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CRITICAL ISSUES IN INDIAN EDUCATION: 1972-1973.

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CRITICAL ISSUES IN INDIAN EDUCATION:

1972 - 1973

has been reviewed and approved by a Committee of Examiners and has been accepted by the Committee on Degrees, Harvard University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my wife Nora - my best critic and source of encouragement.

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ABSTRACT: CRITICAL ISSUES IN INDIAN EDUCATION: 1972 - 1973

Critical Issues in Indian Education: 1972 - 1973, a final report presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, is divided into two parts. Part I describes the Office of Education's new role in Indian education and Part II presents recommendations for a national approach to resolving the problems of Indian education.

Part I: Implementation of Title IV, Public Law 92-318, is a description and analysis of the critical internal issues arising from the process of carrying out the intent of the Indian Education Act (Title IV, P.L. 92-318), and an examination of my role in the total process. The role is described in relationship to three constituencies - the Administration, Congress, and the Indian community.

There were five internal issues that emerged during the implementation of Title IV, P.L. 92-318: 1) Funding; 2) Internal Leadership; 3) Priorities for Title IV programs; 4) Appointment of the National Advisory Council; and 5) Organization of the Office of Indian Education.

My role as a leader in the planning and implementation stage is described as it relates to the constituencies mentioned above. After a description and analysis of the relationship, the question of how to deal with the complexities of being caught between the three, oftentimes opposing, groups is examined.

The conclusion describes the Administration's final actions and

the causes for each action step.

Part II: Pricrities for Indian Educetion: A Position Paper, presents a brief histcrical perspective on Indian education and then describes fcur naticnal pricrities for Indian education, including the rationale and recommendaticns fcr each.

The description, raticnale, and recommendations for a national policy board; a national needs assessment; a comprehensive federal funding program including a basic foundation entitlement for Bureau of Indian Affairs' schools, federal boarding schools, construction funds, and a reaffirmation of the desirability of supplementary support similar to Title IV; and a parent based early childhood education program; compose the bulk of this part. It is based on information from several national studies on Indian education, current educational theories and research, and personal experience.

The principal target groups for this part are the National Advisory Council authorized under Title IV, and the Indian community. It presents in simple, concise language just what the Native American must do if educational success is to become a reality.

Part I describes the process, problems encountered, and final success of the first major modern step forward in Indian education. Part II describes what I believe the second step must include and is presented as necessary because the Native American cannot afford to wait for years of research to point the way.

The strategy used during this process has been simple - use every available argument and force necessary to convince the Administration, Congress, and the public that improvement for Indian education is a priority.

INTRODUCTION

Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge, prepared by the special subcommittee on Indian education in 1969, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, ushered in a new, exciting and challenging era for Indian students of all ages. This report did not initiate new direction, but it became a focal point for renewed efforts to improve the educational opportunities for Indian children and adults.

This new era is just beginning. The first initiative introduced by the Meriam Report of 1928, has run its course, but it paved the way for many things yet to be accomplished. Many of the recommendations made in 1928 were reiterated again in 1969 and are still necessary today. This does not mean that progress was not made, but rather, that not everything was accomplished.

The basic difference between the old and the new eras centers around the Indian professional who has two responsibilities. He has to respond to Indian direction while actively working within the system and he must provide educational alternatives for Indians to evaluate and choose from. In the past, the Federal Government was telling Indians what to do and how to do it. Today, the Indian is attempting to tell the Government what needs to be done and that it is important for him to work out his own problems.

The Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education, originally chaired by Senator Robert Kennedy (Democrat - New York) and later by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Democrat - Massachusetts) was responsible for focusing pub-

lic attention on the problems of Indian education and spurring new efforts in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Office of Education to meet the special educational needs of Indian children and adults. The Report presented shocking information about the sad state of Indian education in the United States, re-emphasized the Federal responsibility for funding Indian educational programs, and made recommendations for improving services.

The second major result from the Subcommittee Report was the introduction of the first major Indian Education Act since the Johnson O'Malley Act passed in 1934 and was amended in 1936. From the outset, the proposed legislation was opposed by the Administration but attempts were made from within to respond to the demands being made by the Congress, Indian communities, and the public. One of those efforts became a part of the Educational Renewal Thrust under CE Deputy Commissioner Don Davies. The plan called for placing approximately $22 million in discretionary money under a Director for Indian Education in the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Development.

