature of the work situation [became] an educative setting" (Cremin, 1977, p. 100) with apprenticeships becoming an initial career stage for low paying and unskilled workers. The multifaceted purpose of education expanded to include the production of workers and citizens for an industrialized nation while continuing to provide democratic, moral, social and civic instruction (Goodlad,1984; Labaree,1997; Timar & Tyack,1999; Tyack,1980,1991; Zais,1976).

By the end of the 19th century American public schools were struggling to achieve curricular coherence, assimilate immigrant children, emphasize the value of intellectual training and stress the responsibilities of a democratic society. As immigrant children were placed in public schools with no concern for their heritage or background, "the tensions of segmental pluralism were multiplied many times over; and many 'natives' as

well as 'aliens' found the adjustment traumatic" (Butts, 1978, p. 233). Educators considered their job to be that of assimilation of immigrants to the dominant culture imposing "the prevailing core culture of America upon the immigrants" (p. 237). At the same time an emphasis on social efficiency was intended to prepare students for "everyday life, especially the majority that would not go on to college"(p. 191). This preparation of the individual for "his role in an urban, industrializ[ed], and capitalist society" (p. 191), also reinforced the stratification of public schools, separating those students qualified for higher education from those considered trainable for immediate entrance into the work force. National civic values and academic quality, although promoted, began to take a back seat to issues of social value. Exemplifying the views of critical theorists, "the primary purpose of education for social control was not to acquire knowledge as such or simply to develop academic power; it was to prepare the individual for his role in society as it really exists" (Butts, 1976, p. 6).

> The purposes of education as well as the curriculums of the schools had become so scattered and fragmented that these three diverse programs for curriculum reform, [mental discipline, social efficiency, and civic responsibility], had the common objective of imposing some order, uniformity, and consistency upon the educational enterprise. The dissonant voices of academic discipline and social efficiency created such a clamor that the political purpose to develop civic responsibility was almost submerged in the tumult. (Butts, 1978, p. 188)

### 20th Century

America entered the twentieth century with no clear focus on what education was to accomplish. Bouncing between purposes that ranged from citizenship to market economy and social efficiency to socialization skills, public education was responsible for accomplishing a task that had no agreed upon outcome. America has always been at

odds about the purpose of education. This has led to an 'issue - attention cycle' which bounces attention from one focus to another, resulting in competition for attention. This focus for attention has, and often does, become contradictory. Schools perform a variety of functions, themselves legacies of earlier reform eras, yet innovations usually focus on only a narrow range of purposes. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 25). People want schools to:

- give children basic skills and knowledge;
- sort people out for future roles by grading and testing them, thus providing an apparent fair way to ration opportunity;
- encourage personal attributes such as creativity, self-reliance, or interpersonal sensitivity;
- provide daytime custody for children;
- socialize children to core values of the society; and provide a bridge between the home and the world of work and political participation

(Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Public schools and the education they provided became the "agency charged with the responsibility of maintaining social order [while] instilling individuals with codes of conduct and social values that would insure the stability of existing social relationships" (Spring, 1973, p. 30).

The 20th century saw America's completed transformation into an industrialized nation accelerated by federal, state and local government policies designed to stimulate the economy. Having a significant influence on education and resulting from pressure exerted by the business world, the federal government funded and implemented the Smith-Hughes Act (1917) mandating that 80% of all students be prepared to enter the work force upon the completion of school. Reports written by the Committee on Industrial Education suggested the building of "trade schools" as seen in German technical education, thus "prevent[ing] the working class from being segregated in second-class schools" (Butts, 1978, p. 217). These trade schools were to focus on the

retention of students in school while providing a place for vocational exploration and were to be run by private corporations. Answering this call for vocational training, public schools were compelled to incorporate vocational training programs as a principle component at both the junior high and senior high level. Courses in agriculture, home economics, and trade and industry were added to the curriculum (Butts, 1978). Public education was clearly straining to become "all things to all people" (Burgess, 1984, p. 92).

Prior to World War I, an influential group of educational philosophers and psychologists that included John Dewey, "sought to reform American political, economic, and educational institutions"(Gutek, 1986, p. 206). Arguing that schools had become "excessively formal, routine, and bureaucratic" (p. 207) and questioning the social conception of human nature, thinking and learning (Butts & Cremin, 1953), the Progressive movement sought to reform education based on concepts that knowledge had a social origin, and a child's interest should be the primary source of his learning. Dewey and the Progressives encouraged public education to place an emphasis on social goals and the education of the whole child while making school an agency of social progress. Objecting to the "acquisition of specialized skill in the management of machines at the expense of industrial intelligence based on science and a knowledge of social problems and conditions" (Dewey, 1915, p. 42) schools were urged to demonstrate American ideals and educate citizens to function in a democratic and cooperative society. This education was to stress physical fitness, citizenship, family duties, consumer skills, leisure activities, values clarification, rational abilities, fine arts, worthy home membership and worthy use of time. Students were encouraged to build and maintain close ties with the

school, community and culture in which they were raised, marking the beginnings of cultural pluralism in public education (Butts, 1978; Long, 1991; Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Although few school systems implemented progressive education programs until the mid- to-late 1920's, the progressive philosophy became part of the "general climate of opinion that sought to reform American political, economic and educational institutions" (Gutek, 1986, p. 206).

In the aftermath of World War I, America's "red scare" and fear of "worldwide communist revolution" (Gutek, 1986, p. 233) triggered anxiety about the benefits of cultural pluralism within America's public education. Maintaining that students in American public schools should be practicing American traditions and subscribing to American values, committees were formed to investigate teachers, textbooks, and libraries to "eliminate anti-Americanism"(p. 234) and to ensure that education and educators did not deviate from "true patriotism" (p. 234). Those in positions of power chose once again to push for the assimilation of immigrants into a recognized and accepted American culture that promoted moral training guided by adherence to national civic values (Butts, 1978; Labaree, 2000, 1997; Riles,1971).

By the 1920s the goal for many Americans was to make a fortune through business investment and the accumulation of material goods. Compulsory education laws and the enforcement of child labor laws led to higher numbers of students attending and completing secondary education. Stressing intellectual pursuits and academic abilities, the purpose of education became to "prepare the agents of the new prosperity: the inventors, investors, entrepreneurs and corporate leaders of the new economic order"

(Gutek, 1986, p. 235). Although vocational training was considered a necessity for lower ability students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the primary purpose of education according to policy-makers was to "challenge the talented, stress the academic basics and press for greater coherence and discipline in education" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 44).

Although the 1920s brought economic prosperity, they ended in economic depression, putting millions out of work and bringing agriculture and industry to a standstill (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Business closings and unemployment brought a reduction in school funding normally generated through local taxes. This shortage of funding caused a reduction in the teaching force, a narrowing of schools' educational programs, and in some cases, school closure. The 1930s found Americans beginning to question the traditional values related to business and the free enterprise system, causing a weakening of the bond between school administration and businessmen developed during a period of prosperity (Gutek, 1986). Considered a time of profound social class disparity, social transition and social reconstruction, public education was encouraged to examine the impact of industrialization and advocate social change while implementing a discussion based approach to the study of controversial matters and the confrontation of socio-economic issues (Counts, 1934, Goodlad, 1984; Gutek, 1986; Tyack, 1976). Educational purpose now aimed at social progress and the creation of social order.

In 1938, the Education Policy Commission (EPC) of the National Education Association, released its report, the *Purpose of Education in America*, which voiced concerns about the directions that public education had taken. It opined that education had drifted from the teaching of the basics to become an all encompassing system based

on the expressed desires of those in positions of political and economic power. Citing a concern with adolescent behavior and the failure of compulsory education laws to reduce the crime rate, the EPC reiterated that "the purpose of education was to be the teaching of truths found in the basics"(Burgess, 1984, p. 934).

After World War II, America focused primarily on readjusting to peacetime and broadening its economic base. Linking the purpose of education to something that appeared "blatantly anti-intellectual"(Burgess, 1984, p. 95), yet tightly linked to "national interest" (p. 93), vocational educators recommended that American schools incorporate "life adjustment" education into the curriculum. Based on a belief that only 20% of American youth should be prepared for college and 20% should receive vocational instruction leading to 'skilled' occupations, the majority of American children and youth were to be taught to "adapt to the imperatives of contemporary society, to learn how to be socially acceptable, to conform to group norms, to adjust themselves to service and to accept uncritically the leadership of the American elites" (p. 95). Life adjustment curriculum addressed such issues as "the problem of improving one's personal appearance, the problem of selecting a family dentist, and the problem of developing and maintaining wholesome boy-girl relationships" (Spring, 2000, p. 292). Critics of the life adjustment movement saw it as "erasing the last traces of concern for the child's mind [with] learning transmogrified into adjustment" (p. 96). By 1955, life adjustment education had undergone such severe criticism that its programs and curriculum were discredited and discontinued.

