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ABSTRACT

The document discussed the functions of intermediate educational units their relation to rural schools, and the unique needs of rural schools. Chapter I traced the development of the American school system from its inception in colonial America to contemporary times. Characteristics of America's rural population were identified and briefly explained, focusing on educational opportunities in rural areas. The development of the intermediate educational unit was followed from its origin as a county unit to its relatively recent emergence as a regional one. Chapter II contained a detailed comparison of these units, explaining that intermediate units organized on a regional basis are much more efficient and economical than those limited by county lines. Chapter III discussed several specific programs provided through regional intermediate units which appeared to meet the needs of both small and large schools. Recommendations for bettering rural education covered: (1) regulatory versus service roles, emphasizing that, when regional programs are more effective than similar ones offered by individual schools, these schools should be required to participate in the regional program; (2) boards of control, which should represent the clientele organizations of the regional units; (3) financing, including guaranteed basic funding for core program operations; (4) staffing, especially the intermediate unit's chief executive and his administrative team, and (5) improving services to rural schools through these regional intermediate units. (KM)

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# INTERMEDIATE EDUCATIONAL UNITS
# AND THEIR PROMISE FOR RURAL EDUCATION

by

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# CONTENTS

I. UNIQUE NEEDS OF RURAL SCHOOLS.................................... 1

Development of the American Public Education System............ 1

Industrial Revolution........................................ 2

Move to the Comprehensive High School.......................... 3

Present Demands on Schools.................................... 4

Population Shift and School Consolidation...................... 6

Problems of Rural Schools..................................... 7

II. THE INTERMEDIATE EDUCATIONAL UNIT..............................13

Historical Development of Intermediate Units...................14

Analysis of Intermediate Educational Units.....................19

III. INTERMEDIATE EDUCATIONAL UNITS: THE PAYOFF TO RURAL SCHOOLS...31

Special Education..............................................31

Vocational Education...........................................38

Data Processing................................................40

Curriculum Leadership..........................................41

Media Services.................................................43

Driver Education...............................................46

Other Services.................................................48

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS....................................49

Summary........................................................49

Recommendations................................................52

REFERENCES.....................................................61

ABOUT THE AUTHORS..............................................67

# Chapter I

## UNIQUE NEEDS OF RURAL SCHOOLS

### Development of the American Public Education System

American education began with the colonial period, during which time European school systems were transplanted to America. The settlers who migrated to this country in the seventeenth century were basically religious, and as such possessed primarily religion-oriented educational motivations. In accord with the beliefs of the original colonists that a person could be spiritually lost if unable to read the Bible, "The Old Deluder Law of 1647" was legislated. The Massachusetts Bay Colony thereby provided an early legal structure for the education of its youth, though the law did not provide funds either for the support of education or for the establishment of a school system (Hillway, 1964: pp. 13-14).

Schools varied widely throughout the colonies, with the "dame school" typical of the primitive approach to education. Classes in such a school were conducted for children in the home of a poor widow needing extra funds to supplement her income from sewing. In New England, however, a one-room school house was erected and a schoolmaster employed when a town grew large enough to warrant it. Schools in the Middle Colonies varied with the national origins of the colonists, while in the South, plantation families hired tutors for their children and also provided for the education of the poor (Hillway, 1964: p. 14).

In the eighteenth century, religious orientation in the American schools had begun to be replaced with more practical subject matter. By this time, the country had experienced an expanded economy, characterized by successful merchants and craftsmen located in urban centers. A new type of education was needed in the form of technical and commercial design to help meet the nation's expanding economy. An intellectual of that time, Benjamin Franklin, encouraged the establishment of the "Academy," which reflected the enthusiasm of Americans of the eighteenth century for practicality in education (Hillway, 1964: pp. 14-15).

In discussing what he referred to as the American school system's "seven battles," Ellwood P. Cubberly (1934: pp. 176, 177) led the fight to make the schools entirely free. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that Americans discarded the religious domination of the schools and instituted nonsectarian and free schools. Even as late as 1880, monies to run schools came from personal donations, lotteries, land grants, tuition fees, and related sources (Hillway, 1964: p. 15).

Generally, the city schools were advanced, developmentally, beyond those in the rural areas of a state. Graded, free schools were established in California, New York, and Pennsylvania, for example, in the 1860s (Good, 1962: p. 153).

By the later 1800s, a new era had dawned on American education. Schools were being affected by the opening of the West, the growth of towns, invention of farm machinery, and the use of industry. In New Hampshire, for example, the 1870 census reflected that within a span of fifty years, the percentage of population living on farms had diminished from 80 to 25 percent (Good, 1962: pp. 154-55).

## Industrial Revolution

With the advent of the academy concept of schooling, installed in the middle of the eighteenth century, schools had begun to view the function of education as being something beyond the Aristotelian ideal of the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Actually, practicality and instrumentalism in education emerged, as was manifested by the utilitarian character of the curriculum of the original academy proposed by Benjamin Franklin (Brubacher, 1947: p. 83). This change in the direction of education was, according to Brubacher (1947: p. 84), "credited to the middle-class viewpoint and furthered by the general spirit of the colonialists' ideology that hard, industrious work was important in yielding independence, enterprise and self-reliance." The Industrial Revolution "accelerated the development of capitalism and the nineteenth-century ascendency of middle-class ideals" (Brubacher, 1947: pp. 85-86). Furthered by Horace Mann's insistence that state-supported schools would be conducive to a better-educated citizenry, other leaders, such as Henry Barnard and James Carter, led in the struggle to establish state schools (Mulhern, 1959: p. 508).

"By 1870," according to Mulhern (1959), "the groundwork of our public school system had been firmly laid, but the superstructure was still very imperfect [p. 617]." The right to establish high schools was being legally questioned during this time. The first conclusive answer came in 1874 when the Michigan Supreme Court held that it was constitutional for the school district of Kalamazoo to collect taxes for the support of a high school (Van Til, 1971: p. 147). This decision set the stage for a national expansion of public education to all levels.

## Move to the Comprehensive High School

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century constituted an important benchmark in American education; for while the nineteenth century was essentially rural and agricultural, by the turn of the century a trend toward urbanization and industrialization had emerged. Families began migrating from the farms, hamlets, villages, and towns to establish residences in urban settings (Van Til, 1971: p. 295). Beginning in the early twentieth century, philosophical influences militated toward shaping schools to accept an ever-increasing responsibility for education. The progressive education movement, for example, though concerned with experimentation and instructional methodology, also had the attendant effect of expanding the general scope of the schools' responsibilities for educating the child. Subsequently, with the advent of worldwide economic depression and the rise of fascism in the 1930s, progressive education became closely attuned to social needs and interests (Van Til, 1971: p. 154). The stage was set by this time for the continued expansion of school programs and offerings. Further, the schools continued to assume more and more responsibility for the process of education. Although there were, and are, criticisms of the effects of the progressive education movement, its influences on broadening the concerns of American education and providing the setting for "the transformation of the schools" are now quite evident.

The development of the "comprehensive high school" is noted by Conant (1959: pp. 7, 8-12) in his report on The American High School Today. Conant characterizes the responsibility of the American public education system in his description of a comprehensive high school: "the public high school is expected to provide education for all the youth living in a town, city, or district" [p. 7. According to this critic, thousands of such schools exist throughout the United States and attempt to accommodate all the youth in their respective communities.

This type of school is a reflection of American economic history and the American devotion to the ideals of equality of opportunity and equality of status. However, the term "comprehensiveness" should be considered carefully, for as Conant (1959: p. 13) suggests, there are "degrees of comprehensiveness" which relate to the adequacy or level of acceptability of the schools' accomplishments in achieving their educational goals.

## Present Demands on Schools

A trademark of American schools since the 1920s has been the tendency to expand the curriculum and to offer increased educational opportunities to students. Although contemporary critics have vocalized on numerous occasions the needs for change, a cursory comparison of the school of fifty years ago and the typical school of today will yield significant contrast. Organized to go beyond the essentialist's notion of education being a rigid inculcation of the hard core of basic educational subjects (Morris, 1961: p. 340), the typical modern school aspires to address educationally as many issues relevant to student needs as possible.

The rationale for the acceptance by schools of a role of expanding responsibility is clear. Recorded in the history of education are a number of instances in which threatening social problems have been referred to the schools for solution. For example, Van Til (1971) explained that

> in the 1930s, the economic and international crises led to an increase in socially oriented materials in the programs of schools. World War II in the 1940s led to the adaptation of school programs to wartime demands. In the 1950s, the schools reacted to the national fear that the United States might be second to the Soviet Union in the space race. This persisted into the early 1960s; emphasis was placed on strengthening programs in science, mathematics, and modern languages, supported by federal funds to realize American national purposes. But the later sixties saw a rediscovery of poverty in America and emphasis shifted to the education of disadvantaged youth, supported by philanthropic and government funds [p. 436].

Articulating the extant conditions of our times, Van Til (1971) posited the following:

> In the 1970s, confronted by angry youth and dissenting blacks and the dismay of the silent majority at crime, bombings, and incipient revolution, American society again looks to the schools

> for help. Such approaches as black studies, free universities, free choice curricula, and problem-centered programs are developing. In the 1970s, national concern also is aroused by the sharp increase in the use of drugs by both the college and high school population. Especially in the large cities, then in the suburbs and smaller cities, and finally in rural areas, courses and programs concerning drug abuse have been added to the curriculum [p. 437].

The citation above reflects what society has grown to expect of the schools. The concept that school boards of public educational agencies are morally bound to direct the schools toward the desired outcomes of the local citizenry which elects them has caused the schools to arrange their resources to meet those needs which the local community has identified as its major concerns. Similarly, state laws have been passed to address particular needs identified as requiring attention to influence and shape educational programs in all states. Examples of these programs are drug abuse education, crime prevention education, character education, and economic education. Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, attention at the Federal level has been focused on subject matter related to national defense considerations, ecological education, education for the disadvantaged, early childhood and preschool education, compensatory education, and so on.

There have been, of course, many manifestations of the adjustments schools have made to the aspirations of society. Additionally, schools as integral social institutions have served as instruments for preserving the culture of the controlling social group; and, as such, they have reacted to the dominant social class desires. However, there appears to be a point where the level of comprehensiveness of a school becomes unfeasible. As articulated by a sociologist (Corwin, 1965),

> comprehensive schools have led to two major types of strain in the school system, each of which subverts intellectual functions. First, the comprehensiveness of the program results in a multiplicity of goals, ranging from teaching knowledge to teaching character training. Many of these goals are either logically inconsistent..., or they cannot be completely achieved simultaneously because of the limited time and energy of teachers and students [p. 141].

Despite such cautions as are cited above, the trend of the past—that of increasing acceptance by the schools of broader responsibility—is continuing at a consistent pace. An educated guess would be that the schools will continue to become more comprehensive and that they will assume an even greater role in the acculturation process. Passow (1966) contributed to this notion when he stated that "the downward extension of schooling seems assured in the years ahead"[p. 12].

## Population Shift and School Consolidation

Since the turn of the century, there has been a general population shift from rural to urban America. Urban centers are steadily expanding while farm populations diminish. Within ten years, from 1960 to 1970, the farm population dropped from 15 million to 10 million. According to Van Til (1971), "in 1960, farmers and their families comprised about eight per cent of the U. S. population..., [and] in 1970, the ratio had fallen to about five per cent"[p. 294].

