EDUCATION AND THE AMERICANIZATION OF MICRONESIA

door LEONARD M. HENNY *

In the Sociology of knowledge scholars have focussed upon the role of education as a mechanism of social control by which power elites legitimize the perpetuation of their position. Mannheim has spelled out how the British aristocracy 'used' the universities to defend themselves in a gentleman-like manner from the threat of competition by lesser members of the society. Weber has described how the system of exams in China maintained a strata of literati in support of the pattern maintenance of that society. Nowhere has the role of education as an instrument in class division and authority maintenance been more clear than in colonial history, be it of the French, British or Dutch variety, and these are well documented.

It is easy to assume that in present, post-colonial, days education has become from being a tool in the hands of a minority to a tool in the hands of the majority as a liberator of the claims of backwardness. 'Education now is the key to economic development and the volumes of studies on education and manpower are there to prove it. One such recent study is 'Planning for Education and Manpower in Micronesia' 1 by a team of experts of the Stanford Research Institute in California.

The following article provides some looks behind the scenes of the proceedings of that study.

THE AMERICANIZATION OF MICRONESIA

Micronesia consists of a group of more than two thousand islands in the Pacific Ocean, presently administered by the United States as a strategic Trust Territory under an agreement with the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

The islands are scattered over a territory that, in square miles of ocean water, is larger than the United States. Yet the total land area of the inhabited and uninhabited islands is smaller than one-third of the state of Rhode Island, the smallest state in the Union.

The population is presently 90,000, dispersed over 90 islands which are clustered in six major districts. The Micronesians are of varied cultural and ethnic background. They speak nine different languages. Since Magelhan, the Portuguese discoverer, set foot on Guam, the area has been governed by Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States. At present it is the last of the U.N. Trusteeship territories that has not received independance or been affiliated to some other country.

* Schrijver was van februari 1967 tot september 1968 aan het Stanford Research Institute verbonden.
After the U.S. took over in Micronesia, following the defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific, the territory has been closed to international traffic. Bikini, one of the islands of Micronesia, served as a testing ground for the explosion of the first atomic bomb; the island of Kwajalein still serves today as a base for the U.S. Navy as a test-site for the Nike X interballistic missile.

Recently there are rumors, substantiated by articles in U.S. World and News Reports, that the Defence Department has a renewed interest in the territory in connection with the upcoming renegotiation of the defense treaty with Japan in 1972. According to these sources it is envisioned that in the case of a termination of the treaty by Japan, the Western defence perimeter would be withdrawn to the Trust Territory which would then serve as a host to new military bases.

The agreement between the United Nations and the United States, dating from April 2, 1947, reads in part that '... the administering authority shall foster the development of such political institutions as are suited to the Trust Territory and shall promote the development of the inhabitants of the trust territory toward self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances...'. Significantly the word 'independence' was inserted in the final agreement, it does not occur in the draft trusteeship agreement dated February 17, 1947, which speaks only of self-government.

Interestingly an internal memorandum of the Trust Territory education department, dated April, 1967, states on page 1: '... the national objectives of the United States in the Trust Territory are to maintain and strengthen the political, economic and social orientation of Micronesia toward the United States in order that:
— The citizens of the Trust Territory will regard a continuing government relationship with the United States as in their best interest.
— The Trust Territory will develop political cohesiveness incorporating the American pattern of the democratic governmental process.
— Whatever degrees of self-government are eventually achieved by the Micronesians are consistent with long range United States' objectives.
— The economy is developed and strengthened so that Micronesia will become increasingly self-reliance and eventually reduce its dependence upon United States' financial support'.

Micronesia is faced with a giant social octopus which strangles any effort to modernize in a Micronesian way rather than according to the pre-set American pattern.

