Community control as a tool to enhance school effectiveness in low-income minority areas: a case study of school district 7 of New York City

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COMMUNITY CONTROL AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE
SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN LOW-INCOME
MINORITY AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT 7 OF
NEW YORK CITY

A THESIS
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BY
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The Urban Setting

Over the last twenty years we have witnessed extensive changes in the composition of our urban population, changes that have greatly intensified the problems of our city school systems. The exodus of middle-class whites and the movement of blacks to the cities have effected radical change in the school population; in many of our large cities a majority of the inner city school population is now black. City institutions have yet to adjust to the changing character of the city population. Pressing needs have been met with limited responses. Over the last thirty years, cities have expanded their services to cope with this growth, city bureaucracies have doubled in size. Unfortunately growth and expansion have not been paralleled by any fundamental change in the basic structure of city bureaucracies. Urban school systems are but a case in point.

Economy and efficiency, civil service reform, professionalism and centralization have characterized the major
movements in urban governments. All of these factors contribute to the development of a remote, static bureaucratic structure ill equipped to handle the demands of a new population. Those new demands are for a greater "piece of the action" that is, "a redistribution of power in the city to allow the low income minority community a greater role in the policy process."¹ For cities all over the country, effective action will depend on a breaking down of the structure and re-evaluation of the ideology that has governed that structure and denies so large a segment of the population a voice in its own affairs. As it is now structured, the large remote city structure cannot be responsive to the needs of the black community; it cannot provide that "piece of the action" that they demand. The survival of America's urban communities as we know them will depend upon their ability to respond to these pressures. The city school system is one of the battleground and in many respects, reflects the larger problem in microcosm.

The Urban School Setting

The public education system in our large cities are paralyzed. Their failure is political as well as educational. The educational failure is relatively easy to substantiate: There are sufficient data in test scores, dropout rates,

the number of academic diplomas produced to establish the nature of that failure. Rationales developed to relate the cause of this failure to the problems of a disadvantaged community, while they may be valid, do not in any way negate the responsibility of the school system to educate its clientele. The inability of school professionals to cope with this problem must still be labeled an educational failure.1

The political failure can best be described in terms of the development within the city of a political sub-system whose policy process is entirely controlled by school board members located at the various boards of education. The policies coming out of this elite group supports an educational establishment that maintains a status quo orientation in all areas of educational policy.

Over the last sixty five years, city school systems have experienced a high degree of professionalization combined with extensive centralization of the educational bureaucracy. In every large city, an inbred bureaucratic supervisory staff sits at the school board offices holding a tight rein on educational policy. Their vested interests are clear: Any major shift in educational policy might well challenge their control of the local educational system. The only

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new agent to enter the area of school affairs in recent years is the teacher organization or union. Unfortunately these groups have concentrated their attention on salary and related issues; on all other questions they have supported establishment policies.¹

The specific problem that this study is concerned with is the relationship between community control of the schools, parental participation and providing quality education in the low income minority areas.

Community Control of the Schools

A concept that has aroused both fear and hope is emerging from the crisis in public education, especially in the inner city. That concept is that public education will return to the direct control of the public. Not just the traditionally "prepared public" i.e., those civic leaders who serve on city wide boards, or parent-association leaders who are endowed with organizational skills and college degrees, or business leaders who recognize good schools as a drawing card to local economic development, but the parent and community residents, especially low-income minority inner-city parents, calling for a say in the operation of public schools.

The prospect is frightening to this "prepared public" because it would alarm the majority of professional educators who fear the decentralization of complex systems of education into the hands of the people thought to be incompetent. After all, we are not talking about an insignificant thing, but a vaunted American institution with enormous and growing capital and operating budgets.

Many argue that community control of the schools is nothing more than romanticism or naive idealism. An examination of more hard-core approaches to modern public education, however, suggests that this idealistic path may turn out to be the most practical and efficient.

Assumptions underlying the project are:

1. Public education is failing. The most viable failure is in the urban, low-income racial minority community.

2. Public education is a governmental function. It is supported by the public at large and it is subject at least to review, if not close accountability, by elected public representatives somewhere along the line.

3. While the goals of American public education are not confined to skill development, the present operational definition of quality education is performance in basic skills at or above grade levels, as measured by standardized tests.

4. The growing complexity of the education process is no cause for dismissing the concept of public control of public education.
5. Public education is a universal right. Therefore it cannot be limited to those who are responsive and congenial to whatever the prevailing mode of public education happens to be.

6. The public has a right to determine educational policy and to hold professionals accountable for implementing policy. Thus when 70 percent of black children are not reading at grade level, their parents have a right to question professional performance since the schools are supposed to educate everyone.

7. Urban education is synonymous with the education of low income racial minorities whose growing despair is both a threat and a challenge to America's cities. The general crisis is inextricably linked to the crisis of urban education.

Major Concepts

The major concepts utilized in this inquiry will include; administrative decentralization, political decentralization (community control), school effectiveness, and integration of the local school with the local community, (parental participation). Administrative decentralization will mean the delegation of authority from superior to subordinate in a bureaucracy. The subordinate, however, continues to remain dependent on his superior in varying degrees depending on the extent of the delegation. Political decentralization will mean the transfer of authority to officials who have been selected and who are dependent on a clientele. It is assumed that the elected official exercising his authority can no longer be manipulated by the former possessor of that authority.
These officials will have policy-making power over four critical areas: (1) personal (2) budget (3) curriculum and (4) pupil policy. Integration of the local school with the local community will mean the involvement of the parent in the education of his child, and school effectiveness will mean (1) the performance in basic skills at or above grade level as measured by standardized tests (2) rates of absenteeism and (3) rate of suspensions. My hypotheses in this inquiry are: (1) political decentralization increases school effectiveness and (2) political decentralization of schools facilitates the integration of the local school with the local community and (3) as a result of political decentralization, there has been a shift toward power equalization and participative decision-making.

**Methodology**

In this explanatory inquiry, my methodology will consist of an indepth study of one school district (District 7 in the South Bronx) looking specifically at the impact of the 1969 Decentralization Law and the concept of political decentralization (community control) on one poverty school district in the New York city school system. The central question to which this inquiry addresses itself is: What has been the effect of political decentralization on school effectiveness: To reach a conclusion, a comparison was made of the
following data before and after decentralization; academic performance, specifically reading scores, student absenteeism and student suspensions. These indicators were selected to measure changes in school effectiveness. Two of these indicators - reading scores and student suspensions, had been singled out by the Bundy Report to characterize the shortcomings of the New York public school system.\footnote{Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, Reconnection for Learning: A Community School System for New York City. November, 1967, p. 4.} In addition to the central question of effectiveness, answers to the following questions were also sought: To what extent has political decentralization facilitated the integration of the local school with the local community and to what extent has there been a shift toward power equalization and participative decision-making as a result of political decentralization?

New York City was chosen because it was the first large city to experiment with community control of the schools. District 7 in the South Bronx was selected for this study because it has all of the problems you have in the city. It was the failure of the centralized school system to provide pupils from poverty areas such as this with basic learning skills that provoked the demand for decentralization and community control. It is only fitting, therefore, that the
impact of the Decentralization Law and the attempt at local control be examined here. Also, it is in districts such as this one that decentralization must prove its effectiveness as an instrument of change.

The test of my hypotheses will occur in the comparison of the data from the study (i.e., reading scores, student absenteeism rates, student suspension rates) with the propositions I have made. For example, if I find that decentralization did not effect the integration of the parents and the community with the local school, or student academic performance, then my hypotheses will be disconfirmed.

Data Collection

The data collection process will consist of a library study of the existing literature on this subject and open-ended interviews.

Anticipated Results

At the conclusion of this study I should be able to answer the questions, (1) will decentralization promote the integration of the local school with the local community and (2) is there a relationship between this integration of community and school, and the level of school effectiveness.

Historical Background for Decentralization

When the public schools reopened in the Fall of 1970,
the New York City public education system prepared itself to face a new program based on the concept of a decentralized organizational structure. For the first time, local school boards, elected by members of the local community, began to exercise their newly acquired powers over the selection of staff, choice of teaching materials, and within limits, over local expenditures.

The move toward decentralization was a response to widespread dissatisfaction with the public school system. The reasons for this dissatisfaction are numerous. Many of them are enumerated in the Bundy Report. In 1965, for example, a statewide evaluation of pupil performance was instituted by the New York State Education Department. It showed that of those students in the first through ninth grades who were below the level of minimum competence in reading and arithmetic, fifty-five percent were New York City public school students. This figure gains added significance when we realize that New York City accounts for only thirty-five percent of the State's total enrollment.

The Board of Education report covering the 1966-67 school year indicated that one out of three pupils in the

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1Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, Reconstruction for Learning: A Community School System for New York City (New York, 1967); referred to as the Bundy Report, after its chairman, McGeorge Bundy.
New York City school system was a year or more behind in reading and arithmetic, compared with national norms. Furthermore, the proportion of sixth grade pupils in the city scoring below State defined minimum standards increased from thirty-one percent to forty-five percent between 1965 and 1966, compared to the statewide increase from twenty percent to twenty-three percent.

At the high school level, only 43,864, or sixty-eight percent of the 64,117 students admitted to the city's high schools and scheduled to graduate in 1967 actually did graduate. Of those graduating, only 21,364, or about one-third of those admitted, received academic diplomas. The others, for the most part, were assigned to "general" courses, where no scholastic standards were set and where students were permitted to "graduate with eighth grade reading scores."

An examination of the distribution of academic diplomas reveals the great disparity in the performance of black and Puerto Rican students compared with the performance of white students. In 1963, for example, of some 21,000 students receiving academic diplomas, only 331 were Puerto Rican and 762 were black. In other words, despite the fact that forty-

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1Ibid., p. 5

five percent of the population was non-white, only five percent of the academic diplomas went to non-whites. By 1969, the non-white school population had increased to fifty-five percent. During the same period black and Puerto Rican enrollment in academic programs increased to nineteen percent, only slightly more than the increase in population.¹

Approximately 12,000 students were suspended from school during 1966. Many of them according to the Bundy Report, had been suspended on relatively minor charges and without fair hearing.² In the same year, there were 500 classes to which no teacher was assigned on a permanent basis, and teacher absences accounted for an additional 1,500 uncovered classes daily.³

Pressures For Decentralization

The pressure for the decentralization of the school system had its origin in two different concepts; one was the concept of administrative decentralization; the other was the concept of political decentralization or more specifically, community control. Administrative decentralization involves the delegation of authority from superior to subordinate in

¹Ibid.
²Bundy Report, p. 5.
³Ibid.
a bureaucracy. The subordinate, however, continues to remain dependent on his superior in varying degrees depending on the extent of the delegation. Political decentralization, on the other hand, involves the transfer of authority to officials who have been selected by and are dependent for re-election upon an electorate or clientele. One assumes that the elected official exercising his authority can no longer be manipulated by the former possessor of that authority. Community control, a form of political decentralization, can be defined as the exercise of authority by a democratically organized government of a neighborhood jurisdiction.¹

**Dissatisfaction With The Central Bureaucracy**

Prior to 1897, each borough had its own Board of Education, and sent representatives to the New York City Board of Education, which had nineteen members. With the adoption of the new City Charter in 1897, however, there began a steady trend toward centralization. In 1902, the borough boards were abolished and forty-six local school boards whose members were appointed by the borough president, were established instead. Each of the boards sent a representative to the City Board which had forty-six members. In 1917, the number of members in the central Board was reduced from forty-six to seven in the interests of efficiency. The forty-six local boards were

retained but only in an advisory capacity. This structure prevailed until 1961.¹

By 1960, the forty-six local school boards had grown in number to fifty-four, but for the most part they were unrepresentative, powerless, and, in many cases, inactive. In 1961, a major reorganization of both the central and local boards occurred after a special session of the State Legislature removed the old Board of Education because of charges of corruption in school construction. The new Board of Education established thirty Local School Boards whose members were to be appointed by the Central Board rather than by the borough president. The functions of the newly formed Local School Board, however, remained advisory only.²

By 1967, the New York City public school system had grown into a vast complex covering the five boroughs and comprising 870 day schools, more than 2,000 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes, and about 100 evening elementary, high and trade schools. The school population was over one million pupils, with educational needs ranging from special schools and classes for the emotionally and physically handicapped to special schools and classes for the intellec-


²Ibid.
tually gifted and talented. This complex structure was staffed by over 60,000 teachers, supported by school psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors, and school community coordinators, as well as other technical and teaching specialists. It was administered by a highly centralized, many-leveled bureaucracy with headquarters at 110 Livingston Street in Brooklyn. It was called the Board of Education.

Traditionally, the function of the public school system was to provide an educational ladder that was open to all children despite their widely diversified economical, social, and cultural backgrounds. For this purpose, a highly centralized administrative structure was conceived as suitable.

