

The History and Goals of Public Schooling

This chapter introduces the reader to the controversies surrounding the goals of U.S. public schools. It also provides a brief history of U.S. schools by discussing educational goals from the founding of public schools in the nineteenth century to the present. The overall purpose of the chapter is to help the reader understand debates about public education. Educational goals are a product of what various people think schooling should do for the good of society. Consequently, they often reflect opinions and beliefs about how people should act and how society should be organized. Since there is wide variation in what people believe, educational goals often generate a great deal of debate. I'm sure that in reading this chapter you will find yourself taking sides on issues. For instance, some people argue that a goal of public schooling should be to reduce teenage pregnancy and to prevent the spread of AIDS. Should this involve teaching teenagers to abstain from premarital sex or should it involve teaching about the use of contraceptives? This question sparks heated debates because it goes to the heart of people's religious and moral beliefs.

It is important to understand that public schools were established to serve the public and not necessarily individual desires. The goals of public schools determine what is taught and how it will be taught. Students and parents are not asked at the schoolhouse door what they want from education. Educational goals, including the content of instruction and methods, are determined by federal, state, and local politicians, special interest groups, community organizations, and professional education organizations. Given the political control of public schools, it is not possible for the principal of a public school to design the content and methods of instruction to suit the wishes of individual parents or students. When students enter a public school they are submitting to the will of the public as determined by local, state, and federal governments.

To distinguish between educational goals I have divided them into political, social, and economic. For instance, political goals often involve teaching patriotism. But should teaching patriotism consist of saluting the flag and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, which contains a reference to God? Some religious

groups criticize flag salutes as worshiping false gods, while other people complain about the reference to God in the Pledge. Also, social goals can stimulate debates as suggested by the previous discussion about reducing teenage pregnancy. An important traditional goal of schooling is reducing crime through instruction in social values. But whose social values or morality should form the basis of instruction in public schools? Today, the economic goals of schooling primarily center on educating workers to help the U.S. economy compete in the global economy. But will this goal increase or decrease economic inequalities in society?

Throughout this chapter I have lists of questions about each set of goals. These questions do not have right or wrong answers. They are questions that reflect real debates about the role of U.S. public schools. The questions also provide insight into the historical evolution of American education. For instance, what are your answers to the following questions:

- Do you think there are public benefits from education that should override the objections of parents and other citizens regarding the teaching of particular subjects, attitudes, or values?
- Should elected representatives determine the subject matter, attitudes, and values taught in public schools?
- What should public school teachers do if they are asked to teach values that are in conflict with their own personal values?

In answering the preceding questions remember that public schools do not always operate for the general good of society. Most people assume that public schooling is good for society. However, public schools are used to advance political and economic ideologies that do not improve the condition of human beings. For instance, in the 1930s Nazis enlisted schools in a general campaign to educate citizens to believe in the racial superiority of the German people, to support fascism, and to be willing to die at the command of Hitler. Racial biology and fascist political doctrines were taught in the classroom; patriotic parades and singing took place in the schoolyard. A similar pattern occurred in South African schools in attempts to maintain a racially divided society. In the United States, racial segregation and biased content in textbooks was used to maintain a racial hierarchy.

Consequently, the reader should be aware that “education” does not always benefit the individual or society. Public and personal benefits depend on the content of instruction. To think critically about education means to think critically about the content of instruction and the potential effect of that content on society. For instance, there are constantly recurring debates about teaching the evolution of humans in contrast to the Biblical emphasis on God creating humans. Those opposed to teaching evolution claim that it has a negative effect on individual morality and society because the Biblical explanation makes humans a special creature in the eyes of God and therefore obliged to obey Scriptures. I will discuss the evolution debate in more detail later in this chapter.

In summary, this chapter will introduce readers to:

- The goals and history of U.S. public schools.
- The debates about the political, social, and economic goals of public schools.
- Questions designed to help readers formulate their own opinions about the purposes of American education.

HISTORICAL GOALS OF SCHOOLING

The historical record provides insight into current controversies surrounding public school goals. The original goals of public schools centered on citizenship training, equality of economic opportunity, and reduction of crime. These goals remain on the public school agenda. Over time, schools expanded their purposes as new problems were encountered. Most of the original goals of schooling still guide the work of educators. The multiplicity of things schools are now asked to do is a result of an accumulating historical agenda.

Therefore, a history of the evolution of public school goals provides a critical analysis of what public schools are now doing. Each of the following sections will trace the history of these goals to the present. In each section, I will list critical questions about the role of schooling in society. I have also created two time lines. Figure 1–1 indicates the approximate decades when public schools adopted particular educational goals to meet changing social and economic conditions. Figure 1–2 is a time line of events discussed in this chapter.