Although the figures above indicate that the rural-farm population has declined substantially, there is need for very careful consideration of the rural-nonfarm population. If the total rural population is not properly considered, untrue inferences might be accepted that all rural America is dissipating. In a rigorous analysis, Tamblyn (1973) asserted that

> in the past 70 years, while U.S. total population has increased from 76 million to 203 million, and urban population from 30 million to 149 million, the rural population has remained steady at just about 50 million. The farm sector of the rural population, however, has declined from 46 million in 1900, or three-fourths of the rural total, to fewer than 10 million, only one-fifth of the rural population [p. 5].

Thus the total rural population of this country is holding steady. Although the trend is clearly toward urbanization, there are, nevertheless, almost 45 million rural Americans whose existence cannot be denied.

In addition to the changing character of the rural population—from rural-farm to rural-nonfarm—the structure of the educational setting has undergone modifications. This alteration has occurred in the dramatic reduction of public school districts in the United States—from more than 127,000 in 1932 to 16,771 in 1971 (Tamblyn, 1973: p. 22). Public school districts have constituted the component of local government that has experienced more organizational reform than any other governmental appendages. Tamblyn (1971: p. 10) predicted that the trend of reducing school districts through reorganization and consolidation will continue until not more than five thousand districts remain.

Recognizing that, through the reconstitution of districts, veritable gains have been accomplished in improving the quality of educational opportunity for rural children, there is still much to be done in the future. The established fact that small schools do not provide comprehensive educational programs constitutes a quite real obstacle to equitable education for the youngsters who attend them. Conant (1959), in one of his well-known reports, emphasized vividly his opinion of small high schools when he stated, "I should like to record...my conviction that in many states the number one problem is the elimination of the small high school by district reorganization" [p. 38]. Conant strongly recommended that persons interested in improving public education devote their energies to mobilizing opinion about school district reorganization.

However beneficial changes via reorganization and consolidation have been, most schools in rural areas remain small. In his study on inequality in rural America, Tamblyn (1973) stated that "despite all the reorganizing to date, over 30 per cent of the school systems enroll 300 or fewer students; over 75 per cent of them have an enrollment of less than 2,000. More than one-third of the students enrolled attend schools with under 5,000 students" [p. 22].

As a result of their smallness, and possibly because of their geographic isolation, rural schools possess a number of unique problems. Some of the major needs experienced by rural schools will be discussed in the following section.

## Problems of Rural Schools

Many unique problems have beset rural schools through their many years of existence. Although the vast majority of these problems relate to their size and limited student enrollment, there are, nevertheless, other types of conditions and influences which impair their ability to provide educational opportunities on a basis competitive with urban settings.

### Financial Constraints

Typically, rural school districts have consistently spent less money on education than have urban districts. This condition may be partially explained in that the majority of states having substantial rural populations concomitantly experience "fewer fiscal resources per child to support educational programs than the average state"[Tamblyn, 1971: p. 13]. Because fiscal resources differ in rural and urban areas, various disadvantages emerge. According to Tamblyn's analysis (1971), a cyclic effect materializes which perpetuates the problem. This cycle is explained as follows:

> This differential in fiscal ability to support educational programs is reflected in less than adequate facilities and instructional materials, a disporportionate number of unqualified teachers, a high rate of teacher turnover, fewer and less effective special services, and ultimately a higher dropout rate and inadequately prepared graduates. This in turn has led to high unemployment rates and underemployment rates and in turn to fewer taxable resources [p. 14].

The lack of a nonindustrial base and the limited taxable resources, which is compounded by a lesser rate of taxation on a lower assessed evaluation, produces less money for educational expenditures in rural areas. Additionally, the necessity of transporting the child great distances to school in some rural settings further inflates the costs.

Limited Curricular Offerings

Because of the limited number of students, rural schools are not able to provide the comprehensive curriculum coverage that larger schools provide. For example, kindergarten programs are noticeably absent in many rural schools. A smaller percentage of students who attend nonmetropolitan schools have access to preschool and kindergarten education.

Similarly, rural schools afford less attention to special types of students with particular needs, such as the disadvantaged or handicapped. Students with peculiar needs, and students in general, tend to drop out earlier and more often than do students who attend urban schools.

Conant (1959), in a criticism of the small high school, delineated his position of favoring the elimination of the small high school:

> I am convinced small high schools can be satisfactory only at exorbitant expense. The truth of this statement is evident if one considers the distribution of academic talent in the school which serves all the youth of the community. It will be a rare district where more than 25 percent of a high school class can study with profit twelfth-grade mathematics, physics, and a foreign language for four years.... If a school has a twelfth grade of only forty and indeed only a quarter of the group can handle the advanced subjects effectively, instruction in

> mathematics, science, and foreign languages would have to be provided for a maximum of ten students [p. 37].

Owing to the lack of diverse program offerings in the rural school, graduates often discover that they are not only deficient in the training and skills essential to job success in the urban domain but also that they may be lacking in the skills necessary for productivity in the rural environment. The President's Committee on Vocational Education in 1963 discovered that, generally, rural schools do not provide ample opportunities for students to participate in industrial and distributive education. Courses in vocational education tend to be focused on homemaking and agriculture; unfortunately, careers requiring these specialities, even in the rural setting, are not sufficiently abundant to serve all those who would aspire to enter them.

## Inability to Attract and Retain Good Teachers

Although there are many excellent teachers in schools which may be classified as rural, generally, there is consensus that many more are needed. Because of the disadvantages of lower pay, isolation, restricted cultural and entertainment-oriented opportunities, as well as study and professional growth provisions, teachers prefer urban school employment.

All too often teachers accept positions in rural schools because jobs were not available in an urban system or larger school. The simple fact that the school offering employment was "least preferred" does not, of course, contribute to an enthusiastic attitude. Teachers with such a set of mind who do accept positions in rural schools are less than aggressive in meeting the needs of their students and are ambitious only in locating more desirable employment elsewhere. Similarly, many teachers accept jobs in small, rural schools during interim periods when their spouses are involved in a college or university program located in a nearby urban area. These teachers, also transient, do not promote continuity and stability as far as their rural school involvement is concerned.

Staffing the rural school with persons who are temporary, such as the wives of military personnel or graduate students, increases the probability that the schools are hiring persons who are not adequately prepared to teach under rural conditions. Thus the rural schools are faced with staffing problems resulting from inadequate preparation, impermanence of service, and unenthusiastic performance.

## Antiquated Administrative and Organizational Structure

There are evidences that in many of the rural states the role and function of education are not fully understood by the citizenry. This condition is typical in the Middle West, where the one-room school, built to meet the educational needs of a frontier society, remained the symbol of education for many years. Goldhammer's description (1968) of the administrative operations in smaller school districts amply addressed the inadequacies present therein:

> In the smaller school districts, it is not uncommon for the central office staff to consist of a single school administrator—the superintendent of schools—with one or two clerical assistants to manage routine affairs for him. There are still school districts which have no administrators and in which the managerial responsibilities are performed both by a teacher—in addition to her regular instructional duties—and by the district clerk or treasurer who is not a professional educator. Other school districts are sufficiently small that the one professional administrator may teach courses in addition to his administrative duties [pp. 32-33].

That competent, energetic, and creative educational leadership is desirable for optimal results is without challenge. However, to expect to attract quality administrators to substandard, bound-for-mediocrity schools is a dream. Admittedly, there may be unique cases where experience-conscious administrators aspire to accept the challenges of inadequate finances, marginal facilities, complacent staffs, and conservative communities; but these are the exception. Most young administrators seek employment opportunities which reflect promise of upward mobility once competence to improve the school environment is demonstrated. On many occasions, for the rural school this possibility appears remote, if not impossible.

Organizationally, the small, rural district is severely constrained. Only the skeletal framework is available around which the school can be structured. Specialized personnel, required for any student population, are unavailable. Guidance counselors, educational diagnosticians, subject matter consultants, vocational-technical specialists, and others are severely needed to satisfactorily address the academic, social, and emotional requirements of the children.

Other resources essential to any effective educational institution are typically missing in rural settings. These resources include, for example, museums, health clinics, community aid agencies, volunteers in service to public schools, cooperative extension services, and the services offered by colleges and universities.

Provincialism and Conservatism

Historically, the rural population has been stereotyped as conservative and provincial. Certainly, the personalities of the rural and urban populations do differ. It has been taken for granted through the years that the two populations differ in their view of the world and in their mode of behavior. Living close to the soil and working closely with their parents, rural children and youth have tended to be more conservative and more accepting of traditional American values. They have been characterized by close-knit family loyalty rather than ready acceptance of strangers. Additionally, rural children have been assessed as less likely to question and rebel against authority and have been determined to be less optimistic about the power of human beings to improve and better the surrounding environment (Graham, 1969: p. 220).

Such attitudes, it has been hypothesized, have contributed to objections by rural taxpayers to physical improvements to educational facilities which cost money. This conservative outlook, accompanied by a comparatively low level of adult education, has militated toward maintaining the status quo. Certainly, many rural adults do not see clearly the need for education of a level or quality as high as that considered essential by educators.

Obviously, there are many other problems common to rural school districts which have not been identified in the brief overview above. Some additional problem areas will be briefly discussed as they relate to specific strategies incorporated in the intermediate educational unit concept explained in the next chapter.

## Chapter II

## THE INTERMEDIATE EDUCATIONAL UNIT

Intermediate educational units have operated in over one-half of our states for more than a century. Still, there is general confusion about what intermediate units are, which states have such agencies, and what role they play in our educational system. It is appropriate that careful examination be given to this level of the educational system. A study of the intermediate unit is particularly germane because of the accountability movement and the emphasis presently being placed upon equality of educational opportunity.

The intermediate educational unit is, by definition, that office or agency which operates between the state department of education and the local school district (Campbell, Cunningham, McPhee, and Nystrand, 1970: p. 116). In states having intermediate educational units, the units are part of the formal education system and are authorized by legislative action. They may or may not have the power to levy taxes for their support, and they may or may not serve a regulatory role for the state department. Most intermediate units have their own boards of directors which determine policy for the agencies.

While the types of intermediate educational units established by states vary greatly, they can presently be classified as either county or regional agencies. County units, as the name implies, are those intermediate educational units whose geographic limits are coterminous with the boundaries of a single county. Regional units, on the other hand, are established according to population patterns and normally include several counties within their geographical boundaries. Some states have established a statewide network of intermediate units. In others, intermediate units may only be functioning in part of the state.

County units which serve as intermediate agencies between the state and local districts should not be confused with countywide school systems. Campbell et al. (1970: p. 116) indicated that some of the literature on intermediate units have erroneously treated county school districts as if they were one type of intermediate unit. This concept is incorrect. In those states, such as Maryland, which have county districts, the districts are the basic operating unit of school government; they are not in an intermediate position between the state and the school district. Also, educational cooperatives should not be confused with intermediate units, since they are not established by legislative action. Rather permissive legislation or the lack of legislation prohibiting cooperatives allows school districts to assume the initiative in establishing such arrangements. Neither countywide school systems nor educational cooperatives will be examined in this document.

