

**In Retrospect:
Then and Now**

Linda C. Ciprich

EDF 6606, Summer 2002

Florida Gulf Coast University

In Retrospect: Then and Now

Then...

Picture a blank page. That's me. Not being an education undergraduate has advantages and disadvantages. I probably didn't have any erroneous preconceived notions to get past, but perhaps it would have helped to have more teaching experience. So much of my learning now in this program is with a learner's viewpoint rather than a teacher's.

Seriously, though, as I went through this course with both Tyack's *The One Best System* and some of the older essays from Strouse, I realized that I have gleaned some historical knowledge of our educational system over the years. For instance, I am aware of some of the significant changes in the way education was portrayed in books I read as a child, such as the *Little House* series and *Little Women*, and classics in high school, such as *David Copperfield*, compared to what I experienced in grade school. I went through a biography stage around grade four and can remember some of the history of significant people such as Jane Addams and Booker T. Washington. The one-room school house that my grandparents attended still stands in my hometown, albeit as a historical site rather than in actual use.

Within my family, my father didn't finish high school and my mother took secretarial courses. Not counting aunts, uncles, and cousins, my oldest sister was the first of our direct line to attend college. My father is very proud today, however, that between his six children there have been two associate, four baccalaureate, and two master degrees, and the one daughter who does not have a degree is currently working on an associate and planning to go on for her baccalaureate. Three of the six are full-

time teachers. Now Dad has grandchildren with college degrees, plus we have cousins who are doctors and Ph.D.'s, so I think that represents a change from one generation to the next on the value placed on higher education.

I'm not sure I ever really thought about the socio-cultural and economic forces affecting education before this class. I do know I've been aware for a long time of the lesser role women were relegated to years ago. In my genealogy research I have come across records where several of my great-great-grandmothers were illiterate, even with families fairly well off at the time, and where one great-great-great-grandmother had her husband appointed as her guardian upon the death of her father when she was 19.

In addition to gender, I was aware of the race issue and *Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka*, as well as knowing first-hand the remnants that live on in areas such as Prince Edward County, Virginia. Tyack covered some of the important history but essays in Strouse's Part 7 had more of an impact for me as far as social force--descriptions of classes where transformational education practices are being used to empower minority students, rural students, and urban students.

Economic and political forces are more cyclical than socio-cultural ones although some factors such as race can be viewed as social and political, and, come to think of it, even economic, e.g., the desegregation movement as a result of inferior schools for black children and the lack of funds to improve them. When it comes to funding and politics, I think issues will always be cyclical and there will always be change. Thoreau said, "Things do not change; we change." Diversity is increasing and the more diverse and different people are, the more diverse the issues will be.

Now...

I know more. I know there's a lot more to education than books, students, teachers, administration, and infrastructure. I have a better sense of the timeline through which American public education evolved, as well as a better feel for the issues, both past and present.

One thing I was struck by in Tyack's *The One Best System* was that desegregation in public education meant the majority of black teachers would end up losing their positions to whites and that a lot of African-Americans would have preferred to keep the separate schools. I guess I had just never thought about it from that perspective. I found it so interesting that I went on to further research and then changed one of my article summaries that had been on desegregation to something else. Besides, the Supreme Court had just made a landmark decision on school vouchers, another issue that sparked my interest and I wanted to read more on that topic.

In Strouse's text, I think I learned a different take on Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The examples where teachers are not only critically reflective themselves as educators, but plan activities which require the students to use critical reflection, made me realize it is not a theory only applicable to adult education. I can see where it might be exciting to be a teacher and be doing some of the innovative and challenging activities that these reflective teachers are involved in.

Exploring Socio-Cultural Themes in Education was a good title for Strouse's text. I thought she did an excellent job in pulling together different aspects of culture and different timeframes of culture. I even wonder if finding the right material would not be more difficult than writing a text yourself.

Tomorrow?

I will be doing further study in educational technology, distance education, and adult education. I have a good background in the technology already, but previously lacked the foundation in education that I'm obtaining in this curriculum. I may never be a full-time educator but even as a part-time educator, or someone who may go on to develop distance education programs for adults, I think it's important to understand the evolution of education and why there is constant change and reform. I also think that we are just beginning to experience the effects of the tremendous technology changes in the modern world. We are always going to have to deal with the social, economic, technological, and political issues by adapting to change.

In 1994, Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. It calls for "systemic changes needed to ensure equitable educational opportunities and high levels of educational achievement for all students," among other things. The promotion of the use of educational technology is an important part of the act and that means education, K12 and higher, is going to need technological educators more than ever. I can see a future for a professional moving his or her career into the training development area of whatever that career has been.