Steerage from a Distance:
Can Mandated Accountability Systems
Really Improve Schools?

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ABSTRACT: Theoretical propositions advanced by Habermas, Foucault, and Baudrillard, among others, suggest the ways in which the instrumentalist logic of mandated systems of mass testing, as a means of ensuring the accountability of public schools, result in the loss of local responsibility for student learning as well as an almost inevitable orientation of local schools to compliance with system directives over personal, professional, and community values.

RESUME: Des propositions théoriques soutenues par Habermas, Foucault, Baudrillard, et bien d'autres, proposent les moyens dans lesquels la logique instrumentaliste des systèmes mandatés de masse évaluant comme le moyen d'assurer la responsabilité d'écoles publiques aboutit à la perte de responsabilité locale de l'étude de l'étudiant aussi bien qu'une orientation presque inévitable d'écoles locales à la conformité avec des directives de système sur l'annonce personnelle, le professionnel et des valeurs de communauté

*Do you mean that you spent a billion dollars
and you don't know whether they can read or not?*
Senator Robert F. Kennedy (1966)

The floggings will continue until morale improves.
Anonymous Office Wit (late 20th century)

Senator Kennedy's question reproduced in the epigraph above illustrates the essence of the instrumentalist logic of rational system planning and accountability in modern public education. Decision makers and their constituents care about the investment of public

resources and legitimately wish to know whether this investment has been meaningful in achieving fundamental aims. The second epigraph heading this page characterized a kind of hyper-rational system that might have been in evidence in the British navy of the 18th century. Flogging was seen as a means by which the rational goals of maintaining discipline and order on a ship of war were achieved, yet in some profound ways it did not and could not work, as illustrated by the paradoxical suggestion that corporal punishment might compel the recipient's satisfaction.

Accountability has become a driving concept in American public education and reflects both of these notions. There is a genuine and reasonable desire to compel public schools to demonstrate in concrete ways the effectiveness of their efforts to fulfill the public pledge to effectively and efficiently educate all children. There is also an emphasis on control and sanction that works at cross purposes to the ostensible goal of continuous improvement articulated in arguments for public accountability. Though it is likely that data, money, governmental authority, and administrative pressure will be increasingly applied to press schools to meet some set of generic achievement standards, it is unlikely that they will be able to accomplish what most reformers claim to hold most dear – the genuine improvement of education. Cost accounting priorities and an ideology based on the primacy of capitalist market forces shape much public policy toward education, thus focusing on variations of economic indicators of production and emphasizing efficient preparation of workers as the fundamental purpose of public education, an orientation inimical to the communitarian basis essential to good schools.

Complex, centralized bureaucratic systems face powerful demands for evidence of productivity in a cultural framework rooted in faith in the power of market forces and values to shape and define human enterprises of all kinds (Giroux, 1999). Thus, expectations for the accountability of public schools reflect the corporatist Fordism (Saul, 1997; O'Looney, 1993) of manufacturing quality control (Weiner, 1990). These conceptual technologies maintain education as one among the universe of mechanistic processes that can fall before the logic of manufacturing quality control techniques. Mass testing caters to a desire for efficient, rational-technical solutions to concerns about student achievement, and so it is not surprising that modern accountability efforts are largely based on the premise that we have, in fact, defined consistent, uniform, internationally

comparable measures of the facts and skills we can regard as a kind of "gold standard" of educational outcomes.

Reflecting this understanding of public accountability in education, the United States National Center for Research in Vocational Education described accountability as "the practice of holding educational systems responsible for the quality of their products – students' knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes" (National Center for Vocational Education, 1992, p. 1). This perspective on accountability is widely held, since the dominant market ideology suggests that producers should be rewarded based on the quality of the product they deliver. This "payment by results" approach is seen as providing a logical mechanism by which to judge, and thereby to optimize, student performance. Such a system requires that learning outcomes be quantified and the costs of producing them accounted for "to compare the output efficiency among school systems or among the schools within a system" (p. 1).