## Historical Development of Intermediate Units

As earlier stated, intermediate educational units have been in existence in this country for many years. The recent interest in these units indicates a need to consider briefly the causes which led to their initial establishment and the factors which have necessitated changes in the organizational structure of intermediate units. Excellent resources exist which treat the development of intermediate units in depth (Cooper and Fitzwater, 1954: Isenberg, 1954; Hooker and Muller, 1970; Hughes, Achilles, Leonard, and Spence, 1971).

### County Units

Early laws regarding the establishment of school districts were quite permissive. Settlers pushing westward would often, upon reaching their destination, select as one of their first tasks the establishment of a school for their children. Thousands of schools came into existence in the Midwest and West during the course of the pioneering movement. The schools were predominately small since they were built primarily for children of farmers and ranchers and, consequently, were located in sparsely populated areas (Hughes et al., 1971: p. 30).

As large numbers of school districts came into existence, legislatures saw the need for providing a system that would improve communications between the state and the local school districts. There was also a desire to impose and enforce uniform regulations upon the districts. Since most states had established the county as their basic unit of government, the county was the logical choice for these states to select as their intermediate educational unit (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1967: p. 276).

The first county units were created in the Midwest during the nineteenth century. Their main purpose was to help the state operate its school system. The county unit was basically concerned with small elementary schools. It performed such duties as supervising the districts within its boundaries, enforcing state regulations, gathering statistical information for the state, distributing state funds to the schools, and providing other general administrative services for the schools. For example, in some cases the county office interviewed and employed teachers for the schools under its jurisdiction (Hughes et al., 1971: pp. 30-31; Morphet et al., 1967: p. 276).

The administrative head of the county unit was usually the county superintendent of schools. In most states this individual was chosen in a general election. This procedure resulted in the office being sought and held by politicians rather than educators, although states generally did require the superintendent to have a teaching certificate. The job security of the county superintendent rested solely upon his ability to win votes. Thus, it was little wonder that county superintendents usually served in a clerical role rather than as an educator.

The office of the county superintendent was, by and large, an outgrowth of rural America. It was a downward extension of the state designed to improve communications between local schools and the state, as well as to provide some uniformity between schools. As small towns grew into cities, they began establishing secondary schools. The cities also began developing their own abilities effectively to administer their schools. As schools increased their administrative capabilities, they grew increasingly reluctant to rely upon the county superintendent for services he had previously provided them. Thus, the county superintendent found himself working only with very small schools and then usually in a limited manner.

In 1949, twenty-eight states had county units serving as intermediate educational units. One state, New York, had both county units and a regional unit. Six New England states had supervisory unions, whose status as intermediate educational units has been questioned. The remaining thirteen states had no provisions for intermediate units (Hooker and Mueller, 1970: pp. 58-59).

## Regional Units

For a long period of time, the county served admirably as the geographic boundaries for intermediate educational units. However, a number of states found a need to reorganize their intermediate units following World War II. Isenberg (1971: p. 60) reported that almost one-half of the states had created new intermediate units or substantially modified their old units over the past twenty-five years. A major consideration in the reorganization was the desire to establish units which encompassed multicounties rather than single counties.

Several factors stimulated legislatures to take the initiative in restructuring their intermediate educational units. The ambiguity of the role of the county superintendent made it difficult for that office to perform more than mundane tasks for most districts. The county superintendent was limited to performing certain legal duties primarily dealing with the record keeping and reporting required by the state department of education. Boards which had employed their own administrators to operate their schools were not inclined to listen to the suggestions of the county superintendent. This inclination was understandable, since most of the districts employed administrators who were better trained than the county superintendent. Also, local districts desired to keep as much control of their schools as possible and tended to view the county superintendent as an intruder (Campbell et al., 1970: p. 125).

School consolidation was another factor that led to a serious examination of the effectiveness of the county as an intermediate educational unit. As earlier stated, the permissive legislation adopted by most states regarding the establishment of school districts resulted in thousands of small districts being formed. For example, in 1945 over 100,000 legally established school districts existed in the United States (Isenberg, 1971: p. 60). This was a reduction from a high of about 175,000 districts which had at one time been operational. School consolidation has, during the past twenty-five years, occurred at a rapid pace; to the extent that there are approximately 17,000 school districts presently in existence (Nyquist, 1973: p. 26).

The mass consolidation of small schools resulted in the number of schools within most counties being substantially reduced. However, in

1971, even after the great reduction in the number of school districts, over 67 percent of the districts enrolled fewer than two thousand students. Less than 10 percent of the districts enrolled more than six thousand students. Thus, the consolidation movement did not result in the establishment of large districts; rather, it substantially reduced the number of extremely small ones (Isenberg, 1971: p. 62).

Most of the districts eliminated by school consolidation were those that the county superintendent had been serving. This change, coupled with vastly expanded educational demands and expectations, proved to be the catalyst which led several states to take action toward eliminating the office of the county superintendent. Kansas, Minnesota, New York, Wyoming, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Nevada, Washington, Illinois, and Idaho were states whose legislatures completely eliminated the office of the county superintendent of schools. Five of those states, Kansas, Nevada, Minnesota, Wyoming, and Idaho, made no provision for establishing any other type of intermediate unit and are presently operating a two-echelon educational system. The other five states authorized the establishment of regional units to fill the void left by the elimination of the county superintendent.

Other states chose to pass legislation which permitted the establishment of regional units in addition to county units. This strategy was probably selected because of the political nature of the office of the county superintendent (Hughes et al., 1971: p. 35). On the surface, this approach would seem to encourage a duplication of effort because often the boundaries of the two units overlapped. Actually, there was not duplication since legislatures generally gave the new regional units a much broader and more comprehensive role than had been assigned the county superintendent. Also, the enabling legislation for regional units made provision for a gradual phase out of the county units. States which have both county and regional intermediate educational units include Texas, Iowa, Colorado, Nebraska, and Oregon.

In addition to the states which revised the structure of their intermediate units to cover large geographic areas, one state has initially begun such a unit. Kentucky, in 1972, authorized the creation of seventeen Educational Development Districts to expedite the delivery of educational services to local education agencies. In all but two instances, the districts encompassed geographical areas greater than single counties. The exceptions occurred in districts serving the largest two cities within the state.

One can differentiate between county and regional intermediate units on a basis other than boundaries. Regional units are in all cases oriented toward providing comprehensive services to local educational agencies, a role most county units do not fulfill. While the service concept will be developed further in a later section, the following statements taken from documents explaining regional agencies seem appropriate.

> The geographic area to be served by the intermediate unit should be determined by the educational needs of children, rather than by county or other political boundaries [State Plan IED. 1969: p. 3].
>
> A major purpose of regional service centers is to help all local education agencies obtain resources necessary to provide opportunities needed by people of all ages [Kentucky, 1973: p. 3].
>
> Regional boundaries were determined by the needs of each area, by pupil population, and by the clustering of educational resources ["State Plan: Procedures," 1970: p. 8].

Nyquist (1973: p. 26) discussed the background leading to the establishment of regional intermediate units. He stated that regionalism was brought about because of the growth in the range and complexity of the services necessary to provide an appropriate education in the modern world. As states examined the educational needs of their citizens, they found some needs too expensive to be met by the individual school districts. However, by providing an organizational structure through which districts could share their resources, the districts could collectively provide programs necessary to meet their needs. The resulting organizational structures have emerged as regional intermediate educational units.

The greatest impetus for the development of regional intermediate units was the desire to make needed services available to all schools within the state regardless of the district's size or financial ability. States which established regional units viewed these agencies as vehicles for equalizing educational opportunity. They saw small schools benefitting, for example, by sharing media resources with larger districts within the same geographic area. This attitude toward regional intermediate agencies by the states is typified by the motto for Regional Education Service Centers in Texas: Services Available Anywhere Should Be Available Everywhere.

## Analysis of Intermediate Educational Units

During the development of the educational system in the United States, two types of units emerged as intermediate agencies between state departments of education and local school districts. The county unit, headed by the county superintendent of schools, was the first type to develop. Recent years have seen the genesis of regional intermediate educational units. Often, both types of organizations have similar responsibilities; however, each type possesses its own unique characteristics which influence the degree to which it is able to accomplish its mission. This section will present the current status of both county and regional intermediate units. Emphasis will be placed upon the ability of each to meet the educational needs they were designed to address.

### County Units

Most states with intermediate ~~units~~ utilize the county as the organizational structure for the agencies. This appears largely to be owing to the political strength which county superintendents have been able to muster with their state legislators. Traditionally, county politicians have more power in states which are predominately rural, and it is primarily in the rural states that the county is still operating as an intermediate educational unit. Their power is illustrated by the fact that moves to eliminate the office of the county superintendent have been defeated in such states as Texas, California, and Oregon.

The refusal of legislatures to act on this question is surprising when one examines the literature about intermediate educational units. It is the consensus of authorities that the county has largely outlived its usefulness as an intermediate unit. The criticism of the county unit generally relates to the following: (1) size of the unit, (2) lack of professional staff and role ambiguity, and (3) lack of a service orientation.

Probably the most often-voiced criticism of the county unit has been related to its size. Morphett et al. (1967: p. 279) pointed out that many have come to realize that the county unit is too small to effectively meet the growing needs of schools. This observation, that the county is too restrictive geographically, was echoed by others (Campbell et al., 1970: p. 124; Isenberg, 1971: p. 61; Establishing the Intermediate Unit, 1970) and was stated explicitly in a report to the California legislature: "We recommend that the office of the county superintendent of schools... be eliminated...and replaced as the intermediate unit...by regional education districts which are not restricted in size to the boundaries of a single county" ["Intermediate Unit in California," 1971: p. 2].

The size of the county unit has been questioned on several grounds. Counties are relatively small geographic areas and normally do not contain many school districts. Thus, the ability of the state to economically provide services to schools through county intermediate units has been compromised. Also, states generally have a large number of counties, a situation which has posed a communications problem for states which utilize the county as the intermediate educational unit. In Texas, for example, the state would need to contact 202 county offices as opposed to twenty regional units.

The lack of an adequate professional staff and the ambiguity of the role of the county as an intermediate unit have been cited as the shortcomings of this organizational structure. Most county units cannot economically afford to maintain a professional staff of any significant size. This restriction is, of course, related to the financial constraints caused by a limited number of districts being located within most counties. The lack of understanding of the role of county superintendent further complicates the ability of that office to serve the schools. Because neither the county nor the districts understand completely how the county should help the schools, little assistance is usually offered by the county superintendent.

Failure of the county to provide services to the school districts at a time when many districts cannot economically provide them for themselves has been another criticism of the county as an intermediate educational unit. Services in areas such as media, special education, and data processing require considerable financial outlay. Since a county's size may limit the number of districts which can share the expense of the services, the costs, even if shared by districts within the county, tend to be quite high. This factor has been recognized by those advocating the establishment of regional intermediate units to replace the county units.

While it is generally felt that the county is an obsolete boundary for an intermediate unit, it does offer certain advantages. The small size of the county units provides for close association with local educational agencies within the county. The county superintendent who has established rapport with the schools should be better able to work closely with those schools. Obviously, the county is closer to local control than are regional units which include a number of counties.

County units in several states, California in particular, have worked toward improving the comprehensiveness of their service programs by cooperating with other county units. In 1956, the northern section of the California County Superintendents Association recognized the need for county superintendents to cooperate and to establish a regional instructional television project. Without regional cooperation,such a project probably could not have been successful ("Educational Regionalism," 1967: p. v).

