

PAPER FOLIO ONE: EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND  
SOCIETAL CHANGE IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR  
PAPER FOLIO TWO: STRESSORS IN THE LIVES OF  
STUDENTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL AND  
ECONOMIC CHANGES AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM  
PAPER FOLIO THREE: THE CHANGING ROLE OF  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF  
SOCIETAL CHANGE AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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- Paper Folio One: Educational Reform and Societal Change in Newfoundland and Labrador**
- Paper Folio Two: Stressors in the Lives of Students Within the Context of Social and Economic Changes and Educational Reform**
- Paper Folio Three: The Changing Role of School Psychologists Within the Context of Societal Change and Educational Reform**

by

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### **Preface**

**This folio, which places educational reform within the social, economic, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador, consists of three papers. Each paper is independent, but together the three papers form a continuum revolving around the premise that the societal, economic, and educational changes that have occurred, and are continuing to take place in Newfoundland and Labrador, have implications for the delivery of counselling and psychological services in this province's schools.**

**Paper One establishes that Newfoundland and Labrador is in the midst of social and economic changes which precipitated educational reform. Paper Two, making reference to Herdman Collegiate, discusses the impact that societal change has on the lives of high school students. Paper Three discusses the delivery of counselling and psychological services within a climate of societal change and fiscal restraint.**

**Educational Reform and Societal Change in Newfoundland and Labrador**



The theories of educational reform are many because there is a variety of viewpoints associated with educational change, and the chosen definition of the term is dependent on perspective. However, Fullan (1991) describes educational reform as a desire "to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures, programs and/or practices with better ones" (p. 15).

Education systems have always been under critical review. A discussion of the history of educational reform could begin in ancient Greece, and ever since the process of training the youth of every culture and society has had its critics. For the purposes of this paper, however, the discussion will begin in the 1960s. The programs and services offered by a school system are not distinct and separate from society at large. According to Tirozzi and Uro (1997), "Schools are a microcosm of society--the problems of society enter the schoolhouse; they do not remain outside" (p. 248). Levin and Young (1994) state that

Criticisms of schools and proposals for reform tend to follow broad economic cycles. When economic times are good, people tend to criticize the schools for being too conservative and restrictive. In the 1960s, at a time of prosperity, the call was for schools to become more open, liberal, and relevant. In the 1980s, with a less optimistic economic outlook, the demands on schools were largely reversed (p.296).

Levin and Young (1994) further state that "The debate over schools also reflects the deep shifts in society that are always occurring" ( p. 293). Curriculum-based education, with a particular emphasis on mathematics and the physical sciences, gained

support after 1957 when Sputnik was launched, and it was feared that the Soviet Union had surpassed the United States in the fields of science and technology. Needs-based education, intended to help children develop emotionally, physically, and socially, as well as intellectually, became popular during the 1960s when educators began to focus on the special educational needs of poor, minority, and disabled students. The introduction of open area primary and elementary classrooms and the concepts of team teaching and continuous progress were examples of this philosophy.

The economic crisis of the 1980s led to another round of questioning the education system. In that decade, deficiencies in the education system were perceived as one of the causes of unemployment, social disorder, and economic underperformance. A revival of interest in education among politicians in the 1980s, especially in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, and Japan, created "a widespread tendency to blame the schools and teachers for social ills, and politicians made headlines with educational reforms and reports that emphasized the crises in education" (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1988 Yearbook, p. 182). According to Covalieskie (1997), "While most people still think their local school is in good shape, they nevertheless think that the school system in general, which they only know through the dispatches from this front of the culture wars, is a mess" (p. 527).

Average scores on standardized examinations for high school students in the United States fell during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1983, the report, A Nation at Risk, of the National Commission on Excellence in Education pointed out that American students lagged far behind students from many other industrialized countries, particularly in science

and mathematics, and called for improvement on all levels of American education.

