



What Do We Mean by “Reform?”: On the Seductiveness of Reform in Teaching and Teacher Education and It’s Mischievous Influences

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Drawing on literary critic Kenneth Burke’s concept of “terministic screens,” the author explores some of the history and a few of the troubling implications for the work of teachers and teacher educators that flow from the idea of reform. Concluding that “reform is a bad idea,” the author argues for an alternative conception of educational improvement, one that is more life-affirming and hopeful. Seeking to weaken the conceptual and ethical hold of reform on policy-makers and educators, the author argues with John Goodlad that educational improvement first and foremost must be understood as a learning problem, an issue of educational renewal.

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INTRODUCTION

In his dramatistic conception of language, language as symbolic action, literary critic Burke (1989) called attention to what he characterized as “terministic screens,” how words, functioning as screens, direct “attention.” What he had in mind was “the fact that any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others” (p. 115).

Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another. Also, *many of the “observations” are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made.* In brief, much that we take as observations about “reality” may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms (p. 116).

Moreover, the screens employed bring with them what Burke called a “‘terministic compulsion’ to carry out the implications of one’s terminology” (pp. 73–74). Put differently, the screens used are taken as not merely defensible but as proper and correct, as true interpretations. In effect they function as implicit theories about the way things actually are. As such, “screens define reasonable action” (Bullough, 2014, p. 186). Burke further suggests that screens have central terms; such a term “can be shown to ‘radiate,’ as though it were a ‘god-term’ from which a whole universe of terms is derived” (p. 135). Reform is such a word.

Knowing the central terms of a social practice, like teaching, and how screen-terms shape understanding and set expectations, is crucially important for understanding that practice and how judgments are made about the quality of its performance. Such understanding requires identification of how key terms both enable and limit meaning and shape action: “Even if any terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection*

of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality” (p. 115). Identifying evidence or instances of reflection, selection, and deflection, reveals meaning—what is intended, the motivation residing in the intentions, and what actions are assumed to be reasonable or unreasonable, appropriate or inappropriate.

The intention of this article is to explore “reform” as a key concept in the dominant terministic screen of teaching and teacher education, one that has profound and rather troubling implications for the work of teachers and teacher educators. Weakening the conceptual and ethical hold of *reform* in the language and in the imagination, thought and action of educators then replacing it with another term is essential for constructing a teaching profession that is life-affirming, one that is supportive of teachers’ and students’ well-being, and also is genuinely educative. Echoing Goodlad et al. (2004), ultimately the argument is that educators must escape from the hold of the assumptions embedded in *reform* and create another lens, a contrary concept, through which to view our work. John Goodlad believed that concept to be *renewal*.

THE SEEDS OF REFORM: J.M. RICE AND THE FORUM

Terms have histories. Those histories linger in usage, often silently in the background. In the middle 19th century, the connection between reform and schooling was most apparent in the formation of the reform school, understood as a place where young people needing correction were assigned rather than to prison, where corrupting influences beckoned. The Latin root, *reformo*, suggests overcoming evil or corruption, a form of individual repentance, a rebirth expressed in a new or better form found, for example, in overcoming intemperance. The link between reform and institutional life is evident in the late 18th century within British Parliamentary calls for social change. Talk of reforming public schooling had to wait until there were systems of public education and institutions dedicated to teacher education, and these came later. In the United States they first came in Massachusetts where Horace Mann championed the view that common schools were essential to internal improvement and to the success of the democratic experiment:

[Education’s] domain extends over the threefold nature of man;—over his body, training it by systematic and intelligent observance of those benign laws which secure health, impart strength and prolong life; over his intellect, invigorating the mind, replenishing it with knowledge, and cultivating all those tastes which are allied to virtue; and over his moral and religious susceptibility also, dethroning selfishness, enthroning conscience, leading the affections outward in good-will toward men, and upward in reverence to God (quoted in Messerli, 1972, p. 443).

The seeds of school reform are evident in the late 19th century and grew weed-like throughout the twentieth century, eventually becoming an industry. J.M. Rice first laid ink to paper that would form the direct line that connects 19th to the 21st century educational reform. As editor of *The Forum*, Rice traveled the

United States gathering data for a series of articles on schooling. Close to 100,000 pupils were “examined” (Rice, 1912, p. v.). To determine “whether good value [had] been received for the capital invested” (p. 9) in schooling, Rice developed, and with the help of a large team of assistants, scored subject area tests and made comparisons of those scores and time spent in school on those subjects across a large number of cities. Rice also gathered, “exact information” which was “taken into consideration” on pupil age, nationality and “environment” (p. 35). His conclusions proved shocking: there was no apparent relationship between time in school spent on a subject and student scores. “The schools in which children have been making a very poor showing have devoted just as much time to [arithmetic] as the schools where the problems have been solved without any difficulty, and in some instances more (p. 11). Lamenting the sorry state of schooling, Rice concluded that “even... our leading educators [conflict] to the point of absurdity... Everything is speculative: nothing is positive” (p. 22).