A distinctive feature of city school systems, and one that has made them an interesting object of study to students of educational administration coming from other lands, is the wide diversity in educational facilities which they provide, with a resulting adaptability of the instruction to the needs of the many different classes of the population. Unlike most European two class school systems, the American public school has been compelled to organize its instruction about a one-track form of educational organization and provide an educational ladder nominally at least open to all. The adjustment to the needs of the different social and intellectual classes which attend has had to be made by providing a diversity of types of classes and instruction. This adaptability has been made possible only by reason of the unity of its administration and finances, and it could not have been provided except under a centralized large scale form of educational organization...
In addition, due to the concentration of wealth, which the city usually represents, and with local school levies made on the city school district as a whole by one administrative board, a pooling of costs is made possible which results in the provision of uniform educational advantage to all without undue burden to any portion of the whole.¹

In recent years, however, the ability of a highly centralized school system to perform this traditional function had begun to meet with increasing skepticism. Serious questions began to be raised as to its competence to meet the urgent needs of a city with a rapidly changing population. Peter Schrag, executive editor of the "The Saturday Review" and author of several books and articles about the public school system, is one of those commenting on this apparent inadequacy. Referring to the fact that the public school had always been viewed as the great American social instrument, the device that converted the raw material of immigration into an endless stream of social success, Schrag went on to say:

Now, oddly enough, the school seems to be failing in the very function on which its reputation has always been based. It does not seem to be able to bring the most indigenous of all "immigrants" into the main stream or even to give them the educational qualifications that life in the main stream requires.²


To a large extent, the inability of the public school system to meet the needs of its changing clientele can be traced to the problems of an overcentralized bureaucracy. The central Board of Education had a system of formulas that dictated the application of programs to schools in various categories without taking into account the gradations within each category. The effect was to minimize the flexibility and effective distribution of personnel and materials.¹ Furthermore, bureaucratic procedures made it almost impossible to introduce the new materials needed for curriculum change. Experimental programs, many of which were conducted in inner-city schools, were hampered by long delays in securing textbooks and supplies.²

Although inner-city schools had many more compensatory programs and their expenditures per pupil were higher than in segregated white schools, the bureaucracy hindered the coherent and integrated use of these services by its failure to clarify and coordinate the roles of special teachers and staff members.³ The organization of the Central Board was characterized by a pattern of multiple authority, which

²Ibid., pp. 274-275.
³Ibid., p. 277.
violated the principle of unity of command and frustrated efforts to secure services, facilities, and information.¹

Headquarters officials were preoccupied with forcing field personnel to conform to numerous rules and directives. At the same time, few headquarters professionals or Board members knew how poorly staffed and equipped the ghetto schools really were since they rarely visited these schools. Innovation by field personnel was discouraged. All decisions about curriculum and instruction were made at central headquarters despite its remoteness from local conditions. As a result, field supervisors became so accustomed to their limited authority and the lack of encouragement that they practically abandoned any responsibility they may have had for innovating.²

Finally, the perpetuation of the value system of the central bureaucracy was ensured by the Board of Examiners. This Board controlled entry and promotion within the system through its jurisdiction over the preparation and administration of examinations for teachers, supervisors, and staff positions. Critics of the Board of Examiners contend that the rigidity of its control led to inbreeding and mediocrity throughout the school system.³

¹Ibid., p. 274.
²Ibid., pp. 278-281.
³Ibid., p. 285.
If the problem was solely one of finding a suitable structure to increase the efficiency of the school system, it is conceivable that conventional theories of management and organization might have provided a solution. Unfortunately, however, administrative and organizational factors were not the only elements of the problem. The social and political factors that provide the second source of pressures for decentralization were loaded with emotional overtones that complicated the whole question of decentralization and community control.

An Awakening Desire for Power

The political and social undercurrents that provided the second source of pressure for decentralization found expression in the concepts of political decentralization and community control. These concepts gained tremendous force with the failure of integration in the city schools. In the early 1960's, it became increasingly evident that the black and Puerto Rican communities were being poorly served by the public school system. At first desegregation of the schools was offered as a solution. Integration was quite compatible with the melting pot tradition of the public schools, and one wonders what might have happened if serious and sincere attempts had actually been made to integrate the schools. The question, of course, is an academic one.
The frustrating history of the struggle to desegregate the New York City public schools has been traced by David Rogers in his book 110 Livingston Street, through four phases: the academic stage, the voluntary stage, the non-voluntary stage, and finally the decentralization and community control stage. During the academic phase, which occupied the period from 1954 to 1960, the Board of Education made studies, formed committees, issued reports and policy statements, but firmly maintained the commitment to the neighborhood school concept. Only when civil rights protest groups appeared to have strong local or citywide support did the Board make any concessions and sometimes not even then.

During this period, black inner-city groups, with the support of white liberals, focused their attention on the construction of schools in fringe areas rather than in areas whose housing patterns would ensure continued segregation. The response of the Board was minimal. The frustration of the community during 1958 and 1959 stemming from the inability of black parents to send their children to schools outside the district was reflected in a series of strikes and boycotts.

The period from 1960 to 1963, the voluntary stage, witnessed the introduction of Open Enrollment. This was a voluntary transfer plan that had been designed to promote
desegregation, but which received little support from the Board. Instructions on what schools their children could attend and how they could get to them were rarely given to parents, and many parents whose children were eligible for transfer were not aware of it. The limited success Open Enrollment had in a few areas could be attributed to the efforts of civil rights workers.

With the failure of Open Enrollment, the inadequacy of voluntary techniques was clearly evident, and in May, 1963 desegregation moved into its non-voluntary phase. The Board of Education was requested by James Allen, the State Education Commissioner, to submit a report on the racial composition of the New York City schools. The report was to include a statement of plans to re-examine "racial imbalance" in schools in which there was a substantial departure from a fifty-fifty black-white ratio. Following a series of school boycotts organized for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the Board of Education, the Board announced its desegregation program on May 28, 1964.

The plan called for four pairings of elementary schools, the rezoning of eight junior high schools, and shifts of sixth and eighth graders into new junior high school and high school arrangements.
Prior to the release of the Board's plans, the Allen Commission released its own plan. This Commission had been appointed by Commissioner Allen at the request of the Board of Education for the purpose of suggesting specific desegregation proposals. These recommendations, released in April, 1964, called for four-year middle schools organized in educational parks in order to draw from a large heterogenous population. It also called for much more fringe area construction.

In April 1965, the Board announced a new statement of policy, which committed the Board to a major reorganization of the school system along the lines of the Allen Report. Included in its plan were new four-year intermediate schools, and some pre-kindergarten programs in minority group areas. Although all civil rights groups joined in commending the statement, little was done by the Board toward its implementation.

By the end of 1965, civil rights leaders and others who had carried the brunt of the desegregation battle were demoralized. The black community gave up pressing the New York City Board of Education for more desegregation. Instead, parents turned away from the possibility of achieving quality education for their children through integration and toward community participation and control.

In the decentralization and community control phase,
black groups concerned with the inability of the schools to educate black and Puerto Rican children and frustrated by the power of school professionals to subvert desegregation plans, turned their efforts toward diluting that power. The coincidence of this awakening desire for power among the urban poor with the trend toward decentralization has been noted by Fantini and Gittell. At the same time, they point to some important distinctions between the concept of administrative decentralization and that of community control.

Coinciding with an awakening desire among the urban poor for power is a trend toward decentralization of services. This impetus, however, is more a matter of administrative efficiency than of responsiveness to community desires. It recognizes the difficulty of prescribing at the center uniform rules and procedures that can apply equally effectively across the whole or a large and diverse city. It acknowledges, furthermore, the deadening effect on the invitation and creativity of personnel, to say nothing of morale in centralized decision making in all matters. It is, in short, the counterpart at the governmental level, of a practice long followed by many large corporations that have discovered that decentralization is more effective and profitable than a rein held tightly at the center. Administrative decentralization of government, however, should not be mistaken for community control or participation. It can facilitate community participation by locating the decision-making agencies close at hand. But it is no guarantee in and of itself of community participation. In some instances indeed, a decentralized agency of government, if it lacks sufficient decision making authority, can frustrate community desires by deflecting them from the real seat of authority.  

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The Convergence of the Concepts of Administrative Decentralization and Community Control

In the Spring of 1967, the concepts of administrative decentralization and community control gathered momentum and converged on a collision course. In response to growing pressure from the black community for control of their own schools, the Board of Education announced a policy that led to the establishment of three demonstration districts, Two Bridges, the Intermediate School 201 complex and Ocean Hill-Brownsville, as an experiment in local community control of schools.

At about the same time that these experimental districts were getting under way, administrative decentralization was gaining support from a different quarter. During the administration of Mayor Wagner, the Temporary Commission on City Finances had pointed out that the City stood to profit financially if it divided the school system into five school districts. State aid for school districts in New York State takes into account the ability of the local district to finance its schools through property taxation. The device used to allocate State aid is an aid ratio that determines the State's share of total approved operating expenses. The aid ratio for each school district varies, depending upon the relation of the full value of taxable real property in the district to the statewide average. Every district, regardless of wealth, however, receives a minimum amount of aid. As a
result, New York City received far less aid than it would otherwise have received if State aid had been computed on a county-by-county basis, considering each county, or borough a separate district. Mayor Lindsay used this decentralization idea as a way of obtaining additional State aid and suggested it to the State Legislature.

In the Spring of 1967, the New York State Legislature passed an education bill that granted the New York City schools an additional $54 million in State aid if the school system was divided according to boroughs. The Legislature went one step further, however. It called upon the Mayor to present a plan for greater community participation in the governance of the city schools.

In response to this request, Mayor Lindsay appointed an advisory panel headed by McGeorge Bundy, President of the Ford Foundation. Among the recommendations made by this panel in its report to the Mayor were: (1) the formation of between thirty and sixty community school districts, each to be governed by a Board of Education selected in part by the Mayor; (2) the Community Board should have broad personnel powers, including the right to hire a community superintendent; and (3) the community Board should have authority over

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elementary and secondary education within its boundaries.¹

In January 1968, the Mayor accepted most of the recommendations. The Board of Education opposed the Bundy-Lindsay plan, and proposed continuing with its own experiment in decentralization. The State Board of Regents rejected the Central Board's plan as inadequate and indecisive, and submitted a proposal of its own. The Regents recommended that the Central Board be replaced by a five member Board appointed by the Mayor and that the basic power and duties the Board exercised under the State Education Law be shifted to new semi-autonomous Community School Boards.

A decision on administrative decentralization was delayed for a year by the Legislature first dealing with the passage in May 1968 of the Marchi Bill named after its sponsor, State Senator John J. Marchi, a Republican from Staten Island and Chairman of the Senate Committee on New York City. Despite the delay, however, the bill did leave the door open for further movement in the direction of decentralization if the Mayor and the Board of Education so desired. To facilitate such movement, the bill provided four more places on the Board, which were promptly filled by Mayor Lindsay with proponents of decentralization. It also removed an obstacle to decentralization by authorizing the Board to delegate its powers to the community school districts.

¹Bundy Report, pp. iii - iv.
Unfortunately, for the future course of administrative decentralization, it was at this moment in time that the concept of community control became the central issue in a bitter confrontation involving the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration district and the United Federation of Teachers. The dispute began early in May 1968 with the involuntary transfer of nineteen teachers by the local governing board of the Ocean Hill-Bronwsville Demonstration District; it culminated in a series of strikes by teachers and supervisors that began on September 9, 1968, and lasted until November 15, 1968. During most of this period, more than ninety percent of the city's teachers and supervisors were out on strike, and more than ninety-five percent of the city's pupils were absent from school.¹

The strike opened deep wounds and left scars in a city that was already badly divided.

The strike heightened tension and conflict throughout the city. It fractured old coalitions between organized labor and the civil rights movement, for example. It caused internal ruptures in formerly cohesive groups; the liberal establishment, for one, found itself torn between, on the one hand, its affinity for the oppressed and, on the other, its traditional loyalty to the hard-won prerogatives of labor unions.

But the fractures followed other lines too. Since the majority of New York's teachers and supervisors are Jewish, several Jewish organizations tended to side with the U. F. T. Their opposition intensified with the surfacing of anti-Semitic remarks and, occasionally, pamphlets.

Not the least of the divisions arose between striking and non-striking teachers throughout the city. Some younger teachers, in particular, did not regard the union picket line as inviolate. For their part, some union teachers could not forgive the actions of their colleagues who had not participated.¹

In its analysis of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville controversy, the New York Civil Liberties Union made a point of differentiating administrative decentralization from community control:

Integration failed at least partly because it was resisted by many principals and because the system was already administratively decentralized to the point where resisting principals were not forced to comply with board policy on integration.

Once the Board of Education understood that what the Ocean Hill-Brownsville parents really wanted was an experiment in genuine community control, it retreated even before it had begun. Almost immediately, the board began to talk about community involvement as opposed to community control.²

The Enactment of the Decentralization Law

On September 4 and 11, 1968, amidst the turmoil of

the initial stages of the teachers strike, the newly reconstituted Board of Education delegated limited powers to the Local School Board. In December, it published a proposal for a long-range plan for a system of semi-autonomous community school districts within limits established by the March Law. In February, 1969, these proposals were submitted to the State Legislature by the New York State Board of Regents along with the Regents' own proposals. With the violence and severity of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville controversy and the divisiveness of teachers' strike fresh in their minds, the legislators undertook consideration of the various decentralization proposals. The bill that finally emerged from the Legislature on April 30, 1969 was a product of pressure, negotiation and compromise. Although the 1969 Decentralization Law and the events leading to its enactment will be discussed at greater length in the ensuing chapter entitled "The 1969 Decentralization Law," it can be noted at this point that its provisions met with something less than universal approval.

Under these provisions, the previous Central Board was to be replaced by an "interim" Board of Education comprising five members, each appointed by one of the five Borough Presidents. The "interim" Board, in turn, was to be replaced in May 1970 with a new seven-member Board,
comprising two members to be appointed by the Mayor and five members to be elected by the voters in their respective boroughs. This provision was later ruled to be in violation of the one-man, one-vote guidelines by Federal courts. When the Legislature reconvened in January 1970, the term of the "interim" Board was extended still another year. In February 1972, the Legislature once again extended the life of the interim Board, this time until June 30, 1974.

