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Component Group Report

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COMPONENT GROUP REPORT

JOEL BARKER, workshop leader

In the discussion section on Education, the attitude that prevailed was one of challenge. Without exception, everyone felt that education was, as it always has been, the key to successful continuation of a society, but we also felt an enormous and growing pressure with the dilemma of preparation. How could we design a system so that we develop children flexible enough and ethical enough to handle the next thirty years? With those kinds of questions, we began our discussion of the prepared scenario.

Schooling Versus Education

It was this word, schooling, that came up again and again in the discussion and was finally considered the real topic of our discussion. Try as we would to open up ourselves to discussing the whole realm of education, we continually boxed it, institutionalized it, and schooled it. We finally recognized our inability to handle the broad term and focused in on schooling as the kind of education we could and would talk about.

Status Quo

Four basic complaints about the status quo description were lodged by the group. Initially, it was felt that the entire process described was much too rigid and closed. It was the group's feeling that the system actually has more flexibility and more willingness to hear things from the outside.

Secondly, the statements on planning, although they were beautifully and complexly done, were not considered realistic descriptions of the ways goals are handled. Several members pointed out that goals are generated by many groups other than just the top administrators and that these goals enter into the system from routes other than the top of the planning pyramid. Planning is not so top-to-bottom orderly as the scenario suggests.

The group felt that budget control and dispersal has more disorder and personal direction than the writers offered. Several people in school systems noted that the farther away from the administrators the budget gets, the more autonomy an individual has for the dispersal.

Finally, it was felt that evaluation of the entire system right down to the individual educator is lacking. It was the opinion of the group that no wholly satisfactory evaluation system had yet been devised, and that such criteria and implementations of those criteria were an important priority.

Trends

In the area of the trends, the group addressed itself, in some cases, specifically to the scenario, but it also tried to handle some tangential spin-offs that grew out of the discussions.

Education is being changed by ferment, but that ferment is coming not only from without but from within as well. And it is increasing. The question the group raised was whether or not the internal changing was active or reactive. The trends in pluralism which were

mentioned without strong emphasis deserved more recognition, the group felt. The trend in individual self-fulfillment will continue but it will, if the group's feelings are correct, begin to create a vacuum in cooperative kinds of behavior in education.

Several other trends also seem to be gaining major importance. There is a growing though muddled emphasis on the concept of accountability and this is being felt strongly in the demands for basic skills: people should learn how to read and write and handle numbers in school, or the school has failed.

Innovations from outside the standard educational sphere will continue to grow, according to the group. Systems like Outward Bound, Betty Crocker Schools, transcendental meditation schools, are setting the standards and leading the way in this non-sanctioned but important educational area.

The last trend the group mentioned was the lengthening of the time that people will spend in educational systems. Children under 5 and adults past 25 will be participating in schooling in a much more important way than now.

Reactions to the 1985 Scenario

The Keller/Fallon scenario raised many strong reactions and did its job as a provocative instrument. The complaints were really not on the content so much as the scope and implications of the content. Some of the group's feelings were as follows:

The scenario could not happen by 1985 because there were too many massive changes.

The schools were portrayed as totally non-custodial, and that could not happen without a major shift in the thinking of parents. This shift was not suggested or mentioned anywhere in the scenario.

The scenario offered only one possibility when more should have been considered. The growing thrust of pluralism will only begin to be realized by 1985.

The legislative changes needed to make such a scenario happen are huge and unmentioned. Again, the driving force behind so massive an alteration in education needed to be rationalized. This was lacking in the scenario.

It is a scenario for white, middle-class, and definitely urban in its scope.

It is based on an energy-intensive society just when we are beginning to be an energy-conserving society.

It seems also to be based on the standard growth society because of the enormous sums of money needed to be spent on such a system. Can we really afford such a system?

The extending of education both ways was ignored in the scenario.

There was too much emphasis on individualism and not enough on cooperation, which our group perceived to be a growing trend.