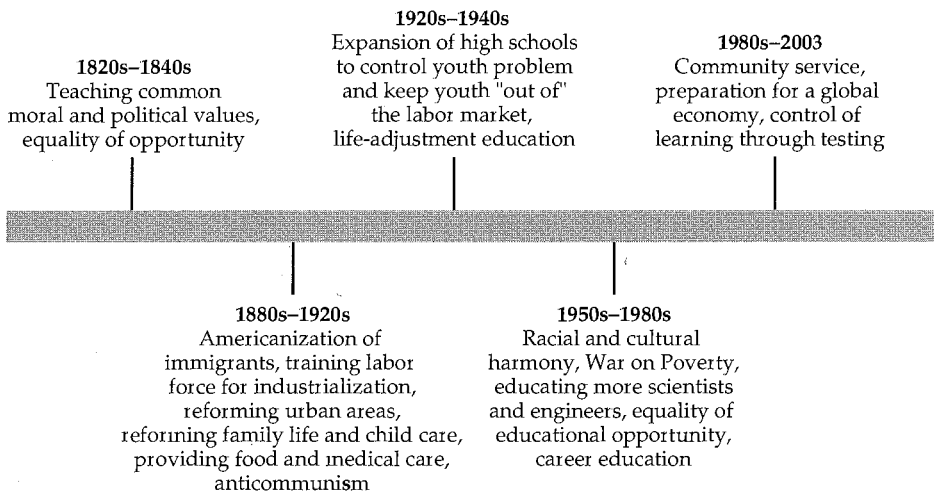


FIGURE 1–1 Goals of Public Schools in the U.S., 1820–2003

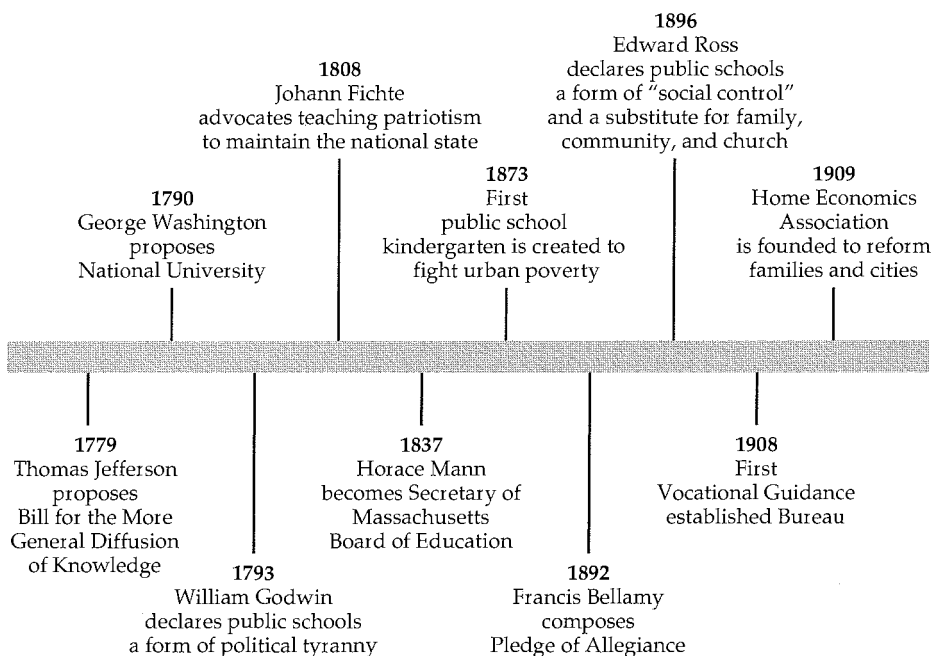


FIGURE 1-2. Time Line of Events Discussed in This Chapter

THE POLITICAL GOALS OF SCHOOLING

Before the actual establishment of public schools, public leaders argued that public schools were needed to create a national culture and to educate qualified politicians for a republican government. The role of schools in determining national culture continues into the twenty-first century, particularly as a result of increased immigration. After the American Revolution, many worried about national unity and the selection of political leaders. In his first message to Congress in 1790, President George Washington proposed a national university for training political leaders and creating a national culture. He wanted attendance by students from all areas of the country. What was hoped was that a hereditary aristocracy of the British would be replaced by an aristocracy of the educated.

Washington's proposal was criticized as elitist. Requiring a college education, some protested, would result in politicians being primarily recruited from the elite. If none but the rich had access to higher education, then the rich could use higher education as a means of perpetuating and supporting their social status.

To avoid the problem of elitism, Thomas Jefferson suggested using education to promote a *meritocracy*; a term still used to describe the affect of schools on society. A meritocracy is an educational system that gives an equal chance to all to develop their abilities and to advance in the social hierarchy. Advancement within the educational system and society is based on the merit or achievements

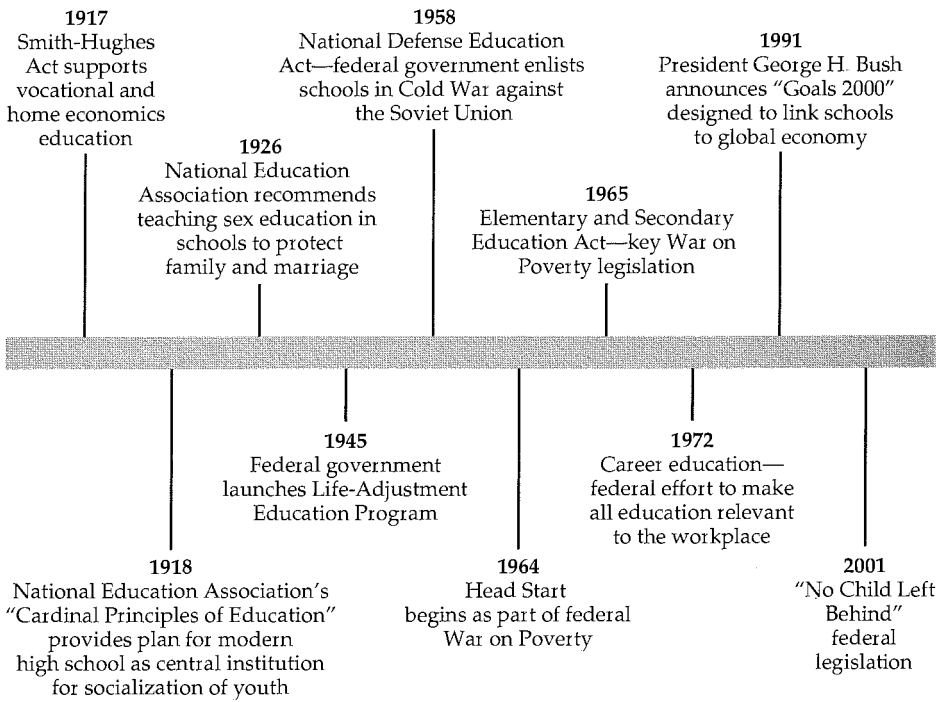


FIGURE 1–2. (Continued)

of the individual. For instance, consider the following situation: Students A and B are given an equal chance to attend school; student A is very successful but student B fails. Within the framework of an educational meritocracy, their success or failure in school determines their later position in society.

Jefferson was concerned with finding the best politicians through meritocratic system based on education. In the 1779 Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, Jefferson proposed three years of free education for all nonslave children. The most talented of these children were to be selected and educated at public expense at regional grammar schools. From this select group, the most talented were to be chosen for further education. Thomas Jefferson wrote in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, "By this means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually, and be instructed, at the public expense."

The details of Jefferson's plan are not as important as the idea, which has become ingrained in American social thought, that schooling is the best means of identifying democratic leadership. This idea assumes that the educational system is fair in its judgments. Fairness of selection assumes that judgment is based solely on talent demonstrated in school and not on other social factors such as race, religion, dress, and social class. Meritocracy fails if schools favor individuals from certain racial, religious, and economic groups.

Besides educating political leadership, schools were also called on to educate future citizens. However, opinions were divided on how this should be

accomplished. Thomas Jefferson proposed a very limited education for the general citizenry. The three years of free education were to consist of instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, with reading instruction using Greek, Roman, English, and American history. Jefferson did not believe that people needed to be educated to be good citizens. He believed in the guiding power of natural reason to lead the citizen to correct political decisions. Citizens were to receive their political education from reading newspapers published under laws protecting freedom of the press. Citizens would choose between competing political ideas found in newspapers. Consequently, the important function of schools in preparing citizens was to teach reading.

Interestingly, while Jefferson wanted political opinions to be formed in a free marketplace of ideas, he advocated censorship of political texts at the University of Virginia. These contradictory positions reflect an inherent problem in the use of schools to teach political ideas. There is always the temptation to limit political instruction to what one believes are correct political ideas.

In contrast to Jefferson, Horace Mann, often called the father of public schools, wanted to instill a common political creed in all students. Mann felt that without commonly held political beliefs society was doomed to political strife and chaos. Mann developed these ideas and his reputation as America's greatest educational leader while serving as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education from 1837 to 1848. Originally a lawyer, Mann gave up his legal career because he believed that schooling and not law was the key to creating the good society.