The decentralization design under the 1969 Law was structured with certain areas designated as the domain of the Community School Boards, but with control retained centrally through the Chancellor and the Central Board of Education. The Community School Boards have the power to select a Superintendent for the district, who, in addition to his educational duties, exercises the managerial functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling within the limitations imposed by the Central Board, the Chancellor, and the Community School Board.

Although the powers assigned to the Community School Boards involved significant changes in the nature of the relationship that had characterized the interaction of Local School Boards, community groups, and district Superintendents in the past, the provisions of the Law were far less sweeping than had been desired by the advocates of community control. It was this disenchantment with the Law
that contributed, at least in part, to the low voter turnout for the Community School Board elections that were held in March 1970. As little as five percent of those eligible voted in some districts. Other factors contributing to the low turnout were the residency requirements, and the complexity of the pre-registration and voting procedures.\(^1\)

In any case, there was some question as to how closely the Community School Boards reflected the composition of the districts they had been elected to represent. Along with their other problems, therefore, an important task that faced some of the Community Boards was to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents.

### Decentralization and School Effectiveness

My study is concerned with the impact of the 1969 Decentralization Law and the concept of political decentralization (community control) on one poverty school district in the New York City school system. The central question to which this inquiry addressess itself is: What has been the effect of political decentralization on school effectiveness in New York City school District Seven in the Bronx?

To reach a conclusion, a comparison was made of the following

data before and after decentralization: academic performance, specifically reading scores, student absenteeism and student suspensions. These indicators were selected to measure changes in school effectiveness. Two of these indicators, reading scores, and student suspensions, had been singled out by the Bundy Report to characterize the shortcomings of the New York public school system and were consequently adopted as effectiveness indicators in this study.¹ The other indicator, student absenteeism, was selected because it is a response frequently observed among participants in a system that they believe is failing them.

Advocates of political decentralization/community control had not only hypothesized that restructuring the school system would lead to more effective schools, but they had also indicated the specific changes that would contribute to this increase in effectiveness. The redistribution and equalization of power was seen as a major change that would in turn, lead to the integration of school and community (parental participation). Therefore, in addition to the central question of effectiveness, answers to the following questions were also sought:

1. To what extent has there been a shift toward power equalization and participative decision making as a result of decentralization?

2. To what extent has decentralization facilitated the integration of the local school with the local community?

¹Bundy Report, p. 4.
CHAPTER II
THE 1969 DECENTRALIZATION LAW

In a sense, the 1969 Decentralization Law had its origins in the Bundy Report. This description of the relationship, however, is appropriate only in terms of legislative process and not in terms of content. On the contrary, the provisions of the decentralization law that emerged from the legislature were quite different from the recommendations of the Bundy Panel that had been created at the request of the Legislature.

It was in response to an Act of the 1967 State Legislature that New York City's Mayor John V. Lindsey created the Advisory Committee on the Decentralization of the New York City Schools. The Act directed the Mayor to:

Prepare a comprehensive study and report and formulate a plan for the creation and redevelopment of educational policy and administrative units within the city school district of the City of New York with adequate authority to foster greater community initiative and participation in the development of educational policy for the public schools. . .

and to achieve greater flexibility in the administration of such schools.¹

The Committee was appointed on April 30, 1967. By November, 1967 it was ready with its report, Reconnection

¹Bundy Report, p. i.
for Learning: A Community School System for New York
City better known as the Bundy Report after its chairman, Ford Foundation President McGeorge Bundy. In the covering letter to Mayor Lindsay that accompanied the Report, the Bundy Panel described the concepts that provided the foundation for its decentralization design:

We have designed this plan of decentralization so that Community Boards may have as much authority as is consistent with citywide necessities. We have sought to be responsive to the deep and legitimate desire of many communities in the city for a more direct role in the education of their children. We are deeply concerned with the need for participation, for responsibility, for shared authority and concern. We believe that, with exceptions where leadership has been exceptional, the schools of New York have been dangerously separated from many of New York's communities.

It is of no use to say that others in the past have accepted a distant discipline and learned well from accepting unfamiliar authority. The proposition is open to doubt, on its own merits, and it simply does not apply at all to the state of mind in the urban ghetto today. The liberating force for the urban education of the Negro and the Puerto Rican must be a new respect, a new engagement, a new responsibility.¹

The Bundy Report made the following recommendations:

1) The New York City public school system should be reorganized into a community school system comprising a central education agency and between thirty and sixty autonomous school districts; 2) Each community school district would

¹Covering letter for the report of the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, submitted to the Mayor December 9, 1967.
have authority for all regular elementary and secondary education in the schools within the district. The central education agency would have operating responsibility for special educational functions, citywide educational policies, and centralized services if the community school district desired them. The State Commissioner of Education and the central agency would continue to be responsible for maintaining educational standards in all public schools in the city; and 3) The community school districts would be governed by community school boards, six of whose members would be chosen by a panel that had been elected by the parents of children attending schools in the district. There would also be five members selected by the Mayor (after consultation with parents and community organizations) from lists of qualified persons presented by the central education agency.

The Bundy Panel suggested two alternatives for the central education agency: a commission of three full-time members appointed by the Mayor, or a full time nine-member board appointed by the Mayor. Five of the members would be selected from names submitted by the presidents of the community school boards. The remaining four would be selected from names submitted by a screening panel comprising civic and educational leaders.

Each of the community school districts would receive a total annual allocation of operating funds determined by formula. The districts would be permitted the widest possible
discretion in the use of these funds commensurate with education standards and goals and compatible with union contract obligations.

The community school district would have broad personnel powers, including the power to hire a community Superintendent. The process of qualification for the appointment and promotion of teachers and other professional staff would be revised so that the community school district would be able to select their personnel from the widest possible range of sources provided only that the applicant met State qualifications and that hiring would be on a competitive basis. Although existing tenure rights of teachers would be preserved, tenure of new personnel employed in a particular district would be awarded by the community school board.¹

The recommendations of the Bundy Report received a mixed reception. The reaction of the United Federation of Teachers and of the Council of Supervisory Associations (C.S.A.) was uncompromising and outright rejection. The C.S.A.'s response to the Bundy proposals was:

As knowledgeable educators and as forward looking citizens, we must express our utmost opposition. The plan gives structural change priority over pupil progress and welfare. It presumes to increase public and parent involvement in the schools but operates so as to vitiate such involvement. It not only neglects present-day social forces within which

¹Bundy Report, pp. iii - iv, 16 - 40.
the schools must function but even operates as to obstruct social progress. Thus, the report, while it claims to be an attack on the problems of public education, is really an attack on public education itself.  

For its part, the U.F.T. was determined to fight any attempt to transfer power to the local community and, in particular, any transfer of power that would affect the hiring and firing, compensation, working conditions, tenure, and professional prerogatives of teachers. Albert Shanker, president of the U.F.T., warned that the union would spend "thousands of dollars, whatever is necessary" to oppose the Bundy proposals. He predicted that "thousands of teachers" would leave the school system if the proposals were adopted without alteration. Shanker was as good as his word and for the next two years engaged in a running battle in opposition to decentralization and community control.

The central Board of Education took the position that there would be a downgrading of standards and an inequitable distribution of personnel. Furthermore, the power of the

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locally elected boards to appoint teachers and to determine tenure could result in personal and politically motivated appointments on a large scale. 1 Alfred Giardino, president of the central Board who was also a member of the Bundy Panel but did not sign the report, contended that "serious problems must arise in recasting in one quick stroke the largest educational system in the world. Rather than a rigidly timed and mandated set of procedures, we prefer a more deliberative process of movement and evaluation." 2

Superintendent of Schools, Bernard Donovan, argued that the community school districts covering the ghetto areas would experience difficulties in obtaining qualified personnel if teachers and supervisors were free to shop around. A fragmented network of local schools would hurt the very children who needed the help the most, those living in the ghettoes. 3

On the other hand, the Bundy Report was warmly received by the State Board of Regents which favored the proposals and, if anything, would have preferred an even

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more sweeping reorganization. The New York Times also gave strong editorial support to the Bundy proposals:

In a report whose broad principles we strongly endorse, the Bundy Panel on decentralization of the city school system calls for an almost total shift of administrative power from the central board of education to largely independent community school boards. If this proposal is radical, it is justified by the fact that the situation is desperate. If the cure is drastic, it is necessary because a long succession of moderate reform efforts has failed to halt the deterioration of New York City's gigantic school system.

The Bundy proposals received support from the New York Association of Negro School Supervisors and Administrators despite the fact that many of its members were also members of the Council of Supervisory Association, which had so strongly opposed it. Additional support was received from the Puerto Rican Education Association, representing 250 Puerto Rican teachers in the city school system. But Herman Badillo, Congressman from the Bronx and frequently a spokesman from the Puerto Rican community, attacked the Bundy proposals. Mr. Badillo contended that the election

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of local neighborhood boards would create strife because, in many areas, candidates would be running along ethnic lines.¹

In January 1968, Mayor Lindsay submitted a revised plan for reorganizing the schools to the State Legislature, and in March 1968, the State Board of Regents submitted a plan of its own. By the end of March, there were, in addition to the Bundy Plan, no fewer than five different proposals or modifications of proposals for reorganizing the city's schools before the State Legislature: The United Federation of Teachers (U.F.T.) plan, the Lindsay plan, the Council of Supervisory Associations (C.S.A.) plan, the Board of Education plan, and the Board of Regents plan.

The U.F.T. Plan

In proposing alternatives to the Bundy recommendations, the U.F.T. had two major objectives: the first was to keep power out of the hands of militant community control groups, and the second was to protect the gains that had been achieved contractually and by private understandings with the central Board of Education. The U.F.T. recommendations, that were designed to limit community control, fell into two categories. In the first category were recommendations on the size and number of school districts. In the

second category were recommendations dealing with the composition and method of selecting community school boards and the central Board of Education.

The size and number of community school districts has an important bearing on the whole concept of community control, the larger the number of districts and the smaller the size of each district, the stronger the sense of community and the influence of community groups. The tendency toward residential clustering by race, religion, class, and ethnicity is very strong. People want to live among neighbors whose life styles and patterns are similar to their own. The poor, however, tend to move in a much smaller radius than do the more affluent. The larger the district, therefore, the greater the chance that it will include not one but several communities, each with its own objectives and life style. As a result, the influence of each community is diluted in a large district. That is particularly true in areas populated by the poor of many different ethnic, cultural, and national backgrounds. It was with a view toward preserving the integrity of the community that the Bundy Report recommended that there be between thirty and sixty districts. It was to dilute the influence of the community and the U.F.T. recommended that

the number of districts be limited to no more than fifteen.

The U.F.T. proposed that all members of the community school board should be popularly elected but that the voting should be limited to parents. This restriction was aimed directly at community action groups, who provide much of the militant leadership in black and Puerto Rican communities. The constituencies of these groups are not limited to parents, so their influence would be seriously affected by such a restriction.

The U.F.T. recommended that the members of the central Board of Education be appointed by the Mayor from lists proposed by the community school boards. Such a procedure would enable the U.F.T. to exert its considerable influence at two levels, the district level and the mayoralty level.

In addition to recommendations concerned with the size of districts and the selection of board members, the U.F.T. offered a number of proposals designed to protect the rights and privileges of teachers. One such proposal was that the central Board continue to control that portion of the budget applicable to salaries, pensions, and other legal contractual obligations. Another was that tenure be granted on a city-wide basis and not be limited to a particular school district. A third was that the assignment of teachers be handled by the central Board in accordance with rank on the basis of a
national examination.

This last proposal touches on a critical issue that had been raised by the Bundy Report, the elimination of the influential Board of Examiners. This Board, through its control of selection and testing procedures for teachers and supervisors, controlled entry to and promotion within the school system. The Bundy Report had recommended that the community school boards be given authority to determine the eligibility of teaching personnel, subject to State requirements. The Report had further recommended that the community boards be empowered to select and assign all teaching personnel.

At first, the U.F.T. did not oppose the elimination of the Board of Examiners per se, provided that central control was maintained in the manner prescribed earlier.¹ Later, however, the position of the U.F.T. shifted to one of qualified endorsement of the Bundy Report's recommendation to eliminate the Board of Examiners, a position the U.F.T. continued to maintain as the possibility and the implications of community control became more threatening.

The Lindsay Plan

Although the proposals made by Mayor John V. Lindsay were similar to those of the Bundy Report in most respects, they did reflect a number of concessions to the U.F.T., the C.S.A., and the other groups who felt that the Bundy Report wanted to transfer too much power from the central Board to the community school boards. Under the Lindsay plan, for example, the central Board of Education retained responsibility for operation of the academic high schools (not just the specialized and vocational high schools) for an initial three-year period. This was a concession to the powerful high school division of the Board of Education, about whom it said: "There is the New York City school system, and then there is the the high school division."\(^1\) The Lindsay plan also recommended that the number of school districts be kept to thirty. Although this was double the number of the U.F.T. had proposed, nevertheless it was the minimum number the Bundy Report had proposed, in effect, another compromise.

Under the Lindsay plan, the community boards were empowered to select and assign personnel, but the central Board would determine the eligibility of the teaching staff through qualifying examinations. In a similar vein the

\(^1\)David Rogers, 110 Livingston Street (New York: Random House, 1968) p. 301.
Lindsay plan gave the central Board the power to ensure maintenance of State standards and to intervene if it found that established norms were being violated by the local boards.