- P D There will be a measure of cost effectiveness in education.
- P D There will be an increased use of values clarification processes.
- P U There will be a continued inability to measure performance.
- P U Teacher obsolescence will be accelerated because of high technology, expanding knowledge.
- I D An adequate theoretical learning model will be developed.
- I D Youth will return to useful employment at any age.
- P U There will be an increase in mental health and emotional problems.
- P D There will be increased school plant utilization.
- P D There will be an accelerated exploration of inner space.
- P U New drugs will be developed, and their use will be socially accepted.
- P U There will be a lower teacher-student ratio.
- P D State and national constitutional reform will affect education.
- P (D) There will be an increased conflict over church and state separation.
- P D There will be more student input to planning.
- P D Teachers will assume more of a facilitator role.
- I U There will be a major war.
- P U Periodic breakdown of services and chronic shortages will affect education.
- I U There will be an increase in performance contracting both for teachers and students.
- P D There will be increased parent and home involvement in education.
- P D Decision-making will be closely related to human value and dignity.
- P D Privacy issues will be a problem.
- (P) (D) Large computer data bases will be established.
- P (D) Collective bargaining will increase.
- P D Education will teach allegiance to groups.
- I D Ecological training will be universal.
- P D Children will be educated to relate to and to cope with change.
- I U Scarce resources will reduce education to the teaching of basic skills.
- I U Political change will force indoctrination.
- I U Education will be conducted by and for those who can pay for it.
- I U Education will be abandoned because of war or other causes.
- P D Education taking place in other and all institutions will teach intercultural values.
- P D Education will be a continuing process for students of all ages.
- P D The student will retain his own identity even in the face of larger enrollments and more diversified functions of schools.
- I U There will be no compulsory education.
- I D There will be a breakdown of barriers between students, teachers and administrators.
- P D There will be more community involvement and experience with education.
- P D All institutions will be more responsive to public will.
- P D Broad use of electronic communications will be prevalent (cable TV).
- P D Knowledge of basic skills will improve.
- P D Human relationship skills will improve.
- P D Education will increase its ability to achieve goals as well as to define them.
- P D Education will teach students ways of receiving and using all sources of information.
- P D A strong work ethic will continue to exist.
- P D Education will promote intelligent patriotism.
- P D There will be a greater emphasis on and understanding of personal health.

FOLLOW-UP SCENARIO

SCHOOL IN MINNESOTA: 1985 LOCATION: SILVER BAY, MINNESOTA

PRESENTED BY THE EDUCATION COMPONENT GROUP

Jackie, the wife of Mark, Sr., came walking down the stairs to set up breakfast. It was her day to do it because Mark had done it the day before. Grandpa, who had preceded her, was sitting near the computer terminal, about to make an entry. She sat down next to him and asked him what he was up to.

"Getting the news, honey," he replied. The screen cleared and Dave Moore, white-haired and frosty, began speaking the early morning news: "As part of new legislative moves, the ERIC Clearinghouse has been dropped because of lack of cost effectiveness. Also, because of recently completed regional school alignment in southern Minnesota, the Jefferson Grade School in southeast Rochester will be converted to a community

art and information center. Be sure to tune into this week's *Moore on Sunday* on the new regional school planning."

Jackie got up, saying, "Boy, that's a good idea. Just think of all the fun we had at our art show at the old school last week. By the way, the gym will be open tonight until midnight if you want to get over for some late night aerobics running, Gramps."

Mark, Jr., a bouncy 10-year-old, came running down the stairs, heading for the main door. "Hey, Mom, I'm gonna skip breakfast here and pick it up at the skill center so I can work on algebraic games that I need for finishing the level work this week. Did you know Mr. Upton from down the street is going there now, and he's

helping me with my work. I didn't know 80-year-old people had to go to school."

"They don't have to, Son, they do it because it's interesting and it also helps the community," Jackie explained.

Grandpa interrupted, saying, "By the way, Mark, you may not skip breakfast. You know very well today is family morning, and you owe it to all of us to spend the time here."