Horace Mann feared that growing crime rates, social-class conflict, and the extension of suffrage would lead to violence and mob rule. Commonly held political values, Mann believed, would curtail political violence and revolution, and maintain political order. For Mann, the important idea was that all children in society attend the same type of school. This was what was meant by "common." It was a school common to all children. Within the common school, children of all religions and social classes were to share in a common education. Basic social disagreements were to vanish as rich and poor children, and children whose parents were supporters of different political parties, mingled in the schoolroom.

Within the walls of the common schoolhouse students were to be taught the basic principles of a republican form of government. Mann assumed there was general agreement about the nature of these general political values, and they could be taught without objection from outside political groups. In fact, he opposed teaching politically controversial topics because he worried that conflicting political forces would destroy the public school idea. The combination of common schooling and the teaching of a common political philosophy would establish, Mann hoped, shared political beliefs that would ensure the survival of the U.S. government. Political liberty would be possible, according to Mann's philosophy, because it would be restrained and controlled by the ideas students learned in public schools.

Is there a common set of political values in the United States? Since the nineteenth century, debates over the content of instruction have rocked the schoolhouse. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, conservative political groups pressured local public schools to not teach left-wing ideas.

On the other hand, liberal organizations demanded schools teach their particular political doctrines.

There is a strong tradition of dissent to public schools teaching any political doctrines. Some argue that teaching of political ideas is a method of maintaining the political power of those in control of government. In the late eighteenth century, English political theorist William Godwin warned against national systems of education because they could become a means by which those controlling government could control the minds of future citizens. Writing in 1793, Godwin stated, "Their views as institutors of a system of education will not fail to be analogous to their views in their political capacity: the data upon which their instructions are founded."

Mann's political and social objectives were in part to be accomplished through socialization within the school. Simply defined, *socialization* refers to what students learn from following school rules, interacting with other students, and participating in school social events. Socialization can be contrasted with academic learning, which refers to classroom instruction, textbooks, and other forms of formal learning.

For some educational leaders, socialization is a powerful means of political control. Learning to obey school rules is socialization for obedience to government laws. Advocating the use of schools as political control, Johann Fichte, a Prussian leader in the early nineteenth century, asserted that schools should prepare students for conformity to government regulations by teaching obedience to school rules and developing a sense of loyalty to the school. He argued that students will transfer their obedience to school rules to submission to government laws. According to Fichte, loyalty and service to the school and fellow students prepares citizens for service to the country. The school, according to Fichte, is a miniature community where children learn to adjust their individuality to the requirements of the community. The real work of the school, Fichte said, is shaping this social adjustment. A well-ordered government requires citizens to go beyond mere obedience to written constitutions and laws. Fichte believed children must see the government as something greater than the individual and must learn to sacrifice for the good of the social whole.

To achieve these political goals, Fichte recommended teaching patriotic songs, national history, and literature to increase a sense of dedication and patriotism to the government. This combination of socialization and patriotic teachings, he argued, would produce a citizen more willing and able to participate in the army and, consequently, would reduce the cost of national defense.

In the United States, patriotic exercises and fostering school spirit were emphasized after the arrival in the 1890s of large numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In 1892, Francis Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance and introduced it in the same year to educators attending the annual meeting of the National Education Association. A socialist, Bellamy wanted to include the word "equality" in the Pledge but this idea was rejected because state superintendents of education opposed equality for women and African Americans. The original Pledge of Allegiance was: "I pledge allegiance to my

Flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Bellamy's Pledge of Allegiance became popular classroom practice as educators worried about the loyalty of immigrant children.

In the 1920s, the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution thought that the Pledge's phrase "I pledge allegiance to my Flag" would be construed by immigrants to mean that they could remain loyal to their former nations. Consequently, "my flag" became "the flag of the United States." It was during this period that schools initiated Americanization programs which were a precursor to current debates about immigrant education. Americanization programs taught immigrant children the laws, language, and customs of the United States. Naturally, this included teaching patriotic songs and stories. With the coming of World War I, the Pledge of Allegiance, the singing of patriotic songs, participation in student government, and other patriotic exercises became a part of the American school. In addition, the development of extracurricular activities led to an emphasis on school spirit. The formation of football and basketball teams, with their accompanying trappings of cheerleaders and pep rallies, was to build school spirit and, consequently, prepare students for service to the nation.

Teaching patriotism creates problems for a society with a variety of religious, ethnic, and political groups. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, some religious groups object to pledging allegiance to a flag because they believe it is worship of a graven image. In *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that expulsion from school of children of Jehovah's Witnesses for not saluting the flag was a violation of their constitutional right to freedom of religion. Some teachers view patriotic exercises as contrary to the principles of a free society. In Chapter 10, which deals with legal issues, there is a lengthy discussion of the court cases related to academic freedom and loyalty oaths as well as the conflict between patriotic requirements and students' rights.

In the 1950s, the Pledge of Allegiance underwent another transformation when some members of the U.S. Congress and religious leaders campaigned to stress the role of religion in government. In 1954, the phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge. The new Pledge referred to "one nation, under God." Congressional legislation supporting the change declared that the goal was to "acknowledge the dependence of our people and our Government upon . . . the Creator . . . [and] deny the atheistic and materialistic concept of communism." For similar reasons, Congress in 1955 added the words "In God We Trust" to all paper money.

Reflecting the continuing controversy over the Pledge, a U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in 2002 that the phrase "one nation, under God" violated the U.S. Constitution's ban on government-supported religion. The decision was later dismissed by the U.S. Supreme Court because the father in the case did not have legal custody of his daughter for whom the case was originally brought. The suit was filed by Michael Newdow, the father of a second-grade student attending California's Elk Grove Unified School District. Newdow argued his daughter's First Amendment rights were violated because she was forced to

“watch and listen as her state-employed teacher in her state-run school leads her classmates in a ritual proclaiming that there is a God, and ours is ‘one nation under God.’” While the issue remains unresolved, the suit raised important questions about the Pledge of Allegiance.

In reaction to the Court’s decision, Anna Quindlen wrote in the July 15, 2002, edition of *Newsweek*, “His [Bellamy’s] granddaughter said he would have hated the addition of the words ‘under God’ to a statement he envisioned uniting a country divided by race, class and, of course, religion.” Another dimension of the story was that Bellamy was a socialist during a period of greater political toleration than today. In contrast to the 1890s, today it would be difficult to find a professional educational organization that would allow an outspoken socialist to write its patriotic pledge.

In recent years, community service has become a part of citizenship training. For instance, in the fall of 1998, Chicago became the nation’s largest school system to require students to perform community service or service learning to receive a high school diploma. In 2008, Chicago schools stated the purpose of service learning: “GOALS: Service Learning as an educational strategy is designed to enhance social and academic learning while developing character and citizenship skills.” Bruce Marchiafava, speaking for the nation’s third-largest school system behind New York and Los Angeles declared, “We want students to learn the importance of community. They need to know that community is about giving, not just getting.”