The Lindsay modifications of the Bundy proposals were clearly designed to temper some of the provisions that had provoked the most concern on the part of teachers and supervisors and, at the same time, retain the spirit of the decentralization and community control concepts embodied in the Bundy Report. The response of U.F.T. president Albert Shanker to these modifications was a prediction that Mayor Lindsay would recommend even more changes because "he realizes that whatever is passed by the State Legislature will be called the Lindsay plan."

The Board of Education Plan

Although the U.F.T. may have been the most belligerent opponent of the Bundy proposals, it was not the most intransigent. This dubious distinction was shared by the Council of Supervisory Associations (C.S.A.) and the central Board of Education. Both of these groups took the position that educational performance was not a function of a structure but of process and this process must be controlled by professionals. Although the U.F.T. was prepared to accept

change except in those areas that might affect the security of teachers, the C.S.A. and the central Board were unwilling to accept any significant changes whatsoever.

The Board of Education recommended that the existing school districts be retained; that the composition and method of selecting local school boards be retained; and that the composition and method of selecting the central Board of Education be retained. The Board of Education further proposed that there be no change from the existing distribution of power, according to which the central Board was responsible for both educational policy and the operation of the school system.

Although the Board of Education was willing to allow the local school board to select the district superintendent, it recommended that the Board of Examiners continue to determine the eligibility of all personnel who would then be assigned by the central Board. The Board would consult with the local school boards, however, on the assignment of principals. Tenure would be determined on a citywide basis, not locally.

Under the Board of Education plan, the board would control funds for salaries and other mandated purposes, but would allocate to the local boards a lump sum for maintenance, repairs, books, and instructional material and equipment.
Local school boards would be permitted to choose from among certain programs, and to create new programs from whatever additional funds were available, subject to the approval of the central Board, curriculum would be handled centrally, but the local boards would be permitted to adopt it to their needs.¹

Council of Supervisory Associations Plan

The powerful Council of Supervisory Associations is a professional organization of about 3,000 members whose primary memberships are in fourteen constituent organizations, including the High School Principals Association, the Junior High School Principals Association, and the New York Elementary School Principals Association. The C.S.A. rejected even the few minor changes that the Board of Education was willing to accept.

The C.S.A. proposed that the City Superintendent continue to select the district Superintendent after consultation with the local Board. The Board of Examiners would select personnel, and the central board would assign them after some consultation with the local boards. Tenure would be on a citywide basis.

The C.S.A. also recommended that the central Board

continue to manage funds for such purposes as salaries, pensions, and major aspects of construction and repair. The local school boards would have funds for building maintenance and repairs, for educational services and for the purchase of textbooks and supplies.\(^1\)

**The Board of Regents Plan**

Although the proposals of the State Board of Regents supported the recommendations of the Bundy Report in most respects, they did deviate from those of the Report on a number of matters. Most significant was the Regents' recommendation that the number of school districts be reduced to fifteen. Although this proposal was the same as the one made by the U.F.T., the motivation was quite different, the Regents still placed high priority on school desegregation despite the setbacks that the cause of integration had received in the past. They hoped that, by having larger districts that would include children of many different racial and ethnic backgrounds, the progress of integration would be accelerated. However, the Regents did not reject the concept of community and the advantages of a smaller district altogether. They also proposed that there be a number of smaller districts in areas of low educational achievement with jurisdiction over elementary and intermediate schools. These districts, however, would be only temporary.

\(^1\)Ibid.
In other respects the proposals of the Regents were very much in accord with those of the Bundy Report. The Regents proposed that the District Superintendent be appointed by the local school board under contract, and that all other personnel be engaged by the local board on the recommendation of the district Superintendent. The minimum qualification for the appointment of all personnel would be State certification as opposed to certification by the New York Board of Examiners. Tenure of all incumbent personnel, however, would be protected.

The Board of Regents proposed that the central Board of Education comprise five members selected by the Mayor from a list submitted by a screening committee of civic and educational leaders. This recommendation differed from the Bundy Report recommendation in that the latter had proposed a nine-member board, five of whose members would be selected from names submitted by the presidents of the community school boards; the remaining four would be selected as proposed by the Regents.

The Regents also proposed that the local school boards comprise eleven members, who would be elected by all the eligible voters in the district (not just parents, as proposed by the U.F.T.). This proposal also differed from that of the Bundy Report, which had recommended that the local school boards comprise six members selected by a panel elected by parents and five members selected by the Mayor.
The Board of Regents further proposed that the local school boards have maximum control over their budgets, and that they be encouraged to experiment with educational practices and procedures. The central Board would have authority to deal with citywide aspects of education, and to maintain State and City standards.¹

These six proposals presented to the State Legislature in the Spring of 1968, reflected a broad spectrum of attitudes about decentralization and community control, from the C.S.A. plan with its uncompromising rejection of change on the one hand, to the Bundy Report with its strong orientation toward community control on the other. Ultimately, aspects of almost all of these proposals found their way into the 1969 decentralization law.

The Attitude of the Community

A significant factor during this critical period was the absence of strong community support for the Bundy proposals, particularly from the black communities that were supposed to be the principal beneficiaries of these proposals. Mario Fantini, who headed the staff that prepared the Bundy Report and a strong advocate of community control, acknowledges this lack of community support:

¹Ibid.
The Bundy Plan itself was viewed with almost as much suspicion by the community control advocates as it was by the majority of teachers and supervisors. Disbelief that a progressive equitable blueprint could emanate from the establishment tended to dilute any wholehearted support the plan may have had from the strongest community leaders.¹

Fantini points out that although these attitudes may have been justified on the basis of long and better experience, they were self-defeating from the very first round of the community control struggle.

The Marchi Law

By the time the various community control proposals reached the State Legislature in May 1968, it was evident that, although some moderate form of decentralization might be acceptable, the legislators were going to proceed with caution. Moderation and caution were certainly the dominant characteristics of two proposals drafted by State Senator John J. Marchi, Republican from Staten Island and Chairman of the Senate Committee on New York City. The First of these two proposals called upon the existing Board of Education to produce a decentralization plan by July 1, 1969. The Board would then hold hearings on the plan and submit recommendations to the 1970 session of the State Legislature.

The second Marchi proposal made provisions for the interim period during which the Board of Education would be drawing up a decentralization plan. The thirty existing local boards would be given the power to hire superintendents for their districts. They would also be permitted to conduct special urban educational projects for the disadvantaged with the approval of the central Board. Fiscal power and the responsibility for hiring and firing teachers, granting tenure and contract negotiation would be controlled by the central Board. ¹

A number of legislators wanted a stronger decentralization law, but any and all attempts to achieve a stronger law were bitterly opposed by the opponents of decentralization, foremost among whom was the United Federation of Teachers. Albert Shanker was accused of threatening to spend union funds to defeat legislators who voted against the union position.² That this was no idle threat is indicated by the fact that Shanker himself estimated that his union spent between $125,000 and $250,000 in its campaign to defeat decentralization of the City's schools.³ Another union official, Keith Brand, an opponent


of Shanker for the U.F.T. presidency, placed the figure at $500,000.¹

There are indications that this unrelenting pressure may have reached a point where it was becoming counterproductive. One legislative leader warned Shanker that he was playing with dynamite, and that if he did not drop or modify his demands, the legislators might very well decide to scrap the mild decentralization plan and adopt a more sweeping one.² This warning succeeded because shortly after it was issued, the Legislature finally passed a somewhat stronger version of the earlier measures that had been proposed by Senator Marchi. The Marchi Law as it has come to be called, included the following provisions: 1) The Board of Education was enlarged from nine members to thirteen; 2) The enlarged Board would be responsible for preparing a detailed decentralization plan for presentation to the State Board of Regents and to the State Legislature; 3) During the interim period while the Board was preparing a permanent plan, it was authorized, with the approval of the State Board of Regents, to delegate any of its powers to the thirty existing local school


boards, and to the three experimental districts, I. S. 201, Two Bridges and Ocean Hill-Brownsville.¹

Although the Marchi Law had the effect of delaying any final action on decentralization, it did make two important contributions to the progress of decentralization. By expanding the membership on the Board of Education from nine to thirteen members, it gave Mayor Lindsay the opportunity to appoint four new members to the Board who presumably, would be less hostile to the concept of decentralization. By granting the Board of Education authority to delegate its authority to the local school boards, the Legislature removed an important legal obstacle to decentralization.

In signing the Marchi Bill, Governor Rockefeller commented: "While the bill may not be satisfactory to all persons concerned, it sets a framework for proper action before the end of the 1968-1969 school year."² One of those to whom the March Law was definitely not satisfactory was Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, psychologist and the only Black ever to have served on the State Board of Regents. Dr. Clark accused Albert Shanker of having used political


threats, and arrogance "to persuade the Legislature to pass a bill that sacrifices the interests of children in deprived areas to the interests of the U.F.T. and the Board of Education."¹

The 1969 Decentralization Law

By the time the Marchi Bill was signed into law, the seeds of conflict had already been planted in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration district. This conflict, which was to erupt in the Fall of 1968, was highlighted by the longest and most disruptive teacher's strike in the city's history. It brought into the open submerged feelings of racism and anti-Semitism whose intensity was probably not even suspected by the participants. It was against this background that the Board of Education struggled during the Fall and Winter of 1968 to produce a decentralization plan that could be presented to the Legislature in the Spring of 1969.

By the end of January, 1969, the Board of Education was ready with its proposals. These included: 1) the local districts would be governed by locally-elected community school boards. These boards would select their own

community superintendent and would have substantial operating authority over the elementary and junior high schools in their districts. All high schools (except those on Staten Island) would remain under the jurisdiction of the central Board; 2) the local school boards would inherit the present school staffs in their districts, but they would be permitted to recruit and hire additional teachers and other personnel as needed. They could set educational policy, control school repairs and maintenance funds, and purchase supplies; 3) the local boards could transfer teachers within the district, but no teacher could be transferred out of the district involuntarily. Tenured teachers would continue to be protected against dismissal; 4) the central Board would enforce citywide standards, oversee specialized programs and provide certain services; 5) the city Board of Examiners would be abolished and State certification would become the requirement for the employment of teachers; 6) Community school districts would be permitted to create one new demonstration projection within each district with the approval of the City Board.\(^1\)

When the State Board of Regents received the decentralization plan that had been proposed by the city Board, the Regents proceeded to make some sweeping changes of their own. Taking the position that the very essence of the community school concept was the transfer of the traditional responsibilities of the central Board to the community boards, the Regents proposed that the existing thirteen members unsalaried central Board be eliminated entirely. Those responsibilities that had not been transferred to the community boards could be discharged more effectively, according to the Regents, by either an individual or by a board of three to five members all of whom would be compensated. Appointment would be made by the Mayor with the consent of the City Council.

The Regent's proposals departed from those of the city Board in several additional ways: 1) The Regents proposed that the local school boards be permitted to use money allocated to them in a lump sum without prior approval of a detailed budget as was proposed by the City Board; 2) The City Board had proposed that the community school boards have the power to determine curriculum in their schools in accordance with State laws and the regulations of the Commissioner of Education, subject to the City

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2Ibid.
Board's power to set citywide minimum curriculum requirements. The Regents amended this proposal by deleting the City Board's authority to set citywide standards; 1 3) The City Board had proposed that existing laws be modified to permit a school district employee to be a candidate for community school board membership in any district other than the one in which he was employed. The Regents proposed that no employee of the New York City school system should be eligible for election to a community school board. 2

U.F.T. President Albert Shanker labeled both proposals an educational disaster, and warned that about half of the city's 58,000 teachers would quit the public school system if these plans were approved by the State Legislature. 3

With memories of the teacher's strike of 1968 still very fresh in their minds, the legislators were hardly in the mood for another confrontation.

The decentralization-community control issue was hotly contested in the Legislature over a period of several weeks. The black caucus, whose major spokesman were Basil Patterson and Charles Rangel, led the fight for a strong decentralization law, but were outvoted on practically every

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1Ibid.
2Ibid.
major point. The decentralization law that finally emerged on April 30, 1969\(^1\) satisfied few of the supporters of decentralization and not even all of its opponents. The method it provided for the selection of central Board members was later declared unconstitutional. Some of its provisions, particularly those defining the powers of the central Board, were so vague that they invited confusion and conflict.

All in all, the provisions of the Decentralization Law bore little resemblance to the proposals made by the Bundy Committee, a committee that had been mandated by the State Legislature for the express purpose of making recommendations that would provide the basis for decentralization legislation. A comparison of the recommendations of the Bundy Report and the provisions of the Decentralization Law discloses how far the State Legislature had departed from the spirit of the Bundy Report, the spirit of decentralization.

Selection of Central Board of Education Members

Consistent with its objective of increasing community participation in the school system, the Bundy Report had recommended that five members of a nine-member central Board

\(^{1}\)State of New York Senate Bill 5690 and Assembly Bill 7175.
of Education be selected by the Mayor. The remaining five members would be elected by the voters of each borough, one board member for each borough. This meant that the borough of Richmond with one school district (district thirty-one) and only 48,401 pupils (86.9 percent of whom are white) and the borough of Brooklyn, encompassing ten school districts (districts thirteen to twenty-two inclusive) and serving 414,892 pupils (61.7 percent of whom are black and Puerto Rican) would each have one Board member representing them. This method of election was so patently unrepresentative that it was declared in violation of the "one man, one vote" rule by a Federal court.