In an influential essay, “Obstacles to Rational Educational Reform,” first published in 1896, Rice described what he thought needed to be done to achieve an “ideal system of schools” (p. 20). First, there needed to be a “clear definition of what is meant by the term ‘satisfactory result,’” a “standard of measurement” (p. 25). No longer should the teacher be “a law unto himself; permitted to experiment on his pupils in accordance with his own individual educational notions whether inherited from his grandmother or the results of study and reflection” (p. 26). A goal was to stop “ward [local] politicians” from meddling with education. Once standards were set, teachers would be free to teach as they wished: “He [the teacher] would be much more free than he has ever been; for, so long as the demanded results were obtained, he would be at liberty both to present the desired materials in any form that he might choose and to do as much else as he might deem fit” (p. 30). Standards would enable testing and comparison and thus serve as means for determining the “comparative economy of different educational processes” (p. 31).

Rice’s conviction was that once the “facts” were known and “truths [were] recognized, the factional lines between conservatives and radicals will cease to exist, and all will become co-laborers in the discovery of the laws that apply to all our educators, regardless of pedagogical creed” (p. 34). In modern parlance, Rice believed his proposal would, over time, result in the identification of what now are called “best practices” and with their identification, debate about what to do would end. “Best practice” is a term now wed closely to reform (see Bullough, 2012).

IN RICE’S SHADOW: CHANGE, REFORM AND EDUCATION

Over the past century virtually every social issue in America from poverty to teenage pregnancy has been tossed on the doorstep of the public school and so also onto teacher educators’ laps. Given the unbounded nature of the work of teaching, the severely limited time available for its accomplishment and generally very limited resources particularly in teacher education, no wonder

expressions of disappointment and criticism perpetually swirl around the work of teachers and teacher educators. Reform—the ever unsatisfied and insistent need for change—is the watchword. No matter how good a program is or how diligently educators work, programs can always be better and educators can always work harder—nothing is ever good enough; no educator is thought ever to work hard enough. Teachers, after all, have summers off! Moreover, since every living person has been a student, virtually everyone has a story to tell and is an expert on schooling; and so while working the wise educator attends carefully to who is watching and what is expected to be seen.

In the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* on educational reform in the United States, Wang et al. (2010) described three different conceptualizations of teacher education which “engender imperative, daunting, and yet inconsistent expectations for... reform, making it an ambiguous and potentially impossible task for teacher education programs to implement reform” (p. 397). Despite this conclusion, as an article of faith also held by Rice, the authors asserted the solution to the problem of improvement would come from “systematic and longitudinal empirical studies [that will] substantiate theoretical assumptions underlying the conceptualizations” (p. 397). Hence, the presumption is that research will lead to consensus, even though consensus is a relatively rare occurrence within the social sciences wherein contrasting theories generate contending recommendations. Furthermore, as “reform of teacher education is implemented in different teacher education institutions, systemic, and long-term empirical studies need to be developed to determine whether the intended results were achieved and to identify any unintended effects” (p. 399). The plea is for “reliable knowledge of teacher learning on which to build program content, sequence, and character” (p. 399) and for “research on contextual factors and their relationships in influencing the processes and results of teacher education reform [that is] definitive” (p. 399). Note use of the word, “definitive,” a synonym for “best practice.” The ambition, on this view, which parallels that expressed by the National Research Council Committee on the Study of Teacher Preparation Programs in the United States (National Research Council (NRC), 2010; see Bullough, 2014), appears to reduce teacher education to training: In the quest for reliability, training centers on the measurement and demonstration of detailed prespecified outcomes, carefully defined skills and behaviors; in contrast, education—a process, not a product—is a messy business; results are uncertain, surprises common, standards negotiable, and direction of learning often more important than arriving at any particular destination.

The tension between the purposes and practices associated with training and with education underpin a distinction made by Rubin et al. (2017) in a study of a “school improvement effort in two high schools” (p. 609), between “continuous improvement” and “replication” models of reform. Within replication models, “schools (and teacher education programs) try to duplicate the success of an externally developed program” (p. 610). In contrast, in continuous improvement models, “educators, researchers, and external reform organizations work together to identify areas for school improvement, design school practices with those areas in mind, and continually test and improve those practices at the

school level” (p. 610). Reform-level matters a great deal within both models. In the Rubin et al. study, the “the core components of the school improvement program were determined at the district level” by a committee composed of various interested parties: researchers, curriculum developers, district leaders, and teachers. The irony is apparent; developed by district personnel, the program was taken to the school faculties who then were charged with changing. As distinctions blur, seeking legitimacy, replication models of reform may simply dress up and strut about as continuous improvement models.

