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## *A kinder and gentler report: Turning Points and the Carnegie tradition*

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This paper is an effort to locate the latest Carnegie report, *Turning Points*, within the historical tradition of Carnegie initiatives to shape American educational policy in the twentieth century. Carnegie reports have long expressed an educational vision in which US schools act as a socially efficient mechanism for sorting and socializing students for future positions in the existing social and economic structure. They have pursued this goal by promoting a system of education that is highly rationalized, scientifically grounded, and meritocratic. While *A Nation Prepared* fits this model beautifully, in some ways *Turning Points* does not. Instead, the latter report proposes a restructured form of middle school which is decentralized, varied in format and content, and focused on promoting cooperative process and convergent outcomes. Yet in spite of these differences, I conclude that the proposed reforms would still fit comfortably within the rationalized structure of American education promoted by more traditional Carnegie reports.

At first glance, the new Carnegie report on middle schools (*Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*) looks like another in a long line of Carnegie reports on American education. The Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have been issuing reports on educational matters for 80 years, and recently these reports have had a distinctive look. Invariably encased in a shiny blue and white cover, they are printed on heavy semi-gloss stock and boast generous margins broken by frequent headings and boxed inserts. It is a format designed to grab the attention of busy policymakers and to provide them with the essence of the argument in one quick scan of the text.

This argument, the reports are careful to point out, is thoroughly authoritative. These publications are never cluttered with tedious data or fine points of theoretical analysis, which might slow down or confuse their distinguished readers; but the reports refer to an impressive array of empirical studies commissioned for this purpose and prominently listed in the back. Moreover, these reports do not rely on science alone for their support. Right up front they display their first claim to credibility, which is the elite makeup of the task force or commission which provided oversight to the whole project. Governors, senators, superintendents, deans and executives, the members are recorded with full honorific title and the all-important institutional position; and they are even given a page to sign their handiwork.

The result is that a Carnegie report is an impressive document. Produced in grand style and displaying the support of both Science and some Very Important People, it demands to be heard in the highest levels of the American policymaking establishment. Perhaps nowhere else can one see so clearly what Foucault (1980) has identified as a defining characteristic of modern societies, the inseparable ties between power and knowledge. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that writers who view schools as functionally subordinate to the demands of the ruling class are fond of pointing to the efforts of the Carnegie people. (See, for example, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Karier 1978, and

Spring 1989). Nowhere does an instrumentalist view of the impact of elites on schools appear more credible than in an analysis of the Carnegie role in the making of American educational policy.

But for all the similarities between the new report and its predecessors, there are some subtle differences that emerge from a visual inspection. Consider a comparison between *Turning Points* and another recent and highly visible Carnegie report that was published three years earlier, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986). For one thing, we find that the cover of the latest report is done in a softer shade of blue (aquamarine vs. indigo). In addition, although both reports are 8½" by 11" in size, the newest version is designed so that the long side of the page is held vertically (as opposed to other's horizontal tilt). For a series of reports in which style of presentation is half the story, the reader can be pardoned for speculating that these apparently superficial changes may suggest significant shifts in substance. Could it be that *Turning Points* has assumed the character of a kinder and gentler form of Carnegie report? Is it even possible that the latest entry in the field has taken the argument of *A Nation Prepared* and turned it on its side? In my view, the answer to both of these questions is a qualified 'yes'.

In order to evaluate the significance of the latest report, we need to shift attention from form to substance. First, I will sketch out the major characteristics of the Carnegie tradition of shaping American educational policy in the twentieth century. Then I will explore the place of *A Nation Prepared* within this tradition. Finally, from this historical perspective, I will analyze the distinctive approach taken by the authors of *Turning Points* and attempt to explain the reasons for this distinctiveness and its significance. My argument is that Carnegie reports have long sought to make US education a socially efficient mechanism for sorting and socializing students in order to fit them into the existing social and economic structure. They have pursued this goal by promoting a rational system of education that is integrated, standardized, differentiated, scientific, and meritocratic. While *A Nation Prepared* fits this model beautifully, in some ways *Turning Points* does not. Instead, the latter report proposes a restructured form of middle school – one that is decentralized, varies in format and content, and focused on promoting cooperative process and convergent student outcomes. Yet in spite of these differences, I conclude that the proposed reforms would still fit comfortably within the rationalized structure of American education that has traditionally been promoted by Carnegie reports.

### The Carnegie approach to educational policymaking

In 1901, Andrew Carnegie sold the Carnegie Steel Company for nearly a half billion dollars to a syndicate organized by J.P. Morgan, a transaction which led to the creation of the trust known as United States Steel. In retirement, Carnegie devoted himself to full time philanthropy, primarily through the creation of a remarkable series of foundations. Two of these took a particular interest in education: the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which was established with a modest endowment of \$10 million in 1905, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, created in 1911 with a gift of \$125 million in US Steel bonds. The latter was the first of the large general-purpose foundations, and it is still one of the best-endowed. While the Corporation received the bulk of the money, it was the Foundation that took the early programmatic lead, focusing from the start on higher education. Over the years, the Corporation has cast its philanthropic net wider than this, but it too has supported a wide range of projects in education, either directly through grants or indirectly through subsidies to the Foundation.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning, the primary aim of Carnegie educational endeavours has been to influence public policy. Alan Pifer, president of the Corporation between 1965 and 1982 discussed the importance of this goal in an essay on 'Foundations and Public Policy', which was printed in the 1974 Annual Report. He argued that foundations should

be constantly sensitive to public policy issues in the field in which they operate and not be afraid to initiate or support activities that relate to these issues. Indeed, the greatest justification for foundations continuing to enjoy tax-exempt status lies in their making the maximum contribution they can . . . to the development of enlightened public policy for the nation (Pifer 1984: 107-108).

