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Open Education: Its Development in America and Its Influence on Current Educational Themes

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OPEN EDUCATION: 
ITS DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICA 
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EDUCATIONAL THEMES 

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Dedication

I would like to thank Dr. Bolden for serving on my committee and proofreading this paper; Dr. Scheirer for her inspiration and her assistance; and most particularly Dr. Grimes, who devoted a great deal of time and energy to my project over the past several months.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the origins of the Open Education movement in the United States and traces its development throughout the twentieth century. Pioneers of the movement are discussed, with an extensive description of John Dewey's work provided. Political and social forces which affected Open Education throughout the century are described. Finally, current trends in education are examined to determine whether Open Education remains in practice. Conclusions and implications for classroom practice are included.
Introduction

Teachers frequently find themselves being called upon to make changes in their classroom behavior. Often, these changes involve more than just altering style, or observable methods: they can require quite fundamental shifts in philosophy. For instance, the currently popular whole language movement is encouraging teachers to adopt and make central to their teaching certain fundamental tenets of the philosophy. In "Rethinking My Roots as a Teacher," Zelene Lovitt (1990) notes "if a whole-language class is student-centered and therefore responsive, then the teacher must have few of the pre-conceived notions and assumptions typically found in the classroom" (p.43). The whole language approach to language arts teaches whole words from their contexts in stories, songs, and poems, and builds phonetic knowledge from these known words. The process of writing is also an important element of the approach, with the initial emphasis being on the children getting their thoughts and feelings into words, and with grammar and mechanics being taught from this writing.

These "notions and assumptions" to which Lovitt refers, however, are not frivolously acquired and are often difficult to discard. A teacher's style is often
representative of a combination of factors: personal values, training, views of human development and child psychology, among others. Educators from an expository, basic skills tradition will have major adjustments to make if their schools move to the more student-centered, holistic approach of whole language.

Teachers with more than a few years of experience in the classroom have noted the cyclical nature of changes in educational thought: often, what is accepted during one decade is regarded with disfavor in the next, only to be rediscovered, relabeled, and repopularized in the following decade. These pendular swings have had the effect of making many teachers cynical about any new information which they receive. They feel that they have heard it before, that the new method will more than likely be short-lived; consequently, they show little interest in new research, new texts, or new programs.

Often, these pendular swings in philosophy reflect popular sentiments. Parents and general public react to certain programs or methodologies; administrators react to standardized test results; teachers and researchers react to levels of interest among students. In response to these forces, school systems react to perceived needs and to changes in the social and political communities.

One such movement, currently regaining favor, is the open education movement. The educational philosophy implicit in open education is one which has enjoyed varying degrees
of popularity in the United States in this century. Initiated as a reaction to a specific style and tradition of expository teaching, open education precipitated reactions of its own several times over the decades.

Open education has several components which make it different from the traditional teaching approach. Although there are many definitions of open education, perhaps none is better than that offered by Blitz: (1973) "...that children are unique, physically active individuals, and that their learning needs can be met in a free, active atmosphere which tailors the learning environment to the specific needs and abilities of each child" (p.4). This method contrasts sharply with the basic-skills, basal reader approach, which is generally highly teacher-directed and which provides the same curriculum to each child, regardless of need.

As a way of better understanding the shifts which have occurred in American education throughout the twentieth century, a close look at the philosophy behind open education may be a worthwhile pursuit. By looking at this philosophy and by examining separate components of the concept of open education, scholars and teachers may be able to better understand some of the many pedagogical changes that have taken place in this century. Such knowledge can help a teacher define and articulate his or her own teaching philosophy and style.

In developing such personal philosophies, in reflecting upon their own beliefs, and in determining their
own priorities and goals, teachers may find themselves better able to withstand the fluctuations in educational trends. Through evaluating one's personal philosophy and by retaining from each educational pendular swing those elements which most appeal to and work best within one's own style, educators may be able to accept the fluctuations in practice with more equanimity. In this researcher's case, it has been reassuring to learn that a theoretical base does exist for many of the ideas, questions, and practices which have emerged in her own experience over the past few years. This knowledge will be used to continue to refine a personal philosophy of education and style of teaching.

Education in America evokes several long-held stereotypes: row of desks; teacher in front of the room at a desk; silence; many rules; little expression of individuality. To what extent particular classrooms fit these stereotypes varies from teacher to teacher, but sufficient numbers of classrooms resemble this image for the stereotype to hold. The traditional classroom is teacher-centered and teacher-directed. In that setting, order and control are highly favored. In the traditional classroom, organized lesson plans, curriculum guides, and teacher requirements take precedence over the needs of individual students.