The “link between education and economic performance was now taken for granted in most countries. There was also a growing perception of education and training as an interrelated and even a unified activity” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1988 Yearbook, p. 182). The emergence of Japan as an economic superpower prompted much emulation of the Japanese model of business organization in the Western World in the 1980s. The Japanese system was perceived as being efficient and cost effective. Japan surpassed other industrialized countries especially in the area of computer technology which made possible the rapid dissemination of information and the creation of a global market place. Many countries looked to Japanese education for the key to economic success. Ironically, this occurred as the Japanese were becoming increasingly concerned that their system had many social defects: the bullying of students who did not perform to academic standards, an increasing rate of student suicide, intensive tutoring to ensure academic success, and a narrow and inflexible curriculum.

#### **The Rationale for Educational Reform in Newfoundland and Labrador**

Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest rate of unemployment in Canada and a provincial debt which is currently in excess of six billion dollars. However, the people of this province have a strong desire to be a "have" rather than a "have not" province. Because its credit rating in the international money markets may be otherwise adversely affected, the Newfoundland and Labrador government is compelled to balance its budget and reverse negative economic trends. Of all Canadian provinces and territories, this province can least afford waste and inefficiency in any area of the public sector. Education

is one of the costliest items in the provincial budget, and according to the Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Education, Roger Grimes (1996),

Although the total amount spent per student in this province is lower than in many other provinces, the percentage of GDP per capita spent on education is the highest. This indicates a substantial commitment to education in relation to the province's ability to pay (p. 3).

The pervasive economic thinking of the 1980s and into the 1990s was to cut the deficit by reducing expenditures. In an era of fiscal restraint, government deemed it necessary to evaluate the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of one of its largest expenditures: the education system. In the early 1980s, the duplication of services evident for many years in the denominational system of education was critically examined in view of the economic realities of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The denominational system of education had always been subject to change and revision since its inception in 1876. Its reevaluation reflected a requirement to meet the needs of a changing Newfoundland and Labrador society in which improved transportation and communication systems had largely eliminated the isolation previously experienced by geographically remote communities which had sometimes tried to maintain two or three small denominational schools. Yet, in 1990, there was still needless duplication of services. For instance, in one small town in Green Bay a newly constructed Pentecostal school housed 70-80 students while a single teacher in a two room school struggled to educate 20 non-Pentecostal students. Although there were many instances of consolidation of services across the province, there was still perceived inefficiency and

waste in the system.

The school age population in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in the rest of Canada, dropped dramatically during the 1970s and into the mid 1980s. The student enrollment in the province peaked in the 1971-72 school year when it reached 162,818 students. Since then, it has declined by 61,210 students or 37.6% (Fact Sheet, News Release, Department of Education, Newfoundland and Labrador, March 17, 1998). Falling enrollment was accompanied in the 1980s by reduced budgets for education and by a drop in the demand for new teachers. The 1960s was a time of increasing enrollments; however, the 1970s saw declining enrollments which gave an appearance of increased spending per capita in education. This perception was used by critics to claim that education costs were skyrocketing while achievement levels remained static. Another consequence of declining enrollments is that there are fewer taxpayers who have a vested interest in the schools. An ageing population places more pressure on government for increased health care, nursing homes, and pensions. Education budgets thus face pressure because government is likely to increase expenditures in areas other than education as the relative proportion of parents with school children in the voting population is declining (Levin & Young, 1994, p. 294).