In her history of the Foundation, Ellen Condliffe Lagemann (1983) notes that this policy-making effort left the foundation open to recurring charges that it was in fact manipulating public means for private ends. But Pifer argues that no one should fear the policy-making power of the foundations, since their capabilities in this regard 'are small indeed. Ultimately, whatever they do is subject to the harsh rule of the market place' (Pifer 1984: 114).

The leaders of the Carnegie Foundation and Corporation were always eager to make a contribution to the formation of educational policy, however 'small'. However Lagemann (1987) suggests that these philanthropies had considerable impact by successfully shaping the politics of knowledge that is so critical for policy formation. She notes that the efforts of

large philanthropic foundations like the Carnegie Corporation . . . have not directly or exclusively determined the nature of policy-making or indeed the substance of public policy in the United States. But insofar as they have played a central role in shaping the politics of knowledge, their efforts have often been vital in determining which intellectual resources and which social groups would be brought to bear in defining the issues and questions that policymakers would address (p. 220).

When one examines their educational initiatives over the course of the twentieth century, a limited number of related policy goals come repeatedly into view. In general, Carnegie projects have tended to promote four broad outcomes for American education: social efficiency, rationalization of the educational system, professional expertise, and meritocratic process. Let us consider each of these in turn.<sup>2</sup>

### Social efficiency

Henry S. Pritchett was the first president of the Foundation and remained in charge until 1930. During this time he managed to put an enduring stamp on the shape of its educational efforts. Lagemann (1983) defines his effect this way:

Pritchett . . . turned the Foundation into a forceful and effective proponent of systematization in American education, and through education, in American life. As an advocate or organization and efficiency, Pritchett was especially concerned with establishing the university as both a consolidated and a consolidating center of knowledge-related activities. His signal contribution . . . was to direct some of Carnegie's wealth and the power that came with it to the organization of American education along more modern, national, scientific, and bureaucratic lines (pp. 21-22).

Most of the key elements of the Carnegie vision for American education are captured in this characterization of its first leader's personal vision, including a stress on social efficiency, systematic structure, and expert knowledge. (Significantly absent is any reference to equal opportunity, but this would come with time and changes in leadership.) The principle around which these concerns are organized is the idea of efficiency. As Pritchett himself put it in a 1907 speech, economic change since the end of the Civil War 'has taken us out of the pioneer stage'. In the more densely populated and complex society that

developed, 'it becomes more and more necessary that every human being should become an effective, economic unit' (quoted in Lagemann 1983: 32). To accomplish this goal, what is needed is an educational system that is carefully adapted to the needs of the economy. Such a system must seek to produce economically useful knowledge and to sort people efficiently into the various positions that need to be filled in the stratified occupational structure.

### *A rationalized system of education*

The primary way that the Carnegie Foundation and Corporation sought to promote a socially efficient educational policy was by working tirelessly to promote a rationalized system of education in the United States – that is, one which is standardized, vertically integrated, and rationally planned. Andrew Carnegie himself had something different in mind for his creations. An entrepreneur not a bureaucratic manager, he had run his steel company as a simple partnership and had no desire to manage the kind of complex trust that it had become after his retirement. His initial charge to his new Foundation was merely to provide pensions for college professors. However, Pritchett turned this mandate into a powerful mechanism for restructuring American education.

The Foundation's head (a former president of MIT) and his fellow board members (all college presidents) were unhappy with the loose structure of education at the turn of the century, a situation which frequently compelled colleges to compete with high schools for the same students. They set up guidelines that limited eligibility for pensions to colleges, which, among other characteristics, required applicants to spend a certain amount of time studying college preparatory subjects in a high school. In collaboration with the National Education Association and the College Entrance Examination Board, they settled on a measure of secondary instructional time which became immortalized as the 'Carnegie unit' (defined as one quarter of the total time spent in instruction during an academic year). By requiring 14 units for admission to an approved college, the Foundation in effect mandated a four-year course of high-school study for students applying to a college that sought to qualify for a Carnegie pension. Through the innocuous offer of free pensions, therefore, the foundation established for the first time a clear and hierarchical relationship between secondary and higher education (Church and Sedlak 1976) and at the same time established a unit of educational progress defined by student seat time rather than a demonstration of content mastery. Both of these innovations had a profound effect on American education.<sup>3</sup>