Arguing that public schooling had become weakened by life adjustment education, that American schools were less academic than European and that an "overly

permissive attitude in American schools had lowered civic and moral standards" (Gutek, 2000, p. 275), critics of public education such as Bestor, Rafferty and Rickover professed an urgent need for the development of academic programs stressing the basic skills (Burgess, 1984; Gutek, 2000, 1986). Prompted by the Soviet's successful launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 and asserting that a "proper and appropriate education would allow the top 15 % of students to become world leaders" (Burgess, 1984, p. 97), once again educational purpose shifted to a highly academic curriculum that emphasized the development of math and science skills while accentuating the need for American competition in a global society (Burgess, 1984; Butts, 1978; Riles 1971; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

During the first half of the 1960s the movement to structure curriculum showed "academic ascendancy" (Gutek, 2000, p. 63); however, by the late 1960s a variety of societal issues began to push aside the call for academics. Encouraging public education to accept the responsibility for helping to solve societal problems, educational reform focused on issues such as racial unrest and equal opportunity, the needs and rights of the educationally deprived, economically disadvantaged, gifted and mentally or physically handicapped. "A need to correct the educational discrepancies among students [was facilitated] by placing greater emphasis on the less able students" (Burgess, 1984; Long, 1991; Ornstein, 1985, p. 44; Riles, 1971). As teen pregnancy rates rose, greater frequencies of venereal disease were documented and gender inequity dominated headlines, public education further expanded its purpose to include that of teaching America's youth to shoulder social responsibility. Curricular changes included the addition of courses in multicultural awareness, sex education, values clarification and

functional literacy (Butts, 1978; Goodlad, Sirotnik & Overman, 1979). A return to the basics of academics became less of a priority as public education became the answer to America's burgeoning problems with social responsibility. "Mastering subject matter was not eliminated as a responsibility, but it was secondary in kindergarten through graduate school" (Schlechty, 1997, p. 4). Public education had entered a period of "multifunctionalism" (Gutek, 2000, p. 62) serving a variety of functions that included:

- implementation of compensatory programs for disadvantaged students
- development of cultural and ethnic studies courses
- expansion of basic skills and knowledge programs
- sorting of students for future roles
- providing vocational training related to specific personal abilities
- providing daytime custody for children
- socializing children in concepts and core values
- bridging the gaps between home, work, and political partnerships
- encouraging social integration and equality
- battling the war on poverty and joblessness

(Burgess, 1984; Butts, 1978; Tyack, 1980; Tyack & Cuban, 1995)

Technological advances in the 1970s, coupled with an energy crisis that exacerbated inflation and recession, prompted a concern that American schools were ineffectively preparing students for entrance into the workforce. This ineffectiveness was most visible in "a weakness in basic intellectual skills that prevented many students from learning the new skills for computer-assisted information systems, and ineffective vocational, clerical and service-oriented educational programs" (Gutek, 1986, p. 325). The dominant purpose for education became educational programs designed to "prepare students for specific careers, a return to basic education, and an expansion of vocational education" (Spring, 1986, p. 313).

Focusing national attention on the condition of public education in America, a comprehensive review of the quality of education was conducted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This review led to the release of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) warning that America's education was deteriorating seriously and that "Americans have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 6). Coupling the perception of educational failure with a declining U.S. economy, educational purpose turned once again to the pursuit of academic excellence. The search for knowledge, coupled with a desire to expand economic growth, productivity and efficiency in order to remain economically competitive in the world market, were the dominant themes for the 1990s and have continued into the twenty-first century (Timar &Tyack, 1999).

Emphasizing anew the collaboration of leaders in business, industry and education, America's most recent attempt at defining educational purpose comes in the form of educational standards tied to systems of accountability. This accountability process would imply that the purpose of education is the accumulation of knowledge and that the intent of standards is to focus the educational system on what is most essential for students to learn. "Now the requirement is that education prepare ordinary citizens to construct knowledge and products based on knowledge" (Schlechty, 1997, p. 37). American business leaders have endorsed the accumulation of knowledge as the purpose of education and a necessary step in assuring that we remain economically competitive in the world market (McNeil, 2000 a/b; Skrla, 2000). This coupling of educational purpose

with the pursuit of knowledge and an emphasis upon standards reinforced through a system of accountability is perceived to be the solution to America's educational ills (Gratz, 2000; Merrow, 2001).

## Current Accountability Movement

In 2002, President Bush signed into law a school reform measure requiring that every pupil in America's public schools, grades 3-8, be tested yearly. Reiterating that American high school seniors have ranked poorly when compared to students from other industrialized countries, this legislated call for standardized testing and educational accountability occurred in response to multiple demands for school improvement, higher levels of academic achievement and the idea that failure to meet high academic standards "threaten[ed America's] economic competitiveness" (McNeil, 2000b; Scheurich, Skrla, Johnson, 2000; Smith, 2000, p. 335). Educational accountability rests on the notion that teachers and school systems may be held responsible for improvement in pupil achievement and that this improvement is measurable through the use of standardized tests constructed by outside agencies (Glickman, 2001; Linn, 2000; McNeil, 2000a/b; Theobald, 1995). This acceptance of mandated standards for school performance and emphasis on raising test scores as evidence of academic achievement has guided America's most recent attempts at reform in education (Furman, 1994; McNeil, 2000a/b).

The impetus to raise academic standards has received political backing at national, state and local levels (Furman, 1994; McNeil, 2000a/b; Sacks, 2000; Smith, 2000). "Student achievement on standardized tests has become the single most important factor by which government officials evaluate policy initiatives" (Brandt, 2001, p. 154).

"Both Republican and Democratic leaders have endorsed the concept and all 50 states employ testing to some degree to determine what students are learning" (Johnson & Duffett, 2002, p. S2). This shift of school control from the local level to the state implies a responsibility to higher authority and an attempt to legislate learning with an increased "emphasis on student performance as the touchstone for state governance" (Elmore, Abelmann, & Fuhrman, 1996; McNeil, 2000b).

Achievement tests account for the majority of standardized tests used in American schools. What is readily tested and testable by achievement tests is the students' ability to accumulate information. According to Sacks (2000), standardization and the use of achievement testing focuses on "test scores and means to effect higher scores, [thus] reward[ing] superficial learning, reinforc[ing] rote learning of facts and standardized thinking" (p. 1). America's need to demonstrate high student achievement has become a system of outcome measurement with "standardized tests measur[ing] the acquisition and reproduction of factual information" (Theobald, 1995, p. 467). Measuring what a student has learned while providing information about a student's accumulation of knowledge (Cizek, 1999; Popham, 1999; Theobald, 1995), these tests "are meant to assess the knowledge and skills that a student possesses in a particular content area" (Popham, 1999, p. 3). "Standardized achievement tests are formatted to test lower-order thinking skills (e.g., knowledge, comprehension)" (Cizek, 1999, p. 27) causing students to focus on the memorization of isolated facts rather than the development of fundamental and higher order abilities (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2002).

Testing is a visible, visual and measurable way to manage massive public education (Office of Technology Assessment, 1992). Standardized achievement tests

seem to measure what the policy-makers want, while in turn providing them background on which to base the argument "schools should take the steps necessary to teach what the tests measure" (Elmore, Furhman, 2001, p. 72)

The assumption is that achievement tests measure "the skills which are among the most important in our society", constitute an "alignment between the job market and the public schools" (Spring, 2000, p. 316), and are in agreement with those purposes espoused by educational stakeholders. The focus on student output coupled with the national call for higher achievement on standardized tests implies that the valued purpose of education in America's public schools is the acquisition of copious amounts of fixed knowledge. However, as Theobald (1995) notes, "It would be a shallow argument that sought to maintain that this ability somehow defines an education" (p. 467).

## Research on Educational Purpose

Most of what has been written about educational purpose is derived from histories and philosophies of education. Educational purpose has rarely been the focus of empirical research. Indeed, only two studies have been conducted to explore perceptions of educational purpose.

The *Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools* has been conducted yearly via telephone since 1965. For the first time, the 2000 survey incorporated questions to determine public perceptions of the purpose of public education. Conducted between June 5 and June 29, 2000, the study used a national "unclustered, directory-assisted, random-digit telephone sample, based on a proportionate

stratified sampling design with a total of 1,093 adults, 18 years of age or older" (Rose & Gallup, 2000, p. 58), to gain insight into public attitudes toward school.

Drawing on a review of relevant literature, the portion of the survey related to purpose identified seven educational purposes in turn, asking the telephone respondents to rate each of them on a scale of one to ten with ten (10) being of "highest importance" and one (1) being "not at all important." The seven purposes identified were:

1. To prepare people to become responsible citizens
2. To help people become economically self-sufficient
3. To ensure a basic level of quality among schools
4. To promote cultural unity among all Americans
5. To improve social conditions for people
6. To enhance people's happiness and enrich their lives
7. To dispel inequities in education among certain schools and certain groups

(Rose & Gallup, 2000, p. 47)

Results of the *PDK/Gallup* poll revealed that respondents rated all seven of the purposes as being important, although not equally important, with means for each of the seven purposes ranging from a high of 9.0 to a low of 7.5. Respondents differentiated among the purposes to some extent with preparing people to become citizens receiving the highest mean score, 9.0 out of 10.0, and helping people to become economically self-sufficient receiving the second highest mean score, 8.6 out of 10. Completing the list were: economically self-sufficient, with a mean score of 8.6; ensuring a basic level of quality among schools, with a mean score of 8.5; cultural unity, with a mean score of 8.0; and improving social conditions, with a mean score of 7.8. Lowest mean scores were jointly assigned to enhancing people's happiness and enriching their lives, and dispelling inequities in education among certain schools, each receiving a mean score of 7.5 out of 10.

While the results suggest priorities among purposes, they are equally supportive of the notion that the public at large embraces multiple purposes for education. However, it is difficult to make such an assertion given the way in which the questions were asked. Respondents were asked to rate each purpose independently of the others and were not asked to assess the importance of the potential goals in relationship to one another. What's more, respondents might have felt uncomfortable characterizing any of the purposes as unimportant. In a different vein, although the population potentially involved educators as members of the "public" surveyed, there is no way to identify specific input from either teachers or administrators, two of the stakeholders in education. Finally, the statements of purpose did not include the acquisition of knowledge, vocational training, basic literacy or other purposes identified in the literature.

In *A Place Called School*, Goodlad (1984) attempted to "examine the events that occur within schools and the meaning these events have for those in the school and community" (p. 16). Through extensive observation, interviews and surveys in 38 schools in 13 communities in 7 different sections of the country, data were collected in an attempt to "study schools as total entities" (p. 17). Since only four questions on the survey used in the study are relevant to this review, only that portion of his study will be discussed.

A total of 20,157 secondary students, 3,400 elementary students, 6,900 secondary parents, 1,724 elementary parents, 1,147 secondary teachers, and 286 elementary teachers were surveyed by Goodlad and his team of researchers (Overman,1980,1979). School administrators were not included in this portion of the study. State, district and local school goal statements were reviewed to identify four functions of schooling.

1. Academic/Intellectual (these terms are used interchangeably throughout the study), embracing all intellectual skills and domains of knowledge
2. Vocational, geared to developing readiness for productive work and economic responsibility
3. Social and civic, related to preparation for socialization into a complex society
4. Personal, emphasizing the development of individual responsibility, talent, and free expression (Goodlad, 1984, p. 37).

Goodlad's survey was mailed to every family with students enrolled at each of the 38 school sites, distributed to all teachers at each school site and administered to a "class-specific sample of students" at each school site (Goodlad, 1984, p. 20). Using a four-point Likert scale with categories of Very Important, Somewhat Important, Somewhat Unimportant, and Very Unimportant, parents, teachers and students were asked to: rate the importance their school assigned to each of the four functions; indicate how important they thought each function *should be* at their school; select the function that was most emphasized at their school; and finally, select the function they thought *should be* emphasized at their school (Overman, 1979).