Recent developments within teacher education in England nicely illustrate the point. Recognizing the “growing appetite for research use among educational leaders and decisions makers,” Godfrey (2017) undertook an analysis of how government policies that promote “evidence-based practice” (EBP) have shaped development of what is called the “self-improving school system,” a system supported by and grounded in an “enquiry-focused professionalism” (pp. 433–434). Similar to developments in the U.S., EBP privileges “certain types of research evidence (particularly meta-analyses and randomized control trials [RCTs])” that tend to “simplify, quantify and tame the complexities of the education system in order to impose control of those involved in it” (p. 436). Giving preference to replicability and reliability over validity, EBP “suggests a technical-rational professionalism in which the expert knowledge resides in the academy and underpins the way practitioners work” (p. 437). One result is that educators are marginalized; despite having an inextricable and intimate relationship, educational aims and educational means are first conceptually then practically separated (Dewey, 1916). Assumed to be technicians, means, not aims, are widely assumed to be the purview of educators (see Department for Education, 2016, p. 9, 1.17–19), just as Rice approvingly suggested.

Recognizing the tension, Godfrey (2017) contrasts EBP with research-informed practice (RIP). “This can be characterized as a conflict between what has been referred to as a ‘what works’ role for research evidence in education with a rather more nuanced one, in which practitioners play a more active and critical role” (p. 437). Driven by curiosity and interest, RIP is concerned with gaining knowledge with an eye toward the improvement of teachers’ practice, not the establishment of best practice, is responsive to contextual differences and is inquiry driven. Using EBP and RIP as lenses, Godfrey reviewed the 2016 Department for Education (DfE) White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, a 124 page document that detailed “reforms” for the nation’s school system, including for teacher education (Department for Education, 2016, p. 9, 24–29). The White Paper,

sets out our [the Department’s] approach to achieving educational excellence everywhere: putting the best leaders at the heart of the school system, with the support to thrive; recruiting and developing great teachers where ever they are needed; setting high expectations for all-supported by fair, stretching accountability measures; and enabling pupils, parents, and communities to demand more from their schools (Department for Education, 2016, p. 8).

To do this, the “fastest and most sustainable way [to excellence] is for government to trust this country’s most effective education leaders, giving them freedom and power, and hold them to account for unapologetically high standards for every child...” (p. 9).

From his analysis, Godfrey concluded that within the White Paper, reform is understood primarily as a problem of EBP, and not of RIP: “There are no mentions of ‘enquiry’ or for teachers or schools to adopt an ‘enquiry-focus.’” Instead, the paper suggests a “continued reliance on seeing educational interventions as treatment through RCTs” (Godfrey, 2017, pp. 440–441). The paper supports the importance of research to improvement, but “downplays the role of teacher agency and autonomy” (p. 441). The reform model presented, he concludes, represents a “top-down evidence to practice approach” (p. 441).

While the government rhetoric supports professional autonomy, this message is in danger of being overwhelmed by its simultaneous support of a top-down model of knowledge production that promotes a disempowering prescription to practice. Teachers are not just being told to listen to evidence, they are being told which evidence to listen to and which to ignore (p. 442).

Reviewing his findings, Godfrey concludes, “Rather than being ‘led’ by evidence, teachers and school leaders need to be guided by values” (p. 442). The question, of course, is “which values?”

TEACHERS AND REFORM

Recently the Educational Week Research Center (2017) published the findings of a nationally representative survey of U.S. teachers focused on innovation and reform and their experience of reform. The results are revealing. The three most common reforms experienced were changes to teacher-evaluation systems (62 percent); to the curriculum taught (58 percent) and to professional development approaches (53 percent). Forty-one percent of teachers surveyed reported that most reforms influencing their classrooms were initiated at the school district level while 36 percent reported they originated at the state level. Views split over whether the reforms had a positive or a negative effect on classroom instruction. Thirty-six percent thought the impact was equally negative and positive and 39 percent said it was positive. Slightly more than half of teachers reported that plans for change were discussed with the entire staff but only 47 percent said they could “influence the implementation of reforms in their school (Educational Week Research Center, 2017, p. 3). The authors concluded there were signs of the teachers experiencing “reform fatigue”: Fifty-eight percent reported they “have experienced too much or way too much reform in the past 2 years. Eighty-four percent perceive that as soon as they get a handle on a new reform, it changes. Sixty-eight percent are skeptical that ‘new’ education reforms are truly new, agreeing with the statement that ‘they have (all) been tried before’” (p. 3). Forty-four percent of teachers asserted that increasingly the pace of reform is a reason for leaving teaching.