The immediate problem for Chicago officials was defining and identifying community service. This problem was compounded by the headache of finding enough community service activities for all the students. “If you let students work for an anti-handgun group,” Marchiafava said, “do you also let them work for the NRA [the National Rifle Association, which opposes strong gun control laws]?” Are political activities community service? Does volunteer work at for-profit schools and hospitals increase profits for these institutions by decreasing labor costs? Also, who decides what is community service? What happens if the person making this decision identifies work with religious organizations as community service? Would this be a violation of the Constitution’s prohibition of government aiding religion? What about objections by some people to religious groups such as the Native American Church, which uses peyote, a hallucinogenic drug, in its ceremonies? Will students be able to volunteer to work for organizations advocating the legalization of marijuana?

Chicago schools never really resolved these issues. Ambiguous regulations were adopted that give school staff the power to determine what service learning could take place with political and religious organizations. The 2006 Chicago guidelines for service learning state:

Students may not earn Service Learning hours through the following: Religious organizations if the service involves proselytizing

Students may not earn hours for the following specific activities: Volunteer work with a political campaign without the mediation of an approved community organization or classroom instructor.

These regulations still don't answer the question of students working with the National Rifle Association, the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws, or the Native American Church.

None of the issues surrounding the political goals of education are easily resolved. Can they even be achieved? For instance, consider the following questions:

- Should there be a consensus of political values in the United States and should public schools develop that consensus?
- Should the public schools develop emotional or patriotic attachments to symbols of the State through the use of songs, literature, and history?
- Should the purpose of teaching history be the development of patriotic feelings?
- Does the teaching of patriotism in schools throughout the world increase the potential for international conflict?
- Who or what government agency should determine the political values taught in public schools?

THE SOCIAL GOALS OF SCHOOLING

Solving social problems was always part of the goals of American public schools. Horace Mann believed the school was the key to social improvement. He argued that past societies failed to stop crime through the power of government laws. To stop crime, Mann reasoned, schools must instill moral values in students. Later, this approach to controlling crime was referred to as putting a police person in every child's heart. Mann even suggested that America might see the day when the training in the schoolhouse would significantly reduce the number of police required by society.

The problem for Horace Mann and later educational leaders was determining which moral values to teach in schools. His approach was to teach moral values common to most Protestant denominations. A variety of religious groups disagreed with his ideas. The Catholic Church, the largest single religious group to reject Mann's plan, established its own system of schools. Catholic Church leaders argued that education was fundamentally religious when it involved shaping behavior and that it was impossible for public schools to teach moral values that reflected the views of all religious groups. Even if the public school eliminated all religious and moral teaching, this alternative could not be accepted because education would then become irreligious.

Mann's dream of education as the key to social improvement remains alive despite conflicts over what morality should be taught in public schools. For many Americans, the school is the symbol and hope for achieving the good society. This hope is best illustrated by a story told to kindergartners in the early twentieth century about two children who bring a beautiful flower from their school class to their dirty and dark tenement apartment. Their mother placed the flower in a glass of water near a dirty window. She decides the flower

needs more light to expose its beauty. The mother cleans the window allowing more light into the apartment which illuminates the dirty floors, walls, and furniture. The added light sends the mother scurrying around to clean up the now-exposed dirt. In the meantime the father, who is unemployed because of a drinking problem, returns to the apartment and is amazed to find his grim dwelling transformed into a clean and tidy house. The transformation of the apartment results in the father wanting to spend more time at home and less time at the local bar. The father's drinking problem is solved, he is able to find work, and the family lives happily ever after. This story characterizes the hope that the social influence of the school will penetrate the homes and neighborhoods of America.

This story illustrates the importance early sociologists placed on the social influence of the school. Writing in the 1890s, sociologist Edward Ross referred to education as a key mechanism for *social control*. Social control, as he used the term, referred to how a society maintained order and controlled crime and rebellion. He divided social control into external and internal. External social control involved the police and military regulating social behavior. Internal social control involved people controlling their own behaviors according to moral values. Traditionally, he argued, families, churches, and the communities taught children moral values and social responsibility. In modern society, Ross declared, the family and church were being replaced by the school as the most important institution for instilling internal values. Ross saw reliance on education for control becoming characteristic of American society. "The ebb of religion is only half a fact," Ross wrote. "The other half is the high tide of education. While the priest is leaving the civil service, the schoolmaster is coming in. As the state shakes itself loose from the church, it reaches out for the school."

Other groups advocated the expansion of the social role of the school during the same years as Edward Ross was declaring schools a central mechanism for social control. The home economics profession, currently called Family and Consumer Sciences, called upon schools to play a major role in improving the quality of American families, changing the lifestyles of women, bettering urban conditions, and reforming the American diet. Schools responded by adding home economics courses for girls and school cafeterias. Founded in 1909, the American Home Economics Association spearheaded the creation of educational goals linked to home and urban improvement projects.

Home economics courses were designed to train women to be scientific housekeepers who would free themselves from kitchen drudgery by relying on packaged and processed foods. Home economics courses taught cooking, household budgeting, sewing, and scientific methods of cleaning. The goal was providing housewives with more free time for education and working to improve municipal conditions. The family model was of wives as consumers of household products and educators and husbands as wage earners. By teaching women household budgeting, families learned to live within their means and as a result worker discontent over wages was to decline. A clean and cheerful house, it was believed, would reduce alcoholism because husbands would want

to hurry home from work rather than stop at a tavern. Teaching women how to cook healthy meals would give their husbands more energy at work. And, of course, freed to receive more education, the housewives were to improve the political and cultural level of the American home.

In *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*, Laura Shapiro credits home economists with the development of a distinctive American cuisine. She argues that during the latter part of the nineteenth century home economists "made American cooking American, transforming a nation of honest appetites into an obedient market for instant mashed potatoes." Jell-O and Wonder Bread, a factory-baked white bread, became symbols of American cuisine. These home economists paved the way for America's greatest contributions to global cuisine, the fast-food franchise.

School cafeterias were to reform American eating habits. Home economists made school and hospital cafeteria food healthy, inexpensive, and bland. Through the school cafeteria, home economists hoped to persuade immigrant children to abandon the diet of their parents for the new American cuisine. A founder of the home economics movement, Ellen Richards projected a liberating role for prepared food in a 1900 article titled, "Housekeeping in the Twentieth Century." In her dream home where the purchase of cheap, mass-produced furniture allowed more money for "intellectual pleasures," the pantry was filled with a large stock of prepared foods—mainly canned foods and bakery products. A pneumatic tube connected to the pantry speeded canned and packaged food to the kitchen where the wife simply heated up the meal. In addition, the meal would be accompanied by store-bought bread. Besides being unsanitary, home economists believed that homemade bread and other bakery goods required an inordinate amount of preparation time and therefore housewives should rely on factory-produced bread products. Ellen Richards dismissed the issue of taste with the comment, "I grant that each family has a weakness for the flavor produced by its own kitchen bacteria, but that is a prejudice due to lack of education." People would stop worrying about taste, she argued, when they fully realized the benefits of the superior cleanliness and consistency of factory kitchens and bakeries.