Selection of Community School Board Members

The Bundy Report had proposed that the community school boards comprise eleven members each. Six members would be selected by district panels elected by parents of children who attended schools in the district. The remaining five members would be selected by the Mayor (after consultation with parents and community organizations) from lists of qualified persons that would be presented by the central Board. The Bundy Panel considered and rejected the direct

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1Article 52A section 2590-b of the State Education Act as amended April 30, 1969.

election of community school board members. This decision was motivated by the fear of possible domination of the community boards by residents who were not parents and by sectarian groups. The decentralization law provided for the direct election of community school boards by all residents of the community under a system of proportional representation, thereby opening the door to the very abuses the Bundy Panel had tried to avoid.

Responsibility for Curriculum

The Bundy Report had recommended that the community school boards have the responsibility for the general course of study given in the schools. This course of study would have to comply with the standards established by the State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education. The central Board would be responsible for reviewing the education provided in the schools under the jurisdiction of the community school boards. The results of this review and any recommendations for action in case of violations of State educational standards would be reported to the State Commissioner of Education. The Decentralization Law, however, assigned the responsibility for setting minimum education standards and curriculum requirements for all

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1Bundy Report, pp. 18-19.
2Article 52A, section 2590-c.
3Bundy Report, p. 79.
schools and programs to the Chancellor (the new title for the Superintendent). Each Community School Board is required to make an annual report to the Chancellor covering all matters relating to the schools under its jurisdiction. This report should include an evaluation of the educational effectiveness of these schools and their programs.\(^1\) If, in the judgment of the Chancellor, a Community School Board fails to comply with the provisions of the law, the Chancellor can suspend or remove the offending Community Board or any member of it.\(^2\)

**Selection and Appointment of School Personnel**

A major recommendation of the Bundy Report had been to eliminate the Board of Examiners and to replace the highly centralized and restrictive entry and promotion policies of the existing system with more liberal policies. To give districts the largest possible pool from which to choose, the Report proposed that selection be limited only by the requirement that teachers meet State certification standards and that appointments be competitive. The Bundy Report also proposed that the community school districts be free to petition the State Commissioner

\(^1\)Article 52A, section 2590-h, paragraphs 8, 9 and 10.

\(^2\)Article 52A, section 2590-i.
of Education for alternative means of certifying teachers. These would include the use of certain approved college and university programs with internship provisions, the National Teachers Examination, and teaching experience in the Peace Corps or V.I.S.T.A. Teachers and non-supervisory personnel would be hired by the community school board on recommendation of the community superintendent and his staff.

The Bundy Report had proposed that eligibility for supervisory positions be governed by State standards or by alternative standards developed in the district and approved by the State Education Commissioner. It also had recommended that the ranking of candidates be abandoned for all positions; that the basis of examination for supervisory positions be enlarged to give emphasis to performance as opposed to pencil-and-paper tests; and that consideration be given to applicants in other school districts inside and outside the city as well as to those already in the district.

Under the provisions of the Decentralization Law, the Board of Examiners was retained and given the power to prepare and administer examinations to determine the fitness of all candidates for teaching and supervisory positions.

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1Bundy Report, pp. 48-49.
2Ibid., p. 51.
other than the positions of Chancellor, Executive
Deputy City Superintendent, Deputy City Superintendent,
Assistant City Superintendent and Community Superintendent.¹

The Decentralization Law required each Community
School Board to appoint teachers for all schools and
programs under its jurisdiction who are assigned to the
district by the Chancellor from competitive eligible
lists. Insofar as was possible, the Chancellor was
supposed to honor requests by the Community Boards for
specific persons when making such assignments. A special
provision was made for schools in which the reading scores
of the pupils were in the lower forty-five percent of all
schools. Before October 1 of each year, every school has
to be ranked in order of percentage of pupils who are
reading at grade level as determined by a comprehensive
reading examination prepared and administered under the
auspices of the Chancellor. If the ranking of a school
falls in the lower forty-five percent of all schools, the
Community School Board having jurisdiction over that
school, may appoint any person to teach in the school
without regard to any competitive eligibility list, pro-
vided he has the education and experience for certification
as a teacher, and provided he passes a qualifying examina-
tion prepared and administered by the Board of Examiners
or passes the National Teachers Examination with the average

¹Article 52A, section 2590-j, paragraph 3(a) (1).
pass mark established over a five-year period.\(^1\)

**Jurisdiction Over High Schools**

The Bundy Report proposed that high schools be under the jurisdiction of the Community school boards and that only the city's five special high schools and twenty-nine vocational schools should continue to be operated by the central Board of Education.\(^2\) Under the provisions of the Decentralization Law, however, the power to control and operate all academic and vocational high schools was given to the chancellor until these schools would be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Community school Boards.\(^3\)

**Compensation of Community School Board Members**

The Bundy Report recommended that members of Community School Boards receive compensation for expenses they incurred, including lost wages for time spent in attending school meetings. The Report also recommended that Community School Board members be compensated for expenses incurred including lost wages, while engaged in activities other than meetings that the Community Board might impose on its members.\(^4\) This recommendation was

\(^1\)Article 52A, section 2590-j, paragraph 4(c), 5(a), 5(b).

\(^2\)Bundy Report, p. 23.

\(^3\)Article 52A, section 2590-h, paragraph 1.

\(^4\)Bundy Report, p. 78.
ignored by the Legislature, but the Decentralization Law did provide for compensation for the members of the central Board of Education, although this had not even been mentioned in the Bundy Report. ¹

Summary and Analysis

The direction of the Bundy proposals, the Regents proposals, the Lindsay proposals, and the proposals of the revised central Board of Education had been toward greater autonomy for the local community. The decentralization law that was finally enacted, however, emphasized the administrative aspects of decentralization while it carefully hedged whatever powers it granted to the community with tight safeguards and constraints. The method of selecting members of the central Board of Education would have led to maximum dilution of the votes of minority group community members. This provision was so unrepresentative that it was invalidated by the courts. The method of selecting Community School Board members, although not illegal, contributed, at least in part, to the serious underrepresentation of blacks and Puerto Ricans on Community school boards. Although 57.2% of the city's public schools enrollment was

¹Article 52A, section 2590-b. Amount set by New York City Council at $100 per day.
black or Puerto Rican, only sixteen to seventeen percent of the 279 members elected to Community School Boards throughout the city were black and only ten to eleven percent were Puerto Rican.\footnote{Boulton H. Demas, The School Election: A Critique of the 1969 New York City School Decentralization (New York: Institute for Community Studies, 1971), p. 4.}

The provisions of the Decentralization Law on compensation (or lack of compensation) for Community School Board members was significantly related to the composition of the Community School Boards. Sixty-three point eight percent of all Board members hold professional, technical or managerial positions; 10.3% are employed by poverty agencies or as paraprofessionals; 5.3% are clergymen; 16.6% are housewives; 4% are employed as laborers or mechanics, or in relatively low-paying unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.\footnote{Ibid.} The demands on Community Board members' time are so great that in poverty areas, where the working members of the population are engaged in occupations from which they cannot take time off, a large proportion of the community is automatically excluded from Community School Board membership. This applies to the housewives as well. It is very difficulty for wives and mothers in poverty areas to cope with the demands of a household and of rearing small children while serving on a community Board without
some form of compensation to pay for baby sitters and household help.¹

The one member of the professional staff over whom the Community School Board has complete jurisdiction is the community Superintendent. All other members of the supervisory and teaching staff are subject to the jurisdiction of the Community Board but only within the constraints imposed by union contracts and the provisions of the Decentralization Law.

Recruitment of new teachers and supervisors is restricted by provisions very similar to those that existed prior to decentralization. The Board of Examiners has been retained with most of its powers intact.

Despite the various constraints that were imposed on the Community School Boards vis-a-vis the allocation of funds, the selection of staff and the choice of curriculum, the Decentralization Law did provide for some dilution of authority from headquarters to local school boards.

First and foremost, it gave recognition to the fact that the local community has a role to play in the conduct of its schools, and that this role is not merely a passive one. Secondly, the concept of accountability of the professional staff for their performance, as well as the concept of the accountability of the Community Board for theirs,

¹Since July 1972, Board members have received an expense allowance of $50.00 a month, and the president an allowance of $100.00 a month.
is implicit in the Decentralization Law. Finally, there is recognition of the diversity of the school population and the variety of its needs with respect to school programs and curriculum. The question, however, is whether or not the Decentralization Law is an adequate vehicle to accomplish those objectives that proponents of decentralization and community control contend would lead to increased school effectiveness.
CHAPTER III

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT SEVEN AND THE
EFFECTS OF DECENTRALIZATION

Community District Seven in the South Bronx of New York City was selected for this study because it has many of the problems you have in the city. (i.e., unemployment, drug addiction and deteriorated housing). It was the failure of the centralized school system to provide pupils from poverty areas such as this with basic learning skills that, to a large extent, provoked the demand for decentralization and community control. It is only fitting, therefore, that the impact of the Decentralization Law and the concept of community control should be examined here. Moreover, because of the relationship between education and upwards mobility, it is in districts such as this that decentralization must prove its effectiveness as an instrument for change.

District Seven, comprising most of the South Bronx, has a population of approximately 200,000 people. About 65% of the population is Puerto Rican; about 35% are black, and the balance non-Puerto Rican whites. These proportions
are closely reflected in the composition of the student population as shown in Table 1.

With a school population that is ninety percent black or Puerto Rican, District Seven has a far higher concentration of these two ethnic groups than does the Bronx as a whole. In the Bronx, about 74% of the student body is either black or Puerto Rican; in Manhattan about 73%; in Brooklyn, about 62%; in Queens, about 32%; and in Richmond (Staten Island) about 12%. A further distinctive demographic feature of District seven is the fact that, although the student population of the Bronx as a whole is black and 39.7% Puerto Rican, in District seven the Puerto Ricans outnumber the blacks two to one.

The number of students now under the jurisdiction of Community District seven is approximately 30,000. In the fall of 1968, prior to decentralization, there were 35,000 students including those attending two vocational high schools and one "six hundred" school.\(^1\) At that time, the district included nineteen elementary schools and four intermediate schools in addition to the two high schools and the "six hundred" school.

\(^1\)Schools numbered in the "600" series are designated "special schools for maladjusted children" by the Board of Education.
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<th>School</th>
<th>Total Number of Pupils</th>
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<th>Percent Puerto Rican</th>
<th>Percent Other Spanish Germans</th>
<th>Percent All Others</th>
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Under the provisions of the Decentralization Law, the two high schools and the "six hundred" school were reassigned to the jurisdiction of Community District eight. This reduced the number of schools under the jurisdiction of Community District seven from twenty-six to twenty-two. The present student population of Intermediate School thirty-eight has been transferred to two new intermediate schools, Intermediate School 151 and Intermediate School 162 and Intermediate School thirty-eight has been abandoned. In addition, another elementary school, P. S. 156, has been completed. This brings the total number of schools in District Seven to twenty-four.

The area in which District Seven is located has been described as one of the most severely impacted poverty areas not just in New York City, but in the entire nation. Forty percent of the families have incomes under $4,000. Its problems include unemployment, drug addiction, unwed teenage mothers, infant mortality, veneral disease, truancy and school dropouts. Housing has steadily deteriorated. There has been no private construction of housing in the past fifty years. The only new housing has been provided by eleven public housing projects that have been built in the area.¹

The Effects of Decentralization

The indicators that were selected to measure change in school effectiveness since decentralization were reading scores, student absenteeism and student suspensions.

Reading Scores

Citywide standardized achievement tests in reading have been administered for many years in all schools in the second through ninth grades. When the Decentralization Law was enacted, one of its provisions required the Chancellor to hold these comprehensive reading examinations annually during April or May. Then, prior to October 1, each school is ranked in order of the percentage of pupils reading above grade level.¹ This procedure not only serves as a check on pupil performance in the schools, but also has an important bearing on the selection of teachers. If the ranking of a school under the jurisdiction of a community district falls in the lower forty-five percent, the Community Board can appoint any person as a teacher in that school without regard to any competitive eligibility. The only requirements are that he has the education and experience qualifications for certification as a teacher, and either passes a qualifying examination prepared by the Board of Examiners or has passed the National Teachers Examination within the past four years.²

¹State of New York Senate Bill 5690 and Assembly Bill 7175, Article 52A, section 2590-j; paragraph 5 (a).

²Ibid., Article 52A, section 2590-j, paragraph 5(a), (b), and (c).
scores for fifth grade students in the schools in District Seven from 1965 to 1972 appear in Table 2.

Test scores are given in grade equivalent units. The number of correct answers that the pupil achieves is converted to a grade equivalent score on the basis of tables developed when the test was standardized on a national sample of students. In formulating the standardized scoring system, the ten months of the school year are represented by tenths of the grade equivalent score. A score of 5.7 therefore, would be the grade equivalent score for a test given in March, the seventh month of one year's reading instruction.¹

The grade equivalent scores for District Seven have fallen well below the City average regularly. In most years since 1965, the disparity has been a year or more. In 1971, this disparity was reduced to eight months, not because the reading scores in District Seven had improved, but because the citywide average had fallen to its lowest point in six years. In 1972, however, the gap widened once again to a year.

These scores tell us very little about the effects of decentralization. They do, however, reinforce the very strong belief that the schools are failing in one of their fundamental functions and that decentralized school districts must seek more innovative approaches geared to individual needs. For example,

the performance of students at P. S. 31 have been consistently higher than the district average or the city average. The reason is that P. S. 31 initiated a Special Primary program funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was designed to raise the academic level of children from minority groups. Reading instruction has been conducted in small departmentalized groups and a special effort has been made to detect and correct learning disabilities early through individual attention.