Like teachers, teacher educators are caught in a riptide of conflicting conceptual and moral frameworks; similarly, like teachers, their work is becoming ever more complex and, while outcomes are inevitably uncertain, expectations continue to rise as insistent and sometimes powerful interest groups demand proof of the value of teacher education and compelling evidence for its impact (presented in a few numbers). What is complex and morally charged about the work of teaching and teacher education, is drastically simplified: Scores go up; scores go down, and teachers and teacher educators hold their breath while awaiting the results. It is not surprising that the most common reform mentioned by the surveyed teachers had to do with reworking teacher evaluation systems.

SO, WHAT IS WRONG WITH REFORM?: TINA AND REFORM

The section that follows draws on insights from self-determination theory (SDT) and its implications for educators and policy makers engaged in reform. SDT offers an imaginative outlet, a counternarrative, to what Bauman and Donskis (2016) describe as the TINA (There Is No Alternative) Syndrome, a deeply embedded belief arising from living in a presentistic, “deterministic, pessimistic, fatalistic, fear-and-panic-ridden society” (p. 5) wherein what is, must be. Confined to a “principle of reality” and condemned to “social determinism and market-based fatalism” (p. 4) it is believed there is nothing humans can do that will change the future; both outcomes and pathways are set. For Bauman, TINA is the great evil of our time: Liquid, it is difficult to locate, lost in the busyness of daily living and of just getting along and of getting by. Lacking recognizable names and faces deserving of censure and scorn, TINA resides unnoticed in dulled moral sensibilities and feelings of resignation and indifference. TINA, for example, infected Horace Smith, a high school teacher of English Sizer (1984) described, in his “compromise”: After all, as Sizer wrote, “Horace is realistic” (p. 17).

Empirically robust, SDT bumps up against TINA: SDT focuses on “people’s inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes” (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 68). The theory “maintains that the design of a school-reform approach must begin with the realization that teachers and students alike have inherent psychological needs to feel *competent* in relation to their environment, *autonomous* in regulating their behavior, and *related meaningfully* to others” (italics added). If these needs go unsatisfied persistent frustration and eventually depersonalization may result. When adequately satisfied, educators “feel a sense of volition, choice, and effectiveness” which set the conditions for positive change (Deci, 2009, p. 246). On this view, striving for improvement is understood simply as part of teaching and of doing one’s job, not something imposed from outside or above. In a high-stakes testing era, in contrast, as Ryan and Weinstein (2009) argue, reliance on rewards and sanctions means getting

motivation wrong. Rather than feeling empowered and becoming more committed to the work by gaining in competence, being embedded in and responsible to communities that support educator learning and growth, they disconnect, disengage and everyone's learning suffers.

Traces of TINA in reform are revealed in a cluster of tendencies that shape how reform is experienced and limits the extend and nature of its positive but not its negative influence. Brief explication of five of these tendencies which seem to be particularly important, follows. Reform tends to be: Diversionary and disingenuous; Hurried; Deficit driven, Instrumental and impositional; Disappointing and exhausting.

Diversionsary and Disingenuous

In *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud and the Attack on America's Public Schools* (1995) Berliner and Biddle responded to the claims made and the challenges presented to public education of the extended reform effort that followed publication and the enthusiastic promotion by members of the press and by politicians in the U.S. of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Unfortunately, the Manufactured Crisis has had a good deal of influence—thus, too many well-meaning, bright, and knowledgeable Americans have come to believe some of its major myths, and this has generated serious mischief. Damaging programs for educational reform have been adopted, a great deal of money has been wasted, effective school programs have been harmed, and morale has declined among educators (p. 4).

Berliner and Biddle undertook their study because they feared matters might get worse, and they were right, they have. “The ‘brutal truth’ about U.S. performance in... international tests, demonstrating that we are falling behind nations we need to compete with, might appear reasonable at first. But deeper investigation shows that many Americans—news reporters and politicians especially—have been duped into believing the U.S. education system is in crisis (Berliner et al., 2014, p. 14). Reviewing these test scores, Berliner et al. concluded, “In fact, the many millions of public school students who go to schools with fewer than 25% of their students living in poverty have average test scores that are higher than almost all other nations that compete on these tests” (p. 15). The real issue was, and still is, family and child poverty, which is deepening in America. “Myths lead to poor ideas for educational reform” (Berliner and Biddle, 1995, p. 7).