I was hired to head this office and reported for work on July 31, 1972. Between the time I was hired for the position and when I reported for work, two events took place that caused a major shift in policy. First, the Renewal Plan was shelved, and second, Title IV, P.L. 92-318, the Indian Education Act, was signed into law by President Nixon on June 23, 1972.

In addition, three critical incidents occurred which changed my role in Indian education from that of heading a new program to leading a

planning effort in CE for Indian programs, and participating in implementing Title IV, P.L. 92-318. First, Deputy Commissioner Don Davies resigned and moved to Yale University; second, the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Sidney P. Marland, Jr., was appointed Assistant Secretary for Education (Dr. John Cttina is now the Commissioner Designate); and third, a Planning Team was formed with Co-Directors, under the wing of the Office of Special Concerns headed by Assistant Commissioner Dick Hays.

Surfacing as the primary issue for Indian Education in 1972-73, amidst this uncertain state of affairs, was the implementation of Title IV, P.L. 92-318, the Indian Education Act of 1972.

local and national levels. There is still a tremendous amount of work to be done if the Native American is to develop an educational system that will serve community and individual needs.

I have attempted to outline the second major effort Indians must embark upon in the following part of this final report. Priorities for Indian Education: A Position Paper, deals with the establishment of a National Policy Board for Indian Education rather than an Advisory Council; a national needs assessment for providing hard data to support the budget requests; a comprehensive federal funding program for basic support of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, boarding schools, and school construction; and a parent based early childhood educational program. In my opinion, these constitute the major requirements for Indian education over the next decade in order to provide a systematic and comprehensive educational system for both reservation and non-reservation Indians.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Perspective

Since the beginning of man, parents and members of the community have been responsible for transmitting to their children knowledge and skills necessary to keep them caring, to instill a sense of belonging, and to provide a means of feeding themselves.[1] This process probably began with simple food gathering and hunting skills, a need for companionship, and an instinct to survive.

The American Indian (including the Native Alaskan and hereafter referred to as Indian) was no different from any other group when it came to responsibility for the education of their children. In our early history, the young child was taught what he needed to know by someone in the family - an aunt, uncle, or grandparent. His education started at a very early age and was geared to making him a productive member of the community. He was taught the skills necessary to live in his environment. He was well taught and could compete with anyone or any group. This was a source of pride to the individual and his family, as well as to his tribe.[2]

After the arrival of the white man this process deteriorated. Responsibility for educating the child was eventually transferred from the family to church schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, and eventually public schools. In some cases it was forced, in other cases it was voluntary and planned, and in others, a gradual change over took place. As parental responsibility and participation lessened, apathy

and negativisim increased. The Meriam Report of 1926, the Senate Sub-committee Report of 1969, and the Havighurst Report of 1970 on Indian Education reiterate the dismal failure of the external educational systems to adequately educate Indian students.

The National Center for Educational Statistics, in their January 2, 1973, Bulletin No. 13, lists 226,600 Indians enrolled in elementary-secondary schools in the United States in the fall of 1970. Private schools accounted for 18,200 pupils, Federal schools enrolled 51,300 students, and public schools had 197,100 students with 63,000 of these identified as Indians serviced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Excluding Alaska, Hawaii, and Haskell Indian Junior College, the National Center for Educational Statistics lists a total of 29,269 full-time students in college in 1970, with 1,608 of these in graduate school. The BIA is currently sponsoring over 13,000 Indian students in over 700 colleges and universities with about 1,000 expected to receive under-graduate or graduate degrees this spring.[3] No statistics are available on the number of Indians receiving post-secondary school support under the Office of Education's Educational Opportunity Grants, Higher Education Act Insured Loans, Higher Education Work-Study, National Defense Student Loans Direct Loan Contributions, Special Services for Disadvantaged Students in Institutions of Higher Education, and the Upward Bound Program. Leroy Falling, from the Branch of Higher Education Programs in the BIA, has estimated that there will be approximately 7,000 students in college programs who will not receive BIA support in FY 1974, with 2,000-3,000 of those in graduate schools.[4]