Alongside these traditional classrooms, however, there have coexisted, for many years, exceptions to these traditions, exemplifying alternative methods, curriculums,
and teacher/student roles. These alternative methods and philosophies, while never supplanting traditional classrooms, have made their way into the mainstream in a variety of ways and to varying degrees.

Just what these alternatives are, where their roots lie, and the form in which they continue to exist are the issues that provide the focus of this paper. An examination of these alternatives should also reveal the strengths of these curricular options, and suggest the extent to which they can be incorporated into one's own methodology.

To address these issues, this researcher first investigated the origins of the open education movement in America, examining the aspects of that philosophy which distinguish it from the principles reflected in a traditional classroom. After examining this evidence, the researcher traced the development of the movement in this nation, noting its periods of relative popularity and disfavor and describing the social conditions which led to these fluctuations. Finally, the investigator has examined new trends in American education to trace the evolution of open educational philosophy in modern day practice.

Although references have been made to some of the pioneers of the movement, no attempt to provide a thorough study of their lives and work was undertaken. Froebel, Dewey, and others are cited in the context of their contributions to alternative forms of education, but no attempt was made to describe their work comprehensively.
Similarly, while the Infant School in Great Britain is discussed with respect to its effect on American open education, there was no exhaustive investigation into its particular style and development.

This paper does not attempt a definitive critique of the Open Educational philosophy; rather it delineates its qualities and its history, tracing elements of that philosophy to present-day themes, with no intent to persuade the reader that the movement and its tenets are superior or inferior to an alternative model.

Definition of Terms

Open Education: An approach to education which emphasizes trust in the student, freedom of movement and speech in the classroom, and which seeks to promote enthusiasm for and independence in thinking and learning. This is an approach which attempts to address the whole child and to integrate the different subjects into meaningful units or themes.

Traditional classroom: The classroom in which order, teacher authority and control, and adherence to sequential, prescribed curriculum guides and lesson plans are significant features.

Whole language: An approach to teaching language arts which
approach: dispenses with commercial texts and children's literature to teach reading and writing. This approach builds phonetic knowledge and writing mechanics from the vocabulary in the literature and in children's written discourse. Children are encouraged to express individual thoughts and ideas and to react to literature through their writing.
Overview

Open education is a concept which has surfaced several times in this century under several different titles. Various terms applied over the years to describe this movement include open corridor, open classroom, Leistershire approach, and integrated day. (Barth, 1973; Blitz, 1973; Rogers & Church, 1975; Silberman, 1973).

Whatever the currently popular designation, the underlying tenets have remained constant. What has changed has been the popularity of the approach. At various times since the early 1900s there have been periods in which traditional approaches to education have received unfavorable critiques from educators and laypeople alike. During these periods, alternative approaches have received increased attention and have found supporters (Adler, 1990; Bunting, 1987; Kantrowitz, 1990; Hechinger, 1990; Rugg & Schumaker, 1969).

A review of the literature (Barth, 1972; Bremer & Bremer, 1972; Dewey, 1902; Meyers, 1988; Rogers & Church, 1975; Rothenberg, 1990; Wirth, 1966) provides a history of these shifts in acceptance and promotion of alternative programs throughout the twentieth century. Beginning in the early 1900s, with John Dewey's advocacy of child-centered learning and of meaningful tasks within the classroom,
through the efforts of the 1960s to reshape traditional education, to the current emphasis on whole language learning and integrated curricula, certain strands have been consistent. These strands include child-centered teaching, experimental learning, trust in children's ability to make worthwhile choices about learning, and attention to process as well as to product. The literature provides sustained evidence comparing the merits of traditional and alternative approaches to teaching, using these dimensions.

The literature also includes works which strongly advocate a particular approach or program, some of which even provide strategies for those interested in implementing a particular approach (Blitz, 1973; Graves, 1983; Gray & Chanoff, 1984; Hassett & Weisberg, 1972; Hunter & Scheirer, 1988; Ishler & Ishler, 1974; Nyquist & Hawes, 1972; Smith, 1988-89). Others offer critiques of these strategies from a historical perspective. (Bunting, 1987; Gray & Chanoff, 1986; Lovitat, 1990; Rogers & Church, 1975; Rothenberg, 1990; Sirotink, 1983).