## Regional Units

The development of regional education agencies is one of the significant thrusts in American education today. Approximately one-half the states have promoted this strategy since the early 1960s as a major alternative for meeting the increased needs of both large and small school districts (Stephens and Ellena, 1973: p. 19). Most of these states have recognized that local education agencies must have assistance in providing their students with the type of education they need in a dynamic society.

The regionalism movement was strengthened by the very factors which had been the shortcomings of the county intermediate unit. These factors have been identified by several writers (Stephens and Ellena, 1973: pp. 19-20; Isenberg, 1971: pp. 66-67; Nyquist, 1973: pp. 26-28). The foremost reasons for the emergence of regional educational intermediate units have been the following:

1. The economy gained by larger geographic areas.
2. The ability to provide equality of educational opportunity.
3. The emphasis upon service to schools.
4. The ability to provide sophisticated assistance through specialized staffing.
5. The linkage with other regional agencies.
6. The flexibility of the organization.

Economy of Size. The economic advantages which accrued to states and local educational agencies by increasing the geographic area for intermediate units were a prime motivation for states selecting the regional unit. Increasing the size of the intermediate units resulted in providing those units with a larger student population. Thus, the regional units could apply economics of scale in providing educational programs.

Nyquist (1973: p. 26) stated that regionalism was brought about as it was determined that, because of costs, individual districts could not meet the expanded educational needs of the people in their districts. He indicated that to meet increased needs, New York has now blanketed most of the state with forty-seven regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). The BOCES provide a way to share resources over a broader base than single districts; yet, individual districts do not lose their autonomy.

The economies of size and pupil population have been addressed by most states which have established regional units. Isenberg, in "Regional Concept" (1971), made specific recommendations to groups in Illinois relative to geographic size and student populations for regional units. He stated:

> Two major criteria for the development of service regions are population and distance. In general a student population of from 60,000-75,000 is a median figure for the development of maximum services and a driving time of not more than 60-75 minutes to the most distant school district is desirable. It is recognized that population density, topography and road conditions will make it difficult or undesirable, in some cases, to adhere to these criteria [p. 2].

The value of regional intermediate units which contain relatively large student populations is in terms of greater economy. For example, school districts within a region can pay a pro rata share of the costs to maintain a regional media center. Then, each district and each teacher will have access to every film, filmstrip, audio tape, and other media equipment and materials within the center. This concept of obtaining a greater value for the dollar has been very enticing to legislators and taxpayers.

Equality of Educational Opportunity. The sharing of district resources to provide programs from which all districts within the region can benefit has definite implications for attaining greater equality of educational opportunity within a state. Again, let us consider regional media programs. If all local districts within a geographical region contribute according to student attendance, then every school will have access to the same media resources. This approach makes it possible for small districts to utilize the same media materials as the larger districts. Data processing and various other programs can also be made available to small schools by the sharing concept.

Regionalism equalizes educational opportunities in yet another way. A number of regional intermediate units have contracted with their school districts to provide certain specialized programs. Other schools within the region often may benefit from these programs without any costs to them whatsoever. Poorer districts frequently send teachers to inservice training sessions financed by more wealthy districts. Also, materials prepared under a project or contract can be made available to all schools simply for the costs of reproduction. This method of equalizing educational opportunity is likely to become more prevalent, particularly as the poorer schools become more aggressive and as state departments receive increased pressure to equalize educational opportunities.

Service Orientation. Possibly, regional intermediate educational units have enjoyed their present degree of success because of their service orientation. They have been able to establish relatively good working relations with school districts by emphasizing their role as a service agency. By stressing their ability to supplement the activities of the districts, the regional units have been able to approach the local agencies on positive grounds. The fact that, in most cases, participation by the districts in regional programs is totally up to the individual districts helps in establishing cooperative working relationships between the local districts and the intermediate unit. In addition, many regional units have taken the stance that they will only offer programs which have been specifically requested by school districts or that the state has mandated.

It is clear that regional intermediate units throughout the United States are service oriented. Some view the service role as being important enough to be the only purpose of the regional agencies. They are of the opinion that, by assigning regulatory functions to the intermediate organizations, the effectiveness of the services would be compromised. They point out that school districts are more prone to accept services from an intermediate agency if that agency has no regulatory responsibilities (Chambers, 1971: p. 21).

A number of states have chosen to make their regional educational agencies totally service oriented. However, the distinction between units which are service oriented only and those which are both service oriented and regulatory is not always clear. For example, Texas, Nebraska, Colorado, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and New York indicate that their intermediate units are totally service oriented. However, in New York the superintendents who make up the administrative board of the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) also serve as members on the staff of the Commissioner of Education. These superintendents have as much authority as the Commissioner and the legislature delegate to them (Isenberg, 1971: p. 68).

The regulatory duties performed by the regional units in Pennsylvania, Iowa, Illinois, Washington, Michigan, Oregon, and Wyoming are largely those assumed when they accepted the standard duties of the county superintendents. Publications from those states emphasize that service is the primary business of their intermediate units, and regulatory duties are played down. The following examples illustrate this point:

> The intermediate unit...provides consultative, advisory or education program services to school districts. The responsibility for administration and program operation belongs to school districts. The intermediate unit provides ancillary services necessary to improve the state system of education [Establishing the Intermediate Unit, 1970: p. v].

> The major task of the intermediate unit is the provision of direct services to school districts, or cooperatives of school

> districts, which they cannot effectively and economically provide themselves [Building for the Future, 1968: p. 1].

The first quotation, a definition of intermediate units by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education, clearly indicates service as the primary function of regional educational units. The second, from Oregon, also stresses the service concept. Yet in both states, intermediate units engage in duties that are regulatory in nature. Intermediate units in Pennsylvania operate special education programs if districts fail to provide them. Also, they may operate area vocational schools and are occasionally responsible for collecting data from the schools for the state department (Establishing the Intermediate Unit, 1970: pp. 16-17). In Oregon, the intermediate educational districts must thoroughly check for accuracy and completeness such reports as school calendars, enrollment and membership rolls, transportation reports, and other basic school fund reports. They must also perform statistical studies on enrollment, census, average daily membership, assessed and actual cash valuation, pupil-teacher ratio, salaries, and other data of individual districts within their boundaries (State Plan IED, 1969: p. 20).

Service is the key word used to describe the role of intermediate units. This is true even in those states which have assigned some regulatory duties to this form of middle-echelon administration. It is important for the regional intermediate educational unit to discover how it can best help both the local districts and the state department of education to achieve their goals. Presently, the answer is overwhelmingly by providing services!

Table 1 presents, on a state by state basis, the name, number, and type of duties assigned to regional intermediate educational units. It is possible, indeed likely, that states will continue to change their stances on the regulatory-service question.

Specialized Staffing. One might accurately refer to our times as the era of specialization. The great expansion of the knowledge base has made it impossible for individuals to acquire indepth expertise in more than a few limited areas. Thus, we have seen a proliferation of programs designed to prepare people to function in narrow, yet technical, fields. This tendency toward specialization is apparent in all professions, as

Table 1

SERVICE AND REGULATORY FUNCTIONS
OF REGIONAL INTERMEDIATE EDUCATIONAL UNITS

| State | Name and Number of Units | Service Only | Service & Regulatory |
|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado | Boards of Cooperative Services (16) | X | |
| Illinois | Regional Educational Service Center (17) | | X |
| Iowa | Joint County School System (10) | | X |
| Kentucky | Educational Development District (17) | X | |
| Michigan | Intermediate School District (59) | | X |
| Nebraska | Education Service Unit (17) | X | |
| New York | Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (47) | X | |
| Oregon | Intermediate Educational District (29) | | X |
| Pennsylvania | Intermediate Unit (29) | | X |
| Texas | Regional Education Service Center (20) | X | |
| Washington | Intermediate School District (15) | | X |
| Wisconsin | Educational Service Unit (19) | X | |

well as in many skilled tasks. Consider the many specialists in medicine, law, architecture, and business.

The field of education has not escaped the need for individuals with a high degree of training in very specialized areas. The more we learn about the educational process and the needs of students, the more we find we need to know. It becomes apparent that a system of delivery is necessary if techniques and strategies that will enhance the learning process are to be successfully communicated to classroom teachers. In order to provide teachers with these techniques, specialists need to be readily available and at the disposal of teachers.

Individuals with expertise in topical areas are usually in demand. This demand makes it difficult for many schools to employ these people. Because of the lack of available local funds, or inadequate support from the state financial program, poor or small schools cannot afford the additional expense in terms of salary and support even if they are able to find the needed specialists. Also, the very nature of specialization makes it extremely expensive to provide assistance in the numerous problem areas that school districts face. For example, to meet the needs of its handicapped children, a district might need technical assistance in programs for the emotionally disturbed, the trainable mentally retarded, the educable mentally retarded, and the physically handicapped. Assembling and maintaining a staff of specialists in these areas, as well as in other areas, would be very costly to any school district.

The services of specialists have been made available to local districts through regional education agencies. These agencies are able to take advantage of their broader student population base and economically provide the services of specialists to all of the districts within their boundaries. This approach results in even the poorest district having access to highly sophisticated talent.

The money necessary to employ and support specialists in a regional unit may be obtained through a state or federal grant or may be generated by assessing participating districts a pro rata amount of the costs. Presently, in Texas, the state department of education has funded or awarded special grants to Regional Education Service Centers to employ specialists in guidance and counseling, drug and crime education, vocational education, and special education. Thus, every school district in the state has ready access, without financial outlay, to individuals highly trained in those specific areas.

Linkage. Regional intermediate units provide an avenue for increasing the amount of cooperation between educational agencies and other governmental and social agencies. Isenberg (1971: p. 65) pointed out that no single organization should attempt to provide all services. This holds true for intermediate units. There are a number of agencies presently in operation which have goals similar to those of the schools. The task is to identify those organizations and to work cooperatively with them to meet common goals. The regional educational unit is in an excellent position to coordinate these types of efforts for school districts.

Several states have recognized the need to establish better linkages between their various regional agencies. Iowa's State Board of Public Instruction adopted a position which suggested that the boundaries of its intermediate units be contiguous with the already existing boundaries of community college—vocational school areas. The purpose of that policy was to improve communications between these two regional agencies and to prevent Iowa from facing a maze of organizational boundaries delineating different areas for different purposes. The regionalization of services that has taken place in Iowa, in addition to the regionalization of the state's educational intermediate units, includes agricultural extension services, vocational rehabilitation programs, mental retardation planning, Iowa State Employment Service, and mental health centers ("Development in Iowa," 1970: p. 4).

The need to provide continuity between the boundaries of the intermediate units and the regional organizational boundaries of the state government has also been recognized in Kentucky. The intermediate units, known in Kentucky as Education Development Districts, have interlocking boundaries with the Area Development Districts, which are state government organizations. Thus a combination of resources have been organized and mobilized to meet the demands of education (Kentucky, 1973: p. 4).