EDUCATION IN MICRONESIA

Since 1962, the U.S. Administration has taken an increased interest in the development of education for the U.S. and Micronesian population in Micronesia. In 1966 the Trust Territory Department of Education decided to design an educational masterplan for the development of curriculae and facilities. With the sole objection of the Peace Corps director it was decided to have the plan designed by an outside consultant. The Peace Corps Director, proposed to invite a team of the United Nations rather than an American consultant firm to promote an international review of local educational policies and to prevent American bias. As is customary in the United States, the contract for the design of the development plan was put up for bids and the strongest bidder was Stanford Research Institute, one of the major 'think tanks' on the American West Coast. The team of experts consisted of an economist, a psycholo-
gist, a sociologist, an anthropologist and two education specialists. Field work was executed during a three month period and included two week-long conferences which brought together a cross section of Micronesians and Americans who are directly and indirectly involved with education in the Territory.

ROADBLOCKS TO THE 'MICRONIZATION' OF MICRONESIA

The report by Stanford Research Institute formulates some important recommendations that may make some inroads in the replacement of Americans by Micronesians. A manpower board is proposed which would screen projects of economic development upon their merit to Micronesian employment. A 'counterpart system' is proposed whereby it becomes the task of Americans to prepare qualified Micronesians to take over their jobs. A plan for extra expansion of the secondary schoolsystem is recommended, and the establishment of a Center for Micronesian Studies.

What is disturbing about the report however is its undisturbed tone of 'all is well on the Western front'. There is a complete negation of what is actually at stake: The fact that there is a people that is culturally being wiped out.

Presently, the curriculum teaches the children more about the Chicago Slaughterhouses and the opening of the American West by the railroads than about their own geography and culture. American school principals, questioned about the goals of education in Micronesia had some very clear cut answers on why they were there: 'Our purpose here is to bring a U.S. standard education'. 'American enterprise is coming in, and for Micronesians it is better to be prepared to compete with the Americans than to be left out'. 'I think, what we are really doing here is to prepare the Micronesians to become more efficient and to adopt to a society that operates on the profit motive'. 'There is no doubt that we should persue this quest for quality education, even if in the short run some Micronesians may be bypassed. After all the United States is picking up the tab on it'.

More important than the principals' opinion on what is good for Micronesians, is the use of the 'California Achievement Test' (CAT) which assesses pupil performance. At present the key to the avenues leading toward future employability and towards future positions of leadership in the powerstructure are vested in the achievement tests. A pupils' score on the test battery primarily determines whether the pupil will continue his education at an advanced level. The report does not speak about tests, nor does it point to the unfair selection of students for privileged treatment, once they score well on the test. The tests actually measure proficiency in the English language rather than general achievement but nevertheless in a number of schools students are grouped in 'Fast', 'average' and 'slow' classes, according to their scores
on the CAT test. A survey to determine the impact of the social background of pupils on their CAT scores was discontinued by the research project because it was regarded to be 'irrelevant' to the objectives of the research. There are indications from the pilot survey that scoring on the test is related to whether the family of the child speaks English in the home or not.\(^2\)

This point to the likelihood that the scores on the CAT test are related to the degree that children and their parents have been exposed to the American culture. In grouping the children of America-oriented families in 'a fast' class the educational system is possibly creating the embryo of a future Micronesian elite. A child who comes from an American oriented family receives great advantages over other children, not only because it is placed in a 'fast' class, but also because from the moment the child is in a fast class it will receive most of the instruction in English, will be better equipped to use English textbooks, and for that reason will more easily perform homework which, all together makes it more likely that he or she will score high on achievement tests later in his or her educational career. Children who come from a family in which no English is spoken will have greater difficulty in getting into a fast class. They may have talents in Mathematics or Social Studies, or Science, but their non-proficiency in English presents a handicap in getting access to the efficient teaching which happens to be in English. Therefore the selection of children into fast, average, and slow classes does not select the children to their potential of developing their talents to the fullest extent, and creates inequalities of opportunity; the very same phenomena that has plagued minorities within the United States. Another weakness in the report is its failure to assess the need for a indigenous institution of higher learning. The Congress of Micronesia, an elected body of Micronesians that has an advisory role to the Trust Territory Administration but no legislative power, has long ago recommended that a study be made to assess the feasibility of the establishment of a junior college in Micronesia. However, since the recommendation was passed in 1965, no serious study has been under-

\(^2\) The findings are based upon a pilot survey among sixth graders of Chalan Kanoa elementary school, Saipan, Mariana Islands: Children who scored high on the CAT test were assigned to a fast class, while the others were accordingly assigned to an 'average' and 'slow' class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>children's assignment to classes</th>
<th>fast</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>slow</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English spoken in the home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occasionally</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Also in other respects it can be said that the success on the CAT tests are related to the degree that children and their parents have been exposed to the American culture.
taken by the administration. At present a hand picked 300 Micronesian students are enrolled through a scholarship program in colleges overseas. More than half of the students study at the College of Guam which is under U.S. jurisdiction. The other students are enrolled at the University of Hawaii and at various colleges and universities on the U.S. Mainland.