A third body of significant literature is that which discusses current educational trends. A review of current research and a comparison of this material to scholarship published earlier in this century reveal the recursive nature of this educational movement. Indeed, some of the very terms which are most in vogue among researchers today can be found in literature from the twenties through the seventies (Bunting, 1987; Hiebert & Fisher, 1990; Jensen &

Although no one source provides a definitive conclusion regarding the superiority of one method over another, sufficient information exists to allow the formation of some tentative conclusions. However, even within the context of the available information, one's basic orientation toward education will cause a filtering of the information. Where one reader may find certain information to be "proof," another may see the same data as merely opinion or biased perception.

The one aspect of the literature which cannot be disputed is the frequency with which certain topics have surfaced and resurfaced throughout the 1900s. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the themes, it is obvious that each has played a role in the development of American education.
Procedures

The objectives of this study were met almost exclusively through library research. The research began with the investigation of materials from the early 1900s when open education was initially formulated and introduced by such educators as John Dewey and William Kirkpatrick. These materials provided the definition of open education, and establish a background for its development in America. Through analysis of writings by and about these and other pioneers, a better understanding of the roots of the open education philosophy as it applies in this country evolved.

Following this examination of the inception of open education in the United States, a perusal of the literature provided a record of that movement's periods of popularity and disfavor throughout the ensuring half century. One later period in which the movement enjoyed a resurgence was the 1960s, so an especially close look at this era was taken.

A thorough look into the vicissitudes of the open education movement in America required that some attention be paid to the social and political climates in the country in successive eras. As noted earlier, educational changes often occur as reactions to changes and events in the community and/or the nation. To look at education without giving some attention to these social changes is to look at
a less than complete picture. Therefore, important events or philosophies present in the United States during various periods are described as they coincide with educational shifts.

Finally, a careful analysis of current trends in education was attempted, with an emphasis on examining those trends which appear to have roots in the open education philosophy. By comparing terminology from various eras and by looking beyond the terminology to the values inherent therein, conclusions as to the presence of open educational tenets in today's educational practices can be made.

The researcher intends to make highly personal use of the information gathered in this study; as a first grade teacher, she will use data gathered to provide a theoretical basis for classroom practice. In addition, many of the practical suggestions for implementing the open education approach will be adapted in toto or in part. It is hoped that this study will make the researcher better aware of both the positive and less positive aspects of the approach, so that care can be taken to initiate new steps with awareness and understanding rather than with enthusiasm alone. Others, in turn, may benefit from the application of these insights to their classroom teaching.
Review of the Literature

Although this paper focuses on the evolution of open education in America throughout the twentieth century, it would be misleading to imply that precedents to the philosophy did not exist. While the same labels were not applied, elements of the philosophy have existed throughout history, dating back to the days of the early Greek philosophers. Lillian Stephens notes, "Its antecedents lie deep in the history of western education. Many of its principles were enunciated centuries ago, as far back as the days of the early Greek philosophers" (1974, p.1).

The history of educational development reveals that controversy over educational methods has also existed for centuries. "The relative merits of open and traditional education have been a subject of debate since the time of Socrates" (Gianconia & Hedges, 1982, p.580). The discovery method of teaching can be traced to the questioning technique of Socrates (Navia, 1985). Other tenets of open education, such as a focus on the interests of students, and concern that education be related to the social environment, have roots in the philosophy and teaching of Socrates' student, Plato. (cited in Hamilton, 1952). In more recent history, educators and others have sought to improve upon
the existing educational models: in the seventeenth century, Comenius in Czechoslovakia and Locke in Great Britain wrote about such familiar-sounding topics as integrated subjects and sensory experiences. (Locke, 1977). Following their lead, Rousseau, in eighteenth century France, was one of the first to recognize childhood as a separate, important stage in human development, a phenomenon he described eloquently in his well-known treatise, *Emile*. Rosseau also perceived education as a means by which society might be improved, and his book exerted great influence on John Dewey. (cited in Boyd, 1956).

Eighteenth century Swiss educator Pestalozzi formulated theories of individual development and the merits of concrete experience, which work later provided further foundations of open education. (cited in Silber, 1960). Later, in the nineteenth century, Tolstoy in Russia and Froebel in Germany were among the first to accommodate children's abilities and needs into recommended educational practices. Froebel, (cited in Kilpatrick, 1916) founder of the kindergarten system, promoted self-activity and pleasant surroundings for young children. Froebel's influence persisted well into the twentieth century, as did that of another German educator, Johann Herbart. (cited in Robinson, 1977). By combining the field of psychology with theories of education, he developed the Herbartian method, which became so popular that a Herbartian Society was created. (cited in Rugg & Schumaker, 1969).
An American whose work greatly influenced nineteenth century education was William Harris, (1937) a philosopher and educator who resigned his teaching job at Yale to work in the public school system of St. Louis, Missouri. Harris helped to perpetuate the theories of Pestalozzi and Froebel, and is credited with establishing the first permanent kindergartens in this country. This development greatly altered Americans' perception of education, since it provided a hands-on, experiential learning approach for young children, something novel at the time.