Not only were the Carnegie philanthropies instrumental in differentiating secondary and higher education, but they also played an important part in promoting differentiation within the latter sector. In 1932 a Carnegie panel known as the Commission of Seven issued a report on *State Higher Education in California*, which Brint and Karabel (1989: 47) call 'a landmark in the rationalization of public higher education in the United States . . .'. Motivated by concern about the role of education in providing for the socially efficient allocation of people to jobs, the commission established the outline of what was to become the enormously influential 'California model' for the structure of higher education. Under the terms of this model,

the state university had an effective monopoly on research and training for the higher professions; the state colleges concentrated in preparation for such middle-level professions as teaching and social work; and the junior colleges focused on training for the semiprofessions, general education for the masses, and vocational education. The Commission of Seven thus provided a philosophical rationale for the tracking structure that was then emerging in higher education and also a set of concrete proposals designed to sharpen the lines of demarcation between the tracks (Brint and Karabel, 1989, pp. 51-52).<sup>4</sup>

The Foundation maintained a continuing concern for the stratification of higher education. In 1967 it established a Commission on Higher Education under the leadership of Clark Kerr, the former president of the California university system. One of the key conclusions of the Commission was, in the words of one chapter title in its final report, the need for the 'Preservation and Enhancement of Quality and Diversity' (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education 1973). In practice this goal could be attained by keeping community colleges in their assigned position as two-year institutions focusing on vocational training (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education 1970)<sup>5</sup> and by preserving "elite" institutions of all types – colleges and universities – (which) should be protected and encouraged as a source of scholarship and leadership training at the highest levels' (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education 1973: 30). Pleading that higher education 'should not be homogenized in the name of egalitarianism', the final report drew its rationale for stratification from a Commission-sponsored study by Eric Ashby: "All civilized countries . . . depend upon a thin clear stream of excellence to provide new ideas, new techniques, and statesmanlike treatment of complex social and political problems" (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education 1973: 30).

### *Professional expertise*

In order to achieve a socially efficient mechanism for training and allocating people to play diverse social roles, the Carnegie Foundation and Corporation have promoted a rationalized system of education. And, as the Ashby quote suggests, 'all civilized countries can only operate efficiently if they have the benefit of well informed and highly skilled leaders. From within the Carnegie vision of the ideal society, therefore, it follows that the natural role of the university in the hierarchical structure of schooling is to produce this socially necessary expertise.

One sign of the Carnegie stress on professional knowledge is the series of studies it has commissioned on the subject of restructuring and upgrading professional education. The most famous early report that the Foundation issued was Abraham Flexner's 1910 study of medical education. After examining all 155 medical schools in the United States, he issued a scathing attack on them for producing too many doctors with too little professional skill and then proposed a remedial plan. Most of the basic elements of his plan were eventually adopted, and the result was a system of professional education which became a model to other professions. According to this model, professional education should be solidly grounded in scientific knowledge, in which a candidate should receive substantial undergraduate preparation; it should be strongly linked to the university in the form of a graduate-level degree programme; and it should have a curriculum that combines concentrated instruction in theory with supervised practice in a clinical setting. Following up on its success with the Flexner report, the Foundation commissioned a series of other studies of professional education in such fields as dentistry, law, engineering, and teaching.

Another way in which the Carnegie devotion to professional knowledge manifested itself was in the structure of the work it commissioned. First, the Foundation tended to use professionals to carry out its studies. While Flexner himself was a layman (an ex-schoolmaster), the growing tendency was to have university professors perform the research. Second, there was gradual movement toward the model of forming elite commissions to sponsor Carnegie work in particular areas. This pattern led to such groups as the Commission on Higher Education, the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (which produced *A Nation Prepared*), and the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents

(which produced *Turning Points*) – each consisting of a star-studded cast of highly-credentialed and institutionally-sponsored experts.

Third, every Carnegie foray into a new area was fortified with a bewildering array of scientific data, usually constituted as a series of surveys of different parts of the terrain. The ultimate effort in these terms was the work of the Commission on Higher Education, which produced 23 commission reports, 60 sponsored research reports, and 23 technical reports in addition to hosting 24 conferences (Pifer 1979: 33). As one critic put it,

Kerr and the Commission decided to do a strictly science job on higher education – they climbed all over it, counting, measuring, describing, gauging, and projecting enrollment trends, demographic patterns, financing practices, student and alumni attitudes, governance procedures, and community relations (McDonald 1973: 33).

Finally, the recommendations that emerged from each of these forays into policy analysis tended to embody a vision of reform by means of rational planning. The image has always been of social and educational problems that are amenable to the prudent intervention of scientifically informed leaders. Problems, it is implied, are not the result of political differences or contradictory interests but a lack of solid information and professional competence. Carnegie studies have consistently aimed to enhance both.

### *Meritocracy*

With its longstanding interest in social efficiency, rationalization of the educational system, and professional expertise, it was inevitable that the Carnegie Foundation (with the backing of the Corporation) would become an enthusiastic supporter of objective testing in American education. Such tests offered a method of educational evaluation and selection that promised to be both efficient and fair, promoting the rationalization of student advancement within and between schools while grounding such advancement in an objective measure of each student's academic merit.