Iowa and Kentucky are typical of many states in regard to the existence of different types of regional agencies. By making the boundaries of their regional education units coterminous with the boundaries of other regional agencies, Iowa and Kentucky have taken a positive step towards enhancing communications and linkages between the different organizations. However, regional educational agencies in any state have a built-in advantage over individual districts in communicating with regional governmental agencies, primarily because resources available through these organizations need to be spread throughout their geographical boundaries. Regional intermediate units can help the regional governmental agencies accomplish this purpose since the units serve a number of school districts.

Flexibility. The flexibility of regional intermediate units has contributed to their success and growth. In the main, they have been able to respond to requests of school districts and state agencies in a timely manner. This ability may be owing in part to the quality of their staffs and in part to the fact that they are relatively new organizations and have not yet developed the rigid structure of older, more well-established agencies.

While regional education agencies provide the services of specialists, these individuals frequently possess characteristics which permit them to operate in a number of programs. During the course of obtaining in-depth training in their specialties, educational specialists are usually exposed to and work in related fields. Also, the nature of the educative process to which educational specialists are exposed while doing advanced work generally provides them with the skills necessary to update themselves as new or different areas become relevant. Furthermore, regional agencies generally employ staff members for specific projects, a practice which provides an added degree of flexibility in the sense that the person's job is tied to the duration of the project. As needs change, the organization has the freedom to select its staff members in relation to their ability to meet new needs.

The newness of regional intermediate units and the relatively small size of their staffs have contributed to their ability to remain flexible. Since regional education agencies stress service to schools, they must be capable of responding to needs voiced by districts. The success of the intermediate organizations depends upon their ability to satisfy their clients. Schools generally have the freedom to decide whether or not they wish to participate in programs offered by the regional units. Thus, the intermediate units could be classified as wild organizations under Carlson's (1964: p. 235) typology. As wild organizations, they must be flexible and respond to the needs of their clients if they are to survive. The small size of their staffs helps to prevent the regional units from becoming mired in bureaucratic red tape and unable to respond quickly to needed changes. Small staff size makes communication less difficult; and, consequently, the organization can rapidly mobilize its resources to meet new challenges.

## Chapter III

# INTERMEDIATE EDUCATIONAL UNITS: THE PAYOFF TO RURAL SCHOOLS

Intermediate educational units have, from their beginning, been largely justified according to the assistence they have been able to lend to rural schools. County units were originally established to assist rural elementary schools with administrative matters. The Boards of Cooperative Educational Services in New York, the first regional intermediate units, were founded, according to Nyquist (1973), "to meet the needs of rural districts too small or too poor to provide a full range of services for themselves [p. 28]."

What programs constitute a "full range of services"? Various lists have been compiled of the types of services which can be offered effectively, costwise, through intermediate educational units. New services continually surface in response to the changing needs of the educational system. Thus, while lists of services that are particularly suited to intermediate units are useful, these lists must be updated continually. Some services will need to be added and others deleted. In this chapter, discussions are presented about several specific programs which have been provided through intermediate units and which appear to be successfully meeting the needs of schools, both large and small. Certainly, the programs discussed in no way represent a complete list of services. They are, however, representative of the types of services which readily lend themselves to the intermediate unit.

### Special Education

On a national basis, intermediate educational units have probably been more active in the area of special education than in any other specific curricular field. They have been able to help states implement statewide programs for handicapped students and have also assisted individual school districts in their efforts to meet the unique needs of these youngsters. It is possible that, in special education, intermediate educational agencies have realized their greatest potential as a helping organization located between the state and the local educational agencies. It seems that, in this area, intermediate units have indeed performed the role their designers planned for them.

Special education is a program area that is quite well addressed through intermediate units (Isenberg, 1966: pp. 4-5). Meeting the needs of handicapped children requires highly skilled educators. In addition, a wide variety of skills are necessary to meet those needs. As has been pointed out, intermediate units are in a position to employ specialists to work with districts in meeting the educational requirements of exceptional children. The specialists may actually conduct classes for the handicapped children of districts within their geographic area, or they may serve in a consultative or training role for the special education personnel employed by the districts.

The capability of intermediate educational units to assist in the area of special education is an asset to all districts regardless of their size. However, it is with rural schools that the importance of the intermediate unit becomes most clear. All schools, even the smallest, are likely to have within their attendance zones children who are classified as handicapped. School districts are responsible for providing these students with the special assistance which will allow them the opportunity to progress according to their potential. Fortunately, because of their limited enrollments, rural schools normally have only a few children who suffer from handicapping conditions. Unfortunately, the small number of children involved, usually with different kinds of handicaps, makes it virtually impossible for a school to provide the comprehensive services these students need. The intermediate educational unit has served as the organization through which local districts share their resources in order to meet the unique needs of handicapped students.

Intermediate units generally serve the special education needs of school districts in one of two ways. The units may provide direct services to the students of the districts. That is, the intermediate unit may actually teach the handicapped children of the district. On the other hand, the intermediate educational agency may provide indirect services to students. Units which take this approach concentrate their efforts on staff development activities and consultation with special educational personnel employed by the separate districts. The approaches used by two states, Pennsylvania and Texas, will serve as examples of special education services provided to school districts by intermediate units throughout the United States.

## Pennsylvania

Intermediate educational units in Pennsylvania assumed the authority and responsibility of county school boards for special education in 1971. This transfer of power resulted in the intermediate units being involved in a substantial way in the special education efforts of the state.

In regard to special education, intermediate units in Pennsylvania function in both a regulatory and service role. The functions and duties of these agencies pertaining to special education are described in Establishing the Intermediate Unit (1970: p. 17), though the list is not all inclusive. Among the functions listed are the following:

1. Develop for districts and the intermediate unit a comprehensive plan of programs and services for exceptional children.
2. Provide, maintain, administer, supervise, and operate schools, classes, and services for exceptional children.
3. Provide a professional staff capable of meeting the educational and training needs of exceptional children.
4. Develop and operate inservice education programs for teachers and other professional employees engaged in the education of handicapped students.

Other duties include conducting an annual census of exceptional children; establishing liaison with social, state, and federal agencies in matters pertaining to the education of exceptional children; conducting research to improve special education programs and services; coordinating and/or operating parent education programs and services; and evaluating special education programs and services for the purpose of improvement (Establishing the Intermediate Unit, 1970: p. 17).

The above description of functions and duties makes it clear that in Pennsylvania the intermediate units are directly involved in the special education programs of districts and, in fact, may themselves conduct classes for handicapped children. Such classes are provided by these agencies if requested by individual school districts. Substantial economy can be enjoyed by rural schools by allowing the intermediate units to teach their handicapped students.

Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit, located in the north-central part of Pennsylvania, serves 26,000 public school students and fourteen independent school districts. Most of the school districts in this region are rural and face the same problems as other rural schools. These districts have, however, been able to obtain comprehensive educational programs and services for their exceptional children in spite of their small school size. Seneca Highlands provides instruction for almost all of the exceptional children in those fourteen districts. Specifically, the intermediate unit teaches students with the following handicaps: mentally retarded (educable and trainable); profoundly mentally retarded; brain injured; orthopedic impairments; and the socially and emotionally disturbed. In addition, classes are conducted for students with speech and hearing problems and for the visually handicapped. A diagnostic and consultative clinic is also a part of the special education service which schools can participate in through Seneca Highlands ("Intermediate Unit," 1973: p. 2).

By permitting intermediate units such as Seneca Highlands to teach the handicapped students, rural schools can actually provide their exceptional children a better education. Rural schools do not have the resources to provide special classes designed to meet the unique needs of handicapped students. A single district might, for example, have six children who are mentally retarded, one physically handicapped, and two emotionally disturbed. In all likelihood, the district cannot, on an economical basis, provide special classes with trained teachers and support personnel for the children. By enlarging the attendance area to include a number of rural districts, there would probably be enough children with different handicapping conditions to warrant special classes for the youngsters. This is exactly what was done in the Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit, as well as in other intermediate units in Pennsylvania. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the full-time special education classes taught by Seneca Highlands in 1972-73. These classes served students from a number of rural schools.

Seneca Highlands also provided school districts with outreach and indirect services in special education. During the 1972-73 school year, their special education staff traveled to individual schools to give speech therapy to 1,227 students and hearing therapy to 17 students. They provided home instruction to 7 profoundly mentally retarded children and worked with 117 students with special learning disabilities. In addition, the intermediate unit assisted several school districts in planning and evaluating their special education programs and provided inservice training for teachers.

Table 2

FULL-TIME SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSES
SENECA HIGHLANDS INTERMEDIATE UNIT, 1972-73

| Program | Classes | Students |
|---|---|---|
| Educable Mentally Retarded | 35 | 487 |
| Trainable Mentally Retarded | 8 | 66 |
| Physically Handicapped | 1 | 6 |
| Socially and Emotionally Disturbed | 1 | 5 |
| Brain Injured | 5 | 40 |

NOTE: Compiled from "Report of Services," Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit, Aug. 23, 1973, p. 1.

## Texas

The Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) in Texas became involved in helping the state upgrade its special education programs in 1968 when the state allocated each of the twenty RESCs funds to employ and support a special education consultant. This person was charged with providing inservice training activities to special education personnel employed by local school districts. The specialist was also to assist schools in planning their special education programs and to consult with individual teachers on problems pertaining to the education of handicapped children.

In 1970, the state undertook a comprehensive special education program for exceptional children. Local districts were reimbursed, from the state's minimum foundation program, the salaries paid to teachers and support personnel working with the physically handicapped, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and language and/or learning disabled. At the same time, it was evident that few districts had enough qualified special education personnel or special materials necessary to help those children overcome the learning problems caused by their handicaps. In 1971, the Regional Education Service Centers were called upon by the Texas Education Agency to increase their assistance to districts in these areas. The service centers were made eligible for additional state funds to provide local schools consultative assistance in planning and evaluating their special education programs, inservice education for their special education personnel, and consultative assistance to individual teachers. Funding was also provided to each intermediate unit to establish, operate, and maintain a Special Education Instructional Materials Center from which all teachers in the region could borrow materials for examination and use with handicapped students.

With the exception of contracted appraisal services, Regional Education Service Centers are limited to providing indirect services to special education students. The centers are not permitted to teach classes for handicapped children. This responsibility is solely that of the local school districts. The state department does, however, encourage rural schools to establish special education cooperatives which include at least two school districts. Regional service centers across the state have helped the administrators of these small districts to plan and obtain approval to establish such cooperatives. Thus, the small rural districts in Texas can combine their resources to meet the needs of their handicapped children.

The Region XIX Education Service Center serves thirteen school districts in far West Texas and offers an excellent example of how rural districts can benefit through access to an intermediate unit. The region serves a public school population of over 100,000 students, but over 90 percent of those students are in two urban districts. The remaining eleven districts are rural, with the largest serving about 2,500 students, K-12. The service center receives state funds for special education services according to the total average daily attendance of all districts within its boundaries. These funds flow to the RESC through individual districts. Once the RESC receives the money, the funds lose identity and are not earmarked for specific districts. Thus, the small districts can benefit from services made available because of the large student population within the total region. For example, Region XIX has a special education staff of seven professional employees, four with doctorates, who provide inservice and consultative assistance to all schools in the region. In addition, the RESC uses its resources to bring in nationally prominent figures in special education for workshops on timely topics. Obviously, most rural school districts would not have access to services of this quality were it not for the service center. Table 3 gives a summary of special education activities conducted by Region XIX ESC for the 1972-73 school year ("Summary of Activities," 1973: pp. 10-14).