Francis Parker, (1969) another nineteenth century American, practiced and extended the theories of Froebel and Pestalozzi. Prior to his career in America, Parker spent time in Europe, observing schools in which the pedagogical emphases of Froebel and Pestalozzi were being practiced. As a teacher at the Cook County Normal School, and later as director of the Department of Education at the University of Chicago, he influenced the shape of elementary education in America by promoting activities and creative self-expression in the classroom.

All of these philosophers, writers, and educators promoted an alternative method of education, with different principles and emphases from those of traditional education. The principles of their alternatives include respect for and trust in children, belief that learning should begin with the child's interests, belief that true learning requires interaction with the environment and with other people, and
emphasis on classroom environments which allow for this interaction. The role of the teacher in these models is also different from the traditional conception. While in the traditional classroom the teacher adopts the role of rule-maker and enforcer, primary source of knowledge, and control agent, alternative models view the role differently. In these models, the teacher is still the person in charge, but since students have assisted in the design of rules and procedures, they are trusted to comply with their own decisions, thereby greatly reducing the teacher's role as rule enforcer. Furthermore, children in these classrooms have freedom of movement, of choice of activities, and of speech, so the need for rules is lessened. The teacher does not attempt to be the only source of information in these models; children are encouraged to view books, other adults, other children, and their own research as additional sources. They are also encouraged to pursue personal interests, and are given ample time to do so since the day is not divided into time slots for isolated subjects. While traditional education may have endorsed each of these principles to some degree, it has more frequently been characterized by an emphasis on order, control, and teacher or subject centeredness, with the needs of individual students being considered to a lesser degree (Barth, 1972; Blitz, 1973; Bremer & Bremer, 1972; Giaconia & Hedges, 1982; Hassett & Weisberg, 1972; Rogers & Church, 1975; Rugg & Schumaker, 1969; Silberman, 1973; Stephens, 1974).
None of the previously mentioned educators, however, articulated these principles or influenced American education to the degree that John Dewey did (Wirth, 1966). Born in Vermont in 1859, Dewey was educated in the tradition of the day—an expository tradition emphasizing order, silence, and memorization. As an adult, his two professions, philosopher and teacher, provided vehicles through which he could reflect upon and improve education.

Dewey's vision of school as "a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place apart in which to learn lessons" (Hechinger, July 18, 1990, p.B7) evolved both from his philosophical leanings and from his faith in experiential learning. Dewey's philosophy, known as Pragmatism, held that truth can only be measured in relation to experience, and that truth is ever evolving. In Dewey's view, only through people-created institutions such as education and democracy could truth be determined. In providing students with classroom situations in which they could practice and experience democratic principles, Dewey attempted to give young people the necessary skills to succeed in society. This experience—with cooking, with woodworking, with plants, with animals, and with learning games—was provided both with classroom materials, and through ventures outside of the school setting.

As a philosopher, Dewey was convinced that education failed to respond appropriately to an industrialized, rapidly growing nation. As immigrants from several nations
poured into the country, schools responded by becoming more impersonal and regimented in their efforts to "Americanize" the newcomers. In Dewey's view, the schools needed to provide more, rather than less, individual attention to such students. By meeting the needs of the individuals, he felt, society's needs would ultimately be met (Bunting, 1987; Dewey, 1900; Wirth, 1966).

Dewey's convictions about learning provided the foundations for his lab school at the University of Chicago. This school, established in 1896, provided an environment in which Dewey could test his theories. His curriculum was child-centered, based on the children's interests, and provided a wide variety of opportunities for experience both in and out of the classroom.

Integration of subjects was another keystone of Dewey's lab school, providing an alternative to the traditional division of subjects. This integration was consistent with his assertion that true learning does not occur unless the student is making sense of new information in his or her own unique way, accommodating it into previously developed cognitive structures. By integrating subject matter, he hoped to promote a higher level of thinking and mental reorganization in his students (Bunting, 1987; Dewey, 1902; Wirth, 1966).