The quantification and standardization of student performance, or "output efficiency," has come to be identified almost exclusively with student test scores. Though mass testing has been part of United States education for much of the past century, the past two decades have seen an intensification of the interest in and reliance on such data (Martin, 2000). The 1983 release of the national report *A Nation at Risk* prompted deep concern for and scrutiny of the quality and effectiveness of public education in the United States (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report identified a dozen "Indicators of the Risk," of which nine specifically cited test data of one kind or another as evidence of the decline of educational quality in the United States. Thus, while the use of tests to gather educational data is not a new phenomenon, the reliance on mass standardized testing has taken on new significance as both the federal government and the majority of states collect such data as the basis for establishing the accountability of public schools and informing and supporting decisions pertaining to the relationship between the state and the public schools (e.g., Education Commission of the States, 1999; Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, 2000; FairTest, 2000; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001

Quantifiable data permit the satisfaction of what seem to be direct answers to Kennedy's question – "did the money we spent to teach children to read do any good?" The logic of Kennedy's question, however, has been translated increasingly as a question of

economic production, and thus money becomes a critical medium of translation and interpretation (e.g., Giroux, 1999). For example, in many states educators have understood legislative demands for data to be essentially a quid pro quo – trading funding for accountability. As Fetler noted,

> Educators often view accountability almost mechanically as a steering system that monitors progress toward goals. The system sounds an alarm when schools veer off track, do not function efficiently, or do not meet goals. Accountability indicators signal an opportunity to make adjustments. (1994, p. 3)

These adjustments will be in the direction of basic system priorities.

The understanding of accountability as a mechanical, or cybernetic, steering system was well described over a quarter century ago by Levin who defined an accountability system as:

> A closed loop reflecting a chain of responses to perceived needs or demands; an activity or set of activities that emerges to fill those demands; outcomes that result from those activities; and feedback on outcomes to the source of the demands. The feedback may generate new demands or a regeneration of the old ones in either case, the previous set of activities may be modified or remain intact; a new or altered set of activities may be modified or remain intact; a new or altered set of outcomes may be produced; and the loop is completed again with feedback to the source of the demands. (1974, p. 375)

The mechanistic nature of these processes results from and in turn reinforces an understanding of schools as production centers and employers, parents, and students as consumers who require product evaluation and quality control (e.g., Weiner, 1990).

Yet these accountability/testing systems are not simply automatic activities. They are rooted in both the humanistic values of individual development and the economic values of service to the economy, and the rhetoric of mass testing borrows from both of these bases. On the humanistic side, it is argued that such testing programs provide at least a kind of stimulus against simple complacency in accepting poor educational outcomes for disadvantaged students (e.g., Skrla, 2001). On the economic side, though there is much emphasis on economic productivity and workforce preparation (e.g., National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), there is conflicting evidence that the outcomes measured by most standardized tests are necessarily related in meaningful ways to economic productivity or individual success (Chickering, 1999; Levin, 1998). These debates

over testing and its merits or technical deficiencies are perhaps secondary in importance to the larger issues of system control and authority articulated and extended through testing as a conceptual technology and mechanism of centralized control over schools and schooling.

Systems, Lifeworlds, and the Meaning of Data

Habermas (1989) argued that modern society can be seen as a complex of "lifeworlds," "systems," and "steering media." Lifeworlds are understood as the communicatively formed networks of interpersonal life experiences and beliefs that shape individual identity and guide attitudes, behavior, and action as well as provide content, meaning, and character to community and culture (Kemmis, 2000; Myers & Young, 1997). Systems describe the components of social interaction that operate according to instrumental, functional reasoning in pursuit of the achievement of specified goals and outcomes. Systems tend to be highly rationalized and associated with "social organization ... mission, vision, strategy, policies" (Kemmis, 2000, pp. 4-5). Steering media are the various means, such as money, data, or political power, that allow the rationalized system to exercise direction and ultimately even control of lifeworlds (Götz, 1997).