In releasing the citywide test results for 1969-70, Harvey B. Scribner, Chancellor of the Board of Education of the city of New York schools, pointed out that judgments based solely on test scores are often unfair and unproductive. In the first place, a school whose test results, as a group, indicate an academic "failure" may actually be a "success" in the sense that its students may have made important progress, although their absolute academic level may be below that of other schools. In the second place, the school experience includes such intangibles as maturity, emotional and psychological growth, and the development of values and attitudes. Chancellor Scribner concluded his statement by saying:

It is simplistic and too easy to blame academic failure on the learner, on his lack of interest, his family background or his economical level. When a student fails to learn, it is more accurate to say that the learning process has been ineffective, and the school must seek, perhaps with new methods and new resources, to bring to that process and that student a new level of academic success.¹

¹Ibid., p. iv.
This concept had the strong support of the Community School Board and the community action groups in District Seven. As a result, although decentralization has had no visible effect on reading scores for pupils of District Seven, the Decentralization Law incorporates provisions that give these test scores some important implications for teachers. The first of these is that the Board can bypass the eligibility lists in its selection of teachers if the school ranks in the lower forty-five percent of test scores. The second of these gives the Community School Board the power to grant tenure or to withhold it. These provisions are particularly relevant in District Seven where sixty percent of the pupils are Puerto Rican and where the demand for an increase in the number of Spanish-speaking teachers ("who are more responsive to the needs of Spanish-speaking children") has become more and more insistent.

This demand posed a threat to white teachers in District Seven, and in some instances, the black teachers as well. Not surprisingly, the teachers used various methods to try to keep the reading scores at or above level. For example, if the reading test scores for the individual schools in District Seven are examined year by year, it can be observed that there are a number of instances of sudden leaps forward, some as much as a year or more. When asked about these "improvements" the community superintendent's explanation was to the point: "They cheat." This cheating takes the form of coaching pupils
## TABLE 2

**CITYWIDE SURVEY OF READING ABILITY, DISTRICT 7, 5th GRADE, 1965 TO 1972**

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CITYWIDE SURVEY OF READING ABILITY, DISTRICT 7,
5th GRADE, 1965 TO 1972

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Source: Bureau of Educational Research, Board of Education of the City of New York.
on materials taken from the actual tests themselves. These practices were by no means confined to District Seven.\(^1\) In fact, they were so widespread that Chancellor Scribner found it necessary to send a letter to all Community School Boards and community superintendents advising them of their responsibility, under the Decentralization Law, for actions performed by school personnel relating to instruction and evaluation. At the same time, he advised the community Superintendents and their Boards, of the appointment of a committee on citywide reading tests to evaluate the current test and to explore ways to avoid the pressures caused by the publication of reading scores by schools as required by law.\(^2\)

Although no positive conclusions can be drawn at this time about the effect of decentralization on reading test scores as a measure of school effectiveness, we can conclude that the Decentralization Law has shifted the burden of failure from the pupil to the school system. The results of this shift are not yet evident, but at least the pressure to change is now being exerted on the system rather than on the pupils and their parents.


Suspensions

In discussing the shortcomings of the New York public school systems, the Bundy Report called attention to the fact that some 12,000 students had been suspended during the previous school year. These suspensions were of two types: (1) A principal had the power to suspend the students for up to five days in cases where he felt that the behavior of the student was disruptive or presented a danger to other students or staff members. Most of the suspensions were of this type. (2) If the principal felt that a longer period of suspension was desirable, he could refer the matter to the community Superintendent, who would arrange for a hearing. After the hearing, the student might be transferred to another school, sent to a "six hundred" school (600 schools are special schools for maladjusted children), referred to the Bureau of Child Guidance, or reinstated in his old school. Until he is reassigned, however, the student can be kept on suspension.

The New York Civil Liberties Union had charged that many students had been suspended without being given a fair hearing.¹ Ellen Lurie, Educational Director of United Bronx Parents, contended that "too many principals use suspensions to harass students, intimidate parents and to get rid of those pupils they simply do not want to handle."² When


Dr. Bernard Friedman became community Superintendent of District Seven in 1965, one of his first appointments was a new guidance person to investigate the reasons for so many suspensions. In the first year after this appointment, suspensions dropped from eighty-nine to fifty; in the second year, from fifty to twenty-five; in the following year, from twenty-five to eight; and finally suspensions dropped to zero. (Table 3).

Between 1966 and 1970, this policy at district headquarters was reflected in a reduction in the number of principals' five-day suspensions at the local level. From 362 suspensions in 1966-67, the total dropped to 113 in 1969 - 70. In 1970-71, however, it rose to 163, and in 1971-72 to 283, the highest point in five years. Three schools (P. S. 30, J.H.S. 38 and J.H.. 149) accounted for sixty-five percent of the suspensions in 1970-71. Two of the same schools (P.S. 30 and J.H.S. 149) plus a third (J.H.S. 162, a new school to which the students of J.H.S. had been transferred) accounted for seventy percent of the suspensions in 1971-1972. (Table 4). Guidance counselors explained this concentration of suspensions as being related to the appointment of new principals who felt that they had to demonstrate control over their particular school.

Student Absenteeism

Excessive absenteeism has been described by the
TABLE 3
DISTRICT SUSPENSIONS IN DISTRICT 7
1965 TO 1972

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TABLE 3 (Continued)

DISTRICT SUSPENSIONS IN DISTRICT 7
1965 TO 1972

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Source: Office of Special Services, Guidance Department, District 7, Board of Education of the City of New York.
TABLE 4
PRINCIPAL'S SUSPENSIONS IN DISTRICT 7
1966 TO 1972

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PRINCIPAL'S SUSPENSIONS IN DISTRICT 7
1966 TO 1972

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a = New Principal
b = Acting Principal
c = New school students transferred from J.H.S. 38, which are closed.

Source: Office of Special Services, Guidance Department, District 7, Board of Education, City of New York.

-87-
Community School Board of District Seven as one of its major
difficulties.\footnote{Annual Report of Community School Board Seven for
1970-71, Submitted to Chancellor Scribner of The Board of
Education of the City of New York, August 27, 1971.} It follows a pattern that had persisted over
the last several years (Table 5) although it was not peculiar
to District Seven. Figures obtained from the City Controller's
office show that New York City, with an attendance rate of
eighty three percent, leads the country in pupil absences.
Los. Angeles, for example, had an attendance rate of 97.2%
San Francisco, 94.5%; and Washington, D. C. 93%. Most of the
schools in District Seven fell very close to the citywide
average, with approximately half slightly over it and half
slightly under it.

In industry, the relation of absenteeism to job
satisfaction has been investigated by several psychologists.
describes several studies that have reported a correlation:

To the extent to which the worker derives satis-
faction from participating in his work role, we
would assume that there would be a force acting
on him to be present at work. It would seem to
make little difference what characteristics of the
work role are the source of these rewards. The only
requirement is that the attainment is dependent on
being present at work.\footnote{Victor H. Vroom, \textit{Work and Motivation} (New York:
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# TABLE 5 (Continued)

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN DISTRICT 7, 1965 TO 1972

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<td>85.26%</td>
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Citywide 86.94% 86.40% 81.63% 82.90% 83.55% 83.86%

Source: Bureau of Attendance, District 7, Board of Education of the City of New York.
If this relationship holds true of pupils and their schools, it would appear that many of them are finding attendance a far from satisfying experience.

Like his adult counterpart, the child, also makes judgements of the school. He may regard it as a waste of time, or, on the other hand, as an exciting and rewarding experience that meets his needs. What the pupil's experience will be depends, at least in part, on his attitude toward school, and these attitudes, in turn, are determined to a greater or lesser extent by the attitudes of his parents, the community at large, and his peers. If parents and neighbors regard the school as a strange, unresponsive, or ineffective institution, such an atmosphere contributes to pupil alienation from the school and to academic failure. If, on the other hand, the community can identify with the school and can recognize the agency in which they have an investment, children will also have positive expectations.\(^1\) It was with such attitudes in mind that one of the objectives of decentralization was to provide for greater participation and a more meaningful role on the part of parents and the community.

Unfortunately, in poverty areas, the causes for absenteeism are frequently physical rather than psychological. In the black and Puerto Rican communities of the South Bronx, where school absenteeism is the greatest, high family mobility,

\(^{1}\text{Bundy Report, p. 12.}\)
illness and lack of adequate clothing, particularly during
the winter months, are major contributing factors. These
factors are not likely to respond to decentralization. Under
the circumstances, it is not surprising that there has been
little change in the attendance figures in District Seven
since decentralization. So far as the future is concerned, it
would appear that any large change in pupil attendance would
require not only organizational reform of the school system,
but also sweeping social reform of city services including
more resources and social services for the poor.

Integration of the Local School With
the Local Community

Proponents of decentralization and community control
have attributed at least part of the blame for the failures
of the New York City public school system to the alienation
of the children and their parents from schools with which
they did not identify. For these parents and children, the
schools were institutions controlled by some remote and face-
less governmental agency. They perceived the teachers and
supervisors as "outsiders" who did not live in the district,
who entered it reluctantly, and who left it quickly at the
three o'clock bell. In 1971, for example, the federal govern-
ment authorized "hazard pay" for teachers in schools located
in slum areas.1

1"Hazard"Pay Authorized by U. S. for Teachers in Slum
With decentralization and increased community control, it was felt that there would be greater integration of the school with the community. This would manifest itself in a number of ways: (1) Through the Community School Board, there would be an increased sense of participation on the part of the community; (2) There would be an increase in the number of staff members who live in the community and were part of it; (3) There would be a closer relationship among the professional staff, the parents and the community at large; (4) There would be greater use of school facilities by the community after school hours.

In District Seven, the first and second of these objectives have been achieved in a limited way. The results are inconclusive on the third objective and as for the fourth, the effects of decentralization and community control were adverse.

Participation by the Community in Decision-Making

There are two aspects of the community's role in decision-making that must be considered. The first is the extent to which the sentiments and attitudes of the community influence the decisions of the Community School Board. The second, and possibly more significant, aspect is the extent to which the objectives and actions desired by the community are within the decision-making power of the Community School Board. Although the Community School Board is, for the most part, highly sensitive to the demands of the community, the
most pressing demands are not within the jurisdiction of the Community Board.

The influence of the community on decision-making is exerted through a variety of channels. It is exerted through the anti-poverty agencies such as the South Bronx Community Council. The United Bronx Parents has an important influence on the Community Board. The fact that the members of the Community School Board also hold memberships in one or more of these organizations helps to keep them in touch with large segments of the community.

The Parents Associations in the local schools provide another direct link between the local community and the Community School Board. This link has been strengthened by the assignment of Board members to specific schools.

Although there might have been some issues on which the community has been divided, there have been few, if any, instances on which the Board has taken a position with which the community as a whole (both black and Puerto Rican) has disagreed. Although this is partly the result of the Board's sensitivity to the demands of the community, it is also a reflection of the narrow range of issues within which the Community Board has the authority to make decisions.

There were forty different resolutions acted upon by the Community School Board at the open meetings and discussions during 1970-71. Of these forty resolutions, fourteen were
confirmations of appointments of staff personnel; six were concerned with the internal organization of the Board itself (election of officers, etc.); three dealt with various modifications within the budget (shifting funds from one use to another). The remaining seventeen resolutions dealt with the following topics: proposals for the District Seven budget for the next year, to be submitted to the Chancellor; free milk and free lunch for all children in District Seven; the composition of the Advisory Committees for Title I and State Urban Education Programs; names for three new school; recommendations for a school site; recommendation for an early childhood center; proposal for a special curriculum for over-age students in one Intermediate School; termination of a probationary teacher for excessive absenteeism; expansion of the playground area for one school; acceptance of the Project Redesign program offered by the New York State Education Department; participation in Bronx Day; rezoning of one school whose students had been transferred to the newly built I.S. 162; and supervision of a mini school by the principal of an adjacent school.

These topics, all within the competence of the Board, aroused very little controversy. The issues that aroused the most emotion and the most heated discussion were those over which neither the Board nor the community Superintendent had control. One such issue was the recurrent demand by
by community members for an increase in the number of black and Puerto Rican teachers and supervisors. The Community Board and the Community Superintendent had only limited power in this area. They were bound by the requirements of the central Board and by union contracts. Nonetheless at many meetings it was the subject that provoked the most intense interest.

It can be said that the community, through the Community School Board, did have a role in decision making, and, to that extent, decentralization has helped in the integration of school and community. But the range of issues that are within the powers of the Community School Board is restricted to such an extent that the sense of effective participation is neutralized by a sense of frustration.

**Staff Members Drawn From the Community**

A significant development in the composition of the staffs of schools in District Seven is the number of paraprofessionals employed in the classroom and in various other capacities associated with the schools. There are approximately five hundred paraprofessionals, all of whom are black or Puerto Rican, and all of whom live in the community, employed in District Seven. They were referred by the anti poverty agencies such as the South Bronx Community Corporation and the Hunts Point Community Corporation, both of which are closely identified with the community and were
appointed by the Community School Board and the community Superintendent.

Paraprofessionals are employed as teachers' aides, school aides, student aides, homework helpers, educational assistants, and family assistants. In Project Success (a program funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) for example, educational assistants are an integral part of the program, the purpose of which is to provide help to pupils with low reading scores. The educational assistants receive special training in the use of programmed reading materials. They work not only with the professional staff and the pupils, but also with parents in parent workshops and open meetings during which the program is explained and discussed.