In 1928, with Foundation support, William S. Learned and Ben D. Wood began a massive study of high school and college students in Pennsylvania, whose results were published ten years later in the bulletin *The Student and His Knowledge*. At the core of the study was a series of norm-referenced objective tests of aptitude and achievement given to high school seniors, college sophomores, and college seniors between 1928 and 1932. One key outcome was the demonstration that objective testing on a massive scale was feasible at all levels of the educational system. (With the assistance of IBM, the researchers pioneered a method for machine grading test answers.) The study also appeared to demonstrate that such tests were an effective mechanism for identifying the educational capabilities and accomplishments of individual students and thus could provide schools and colleges with the scientific information they needed as a basis for differentiating instruction. The result would be a vertically integrated system of schooling, which could provide an efficient and effective mechanism for creating tracks within high schools. This system would help meet the individual needs of the hordes who were invading this level – purportedly providing equal opportunity for these students to gain access to higher education, and selecting those for college admission who were most capable of doing the work (Lagemann 1983, Savage 1953).

With Foundation support, Learned followed up on the Pennsylvania study by creating the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), a standardized test which was designed to rationalize the transition from college to graduate and professional school in the same way that the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test mediated between high school and college. A third testing organization, the Cooperative Testing Service, had been founded

by Ben Wood (Learned's partner in the Pennsylvania study) under the sponsorship of the American Council on Education and was mass producing objective tests for elementary and secondary schools. After a great deal of negotiation, and with a sizeable grant from the Carnegie Corporation funnelled through the Foundation, the College Board, American Council on Education, and Carnegie Foundation agreed to merge their testing functions in 1947 within a single monolithic testing organization, the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

After establishing ETS, Carnegie money continued to pour into testing projects. In the mid 1960s the Corporation initiated an effort to raise educational standards by establishing a national census of student achievement. It put \$2.5 million into the planning and test design for what came to be known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), whose funding was then taken over by the federal government. In another testing effort, the Corporation funded the College Board in its development of the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), which allowed non-traditional students to test out of college course requirements (Pifer 1984).

Other Carnegie projects helped to promote the kind of stratified structure of education within schools that seemed to follow naturally from the work of Learned and Wood and from the possibilities posed by the new testing technology. In his famous Carnegie Corporation report in *The American High School Today*, James B. Conant (1959: 49) argued vigorously that

In the required subjects and those elected by students with a wide range of ability, the students should be grouped according to ability, subject by subject . . . - one for the more able in the subject, another for the large group whose ability is above average, and another for the very slow readers who should be handled by special teachers. The middle group might be divided into two or three sections according to the students' abilities in the subject in question.

The continuing Carnegie concern for testing and tracking, therefore, promised to lead to a system of schooling that was sensitive to both individual merit and social efficiency.

### The ultimate Carnegie report: *A Nation Prepared*

In 1986, the Carnegie Corporation's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued a report called *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, which stands as an ideal representation of the Carnegie tradition in educational policy formation. All of the elements of the classic Carnegie report are there in spades.

As one might expect for a report published under the authority of a Corporation entity known as the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, this report sounds the social efficiency theme loud and clear. The opening paragraphs of the report's executive summary leave no doubt that the primary goal of the educational reforms proposed by the task force is economic:

America's ability to compete in world markets is eroding. The productivity growth of our competitors out-distances our own. The capacity of our economy to provide a high standard of living for all our people is increasingly in doubt. As jobs requiring little skill are automated or go offshore, and demand increases for the highly skilled, the pool of education and skilled people grows smaller and the backwater of the unemployable rises. Large numbers of American children are in limbo - ignorant of the past and unprepared for the future. Many are dropping out - not just out of school but out of productive society.

As in past economic and social crises, Americans turn to education. They rightly demand an improved supply of young people with the knowledge, the spirit, the stamina and the skills to make the nation once again fully competitive . . . (Task Force on Teaching 1986: 2).

Another prominent theme of the report is the important role of expert knowledge, which

appears in several different forms. First, there is the membership of **the task force itself**, which consisted of a formidable array of experts on education and the economy. Out of the fourteen members, there were two business executives (including the chairperson), two governors, two state school superintendents, two heads of teacher unions, an education writer and foundation head, a former HEW secretary, the speaker of a state assembly, a professional association official, the dean of a college of education, and the head of a policy centre. (Characteristically, the membership did not include any practising teachers, to say nothing of students.) In addition, there is a list of commissioned papers and workshop participants in the back, which reinforces the image of expertise that surrounds the report.

But expert knowledge is not simply embodied in the names and credentials of the report's sponsors; it rests at the heart of the task force's **proposals**. The central theme of *A Nation Prepared* is **the need to professionalize the teaching force** – a theme it shares with another prominent report (*Tomorrow's Teachers*) issued the same year by an organization of education school deans known as **the Holmes Group (1986)**. (The latter group also received the support of the Carnegie Corporation.) According to both of these reports, education will not improve until it can **attract the most qualified people into teaching** and give them the kind of training that will allow them to carry out their jobs with the highest level of professional skill. The model for professional education found in both documents is, not surprisingly, drawn directly from Flexner's report on medical education (as noted in the preface of the Carnegie report). Just as Flexner recommended, the two teacher reports call for a system of teacher education that would: begin only after students had completed a bachelor's degree focused on the acquisition of subject matter knowledge; continue at the graduate level in a college of education, where they would focus on what the Holmes Group calls the 'science of education' (p. 52); and culminate in a supervised clinical internship.