Under the growing influence of neoliberalism, “corporate disrupters” (Ravitch, 2020, chapter 1), have promoted school choice as the centerpiece of educational reform. Consumer choice has been promoted and is widely understood to be the hallmark of democratic social systems, but it is not (see Bullough and Rosenberg, 2018). On this view, proof of value is delivering consumers what they want, or what they think they want. The presumption is that “instead of faceless experts declaring policy diktats that affect a child, education markets have a popular-democratic element that those decisions would be placed in the caring hands of those who best know the child's needs” (Lubienski

and Lubienski, 2014, p. 16). Energized by the pursuit of profit, the claim has been that markets create more school options and more options lead to better quality education. Recognizing potential for profit charter schools that directly compete with public schools for student enrollment proliferated, resulting in widespread public school closures in many cities and the opening of new school construction and school management industries. Voucher programs increased and the number of teacher education programs that skirted college and university requirements exploded even as under neoliberal reforms fewer and fewer college students see teaching as a viable career. Finding in public education increasing opportunities for profit, the banner of reform was hoisted and vigorously waved high over what has been a rush for gold fraught with fraud, mismanagement and, under marketing pressures, consistent misrepresentation of outcomes.

A remarkable number of charter schools have come and gone or been proposed and funded but never opened. For example, a recent report concludes that in the first decade of the federal Charter School Program (DSP) nearly a \$1 billion of start-up money was awarded to 537 “ghost schools” that never opened (see Network for Public Education, 2019). As a reform movement, charter school effects on public education have been far reaching, including “the destabilization of the community school via parasitic squandering of taxpayer money in the name of charter choice” (Schneider, 2016, p. 156). In some locations, reform has meant the destruction of public education and the skirting of teacher education requirements. As Schneider concluded, “It is naive to believe that schools outside of state jurisdiction will do right by students and in a manner consistent with the very state education laws from which they escape accountability” (p. 148). The danger is that reform has and is providing a cover for what in effect is the establishment of a “dual school system, with privately managed charters for the most motivated, most able students and public schools as the repositories for those unable to get into the charter system” (Ravitch, 2013, p. 324).

Hurried

Reformers, those who interact with schools and don't just set policies and tell others what they should do, rush in and out of schools following a rhythm set by funding agencies, election cycles, and often promotion and publication deadlines. The press is to show results, and quickly. A different rhythm is required when the trajectory is set by recognition of the profound complexity of schooling and of the lives of children (Bullough, 2001) as well as of the issues involved when seeking to educate the young. Thoughtful educators know that the fundamental problems of teaching and learning are rarely solved, certainly not for long, but resolved, more or less, for a time. Mostly problems are managed, well or poorly and in ways that keep the processes of learning and getting along more or less healthy and productive. The unexpected is always expected, sometimes enjoyed, sometimes dreaded. Given this situation, the most positively influential school research efforts on teaching and learning are characterized by a calmer and slower rhythm that begins with recognition of the need to explore an interest, opportunity, concern, or problem in order to understand how

it is understood and in relation to the surrounding work context, culture and established practice. Agreeing on a question, making plans to address it, including exploring promising actions, identifying, marshaling, then organizing resources and executing and adjusting plans (in a pattern reflecting the cycles of action research, for example) is complex, challenging, and time consuming work. Asking the right question is no simple matter. Building the sorts of meaningful relationships required to sustain the effort and to support change over time, further slows things down.

Everyone who works within and with schools is very busy; too much to do, teachers and administrators and even custodians are always on the run. In the press to gain funding, to meet schedules, get results, then write them up for presentation, the temptation for even the most well-intentioned of reformers, those most concerned with learning and human development, is to be directive and impositional. Little wonder, when work is hurried, few intended changes are long-lasting, rarely beyond funding; and most that do last for a time are of marginal consequence and stick because they are closely aligned to already established practices (see Rubin et al., 2017).

Because self is the place where meaning is made, change that takes must respect the rhythms of learning and development. These rhythms involve an ebbing and flowing of equilibration.

[Learning involves an] ongoing conversation between the individuating organism and the world, a process of adaptation shaped by the tension between the assimilation of new experience to the old “grammar” and the accommodation of the old grammar to new experience... [The] conversation is not one continuous argumentation, but is marked by periods of dynamic stability or balance followed by periods of instability and qualitatively new balance. These periods of dynamic balance amount to a kind of evolutionary truce; further assimilation and accommodation will go on in the context of the established relationships struck between the organism and the world (Kegan, 1982, pp. 43–44).

Reconstructing the habit of self, which is relationally embedded, and the established beliefs within which the self resides, is, under the best of conditions, difficult and, as Kuhn (1970) suggested, sometimes simply impossible. Like schooling itself, “success depends on slow but sure progress, not bursts of brilliance” (Hirsch, 2016–2017, p. 33).