Another category of paraprofessional is the family assistant. The family assistants are employed under the Strenghtened Early Childhood Program, which is also funded by Title I of the ESEA. The family assistants encourage parents to come to school, to join the activities, and to become involved, particularly in those workshops that cover material with which their children may be having difficulty and need help. If a child has been absent, a family assistant visits the home, brings homework, and tries to find out when the child will return to school. The fact that the paraprofessionals are part of the community and are, in many instances, bilingual, makes them invaluable in this work.
The paraprofessional, therefore, is a clearly recognizable integrating link between the community and the school.

**Relationship Among Parents, Community, and the Professional Staff**

The principals and the professional staffs of the local schools have, for the most part, made a conscientious effort to attract parents into the schools and to persuade them to become involved in one or more of the many problems and activities that have been made available. Some of the programs are primarily social. Family rooms are maintained in which refreshments are served and there are facilities for sewing and arts and crafts.

Some of the programs, on the other hand, are primarily educational. Workshops are held to familiarize parents with the school curriculum. Parents are invited to school events, assemblies, lectures, and art shows. They are invited to go on trips with the children's classes. The use of the school's library facilities was offered to parents.

Several of the schools asked parents to serve on the working committees of the school. Parents, for example, have been asked to serve on committees that are evaluating, reviewing, and selecting texts and supplies. Parents are invited to attend faculty conferences and to join in the discussion.

Nevertheless, progress in the direction of bringing about a more broadly based participation on the part of
parents and community in the schools has been slow. The response to the various programs and activities that have been offered has not reflected the entire school population. ¹

This limited response cannot be attributed to lack of interest. Educational workshops conducted by United Bronx Parents are usually well attended. There are, however, a number of factors that might account for the difference in response. The United Bronx Parents is a grass-roots organization thoroughly integrated with the community, particularly the Puerto Rican community. Parents receive a stipend of $7.00 for each session they attend to offset the cost of baby sitters and transportation. All workshops are conducted in Spanish as well as in English, and all text material used in connection with these sessions are printed in Spanish as well as in English.

In brief, U.B.P.'s approach is simple, direct, and delivered in language that community people understand. There is an underlying difference in philosophy between the efforts of the professional staff and those of the United Bronx Parents. The efforts of the professional staff are directed toward inducing the community to improve its understanding of the school system and to adjust to it. U.B.P., on the other hand, places its emphasis on the failures of the system, and demands that the system under-

¹Volume I, No. 3, p. 4; Annual Report of Community School Board Seven.
standing of the school system and to adjust to it. U.B.P., on the other hand, places its emphasis on the failures of the system, and demands that the system understand and adjust to the needs of the community. Until this basic conflict is resolved, progress in the direction of integrating school and community is likely to continue to be slow.

Another problem of parent and community relations is that of bringing blacks and Puerto Ricans together. Unfortunately, conflict is built into black and Puerto Rican relations by virtue of the organizational design created by the Decentralization Law. The method of selecting Community School Board members and allocating power is conducive to a highly divisive "winner-take-all" psychology. The dominant group on the Community School Board can, within limits, dictate curriculum, establish priorities, influence staff appointments, and determine the allocation of funds, with little opposition from the minority. At present, the Puerto Ricans dominate the Community School Board of District Seven because they control four of the nine seats on the Board. This is especially significant since only a majority (five votes) is required to carry all resolutions, including the election of new Board members. Moreover, the conflict caused by the organizational design of the community school district is reinforced by the design
of the community's anti-poverty agencies through overlapping memberships. As in the case of the community School district, the structure of the anti-poverty agencies also fosters a "winner-take-all" psychology. The anti-poverty agencies control such job opportunities as the assignment of paraprofessionals, and the allocation of anti-poverty funds for community projects.

It is true that, given the organizational design of the community school districts and of the anti-poverty agencies, the struggle for power, money and jobs among community factions might occur in any community. In the poverty areas, however, where these agencies are practically the only source of power, money and jobs, the struggle becomes more intense.

Unless the structure is changed to facilitate a more equitable distribution of resources, it is unlikely that relations among factions in the community will improve. And until relations improve, it is unlikely that community members will act in a unified way for the benefit of the whole community vis-a-vis education, or for that matter, any of the many other pressing needs of the community.

Power Equalization

One of the most controversial aspects of the 1969 Decentralization Law concerned the extent to which it contributed, or did not contribute to the redistribution of power throughout the school system. Marilyn Gittell, political
scientist and former director of the Institute for Community Studies at Queens College, views the movement for urban school reform through expanded community control as an attempt to achieve a new balance of power by introducing competition into the system. Local groups are seen as competing with professionals for power, resources and a larger share in the decision-making process.¹

Proponents of community control are concerned with a redistribution of power not only for political reasons, but also for the impact that redistribution would have on the educational processes in the community. Mario Fantini, who headed the staff which prepared the Bundy Report contends:

the realignment of the participants in public education could produce rich yields for all the main participants. For the parents, a tangible grasp on the destiny of their children and opening to richer meaning for their own lives. For professionals, surcease from an increasingly negative community climate and, more positively, new allies in their task. For the children, a school system responsive to their needs, resonant with their personal style and affirmative in its expectations of them. And finally, there is the goal of participation for its own sake.²

On the other hand, such opponents of community control as Albert Shanker, President of the United Federation of Teachers, have fought to confine decentralization to a purely administra-


The question is: To what extent have the proponents of community control been successful in achieving their objectives, and to what extent have its opponents been able to block them? The answer is far from being clear. At this point, the situation, in a nutshell, is that the community has far more power than it had, but far less than it wants.

The Community School Board wields far more power than was ever possessed by the Local School Board that it superseded. It has taken the initiative on such policies as hiring more black and Puerto Rican principals and supervisors, introducing bilingual classes into every school in the district, and selecting programs requiring the involvement of paraprofessionals. The Board has also become deeply involved in practically every facet of school operations. For example, a committee of the Community Board screens all applicants for supervisory positions, i.e., principals, assistant principals, and so forth. Only after this screening, are names submitted to the community Superintendent for appointment.

The involvement of the Community Board in operations is supported by the fact that the community Superintendent will take no action without consulting the Board or apprising them of his actions by memo. The community Superintendent's role vis-a-vis the Community School Board has been reduced to one of implementation and support rather than one of leadership.
Because of the powers granted to the Community School Board, the community, to whom the Board is ultimately accountable, has also gained in power. Policy decisions, confirmation of appointments and budget revisions, are presented to community members at the monthly meetings of the Community School Board before the Board takes action. Parents at the local schools have more opportunities to make their needs and opinions known to the Community School Board through the Board member who is assigned to the particular school. No principal or supervisor is appointed to a school until the parents of that school have been consulted and have indicated their approval. No teacher is granted tenure without prior consultation with the parents of the school in which he or she has been teaching.

Not all of the actions taken by the community and the Community Board have been in the direction of consolidating their power at the expense of the professional staff. There have also been steps taken by the Board to enlarge the policy-making role of teachers and supervisors. School councils and special-interest committees have been organized to evaluate programs and procedures, to plan and initiate improvements, and, to participate in policy making. Teachers have been invited to serve on the Redesign Committee, which will work with the State Education Department in Albany, New York and with district headquarters personnel to develop structures and new educational techniques for the district.
Teachers and supervisors are represented on the advisory committee concerned with allocation of Title I and State and Urban Education Program funds.

On the other hand, the inescapable reality of decentralization is the imbalance of power between the Community School Board and the central Board of Education. It is this imbalance of power that puts control of funds, contract negotiations, standards for teachers and pupils, curriculum, and even control over the actions of Community Board members in the hands of the central Board that gives credence to U.F.T. president, Albert Shanker's contention that the Decentralization Law was a defeat for the concept of broad community participation contained in the Bundy Report, which led to the present legislation.

To a large extent, the imbalance that now exists can be traced to the philosophy and actions of the "interim" Board, a structure that departs in almost every essential characteristic not only from the Bundy model, but also from the model originally conceived by the State Legislature. A change in that structure could bring a radical change in the balance of power between the Community School Board and the central Board. As Dr. Marilyn Gittell points out, any change that would increase the role of the Mayor and reduce the role of the central Board would help to produce a more equitable distribution of power.¹ Dr. Gittell has also acknowledged

¹Gittell, Community Control of Schools, p. 126.
however, that the Mayor refused to play that role after he was burned so badly at Ocean Hill-Brownsville.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

Two basic concepts have been evident since the beginning of the controversies that finally culminated in the passage of the 1969 Decentralization Law. One is the concept of administrative decentralization, and the other is community control. Administrative decentralization had been advocated by study after study of the New York City school system. In fact, the very existence of local school boards was an acknowledgement of the necessity for some measure of local participation in an overly centralized system.

For a long period of time, even administrative decentralization received little active support. It was only when the militant concept of community control appeared on the horizon that administrative decentralization became a more palatable alternative. As a result, the 1969 Decentralization Law does reflect some administrative changes that had been advocated for many years by liberal, middle-of-the-road administrators. Ironically enough, it owes its passage, at least in part, to the efforts of the so-called militants, who, with some justification, have felt little sense of victory in its passage.

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The Decentralization Law as it was finally enacted, was the result of compromises and concessions designed to satisfy, or at least to placate, the many powerful interests whose claims, according to the Bundy Report, were to have been subordinated to the educational needs of children. By the same token, however, none of these interests was completely satisfied, and some were completely dissatisfied with the final result. Although it may be too early to judge the effectiveness of the new system in terms of its educational outputs, it is not too early to examine the workings of the system itself in terms of poorly ordered priorities and limited preparation and planning for the changes that were to take place.

The indicators of effectiveness in this inquiry do not show that great change has taken place during the early years of decentralization. The average reading scores for District Seven actually showed a slight decline according to the tests given in both 1971 and 1972. In only one of the eighteen elementary schools in the district were children in the fifth grade reading at the appropriate grade level according to these tests. This perpetuates a pattern that has been evident for the past several years.

There appears to be a slight decline in student absenteeism, with attendance levels at most schools higher than the city wide average during both 1970-71 and 1971-72.
In 1970-71, attendance at 17 of the 22 schools in the district was higher than the citywide average of 83.55%, and in 1971-72, attendance at all but two of the schools was higher than the citywide average of 83.86%.

Although district suspensions have been all but eliminated, principal's suspensions increased by 47% during 1970-71 and by another 79% the following year.

Based on these criteria of effectiveness, therefore, there is little evidence of change which would support my principal hypotheses.

Integration of School and Community

Activities involving the participation of the professional staff, parents, and members of the community at large have grown. Nevertheless, these activities have succeeded in attracting only a relatively small proportion of the community. One reason for this is that the efforts of the professional staff have been based on the assumption that the community must change by improving its understanding of the school system, its methods and procedures. Community leaders, on the other hand, want the system to change to meet what they consider to be community needs. This is a basic conflict that must be resolved before school-community integration can be realized.

Another obstacle standing in the way of school-community integration is the fact that the community itself is divided. The District Seven community is 65% Puerto Rican and 35%
Black. The role of the Blacks, who once provided local leadership, has been challenged by the Puerto Rican majority. In a number of instances, Puerto Ricans have superseded blacks in key positions. They now dominate the community School Board, and within the limitations of jurisdiction, the Board does have the power to make decisions in several highly sensitive areas. One such area is staff selection.

Even though blacks are seriously under-represented as teachers and supervisors, Puerto Ricans enjoy even less representation in proportion to their numbers. Therefore, when pressure is exerted by the community for more black and Puerto Rican teachers and supervisors, the Community Board is particularly sensitive to pressures for more Spanish-speaking teachers.

Curriculum is another sensitive area. The Community School Board, for example, has placed a high priority on bilingual instruction. This, however, involves an allocation of resources for programs that have a very low priority among black members of the community. Until the community is able to resolve some of these internal differences and unite in the formulation of common goals, it is unlikely that integration of the community school district with the community as a whole will be achieved, regardless of the structure of the school system.
Power Equalization

Under decentralization, there has been a substantial realignment of power with respect to the relationship of the Community Board to the professional staff, the relationship of teachers and principals to parents and community members, and of professionals to laymen in general. There exists, however, a serious imbalance of power that has its roots in the community itself, an imbalance that was touched on earlier in discussing the significance of ethnicity.

District Seven has limited resources in terms of money, jobs, and opportunities for personal achievement. Those resources that exist are concentrated among community poverty agencies, the community school system, the Model Cities program and similar agencies. In those agencies that require maximum feasible participation on the part of community members, competition for the control of resources is largely along ethnic lines, in this instance Black vs. Puerto Rican. Allocation of resources, for the most part, is on the basis of "winner-takes-all." The combination of scarce resources and a "more-less" philosophy produces a conflict situation in the community school district that has been made more severe by the method of selecting Board Members.

The Decentralization Law provides for the direct election of Community School Boards by members of the community. The Bundy Report had opposed such a procedure as being con-
ducive to community conflict. The Bundy Report had recom-
mended that six of the Board members be elected by representa-
tives of the parents and five appointed by the Mayor. This
recommendation, designed to prevent the balance of power from
shifting too far in one direction, was ignored. The result,
as predicted, was bitter community conflict. Unless pro-
cedures are instituted to maintain equilibrium, the community
school district will continue to be diverted from educational
goals by power struggles that have their origins in community
politics.

Another serious imbalance of power exists with
respect to the Community School Board vis a vis the central
Board. Under existing arrangements, the Community Board
has well defined responsibilities without adequate authority,
whereas the "interim" central Board has broad authority with-
out clearly defined responsibility. Not only are the Community
Boards under pressure from their constituents to develop
creative and innovative programs that will produce results,
but they are also the targets of criticism from the opponents
of community control, such as UFT President, Albert Shanker,
for their failure to do so. And yet, the Decentralization
Law has placed control of funds, authority to negotiate con-
tracts, ultimate jurisdiction over curriculum and standards
for pupils and teachers, and even control over the actions
of Community Board members in the hands of the central Board.
Even the manner of selecting the central Board as originally prescribed by law was so unrepresentative that it was set aside by the courts.