As can be seen in Table 1, all of the respondents perceived their school to regard intellectual development as the most important function, although they differed somewhat with respect to the importance accorded other purposes.

When respondents were asked how important they thought each function *should be* at their school (See Table 2), "90% of all surveyed stated that *all* functions should be considered important or very important" (Overman, 1980, p.69). For elementary teachers, the category receiving the highest rating was that of personal (92.8%) followed closely by the category of intelligence (92.1%). Secondary teachers reversed that opinion considering the category of intelligence (88.9%) to be the most important with personal

Table 1. Perceptions of How Important Each Function Is At Their Schools

(Figures used here are a compilation of multiple tables)

| | | Mean | Very Unimportant | Somewhat Unimportant | Somewhat Important | Very Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers | | | | | | |
| Sec. | Social | 3.17 | 2.7% | 13.7% | 47.9% | 35.7% |
| | Intelligence | 3.47 | 2.3% | 5.5% | 35.2% | 57.1% |
| | Personal | 3.00 | 5.3% | 18.3% | 47.6% | 28.8% |
| | Vocational | 3.26 | 2.4% | 12.3% | 41.9% | 43.4% |
| Teachers | | | | | | |
| Elem. | Social | 3.48 | 0.4% | 5.7% | 39.1% | 54.8% |
| | Intelligence | 3.88 | 0.0% | 0.4% | 11.1% | 88.5% |
| | Personal | 3.48 | 1.4% | 6.1% | 35.5% | 57.0% |
| | Vocational | 2.68 | 12.6% | 25.9% | 42.4% | 19.1% |
| Parents (elementary) | | | | | | |
| | Social | 3.35 | 1.1% | 6.9% | 47.3% | 44.6% |
| | Intelligence | 3.70 | 0.9% | 2.2% | 22.6% | 74.0% |
| | Personal | 3.37 | 2.1% | 9.5% | 37.8% | 50.6% |
| | Vocational | 2.76 | 12.1% | 25.3% | 37.0% | 25.5% |
| Students (elementary students were not surveyed) | | | | | | |
| | Social | 3.23 | 2.9% | 10.7% | 47.0% | 39.4% |
| | Intelligence | 3.61 | 1.4% | 4.4% | 26.0% | 68.2% |
| | Personal | 3.17 | 4.7% | 14.8% | 39.3% | 41.2% |
| | Vocational | 3.29 | 4.6% | 11.7% | 33.9% | 49.8% |

(Overman, 1980, p. 9)

Table 2. Teachers' Opinions Regarding How Important Each Function Should Be At Their School (in Percentages)

| Teachers | | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant. | Somewhat Important | Very Important. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sec. | Social | 0.5 | 1.5 | 27.5 | 70.5 |
| | Intelligence | 0.2 | 0.2 | 10.8 | 88.9 |
| | Personal | 0.3 | 0.6 | 15.6 | 83.5 |
| | Vocational | 0.2 | 3.2 | 26.0 | 70.6 |
| Elem. | Social | 0.0 | 0.0 | 14.0 | 86.0 |
| | Intelligence | 0.0 | 0.4 | 7.6 | 92.1 |
| | Personal | 0.0 | 0.4 | 6.9 | 92.8 |
| | Vocational | 6.8 | 11.2 | 40.6 | 41.4 |

(Overman, 1980, p. 26).

second in importance (83.5%). The need for vocational emphasis was rated much higher by secondary teachers than by those at the elementary level.

When selecting the function that was perceived to be the most emphasized at their school, teachers, parents and students at all levels of education perceived the Intellectual function to be most emphasized. However, in 34 of the 38 schools surveyed, teachers showed a preference for more emphasis on the personal function, a view shared by elementary school parents and secondary school students. The most "persuasive difference is found for the personal function, the preferred percentages are higher than the perceived percentages for all data sources at all levels, and appears to be most dramatic for teachers at all levels" (Overman, 1980, p. 40).

The information provided by Goodlad's (1984) study would seem to parallel the results of the *PDK/Gallup Poll* (2000). Jointly, they suggest that public education is

operating on and reflective of the multiple purpose(s) held by its constituencies. However, the Goodlad study was limited to only four purposes for education, administrators were not included, and data from elementary teachers was somewhat limited.

What one doesn't gain from either of these studies is the perceptions of the schools administrators regarding the purpose of education and how administrators' perceptions compare to those of classroom teachers. Although Goodlad's (1984) study did include classroom teachers, the focus of the study was not on educational purpose; therefore, teachers were given a limited range of focus. The PDK/Gallup poll did not identify teachers or school administrators within the sample. No studies have been conducted on the subject of educational purpose in which the perceptions of school administrators are compared with those perceptions of classroom teachers. A broad spectrum study focusing on the opinions of stakeholders in education would provide us with missing information about public school administrators' and public school teachers' perceptions of the purpose of education.

## Summary

A variance of educational goals and purpose is evident when reviewing the literature. One has seen specific purposes become the focus of educational training only to quickly be replaced by other purpose(s) considered to be more appropriate or relevant to the society at any given time. "The history of educational goals in the U.S. has been a story of shifting priorities, as particular goals come into favor then slide into the background, only to reemerge later with renewed vigor" (Labaree, 1997, p. 58). The

"interplay of social, political, and economic forces within education, the conflicts among groups and ideology, and the persistent, insistent, unending claims made upon public education to do this, to do that, not to do this, and not to do that" (Butts, 1978, p. 264) have caused public schools to operate under poorly defined educational purpose(s). Initially designed to ensure that all citizens would be moral and literate, public education has taken on many facets and been expected to provide multiple services that would seem to lack connection to those original educational purposes of morality and literacy.

Today, schools function under the assumption that the purpose for education is the accumulation of knowledge reinforced by the identification and implementation of academic standards and accountability and implying the implementation of a Functionalistic paradigm within our public schools. This educational purpose may or may not concur with the opinions of educators in the field, those school administrators and teachers who will be held responsible for the implementation and testing of this knowledge accumulation. Holding educators accountable for a purpose(s) in which they hold little belief may result in lowered expectations, commitment and may present a "profound basis for conflict" (Rosenholtz, 1987, p. 537).

What one doesn't know is the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education. In the absence of such empirical data, one is unable to examine the educational stakeholders' perceptions of the purpose for education to determine if those purposes expressed by society are concordant with those expressed by educational stakeholders and in turn with those of policy-makers. Identification of these perceptions would determine if disparate beliefs in educational purpose exist.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education. To explore this issue the following research questions were addressed:

1. What do public school administrators perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
2. What do public school teachers perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
3. What is the relationship between the perceptions of public school administrators and those of public school teachers regarding the purpose of education?
4. What is the relationship between public school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the purpose of education and those expressed by policy-makers in mandated accountability policies?

This chapter details the methods and procedures used in the study.

### Research Design

Given that limited information was available about school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the purposes of education, an exploratory, descriptive study seemed most appropriate for the study, as did the attempt to gather data broadly from a

relatively large population. Thus survey methodology was used to gather information from administrators and teachers about the purpose of education.

## Participants

Participants were elementary school teachers and administrators selected from regular, K-6 elementary schools in the state of Tennessee. Using data from the National Center for Educational Statistics, Common Core of Data (1999-2000); the Census 2000 demographic characteristic profiles via Proximity, an online service that provides access to demographic data regarding America's schools; and the Tennessee State Department of Education School Directory (2001-2002), school district demographics were examined. There were 994 elementary schools identified that met the regular, K-6 elementary criterion.

After consulting the table of recommended sample sizes developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), it was concluded that it would be essential to receive information from a minimum of 278 elementary schools. In order to achieve these numbers at a return rate of 70%, an over-sampling was necessary. Consequently, it was determined that a total of 397 elementary schools would be selected for inclusion in the survey. In order to ensure sufficient representation from throughout the state, the names of all 994 elementary schools were placed on an alphabetized and numbered list. A simple random sample of 397 schools was selected from the list by using a table of random numbers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

The principals at each of the 397 elementary schools were contacted by mail to request their participation in the study. Each administrator was also asked to select one

classroom teacher for participation. This teacher was to be randomly selected from an alphabetized list of regular teachers at the site with teacher number 15 designated as the participant. Regular teacher was defined as a teacher who does not focus primarily on vocational, special or alternative training. At those elementary schools not employing 15 regular classroom teachers, the principal was asked to select teacher number 4. The figures 15 and 4 were selected from a table of random numbers after determining the mean number of teachers in both large and small districts within the state.

Based on the assumption that one administrator and one classroom teacher from each school site would respond, a total of 397 school administrators and 397 teachers were surveyed providing a respondent pool of 794 (N=794). Actual responses were received from 612 for a total response rate of 77.1%.

Specific provisions were made to protect the confidentiality of study participants. Names of school administrators and teachers were not requested nor revealed at any point in the research.

## Instrumentation

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on a review of the literature and research relevant to the function and purpose of education (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was organized in three sections. Section I identified twelve (12) educational purposes as described in the literature. Respondents were asked to rate each of these twelve educational purpose statements on a Likert-type scale ranging from one to four with one (1) being Strongly Disagree and four (4) being Strongly Agree. A four- point scale was used rather than a five-point scale in order to eliminate neutrality

and force respondents to make a choice between agreement and disagreement. For each of the twelve statements, respondents were asked to circle the number that best represented their degree of agreement with that educational purpose. Section II of the questionnaire asked respondents to select from the 12 educational purpose statements identified in Section I, the statement they considered to describe their perception of the most important educational purpose, the statement considered to describe their perception of the second most important educational purpose, and the statement considered to describe their perception of the least important educational purpose. Section III asked the respondents for specific demographic information. This information included their job title, whether school administrator or teacher; total number of years experience in their current position; total number of years in the field of education; gender; and the school's setting, whether urban, suburban, or rural.

A draft of the questionnaire was field tested by a group of school administrators and classroom teachers (N=6) not involved in the study. This group was asked to complete the survey and provide feedback about terminology, clarity of instruction, and format. Revisions in the layout of the questionnaire were made on the basis of the feedback received.

## Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining permission from The University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board (IRB) and those school districts requiring authorization, survey packets were sent via first-class mail directly to the principal at each selected school site. Data collection began in mid-April of 2002 and continued through mid-June of 2002.

Because surveys distributed and returned by mail often suffer from a lack of response, all efforts possible were made to maximize response numbers. Approximately one week before the mailing of the survey packet, initial contact was made with the principal at each selected school site using a combination of e-mail and first-class mail. This pre-notice included the name of the researcher and the organization with which the researcher was affiliated, informed the recipients that they would be receiving a packet of materials pertinent to research being conducted, contained a brief description of the purpose and relevance of the study, provided information regarding their protection and confidentiality while participating in the research, and conveyed acknowledgement of the researcher's appreciation of their willingness to participate. This initial contact letter appears in Appendix B.

Each survey packet mailed to the principal contained two questionnaires; a detailed cover letter; directions for selection of a classroom teacher for participation; two addressed, postage-paid envelopes; and a stamped postcard to be used in requesting results of the study. A detailed cover letter explained the purpose of the survey; indicated how the data would be used and why a response was important from both an administrator and teacher at each site; described the time required of the participants to complete the survey; suggested the benefits to the organization and individual as a result of the study; and assured the participant that involvement was voluntary with no negative consequences resulting from failure to complete the questionnaire. This cover letter appears in Appendix C. Respondents were requested to return their questionnaire to the researcher in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope attached to each questionnaire.

Complete directions for the selection of a classroom teacher for participation was included in the principals' packet (See Appendix D). These instructions were printed on paper of a different color than that of the survey. Also included in this packet was a stamped postcard to be self-addressed by the school administrator and returned separately from the questionnaire if the administrator or teacher wished to receive a copy of the results of the study (See Appendix E).

Two weeks after the initial mailing, a postcard was sent to the principal at non-responding school sites. This postcard stated that a questionnaire had been sent to them, identified the topic of the questionnaire, reminded them of the importance of their response to the completion and success of the study. Information was provided that encouraged a call for replacement paperwork in those cases where the initial questionnaire had been lost or misplaced (See Appendix F).

Four weeks after the first mailing, full-replacement survey packets were sent to 54 sites from which there had been no response. The replacement survey packets contained duplicate materials to that of the initial mailing. In addition, a letter restated the purpose of the survey, emphasized the importance of their response to the success of the survey, reminded the participants of the importance of the survey to the field of education, and once again encouraged their participation.

Names of school administrators and teachers were not used at any point during the research. For response tracking purposes, names and addresses of the schools were numerically coded. This coding was used to follow up on response return or to identify entry errors when aggregating responses for reporting purposes. No individual school, system, or person was identified or identifiable in the study. Only the researcher had

access to the returned survey, actual data files, ID numbers and school addresses. The original collected data were locked in the researcher's home files and will be kept on file for a period of one year. After all responses were received, the coded list of schools was destroyed.

## Data Analysis

Data from the 612 (N=612) returned surveys were numbered as received and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Descriptive statistics were generated and both parametric and non-parametric tests were used in the analysis of the data.

The first section of the survey required the respondents to rate each of twelve educational purpose statements on a four-point Likert-type scale from 1, Strongly Disagree to 4, Strongly Agree. The responses to Section I of the survey were analyzed separately for teachers and school administrators with mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages reported for each educational purpose for each of the two groups. Cross-tabulation tables were developed using frequency and percent of response to determine if there was any relationship between the answers given by school administrators and those of teachers. Pearson's chi-square values were then calculated to determine whether there were significant differences in the responses of school administrators and teachers to each of the twelve educational purposes. Pearson's chi-square was chosen because it involved the use of frequencies rather than measures of central tendency which could be affected or sensitive to influence by one or a few

extreme values in the distribution (Alreck & Settle, 1985) allowing the possibility of significant differences in the responses of school administrators and teachers to go unidentified.

Section II of the survey required respondents to select the educational purpose statement considered to be the Most Important, the Second Most Important, and the Least Important. The responses were numerically coded 3 (Most Important), 2 (Second Most Important), and 1 (Least Important). Total numbers, percentages, means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the identified educational purposes for each of the two groups to determine patterns of responses. Once again cross-tabulations tables were developed using frequency and percent of response to determine if there was any relationship between the answers given by school administrators and those of teachers. Pearson's chi-square values were calculated to determine whether there were significant differences in the responses of school administrators and teachers to each of the categories, Most Important, Second Most Important, and Least Important.

The descriptive statistics generated by each group in Sections I and II of the survey allowed for answering research questions one and two: 1) What do public school administrators perceive to be the purpose(s) of education? and 2) What do public school teachers perceive to be the purpose(s) of education? The results of the chi-square comparisons of responses for both school administrators and teachers to the questions in sections I and II of the survey allowed for answering research question three: 3) What is the relationship between the perceptions of public school administrators and those of public school teachers regarding the purpose of education? The information gathered from the answers to research questions one and two was compared with the

purpose of education implied by policy-makers in the mandating of standards and accountability practices and used to determine the answer to Research question four: 4) What is the relationship between public school administrators and teachers perceptions of the purpose of education and those expressed by policy-makers in mandated accountability practices? Data gathered in section III of the survey was used to construct a demographic profile of the respondent population in order to portray the characteristics of persons represented by the sample.

## Validity and Reliability

A survey instrument, developed by the researcher after a review of relevant research and literature, was used to collect data from the sample population (See Appendix A). Content and construct validity of the instrument was assessed through the process of field testing. A group (N = 6), representing school administrators and teachers not involved in the study, were given the questionnaire to complete and provide feedback about terminology, clarity of instruction, and format. Revisions in format were made on the basis of the feedback received.

Reliability of the instrument was determined through the performance of Spearman-Brown split-half analysis. Results of this analysis produced a value of .9057, providing indications that the instrument was reliable.

# CHAPTER 4

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education and to compare it with the perceptions of policy-makers as expressed in mandated accountability efforts. Through the use of a researcher-designed questionnaire, a random sample of elementary school principals and classroom teachers in public schools in one state were asked to share their perceptions of the purpose of education. The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. Following the presentation of data profiling the respondents, the findings are reported in terms of the questions guiding the study:

1. What do public school administrators perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
2. What do public school teachers perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
3. What is the relationship between the perceptions of school administrators and school teachers regarding the purpose of education?
4. What is the relationship between public school administrators and teachers perceptions of the purpose of education and those expressed by policy-makers in mandated accountability practices?

Profile of Respondents

A questionnaire was sent to 397 (n = 397) school administrators and 397 (n = 397) classroom teachers in the state of Tennessee. Questionnaires were returned by 612 of the 794 educators for an overall return rate of 77.1%. Completed questionnaires were received from 323 (81.9%) of the school administrators and 288 (73.1%) of the classroom teachers surveyed.

The respondent group was predominately female. A total of 441 (72.1%) respondents were female,169 (27.6%) were male, and 2 respondents did not indicate their gender. When calculated by job position, 171 (53.1%) of the school administrators and 270 (93.8%) of the teachers were female.

The majority of respondents, (356; 58.5%) served in schools located in rural areas, as is true of the state distribution, with the next highest number and percent serving in suburban areas (171; 28.3%) and the fewest in urban areas (80;13.2%). When delineated by job description, 183 (56.7%) of the school administrators served in rural areas, 97 (30.0%) in suburban areas and 43 (13.3%) in urban areas. Similarly, among teachers, 173 (60.9%) served in rural areas, 74 (26.1%) in suburban areas and 37 (13.0%) in urban areas.

In reporting total numbers of years they had been in education, the 612 respondents had served an average of 20.2 years (range: 1- 43 years). School administrators had served an average of 25 years (range: 7- 43 years), while teachers had served an average of 14.8 years (range: 1- 42 years). The school administrators had served in their current positions an average of 10.4 years (range: 1-36 years), while teachers had served an average of 13.7 years (range: 1-42 years).

Research Question One

What do public school administrators perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?

In an attempt to answer research question one, school administrators were asked to rate twelve purposes of education identified from the literature, on a 4-point Likert-type scale from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree), and then to select the three which they perceived as the Most Important, Second Most Important, and Least Important purpose. Mean scores of 3 or above were assumed to indicate agreement with the statement and scores below 3 to indicate disagreement with the statement. The twelve educational purposes identified were:

1. Acculturation: to promote cultural unity and a common American heritage
2. Child Care: to provide a system that delays children's entry into the work force
3. Democratic: to prepare students to become responsible citizens
4. Economic: to provide information and develop skills necessary for students to become economically self-sufficient
5. Individual: to help students reach their maximum level of talent development
6. Knowledge: to provide for student knowledge acquisition and intellectual skills
7. Literacy: to ensure students have the basic skills in reading and writing
8. Morality: to develop in students the core values of a moral society
9. Reform: to provide students with the skills and abilities necessary to analyze and address social conditions
10. Socialization: to teach students to interact effectively with others

11. Social Mobility: to provide students with a means of moving up the social and economic ladder
12. Vocational: to provide students with guidance in identifying and preparing for a specific occupation

As can be seen in Table 3, school administrators rated Literacy highest (M = 3.82) followed closely by Knowledge (M = 3.78), Democratic (M = 3.72), Economic (M = 3.69) and Individual (M = 3.67). Conversely, school administrators disagreed with Child Care (M = 1.79), Acculturation (M = 2.97) and Social Mobility (M = 2.91) as purposes for education.

Of the 312 school administrators who identified the Most Important purpose of education, the majority of respondents (55.8%) chose either Knowledge or Literacy. As may be seen in Table 4, 100 (32.1%) ranked Knowledge as the Most Important, while Literacy accounted for 74 (23.7%) of the responses. Following this, in rank order, were: Individual (56;17.9%), Democratic (37;11.9%) and Economic (31;9.9%).