Traditionally, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was responsible for providing services and support (including educational services) to Indians. "The signing of the Treaty between the United States and the Delaware Tribe in 1778 established treaties as the primary legal basis for Federal policies in regard to the American Indian."[5] The U.S. Government recognized the need to convert Indians from hunters to farmers if land was to be secured for white settlers. Educating the Indian was seen as the way to accomplish the conversion. "Between 1778 and 1871, when the last treaty was signed, Indian tribes ceded almost a billion acres to the United States. In return, Indians generally retained inalienable and tax-exempt lands for themselves, and government pledges to provide such services as education, medical care, and technical and agricultural training."[6] The Allotment Act of 1887 was in effect for forty-six years and the Indian land base was further reduced from 140 million acres to approximately 50 million acres of the least productive land available.[7]

From the beginning, the schools have been used to assimilate the Indian into the dominant culture's world.[8] Boarding schools for Indians were originally designed to separate a child from his reservation and family. There was an attempt to take away his cultural base-tribal lore, mores, native language, and tribal identity.[9] This has all led to a school system that has failed a good number of Indians for many years.[10]

The U.S. Office of Education first became involved in Indian Education when it became responsible for operating schools in Alaska. That

responsibility was increased with enactment of P.L. 874, as it relates to Indians, Title I ESEA and other set-asides for Indians, and Title IV, P.L. 92-318, The Indian Education Act, 1972.

At the present time, there is no one Federal agency responsible for Indian education. "The legal responsibility of the Federal Government for the education of Indians is now being met in three broadly different ways:

1. Through the Department of Interior for:
   a. Operation of boarding schools, day schools, and bordertown dormitories.
   b. Payments under the Johnson O'Malley Act to school districts for assistance to Indian pupils.
   c. Vocational training of adults, and college scholarship funds.
2. Through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which make payments to the states to aid education of Indian students in public schools by:
   a. Providing funds in lieu of a property tax on lands which are not taxable but on which Indian families live (P.L. 815 and 874).
   b. Providing funds for local district use (under P.L. 89.10) to improve the education from families with low incomes.
3. Through the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Labor for:
   a. Headstart Programs

b. Community Action Projects

c. Training and job placement of adults."

There is no overall national plan for Indian education for organization, funding, or policy making.[11]

The Havighurst Report states that the conclusions and recommendations of all Indian studies, surveys, and research point to education as the method of resolving Indian problems. The Senate Subcommittee reports that the two major findings of the Meriam Report of 1928 were: 1) Indians were excluded from management of their own affairs and 2) Indians were receiving a poor quality of services (especially health and education), and that these two findings are as valid today as they were in 1928.[12] Forty seven years after the first major study of Indian education, the recommendations for improving Indian education remain basically the same and have not been satisfactorily carried out.[13]

Priorities

The basic underlying themes of this position paper are that the Federal government is responsible for a major role in Indian education, that the basic educational approach for Indian education has to place emphasis on the family, and that major emphasis must be placed on early childhood education.

Federal Responsibility for Indian Education: The Federal government assumed the responsibility of providing financial support for Indian education through agreements in treaties, enactment of statutes, and a moral obligation to fulfill its promises. These assumptions have been

upheld in various court decisions.[14] Legislation like the Snyder Act of 1921, the JOM Act of 1934/36, and more recently Title IV, P.L. 92-318 reflect this responsibility.

Family Based Education: There is evidence to support the theory that education must be family based and that parental authority and responsibility correlate closely to educational success. Sheldon White points out that compensatcry educational programs in early primary grades which have produced significant achievement gains are prcgrams that, among other things, have had parent involvement.[15] He also proposes that all public programs directed at children "shculd make families the focus of intervention efforts, use parents as primary agents of change, and should involve parents in policy and administrative decision making."[16] Burton White tells us that the mother is the most important agent in influencing children.[17]

The Meriam Report of 1928 quotes Dean James G. Russell as saying, "The atmosphere and cenditions of the home are, especially in the early days of the child's life, the primary determinant in the development of the child and since it is parents whc determine these conditions and create the atmosphere, it is they who are of necessity the most important educational factors in the lives cf their children."[18]

Professors Bruner and Skinner have indicated that the school is the institution that passes on the culture of the society that controls it.[19] If this is true, and an Indian identity is important to the Native American, it is doubly important that he become involved in the educational process of his children.