At some future date, when the Legislature will once again consider procedures for selecting the central agency, it will have the opportunity to adjust the imbalance that now exists between the powers of the Community School Board and those of the central Board. A suggestion has already been presented by the State Board of Regents to eliminate the central Board of Education entirely and substitute a single commissioner of education, who would be appointed by the Mayor. It is unlikely that this radical restructuring will take place, but even a less radical change in the structure of the central agency could result in a far more favorable balance of power for the Community School Boards. Any change that would increase the power of the Mayor and reduce that of the central Board would strengthen the Community Boards.

The Decentralization Law As An Instrument of Social Change

The fact that the first years of decentralization produced no significant changes in either educational or administrative performance in District Seven is not, in itself, surprising. The absence of any significant trends in those directions, however, cannot help but provoke questions as to
whether the 1969 Decentralization Law has provided the school system with a structure that encourages constructive change, particularly in poverty areas such as District Seven.

The Decentralization Law had its origins in the Bundy Report, and the Bundy Report predicated its recommendations on the assumption that the schools of New York had become dangerously separated from the local communities. The changes the Report proposed were in the direction of reconnecting the schools and their communities in order to satisfy the learning needs of children; needs that apparently were not being met.

In making its recommendations, the Bundy Panel attempted to reconcile the concept of administrative decentralization with those of community control by incorporating features of both into a total system. The central Board of Education was given the function of establishing general policies, providing those services that lent themselves to more efficient central control, and assisting the community districts with those support services they might request from the central Board. A City Superintendent of Schools, selected by the central Board, was assigned the responsibility for planning the future development of the community school system and for overseeing the maintenance of standards.

Sweeping powers were delegated to the Community School Boards over primary and secondary education. These powers included budget formulation and control of expenditures, selection of personnel, and determination of curriculum
Members of the community, parents and non-parents alike, were to have a role in selecting and serving as members of Community School Boards. The Community School Boards, in turn, were to have a role in the selection of the members of the central Board of Education.

A key feature of the design was the unifying role assigned to the Mayor. He was to participate in the selection of Board members at the community level and also in the selection of the members of the central Board. These recommendations were designed to remove the Mayor from his isolated position and to give him a more important role and greater responsibility for public education.

Instead of a well integrated system, however, the Decentralization Law produced a piecemeal set of arrangements that clearly showed the effects of compromise and concessions to pressure. The misgivings of the Bundy Report about the direct election of Community School Board members went unheeded. As a result, there is every indication that the Panel's fears concerning community conflict are already being realized. The recommendations for a more active role for the Mayor were simply disregarded, so the community school districts have been deprived of what might have been an important force for moderating conflict within the district. Furthermore, a more active role for the Mayor might have contributed to a more equitable distribution of power between the Community School
Boards and the central Board of Education.

The scope of activities delegated to the Community School Boards was reduced, particularly in the critical areas of budget and finance, staff selection, and curriculum. Recommendations on the selection and functions of the central Board were ignored so that the relationship of the central Board to the Community Board is restrictive rather than supportive.

The recommendations for compensation for the members of the Community School Boards were not implemented until July 1972. As a result, the long hours and lack of compensation tended to discourage Board membership and to undermine the stability of the Community Board. On the other hand, the law did provide compensation for the members of the central Board of Education, even though no such recommendation had been made. The result has been to encourage even greater involvement by members of the central Board of Education in the day-to-day operation of the school system, and reluctance to relinquish any part of the power of authority they enjoy on the "interim" Board.

In short, the Decentralization Law has failed to provide the school system with a structure that is any more workable than the one that is superseded. It has not replaced an ailing school system with either a system of administrative
decentralization or of community control or a combination of both. The structure that has emerged is conducive neither to the achievement of organizational objectives of the type identified with administrative decentralization nor the achievement of political objectives of the type identified with community control.

Some Further Questions

From one point of view, the concept of community control is a relatively new one. From another, community control represents a return to an earlier form of organization that was abandoned as communities were absorbed into larger political entities. In any case, the arguments for its adoption or rejection as an administrative form have been hampered by inadequate data.

The decentralization of the New York City school system represents a pioneering effort in contemporary community control. It provides one of many possible models for decentralization. As in the case of many pioneering efforts, this one provides some answers, and, at the same time, provokes many questions for further study.

Is The Community School Board Repeating The Patterns And Pathologies Of The Central Board Of Education?

Unfortunately, there are indications that some of the "manifestations of bureaucratic pathology" under the centralized school system might be gaining a foothold in the Community
School Board. Among them are reluctance to delegate authority and responsibility; empire building; fear of loss of control; and sensitivity to criticism. If allowed to continue, these tendencies could seriously impair the effectiveness of the Community Board.

What Have Been The Effects Of The Inclusion Of The Community School Board In The Community Power Structure?

An inquiry into the relation of the Community School Board to community action groups and community anti-poverty agencies could provide some valuable insights into the community power structure and its effects on decisions involving the community school district. Such an inquiry, for example, might include an analysis of the complex of interlocking memberships and relationships. This is important because of the possibilities for bargaining between community action groups and agencies and the Community School Board. It could also include an evaluation of the effects of a decision made in one community agency on the decision-making process in another. It might also address itself to such questions as: To what extent have shifts in the leadership of influential community action groups affected the decisions of the Community School Board? What difference does it make for school effectiveness?

To What Extent Are The Findings Of The Present Study Applicable To Other Community School Districts?

Comparative studies in which the findings on District
Seven could be compared with those of other community school districts whose characteristics might be very different, would offer a broader base for future policy makers. Such research could focus on the performance of children, of the professional staff, or of the Community School Board. Through such analysis, for example, it might be possible to isolate variables most closely associated with the success or failure of a Community School Board. Also such comparisons might help to develop and test criteria for the evaluation of Community School Boards.

What Are The Implications Of This Study For The Decentralization Of Other City Systems?

Although the present study confined itself to the impact of the 1969 Decentralization Law and the concept of community control on a single district of one of the largest and most important of the City's agencies, the findings have broader implications. Pressure is increasing for the decentralization of other major City agencies (Fire, Police, Sanitation).

Recommendations

In order to increase the effectiveness of the community school system, the stalemate on administrative decentralization as opposed to political decentralization (community control) must be resolved. A move in the direction of administrative decentralization would certainly not receive much support from the community. Also, such a move would be viewed as
repressive and would only serve to increase tensions within the community.

Given the issue of the need to protect the democratic rights of clients, which is of paramount concern, particularly in the ghetto, community control is probably politically more practicable, if not the more equitable direction in which to move at the present time. It is with this consideration in mind that the following suggestions are made.

Community School Districts Should Be Given More Authority To Determine Their Own Objectives And To Establish Measures of Performance

Although it is true that in ghetto communities, among the objectives sought in the community school is the satisfaction of such needs as a sense of self-worth, pride of heritage and the restoration of confidence, these are legitimate goals of education. They are not separate from traditional educational objectives. Fears that Community School Boards in poverty areas will be attracted by radical educational experiments and will lower educational standards are poorly founded. If anything, such communities are conservative in their demands. They are seriously concerned with the competence of their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, since these skills are directly related to earning a livelihood.
The Ability Of The Community School Districts To Develop And Introduce Innovative Programs Should Be Reinforced

The development and implementation of programs to achieve the objectives desired by the community school district will require a flexibility and a capacity for innovation that have not yet been seen. To a large extent, this lack of innovative activity is the result of constraints imposed by the provisions of the Decentralization Law itself. These constraints should be reduced if the community district's potential for innovation is to be realized.

Marilyn Gittell has described three categories of factors that are related to innovation:

1. Participation of the community in school policy making. School systems tend to stay at rest unless external forces upset their equilibrium. Most pressures for change are exogenous to the system; they originate in the community in which the system functions.

2. An administrative organization that encourages and is supportive of change. The structure must be adaptable and capable of adjusting its operation to new objectives and new methods. An organic structure, for example, in which authority is identified with expertise rather than with hierarchical position is more flexible than a mechanistic one and, therefore, more conducive to innovation.
Participative management in which power is equalized is an important means of reducing resistance to change.

3. The allocation of new financial resources to implement change. Existing funds are committed to a given pattern of organization; once these funds are committed, they are difficult to shift.

Gittell's analysis suggests a number of approaches to reinforcing the community district's ability to innovate. One approach, the participation of the community in policy making, comes closest to being realized. Although there are numerous opportunities for community participation, however, the range of issues over which the community district has jurisdiction is severely restricted.

A second strategy - an administrative structure conducive to change, involves significant limitations that are not easily corrected. From the Community School Board down, the emphasis is on hierarchical position rather than on expertise. Not that expertise is absent, but there is a lack of confidence and trust that goes through each level of authority and is transmitted from level to level. This lack of confidence originates in the limitations that have been placed on the Community School Boards in recruiting staff. These constraints, for the most part, were written into the Decentralization Law at the insistence of the United Federation of Teachers and the Council of Supervisory Associations. Both
organizations have made it quite clear that they do not trust the community.

What is needed is more latitude for the Community Board in the selection of the community Superintendent, for the Superintendent in his selection of principals and supervisors, and for principals in the selection of teachers. This would tend to increase confidence, and to encourage a wider dispersal of authority and a reduction of resistance to change. It is ironic that the Decentralization Law recognizes the desirability of greater latitude in the selection of teachers when a school's reading scores fall into the lower 45% of the City's schools. Why should it be necessary for a school to be at extremes before a Community Board can depart from the rigid selection requirements prescribed by law? The very fact that the procedures can be waived in an emergency suggests that the basis for the requirements is the maintenance of teacher security rather than the maintenance of high levels of competence.

The third approach to innovation involves the allocation of financial resources. A major constraint on innovation is the lack of financial resources to plan and implement new programs. The community districts receive an allocation of funds from the central Board, but over 90% of these funds is mandated for salaries for teachers and administrators. Out of approximately $30 million allocated to District Seven, about $27.5 million is appropriated for salaries, $500,000 for the
district headquarters (i.e., the Community School Board, the community Superintendent, and their respective staffs), and the remaining $2 million for all other purposes, including day care centers, after school centers, and recreation centers.

As Gittell had indicated, once funds are committed to an established pattern, they are difficult to shift. Nevertheless, the Community School Board should be given more leeway in determining how funds are allocated to them. It might well be that if a portion of the community district's funds mandated for salaries could be diverted by the Community School Board to innovative teaching methods, better results could be achieved without increasing the total amount spent for teaching.

The Community School Boards Should Have A Role In The Selection Of The Central Agency

If the Community School Board's authority to establish objectives and evaluate performance is to be enlarged, and if its capability for innovation is to be reinforced, its relationship to the central Board must be redefined. As it now stands the role of the central Board vis-a-vis the Community Board is part watchdog and part competitor. What its function should be is to provide service and support to the community school districts. One way in which the redefinition of the role of the central Board could be achieved is by giving the Community School Boards an active
role in the selection of the central agency.

The Bundy Report recommended that the central agency comprise partly members chosen by an assembly of Community School Board presidents, and partly members appointed by the Mayor. The State Board of Regents has recommended that the central Board be eliminated entirely and replaced by a single commissioner appointed by the Mayor. The approach to the Bundy Report is more compatible with the concept of a community school system.

The Method Of Selecting Members For The Community School Board Should Be Revised

The present method of selecting members for the Community School Boards by direct election is conducive to conflict, and can inhibit the ability of the Board to function effectively. If the community is divided along racial and ethnic lines, as in District Seven, the majority can dominate the Board to such an extent that minority interests can be completely submerged.

Furthermore, if there are resignations, the Board can be completely immobilized. The Decentralization Law gave the Boards the authority to appoint replacements for those of its members who resign before the expiration of their term of office. If two members resign, and the dominant group can still muster five votes, the Board will at least be able to reach decisions. If, however, two resignations leave the Board with a four-to-
three split so that neither group can muster the five votes, needed for a decision, the Board may not only be unable to replace the members who resigned, but also may be unable to make any decisions at all.

Finally, the method of electing members of the Community School Board does not provide adequate assurance of the continuity of policies and practices. This can be a matter of serious concern in poverty areas, where there is a high degree of mobility among the residents, and in transitional areas, where the composition of the population may be changing rapidly. Lack of continuity causes anxiety among the staff, from the community Superintendent on down, not only because of job security, but also because of poorly defined guidelines and the lack of set priorities.

What would be preferable is a combination of elected and appointed members along the lines recommended in the Bundy Report. In a Board so constituted, the probability of a prolonged deadlock would be minimized and a degree of continuity would be assured. Furthermore, if the appointments were made by the Mayor as suggested in the Bundy Report, this would provide another link between the Community School Boards and the system as a whole.

Under the 1969 Decentralization Law, community control has not shown itself to the best advantage. The Community School Board's vulnerability to criticism from both inside and outside the community has served to hamper effective
performance. There is no evidence to support my principal hypotheses, mainly because of the limited application of community control. The concept actually has not really been tried. The community should be given the opportunity to develop the techniques and procedures necessary to make it work. The first step would be to provide appropriate mechanisms for community control. Then hopefully, sufficient time would be allowed for a reasonable test of its effectiveness.

In its present form, the 1969 Decentralization Law does not provide the suitable structure for testing that effectiveness. It is important that these deficiencies be corrected not only for the sake of the New York City schools, but for public education all over the United States.
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