Concern about the American diet continued into the twenty-first century when in 2002 the U.S. Congress began considering the Obesity Prevention and Treatment Act that would initiate a campaign to improve the eating habits in the nation, where more than 60 percent of adults are overweight. Public schools also jumped on the campaign to control student diets. Referring to the nationwide income of \$750 million earned by schools from companies that sell snack or processed food in schools, Steve O'Donoghue, a teacher at Fremont High School in California, commented, "Should schools be co-conspirators in promoting unhealthy diets? Even if we can't change a single kid's behavior, the message we send by having all these deals with junk food peddlers is that this stuff is OK." To control student diets, Fremont High School has banned junk and snack foods. However, the Center for Consumer Freedom objects to the restrictions as a denial of student freedom of choice. Who should control students' eating habits?

In addition to the family, community, health, and diets, schools were called on to exercise social control over youth. Traditionally, the high school focused on teaching academic subjects. Broader goals were established for high schools in the National Education Association's 1918 report, *The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. This report set the stage for the high school to become the major public institution for the socialization of youth through school dances, athletics, student government, clubs, and other extracurricular activities. Attended by only a small portion of the population in its early years, the high school became a mass institution during the 1930s.

High school extracurricular activities aimed to control adolescent sexuality and prepare youth for future family roles. In 1926, the NEA's Committee on Character Education recommended sex education courses as a means of combating the decline of the family and regulating sexual impulses for the good of society. The recommendation defined the purpose of human life as: "The creation of one's own home and family, involving first the choice and winning of, or being won by, one's mate." Sex education was to prepare youth to fulfill this purpose. Similar to today's emphasis on sexual abstinence before marriage, these early sex education courses taught that sexual control was necessary for "proper home functioning, which includes the comfort and happiness of all, maximum development of the mates, proper child production, and effective personal and social education of children." Students were warned that sexual intercourse outside marriage should be avoided because of its potential threat to the stability of the family.

Ironically, the high school heightened the possibility of early sexual activity by bringing large numbers of youth together within one institution. High school activities created a shared experience for youth. In *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America*, Beth Bailey argues that the high school standardized youth culture and created ritualized dating patterns. High school marriage texts and manuals built sexual boundaries around dating. According to Bailey, early high school sex education books dealt with the issue of petting, which meant anything from hand-holding to sexual acts short of actual penetration. All the books warned against promiscuous petting. High school girls were cautioned that heavy petting would lead to a decline of their dating value in the marketplace. Women were given the task of ensuring that petting did not go too far. They were warned that boys tended to sit around and talk about their sexual exploits. The worst thing that could happen to a girl was to become an object of locker room discussions. Girls were told to achieve a balance between being known as an "icicle" and a "hot number."

By the 1930s, the senior prom was the pinnacle of the high school dating experience. In *Prom Night: Youth, Schools, and Popular Culture*, Amy Best argues that as a growing number of youth attended high school, "School clubs, school dances, and student government increasingly became a significant part of the kids' lives." Proms became widespread in the 1930s as the high school became a mass institution. They were considered a poor or middle-class version of the debutante ball, which instructed youth in proper dating and mating rituals. Amy Best contends, "Proms were historically tied to a schooling project

used to govern the uncontrollable youth. By enlisting you to participate in middle-class rituals like the prom, schools were able to advance a program that reigned in student's emerging and increasingly public sexualities."

By the 1940s, high schools had created a national youth culture and school youth were given the name "teenagers." After World War II, spending patterns changed as symbolized by the publication *Seventeen* magazine with its slogan "Teena means business." The word "teenager," according to Kelly Schrum, was invented by advertisers. At first advertisers experimented with "teenster" and "Petiteen," then "teenager" was popularized during the 1940s to mean a group defined by high school attendance. Defined as a major consumer market, it was believed that teenagers needed to be trained in the arts of consumption. Reflecting this trend, high school home economics courses were replaced by Family and Consumer Science courses.

Today, the sexual education of teenagers remains a controversial issue. Many people turn to the schools in efforts to exert control over adolescent sexual behavior. In recent years, the most heated value conflicts centered on AIDS education. These debates pitted those who believe in a strong moral code to control sexual behavior against those who believe in the right of free sexual activity between consenting adults. Those who believe in a strong moral code tend to support AIDS education programs that advocate sexual abstinence outside marriage and take a strong stand against homosexual activities. Those at the other end of the value spectrum emphasize educational programs that teach safe sexual procedures and advocate the dispensing of condoms in public schools.

The importance of schools in shaping social behavior continues in the twenty-first century. The 2001 federal legislation No Child Left Behind contains a section on "Partnerships in Character Education" that calls for the integration of character education into classroom instruction. At the 2002 White House Conference on Character and Community, President Bush highlighted the value of character education:

The thing I appreciate is that you understand education should prepare children for jobs, and it also should prepare our children for life. I join you in wanting our children to not only be rich in skills, but rich in ideals. Teaching character and citizenship to our children is a high calling. It's a really high calling. And I'm grateful for your work.

While many parents and teachers support the development of good character and citizenship, there is a problem in defining its meaning. For instance, the No Child Left Behind Act refers to "integrating *secular* character education into curricula and teaching methods of schools" [my emphasis]. The use of "secular" in the legislation is to make a distinction from character education based on religious values. As examples of the elements of secular character education, the legislation provides the following:

- a. Caring
- b. Civic virtue and citizenship

- c. Justice and fairness
- d. Respect
- e. Responsibility
- f. Trustworthiness
- g. Giving

What do these terms mean? Does “caring” mean that the individual should support a strong welfare government that guarantees all citizens health care, shelter, and adequate nutrition? Or does “caring” mean eliminating welfare programs so that the poor are forced to work and learn to be economically independent?

While public schools can’t teach religion, some religiously oriented people would object to “secular character education.” Christian fundamentalist groups refer to this form of character education as secular humanism. The simplest definition of secular humanism is that it comprises a set of ethical standards that place primary emphasis on a person’s ability to interpret and guide his or her own moral actions. Most religions believe that good character must be grounded in religious doctrines. Many Christians believe that the sources of ethical and moral values should be the Bible and God. Secular humanism relies on the authority of human beings rather than the authority of the Scriptures. From a religious perspective, ideas like caring, respect, responsibility, and giving should be taught only in a religious context.

The controversy surrounding the goals of character education are illustrated by a 1986 legal suit brought by a group of parents against the Hawkins County School District in Tennessee for requiring students, on a threat of suspension, to read from the Holt, Rinehart and Winston basic reading series. Specifically, the parents objected to selections in the readers from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, and *Macbeth*. The parents claimed that the textbook series contained explicit statements on secular humanism and taught values contrary to the religious beliefs of their children. In the words of presiding U.S. District Judge Thomas Gray Hull, “The plaintiffs believe that, after reading the entire Holt series, a child might adopt the views of a feminist, a humanist, a pacifist, an anti-Christian, a vegetarian, or an advocate of a ‘one-world government.’”