In 1986, the government set up a Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment. The evaluation of the Newfoundland and Labrador system of education done by this Commission was released in a report entitled Education for Self-Reliance. In that report the commissioners applied three measures to the Newfoundland and Labrador system and found it wanting in each case. The first measure was school retention. In terms

of years of formal education at that time, the population of Newfoundland and Labrador lagged far behind the rest of Canada. The school leaving rate of this province was approximately 33%, a figure that indicated to the commissioners a serious flaw in Newfoundland and Labrador education. Secondly, the Royal Commission looked at an illiteracy rate which some studies indicated was as high as 44%. They used the widely accepted definition that literacy is the "ability to read, write, and count to the level of grade nine" (p. 45). There is undoubtedly a correlation between the level of educational attainment and the illiteracy rate. Therefore, if students drop out of school, they are unlikely to be wholly literate adults, even if the system they are leaving is of very high quality. Thirdly, the commission looked at the performance of Newfoundland and Labrador students on standardized tests. The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education was using the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), a test designed to measure the basic skills that students must have to learn anything, for example, reading comprehension and mathematical ability. While figures showed that student achievement tended to be better in larger schools, on none of the subscales of the tests did Newfoundland and Labrador students meet the national average. However, it is important to remember that CTBS was not used anywhere else in Canada. Our students were, therefore, not being compared to students in other jurisdictions in Canada, but rather to a normed sample that was ten years old. This information was never mentioned, however, when government officials published the statistics which allegedly revealed the poor performance of Newfoundland and Labrador students on these tests.

Several overall conclusions were made. First, if it were assumed that

Newfoundland and Labrador students had the same native ability as students in the rest of Canada, and if CTBS scores were accepted as valid, then it followed that the Newfoundland and Labrador education system was not providing the same quality of education as the rest of Canada in terms of its ability to provide students with basic intellectual skills. Also, the dropout statistics appeared to suggest that the system did not provide sufficient interest and motivation to keep students in school until they finished.

Since education in Newfoundland and Labrador is funded through taxes, government, school boards, parents, and the public demand accountability for the efficacy, efficiency, and relevancy of the programs and services offered by the schools. According to Phillips, Boysen, and Schuster (1997), "Reading the latest research, browsing through newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio or watching television all provide ample evidence that the education system is not working for the majority [of students]" (p.251). Furthermore, as stated by Sarason (1995), "schools...are demonstrably counterproductive in regard to what I called the overarching purpose of schooling: to give expression to, to capitalize on, to nurture individuality in learning, to exploit that individuality for its motivational, propelling, cognitive properties" (p. 339). Whether or not schools achieve their objectives is a growing concern in both this and other jurisdictions, and this concern contributed to the process of educational reform.

The provincial debt, plus the perception that a costly education system was failing to graduate students able to compete on both the national and international scene, necessitated the creation of a more efficient and cost-effective education system. This school of thought was later confirmed by Dr. Robert Crocker when he said, "Education is

becoming increasingly important in the new economy and emerging job market....Society is demanding the education system perform, resulting in increased pressure to do more with less" (The Evening Telegram, July 23, 1995).

While linkages between economic development and education certainly exist, simply increasing the educational level of a population does not guarantee a parallel, consequent increase in economic development. It is assumed that increasing the educational level of the population will result in economic growth. The education system is currently criticized because schools do not prepare children either socially or economically for either the world of the twenty-first century or the global market place, and it is currently stated by many that education is the key to the future. Levin and Young (1994) contend that

Education is an important element in a country's economic development, but it is only one element. The economy must be able to provide jobs for educated people. For fifteen years, Canada has had relatively high levels of unemployment, especially among young people, including those with a good education (p. 297). The educational level of the Canadian population today far exceeds that of 30 years ago, but economic progress has not increased proportionately.

Yet economic restraint, educational reform, and economic prosperity in this province became increasingly linked. In 1992, the preface to the report of the Williams Royal Commission on Education, Our Children Our Future, stated that "Profound political, social, and economic changes throughout the world are prompting educators everywhere to reassess the effectiveness and efficiency of their education systems." The



same construct of educational reform and consequent economic prosperity were echoed in the strategic economic plan for the province, Change and Challenge, as quoted in the Superintendent's Report to the Western Integrated School Board, Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador (1992):

There is a need for a renewed sense of pride, self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

We must be outward-looking, enterprising and innovative, and to help bring about this change in attitude we will have to be better educated....To change this pattern (of negativity), both old and new businesses in the province will have to use modern production methods, invest in new technologies, provide adequate training and retraining and produce higher value-added goods and services. We will all have to be adaptable to a changing work environment and be committed to life-long learning.