"Yah, that's right. I just forgot, Gramps."

The rest of the family came tumbling down the stairs in the next few minutes. Besides Mark, Sr., there was their second child, Molly, Uncle Frank, and Bob and Will, two cousins from Minneapolis who were visiting for different reasons. Bob was taking a classic education of Latin, language, math, history and English in Minneapolis, but was off for his three-month spring break. His school operated year around. Will was forty-five and had come to Silver Bay to finish his high school diploma as part of the program to give formerly disadvantaged persons different environmental situations.

Each person was carrying his computer-generated schedule option list that he had developed at the beginning of the week. For Molly the list covered only five days; for Will it covered the next month. To help in that they had a consultation with their Facilitator Counselor as well as family input.

Uncle Frank said, "Hey, I have not had enough time to work on my brick-laying book for Spanish-speaking Americans." Frank's ethnic background was half Chicano, so he felt capable of speaking the right way to the culture group he was aiming his book for.

Mark, Sr., served the food while the rest of the family began their chatter. "What, soybean synthesis again? You know, since the gas shortage in Nebraska, we have not been able to get the cereals we wanted. But we will have some rabbit meat this Friday."

Grandpa smiled as Joe sat down and directed the first loving dynamic at Joe, "What has been the effect of the new internship part of your mid-phase career change?"

Joe said, "Well, after two months I begin to see exactly why I am doing this. I sure was tired of all management hassle. The sewage-purification plant looks like it will be a challenge, and my new chemistry skills will help them, I think. Plus, look at all the potential for growth there as the funding base develops, and most of my management skills help in working with the other guys, even though I'm no longer a boss."

Grandpa added, "I've found that, too, since I went back to school. When I go to the groups for planning work, I find my past experience as curriculum designer is helpful." Grandpa was in the unusual position of being a student, a teacher with some of those students, and a member of the school council which determined policy for the neighborhood district.

As they talked around the table, the plan for the day for the family evolved. Molly had her regular 10 o'clock practice with little league team; she would also add in the afternoon, after she had finished her skills work on the home terminal, a community ecology project to clean up the neighborhood and plant the spring flowers. Mark, Jr., decided to change his schedule so that he can go on

the Reserve ecology field trip to the Duluth docks to see some of the old structures of commerce. The family concurred that that was good.

As the boys cleared the table and placed the dishes in the sink, Jackie talked about her morning. "I have to be in court by ten o'clock in order to represent the New Faith's case for morals and values education in our schools. You know, this is the fourth challenge this year for this kind of thing."

Fifteen minutes later two neighborhood boys came by to pick up Grandpa to ride with him on their bikes to their day's locations. Their biking would count as extra credit in their aerobic education program as well as being a part of their community ecological involvement training program. George Tensor, 15-year-old, was heavily involved in his internship program which allowed him to get a clear idea of garbage recycling. It still was quite new, but the state and federal governments were pushing hard for more sophisticated ways, and George knew that the garbagemen of the future would be one of the most important cogs in keeping the nation running.

George was concerned about his younger sister who had not been to school in three weeks. "Grandpa, all she does is watch TV all day since she doesn't have to attend school any longer on account of the recent constitutional reform."

Grandpa laughed, "Don't worry, Son. The way those new Cable TV programs work on values clarifications and work ethic hints, she'll come around. If she just watches 'I've Got a Value' she'll learn plenty."

"Yah, I suppose," George said. "After all, her health care check and her re-evaluation systems testing last fall showed that she was in good shape."

Sam, who had just returned from the North State Ecology Education Conference, was heading off to run a workshop for younger kids as part of his contract for the trip. He had already completed his interdisciplinary studies contracts for the year.

"Remember Lila Smith's older brother, and how the psychological testing discovered his learning disabilities?"

"Yah, I wonder what it was."

"Who knows? But sooner or later those things get around."