Does the concept of “respect” included in the character education section of No Child Left Behind include teaching respect for households headed by gay and lesbian couples? In 1992, New York City adopted the “Children of the Rainbow” curriculum, which required elementary schools to teach tolerance toward gays and lesbians. Among the books recommended for use in classrooms were *Daddy’s Roommate* and *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Both books show pictures of gay couples, including a drawing of two men in bed. Standing on top of a truck outside the school chancellor’s office, Mary Cummins, the president of the local Queens district board of education, led a demonstration against the curriculum. “It is bizarre,” she said, “to teach six-year-olds this [referring to the gay and lesbian content of the curriculum]. Why single out [homosexuals] for respect? Tomorrow it will be skinheads.” Catholic, Pentecostal, and Baptist churches along with Orthodox Jewish synagogues protested that homosexuality is a sin

and that schools should not teach respect for gay and lesbian lifestyles. Neil Lodato, a construction worker, shouted outside his daughter's school, "They should stick to teaching these babies that $1 + 1 = 2$, instead of what daddy and his boyfriend are doing in the bedroom."

Should schools teach "respect" for other cultures? In *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children*, William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education, expresses his objections to teaching respect for other cultures. Bennett argues that U.S. cultural traditions have produced the best society on earth. Why teach respect for inferior cultures? Bennett maintains that U.S. schools should focus on transmitting the European roots of American culture.

So what does "respect" mean if it doesn't include appreciation of other lifestyles and cultures? Does it mean respect for one's own person with regard to sexual activities? The Sex Respect program began in 1983 with a curriculum guide designed to motivate teens to practice chastity. The program's current goal is "to enable each individual to progressively develop responsible behavior, positive self-esteem, and respect for others as he/she makes decisions involving the use of his/her sexual freedom." Sex Respect defines sexual freedom as the freedom to say no. In 2006, Sex Respect reported that when its founder Coleen Kelly Mast delivers her "'save sex for marriage' message to teenagers in both public and parochial schools, the response is hand-painted posters like 'Pet your dog, not your date' [and] 'Use your will, not the pill.'"

Today, the program is being used in all 50 states and 23 foreign countries. The program's growth was made possible by Title V of the welfare-reform act of 1996 in which Congress authorized federal funds to be provided to the states in the form of block grants to promote chastity until marriage. Title V requires states to fund education that:

- a. Has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity.
- b. Teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children.
- c. Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems.
- d. Teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity.

Both the federally funded Sex Respect program and the goals of Title V raise important questions about the meaning of respect and the goals of public schools. Should schools be involved in sex education or should this area of instruction be left to parents, the community, or religious groups? Should government legislation define a "faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage . . . [as] the expected standard of human sexual activity" for all people? Should public schools focus on birth control methods as opposed to abstinence from sexual activity?

Despite the fact that the historical record indicates that moral instruction has not reduced crime, controlled teenage sexuality, or ended substance

abuse, society still turns to public schools as the cure for many social problems. Certainly, the school can teach subjects that will improve society without engaging in moral instruction that will light the fires of religious controversy. For instance, early home economists advocated teaching about sanitation and diseases as a means of promoting public health. High school courses can teach about the results of alcoholism and substance abuse without entering the realm of morality—for example, is smoking marijuana “evil” or just bad for your health? Social studies, history, and economics courses can study social conditions that might contribute to crime and violence. However, even in this seemingly neutral approach to social issues there is always lurking in the background the potential for conflict over moral values.

Attempts to use public schools to solve social problems will continue to raise problems about what values should dominate character education and how to reconcile secular and religious values. Consider the following questions:

- What are legitimate areas of social concern for public schools?
- Should public schools attempt to solve social problems, such as the AIDS epidemic or other epidemics, the destructive use of drugs and alcohol, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and child abuse?
- What government agency, organization, or group of individuals should decide the moral values to be taught in public schools?
- Should instruction related to social and moral issues be mandatory for all students?
- Should teachers be required to teach only the moral and social values given in the school district’s curriculum?

THE ECONOMIC GOALS OF SCHOOLING

Today, the economic goals dominate public schooling as students are educated as workers for the global economy. Education is hailed as the key to economic growth. In 2008, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills issued a report with a title indicating economic education goals: *21st Century Skills, Education & Competitiveness*. The report declared, “Creating an aligned, 21st century public education system that prepares students, workers and citizens to triumph in the global skills race is the central economic competitiveness issue for the next decade.”

The idea of education for economic growth and competition is not new. Since the nineteenth century, politicians and school leaders justified schools as necessary for economic development. Originally, Horace Mann proposed two major economic objectives. One was what we now call *human capital*. Simply stated, human capital theory contends that investment in education will improve the quality of workers and, consequently, increase the wealth of the community. The second was *equality of opportunity*. By going to school, everyone was to be given an equal opportunity to compete for jobs and wealth.

Horace Mann used human capital theory to justify community support of schools. For instance, why should an adult with no children be forced to pay

for the schooling of other people's children? Mann's answer was that public schooling increased the wealth of the community and, therefore, even people without children economically benefitted from schools. Mann also believed that schooling would eliminate poverty by raising the wealth of the community and by preparing everyone to be economically successful.

Mann's thinking was echoed in a global context in a speech by Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer at the three-day Economic Summit on Early Childhood Investment held in September of 2007. He told the gathering of education leaders, politicians, and business groups: "We're no longer competing just with Colorado; we're competing with China. We need to challenge every single educator to create the next engineer." Linda Jacobson reported the conference for *Education Week* in an article with the descriptive human capital title: "Summit Links Preschool to Economic Success." She reported, "Hoping to win over skeptical policymakers, leaders from the business, philanthropic, and political arenas gathered here this week to strengthen their message that spending money on early-childhood education will improve high school graduation rates and help keep the United States economically strong." Preschoolers were being viewed as human resources to be educated for global economic competition.

Current discussions of human capital originated in the War on Poverty programs of the 1960s. War on Poverty programs included Head Start and Title I. The twenty-first-century's federal legislation No Child Left Behind is a renewal of Title I. The economic model of the War on Poverty in Figure 1–3 exemplifies current and past ideas about schooling and poverty. Notice that poor-quality education is one element in a series of social factors that tends to reinforce other social conditions. As you move around the inner part of the diagram, an inadequate education is linked to low-income jobs, low-quality housing, poor diet, poor medical care, health problems, and high rates of absenteeism from school and work. This model suggests eliminating poverty by improving any of the interrelated points. For instance, the improvement of health conditions will mean fewer days lost from school and employment, which will mean more income. Higher wages will mean improved housing, medical care, diet, and education. These improved conditions will mean better jobs for those of the next generation. Antipoverty programs include Head Start, compensatory education, vocation and career education, public housing, housing subsidies, food stamps, and medical care.