As with the first most important rankings, the 302 school administrator respondents once again chose Knowledge (57;18.9%) and Literacy (55;18.2%) as the top two selections for the Second Most Important purpose. Rounding out the next ranked purposes were Democratic (49; 6.2%), Individual (43;14.2%) and Economic (37;12.3%). With the exception of the reverse order for Individual and Democratic, the school administrators' top seven selections for both the Most Important and the Second Most Important were the same. Further, the emergence of Knowledge and Literacy as the most

Table 3: Educational Purposes as Rated by School Administrators

| Educational Purpose | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Count Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth) | | | | | | |
| **Literacy** | 13 | 1 | 18 | 291 | 323 | | |
| | 4.0% | 0.3% | 5.6% | 90.1% | 100% | 3.82 | .631 |
| **Knowledge** | 12 | 0 | 35 | 274 | 321 | | |
| | 3.7% | 0 | 10.9% | 85.4% | 100% | 3.78 | .631 |
| **Democratic** | 11 | 4 | 50 | 258 | 323 | | |
| | 3.4% | 1.2% | 15.5% | 79.9% | 100% | 3.72 | .658 |
| **Economic** | 11 | 3 | 60 | 248 | 322 | | |
| | 3.4% | 0.9% | 18.6% | 77.0% | 100% | 3.69 | .662 |
| **Individual** | 12 | 3 | 63 | 244 | 322 | | |
| | 3.7% | 0.9% | 19.6% | 75.8% | 100% | 3.67 | .681 |
| **Socialization** | 12 | 8 | 118 | 184 | 322 | | |
| | 3.7% | 2.5% | 36.6% | 57.1% | 100% | 3.47 | .724 |
| **Morality** | 13 | 22 | 153 | 135 | 323 | | |
| | 4.0% | 6.8% | 47.4% | 41.8% | 100% | 3.27 | .759 |
| **Vocation** | 7 | 24 | 169 | 123 | 323 | | |
| | 2.2% | 7.4% | 52.3% | 38.1% | 100% | 3.26 | .688 |
| **Reform** | 11 | 37 | 169 | 105 | 322 | | |
| | 3.4% | 11.5% | 52.5% | 32.6% | 100% | 3.14 | .748 |
| **Acculturation** | 18 | 45 | 186 | 70 | 319 | | |
| | 5.6% | 14.1% | 58.3% | 21.9% | 100% | 2.97 | .766 |
| **Social Mobility** | 17 | 68 | 162 | 72 | 319 | | |
| | 5.3% | 21.3% | 50.8% | 22.6% | 100% | 2.91 | .803 |
| **Child Care** | 141 | 113 | 46 | 15 | 315 | | |
| | 44.8% | 35.9% | 14.6% | 4.8% | 100% | 1.79 | .863 |

Table 4: School Administrators' Ranking of the Most Important, the Second Most Important, and Least Important Educational Purposes

| **Most Important** Number (%) | | **Second Most Important** Number (%) | | **Least Important** Number (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth) | | | | | |
| Knowledge | 100 (32.1) | Knowledge | 57 (18.9) | Child Care | 214 (70.4) |
| Literacy | 74 (23.7) | Literacy | 55 (18.2) | Social Mobility | 44 (14.5) |
| Individual | 56 (17.9) | Democratic | 49 (16.2) | Acculturation | 19 (6.3) |
| Democratic | 37 (11.9) | Individual | 43 (14.2) | Vocation | 8 (2.6) |
| Economic | 31 ( 9.9) | Economic | 37 (12.3) | Morality | 7 (2.3) |
| Morality | 7 ( 2.2) | Morality | 26 ( 8.6) | Reform | 6 (2.0) |
| Socialization | 4 ( 1.3) | Socialization | 22 ( 7.3) | Individual | 2 (0.7) |
| Acculturation | 1 ( 0.3) | Child Care | 3 (1.0) | Socialization | 2 (0.7) |
| Child Care | 1 ( 0.3) | Social Mobility | 3 (1.0) | Economic | 1 (0.3) |
| Vocation | 1 ( 0.3) | Reform | 3 (1.0) | Knowledge | 1 (0.3) |
| Reform | 0 | Acculturation | 2 (0.7) | Democratic | 0 |
| Social Mobility | 0 | Vocation | 2 (0.7) | Literacy | 0 |
| **Total(s)** | 312 (100) | | 302 (100) | | 304 (100) |

and second most important purposes mark their significance to the administrators that responded.

As may also be seen, Child Care was ranked Least Important by 214 (70.4%) of the respondents followed more distantly by Social Mobility (44;14.5%) and Acculturation (19; 6.3%). Democratic and Literacy received 0 responses as Least Important. Knowledge was ranked as Least Important by one administrator.

Research Question Two

What do public school teachers perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?

As with the administrators, public school teachers were asked to rate the same 12 purposes of education on a 4-point Likert-type scale from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree) and then to select the three which they perceived to be the Most Important, Second Most Important, and Least Important purposes. Once again, mean scores of 3 or above were assumed to indicate agreement with the statement and below 3 to indicate disagreement with the statement.

As can be seen in Table 5, teachers rated Literacy highest (M = 3.87) followed by Knowledge (M = 3.83). Four other purposes followed closely behind: Democratic (M = 3.72), Economic (M = 3.71), Individual (M = 3.60) and Socialization (M = 3.56). Conversely, teachers disagreed with Child Care (M = 1.82), Social Mobility (M = 2.95) and Acculturation (M = 2.97) as purposes for education.

Of the 288 teachers who identified the most important purpose of education, as may be seen in Table 6, 101 (35.3%) ranked Literacy first, and 75 (26.2%) marked

Table 5: Educational Purposes as Rated by Public School Teachers

| Educational Purpose | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Count Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth) | | | | | | |
| **Literacy** | 6<br>2.1% | 2<br>0.7% | 15<br>5.2% | 264<br>92.0% | 287<br>100% | 3.87 | .503 |
| **Knowledge** | 6<br>2.1% | 1<br>0.3% | 30<br>10.5% | 250<br>87.1% | 287<br>100% | 3.83 | .527 |
| **Democratic** | 6<br>2.1% | 1<br>0.3% | 61<br>21.3% | 218<br>76.2% | 286<br>100% | 3.72 | .581 |
| **Economic** | 6<br>2.1% | 2<br>0.7% | 60<br>20.9% | 219<br>76.3% | 287<br>100% | 3.71 | .587 |
| **Individual** | 6<br>2.1% | 9<br>3.1% | 78<br>27.1% | 195<br>67.7% | 288<br>100% | 3.60 | .654 |
| **Socialization** | 5<br>1.7% | 4<br>1.4% | 103<br>35.8% | 176<br>1.1% | 288<br>100% | 3.56 | .616 |
| **Vocation** | 5<br>1.7% | 28<br>9.8% | 141<br>49.1% | 113<br>39.4% | 287<br>100% | 3.26 | .703 |
| **Morality** | 7<br>2.4% | 32<br>11.1% | 132<br>45.8% | 117<br>40.6% | 288<br>100% | 3.25 | .745 |
| **Reform** | 4<br>1.4% | 37<br>12.8% | 165<br>57.3% | 82<br>28.5% | 288<br>100% | 3.13 | .674 |
| **Acculturation** | 7<br>2.4% | 56<br>19.6% | 163<br>57.0% | 60<br>21.0% | 286<br>100% | 2.97 | .710 |
| **Social Mobility** | 13<br>4.5% | 61<br>21.3% | 139<br>48.6% | 73<br>25.5% | 286<br>100% | 2.95 | .806 |
| **Child Care** | 123<br>43.6% | 99<br>35.1% | 49<br>17.4% | 11<br>3.9% | 282<br>100% | 1.82 | .857 |

Table 6: Teachers' Ranking of the Most Important, the Second Most Important, and the Least Important Educational Purposes

| **Most Important** Number (%) | | **Second Most Important** Number (%) | | **Least Important** Number (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (rounded to nearest tenth) | | | |
| Literacy | 101 (35.3) | Knowledge | 69 (24.6) | Child Care | 193 (69.7) |
| Knowledge | 75 (26.2) | Literacy | 60 (21.4) | Social Mobility | 33 (11.9) |
| Individual | 35 (12.2) | Democratic | 36 (12.9) | Acculturation | 20 ( 7.2) |
| Economic | 31 (10.8) | Individual | 32 (11.4) | Reform | 8 (2.9) |
| Democratic | 26 ( 9.1) | Socialization | 29 (10.4) | Morality | 6 (2.2) |
| Morality | 7 ( 2.4) | Economic | 26 ( 9.3) | Individual | 5 (1.8) |
| Socialization | 4 ( 1.4) | Morality | 16 ( 5.7) | Economic | 4 (1.4) |
| Vocation | 4 ( 1.4) | Vocation | 8 (2.9) | Vocation | 3 (1.1) |
| Acculturation | 3 ( 1.0) | Reform | 2 (0.7) | Democratic | 2 (0.7) |
| Child Care | 0 | Social Mobility | 2 (0.7) | Socialization | 2 (0.7) |
| Reform | 0 | Acculturation | 0 | Literacy | 1 (0.4) |
| Social Mobility | 0 | Child Care | 0 | Knowledge | 0 |
| **Total** | 286 (100) | | 280 (100) | | 277 (100) |

Knowledge first. Following this, in rank order were: Individual (35;12.2%), Economic (31;10.8%) and Democratic (26; 9.1%). As with the first most important rankings, 280 teachers once again chose Knowledge (69; 24.6%) and Literacy (60; 21.4%) as the top two selections for the Second Most Important educational purpose; however, the order for ranking was reversed. Rounding out the next ranked purposes for Second Most Important were Democratic (36;12.9%), Individual (32;11.4%), Socialization (29;10.4%) and Economic (26;9.3%). The teachers' top five selections for the Second Most Important saw the inclusion of Socialization ( 29; 10.4%), ranked fifth, causing Economic to drop to sixth in ranking. The emergence of Knowledge and Literacy as the Most Important and Second Most Important purposes mark their prominence to the teachers that responded.

As may also be seen, Child Care was ranked Least Important by 193 (69.7%) of the respondents followed more distantly by Social Mobility (33;11.9%) and Acculturation (20; 7.2%). Knowledge received 0 responses as Least Important whereas, Literacy was ranked as Least Important by one teacher.

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between the perceptions of school administrators and school teachers regarding the purpose of education?

To determine the relationship between the responses of school administrators and teachers, cross-tabulation tables were constructed using the frequency and percentages of response for each of the two groups, school administrators and teachers, for each of the twelve educational purposes and for their rankings of the Most Important, Second Most

Important, and Least Important purposes. Pearson chi-square ($X^2$) values were then calculated to determine whether significant differences existed between the responses. An alpha level of .05 was set for all tests of significance. Exact significance tests rather than asymptotic ones were used to compute chi-square values. Cross tabulation tables and chi-square values for each of the 12 educational purpose statements may be seen in Appendix G.