Habermas claimed that early in the development of the human social structure system and lifeworld were all but indistinguishable. Increasingly complex human interaction and institutions have resulted in differentiation and ultimately in disconnection of system and lifeworld, a circumstance in which "rational economic and administration action become independent of moral-political foundations" (Habermas, 1989, p. 189). He held that "the normal and preferred logic of societal development is for the societal steering media to steer the societal systems in ways which reflect lifeworld demands" (Myers and Young, 1997, p. 226), but also observed that it was quite possible, even likely, that the system may engage the various steering media at its command to direct social systems in ways inconsistent with lifeworld priorities.

In observing public education we can readily observe that the state functions as the rational, instrumentalist system and exists in tension with the legitimating interpersonal communication, experience, and authority that characterize the lifeworlds of public schools. The legitimacy of the demands and actions of the system is

compromised when authentic commitment from and congruence with the lifeworld are overwhelmed by the system's linear, rationalist, ends-oriented logic and power (Kemmis, 2000).

Testing is a conceptual technology that carries the power of rational planning and objective knowledge into the intersubjective experience and knowledge of the lifeworlds of schools. The objective data provided by testing are intended to serve purposes of equity and fairness in both process and outcome; the logic is that if all are held to a common, public standard, then bias, arbitrariness, and capriciousness cannot inappropriately affect the status of a student or a teacher. Accountability policies emphasizing testing rest heavily on scientific assumptions that uniform measures can be developed and applied that provide direct evidence of student learning, teacher effectiveness, and school quality (Phelps, 1999; Stone, 1999). Testing and related conceptual technologies thereby become the objective, scientific, and meritocratic policy levers by which the state aims to maneuver the processes and manage the outcomes of public education.

Habermas (1989) argued that such technocratic thinking makes science an ideology, which may result in short term gains in production but threatens to undermine social integration. The achievement tests widely used in the United States generally address only the first of the six levels of Bloom's famous taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), thus potentially making education at worst superficial, and at best requiring teachers to engage in or emphasize approaches and outcomes that may violate their professional and personal commitments. In the United States, the state of Tennessee, for example, in 1991 established a vast system of annual comprehensive testing of student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. This system, known as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), has resulted in huge amounts of data being collected and regular reports on teachers, schools, and districts. While such data collection has been argued to demonstrate the powerful importance of the quality of teaching (Sanders, 1997), it has also aroused considerable controversy among educators who are distressed by the implication that their work requires constant monitoring, the apparent distortion of the curriculum and their instructional priorities, and the continuing intrusion into the day to day working lives of teachers and students. The conceptual technology of testing shapes what is attended to in schools and carries normative authority (Barnetson &

Cutright, 2000; Polster & Newson, 1998), facilitating what Habermas called a kind of "structural violence," which is

> Exercised by way of systemic restrictions on communication; distortion is anchored in the formal conditions of communicative action in such a way that the interrelation of the objective, social, and subjective world gets prejudged for participants in a typical fashion. (Habermas, 1989, p. 219)

The Tennessee example noted above illustrates the power of the steering media of money and administrative authority. The pressures to achieve the priorities of the system are systematic and highly rationalized, constituting a hyper-rational distortion of practices and values in a logical enough pursuit of the immediate goals of production control and quality. Student achievement is a rational goal, but when intense emphasis is placed on limited measures of this objective at the expense of the intersubjective lifeworlds of schools, serious distortion and disconnection of the system and lifeworld occur. This disconnection results in what Habermas called "colonization" of the lifeworld by the system – a situation in which the functional rationality of the system imposes itself on the intersubjective, interpersonal world of shared meaning characteristic of the lifeworld. As Kemmis described this disconnection in the context of Australian education,

> We experience ourselves as caught up in abstract, generalized, and globalized system processes, and there seems to be little alternative to adapting ourselves to them. Despite the fact of our endlessly being involved in the lifeworld processes of cultural reproduction and transformation, social integration and individuation-socialization at the local level, the conditions of late modernity – and the colonization of lifeworlds by systems imperatives – push us toward under-valuing what is local, interpersonal, value-laden, moral, or authentically-expressive. (2000, p. 6)

In education, both of these levels are evident – there is a need for the rational components of steerage in hopes of coordinating complex systems, yet it is also clear that there is a need for the human systems of interpersonal relationships and purposeful interactions. Testing can provide useful data, but a system commitment to them above all other information may have a paradoxical effect of undermining goals of improvement and quality that they are ostensibly aimed to enhance. As Götz (1997) observed, the colonization of the lifeworld will ultimately lead to the end of meaningful discourse, as "the lifeworld is one-sidedly

instrumentalized from the point of view of performance and destroyed" (p. 3).