Today, Head Start programs are premised on the idea that some children from low-income families begin school at a disadvantage in comparison to children from middle- and high-income families. Head Start programs provide early childhood education to give poor children a head start on schooling that allows them to compete on equal terms with other children. Job-training programs are designed to end teenage and adult unemployment. Compensatory education in fields such as reading are designed to ensure the success of low-income students.

Besides the issue of poverty, human capital arguments directly influenced the organization of schools. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the dominant model for linking schools to the labor market is the "sorting machine."

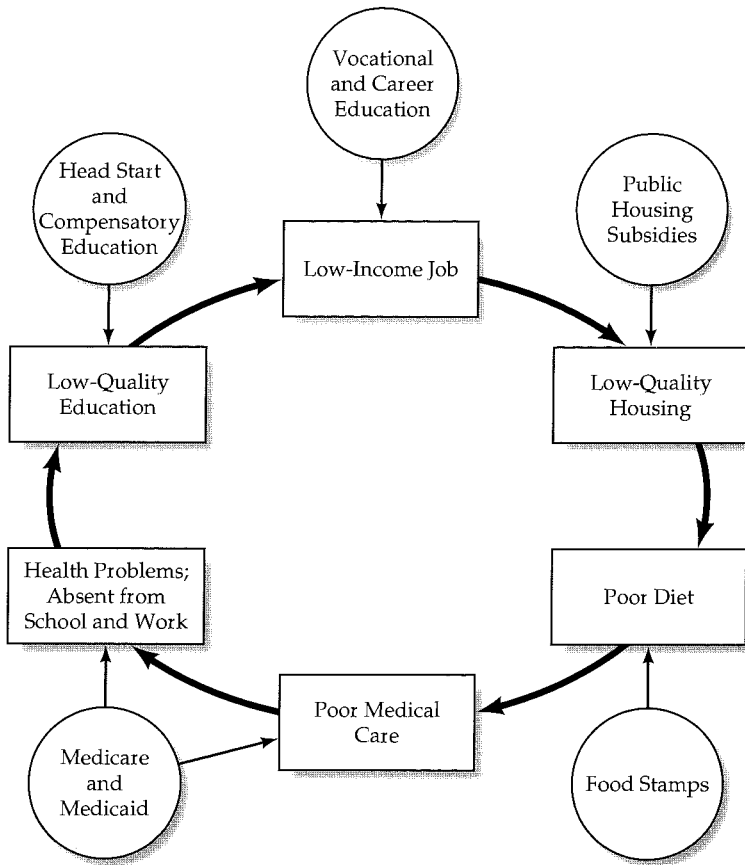


FIGURE 1-3. War on Poverty

The image of the sorting machine is that of pouring students—called human capital or human resources—into schools where they are separated by abilities and interests. Emerging from the other end of the machine, school graduates enter jobs that match their educational programs. In this model, the school counselor or other school official uses a variety of standardized tests to place the student into an ability group in an elementary school classroom and later in high school into a course of study. Ideally, a student's education will lead directly to college or a vocation. In this model, there should be a correlation among students' education, abilities, and interests and their occupations. With schools as sorting machines, proponents argue, the economy will prosper and workers will be happy because of the close tie between the schools and the labor market.

In the twenty-first century, American workers are competing in a global economy. As U.S. companies seek cheaper labor in foreign countries, American workers are forced to take reductions in benefits and wages to compete with

foreign workers. The only hope, it is argued, is to train workers for jobs that pay higher wages in the global labor market.

Preparation for the global economy shifts the focus from service to a national economy to a global economy by preparing workers for international corporations and for competition in a world labor market. It is argued that the income of American workers is to rise because they will be educated for the highest-paying jobs in the world economy.

The architect of educational policies for the global economy, former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, writes in *The Work of Nations*, "Herein lies the new logic of economic capitalism: The skills of a nation's workforce and the quality of its infrastructure are what make it unique, and uniquely attractive, in the world economy." Reich draws a direct relationship between the type of education provided by schools and the placement of the worker in the labor market. He believes that many workers will be trapped in low-paying jobs unless their employment skills are improved. Reich argues, "There should not be a barrier between education and work. We're talking about a new economy in which lifelong learning is a necessity for every single member of the American workforce."

Human capital and global competitiveness are used to justify No Child Left Behind, the most important federal legislation of the twenty-first century. The opening line to the official U.S. Department of Education's *A Guide to Education and No Child Left Behind* declares, "Satisfying the demand for highly skilled workers is the key to maintaining competitiveness and prosperity in the global economy." In his 2006 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush declared, "Keeping America competitive requires us to open more markets for all that Americans make and grow. One out of every five factory jobs in America is related to global trade . . . we need to encourage children to take more math and science, and to make sure those courses are rigorous enough to compete with other nations."

At the opening of the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, Kerry Killinger, CEO of Washington Mutual and vice-chair of Achieve, Inc., declared, "We face the global economy today with workers who are largely not prepared to compete for the well-paid, cutting-edge jobs that are fueling economic growth around the world. The summit is an extraordinary opportunity for states to work together to raise our academic expectations and the rigor of the preparation we give to our young people." The summit's report, *An Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools*, proposes a core high school curriculum of four years of English and four years of math including data analysis and statistics.

Are all public school parents committed to having their children educated so that they can help U.S. businesses compete in the global economy? Did all public school parents participate in the decision to make American economic competitiveness the central educational goal? At the National Summit on High Schools, public goals for secondary schools were articulated by a combination of governors, chief executive officers of major corporations, and educational leaders. Attending the summit were 150 governors, heads of corporations, and

educators. The summit was cosponsored by the National Governors Association (the self-described “collective voice of the nation’s governors” founded in 1906) and Achieve, Inc. Achieve, Inc., was formed in 1996 by the National Governors Association and business leaders for the purpose of raising “academic standards and achievement so that all students graduate ready for college, work and citizenship.” The list of representatives from the business community who serve as officers of Achieve, Inc., is impressive. They include Arthur F. Ryan, Chairman and CEO, Prudential Financial, Inc.; Kerry Killinger, Chairman and CEO, Washington Mutual; Craig R. Barrett, CEO, Intel Corporation; Jerry Jurgensen, CEO, Nationwide; Edward B. Rust, Jr., Chairman and CEO, State Farm Insurance; Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., Former Chairman and CEO, IBM Corporation; and Peter Sayre, Controller, Prudential Financial, Inc.

Human capital theory is the basis for the preceding economic goals for education. In schools, human capital is students, and the development of human capital simply means preparing students to be efficient workers, who, it is hoped, can find employment in their area of training. Economic growth pays for the investment in education. In the framework of human capital illustrated in Figure 1–4, an important consideration is the return on investment:

- Does investment in education produce worthwhile economic returns?
- Should governments invest in schools if there are few economic rewards?

