Can Community Control Concept Work In D. C.?

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WASHINGTON — I shall attempt to discuss community control based on actual experiences pulling from resources in various cities around the country who have been actively involved in community control of public education.

From this data I shall include those experiences which are now workable and discuss the feasibility of adaptation to the Washington school system.

This is not a thorough research presentation at this point, but a microscopic view of a general perspective of community control of public education.

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In 1957, we saw the challenge of nine children struggling to get a decent education. The facility which offered this was an all white public elementary school in Little Rock, Ark.

On our television sets we saw brutality administered to these young children by local whites. We saw use of the National Guard, tanks, bayonets because nine young children wanted a decent education — a right guaranteed to all children in the United States of America.

The struggle for quality education entered on the higher level. We read and saw the insults heaped on Autherine Lucy, including Alabama Governor Wallace standing in the doorway to block her entry in the school, for attempting to study at the University of Alabama.

Violence in all proportions disrupted when James Meredith attempted to enter the University of Mississippi, "Ole Miss" — the hallmark of "Lily White Universities."

My own experiences in Macon County, Ala. include the witnessing of tanks, bayonets, "selection forms" whereby only certain children could go to the better physical educational plant (the white high school), to the establishment of all white, private high school academies.

With this new apparatus (white academies) as soon as a public school was desegregated, the state would lower fund allocations to that particular school.

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In the northern public schools the issue for quality education took on an additional thrust: Community Control for Public Education.

As early as 1958 a group "Harlem 10 Mothers" (Mae Mallory in the leadership) instituted a suit against the state of New York to petition for quality education for the children in the inner city.

The results were coopted by the white, Jewish Board of Education in a plan called the "Use of Under Utilized Schools."

What this amounted to was that a select group of children from Harlem was bused to white, middle class schools in Queens, Long Island and in the Village.

Meanwhile the bulk of the children were getting poor education due to a bad system and deficient facilities. The Board of Education, many of the teachers, and most of the principals in the inner city were all white and had no understanding of the black experience which has a direct relationship to the development of learning.

The Harlem 10 Mothers began to push for community control because of the dissatisfaction from educational results in their children.

In 1964 and 65 a special school facility was being erected in Harlem: the famous I.S. 201 complex.

The struggle around this facility and community control had national attention. The complex idea was to have "Educational Parks," a complete area of land where all levels of education (elementary, junior high and high school) will be at the same location and site.

The particular aspect of I.S. 201 is that it is an intermedrate school with grades from 5to8. The community in Harlem would not allow the I.S. 201 complex to opes nless there was community control. The Borad of Education, still white and jewish, coopted the communtiy control concept with adeceptive scheme of decentralization, with the help of Ford Foundation monies.

What this amounted to was that the community people were divided into districts, held elections to develop community boards.

The tragedy of this had black people fighting each other and squabbling over meager funds while the central Board of Education in New York City, which is located in Brooklyn, was free to continue making unfit policies and dire monetary allocations to inner city schools

In Detroit, the situation was the same including that the communtiy person running for election had campaigns and the person with the most votes was elected. The peculiar tragedy of Detroit is that many people who were running had financial help from individual members on the central Board of Education.

Consequently, crooks and political hacks got elected and the quality of education made no significant changes.

Another significant development was that the teachers union, American Federation of Teachers, headed by Shanker, was against community control for public education.

On the other hand, community people saw that they were powerless. Through their course of struggle they saw the need to elect black, responsible people directly on the School Board.

They realized that it was a political tactic to keep throwing in the community face "you must elect people who have educational qualifications."

Community people began to look at individuals, look at their history in the struggle for human and civil rights, then accomplishments in these endeavors The community people elected those people to educational positions out of trust and commitment with the hopes that people with educational expertise will help.

Thus, Marion Barry in Washington, Isiah Robinson who is president of the School Board in New York city, and other brothers and sisters around the country.

Other developments included "Parents and Students Committees" and "Afro-American Teachers Union." These groups lobby and petition for real implementation of community control.