Table 3

SPECIAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES
REGION XIX EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER, 1972-73

| Activity | Districts | Clients Served |
|---|---|---|
| Inservice Training | 12 | 1,056 |
| Special Topics Workshops | 6 | 686 |
| Planning and Consultation | 12 | 198 |
| Special Materials Circulation | 9 | 1,386 |
| Pupil Appraisal | 3 | 130 |

Intermediate units, both county and regional, have been of substantial assistance to local districts in special education. The economy and the concurrent increase in program quality that accrue through the involvement of intermediate units are of particular importance to small school districts. There is little doubt in the minds of the authors that local districts can better serve the needs of their handicapped children by working cooperatively with intermediate units.

## Vocational Education

This country has long recognized the importance of vocational education. In 1917, the Federal Government made its first commitment to vocational education below the college level when it passed the Smith-Hughes Act. The more recent Vocational Education Act of 1963 reaffirmed the principle that for the general welfare of the United States our public schools must provide educational programs which will produce skilled laborers and technicians. The present emphasis upon career education is indicative of the belief held by Americans that public schools should prepare the country's youth to make a living. It is well documented that in the future fewer jobs will require a college education. At the same time, a greater number of occupations will rely upon highly skilled workers.

Vocational education programs are, for a number of reasons, relatively expensive for public schools to offer. Equipment, material, and personnel costs are much greater for vocational education than for traditional college preparatory courses. The small incident of need also increases the costs to a district. Diesel mechanics, food services, computer programming, building trades, and so on are attractive and appropriate to only a small percentage of any school population (Isenberg, 1971: p. 66). Because of the costs, it is difficult for most rural districts to extablish and operate a variety of specific vocational programs which their students and community members may desire.

A number of states have utilized their intermediate units in a meaningful way to meet the vocational education needs of their students. These states recognized the financial limitations individual school districts faced in attempting to provide a comprehensive vocational education program. They acted to allow intermediate units to supplement and/or operate vocational education programs.

In New York, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) began providing vocational courses in 1948 when an agricultural course was started in Genesee County. From 1955 to 1969, the number of vocational courses taught by BOCES expanded to forty-six and ranged from auto mechanics to practical nursing (De La Fleur, 1961: pp. 24-25). To insure economy and prevent duplication, the New York State Department of

Education may choose not to permit local districts to offer competing programs in such areas as occupational education. Nyquist stated (1973) "In each case a determination is made as to whether the needs of all children require that programs only be offered by BOCES or whether some districts, usually the large ones, can be permitted to run their own programs without impairing the capacity of BOCES to offer the program to children from smaller districts" [p. 28].

In New York State, the BOCES provide occupational education to more than 75,000 boys and girls each year. The programs are directed toward students in grades 9-12. These youngsters may enter the job market or continue their technical training after high school. One of the chief functions of BOCES is to administer occupational education centers for career-bound youngsters (What's a BOCES? 1970: pp. 5-6).

The Nassau BOCES furnishes an example of how the New York units function in assisting school districts to meet the vocational education needs of students. Even though serving a densely populated suburban county, the rationale upon which their programs are established is applicable to any geographical area. The strategy is that the BOCES responds to local needs and demands when establishing its course offerings. Through the Nassau BOCES, fifty-six local districts make over sixty different occupational education courses available to all of their students. Offered in one-, two-, and three-year sequences, the courses are designed to equip boys and girls with a salable skill when they finish high school. Students from each district are bussed to a BOCES vocational center for one-half of each day; they spend the other half-day at their own high schools. Some of the vocational areas students have access to because of this intermediate unit are as follows: Computer Programming, Retailing, Fashion Design, Commercial Cooking, Banking, Offset Printing, Practical Nursing, Plumbing, Commercial Art, Medical Assisting, Animal Care, Auto Mechanics, Commercial Photography, Cosmetology, Dental Assisting, Trade Electricity, Electronics, Horticulture, Aircraft Maintenance, Child Care, Radio/TV Repair, Home Appliance Repair, Carpentry, and Commercial Baking (What's a BOCES? 1970: p. 12).

California, Pennsylvania, and Michigan are among the states other than New York which have chosen to make vocational education courses available to students through their intermediate units. Other states, such as Texas, have opted to limit the role of their intermediate units to that of providing only supplementary services to the vocational programs of their districts. The supplementary services generally take the form of consultative assistance and inservice training for the vocational education personnel of districts.

Regardless of the specific approaches taken by these states, it is quite clear that intermediate educational units have a legitimate and useful role in vocational education. The need for highly trained and widely diversified technicians is certain to increase. As this occurs, states will likely rely more and more on the intermediate unit to assist schools in the area of vocational education.

## Data Processing

For efficiency, educational data processing services rely upon a large student population as much, if not more, than do any of the other specialized services offered by intermediate units. Computer time is expensive. Costs are high regardless of the procedure used to procure access to the machine (for example, rental, lease, lease-purchase, or purchase). In addition, data preparation and programming costs are quite high. Because of the costs, it is desirable to increase the number of clients receiving data processing services. For example, developing a student scheduling program for eighteen thousand students would likely cost no more than if the program were developed for scheduling one hundred students.

Savings which accrue to local schools by sharing in the costs of educational data processing services have resulted in the suggestion, made by many authorities, that this service be supplied by intermediate units (Isenberg, 1966: pp. 6-7; Stephens and Ellena, 1973: p. 19). However, some states see even regional intermediate units as often being too small to provide economical data processing services and have established multi-region data processing centers.

Presently, intermediate units in several states are making data processing services available to schools of all sizes (Willey, 1973: p. 35). All school districts in the state of Texas have access to data processing services through their Regional Education Service Center. Services in which the districts can choose to participate include student scheduling, grade reporting, test scoring and reporting, census reporting, teacher payroll, student attendance, and a number of financial reports. In Texas, the RESCs in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, El Paso, Fort Worth, Kilgore, Amarillo, and Lubbock have their own computers. The other twelve centers tie into one of these computers in order to serve their constituents.

The primary advantage for schools in utilizing computer services is that they can reduce the time spent on routine paperwork and recordkeeping. The computer does permit ready access to stored data and can be used for data analysis. Large school systems would be faced with serious problems if they did not have data processing services available. However, the importance of data processing services to small rural schools is questionable (Willey, 1973: p. 35). Small schools can often maintain their own records, store data, and perform other similar tasks more efficiently and economically by hand than by computer. Preparing data for input into a computer is time consuming. The inability of computer specialists and most school people to communicate effectively with each other is another stumbling block. Willey (1973: p. 35) reported on a good rule of thumb for small schools to use when determining their need for computerized services. He stated that for every dollar the small school spent on these services, there should be an enrollment figure of from three to five students to support the use of these services.

Some of the program areas computers can help with are as follows: (1) information, (2) budget and finance, (3) class scheduling, (4) grade processing, (5) attendance records, (6) testing, (7) guidance counseling, (8) bus route scheduling, and (9) library automation (Willey, 1973: pp. 36-37). Large or small districts can obtain computer services in a realistic manner through their intermediate educational unit. However, the need for such services should be carefully examined, particularly by small schools, before committing the district to participation.

## Curriculum Leadership

One of the most positive aspects of the educational system in this country is the educator's unwillingness to accept the status quo. Educators have continually searched for methods which would improve the instructional process and better meet the needs of learners. The literature is replete with discussions of new and innovative teaching strategies such as Individually Guided Education (IGE), Man: A Course of Study, Taba Teaching Strategies, Piaget-based instruction, and competency-based education. In addition to programs designed to improve the educational process and curriculum content, other programs have been developed to address emerging societal needs. Career education, environmental education, crime and drug education, and ethnic studies reflect a few of the programs schools have implemented to address new concerns.

It is admirable that educational institutions have been willing to change in an attempt to improve their services. However, the rapidity with which change is often introduced causes problems for teachers. Some teachers are able to master the skills that are necessary for implementation of the new programs. For many, these innovative programs have become a source of frustration. They likely received their teacher preparatory training prior to the development of the new concepts and need help in mastering them. A substantial inservice program is required to develop the competence and confidence of these teachers (Isenberg, 1966: p. 7).

Curriculum leadership is one of the areas in which intermediate educational units can provide a valuable service to local districts. Through these agencies, school districts of all sizes are able to make highly trained curriculum specialists available to their teachers. Specialists, employed by an intermediate unit, are free to work with all of the teachers within the agency's boundaries. Thus, every district has access to these professionals; yet, no single district has to bear the total expense. The curriculum consultants work with individual teachers as well as with groups. If requested, the specialists make classroom visits to help teachers on specific problems. Conducting inservice sessions on new programs and teaching techniques is also a primary function of these consultants.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has used the curriculum specialists from the twenty Regional Education Service Centers as spread agents for specific programs. In 1968, TEA conducted training sessions on the Triple A Science Program for a specialist from each of the RESCs. These consultants then returned to their own agencies and conducted workshops on this topic for teachers from local school districts. This same strategy has been used for a number of other programs. While the curriculum consultant in the RESC is a generalist, the centers employ other personnel for specific areas. Most of the intermediate units have consultants for drug and crime education, guidance and counseling, media, special education, vocational education, planning and evaluation, career education, testing, early childhood education, administration, and finance.

Intermediate educational units have concentrated much of their effort in curriculum leadership. The regional units play a major role in providing inservice education for practicing teachers. This service has been especially valuable to rural schools since they are severely limited in their ability to employ curriculum consultants. Intermediate units working cooperatively with local districts perform a needed task by providing teachers with regular assistance in the latest curriculum developments.

## Media Services

The concept of developing regional media programs is quite dated. As far back as the 1930s, with the St. Louis County Cooperative Audio-Visual Center, have concepts of this nature been implemented. The general notion, however, is gaining popularity across the country at a rapid rate. Regional approaches are receiving considerable attention as school districts realize that many specialized services, such as media, cannot be independently operated on an efficiency level comparable with a regionalized operation. Current examples of organizations utilizing the regional concept are as follows: Boards of Cooperative Educational Services in New York, Intermediate Educational Districts in Oregon, Regional Education Service Centers in Texas, and Educational Service Units in Nebraska and Iowa (Liberman, 1972: p. 46).

Liberman delineated several reasons for the rapid growth in the regionalization of media:

1. The high cost factor of educational materials, equipment, and support services.
2. The need for a wealth of expensive educational materials such as 16 mm films and videotapes to support an effective instructional program.
3. The need for a variety of educational services such as video tape duplication that are too expensive to be offered independently in each district.

4. The need for professional direction in assisting districts in development of effective techniques for utilizing media.
5. The ability of many regional centers to acquire federal funding to better support their programs [p. 46].

One of the most popular services intermediate educational units have provided participating school districts is in the area of educational communications or media. Specialized services embodied by media include the following:

1. Loan libraries of 16 mm film available to the various participating schools.
2. Duplication services for audio- and videotapes and transparencies.
3. Graphic development and reproduction services, including slides, transparencies, posters, and so on. Usually these services are available directly to teachers upon request.
4. Audiovisual equipment repair and preventative maintenance services.
5. Television production facilities for microteaching and inservice utilization.
6. Inservice training and staff development programs in media design and utilization.
7. Centralized purchasing of media equipment, instructional materials, and supplies.
8. Professional library services, including state-adopted textbook sample copies, curriculum guides, professional books, and journals.
9. Printing and duplicating services for school district news organs, brochures, and catalogs.
10. Specialized subject-matter resources in drug education, driver and safety education, guidance and counseling, reading, environmental education, and others.