Expanding technology, a desire to compete in a global economy, and economic downsizing contributed to ever increasing expectations for Newfoundland and Labrador schools. Levin, as cited by Fullan (1991), contends that pressure for educational change arises when "indigenous changes in technology lead to new social patterns and needs, or when one or more groups in a society perceive a discrepancy between educational values and outcomes affecting themselves or others in whom they have an interest" (p. 17). The world has been decentralized by technology. This development means that Newfoundland and Labrador, once marginalised economically and geographically, need no longer be on the periphery of global development. Changes in the dissemination of information mean that there are many economic opportunities in a world which no longer requires that the

hubs of trade and commerce be geographically centralized. Consequently, economic opportunities in this province need not depend on conventional methods of organization and development. The business sector input into education has increased in recent years because businesses have for some time claimed that high school graduates have not acquired the skills necessary for the world of work. In addition, because of global trends and the demands of the market place, there has been increasing emphasis placed on science and technology. The high dropout rate plus the realization that education and potential earning power are highly correlated created new expectations of the education system. It is thus readily apparent that the factors which precipitated educational reform in Newfoundland and Labrador, as elsewhere in the 1990s, are interwoven in a complex network of social, political, cultural, and economic variables.

### **The Educational Reform Process**

Historically, educational reform movements in Newfoundland and Labrador have lagged behind other parts of North America and elsewhere. Peter Holly, as quoted by Stoll and Fink (1996), makes reference to three waves of educational reform. He states that

The first wave of reform entailed 'doing the same, but more of it'; the second wave meant doing the same, but doing it better; and the third wave involves the restructuring and redesign of the educational system. It could be argued that the first wave represents the school effectiveness movement, the second wave the drive toward linking it (school effectiveness) with school improvement, and the third wave the pursuit of future excellence (p. 21).

These "waves" of educational reform roughly correspond to the many attempts

that have been made in the past thirty years to improve the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the early 1960s, there was a move to centralize and regionalise high schools. The rationale behind this development was to offer the children of this province the advantages of a varied curriculum which included access to science laboratories, libraries, and physical education facilities as well as more qualified teachers. In the early 1980s, the Revised High School Programme was implemented as a way to diversify the curriculum and to ensure the maturity of the graduating students.

The present decade has seen a flourishing of discussions on school-based management in the restructuring debates that are occurring in practically every educational jurisdiction in both North America and in other parts of the world. Across Canada interest in school councils is prolific, and in theory, implementation of these school councils would substantially increase the ability of parents and school personnel to influence educational policies and to make schools more responsive to the demands of their environments. One of the recommendations of the Williams Royal Commission on Education (1992) was the introduction of school councils into the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. The School Council Handbook: Working Together for Educational Excellence (1995) puts forward a number of arguments to justify collaboration among parents, community, and schools:

First, there is a growing body of literature to support the claim that parental participation has a positive effect on student learning. Secondly, there are philosophical, social, and political arguments supporting the rights of parents to advocate on their children's behalf. Third, as competition for scarce resources

increases, schools will have to depend more and more on the public support of parents and the community. Finally, many educational jurisdictions are moving to collaborative models, such as school councils, where all groups affected by educational decisions participate appropriately in making them. This change is a recognition that together educators, parents, students, and the community can bring improvement to education and an increase in public advocacy (p. 2)