Some of the philosophy for Community Control comes from the practical experiences mentioned above Community control and decentralization are not the same. The former is completely controlled in all aspects by the community:

Determine curriculum, what textbooks to be used; develop new approaches to learning, what standardized tests to be used; hiring and firing of teachers, administrators; controlling and disbursing funds administered for public education; handling state and property tax funds allocated to public education; oversees maintenance, operation and creation of physical plants (schools); determine bond issues; oversees all items pertaining to education which is public.

Decentralization still means that the control is in the central Agency — the Board of Education, not in the community. This method only induces infighting and power struggles.

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A model program would work as follows:

All communities where schools are located (of course some districting will have to be done) will have a board, not a representative. The community board will elect one representative on a one man one vote basis to be on the Board of Education (Central Agency).

Each community board will have an apparatus and a working facility. The community board will call community meetings for discussion around educational tasks.

For instance, School A will need additional textbooks while School B will need additional audio-visual aids equipment.

The research and the budget will be drawn up by the respecilve community boards and submitted to the central Board of Education by the community board representatives. This method will help insure clear cut demands and allocation of funds.

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Secondly, each community board will select a person to serve on the coordinating committee.

This subcommittee will hire a resource person and work with that person to deal with curriculum supplement, updating, rewriting, approaches to learning and overall problems that are common to all community boards.

After taking data back to the individual community boards through the representatives on the coordinating committee for discussion, a representative from the coordinating committee will submit to the central Board of Elucation the recommendations which will implement change in the curriculum.

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All decisions will rest in the community boards. Testing, evaluation, hiring and firing. Teachers should be accountable to the community boards where they are working.

If serious infractions develop, teachers should meet with their respective community board to discuss the issue.

The community board will make a decision about a given teacher and submit recommendations to the coordinating committee if the matter cannot be resolved by the individual Board.

If this does not resolve the problem, the elective representatives from the community board will discuss the issue (those who are now serving on the central Board of Education). Their decision should be final unless there are legal avenues.

This method will include firing as well as hiring. Of course, grievances must be legitimate and substantiated with objective facts.

Only when education and the operation of the educational process and policies are in the hands of the community people can we assure ourselves of accountability and quality education for our children.

(Of course, this can be more elaborate, but for this instance as stated in my introduction this presentation is only a microscopic view with the hopes that all the parts of Community Control is touched upon.)

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The Adams Community School is the only school in the District affecting community control. However, when community control is not involving the total community, it is at best a lobbying agency to the Board of Education.

Under community control, the community also controls the Board of Education whose function will then be a supportive role to the community boards and the coordinating committee.

I think that a fascimile of the above, of course in more detail, is adaptable to the District school system, particularly in the light of the recent School Board elections.

This new Board can begin to affect the control into the community which will destroy the tradition of the "all powerful School Board" and the petty personality and political struggles between individuals.

Private colleges losing out in competition for students

WASHINGTON (UPI) — New evidence that private colleges are losing out to public colleges in the competition for students was released by the Association of American Colleges (AAC).

"If the enrollment picture is to improve in private colleges and universitics, many will need to be more aggressive in their pursuit of potential students and in their retention of those who actually matriculate," he AAC report said.

The 839-member association recently held its three day 58th annual meeting here.

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Its report, "the Numbers Game," a study of enrollment patterns at 431 private colleges and universities, was written by William W. Jellema, AAC research director.

"If private higher education is to survive financially it must also survive in enrollment," he wrote.

"When the fishing is poor, a few fish may tug on many lines (fill out even more applications). At times like these, the skill of the angler becomes critical."

AAC said the rate of increase in private college enrollment has declined steadily from the mid 1960s and has now nearly reached zero, a trend also reported by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education.

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Eight states actually had a net loss in private college undergraduate enrollment between the mid 1960s and 1969-70, the report said: Alabama, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska and Wisconsin.

Jellema said the rate of increase in total enrollment dropped steadily from 3.6 per cent in 1966-67 over 1965-66 the previous year to 2.5 per cent in 1966-67 1.5 per cent in 1967-1968, 0.7 per cent in 1968-69 and 0.5 per cent in 1969-70.

The Cardegie Commission estimates the rate of increase this year was 0.2 per cent.