The 16 mm film library in most regionalized operations consists of a comprehensive bank of films. These instructional materials vary from special staff development and inservice training techniques to subject-matter areas at all grade levels. Normally, the film may be scheduled upon request by clientele teachers, and the materials are then mailed or delivered to the appropriate classroom. Each teacher is provided a catalog of subject-matter-organized film title listings and booking instructions and forms. Although the majority of centers schedule film by hand, some have developed rather sophisticated computerized booking systems. These plans hold promise for routinizing such services by decreasing the "turn down" rate and, generally, improving the service.

In addition to the economic advantages, another advantage of the regionalized media organization is the availability of a comprehensive instructional library for all teacher clients to use. Single libraries, financed independently by school districts, would be hard pressed to procure, maintain, and distribute the quantity of films possible through a specialized and centralized regional instructional media center.

A standard practice by many regional media centers is to involve the users of the materials in the selection and procurement processes. Committees are formed to advise,after considerable study, the regional center of the films recommended for purchase. Such variables as (1) how well the film complements school curricula and instruction, (2) the cost of the item, (3) the estimated level of need for the film, and (4) the timeliness of the topic are considered.

Services embodied by media or educational communications which typically are available to clients of the regional media center include consultation, staff development, and inservice training activities. Many centers employ media specialists who work with teachers and other educators in the development of instructional media and on their utilization. Substantial portions of such consultation are performed at the educator's home base—his school. Obviously, this approach enables the media consultant to more effectively react to specific problems the client may present or demonstrate. Similarly, the consultant can assist in the selection of alternative solutions when he can observe and assess the problems first-hand and evaluate the effects of his suggestions for improvement. In addition, the delivery of consultative services to the schools promotes the possibility of cutting down on the expenditure of unproductive time involved while numbers of teachers travel to be consulted.

In all probability, media-related services enjoy the most commonality of all regionalized services yet installed in the country's intermediate educational units.

## Driver Education

The nature of driver education militates towards its applicability to regionalization, for drastically increasing the number of students taught while only moderately increasing the number of staff personnel contributes to desirable economic benefits.

Region XIX Education Service Center in El Paso, Texas, responded to a request by its clientele schools in 1969 to pilot and study the feasibility of consolidating several school district driver education programs into a regionalized format. The per-pupil costs and overall effectiveness of providing driver education were carefully analyzed. It was concluded that costs could be reduced and the effectiveness could be enhanced by regionalizing a program that used driver simulation equipment.

By utilizing special simulation equipment, several advantages accrued to the program. These include the following:

1. A larger number of students can benefit from such a program.
2. The per-pupil cost of instruction can be substantially reduced.
3. Fewer teachers are needed.
4. Students can learn the necessary basic skills in a simulator as effectively as in a dual-control car.
5. Students can develop better attitudes.
6. Students can learn appropriate responses to emergency situations without the attendant hazard of actually being in a car on the road.
7. Electric scoring devices can provide immediate detection of student errors (Hall, 1969: p. 13).

Fiscal expenditure reduction under the regionalized driver education program with the use of the simulators was approximately 32 percent. This figure was based on information obtained from the Texas Education Agency (the Texas State Department of Education. During the 1967-68 school year, 360 school districts in Texas reported an average per-pupil cost for driver education of $58.74. In that same period of time, 2,400 students in the Region XIX ESC service area completed the course in a conventional program operated by 11 school districts at a cost of $75.00 per pupil. Subsequently, during the period from June 1969 through the 1969-70 school year, some 8,000 students completed training in the new, regionalized program at an average cost of approximately $40.00 per student. Computations were inclusive of amortization of simulation equipment over a ten-year period.

According to the authors (Uxer and Benson, 1971) of a report on the Region XIX ESC regionalized driver education program, "The efficiency and cost reduction of the program may be attributed primarily to centralization of class scheduling, utilization of driver training assistant instructors, limited use of driver training vehicles, optimal utilization of certified instructors, and use of simulators to increase student-teacher ratio" [p. 17].

Contributing to the success of this type of regionalized instructional program, featuring direct services to students, was the initiative of the State Department of Education (TEA), which jointly with the Texas State Department of Public Safety modified the credit requirements relative to the driver education course. Driver training experiences in the simulators were accepted as a portion of the behind-the-wheel experiences previously required. The fiscal advantages of increasing the student-teacher ratio in the in-car laboratory phase from approximately four to one (one instructor with one student driver and three student-observers) to sixteen to one (using the simulator) are quite apparent.

Equally important to the success of the endeavor was the utilization of paraprofessionals, who performed almost total instruction in the laboratory phases involving the simulation and actual in-car driving and observation. Although trained and certified as teaching assistants, these personnel were not required to possess a college degree. The regular supervisory teachers, who provided all of the classroom instruction, typically held masters degrees.

The administrators of the Region XIX ESC make no contention that successful implementation of the regionalization concept in this particular case is indicative of the need for regionalization in all areas of education. It may be concluded, however, that some advantages do accrue when separate school district programs are reshaped into regional designs. Efficiency in manpower utilization, if properly organized, may result in substantial increases. Additionally, if expanded student access to improved educational experiences is an outcome of a regionalized schema, the plan is worth considering.

Rural schools, in regionalized programs, have derived a number of benefits. Through the regional approach, small, rural, isolated school districts can offer the same opportunities for their students as do the larger school districts. When the small student enrollment of one school is combined with that of other small schools the possibility for cost-effective instruction is enhanced.

## Other Services

The services provided by intermediate educational units should supplement the elementary and secondary programs of the public schools; the intermediate agencies should not offer programs which compete with those of public schools. There are numerous services, in addition to those previously discussed, which can legitimately be provided to local districts by intermediate units. Some of the more common services identified in the literature include the following: cooperative purchasing, bus driver training, adult education, health and nutritional programs, cultural enrichment programs, transportation services, psychological services, planning of school buildings, proposal writing, research, social services, teacher recruitment, and custodian training (Isenberg, 1966: p. 9; Tamblyn, 1971: pp. 12-13). The types of services which might be provided by intermediate units are almost unlimited. Of course, specific programs should be selected according to the particular needs of the local districts served by the intermediate unit. By cooperatively planning with its districts, an intermediate unit can develop a set of services which will best meet the needs of its schools.

# Chapter IV

# SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Contained in this chapter are an overview of the previous three chapters and a set of recommendations by the authors which hopefully will improve and optimize the effects of the intermediate educational units on public education.

## Summary

In Chapter 1, the development of the American school system was traced from its inception in colonial America to contemporary times. During this period of approximately three hundred years, the function of education has been transformed from its original, restricted, religious orientation of enabling the population to read the Bible into a comprehensive, almost all-encompassing, responsibility to accept the challenges of solving almost any societal problem.

The gradual expansion of the school's responsibilities to be all things to all people has been based, in part, on the people's faith in the educative processes. Attendant to the increasing comprehensiveness of the American school system has been the changing nature of our population—from almost completely rural to substantially urban. The effects of the Industrial Revolution were reviewed, whereby philosophical modifications in education resulted in a shift in the image of the school from one in which schools pursued the Aristotelian ideal of knowledge for its own sake to one of practicality and utility.

The thrust of the public school system toward including more curricula in the schooling process was further amplified by the willingness of the system to accept responsibility for a greater portion of the individual's life span. This materialized with the ruling rendered in the Kalamazoo case, which installed secondary education as an integral component of the public education design.

Recent and contemporary demands of the public schools were briefly discussed. These demands touched upon the concern in the 1930s that schools teach for social development, the conversion and adaptation of school programs to meet wartime needs in the 1940s, the reaction to the fear that the country was technologically inferior in the late 1950s, and the desire in the 1970s to enhance the relevancy of the schooling processes for the minority populations of the nation.

Characteristics of the rural population were identified and were briefly explained, especially that the rural population, in general, is not dissipating. Although the rural farm sector has declined appreciably during the past seventy years, the nonfarm, rural population still constitutes a substantial percentage of the nation's total population—almost 45 million.

That these millions of Americans rely upon rural schools to provide adequate experiences for the children who attend them should be of paramount importance to the educators of this country. Owing to factors earlier discussed, students attending rural schools normally do not have educational opportunities equal to those of students who attend larger schools. In fact, the problems peculiar to the rural school have had the effect, in essence, of penalizing the child. Discussed were such disadvantages as limited financial capabilities, abbreviated curricular offerings, inability to attract and maintain quality staff, dated administrative and organizational structure, and provincialism and conservatism.

The development of the intermediate educational unit in this country was traced from its original entrance into the educational community as a county unit to its relatively recent emergence as a regional unit. The differences in structure, role, and geographic responsibilities were described.

Basically, the county unit was installed to perform specified administrative services to school districts and to improve communications between the state and the small, rural elementary schools. Although it served admirably in its time, many authorities agree that the county unit has probably outlived its usefulness.

Typically, the qualifications of the administrator of the county unit were more political than educational; therefore, meaningful services available to schools from the county office were limited. The regulatory powers delegated by law to the county unit were specific and generally required the services of only a single person, the county superintendent of schools. Because of the initial rationale for the establishment of the county unit, minimal modification of its role has occurred. Being highly oriented, generally, toward rurality, the county unit has remained rather static and has experienced only minor changes through the years.

Regional units contrast dramatically with the county unit in several ways. While the county unit typically serves a single county area, the regional unit may serve several counties, each with a number of school districts within it's confines. The trademark of the regional unit is service, and the limited regulatory functions assigned to such units enjoy only low-key publicity. Regional units have been associated with the desired outcomes of economizing educational opportunities for children and providing specialized staff personnel to local schools and other organizational resources within a prescribed area.

The approaches taken for the establishment of intermediate educational units vary broadly from state to state. The legal parameters differ, roles and services vary, and the names contrast. However, the pivotal philosophical consideration is relatively common: to improve the quality of education available by providing services to the local education agencies.

Types of Units

Chapter II contained a detailed comparison of county and regional intermediate educational units. The strengths and limitations of these two types of units were discussed. The authors are of the opinion that intermediate units organized on a regional basis are much more efficient and economical than are those limited by county lines. Regionalization permits, first of all, a degree of flexibility that county units do not enjoy. A regional unit, while normally including several counties, can be limited to a single city, if the need exists. For example, among Pennsylvania's twenty-three intermediate units, one has been designated to serve the city of Philadelphia and another to serve Pittsburg. At the other end of the spectrum, the regional unit can be quite large. This is particularly important when attempting economically to deliver services to rural schools in sparsely populated areas. For example, the Regional Education Service Center in Midland, Texas, serves about 70,000 pupils, but these students are scattered throughout nineteen counties and 37,000 square miles of territory.

States which presently have county intermediate units are encouraged to reorganize those units on a regional basis. Also, states considering the initial establishment of intermediate agencies are encouraged to organize their units according to regional boundaries. Some variables which should be studied when determining boundaries include the following: student population and distribution, number of local districts, local district wealth, socioeconomic levels, distance, and cultural orientations.