Surveillance, Authority, and Colonization

The power of testing technologies and associated policy directives as steering media and vehicles of system authority is further theoretically illustrated in two ways: Foucault's description of surveillance as a source of power and Baudrillard's explication of data as abstraction. Mass state testing programs reflect the concept of Bentham's Panopticon, establishing circumstances that differ dramatically from the relative freedom of the classroom characteristic of many teachers' experience and further eroding a sense of professional autonomy already limited by closely prescribed curriculum, course texts, and instructional supervision. The concept of the Panopticon is powerful in that it allows seeing without being seen. Foucault held that this is an essential feature of power, because the ability to exert domination is grounded in the "differential possession of knowledge" (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus & Rainbow, 1983, p. 223).

As efforts to rationalize the system have intensified, they have extended the surveillance described by Foucault (1981) and effected the colonization of the lifeworlds of schools. There is inevitable tension between the personal experiences and interactions of teachers and students and the abstractions of testing in terms of learning and personal growth, professional competence, and individual experience. Could there be a more insightful description of contemporary mass testing programs, in which data are collected in vast numbers systematically, universally, and efficiently, than Foucault's comment regarding the

> Inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorisation to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be minimal cost. (Foucault, 1981, p. 148)

As a case in point, Sanders (1997) argued that neither he nor the state were seeking via testing to direct teachers' behaviors in the classroom or their professional practice, but they were intent on maximizing student performance on a statewide, standardized achievement test. As Foucault correctly assessed such circumstances, the all-encompassing gaze of the state testing program did not aim

to directly control teachers; by encouraging them to be free in using their own ingenuity to maximize scores, the state exercises power by making each individual ultimately self-regulating.

Abstracting the Individual and the Assault on Lifeworlds

The colonization of the lifeworlds of schools is also facilitated by the abstraction of the personal and specific. The United States as a technocratic state has its origin in the New Deal era of the 1930s, a time in which a Keynesian economic view helped government attend to the general welfare, a view in which the focus was no longer on individuals, but on the general, statistical mass. Rips (2001) argued that a fundamental intent of the modern welfare state was to – in Keynesian terms – "remedy unplanned and unwelcome outcomes" (p. 41), a phrase that could aptly be applied to state testing policies. Referring to this transformative era in American government, he suggested that "the idea of public and collective agency quickly devolved into a dependence on managerial expertise to create order out of the statistical abstractions people had become" (pp. 41-42).

As I have argued above, educational testing data represent system production and quality as well as individual achievement and predicted achievement. Yet these data, which are taken to be "signs [that] should correspond to some underlying, objective and independent reality" (Macintosh, Shearer, Thornton, & Welker, 2000, p. 30), are in fact abstractions that are in important ways what Baudrillard called a simulacrum – "a sign, image, model, pretence, or shadowy likeness of something else" (p. 14). Testing assumes that education results in discrete, concrete outcomes, though test data are also understood to be a snapshot, or limited model of what students know and can do. The reliance on measurement and accounting solutions to address concerns about educational performance is based in the belief that data will give substance to abstract concepts of accountability (e.g., Readings, 1996; Peters, 1999). Though Macintosh et al. (2000) were analyzing modern accounting methods, their thesis that "many accounting signs no longer refer to real objects and events and accounting no longer functions according to the logic of transparent representation, stewardship or information economics. Instead, accounting increasingly models only that which is itself a model" (p. 13) is telling in the use and interpretation of test data as well, as Gould's discussion of the history of intelligence testing has so cogently explicated (1996). The hyper-rationality of

the modern testing state increasingly detaches the presumed valued outcomes of education from the lifeworld experience of teachers and students. The simulacra of test data create rationalist abstractions of production where the personal development of individual human beings is sought.