Also running through *A Nation Prepared* (and *Tomorrow's Schools* as well) are the classic Carnegie aims of **creating a rationalized, stratified, and meritocratic structure of schooling**. Both of these reports are **openly hostile to the present bureaucratic control of schools**,<sup>6</sup> and both seek to establish a stronger **role for the newly professionalized teacher**. But in their haste to avoid bureaucracy, both of them run headlong into **the embrace of rationalization**. In quick succession they endorse **sharp increases in standardized testing, occupational stratification, university credential requirements**, and (in the case of *A Nation Prepared*) the creation of **a system of national certification**.

Both reports seem to recommend that **prospective teachers be tested before being allowed to enter or exit from a teacher education programme**, although the Holmes Group is more explicit on this subject: one critic noted that words like 'examination', 'standards', and 'certification' appear 57 times in the first 20 pages of the Holmes report (Cherryholmes 1987: 504). They both propose to transform the presently undifferentiated status of teaching into a **hierarchy leading from regular teacher to the new position of 'lead teacher'** (in the terminology of *A Nation Prepared*), which would involve broader responsibilities and higher pay. (The Holmes Group adds a third stratum below the other two labelled 'instructor'.) This **occupational hierarchy** is intended to provide a **meritocratic mechanism for upward mobility**, as the most able and deserving teachers would be able to get ahead without having to leave the classroom. **Guarding the door to this top level** of the teaching profession, according to the Carnegie Task Force, would be a newly established **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**. A preliminary version of the latter group, with Carnegie support, is currently in the process of designing criteria for awarding national certification to a select group of teachers. Included as a central part of these criteria, of course, will be a test, which is also presumably under preparation.

### A different sort of Carnegie report: *Turning Points*

In his foreword to *Turning Points*, the President of the Carnegie Corporation, David A. Hamburg, begins with a display of **social efficiency rhetoric** that sounds all too familiar to a follower of the Carnegie tradition, echoing the language of the 1986 report on teachers.

The world is being rapidly transformed by science and technology in ways that have profound significance for our economic well-being and for a democratic society. One upshot is that work will require much technical competence and a great deal of flexibility. . . . Successful participation in a technically based and interdependent world economy will require that we have a more skillful and adaptable workforce than ever before – at every level from the factory floor to top management.

. . . We need to develop the talent of all our people if this nation is to be economically competitive and socially cohesive in the different world of the next century.

To do so, we must take advantage of the neglected opportunity provided by the fascinating period of early adolescence, ages 10 to 15 years (Task Force on Education 1989: 12).

However, **the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents**, which issued the report, takes a somewhat different tack from that of the Corporation president. The social efficiency themes are present but in a rather muted form within the main body of the report, largely limited to a small subsection titled '**Unprepared Millions Cost Society**' (pp. 27-29). And the executive summary, which in *A Nation Prepared* was dominated by economic concerns, touches on these issues in only three scattered sentences (out of a total of 56 sentences in the summary). Instead of promoting the relentless pursuit of economic productivity through more efficient schools, as in *A Nation Prepared*, the latest report focuses on promoting the personal development and the mental and physical health of middle school students.

Consider the image of **the kind of 15-year-old** whom the task force would like to see emerging from American middle schools. This student would be:

- An intellectually **reflective** person;
- A person enroute to a **lifetime of meaningful work**;
- A **good citizen**;
- A **caring and ethical** individual; and
- A **healthy** person (p. 15).

As this list suggests, when job roles are mentioned in the report, they are frequently viewed from **the perspective of the needs of the individual student for 'meaningful work' rather than the economy's need for human capital**. This represents a significant shift in the Carnegie approach to education. **Instead of looking on schools as efficient mechanisms** for sorting and training students for future slots in the occupational structure, the task force focuses on trying to **create a middle school environment that will allow early adolescents to develop in ways that will be healthy and personally fulfilling**.

The makeup of the task force demonstrates the elements of both **continuity and change that are present in the new report**. In many ways the members of this group look like the standard array of policymaking elites that is familiar to observers of the Carnegie scene. The Chair (David W. Hornbeck) was also the chair of the Carnegie Foundation trustees; the remaining 17 members included a governor, a US senator, a retired admiral, a current and an ex-superintendent of schools, a school principal, two foundation executives, two education school professors, and an education school dean. But what is new here is the addition of such people as **the dean of a college of health**, an **official of the Girls Clubs**, and no fewer than **four professors of psychiatry or psychology** – who suggest a shift toward a concentration on **personal growth more than economic function**.

However, the most striking differences between *Turning Points* and its predecessors in the Carnegie tradition are not so much in the marginal shifts in rhetoric and task-force

composition but in the main thrust of its proposed educational reforms. *A Nation Prepared* reinforced its social efficiency stance with a series of reform proposals which would promote this end through standardization, stratification, meritocratic competition, certification, and the enhancement of professional knowledge. But while the new report takes a position which supports the last two goals, it stands strongly in opposition to the others.

As in previous reports, certified professional knowledge is held in high esteem in *Turning Points*. The task force – itself constituted on the basis of its members' expertise – commissioned 15 papers, brought in seven consultants, held five workshops around the country with a distinguished cast of participants, and relied heavily on the evidence of academic studies to support its conclusions in the report. In addition, it argues that one part of the solution to the middle school problem, albeit a small part, is the absence of special training for the teachers in these institutions. They propose that 'Teachers in middle grade schools should be selected and specially educated to teach young adolescents' (p. 58). The specialized training would include an internship in a middle school, graduate coursework on the particular problems of teaching students at this level, and the eventual award of a specialized middle school endorsement on a candidate's teaching certificate. This is familiar sounding stuff.