Deficit Driven

To reform means to fix something that is broken; pieces and parts are rearranged, put into an altered and somehow believed to be better order. In the first years following passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), a sweeping and certainly not well-informed indictment of all public education and educators in America, a remarkable discovery was made: Under influence of the law, the quality of some schools and the education they offered some children actually worsened (see, for example, Berliner, 2009, 2011; Waxman et al., 2010). Clearly, not all schools share the same problems or to the same degree; and some problems that may look alike actually may be quite different. NCLB had the effect of turning the problems of family and child poverty, then as now worsened by the accelerating economic

inequality that flows from the worship of markets, almost wholly into school problems, something teachers could and should fix. Few asked whether or not such an expectation was reasonable or the assignment responsible. One outcome was the further politicalization of public education and the fragmentation of education interests into competing camps.

Deflecting their own responsibility for misguided policies, policy makers blamed teachers—there were too few quality teachers and so teacher education was blamed. The solution offered public education was also imposed on teacher education: Competition (through alternative certification). Established university and school-based programs increasingly found themselves competing for fewer and fewer students with on-line or truncated apprenticeships frequently developed and funded with public money. As with public education competitors, teacher education competitors were freed from many long-established regulations. At the same time the federal government tightened its grip on public education by financial threat and promises of very specific and selective monetary rewards and punishments linked to tested achievement, it also tightened control of teacher education through support of the Council for the Accreditation of Education (CAEP). In response to the threat to public education, many states altered laws to facilitate federal priorities. The attack on public education seriously weakened the long-standing and fundamental conceptual and moral linkage of democratic citizenship with public schooling (Bullough and Rosenberg, 2018). Teacher education, in turn, was placed at a serious competitive disadvantage because quality programs were and are much more expensive and demanding than are most alternatives.

While reform generally is assumed to be problem-centered, and as such, is reactive, occasionally educational change is strength-and-asset-driven, a focus consistent with building educator collective and individual competence—not to overcome real or supposed weaknesses but rather to achieve even higher levels of skill and ability that bring the pleasure that comes with recognizably beautiful performance and enriched understanding. Some years ago Gardner (1984) noted the connection between competence and freedom, a link too seldom appreciated:

The importance of competence as a condition of freedom has been widely ignored... An amiable fondness for the graces of a free society is not enough. Keeping a free society free—and vital and strong—is not job for the half-educated and the slovenly. Men and women doing capably whatever job is theirs to do tone up the whole society. And those who do a slovenly job, whether they are janitors or judges...lower the tone of the society. So do the chisellers of high and low degree... They are burdens on a free society (p. 161).

Capable, competent, engaged, curious, hard-working, interested, invested, hopeful, and intellectually growing teachers are not only good for the young, good for education, good for colleagues, but also good for the nation and its future. The contrary is also true: “[T]he more that teachers’ satisfaction of autonomy is undermined, the less enthusiasm and creative energy they can bring to their teaching endeavors. [And] the pressures toward

specified outcomes found today in so many educational settings promotes teachers' reliance on extrinsically focused strategies that crowd out more effective, interesting, and inspiring teaching practices that would otherwise be implemented" (Niemic and Ryan, 2009, p. 140). What is good for teachers, clearly is good for children.

Instrumental and Impositional

Western culture, most especially as expressed in the development of the social sciences, brings with it forms of rationality that have proven themselves powerful for shaping and gaining increased control over the natural environment. Grounded in what Habermas described as humanity's "work interest" (see Bullough et al., 1984), a form of "technocratic consciousness" emerged and has gained in strength.

It appears as if the logic of scientific-technological progress determines the development of the social system. Practical questions, or questions about societal goals, are reduced in public discussion to technical questions: problems which can only be solved according to the objective standards of science and technology" (Schroyer, 1973, p. 218).

Expressed as instrumental reason, technocratic consciousness elevates in importance "how to" questions over "what" (should be done) questions: The central issue is what will "work" to achieve the ends desired. With ends and means separated, what Braverman (1974) described as the "divorce [of] conception from execution," educators were condemned to living a life driven by the need to achieve other's ends; having lost agency, some felt "dehumanized" (p. 113).

Already, mention has been made of how in reform ends and means are separated and how it is natural to think of *means* as the assigned arena of responsibility for teachers and for which they ought to be fully accountable, a view Rice held. It is means that dominate questions about the value teachers or teacher educators add to education even when the centrality of teacher-student relationships to learning is recognized. Dewey (1916) early on spotted the danger:

The vice of externally imposed ends has deep roots. Teachers receive them from superior authorities; these authorities accept them from what is current in the community. The teachers impose them upon children. As a first consequence, the intelligence of the teacher is not free... Too rarely is the individual teacher so free from the dictation of authoritative supervisor, textbook on methods, prescribed course of study, etc., that he can let his mind come to close quarters with the pupil's mind and the subject matter. This distrust of the teacher's experience is then reflected in lack of confidence in the responses of pupils. The latter receive their aims through a double or treble external imposition... (p. 127).