Baudrillard, commenting on what he referred to as "the hyperreality era," stated, "the territory no longer precedes the map ... [rather] the map engenders the territory" (Baudrillard, 1983, cited in Macintosh, et al., 2000, p. 32). Interestingly, testing, or the map, has in many states become the priority over the processes and relationships that facilitate learning. A recent report from the American Federation of Teachers carries a comment made by a member of the Virginia School Boards Association that is perhaps illustrative in this regard. The board member observed that the implementation of the state's assessment system was "backward," that is, "testing first, training teachers second, and purchasing new books and teaching materials third" (2001, p. 3).

The emphasis on test data exemplifies the colonization of the lifeworlds of teachers that results from hyper-rational steering systems that press teachers and students to internalize the values of the test – the authority of the state and the ubiquity of its surveillance. Teachers thus confront the illusion of professional autonomy but find it narrowly circumscribed, as testing phenomena impress self-regulation consistent with the requirements of the state for uniform data.

The Conundrum of State Mandated
School Accountability and Reform

Meaningful accountability does require a useful set of processes for interpreting and acting on information about learning and performance, but when the data supersede processes and values of the lifeworld, accountability and organizational integrity are eroded. The rational goal-seeking of the system helps the lifeworld of the schools be responsive to the larger needs of society and the lifeworld work of the schools maintains the human and humane environment in which individuals and their experience are valued and cultivated. Policymakers, parents, and educators must find their common values, which lie in the devotion to the cause of meaningful education for every child. The quandary for policymakers remains how to use the blunt instrument of policy and the limited resources of the public

weal to make such education possible to the greatest extent possible. As Kemmis commented,

> Resolving problems of system steering ... does not necessarily assist in dealing with problems of meaning, values and legitimacy, or identity and capability in educational research or education. Resolving problems in the lifeworld processes of cultural reproduction and transformation, social integration and individuation-socialization does not necessarily help with problems of steering education systems. There are separation currencies for dealing with the two kinds of problems, and gains in one cannot be bought or paid for in the currency of the other. (2000, p. 7)

How, then, is a balance of these elements achieved that can contribute to an improvement orientation for the school – that is, an orientation toward an ethic of verifiable cognitive achievement for all students, and for the professional and personal commitment of faculty and staff to the growth of all students? Verifiable achievement cannot come at the sacrifice of the essential human connections that give meaning to such efforts and outcomes. Though it is simplistic to consider this a matter of right or wrong, yes or no, do or don't, I will attempt to address this question by positing two general organizational orientations for schools: one compliance-oriented, and one improvement-oriented.

Current accountability policies are inimical to the cultivation of improvement-oriented school cultures (lifeworlds) that are capable of balancing the needs for coordination, planning, and attention to systematic outcomes with the needs for interpersonal meaning, integrity, and communication. We may imagine that a relatively symbiotic relationship of system and lifeworld in an improvement-oriented school is possible, one in which good test data are recognized as useful, though partial, indicators of student achievement and may have utility in making diagnostic, placement, or achievement decisions. On the other hand, system colonization of the lifeworld of the school drives the school toward a compliance orientation, in which the data themselves become a priority and maximizing means while minimizing variance in them become ends in themselves and the threat of sanctions drives efforts to maximize production of favorable data. Yet it is clear that no amount of tests, reporting requirements, analyses, or penalties can alone cultivate a democratic and caring lifeworld in a school, because they press the organization toward this compliance orientation. The alternative view I am suggesting is an improvement orientation that aims for

organizational integrity in a balance of responsiveness to system needs for information about achievement and quality and lifeworld needs for intersubjective meaning, communication, and community.

Sergiovanni (2000) defined school effectiveness in terms of a school's ability to achieve higher levels of thoughtfulness among its students; thoughtfulness characterized by caring and civility. Borrowing from Fullinwider, he declared a four-fold basis for the integrity of schools:

- Moral virtues of honesty, truthfulness, decency, courage, justice;
- Intellectual virtues of thoughtfulness, mental discipline, curiosity;
- Communal virtues of neighborliness, charity, self-support, helpfulness, cooperativeness, respect for others; and
- Political virtues of commitment to the common good, respect for law, and responsible participation in society (p. 19).