In providing the equipment with which children could actively involve themselves in learning, rather than merely being passive observers, Dewey departed from classroom
practices of the day. Even finding the furniture he wanted for his learning environment was difficult, as he reported in his 1899 lecture "School and Society," subsequently published:

Some few years ago I was looking about the school supply stores in the city, trying to find desks and chairs which seemed thoroughly suitable from all points of view—artistic, hygienic, and educational—to the needs of the children. We had a great deal of difficulty in finding what we needed, and finally one dealer, more intelligent than the rest, made this remark: I am afraid that we have not what you want. You want something at which the children may work; these are all for listening. That is the story of traditional education. (Dewey, 1900, p.50).

John Dewey retired from his lab school at the University of Chicago in 1926 to accept a faculty position at Teacher's College, Columbia University, in New York City. He continued studying and sharing his views of education through teaching, writing, and speaking, and in the early years of the twentieth century, greatly influenced other young educators. Several of these educators, sympathetic with his theories and philosophy, attempted to replicate his school model, and the philosophy came to be known as the Progressive Education Movement. (Rugg & Schumaker, 1969).

One of these new educators was Professor J.L. Meriam, who in 1904 established a lab school at the University of Missouri. He attempted a program devoid of furniture, and had, initially, no agenda or schedules, although he later found it necessary to modify this approach. Similar to Dewey, Meriam believed that "education was [meant] to draw out the possibilities from within the child, not to impose
from without." (Rugg & Schumaker, 1969, p.41). Like many other progressive educators, both early and of late, Meriam extended the principles of freedom and self-direction farther than Dewey ever intended.

Another early educator whose progressive values and teachings had an effect on the nation's schools was William H. Kilpatrick (1926 & 1932). Similar to Dewey in his faith in child centered, experimental learning, Kilpatrick influenced many educators as a professor at Teachers' College, Columbia University. Again like Dewey, he attempted to stress the value of purposeful activity. Perhaps best known as the creator of the Project Method, Kilpatrick also advocated students' involvement in decision-making regarding their own learning (Kilpatrick, 1926).

For several years after Dewey's departure from the University of Chicago's lab school, progressive education received little attention or support. In the years preceding World War I, the majority of schools remained traditional in approach, and the progressive movement was limited to lab schools. Because Americans became focused on world events, and then on participation in the war, a climate for innovation was absent. However, Dewey continued to promote his theories until the end of his life, and in ensuing years was acknowledged as the educator who, more than anyone else, articulated and refined the tenets of progressive education. Much of this acclaim came only late in his life, however (Bunting, 1987; Hechinger, July, 1990; Wirth, 1966).
Following World War I, many Americans were ready to question and perhaps discard traditional ways of thinking. This trend extended to the field of education. Having survived a major war, there were those who chose not to accept the status quo, and among this group were people who looked to innovations in education for solutions. So during the 1920s progressive education gained in popularity in some private schools as well as in additional university lab schools. Small, child-centered schools appeared in such diverse places as New York City, Greenwich, Connecticut, and Fairhope, Alaska. Along with the development of these schools, the number of publications addressing the topic of progressive education grew: "Suddenly emerged an accumulating wealth of description--yearbooks, records, bulletins, reprinted addresses, what not. And in 1919 the need of the rebels for mutual support, for discussions, for comparison of practices produced the Progressive Education Association and in 1924, its magazine, Progressive Education" (Rugg & Schumaker, 1969, p.54).

Unfortunately for the cause of Progressive Education, however, many of the new educators based their philosophies on sentiment rather than on solid pedagogical principles. Others, excited by certain aspects of progressive philosophy, ignored other, equally critical aspects. As a result, Dewey's ideas and theories became distorted and consequently maligned. As Hechinger notes, "Dewey fell into disgrace, partly because some of his disciples
misinterpreted his child centered philosophy as a license to abandon academic standards, but in larger measure because educational traditionalists and political reactionaries misread his approach as permissiveness. Dewey's 'progressive education' seemed to subvert traditional values." (July, 1990, p.B7).

This negative reaction to the new and the unfamiliar, along with the opposite trend towards the traditional and safe was hastened by the nation's financial problems in the late twenties and the thirties. As the excesses of the twenties led into the Great Depression of the thirties, this trend continued, and movements such as Progressive Education declined. As difficulties spread throughout the nation, financial support of private schools decreased, and their numbers were greatly reduced, further contributing to the decline of the Progressive Education movement (Rugg & Schumaker, 1969).

Although Progressive Education did not completely die out in the decades between the thirties and the sixties, it remained, for the most part, lodged in small, university-affiliated schools, failing to attract large numbers of news proponents. Indeed, as its original themes became increasingly distorted, some individuals perceived in it a communist slant, and this perception, particularly during the Red Scare era of the fifties, served perhaps more than anything to discredit the movement. During these decades, little was heard about child centered education.
outside of the university setting.