As may be seen in Table 7, there was a high degree of correspondence between the responses of administrators and teachers in the ratings of all of the educational purposes. Literacy was rated highest by both school administrators (M = 3.82) and teachers (M = 3.87) with Knowledge for school administrators (M = 3.78) and teachers (M = 3.83) following closely behind. Indeed, there were no differences in their order of rating for the top six educational purposes, Literacy, Knowledge, Democratic, Economic, Individual and Socialization, and only a reversal in positions 7 and 8 with school administrators rating Morality (M = 3.27) ahead of Vocation (M = 3.26) by a margin of .01, and teachers rating Vocation (M = 3.26) ahead of Morality (M = 3.25) by the same margin. With the exception of this reversal in position, the remaining purposes were rated in the same order by both school administrators and teachers: Reform, Acculturation, Social Mobility and Child Care, with the latter 3 receiving mean scores below 3 from both groups, indicating disagreement with them as purposes for education. A statistically significant difference between teachers and administrators ratings emerged within 1 of the 12 educational purposes, Individual. School administrators were less likely to disagree (3; 0.9%) with Individual as a purpose of education than teachers

Table 7: Comparison of School Administrators and Teachers Ratings for Twelve Educational Purposes

| Educational Purpose | School Administrator Mean | Educational Purpose | Teacher Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Literacy | 3.82 | Literacy | 3.87 |
| Knowledge | 3.78 | Knowledge | 3.83 |
| Democratic | 3.72 | Democratic | 3.72 |
| Economic | 3.69 | Economic | 3.71 |
| Individual | 3.67 | Individual | 3.60 |
| Socialization | 3.47 | Socialization | 3.56 |
| Morality | 3.27 | Vocation | 3.26 |
| Vocation | 3.26 | Morality | 3.25 |
| Reform | 3.14 | Reform | 3.13 |
| Acculturation | 2.97 | Acculturation | 2.97 |
| Social Mobility | 2.91 | Social Mobility | 2.95 |
| Child Care | 1.79 | Child Care | 1.82 |

(9, 3.1%) and the difference was statistically significant, , $X^2$ (3, N = 610) = 0.015, $p < .05$. However, overall this difference had little effect on the position of the purpose for either group.

As can be seen in Table 8, the same nine educational purposes appeared on the list of Most Important purposes and were ranked similarly by both the school administrators and teachers: Knowledge, Literacy, Individual, Democratic, Economic, Morality, Socialization and Acculturation. School administrators included Child Care on their list of Most Important while teachers included the purpose Vocation. Neither group included Reform or Social Mobility as Most Important. Both groups identified Knowledge and Literacy as their top two selections, although their order of importance was reversed. School administrators identified Knowledge (100; 32.1%) as Most Important followed by

Table 8: School Administrators and Teachers Ranking of the Most Important, Second Most Important and Least Important Educational Purposes

| **School Administrators** Count (Percent) | | | **Teachers** Count (Percent) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Most Important *** | | | | | |
| Knowledge | 100 | (32.1) | Literacy | 101 | (35.3) |
| Literacy | 74 | (23.7) | Knowledge | 75 | (26.2) |
| Individual | 56 | (17.9) | Individual | 35 | (12.2) |
| Democratic | 37 | (11.9) | Economic | 31 | (10.8) |
| Economic | 31 | ( 9.9) | Democratic | 26 | ( 9.1) |
| Morality | 7 | ( 2.2) | Morality | 7 | ( 2.4) |
| Socialization | 4 | ( 1.3) | Socialization | 4 | ( 1.4) |
| Acculturation | 1 | ( 0.3) | Vocation | 4 | ( 1.4) |
| Child Care | 1 | ( 0.3) | Acculturation | 3 | ( 1.0) |
| Total | 311 | | Total | 286 | |

* $p < .05$

| **School Administrators** Count (Percent) | | | **Teachers** Count (Percent) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Second Most Important** | | | | | |
| Knowledge | 57 | (18.9) | Knowledge | 69 | (24.6) |
| Literacy | 55 | (18.2) | Literacy | 60 | (21.4) |
| Democratic | 49 | (16.2) | Democratic | 36 | (12.9) |
| Individual | 43 | (14.2) | Individual | 32 | (11.4) |
| Economic | 37 | (12.3) | Socialization | 29 | (10.4) |
| Morality | 26 | ( 8.6) | Economic | 26 | ( 9.3) |
| Socialization | 22 | ( 7.3) | Morality | 16 | ( 5.7) |
| Child Care | 3 | ( 1.0) | Vocation | 8 | ( 2.9) |
| Social Mobility | 3 | ( 1.0) | Reform | 2 | ( 0.7) |
| Acculturation | 2 | ( 0.7) | Social Mobility | 2 | ( 0.7) |
| Vocation | 2 | ( 0.7) | | | |
| Total | 289 | | Total | 280 | |

Table 8. Continued

| School Administrators Count (Percent) | | | Teachers Count (Percent) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Least Important** | | | | | |
| Child Care | 214 | (70.4) | Child Care | 193 | (69.7) |
| Social Mobility | 44 | (14.5) | Social Mobility | 33 | (11.9) |
| Acculturation | 19 | ( 6.3) | Acculturation | 20 | ( 7.2) |
| Vocation | 8 | ( 2.6) | Reform | 8 | ( 2.9) |
| Morality | 7 | ( 2.3) | Morality | 6 | ( 2.2) |
| Reform | 6 | ( 2.0) | Individual | 5 | ( 1.8) |
| Individual | 2 | ( 0.7) | Economic | 4 | ( 1.4) |
| Socialization | 2 | ( 0.7) | Vocation | 3 | ( 1.1) |
| Economic | 1 | ( 0.3) | Democratic | 2 | ( 0.7) |
| Knowledge | 1 | ( 0.3) | Socialization | 2 | ( 0.7) |
| | | | Literacy | 1 | ( 0.4) |
| Total | 304 | | Total | 277 | |

Literacy (74; 23.7%), while classroom teachers identified Literacy (101; 35.3%) as Most Important with Knowledge (75; 26.2%) following. The differences in their responses were statistically significant, $X^2$ (9, N = 598) = .046, $p < .05$; however, it is relevant to note that the administrators second ranked response to Most Important was the teachers first ranked response and vice versa.

There were no significant differences between school administrators' and teachers' rankings of the Second Most Important educational purpose, and total agreement on the top four selections: Knowledge, Literacy, Democratic and Individual. School administrators and teachers also concurred in the ranking of the 3 Least Important educational purposes: Child Care, Social Mobility and Acculturation

When responses to the Most and Second Most Important purposes are considered together the educational purposes Knowledge and Literacy comprise a preponderance of school administrators' (286; 48%) and teachers' (305; 54%) selections.

Research Question Four

What is the relationship between public school administrators and teachers perceptions of the purpose of education and those expressed by policy-makers in mandated accountability practices?

Mandated accountability practices would appear to favor the accumulation of factual knowledge. This factual knowledge is testable and manifest in a number. With the implementation of standards and accountability practices, students are expected to master basic facts, ideas and theories in fundamental subjects, recall these facts from memory and produce observable output on standardized tests. Literacy, the ability to read, write and numerate, provides the skills to access knowledge. Since what is tested and testable by standardized exams is the students' abilities to reproduce acquired factual knowledge, it would appear that literacy and knowledge must be present in tandem for students to achieve success. Thus, using the purposes identified in the literature, one might infer that the purposes of education implied by accountability practices are knowledge and literacy.

The high ratings and rankings by school administrators and teachers accorded to Knowledge and Literacy, as well as their selection as Most and Second Most Important would suggest a strong correspondence between policy-makers' on the one hand, and school administrators' and teachers' on the other, in their perceptions of the primary purposes of education.

# CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions of school administrators and teachers regarding the purpose of education and compare it with the perceptions of policy-makers as expressed in mandated accountability efforts. A researcher-designed survey instrument was used to collect data from a random sample of public, elementary school administrators and teachers. Surveys were returned by 612 respondents (323 school administrators; 288 classroom teachers) for a response rate of 77.1%.

The study was guided by four research questions:

1. What do public school administrators perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
2. What do public school teachers perceive to be the purpose(s) of education?
3. What is the relationship between the perceptions of school administrators and school teachers regarding the purpose of education?
4. What is the relationship between public school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the purpose of education and those expressed by policy-makers in mandated accountability practices?

Data were entered into the SPSS program for analysis. Descriptive statistics were generated and both parametric and non-parametric tests were used in the analysis of the data. The responses were analyzed separately for teachers and school administrators with means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages reported for the rating and

ranking of each educational purpose for each of the two groups. Cross tabulation tables were developed using frequency and percent response to determine if there was any relationship between the answers given by school administrators and those of teachers. Pearson's chi-square values were then calculated to determine whether there were significant differences in the responses of school administrators and teachers.

Summary of Findings

1. In rating 12 educational purposes derived from the literature, there was a high degree of correspondence between school administrators' and teachers' ratings for all of the educational purposes. Literacy was rated highest by both school administrators and teachers with Knowledge following closely behind. Indeed, there was only a slight difference in their ratings of all of the educational purposes, and they concurred in rejecting Acculturation, Social Mobility and Child Care as purposes of education.
2. School administrators and teachers closely agreed on their ranking of Knowledge, Literacy and Individual as the Most Important purposes and Knowledge, Literacy and Democratic, with Individual following, as the Second Most Important purpose.
3. Selected as the Least Important by school administrators and teachers alike were Child Care, Social Mobility and Acculturation.
4. When comparing school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the purpose of education to those of policy-makers as expressed in accountability mandates, Literacy and Knowledge appear to be the highest ranked and rated educational purposes by both.

Discussion

The results of the study would seem to parallel those of both Goodlad (1984) and Rose & Gallup (2000) indicating the existence and acceptance of multiple purposes for public education, as has been the case throughout the history of public schooling (Burgess, 1984; Goodlad, 1984; Overman, 1979, 1980; Tyack, 1980, 1995). Although Rose and Gallup's Poll (2000) did not specifically address the purposes of Knowledge and Literacy and encompassed a broad range of respondents, whose occupation was not specified, the high ratings by those respondents to preparing people to become responsible citizens; to helping people to become economically self-sufficient; and to enhancing people's happiness and enriching their lives; corresponded to high ratings school administrators and teachers gave to the educational purposes Democratic, Economic and Individual in this study.