However, the report actively rejects the rest of the reform agenda laid out in *A Nation Prepared* and a long line of previous Carnegie reports. It goes a considerable distance beyond the anti-bureaucratic stance of the earlier report by proposing that middle schools be broken up into semi-autonomous 'houses', with the houses in turn subdivided into teams of teachers and students. Within these teams, teachers would be able to develop their own interdisciplinary curriculum and would take charge of allocating the use of instructional time during the school day. Even the community would be given a say in educational matters, through such mechanisms as a building governance committee. The result would be a radically restructured form of middle school, in which the control over curriculum and instruction is lodged in the hands of teachers operating in groups. Under this approach, the form and content of classroom learning would vary considerably between schools in the same district, between houses in the same school, and even between teams in the same house.

Such a change would not only free classrooms from the clutches of bureaucrats (as *A Nation Prepared* also thought necessary) but would also attack the element of standardization in schooling, which has always been so central to the Carnegie vision. Consider the difference between this new approach to educational reform and the approach that Carnegie benefactions have taken in the past. The Carnegie unit (the granddaddy of standardization measures) and that alphabet soup of Carnegie-sponsored testing efforts – GRE, ETS, NAEP, CLEP – have all been top-down attempts to set nation-wide standards for American education, the assumption being that schools and teachers at the bottom of the system would have little choice but to go along. To encourage local variation and bottom-up reform, therefore, goes very much against the grain of the longstanding Carnegie tradition.

Just as dramatic is the change to be found in the rejection by the task force of the stratified and meritocratic model of school organization that has also been so much a part of the Carnegie approach. The authors of *Turning Points* turn away from a differentiated curriculum and embrace a strong emphasis on a core academic programme for all students. More striking is their strong opposition to the use of tracking and ability grouping, which earlier Carnegie studies had so fervently promoted.

In practice, this kind of tracking has proven to be one of the most divisive and damaging school practices in existence. Time and again, young people placed in lower academic tracks or classes, often during the middle grades, are locked into dull, repetitive instructional programs leading at best to minimum competencies (Task Force on Education 1989: 49-50).

The report goes even further than this in turning its back on the longstanding Carnegie devotion to meritocratic competition by urging that merit-based groups should be replaced by heterogeneous groups organized around the goal of cooperative learning. 'In cooperative learning situations, all students contribute to the group effort because students receive group rewards as well as individual grades' (p. 50). Thus instead of focusing on individual differences and organizing school into a competitive hierarchy based on these differences, the report calls for a pedagogy that will promote cooperation among students and attempt to reduce differences between them.

### Explaining the changes

The latest Carnegie report on education represents several apparent 'turning points' in the Carnegie approach to educational policy. Trying to explain the reasons for these changes is not a simple matter and trying to interpret their significance is equally difficult. I will consider three different factors that have helped to bring about these changes: the shift in the priorities of the Carnegie Foundation and Corporation in the direction of equal opportunity; the fact that the starting point for the analysis in *Turning Points* is the problems of adolescents rather than the problems of schools; and the decision in this report, unlike most previous Carnegie studies, to focus on a level of schooling that is far removed from the job market.

One explanation for these changes is that the Carnegie philanthropic effort underwent a significant shift in its orientation during the past 30 years. Internal and external sources agree that, in the mid 1960s, the Foundation and the Corporation acquired a growing commitment to the issue of equal opportunity in a perhaps belated but nonetheless significant response to the civil rights and antipoverty movements. John W. Gardner, who headed the Foundation and Corporation from 1955 and 1965, was primarily concerned with the effort to preserve academic standards from the 'galloping mediocrity' that threatened to overtake educational institutions as their enrolments expanded in the post war boom (Nielsen 1972: 42). But according to Alan Pifer, Gardner's successor at both posts, 'During the years 1961-1981, the Corporation developed a major commitment to the furtherance of social justice in our national life - to the right of every human being to enjoy equal opportunity and equal treatment before the law' (Pifer 1984: 202).

This shift was signalled by James B. Conant's 1961 book *Slums and Suburbs* (sponsored by the Corporation), in which he moved from his earlier emphasis on excellence to a new focus on educational inequality. A concern over social inequality runs through many of the Carnegie-sponsored reports on education that emerged in the next two decades. It was a central focus of the massive work carried out by the Commission on Higher Education, as suggested by the title of its agenda-setting initial report, *Quality and Equality* (1968), and also of such high-visibility books as *Crisis in the Classroom* (Silberman 1970) and *Inequality* (Jencks *et al.* 1972).