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In spite of this leveling off, private colleges confidently prediet each year that their enrollments will climb, a prediction based on bad information and false hope that can only damage the school's future program, AAC said.

"An institution that builds plant and program for a student body that never reaches the expected size, or that rises and falls, is apt to be in fiscal trouble and its administrators may have some explaining to do," the report concluded.

Teacher-Student Relationship Key To Education

The teachers most returning pupils met this fall were unfamiliar.

Even now, many pupils have not yet begun to trust their teachers. Nor are they confident of their ability to meet those teachers' expectations, according to David J. Hall, principal of The University of Chicago's Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School.

And by the time this teacher-pupil relationship is developed properly, he notes, there will be only a short time before school ends and the cycle is repeated.

Hall contends this approach to education contributes to the deprivation of inner-city schools. He proposes that teachers remain with their pupils for three years or more to establish that type of relationship conducive to learning.

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How does the tradition of annual promotion of students interfere with learning?

"Unless the child has sufficient emotional resources to successfully meet the challenge of adapting to what, for him, is a radically different situation, he will build up the customary defenses that inhibit the learning process — emotional withdrawal or a depersonalized, mechanical approach to meeting his teacher's demands," Hall warns in the current issue of **School Review**, a scholarly journal for educators.

He believes the inner-city pupils need to identify with adults in the school who represent the values of a broader culture and who believe in education. Without a sustained teacher relationship, pupils are forced to rely exclusively on their parents for educational motivation.

"But the home resources are not sufficient to bear the burden. Parents themselves have conflict about learning and school — many have experienced schooling in terms of personal defeat and are unable to communicate to their children the conviction that learning is a gratifying, attainable experience," he feels.

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Hall believes this "teacher discontinuity" approach to education also impairs teaching performance by:

Diffusing responsibility for a child's education so teachers can blame the previous teacher for a pupil's failure,

Protecting teachers from experiencing emotionally the consequences of their own imperfections,

Discouraging a teaching career since teachers come to feel nine months is too short a time "to affect significant and lasting changes in a child's capacity and motivation to learn,"

Providing teachers with the annual opportunity to transfer out of a school they consider unworthy of their efforts, and

Fostering authoritarian attitudes in teachers and pupils, since it is the only way they can relate in the absense of personal relationships.

"Authoritarian teaching, like chaos, denies children the self-respect and feeling of autonomy that comes from achieving socially acceptable goals through self-initiated purposeful action," Hall believes.

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Hall's proposal that teachers remain with their students over several years is not new.

He says it was adopted early in the 19th century in Germany and now is followed in most Montessori schools in this country and elsewhere, most Israeli kibbutzim schools, Russian schools, England's informal schools, several experimental public schools including the Lorraine Hansberry School in Chicago, and the Sonia Shasnkman Orthegenic School at The University of Chicago.

In these schools, the teacher is not just a supervisor, but an adult with whom a student may identify.

"Identification determines not only a child's motivation to learn but the directions of his character supplemest the family emodevelopment. . .additional adults supplement the family emotional resources, and so he help children make the transition from family life to life in society," Hall writes.

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Besides eliminating the adverse effects of the annual promotion approach, teacher continuity would:

Make the teacher's personality an integrial part of the classroom,

Provide students with an opportunity to develop self-discipline,

Introduce emotional accountability into teaching, and

Be an effective appraisal of teacher performance.

"Children would not return to school at the beginning of the year feeling that they know no adult sufficiently to seek his confidence or ask for help," Hall says.

"And children would not have to spend three or four months each year readjusting to a new teacher, learning to meet his expectations, and overcoming their fear of his presence."

MISS JESSIE MUSE is a professional assistant for the newly constituted division of instruction and professional development of the National Education Association. The major goal of the DIPD is to draw teachers into direct involvement in the decision-making policies of the nation's education system.

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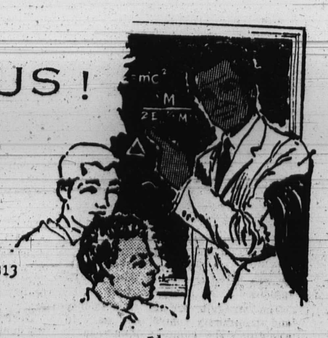

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