The pursuit of these virtues cannot be enhanced by the domination of the system, because system imperatives and attendant managerial strategies are then imposed on schools rather than the being shaped by the communities participating in the lifeworlds of the schools. As Sergiovanni argued, "management systems become ends in themselves, assigning values to schools and students based on adherence to the systems' requirements" (2000, p. 8). Systems can demand data on cognitive outcomes, but are largely powerless to reach for outcomes related to meaning and interpersonal commitment and community.

Thus, individual identity and integrity, though essential, cannot be enhanced or measured by systems, since they are elements of the essential lifeworlds inhabited by individual human beings. As Klemp (1977) and Sheckley, Landon and Keeton (1992), among others, have reported, the kind of cognitive knowledge highly valued as evidence of educational outcomes (witness Hirsch, Kett, Trefin, 1987) is not clearly related to success in life and work beyond formal schooling. Even cursory review of the totality of educational systems makes clear that uniform quantifiable data tell only part of the story of student achievement, are half measures for understanding good teaching, have apparently little to do with the quality of life beyond school or the health of the economy (Chickering, 1999; Levin, 1998), and have little immediate relationship to lifeworld systems of meaning, practice, and relationship in schools.

As Sergiovanni (2000) has argued, schools are properly held to account to the extent that they cultivate in their students higher levels of thoughtfulness, caring, and civility that are rooted in basic cognitive skills and in ethical commitments. Educators understand that education is not a value-free, objective, scientific process. Education is at its heart a value-driven, ethically rich set of experiences. Braskamp (1999) observed that a critical element in the quality of teaching is bound up in the unique identity and integrity of the individual instructor. The positive impact of caring relationships between teachers and students has been documented, and such caring is a hallmark of individual and institutional identity and integrity (Cohen, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999). Individual commitment and meaning-making must be linked to the larger ethical commitments of the school, not as a factory for producing good data, but as a source of values and commitment to the lives of students as they grow and develop as complex and caring human beings in a democratic community. Public rhetoric about empowering teachers and rewarding effectiveness (higher scores) with better pay has often masked structural changes that undermine conditions understood as essential to good teaching and even to the cultivation of democratic and humane values (Weiner, 1990).

The long-term impact of "secularization, bureaucratization, scientism, and statism" (Seidman, in Habermas, 1989, p. 23) erodes the capacity of social institutions and traditions to shape identity and culture. Indeed, even as testing is aimed to provide both carrot and stick in threatening sanctions (positive or negative) based on student scores, a telling commentary on individual identity and integrity is contained in the elaborate test security measures that invariably accompany mass testing programs. The integrity of individuals is not disregarded, but is treated as one among many variables to be controlled. Individual identity is not a variable; teachers are simply a means of production of desired, standardized outcomes. As Habermas (1989) stated, "if by 'responsibility' we mean that one orients one's actions to criticizable validity claims, then a "deworlded" coordination of action that is unhinged from communicatively established consensus does not require that participants be responsible actors" (p. 217). The colonization of the lifeworlds of schools that results in the disconnection of teachers from personal location in a community of learning also removes authentic responsibility from them.

The compliance orientation carries implicit or perhaps explicit threats of detection and sanction. Achievement is valued as a product and threats present deterrents to failure to produce according to system directives (Paine, 1994). As Frye (1999) commented, "accountability is a set of initiatives *others* take to monitor the results of our actions, and to penalize or reward us based on the outcomes" [italics added] (p. 1). Such a school ultimately defines itself in terms of economic production functions, and is thus driven to place production of desirable data as the highest priority. The illusory nature of these data as they pertain to the deeper purposes of education only serves to underscore the potential cynicism inherent in such a mode of operation. When maximization of simple outputs is most prized higher virtues rooted in community and relationship are severely discounted and discouraged. Externally mandated data collection and inspection create disincentives for the personal commitment to caring and common values that is essential to the effective function of a school.