Ellen Lagemann (1983: 192) notes that during the Pifer era - in line with the theme of equal opportunity - there was also 'an effort to introduce "wider representation" into the Foundation's board of trustees. Not only minority group members and women were appointed, but also representatives from a more varied, less elite and homogeneous cross

section of American higher education'. This effort spilled over into the construction of particular task forces, as the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents demonstrates. For example, the school principal on this panel, Deborah W. Meier, heads New York's Central Park East Secondary School, an alternative public school which has an identity quite distinct from that of the traditional American high school.<sup>7</sup>

In all, these changes represent a shift in direction toward a goal that had long been near the top of the Carnegie agenda, the development of a more meritocratic system of schooling. However such a shift fails to explain the full significance of the middle school report, which deliberately tries to move beyond this longstanding Carnegie goal. The new report launches a **direct attack on the notion that middle schools need to adopt the meritocratic model** in order to be fair and effective – arguing, in fact, that **tracking and competitive achievement actually undermine both fairness and effectiveness within these schools.**

In addition, in contrast to the middle schools report, the Carnegie approach in the 1980s has generally sought to **maintain a focus on social efficiency while simultaneously promoting equal opportunity.** When Ernest Boyer (who took over from Pifer as president of the Foundation in 1979) wrote his Carnegie reports on *High School* (1983) and *College* (1987), he was careful to strike this kind of balance. As Pifer put it in his final thoughts upon leaving the presidency of the Corporation in 1982,

Despite the great variety that has characterized my daily existence at the Corporation . . . , virtually everything I have done as its president . . . has been guided by a single motivating force – **a lifelong belief in social justice and the equality of all people under the law . . .**

As time went by this outlook was supplemented by a second perspective that gradually became as strong and as clear as the first. The new outlook grew from an interest I began to take during the 1960s in human resource development or, as it is sometimes called, 'human capital formation', which over time has led me to the view that **the very future of our society depends absolutely on the broad development of all our people . . .** Investment in such things as nutrition, health, decent housing, education . . . is, therefore, not only a matter of social justice but of **practical necessity** (Pifer 1984: 227–228).

Unlike *A Nation Prepared* and other reports in the Carnegie tradition, *Turning Points* seeks to subordinate concern for social efficiency to a **concern for social justice and individual opportunity.** And in order to facilitate the pursuit of the latter goals, it argues for a change from the present hierarchical structure for the middle school to a decentralized and flexible structure that is more compatible with these goals.

A second factor that has helped to distinguish *Turning Points* from earlier Carnegie reports on education is that it was commissioned by a group whose **primary focus was on youth rather than schooling** – the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. It appears that Carnegie projects tend to present a less confining and more flexible view of the world – one that is **less intent on standardization, stratification, and social efficiency** – when they **focus on the problems of people rather than the problems of schools.** Consider Gunnar Myrdal's pathbreaking study of American race relations *An American Dilemma* (1944) or the array of books on children and youth, such as Kenneth Keniston's *All Our Children* (1977) and Richard de Lone's *Small Futures* (1979). In contrast, there seems to be something about education which brings out the most rigid and hierarchical side of the Carnegie tradition, and that something is the unshakable link between schooling and the workforce.

In a society where the **occupational structure is highly stratified**, it is difficult for schools to resist the pressure to adapt themselves to this structure. In spite of this, there is a tradition in American schools that does resist this pressure, **promoting an alternative vision of schooling as an arena for promoting democratic citizenship and social justice.**<sup>8</sup> *Turning Points* successfully taps into this tradition as the ground for its discourse on middle schools. However, the forces on the other side of the issue are powerful indeed. With a hierarchical

economy as a structural fact of life, any effort to make economy and society operate effectively leads to pressure on schools to sort and train people for differentiated work roles. Also, from an individual's perspective, any effort to get ahead in such a society leads to pressure on schools to provide access to the more attractive job roles. The end result is that the demand for social efficiency and social mobility both act as a spur for organizations like the Carnegie Corporation to promote the rationalization of the relationship between school and work.

The pressure on schools for such rationalization is most intense at that the point in the educational structure where students are most likely to leave school and go to work. In general during the twentieth century, high school was that point for working class youths, while for middle class youths it was college. In the past two decades, with the surge in college enrolments making postsecondary education increasingly the norm, college is becoming the primary transition point. Under these circumstances, the early decision by Carnegie leaders to focus on higher education tended to lead them toward a continuing effort to create a socially efficient university system. Thus when they confronted a demand for social justice and democratic equality (as they did in the 1960s), they tended to translate it into the language of equal opportunity. Operationally this meant more of the same – redoubling their efforts to promote a stratified and standardized system of education (with a strong emphasis on objective testing), and all under the banner of meritocracy.

However, as David Cohen and Barbara Neufeld (1981) point out, as the school-leaving age rises, the pressures on lower levels of schooling to adapt to the workforce decline.

If high school is no longer the last stop before adulthood and work, then secondary students can be treated in a more informal and playful fashion. Deferring the immediacy of work defers the pressures of preparing for it, and permits a reinterpretation of the curriculum to suit students' intellectual or cultural interests (p. 82).

Since high school still remains 'the last stop before adulthood and work' for most working class youths, this analysis is most directly applicable to the middle school. For the middle school is the highest level of schooling which has universal attendance but which is still buffered from immediate concern about preparation for work. In this sense, then, the most significant factor shaping the novel preference in *Turning Points* for community over stratification and decentralized planning over standardization may be the grade level involved. In a middle school – even from the perspective of that great engine of educational rationalization, the Carnegie Corporation – educators may have the luxury of approaching education from the perspective of the personal development of students rather than the socially efficient production of human capital.