The teachers in Goodlad's (1984) study were asked to rate a category Intellectual/Academic, described as "all intellectual skills and domains of knowledge" (p. 37), according to how important the function was at their school and how important they believed the function should be at their school. When rating how important Intellectual/Academic was in their school, 88.5% of the teachers rated it Very Important. Similarly, 92.1% of the teachers rated Intellectual/Academic as Very Important when rating how important it *should* be in their school. Goodlad's findings corresponded to the high ratings given to Knowledge and Literacy in this study. Further, comparing the findings of both the Goodlad (1984) and the Rose & Gallup (2000) studies with the findings of this study suggest that the findings are not atypical and may represent a wider population than addressed in the current study.

Based on anecdotal reports and expressions of dissatisfaction with the concept of standards and accountability indicated by teachers, administrators, and prospective teachers in casual conversation, the researcher expected to find a difference between the perceptions of school administrators and those of teachers on the purpose of education, and with both of these and the purpose implied by policy-makers. Continual references by school administrators regarding the bureaucratic decision-making process and how "those people don't know what goes on in our community or in our classrooms" were outweighed by comments that standards and testing would not solve discipline issues that seemed to be escalating in nature and number, thus leading the researcher to believe that school administrators would perceive the purpose of education to be a form of socialization guided by some level of moral training. Teachers, on the other hand, reported being concerned about adaptations necessary in a previously organized curriculum and the incorporation of weekly practice tests, while also expressing an acute awareness their teaching was under scrutiny and their teaching abilities being judged according to their students' abilities to score well upon a test. Many teachers stressed the need to develop students' individual talents; however, most often their concern was that students would be unable to perform well on standardized tests when they were barely able to read and write at grade level. This caused the researcher to make the assumption that teachers perceived the purposes of education to be Literacy and Individual. Therefore, the researcher anticipated significant differences in their ratings and rankings. However, these differences between administrators and teachers did not emerge from the data.

Given the negative perceptions of imposed standards and accountability measures expressed casually and frequently by school administrators and teachers, it was anticipated that the ratings and rankings of school administrators and teachers would differ from those of policy-makers as expressed in mandated accountability practices. Contrary to expectation, there were only minimal differences in perception between school administrators, teachers and policy-makers about the purposes of education. It would appear that despite expressions of concern, school administrators and teachers are generally in agreement with the foundational purpose of current reform efforts, the accumulation of factual knowledge by the student (Linn, 2000; McNeil, 2000 a/b; Skrla, 2000). Perhaps the complaints one hears from administrators and teachers are not so much about the purpose underlying these policies, since there is a fundamental agreement with its implicit purposes, but about the *process* of implementation. Perhaps the failure to involve school administrators and teachers in the development and implementation process, while at the same time shifting control of educational decisions from the local to the state level, (Bailey, 2000; Cuban, 1998; Fullan & Hargraves, 1998; Gallagher, 2000; Kirst, 1989; McNeil, 2000 a/b; Macpherson, 1998; Schlechty, 1997; Sergiovanni, 2000; Skrla, 2000), are the bases for the anxieties and misgivings being expressed.

Underlying the reform movement is a clear adherence to a functionalist perspective of education, one which has dominated education since the opening of common schools (Foster, 1986; Walker & Soltis, 1992). The strength and persistence of this perspective may have contributed significantly to the training and socialization of teachers and administrators into this perspective, thereby reinforcing and adherence to "basic economic, political and cultural practices" (Feinberg & Soltis, 1998, p. 6) and

values consonant with a functionalist perspective. Indeed, it is interesting to note that 4 of the 5 educational purposes perceived by the school administrators and teachers to be most important, Knowledge, Literacy, Individual, Democratic and Economy, with the exception of Individual, would be categorized as Functionalist in nature.

While widely heard in educational circles, "we're just a baby-sitting service", Child Care was unanimously ranked as the Least Important purpose and rated as not important by both school administrators and teachers. In looking at the way this purpose was rated and ranked, it is clear that educators rejected this as a purpose of education and rejected it soundly. Such a result was not surprising. Although not inappropriate for teachers to label themselves as "glorified baby-sitters", it was not perceived by educators to be a sound purpose for education.

The same cannot be said for the comparatively low rating and ranking of Morality. Given the media's emphasis on declining moral values, rising crime rates, calls for return of prayer in schools, increased interest in character education programs, discussions of the need for teaching morality in schools and being located in the "bible belt", it was surprising that educators didn't rate and rank it more highly.

## Conclusion and Implications

Although perceived as such, the decisions made by policy-makers in the mandating of standards and accountability practices do not appear to be in conflict with the purposes of education regarded as most important by school administrators and teachers. While it is evident that multiple educational purposes are present within our public schools, there appear to be close parallels in the purposes of education considered

the most important by school administrators, teachers and policy-makers. As expressed in the ratings and rankings by educators and those implied by mandated accountability practices, it would appear that all groups place high value on Literacy and Knowledge.

It is apparent that policy-makers, school administrators and teachers are working toward the same general purpose, and that therefore policy-makers have little to fear from, and may well better by the inclusion of, educators in the decision-making, policy development process. By including educators, policy-makers might well secure both their overt and covert commitment while further establishing an educational connection that culminates in the actualization of the mutually-held purposes of the policies.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research:

1. A replication of this study at the middle school and high school levels should be undertaken to determine if the perceptions of school administrators and teachers at those levels concur with those of elementary administrators and teachers.
2. A replication of this study in other states and other geographic areas should be undertaken to see if the perceptions differ by regions.
3. A broad-based survey of policy-makers should be undertaken to ascertain their perceptions and understandings of the purposes of education.
4. A series of in-depth, qualitative studies at the different levels of education, elementary, middles school/junior high, high school, and with policy-makers,

should be undertaken to gain a deeper, richer understanding of how they 'think' about educational purpose(s) and how they define and describe those purposes.

5. A mixed methods study of teacher educators' perceptions of the purpose of education should be conducted to see how their perceptions compare with those of teachers and administrators.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## PURPOSE OF EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Listed below are twelve statements of educational purpose compiled from a review of the professional literature. Using the scale provided, please indicate your personal beliefs regarding what the purpose of education should be. Please circle the most appropriate number in each item.

**1= strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=agree 4=strongly agree**

| **The purpose of education should be:** | **Strongly Disagree** | | | **Strongly Agree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. **Acculturation:** to promote cultural unity and a common American heritage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. **Child Care**: to provide a system that delays childrens' entry into the work force | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. **Democratic**: to prepare students to become responsible citizens | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. **Economic**: to provide information and develop skills necessary for students to become economically self-sufficient | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. **Individual:** to help students reach their maximum level of talent development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. **Knowledge**: to provide for student knowledge acquisition and intellectual skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. **Literacy**: to ensure students have the basic skills in reading and writing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. **Morality**: to develop in students the core values of a moral society | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. **Reform**: to provide students with the skills and abilities necessary to analyze and address social conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. **Socialization**: to teach students to interact effectively with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. **Social Mobility**: to provide students with a means of moving up the social and economic ladder | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **12. Vocational**: to provide students with guidance in identifying and preparing for a specific occupation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**SECTION II:** In the section below please place the word **Most** on the line beside the educational purpose that you consider the **Most Important.** Please indicate only one purpose as being most important.

Place the word **Second** on the line beside the educational purpose that you consider to be the **Second Most Important**. Please indicate only one purpose as being second most important.

Place the word **Least** on the line beside the educational purpose that you consider to be the **Least Important.** Please indicate only one purpose as being least important.

Acculturation _____

Child Care _____

Democratic _____

Economic _____

Individual _____

Knowledge _____

Literacy _____

Morality _____

Reform _____

Socialization _____

Social Mobility _____

Vocational _____

**SECTION III: Demographic Information**:

What is your current position? Please check one: _____ School Administrator

_____ Teacher

Including the current school year, how many years have you held the position indicated above?

_____ years

Including the current school year, how many years have you been employed in the field of education?

_____ years

What is your gender? Female _____ Male _____

How would you describe your school setting? _____ Urban _____ Suburban _____ Rural

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to answer this questionnaire. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please place your questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided and return for tabulation.

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## APPENDIX B

## INTRODUCTION LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Dear Principal,

Your school has been selected at random from a listing of all elementary schools within the state of Tennessee to participate in an educational research study. A few days from now you will receive in the mail a request to complete a brief questionnaire as part of a research project being conducted by Laura J. Hopfer, a graduate assistant and doctoral student in the Education Administration and Policy Study Department at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This study is meant to identify school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the purpose of education and to compare their perceptions with those implied by policy-makers through the implementation of educational standards.

A questionnaire, that will take no more than 10 minutes of your time, requests that you rate and rank twelve educational purpose statements. In conjunction with your completion of this questionnaire, you will also be asked to choose one regular classroom teacher to complete an identical questionnaire. Directions for the selection of this teacher will be included in the packet received. In order to compare the opinions of school administrators and teachers with those of policy-makers, it is important that we receive both a principal's questionnaire and a classroom teacher's questionnaire from each school site.

It is hoped that you will benefit from the process of reflection and response to the questionnaire and also from the knowledge gained in the findings of this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Neither you, your teacher, nor your school will be under any financial or personal obligation to the study or the researcher. There are no anticipated risks to you or your teacher as a participant in this study. All responses will be held in complete confidence. No individual, school, or system will be identified, or identifiable by a reader. Final reports will be made available to all participants upon request.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the generous help of people such as you that educational research can be successful. I will gladly answer any questions that you might have about this study.

Sincerely,

Laura J. Hopfer

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Lhopfer@aol.com

## APPENDIX C

## COVER LETTER ATTACHED TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Educator;

How many times have you reflected upon daily efforts and asked yourself, "why are we teaching this"? The topic of purpose in education has been greatly debated as states adopt educational standards and call for accountability within our public schools. I am writing to ask for 10 minutes of your time to participate in a state-wide exploratory and descriptive study designed to seek the opinions of educational stakeholders to determine if their perceptions of the purpose(s) of education are in agreement with those implied by policy-makers with the mandated accountability practices. If you agree to participate, all that is required is your completion of this short questionnaire. The conclusions of this study are dependent upon elementary school principals and classroom teachers such as yourself, taking a few minutes from your busy schedule to answer a few questions.