Equality of opportunity was Horace Mann’s other economic goal. The idea of equality of opportunity resolves the conflict between promises of equality

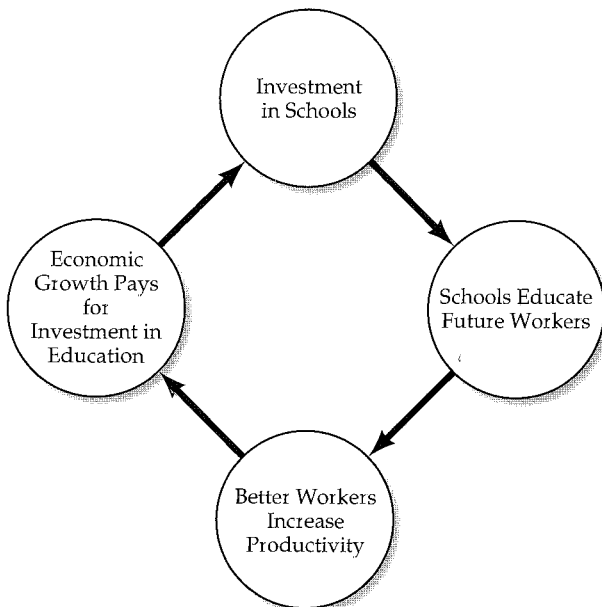


FIGURE 1–4 Human Capital Model

and the existence of a society strongly divided by economic inequalities. Equality of opportunity does not mean equal income, living conditions, or status, but rather *equality to compete for wealth*. Horace Mann envisioned schools providing children of the rich and poor an equal education so that when they graduated they would be on equal terms to compete for jobs. He believed that the idea of equality of opportunity would reduce social tensions between the rich and poor by instilling the belief in people that everyone had an equal chance to succeed. It didn't matter whether equality of opportunity actually existed because social tensions would be reduced simply by people believing that the school provided everyone with an equal chance for success.

Equality of opportunity plays an important role in human capital theory. The War on Poverty and the No Child Left Behind legislation are premised on the idea that improved schooling will provide an equal opportunity for poor children in the labor market. It also assumes that equality of opportunity will improve the efficiency of the labor market by letting talented children from poor families achieve occupations commensurate with their abilities. Allowing talented children to achieve despite family conditions will, theoretically, contribute to economic growth.

Educational inflation, however, might fly in the face of equality of opportunity and human capital arguments. Increasing the number of high school and college graduates might result in decreasing the economic value of education. It is a simple story of supply and demand. With educational inflation, the educational requirements of jobs increase while the actual skills required for the jobs do not change. This results in the declining economic value of high school and college diplomas. Educational inflation first appeared in the early 1970s when the labor market was flooded with college graduates, and scholars with doctorates were driving taxicabs and cooking in restaurants. In this situation, the occupational structure did not expand to meet the increased educational training of the labor force. The response of educational institutions was to reorganize for more specific career training and call for more limited educational aspirations. The important lesson was that the nature of the labor market was more important in determining employment than was the amount of education available to the population. Educational inflation can hinder the ability of increased schooling to end poverty. There must be an increase in the number of jobs actually requiring higher levels of education for increased schooling to effectively raise levels of income. Education alone cannot solve the problems of poverty.

As I discussed, schools are believed to benefit the economy by socializing students for work. The school is the first formal public organization encountered by the child and provides the preparation and training needed to deal with other complex social organizations. The school's attendance requirements, tardiness rules, instruction in completing tasks and following directions, and obedience to authority are preparation for the workplace.

Arguments for the school's role in socializing for the workplace can be found throughout U.S. history. In the nineteenth century, schools emphasized marching, drills, and orderliness as preparation for the modern factory. Lining

up for class as well as marching in and out of the cloakroom and to the blackboard were justified as training for factory assembly lines. Today, some students are prepared for job interviews and filling out employment forms. However, there is the question of whether the school is simply educating workers who are obedient, conforming, and passive, and who are, consequently, unwilling to join or form unions to actively struggle for workers' rights.

In recent years, there has been discussion of the school's role in promoting a learning society and lifelong learning so that workers can adapt to constantly changing needs in the labor force. A learning society and lifelong learning are considered essential parts of global educational systems. Both concepts assume a world of constant technological change, which will require workers to continually update their skills. This assumption means that schools will be required to teach students how to learn so that they can continue learning throughout their lives. These two concepts are defined as follows:

- In a learning society, educational credentials determine income and status. Also, all members in a learning society are engaged in learning to adapt to constant changes in technology and work requirements.
- Lifelong learning refers to workers engaging in continual training to meet the changing technological requirements of the workplace.

In the context of education for the global economy, the larger questions include the following:

- Should the primary goal of education be human capital development?
- Should the worth of educational institutions be measured by their contribution to economic growth?
- Will the learning society and lifelong learning to prepare for technological change increase human happiness?

HUMAN CAPITAL AND THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

Businesses, as I just discussed, are very active in developing educational policies. Education for the global economy links schooling to the interests of the business community and international corporations. In fact, by the twenty-first century, most Americans seemed to accept business as a natural partner in the control of schools. In the 1990s, few people questioned President George Bush Senior and the National Governors Association's statement: "Parents, businesses, and community organizations will work together to ensure that schools are a safe haven for all children."

- Why would business be considered a logical partner in the preceding statement?
- Why was there no mention of unions or churches?
- Why was there no mention of participation by all the citizens who pay taxes to support schools?

The extensive and often unquestioned involvement of business in American schools has increased at a rapid rate and has made economic goals the number-one priority of public schools. Business involvement in schools raises a number of issues. It is not necessarily true that what is good for American business is good for American schools and students. The primary concern of business is the maximization of profits. Business profits depend on the quality and expense of workers. Although businesses want educated workers, they also want workers who are compliant and loyal to the company.

It can also be argued that it is in the public interest for schools to focus on the education of future workers. Doesn't everyone benefit if the economy is booming? Therefore, shouldn't public schools emphasize the development of habits that will meet the requirements of business? If you believe that the primary goal of public schools is making sure that graduates can get jobs, then your answer is "Yes!"

CONCLUSION

The school continues to be used in efforts to solve social, political, and economic problems. It is easier for politicians to blame schools for social and economic problems than to try to directly correct these problems. By relying on the school, issues are shifted from an economic and social level to a personal level. "Reform the individual rather than society" is the message of those who trust the school to end crime, poverty, broken families, drug and alcohol abuse, and myriad other social troubles.

Now the focus is on the role of the school in a global economy. This focus emphasizes the school's role in economic development. Fortunately or unfortunately, students are viewed as human resources whose primary value is their potential contribution to economic growth and productivity. But is economic expansion a worthy goal if the quality of life is not improved? Doesn't education in and of itself improve the quality of an individual's life by opening new possibilities to thinking and learning?

Suggested Readings and Works Cited in Chapter

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