A similar pattern is commonly found within efforts to reform schooling and teacher education.

Aims and means are, however, inextricably connected; they cannot meaningful be separated without significant harm: "an

end which grows up within an activity as plan for its direction is always both ends and means, the distinction being only one of convenience. Every means is a temporary end until we have attained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved" (p. 124). Furthermore, an "aim implies an orderly and ordered activity, one in which the order consists in the progressive completing of a process" (p. 119), which properly can be thought of as the process called "reform." In completing the process, aims may be met but they also evolve, fill out, unravel and, when, education is the intent, new and sometimes unexpected aims may emerge only to fall outside of the driving concern of the reform. When tightly focused on fixed ends—representing anticipated results—unanticipated findings produced by well-designed plans are generally greeted as unwelcome diversions. Dangers of this kind underscore the wisdom for educators of working strategically by ignoring aims and staying sharply focused on means—yet, like ends, when speaking of reform, means are also given and they come with the expectation of fidelity. On both counts, agency suffers. "Compliance is never edifying, it never rings with human dignity, and it never pulses with excitement and curiosity and wonder" (Roger Soder, quoted in Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 76).

Disappointing and Exhausting

In the nearly 40 years since publication of *National Commission on Excellence in Education* (1983) hundreds of reports have been produced detailing windblown but, as believed by those who proposed them, urgent changes needed in public education and teacher education. Assuming an ever deepening crisis, in the background over all these years one hears the sound of a constant, driving, drumming. Echoing the words of *A Nation at Risk* and after failure of the reforms imposed by the NCLB Act, Finn (2019), for example, a champion of choice and of vouchers, recently asserted, "American education is stumbling, [in decline], and education reform is running on fumes," as is indicated by U.S. students scores in international rankings (p. 44). There may be good reason only fumes remain in the tank, and these reasons have nothing to do with educator recalcitrance or laziness but a lot to do with reward structures, work conditions, and reformer intentions and ambitions. Utopian ambitions often have embedded in them seeds of terror: desired futures when coupled with significant coercive power produce both impatience and, when thwarted, implacable anger.

The ambitions expressed in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) centered on achieving "excellence" in education in support of the creation of a "learning society" (pp. 12–13). Moving rhetoric to reality, many of the recommendations were, in fact, embraced by educators: high school graduation requirements and college admission standards were raised with astonishing speed. Raising standards, of course, is easy; meeting them not so easy. The curriculum of public schools was revised to put greater emphasis on academic courses, foreign languages and technology. A variety of efforts were made to increase teacher education enrollment in mathematics and the sciences and to alter the nature of and pay for teachers' work. A particularly important suggested change followed as the federal government answered the call and became

increasingly involved in education, an arena left to the states by the U.S. Constitution.

The Federal Government has *the primary responsibility* to identify the national interest in education. It should also help fund and support efforts to protect and promote that interest. It must provide the national leadership to ensure that the Nation's public and private resources are marshaled to address the issues discussed in this report (p. 33).

A national reform movement was thus born; later presidential candidates would jockey for position as “the education candidate.”

Expectations ran high and multiplied over time; and, no surprise, in stride, attacks on public education and teacher education increased and intensified. Government-supported social safety nets were weakened as the economic and social effects of globalism and of a dramatically diversifying population were increasing. In response more and more educational commissions were formed followed by a trickle then a torrent of national reports, each containing a list of charges and complaints about schooling. After *A Nation at Risk* (1983) but before NCLB, for example, on March 31, 1994, President Clinton, following closely his predecessor's educational program, signed into law The Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The act provided modest financial incentives to states to achieve a set of lofty goals. The charge: By 2000, 5 years, all children in America were to enter school ready to learn; high school graduation rates would reach at least 90%; all children would demonstrate proficiency in English, mathematics, science and foreign languages; and every school would be illegal drug-and violence-free. Two years later, the president “joined business leaders and educators in a National Education Summit to reaffirm commitment to achieving higher academic standards for America's schools and students” (National Commission on Teaching America's Future, 1996, p. 3). This time, teacher education was also to be fixed: “Reinvent teacher preparation and professional development” as well as “Create schools that are organized for student and teacher success” (p. 7).