This study is intended to acquaint school administrators, teachers, and policy-makers with differences in opinion that may exist among these groups and will contribute to a very limited body of research. It is hoped that you will benefit from the process of reflecting and responding to the questionnaire and from the knowledge gained in the findings of this study. It will also enable me to fulfill requirements for the Ed.D. in Education Administration and Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. Although the results from this study will be shared with the educational community and educational

policy-makers, your responses will be held in complete confidence. Identification codes will be used to record response and ensure confidentiality. These codes will be used only to follow up on response return or to identify entry errors when aggregating responses for reporting. No individual, school, or system will be identified, or identifiable by a reader. School names and addresses will be kept in a location separate from that location of identification codes. Actual data files, identification codes, and addresses will not be made available to others. All response sheets will be stored in a locked file at the home of the researcher. As required, these files will be retained for a period of three years and then destroyed by the researcher.

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. However, you will greatly help many in the field of education by taking a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Upon completion of the information please place the questionnaire in the attached, self-addressed, stamped envelope and return for tabulation. If for some reason you prefer not to respond, please indicate by returning the blank questionnaire in the attached stamped envelope.

I will gladly answer any questions that you might have about this study or your participation in it. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Laura J. Hopfer
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
865-531-3044 (home)
865-405-8757 (cell) Lhopfer@utk.edu
865- 974- 0697 (office) Lhopfer@aol.com

## APPENDIX D

## DIRECTIONS FOR SELECTION OF CLASSROOM TEACHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Dear Principal,

This study is designed to compare the perceptions of school administrators and teachers with those of policymakers. It is important that we receive a questionnaire from both a principal and a classroom teacher at each elementary school. In order to secure a random selection, please follow the procedure as listed below to select a classroom teacher for participation

- Using an alphabetical listing of regular teachers at your site, regular is defined by this study as those teachers not primarily focused on the teaching of vocational, special, or alternative classes.
- Select that teacher listed as number **15.** If your elementary school does not employ 15 regular classroom teachers, teacher number **4** is to be selected.
- Please do not write, or in any way indicate on the questionnaire the teacher's name or any identifying information.
- Distribute to this teacher one of the enclosed questionnaires for completion and return.

The second questionnaire is to be completed and returned by you, the principal.

Thank you for your help in the distribution of this questionnaire and for your participation in the study. Your input is greatly appreciated!

Laura

## APPENDIX E

## COPY OF RESULTS CARD

____ Yes, upon completion of the study titled In Pursuit of Purpose: An Exploration of the Purpose of Education, I would like to receive a copy of the results.

Please send this to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip _____

APPENDIX F

REMINDER CARD

Dear Principal,

Recently, a questionnaire was mailed to you seeking your opinions about the purpose of education in America's public schools. Your participation in this study will help us to determine if the implied purpose of education, as determined by policy-makers, is in alignment with those purposes considered important by educational stakeholders.

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire to me, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, I ask that you please do so today. Your help with this study is very important. Only through the participation of principals and teachers can we determine if inconsistency exists among these perceptions.

If you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please e-mail or call me at one of the numbers listed below and I will get another one in the mail to you immediately. If leaving a message, do not leave your name, only the name of your school.

Thank you !

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865-531-3044 Home
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APPENDIX G

CHI-SQUARE SUMMARY TABLES

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Acculturation** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 18 | 7 | 25 |
| | % in Job Position | 5.6% | 2.4% | 4.1% |
| Disagree | Count | 45 | 56 | 101 |
| | % in Job Position | 14.1% | 19.6% | 16.7% |
| Agree | Count | 186 | 163 | 349 |
| | % in Job Position | 58.3% | 57.0% | 57.7% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 70 | 60 | 130 |
| | % in Job Position | 21.9% | 21.0% | 21.5% |
| **Total** | Count | 319 | 286 | 605 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .088$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Child Care** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 141 | 123 | 264 |
| | % in Job Position | 44.8% | 43.6% | 44.2% |
| Disagree | Count | 113 | 99 | 212 |
| | % in Job Position | 35.9% | 35.1% | 35.5% |
| Agree | Count | 46 | 49 | 95 |
| | % in Job Position | 14.6% | 17.4% | 15.9% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 15 | 11 | 26 |
| | % in Job Position | 4.8% | 3.9% | 4.4% |
| **Total** | Count | 315 | 282 | 597 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .088$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Democratic** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| | % in Job Position | 3.4% | 2.1% | 2.8% |
| Disagree | Count | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | % in Job Position | 1.2% | .3% | .8% |
| Agree | Count | 50 | 61 | 111 |
| | % in Job Position | 15.5% | 21.3% | 18.2% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 258 | 218 | 476 |
| | % in Job Position | 79.9% | 76.2% | 78.2% |
| **Total** | Count | 323 | 286 | 609 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .142$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Economic** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| | % in Job Position | 3.4% | 2.1% | 2.8% |
| Disagree | Count | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | % in Job Position | 1.2% | .3% | .8% |
| Agree | Count | 50 | 61 | 111 |
| | % in Job Position | 15.5% | 21.3% | 18.2% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 258 | 218 | 476 |
| | % in Job Position | 79.9% | 76.2% | 78.2% |
| **Total** | Count | 323 | 286 | 609 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .142$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Individual** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| | % in Job Position | 3.7% | 2.1% | 3.0% |
| Disagree | Count | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| | % in Job Position | .9% | 3.1% | 2.0% |
| Agree | Count | 63 | 78 | 141 |
| | % in Job Position | 19.6% | 27.1% | 23.1% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 244 | 195 | 439 |
| | % in Job Position | 75.8% | 67.7% | 72.0% |
| **Total** | Count | 322 | 288 | 610 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .015$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| | % in Job Position | 3.7% | 2.1% | 3.0% |
| Disagree | Count | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | % in Job Position | | .3% | .2% |
| Agree | Count | 35 | 30 | 65 |
| | % in Job Position | 10.9% | 10.5% | 10.7% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 274 | 250 | 524 |
| | % in Job Position | 85.4% | 87.1% | 86.2% |
| **Total** | Count | 321 | 287 | 608 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .459$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Literacy** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 13 | 6 | 19 |
| | % in Job Position | 4.0% | 2.1% | 3.1% |
| Disagree | Count | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | % in Job Position | .3% | .7% | .5% |
| Agree | Count | 18 | 15 | 33 |
| | % in Job Position | 5.6% | 5.2% | 5.4% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 291 | 264 | 555 |
| | % in Job Position | 90.1% | 92.0% | 91.0% |
| **Total** | Count | 323 | 287 | 610 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .519$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Morality** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 13 | 7 | 20 |
| | % in Job Position | 4.0% | 2.4% | 3.3% |
| Disagree | Count | 22 | 32 | 54 |
| | % in Job Position | 6.8% | 11.1% | 8.8% |
| Agree | Count | 153 | 132 | 285 |
| | % in Job Position | 47.4% | 45.8% | 46.6% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 135 | 117 | 252 |
| | % in Job Position | 41.8% | 40.6% | 41.2% |
| **Total** | Count | 323 | 288 | 611 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .216$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reform** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 11 | 4 | 15 |
| | % in Job Position | 3.4% | 1.4% | 2.5% |
| Disagree | Count | 37 | 37 | 74 |
| | % in Job Position | 11.5% | 12.8% | 12.1% |
| Agree | Count | 169 | 165 | 334 |
| | % in Job Position | 52.5% | 57.3% | 54.8% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 105 | 82 | 187 |
| | % in Job Position | 32.6% | 28.5% | 30.7% |
| **Total** | Count | 322 | 288 | 610 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .240$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Socialization** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 12 | 5 | 17 |
| | % in Job Position | 3.7% | 1.7% | 2.8% |
| Disagree | Count | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| | % in Job Position | 2.5% | 1.4% | 2.0% |
| Agree | Count | 118 | 103 | 221 |
| | % in Job Position | 36.6% | 35.8% | 36.2% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 184 | 176 | 360 |
| | % in Job Position | 57.1% | 61.1% | 59.0% |
| **Total** | Count | 322 | 288 | 610 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .317$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Social Mobility** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 17 | 13 | 30 |
| | % in Job Position | 5.3% | 4.5% | 5.0% |
| Disagree | Count | 68 | 61 | 129 |
| | % in Job Position | 21.3% | 21.3% | 21.3% |
| Agree | Count | 162 | 139 | 301 |
| | % in Job Position | 50.8% | 48.6% | 49.8% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 72 | 73 | 145 |
| | % in Job Position | 22.6% | 25.5% | 24.0% |
| **Total** | Count | 319 | 286 | 605 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .829$, df = 3, $p < .05$

| | | School Administrator | Teacher | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Vocation** | | | | |
| Strongly Disagree | Count | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| | % in Job Position | 2.2% | 1.7% | 2.0% |
| Disagree | Count | 24 | 28 | 52 |
| | % in Job Position | 7.4% | 9.8% | 8.5% |
| Agree | Count | 169 | 141 | 310 |
| | % in Job Position | 52.3% | 49.1% | 50.8% |
| Strongly Agree | Count | 123 | 113 | 236 |
| | % in Job Position | 38.1% | 39.4% | 38.7% |
| **Total** | Count | 323 | 287 | 610 |
| | % in Job Position | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$X^2 = .690$, df = 3, $p < .05$

# VITA

Laura J. Hopfer was born in Guthrie, Oklahoma on August 2, 1950. She attended public schools in Oklahoma, Virginia and California, returning to Oklahoma where she graduated from Guthrie High School in 1968. After receiving her Bachelor of Science degree from Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma, in 1974, she began her teaching career in the public schools in Fayetteville, N.C. Multiple moves associated with the military provided her the opportunity to teach in classrooms in Oklahoma; Chofu, Japan; Colorado; and California. In the summer of 1995 she entered the Education Administration and Supervision program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, receiving her Master's Degree in August of 1996. Her administrative internship led to a supervisory position with one of the university's teacher education programs. In August of 1997, she began coursework in pursuit of the Doctorate of Education in Educational Administration. September, 2000 brought an assistantship within the department of Education Administration and Policy Studies and an opportunity to supervise administrative interns in both public and private institutions. She received her Doctoral Degree in December, 2002. She is currently teaching and supervising student teachers at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.