"At least we all know that everyone has some disabilities, so we don't make fun of such things anymore. Still, I would rather 'the word' never got out to anyone but the student."

"I guess that's why they let me carry my school records from place to place rather than just duplicating them, huh?" George mentioned.

Sam urged, "Hey, let's get going, my three-year-old brother is sitting out on the bike and I have to drop him off at the Monty School before I stop by the skills center to pick up the microfiche I ordered by terminal this morning." Later on in the day Sam would go back to the school for his pre-parenting experience/therapy.

Grandpa thought about the benefits of the universal terminals in Silver Bay and how they came to be. It was a pilot project instituted by the State of Minnesota to help the rapid retraining of Silver Bay people who lost their jobs during the Reserve crisis. Of course, Reserve had ultimately come back, but the system had done its

job. And now it was beginning to spread, cable system by cable system, around the state and into other states. Grandpa was proud that he had been one of the first to participate in such a session.

"By the way, Gramps," Sam said as they hopped on their bikes, "I see we are going to be in the same value discussion group this afternoon. That should be fun with the mayor and the senator and those two guys from California."

Gramps knew that Sam was not afraid of the encounter, and as a matter of fact, because of the self-esteem training, he had trust in his own abilities to work and relate with others.

Off they went, whipping down the hills. Halfway to their destination they passed a young retired teacher, Tom Donaldson from Duluth, who had come to Silver Bay to take part in the interactive experiment for educational alternatives. George said, "Hey, Tom, did you see on the news this morning that ERIC was closed down?"

"Yes, and I hear that some of the ERIC personnel will be joining our program as part of the task force moving system. As a matter of fact, I heard from a friend yesterday who already knew, and he said that most were looking forward to the change of work."

Sam interjected, "I hope we start to watch the per capita service expenditure now as we start to come close to our eco-economic boundaries, because I do not want to see the steep jump of support services." Clearly his economics education had not been ignored.

Two blocks later the four parted to go their separate ways. It had been five years now since Silver Bay had had a centralized school building only for education. The traditional system was still available for those who wanted it, and mixtures of all types were common. Now there were areas and projects available even beyond the city limits. The factories had television interactive systems, the library had computer output interlinks and reprint-on-the-spot systems, and the teachers conducted certain classes as much from their home as from any specific classroom.

It was four-thirty as family members were beginning to return when Uncle John called, via slow scan videophone,

from California. His dilemma: He had just been told by his physician that he was coming down with emphysema, and he needed data from his ex-employers, Reserve Mining, as to the compensation he was entitled to by the new state law providing assistance to the company after their huge court settlement with the regional government #3. Joe, Sr., promised to have computer searches in the university files begun on treatment and to inquire at the Reserve office the next day.

At six o'clock the electronic gong rang and the family began to take their places in the meditation room. It was the surprising result of psychic research to develop the new meditation for relaxing without chemical additives. Even the kids could get "drunk" on this kind of high. As Grandpa went into his high, he thought, "It's sure cheaper than booze."

After supper, the group met for their community responsibility time. It was the week when the Education Council met and presented their recommendations to the community. Because Grandpa was on the Council, he had already left for the studio. The Council, made up of Grandpa, two teachers, four members of the community-at-large, and a junior high school girl and a high school boy, took only 45 minutes to present their ideas. The major topic of discussion was the latest methods for management efficiency. The suggestion was made for special two-month sabbaticals for administrators to add to their techniques. The students proposed the same kind of thing, facetiously, for the teachers. At the end of the hour, the members put in the magnetic ID cards to allow them to vote for the proposals. Molly declined to vote because she didn't think she was clear on all the ideas.

At the studio, Grandpa was thinking about the reunion he would be going to the next day. The old 1974 meeting at Camp Onamia was getting together to see how well their proposals had gone.

As Gramps sat there smiling, the other Council members walked past him and said goodnight.

"Good job tonight, Floyd," said one of the teachers. "Goodnight."

One of the students added, "Yah, that was good. See ya, Mr. Keller."