Then came NCLB which “required increasing standardized tests scores year-in and year-out across several specific groups including economically disadvantaged students, limited English speakers, and students with disability. Of these groups, at least 95% of the students were required to be tested. Failure to meet standard by any one group meant school failure,” and potential punishment (Bullough, 2019, p. 37).

Each State shall establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress. The timeline shall ensure that not later than 12 years after the end of the 2001-2002 school year, all students... will meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievements on the State assessment...

Although rhetorically powerful, by 2013, failure was imminent and exceptions to the law began being granted by the federal Department of Education to states requesting them. No surprise,

as the 2014 deadline approached, teacher job satisfaction levels fell to a 25-year low (Metlife, 2013, p. 6).

When the law was passed, public educators anticipated failure even as in desperation and under serious and growing threats that included loss of federal funding and the possibility of school closure, and very modest incentives, they worked diligently for its success. A few states were handsomely rewarded for a time: the Obama administration-sponsored “Race to the Top” awarded \$4.35 billion to a handful of states—\$700 million to New York; \$400 million to Ohio. Perhaps the single most significant accomplishment of the law was to spotlight the gap in achievement separating student groups. Other results included a disrupted and weakened system of public education and a disillusioned educator workforce. In addition, the law produced a citizen test fetish that supported widespread belief in system failure. By education being reduced to a quest for higher test scores and for increased employment opportunities, many Americans began looking to escape the system, a plan very much in the interest of neoliberal market champions. Interest in or awareness of public education's place in realizing the aims of democratic citizenship also diminished. Given ill-informed and grossly exaggerated expectations for system change, coupled with very limited actual investment of the federal government in public education while funding and championing alternative forms of teacher certification, disillusionment was inevitable. Perhaps it was also intentional. As previously noted, the perception of system failure opened to a few a massive entrepreneurial opportunity to access public funds for private purposes.

FROM REFORM TO RENEWAL

Life... is a continual process of change and adaptation. A single day rarely, if ever, turns out to have been what we had anticipated it would be... the rigidity of most reform agendas [results in] shackling the spirit and draining the lifeblood out of what ought to be a joyous and adventuresome exploration of human knowledge and understanding. Our schools do not need still another reform movement. They need to learn to incorporate, as an integral aspects of their day-to-day operations, a process of ongoing, systemic renewal (Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 73).

Reform is a bad idea; a misguided aspiration. In contrast to reform, renewal recognizes that the improvement of education is first and foremost a collective and individual learning problem, as SDT suggests. “There are essentially two ways in which individuals can go about doing things: they can either be told what to do or they can determine their own goals and how they will try to achieve them” (p. 76). On this view, renewal is the task necessarily undertaken by democratic citizens who actively embrace the responsibilities and opportunities for learning that come with self-government. Renewal involves the exercise of freedom in ways that support and extend the freedom of others, for freedom (coupled with adequate resources) is an essential condition for maximal individual development and for growing into wisdom. Reform seeks certainty and predictability; renewal contrasts accountability with

responsibility, childishness with maturity. Reform encourages dependence; renewal promotes interdependence, self-confidence, and increased competence in things that matter. Perhaps most importantly, reform encourages distrust; renewal inspires trust and is hopeful.

Hope is all too rare these days. But without hope, education is impossible. A threat to TINA, hope is essential to human flourishing (see Bullough, 2019, chapter 11) and a necessary condition for learning and for the creation of healthy and happy people and the formation of responsive and productive educational programs and systems: Like people, systems also can be hopeful. Often thought of as a state of mind, hope is sometimes confused with optimism. Unlike optimism, which expects a best outcome, hope “demands something deeper and more precious: in the most dire of circumstances, despite recognition of the limits of one’s ability to change a situation, hope supports engagement, not giving up” (Bullough, 2019, p. 160). As an expression of confidence, by not giving up favorable but often unexpected outcomes may and often do follow even when the smart money suggests to hope is to be foolish. In contrast to optimism, hope is a mature, seasoned disposition and determination: “Hope implies a deep-seated trust in life that appears absurd to those who lack it. It rests on confidence not so much in the future as in the past...in which the experience of order and contentment was so intense that subsequent disillusionments cannot dislodge it (Lasch, 1991, p. 81).

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- Unlike training, quality, life-affirming and expansive education cannot be compelled. Education at base is too complex, too dangerous, and too risky of an adventure for that. As the practice of freedom, education can only be inspired and invited and the invitation can only be received when it is offered by someone who is confident, knowledgeable and skilled, trusted and trusting—someone who understands and appreciates freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. The invitation is an expression of hope and of trust and given in honor of the receiver’s promise. As such, it is an act of love and a call to renewal.
1. TINA has elements reminiscent of Hannah Arendt’s concept of the “banality of evil” See, Arendt (1977). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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