## Recommendations

### Regulatory versus Service Roles

There has been considerable debate relative to whether intermediate units are best fit to be providers of service or possessors of regulatory authority. In their initial establishment, most intermediate unit installations could best be characterized as extensions or arms of the state government designed to deal with local school districts. In many state intermediate operations, such as California, Iowa, and Michigan, specific line power enforcement responsibilities have been legislated. However, this power has been established in the intermediate units only when those agencies have served as arms of the state departments of education.

Whether the effectiveness of the intermediate unit as a service agency is affected when it is also vested with regulatory powers is debatable. Some authorities believe that the intermediate unit's key to acceptance by its clientele schools is its consistent provision of quality programs and services.

In the opinion of the writers, a factor more critical than whether or not regulatory powers are given the intermediate unit is the degree of acceptance the unit enjoys based upon its ability to perform adequately in its involvements with the schools it serves. An intermediate unit builds a stronger reputation as an educational leader by providing services than by relying upon a statute which mandates that these units provide leadership.

Under certain circumstances, however, intermediate units might be more effective if authoritative measures were utilized. For example, if specific programs or services available through the intermediate unit proved to be more effective than similar provisions offered by the schools, then the schools should be required to accept delivery of such services—as when regional media services featuring a comprehensive film and instructional materials library can be operated by an intermediate unit more economically than by individual school districts. In such a case, more teachers and students would benefit from the comprehensive holdings of a regionalized media center. The authors recommend that, under these conditions, the schools be required to participate in the regional program rather than be allowed to establish their own.

## Boards of Control

The structure of governance of the intermediate unit is dependent upon the established mission of the organization. If the intermediate unit functionally serves as an extension of the state department of education, its board of control probably is the state board of education. If the unit is established basically to provide services to schools which request and accept them on a voluntary basis, the unit probably has its own separate board of directors. However, a number of plans for providing governance are operative throughout the country.

It is recommended that the clientele organizations of the intermediate units be represented in the policy-formulation processes. Whether individual schools or districts nominate representatives to serve on a board of directors or whether a superintendent or one of his school board members represents the district is not of particular consequence. The concept of _local_ control is broadened to become _regional_ control in this instance, but is, nevertheless, a desirable condition in insuring that the institutional goals of the intermediate unit and the educational agency being served are compatible.

## Financing

Types of financial arrangements which have been developed to support the intermediate educational unit vary almost as much as do the roles the units have assumed. A number of states, for example, permit the intermediate unit to levy taxes; however, others are almost totally dependent on local funding support. Most intermediate units have legal permission to accept funding from federal, state, and local sources. There are also matching arrangements whereby local revenues are matched to some extent by the state. Incentive programs have been established which feature reimbursement to local education agencies for expenditures associated with cooperative involvements, on a voluntary basis, with the intermediate unit. Flow-through funds from federal sources to the state and finally to the intermediate unit constitute another type of financial arrangement.

A guaranteed basic funding for a core of administrative and programmatic operations is recommended. Included in this funding should be adequate financial resources for the salaries of the chief executive and his administrators; support for facilities; funds for business, communication, and secretarial services; and transportation allowances. Additionally, administrative costs associated with primary services, such as instructional media and planning and evaluation, should be included in the base funding. Additional funds should be available in the form of grants obtained by the intermediate unit from state and federal sources. These funds should be available only after the intermediate unit and its clientele have jointly submitted a request based on a cooperative needs assessment and planning relationship. The intermediate unit's clientele must be involved in determining the needs of the unit and in establishing programmatic priorities and thrusts to address the needs.

It is further recommended that all funding be reviewed annually, even in continuation projects, to insure that priorities still exist in the application areas. Frequent review of the use of basic financial resources would also be appropriate.

### Staffing

One of the major benefits school districts derive from intermediate educational units is ready access to the human resources of those units. Intermediate agencies are better able to employ and retain highly trained individuals than are many school districts. Rural schools, for example, have a particularly difficult time employing specialists. Yet, the importance of a school being able to call upon the services of specialists for assistance has been established. Isenberg (1966: p. 7) stated that the intermediate units are excellent vehicles for making specialists available to classroom teachers.

If the middle-echelon agency is to provide useful consultative assistance to schools, those units must be staffed by individuals with the needed competencies. Haskew (1971: p. 27) stated that once a regional education agency has secured a staff, it must live with that staff's strengths and weaknesses for a long time. He accurately summed up the danger that intermediate units face in staffing, "Mediocrity once secured is hard to overcome"[p. 27].

The success or failure of an intermediate unit is determined by the quality of the programs it provides to the local districts. Few variables have greater influence upon program quality than do the abilities of the individuals employed by the intermediate agency to conduct those programs. For this reason, the authors recommend that considerable effort be expended by intermediate units to employ and retain competent personnel. Because of the criticality of obtaining a quality staff, salaries paid by intermediate units must be competitive with other agencies searching for the same types of individuals. Specifically, salaries paid by intermediate units should compare favorably with those paid by universities, community colleges, state and federal education agencies, and the better-paying school districts.

The most critical position in an intermediate unit is that of chief executive. The leadership provided by that person should shape the direction of the agency and the overall quality of its programs. The individual employed for this position should be a generalist, hold an advanced degree in education, and have administrative experience in the public schools or in an intermediate unit. He should be firmly committed to the concept of regionalization and be philosophically oriented toward change. The chief executive must be able to work effectively with school superintendents He must be diplomatic and, yet, risk-oriented if he is to function as a facilitator of change.

Once employed, the chief executive should expeditiously build a small and competent administrative team. Team members should bo no more than one level below the chief executive. While they should possess in-depth expertise in a particular phase of the organization's work, they should also be capable of working in a number of other areas. It is particularly important that they be skilled in working with people and that they possess planning, administrative, and communicative skills. Definitely, they must be able to conceptualize and write funding proposals for needed programs. Members of the administrative team should constitute the core of the professional staff. They, more than any other employees, must be able to produce results for the intermediate unit and its client schools.

Some individuals trained in narrow specialities are needed by intermediate units; however, the specific programs offered by the agecny should determine the types of specialists required. Media specialists, computer technicians, specialists in various learning disabilities, and business office personnel typify the kinds of jobs that require persons highly trained in relatively narrow fields. Since even intermediate units cannot provide specialists in every area, it is advised that the agencies act cautiously when hiring specialists. For example, it would likely be better to employ an individual with broad experience in curriculum development than a person whose specialty is limited to a single area, for example, mathematics, science, or elementary education. The expert in curriculum development will be of value to many more educators than will the subject-matter specialist. If in-depth expertise is necessary for a special short-term project, contracting with outside consultants or using the "holding company" concept is advisable. Either of these approaches would be superior to employing a full-time staff member for a single, temporary project.

## Improving Services to Rural Schools

An often-quoted advantage of intermediate educational units has been their ability to provide services for rural schools that the schools could not economically provide for themselves. The authors are in complete agreement with this proposition. The benefits which accrue to rural schools by participating with an intermediate unit in programs such as media, data processing, and curriculum consultation have been well documented.

Unfortunately, many rural school districts could be receiving an improved quality of service if the leaders of those schools were more knowledgeable about the purposes of intermediate units. Intermediate units have as their primary function the provision of services to schools. Consequently, they are, in almost all instances, very concerned about the opinions of local superintendents, principals, and teachers. Professional employees of even the smallest schools usually have substantial influence with the administrators of the intermediate units. It is recommended that rural school superintendents become better acquainted with the top-level administrators of their middle-échelon agency. Problems faced by the schools should be openly discussed with these professionals and suggestions solicited. School people should consider the intermediate educational unit as an additional resource they can utilize in solving their problems and not as an organization which is in competition with the public school.

Local school administrators who take the initiative in establishing contact with their intermediate unit will reap benefits in terms of improved and additional services.

Other Recommendations

- State departments of education should increase their utilization of intermediate units in statewide planning efforts. Each region within a state should have a regional planning council composed of the superintendents of schools and the chief administrator of the intermediate unit. Representatives of the regional planning council, along with state department officials, should make up a state planning council. A primary function of these groups should be long-range planning and problem resolution. The structure of the groups should encourage communication from the local and regional agencies to the state department. They should not be used simply to pass information from the state to local and regional units. These groups should have actual influence upon such decisions as formalization of guidelines for program funding, distribution of state and Federal finances, and legislative proposals which affect public education.
- Intermediate educational units should develop the capability to provide schools consultative assistance in program evaluation. Each school district should be encouraged to engage in a substantive evaluation at least every three years. In addition, intermediate units should help local districts to establish and maintain an ongoing evaluation program designed to improve the instructional process.
- Boards of directors should make a concerted effort to employ the most qualified person available for the position of chief executive of the intermediate unit. When an opening occurs, criteria to be used in selection should be published, the vacancy widely advertised, and a search begun for the best candidate. Certainly, the job ought truly to be open and the board committed to hiring the most capable applicant. A screening committee composed of professional educators should be used by the board to eliminate individuals who do not meet the published criteria. The authors

recommend that once the board arrives at a selection, confirmation by the state commissioner of education should be obtained prior to announcing the board's choice. Conversely, approval of the commissioner should be required before a board can dismiss a chief executive.

- The boundaries of the intermediate educational unit should be coterminous with those of other regional governmental agencies in the state. Communications between the various regional agencies should be established in order to augment better regional planning.
- State legislatures should closely examine the possibility of equalizing educational opportunities between school districts by utilizing regional intermediate educational units to a greater degree. For example, regions might be more appropriate than counties for the purpose of assessing property for taxation. Clearly, there would be fewer administrative units to deal with and consequently less deviation between the assessments.
- The state department of education should encourage, possibly with funding, several or all of its intermediate units to develop true expertise in specific topical areas of education. Staff from the various intermediate units could then serve as resource people throughout the state, wherever their talents were required. Topical areas might include accountability, collective bargaining, environmental education, teacher evaluation, management by objectives and results, bilingual education, and needs assessment.
- State departments of education should launch a vigorous campaign designed for better informing school boards and their superintendents about the purposes of intermediate units. They should clearly state the legal status of intermediate educational units, what types of services are available through these agencies, and the costs to districts for services. In addition, the differentiation between the role of public schools and the role of the middle-echelon agencies should be outlined. It should be stressed that intermediate educational units are resources for districts and that the two types of organizations are not in competition.
- The linkage between the Rural Education Association (REA) and

intermediate units should be increased. Efforts should be intensified to inform rural school administrators of the services they can procure through intermediate educational units. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools and the REA are in ideal positions to facilitate this linkage.

- Administrators of intermediate units need to make a coordinated effort to inform decision makers in the educational community about the legitimacy and the role of their organizations. This effort should be conducted at the local, state, and national levels. Writing for professional publications and working through organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) are two strategies which might be utilized. If intermediate units are to be assured of continuing in this time of increased competition for dollars, they desperately need the support of influential persons within the profession.
- Intermediate educational units should take a more active role in encouraging rural school districts to cooperate with each other in programs in which intermediate units are not eligible to participate. That is, they should serve as the catalyst to help the districts establish cooperative programs among themselves, even though the intermediate unit is not directly involved in the programs. In some states, sharing in the use and costs of the following types of activities would be applicable: mobile learning facilities, itinerant teachers, social workers, and vocational programs.

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