Following the Soviet Union's success with Sputnik in 1957, support of traditional education intensified, as Americans sought to "catch up" with Russia. Convinced that a traditional curriculum was the solution, educators and laypeople alike advocated increased emphasis on math and science, and diminished time and money on the arts. As this way of thinking spread, interest in alternative curricula declined. Rudolph Flesch's Why Johnny Can't Read—and What You Can Do About It, published in 1955 to scant acclaim, became immensely popular after Sputnik, since it reinforced for the general public the notion that American education was behind the times. During this era, Dr. Ruth Strang and other professors at Teachers' College, Columbia University, received a great deal of criticism, since they had sustained the legacy of progressive education (Heckinger, July, 1990; Meyers, Fall, 1988; Rothenberg, 1989; Rugg & Schumaker, 1969).

In the mid-sixties, a reaction to the back-to-basics movement emerged, as many educators began to question the emphasis upon standardized tests, expository teaching, and teacher centered classrooms. In searching for alternatives, many of these educators looked to Great Britain for inspiration. There, in the years following World War II, a tradition of child centered schools had developed, with integrated curricula and mixed-age groupings (Barth, 1972; Rogers & Church, 1972; Rothenberg, 1989; Silberman, 1973).
The roots of these schools lay in the war, when students and teachers alike were living in the country to escape the dangers of London. Being forced to make do without textbooks and other standard educational tools, as well as working with children of varying ages at the same time, these teachers were innovative in their approaches. Many, pleased with the quality of learning which resulted in these situations, sought to carry on the practices, once the war was over. By the 1960s about twenty-five percent of the primary schools in England were modeled after this tradition, which later became labeled, among other names, the Open Approach. Americans who were disenchanted with the educational system in their own country traveled to England to observe and learn about the Open Approach. Labelled by many visitors the "Infant School" approach, this model was adopted in many parts of the United States. For a short period in the late sixties and early seventies, Open Education, with tenets and practices quite similar to the Progressive Education model, flourished. During this era, several books indicting traditional education gained popularity among the general public, (Holt, 1972; Kohl, 1976; Postman, 1969; Silberman, 1973) further promoting an interest in alternative education.

The social and political climates in America during this era were conducive to alternative ideas and methods. The Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement each had played major roles in changing Americans' thinking. As
established institutions and philosophies were examined and rejected, new ones were created, in education and in many other areas.

As in the 1920s, however, the popularity of Open Education waned in the mid-seventies, partly due to the efforts of some of its most ardent supporters. As with the early followers of Dewey, many of these modern-day educators were more enthusiastic than knowledgeable, and they distorted the principles of Open Education until these became too extreme for many to accept. Some of these enthusiasts assumed that "open" referred to the physical structure of the school, and that by creating buildings with few walls, and most of those moveable, they were indeed implementing an open approach. Such obvious distortions of the philosophy confused and frustrated teachers, students, and the general public, and resulted in negative publicity for the Open Education concept. In addition, many educators who visited England had done so only briefly, spending small amounts of time in the classrooms, and less time actually thinking about the British primary school approach. As a result, many educators failed to consider the differences between the British and American cultures, histories, and social structures when attempting to transplant British school practices. While the two countries have many similarities, enough differences exist to make such transplanting a difficult enterprise, and few Americans considered this fact at the time (Rogers & Church, 1975; Rothenberg, 1989).
A third element in the demise of this second flourishing of Open Education were the conflicting conclusions of researchers. As the alternative approach spread, the desire to assess and compare it to traditional models inspired many researchers to examine its effects. Many studies conducted during the time were inconclusive; providing mixed results. Others proved unsatisfactory to researchers, since the instruments used were not designed to take into account the methodologies and goals of Open Education. (Asher & Hynes, 1982; Giaconia & Hedges, 1982; Horwitz, 1976). Unfortunately, one study, conducted by Wright, reported negative results for the approach, achieved wide notice, and was a major factor in the demise of open education in the nineteen-seventies. This same study was later discredited for methodological errors. (Asher & Hynes, 1982).

The failure of this alternative approach in the seventies was further hastened by other factors: books written in condemnation of open education; (Barrow, 1978; Troost, 1973) increased state and federal legislation restricting schools; (Scheirer, April, 1988) higher standards of documentation and accountability; greater use of and faith in standardized tests; and a general idealogical swing in education back toward the traditional. (Bunting, 1987; Hechinger, July, 1990, and December, 1990; Rothenberg, 1989). In such a climate, open education proponents again became a small minority, with little
support from the mainstream of the educational community. The philosophy survived, again, in the university-affiliated schools, such as that in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and in small schools begun by graduates of such institutions.