Early Childhood Education: If Indian education is to be successful in preparing today's Indian for a bi-cultural - technical world, it is important that a proper base be laid from the very first days of an infant's life.[20]

Current evidence suggests that differences in the abilities of children are set by the time they reach three years of age.[21] Burton White suggests that most of the basic foundations of educational and general development receive their shape and quality during the end of a child's first year.

The following list of priorities for Indian education are closely associated with the basic themes and will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

1. Establish a national policy board.
2. Conduct a national needs assessment.
3. Establish a comprehensive federal funding program.
4. Establish a parent based early childhood educational program.

Conclusion

There are many individuals in the United States, both Indian and non-Indian, that have spent much of their professional lives attempting to explain what is wrong with Indian education and what could be done about it. Educational reform for the Indian, in the opinion of many, means local control; adequate financial aid for basic educational support and construction of school facilities; and competent professionals who understand, work with, and respect the special needs of individual students. Early childhood education has been added to the list in the last few years. These are important, in fact, I have listed four of the above as priorities necessary for giving the Indian freedom to do what is necessary. These are: 1) the need for a national policy board for ensuring Indian control; 2) a national needs assessment for providing pertinent information; 3) a comprehensive federal funding program for a firm base of financial support; and 4) parent based early childhood education programs. Professionals have finally reached the point of realizing that one needs to look beyond the formal school setting and its limitations. It has become necessary to look to the parents, the community, the economy, the cultural needs, health problems, politics, and finally society's objectives.

When one talks about educational priorities for the American Indian and Alaskan Native, he is talking about concepts that vary as greatly as tribes vary. In my opinion, there is no one answer that will include priorities or a philosophy all Indians would agree upon, nor should there be one. Every person, family, community, and people must have the right to decide for themselves that they would like to become, and how

they would like to pursue goals they set for themselves. This is difficult to accomplish in a complex world where the individual seems so insignificant, where the professional, the politician, the administrator, and the businessman all claim to know what is good and necessary for the masses. It is impossible if one does not care about his rich culture. the present, or the future. "The issue," as I quoted earlier, "is one of man's capacity for creating a culture, society, and technology that not only feed him but keep him caring and belonging"."When any group is robbed of its legitiiate aspiration, it will aspire desperately and by means that outrage the broader society, though they are efforts to sustain or regain dignity. Inequality cannot be altered by education alone, another lesson we have learned in the past decade. The impact of poverty is usually transmitted through the school as well. It cannot be counteracted by words unless there are also jobs and opportunities available to express society's confidence in what is possible after school...In the end, we must finally appreciate that education is not a neutral subject, nor is it an isolated subject. It is a deeply political issue in which we guarantee a future for someone and frequently, in guaranteeing a future for someone, we deal somebody else out. If I had my choice now, in terms of a curriculum project for the seventies, it would be to find a means whereby we could bring society back to a sense of values and priorities in life...I believe I would be quite satisfied to declare, if not a moratorium, then something of a de-emphasis on matters that have to do with the structure of history, the structure of physics, the nature of mathematical consistency, and deal with it rather in the context of the problems that face us...We might better concern ourselves with how these

problems can be solved, not just by practical action, but by putting knowledge, wherever we find it, to work on these massive tasks. We might put vocation and intention back into the process of education, much more firmly than we had it there before."[65]

It is important for Indians to think about and attempt to find answers and direction for meeting their needs. No one else can really understand them, or provide for them, except they themselves. The "Climate" has never been better for making change, revolutionary change. The Native American must take advantage of this opportunity and create an educational system that will permit him to retain his cultural identity, permit him to take his rightful place in today's society, and finally open the way to planning and protecting his future. This is a tremendous task and can only be accomplished with universal support from inside as well as outside the Indian community.

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