At an organizational level, teachers may experience the discomfort of the tension between the system and the lifeworld of the schools and lobby through professional organizations for reforms through formal mechanisms of system control (e.g., American Federation of Teachers, 2001). Yet teachers who experience the surveillance of testing as colonization may feel they are subjugated to superior power that is motivated by inferior values. In such circumstances they may be moved to engage in acts of resistance to being turned into automatons. When teachers see themselves as powerless against the relentless power and logic of the state, they are deprofessionalized and demoralized (Cheng & Couture, 2000; Gawith, 1998; Solmon & Podgursky, 2000). The long history of the behavior of powerless groups has been detailed by Scott who described

> The weapons of the weak ... the tenacity of self-preservation – in ridicule, in truculence, in irony, in petty acts of noncompliance ... in resistant mutuality, in the disbelief in elite homilies, in the steady grinding efforts to hold one's own against overwhelming odds – a spirit and practice that prevents the worst and promises something better. (1985, p. 350)

This may be an unintended outcome of colonization of the lifeworlds of teachers, but perhaps not unexpected. Such circumstances suggest serious problems in maintaining the fundamental integrity of the

locations of the lifeworlds of teachers and students – the school itself.

Table 1 is an attempt to contrast the improvement-oriented school with the compliance-oriented school. The former is characterized by data collection and accountability activities related to improvement and formative judgements, the latter by obedience to external mandates and summative judgements. These differences are crucial in understanding the effects of such emphases on the prevailing ethos of the lifeworld of a school. In fact, the use of the term ethos, or the essential character and guiding values and beliefs of the school, is critical. The quality of a school grows from its ethical commitments; from the quality of its culture. Such culture cannot be externally mandated (e.g., Aper, Culver, & Hinkle, 1990; Paine, 1994). It cannot be grown from the humus of databases. All of the test scores and other measures of production do not, as Darling-Hammond and Ascher (1991) pointed out, make a meaningful and functional system. These data are of value only in the context of a vibrant and committed community of learners. As in all human endeavors, community is critical to meaning and outcome. This has been repeatedly proven true in matters of the growth and development of the young (Chung, 2000; Nevarez, 2000). If states wish to support the improvement of schools they would do well to support the means by which community is cultivated (e.g., Epstein, 2001) and not succumb to the monomaniacal pursuit of technocratic ends alone.

Table 1. Characteristics of Approaches to Accountability Policies

Characteristic	Compliance Orientation	Improvement Orientation
Ethos	Conformity with externally imposed standards. Technical control over objectified processes. Calculated pursuit of individual interests.	Self-governance according to chosen standards. Mutual understanding. Rational decisions within from the work of norms and intersubjectively recognized rules of procedure.

Objectives & Orientation	Primary - economic, rational. Prevention of misconduct, achievement of minimum competency standards, focus on external expectations and agendas, summative decision orientation, comparison with other units or schools. Rational decisions to maximize system goals.	Primary - legitimation, motivation. Enable and empower responsible conduct, attention to both external and internal agendas, formative decision orientation, emphasis on self-knowledge and evaluation, emphasis on effectiveness within mission of school. Intersubjectively understood rules - reciprocity and consensus.
Leadership	Driven by legalism, technocratic orientation, technical experts	Integrated, with all personnel engaged in agenda setting and execution, technical experts as consultants, not driving process
Methods – agenda, timetable, technical standards	Education, reduced discretion, auditing methods and controls on activities enforced, compliance standards central, investigative, emphasis on psychometrics and complex analysis, emphasis on what will satisfy external authority.	Education, shared authority and responsibility in leadership, organizational systems and processes consistent with social commitments, agenda shaped by internal and external needs and expectations, emphasis on self-knowledge and awareness, what's useful to the school, process integrated into other activities of planning, evaluation, mission
Behavioral Assumptions	People within organization are individualistic, self-interested beings guided by simple self-interest, and must be directed and monitored to ensure appropriate conduct and function	People within organization are social beings, guided by self-interest as well as by values, ideals, and peer relationships; they are oriented toward personal responsibility and effective contribution to the whole

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