Throughout the late seventies, and well into the eighties, this trend toward accountability and documentation continued, with teacher rating scales, Master Teacher incentive programs, and Beginning Teacher supervisory plans instituted. Reading approaches and texts emphasized the study of discrete skills, isolated objectives, and workbooks with lockstep formats. Classrooms were teacher-directed, highly structured, and expository. (Bunting, 1987; Kantrowitz, 1990; Rothenberg, 1989).

During this era, educators with philosophies leaning toward an open approach were often caught in a dilemma: striving to satisfy the demands of the public school system while at the same time retaining some of their own personal teaching beliefs. Many of these teachers closed this gap by enriching their language arts programs with literature and by promoting creative writing in their classrooms. As they observed their students' enthusiasm and success with this method, they began to include art, science, math, and social studies into the approach, and continued to find success. Slowly, a network of like-minded educators began to develop across the nation, as teachers began to share their stories with one another and discover kindred spirits. Similar to the networking in the early part of the century, these
educators formed groups and founded publications through which they could share their ideas and techniques. (Hood, 1989; Lovitt, 1990; Mosenthal, 1989; Routman, 1988; Turnbull, 1982).

While classroom teachers were developing these integrated approaches to learning, professors in some universities were conducting similar work. Reading, speech, and linguistics professors were researching and documenting evidence which reinforced the connection between the speaking, reading, and writing processes. These findings reinforced what classroom teachers had discovered: that a reading approach which involves the "whole" language, speaking, reading, and writing, rather than discrete bits and isolated skills, was more likely to result in enthusiastic, successful students who found reading and writing a pleasure.

Thus, a combination of classroom practice and university research engendered the latest trend in education: the "whole language" emphasis. (Hood, 1989; Mosenthal, 1989). Textbook publishers have acknowledged the trend: while still endorsing the use of basal readers, they have incorporated a great deal of traditional literature, and their teachers' editions are replete with suggestions for teaching and evaluating via the whole language approach. Professional journals are full of articles, research studies, and advertisements endorsing the approach. Learning kits and games, classroom management systems, and even
bulletin board supplies tout this new method. The whole language approach, with its emphasis on writing, on students' responses to literature, and on curriculum connections, has roots in Dewey's theories of meaningful learning and integrated subject areas. The approach is one which seeks to involve the whole child in the learning process, another tenet of open education. At the same time, it provides structure and guidance; it defines basic skills imbedded in the activities; it allows for the use of phonics in teaching reading; and it avoids the directionless approach for which other alternative models have been criticized. The whole language approach, which emphasizes child-centered learning without abandoning all teacher control, appears to incorporate the best of two traditions. (Goodman, 1986; Kantrowitz, 1990).

This brief study of the open education movement suggests, however, that further change is inevitable; that regardless of the current popularity or success of any particular program, approach, or method, there will inevitably be movement in another direction. The history of Open Education throughout this century suggests that several forces in this nation help to control America's education system. As the researcher noted earlier, many educational decisions are motivated by the public's perceptions and desires. This was the case just after World War I, when many young parents began to question traditional methods and ways of thinking. Many of these young people had traveled while
in the services, and they returned home unwilling to accept things exactly as they had been. This sense of independence spread to the field of education, as many of these young parents enrolled their children in alternative schools, and supported non-traditional methods.

However, not long after this era, America entered a period of economic decline, and the public's mood was altered by financial realities. As the economy declined, alternative schools felt the pinch, with resulting loss of support and financial assistance.

At other times throughout the century, public sentiment has influenced the tenor and curriculum of America's schools to some degree. One of the most extreme examples of this was during the Red Scare of the 1950s, when the public became convinced that Russia's schools were superior in teaching math and the sciences. The public pressured school systems to return to the basics, and the arts and humanities were given little attention in many cases. This mood was further intensified when the book Why Johnny Can't Read (Flesch, 1955) became popular.

Another example of the public's influence on the school system came in the late sixties and early seventies, when the prevailing mood was to question existing values and traditions. The combined effects of the Vietnam war and the Civil Rights movement created in many people a desire to transform institutions. As they did in the 1900s, many people saw education as a tool by which society could be
improved, and alternative methods and philosophies once more had a platform. (Hechinger, December, 1990; Meyers, 1988).