Thus, while *Turning Points* may in fact promote a kinder and gentler form of schooling than *A Nation Prepared* and its predecessors, this may have occurred only because of the hothouse setting of the middle school, whose economic irrelevance means that educational innovations there pose no threat to the traditional Carnegie vision of schooling. Perhaps it is acceptable, even desirable, to create an undifferentiated and non-standardized learning community in these grades simply because there is still plenty of time in high school and college to select and socialize students for their future roles in a stratified society. After all, the Carnegie Foundation and Corporation have always focused on higher education – and rightly so, since it is at this level that the concern for social efficiency is most salient, which in turn makes the rationalization of education at this level most essential. Opening up education a bit for middle schoolers still leaves intact the system of education which Carnegie initiatives helped construct during the course of the twentieth century.

One last clue about the contradictory character of this report is the manner in which it is being put forward. The report proposes a bottom-up reform of American middle schools, but it does so in the classic top-down Carnegie fashion – with an elite panel, a glitzy report, and a big press conference, all designed explicitly to influence high-ranking policymakers rather than to mobilize reform efforts within individual schools. Perhaps, then, the form of the report really does give some insight into its function; and both form and function suggest substantial compatibility with the Carnegie legacy. *Turning Points*, therefore, may indeed be just what it appears to be, a Carnegie report of a slightly different hue. It proposes a radical restructuring of the middle school, but one that fits neatly within the existing Carnegie-endorsed structure of education. The Carnegie tradition, it seems, will survive this latest turning point in its long history.

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### Notes

1. For the purposes of this essay, I will treat the Foundation and the Corporation as essentially interchangeable. This seems reasonable, given the perpetual dependency of the Foundation on the Corporation for money and the continuing willingness of the Corporation to support the Foundation's educational initiatives. From 1955 to 1979, the two organizations even shared the same president.
2. This brief historical review of the nature of Carnegie educational philanthropies draws heavily on Ellen Condliffe Lagemann's perceptive history of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1983), the only full-length scholarly assessment of the subject. At the time this was written, there was no comparable study of the Corporation. However, as this essay was going to press (December 1989), I found that Lagemann (1990) just published a new volume focused on the history of the Corporation. This promises to be a major contribution to the concerns of this paper, but unfortunately it came too late to inform my own analysis. I do, however, draw on Lagemann's 1987 journal article on the corporation. Other sources on the Foundation include Howard Savage's official history of its first half century (1953) and Alan Pifer's reflections on the first 75 years (1979). Additional sources include Abraham Flexner's biography of Henry S. Pritchett (1943) and Pifer's review of Corporation activities in the 1950s and 60s (1984). Finally, I have looked selectively at reports and books commissioned by both organizations and also at some of their annual reports. Since my effort here is to place the latest report in the context of a tradition of Carnegie reports, I did not delve systematically into the primary sources on Carnegie activities. As a result, my interpretation is heavily dependent on the categories developed by Lagemann. The main difference is that I am more willing than she is to make sweeping characterizations about the central thrust of the Carnegie legacy. In part this may be due to my relative unfamiliarity with the details of Carnegie's institutional history, and in part it may be a consequence of my affinity for abstraction (which comes from being a historical sociologist rather than a historian).
3. Looking back on these events seven decades later, President Alan Pifer (1979: 16) complained about the emergence of a 'powerful mythology' that, through the creation of the Carnegie unit, the Foundation had taken on the role of a 'standardizing agency'. Yet he then went on to confirm the standardising impact of the pension criteria by proudly pointing out

the tremendously important role that the free pension program played in helping to define American higher education. . . . The changes made by a number of institutions to qualify for the pension influenced other institutions of their states and regions and produced a general upgrading of higher education and also of secondary education as high schools sought to meet the new entrance standards (p. 17).

When the Foundation discovered that the pension programme was outstripping its limited resources, it established in 1918 a self-perpetuating and contributory agency for carrying on this function, the Teachers

- Insurance Annuity Association (TIAA), which has helped provide a sound financial base for the expansion of American higher education in the twentieth century.
4. For a discussion of historical origins of the current pattern of stratification in higher education, see Labaree (in press).
  5. In a report on these schools, the commission asserted 'that public two-year community colleges should be actively discouraged by state planning and financial policies from becoming four-year institutions . . . ' The reason? Because of 'concern that, if two-year colleges become four-year colleges, they will place less emphasis on occupational programs and thus leave an unmet need in the local community' (Carnegie Commission of Higher Education 1970: 15, 16).
  6. This despite the fact that there is a serious question about just how effective school bureaucracies are in controlling how teachers teach. See, for example, Bidwell (1965), Lortie (1975), and Meyer and Rowan (1978).
  7. The change is striking if one compares the more recent panels with the Commission on Higher Education, whose 'members were, with one exception, either industrialists or highly placed college administrators. All were white, there was only one woman, and only one person was younger than 45. When they looked at each other across the table, each commission member saw a reflection of himself' (Wolfe 1971: 20).
  8. For a general discussion of the tension between political equality and economic inequality in the US, see Bowles and Gintis (1986). For a discussion of the tension in relation to schools, see Katznelson and Weir (1985). For a discussion of the same tension in the context of the history and an American high school, see Labaree (1988).

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