The College of Guam is a liberal arts college, comparable to a community college with an enrollment of 1600 students in 1967. It has a rule against on-campus discussion of political or religious subjects. The Micronesian students are housed in separated dormitories. The University of Hawaii has a more cosmopolitan character. Its East-West center coordinates much of the research on Micronesia. The choice of colleges for students who study at he U.S. mainland rests in the hands of the Trust Territory scholarships director. This has discouraged students who were qualified to enroll at large universities such as the University of California at Berkeley, because as he states it, he doesn't want them to become trouble makers. The scholarship program to the Philippines was discontinued because allegedly the communists took over the university. One student who, for the first time in Micronesian history received a United Nations scholarship to study in Moscow was called into the Districts Attorneys office to explain why he had accepted the grant and he was asked whether he seriously wanted to study in Russia.

It would appear that an educational masterplan of the costs of almost $100,000 would give ample consideration to the question of costs and benefits of an indigenous institution of higher learning. A feasibility study was in fact contemplated, as it became evident that the Administration was basically against a college at an early stage and as the finding of the cost-benefit analysis pointed towards the feasibility of a college for two thousands students by 1978, this part of the research was discontinued and was not included in the report. Instead the conclusion on the question concerning the college reads: 'The foregoing may be disappointing to some Micronesians who would like to see the early establishment of a degree granting institution. In many areas of the world, a university is seen as a symbol of prestige. Our council however is based on the realities of economics and educational quality'.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the total costs of a college was estimated to be less than a continued scholarship program. The total costs of a college on an accumulative basis up to 1982 was calculated to amount $176,558,000. These calculations include an allowance for the benefits derived from the 'multiplier effect' at the construction and operation of the college which are plowed back into the economy. The accumulative costs of a continued scholarship program up to 1982 are estimated to amount $190,550,000. At the same time it was estimated that there would be approximately 200 more graduates from a Micronesian college compared with a continued scholarship program, due to the 'brain drain' that accompanies the scholarship program. If present trends continue, the loss of graduates who remain abroad after graduation will be between ten and twelve percent.

3 Platt en Sorensen, op. cit, p. 135.
The need for university graduates, is estimated by the official report to be 1,262 over the period 1968—1977, while a 'surplus' of 5,683 highschool graduates and 7,910 elementary school graduates is estimated over the same period.\(^4\)

Nowhere in the report is there an effort made to design a policy to bridge the gap due to this maladjustment in human resource allocation. The conclusion brought forward is simply: '... the gap may be (considered as) one measure of the continued need for outside personnel having the indicated qualifications'.\(^5\)

The lack of micronesians with 'the proper qualifications' has in many cases served as an apology for continued foreign presence in key positions. The Micronesians are shortchanged by an educational masterplan that has a built-in qualification gap which, in the terms of the report, 'is expected to continue for at least a decade'.\(^6\)

Much of the blame for inaction has been given to the epitaph 'lack of funds'. True, at present with the war in Vietnam, education budgets are sliced in the United States as well as in Micronesia. However, the assistant Commissioner on Education has stated in Saipan: 'We can get about as much money as we can demonstrate that we can program for'. If an educational masterplan does not spell out a program to close the qualification gap, there is no need to ask for the money.

The question that goes back to the sociology of knowledge is: 'Who wants the program anyway?' In client-sponsored research good programs may be bad business. Probably the Peace Corps director was right after all when he opted for a United Nations research team.

\(^4\) Ibid., table 7 page 33. 'Demand' and 'Surplus' is defined in terms of the labor absorbative capacity of the economy. 'Surplus' includes unemployed, but also housewives and youngsters who go back to the farm.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 135.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 3.