Financial concerns are never far removed from the educational setting, however, and many of the exciting new plans of the late sixties and early seventies fell victim to budget cuts. As the nation entered its years of gas shortages, inflation, and high unemployment levels in the mid to late seventies, the cause of alternative education met much the same end that it had encountered during the twenties and thirties. (Hechinger, July, 1990 and December, 1990). It is clear that in times of financial hardship, education has tended to abandon experimental approaches and revert to the familiar.

Another consistent strand throughout the development of education in this country has been that of government intervention. Even quite early in the century, many alternative schools existed only as adjuncts to universities, or as small, privately-funded facilities. This autonomy allowed them to implement their own curricula and methods, a freedom not possible in public schools, which were constrained by local and state statutes. Consistently throughout the twentieth century, there has been growing attention paid to schools by not only local and state governments, but also by the federal government. Clearly, mandates and guidelines affecting areas such as integration, special education, and social programs have greatly influenced educational practices beyond the sphere of those
immediate concerns. While one might expect such intervention to mean the gradual demise of models such as alternative education, at times just the opposite was true. During the heyday of the Open Education movement of the 1960s, for example, much government money went into new school buildings, new teacher training programs, and travel money for educators to observe alternative programs elsewhere. While this period was brief and came to a rather abrupt end, it does illustrate the effect government money and support can have on an educational trend.

Finally, one other aspect of change in education has surfaced and resurfaced throughout this century, and that is the educators themselves. The energy and enthusiasm which teachers and administrators bring to a new program or approach can often be a significant factor in the success or demise of that program. At least twice in this century, both during the early Progressive Education movement, and later during the Open Education movement of the sixties, it was enthusiasm in the absence of sufficient knowledge which hurt these approaches: during both periods, large numbers of professionals learned just enough about the approach to get excited about it, but not enough to implement it responsibly. These enthusiasts made many errors and precipitated a great deal of criticism and condemnation for their programs because of their superficial attempts.

On a more positive note, the recent grass-roots movement among teachers who promote the whole language
approach has provided an example in which teachers' enthusiasm has been successfully channeled, and worthwhile changes have resulted. As the approach spreads, and as more and more educators break away from the controlled, cookbook format of recent years, it is possible Open Education will realize a resurgence, and once again the child-centered classroom will be given a chance to succeed.
Conclusions and Recommendations

As noted earlier, this study has served a highly personal purpose for the researcher: it has provided a vehicle through which to reflect upon past teaching traditions and to define a personal teaching philosophy.

This researcher began teaching when the accountability movement was in full sway. "Good teaching" was clearly defined by administrators and others in terms of control, order, high standardized test scores, and quiet in the classroom. Conforming to such expectations was simple, since the desired results were clearly defined: just follow the status quo and produce students who could complete workbook pages, read from a basal reader, and walk through the halls quietly.

However, it was not long before such expectations became less simple to fulfill; for example, such goals and objectives began to seem irrelevant to true learning. Keeping students in order seemed an absurd pedagogical emphasis, compared with the "organized chaos" which resulted when truly exciting classroom activities occurred. Similarly, the carefully sequenced teacher guides which accompanied most learning objectives often seemed to fall short of encouraging students to think and create. It
gradually became apparent to the researcher that the students themselves had much to bring to the educational climate and that to predict and guide every learning experience was to sell short those children.

In the absence of the theoretical base for child-centered learning, the researcher found it difficult to reconcile such feelings with the demands of the administration. Teaching has been described as a lonely profession, in that little opportunity is provided for interaction among adults throughout the school day. As a result, questions can go unanswered, disturbing feelings can grow, and a teacher can feel isolated. Particularly when one is having doubts, it is important to seek an audience for and/or resolution of those doubts.

So in discovering a tradition in which control, order, and teacher-centeredness are not the primary emphasis, this researcher has found a validation of conclusions only intuitively reached. Research and investigation into the rise and fall of open education has provided a foundation for classroom practice. Moreover, an evaluation of the merits of traditional and alternative approaches should equip teachers better to withstand the fluctuations in theory and practice that seem to inform America's educational system. As these changes continue, an educator firmly grounded in his or her own beliefs, but open to improvements, should be able to retain a fresh and enthusiastic attitude towards teaching.
To those concerned with the future, this researcher would recommend that further educational reform be conducted in a spirit of professional inquiry, with sufficient autonomy to resist the whims of public sentiment and economic trends. Further, any such reform movements must be allowed sufficient periods of time to constitute adequate measures of their effect. The researcher would also like to suggest that Open Education in its many guises, be perceived as a persistent philosophy and not as a series of fads or reactions to the status quo.
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