The Williams Royal Commission on Education (1992) called for a massive restructuring of the education system, involving a dismantling of the denominational system and reducing the traditional influence and control the churches had in Newfoundland and Labrador schools. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador moved to implement the major recommendations of the Williams Royal Commission on Education (1992). The steps taken included holding the initial referendum in September 1995, passing Bill 8 in the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly which allowed the restructuring and reorganization of the K-12 school system to proceed, and passing a revised Schools Act in December 1996. An amendment to Term 17 of the Canadian Constitution was subsequently approved by the House of Commons in December 1996. As a result of these legislative actions, the first half of 1997 saw the creation of ten new school boards, the designation of schools as “unidenominational” and “interdenominational”, and Justice Barry’s reversal of the school designation process. After a second referendum in September 1997, a new proposed amendment to Term 17 was passed in the Newfoundland House of Assembly and forwarded to the Government of Canada in Ottawa which passed the legislation in the House of Commons on December 9,

1997, and was approved by the Senate on December 18, 1997. However, the degree to which the government can further proceed with its reform agenda may be dependent upon court challenges which have been initiated.

### **Social Changes in Newfoundland and Labrador**

In recent years, books, articles, journals, and lectures have explored and analysed the dynamics of change. According to Hood (1997),

Prophets, poets, social critics, and economic theorists, among others, have declared that the world is in the midst of a profound change—a radical transformation driven by a combination of forces which include foreign trade, technological change, corporate restructuring, and government deregulation. The world, in fact, has now entered a period of unforeseen rapid growth [although this is not so in Newfoundland and Labrador]. Both supporting and fostering this change is a burgeoning web of global communication networks, the same global connectivity foreseen by McLuhan decades ago (p. 3).

Educational change, which has generated concern, discussion, and controversy in Newfoundland and Labrador, is but one segment of a much larger spectrum of societal change. The process of educational reform cannot be divorced from the demographic, economic, cultural, and technological changes that surround the residents of this province. Rather, all of these changes are interrelated and combine to alter the familiar and predictable aspects of life to which most people were accustomed prior to the reform process.

In this decade, the imposition of the cod moratorium has eradicated the traditional

reason for the existence of many rural communities. As quoted by Hoy (1992), former premier, Clyde Wells, said

The declining fisheries are more than an economic problem in Newfoundland. They're a social and cultural problem. The fishery is so significantly a part of our economy, in the past particularly, that it's become part of our way of life. You can't separate the two (p. 253).

In relation to the cod moratorium, Hoy further asserts, "The cultural after-shocks to thousands of people scattered around hundreds of remote outports are unprecedented in this country" (p.258).

Confronted with uncertain employment prospects, residents of this province, both young and old, have been leaving the province in record numbers to seek employment elsewhere. According to 1998 data from Statistics Canada (Fact Sheet, Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN), the population of Newfoundland and Labrador declined by a record 3,128 people in the third quarter of 1997--a figure double the average quarterly decline of the previous year. Additional data provided by Statistics Canada (1998) indicate that upwards of 50,000 people have left Newfoundland since 1982. The social, educational, and economic implications of out-migration are far-reaching, and the long term effects on Newfoundland and Labrador society still remain to be seen. It may be said that out-migration has always been an issue in this province, but the statistics reveal that the demographics of Newfoundland and Labrador have changed in this decade as never before. Furthermore, this trend translates into a severe reduction in equalization payments which are calculated partly on the basis of population.

Out-migration, declining school enrollments, fiscal restraint, and the process of educational reform collectively have led to school closures in both urban and rural areas. Out-migration and a reduced birth rate have resulted in a declining student population, and in this era of reduced government spending in the public sector, fewer students translate into reduced teacher allocations and increased school closures. Furthermore, the process of educational reform has led to a reduction in the number of schools because of the demise of the denominational system.

The prospect of school closures has challenged the viability of some rural communities already adversely affected by the cod moratorium. The school is an integral part of a rural community, and closing that school may be tantamount to closing the community itself. This social reality is well documented. Bell and Sigsworth (1987) cite various reports on the future of rural areas in Great Britain, and the message is consistent: "The closure of the school...will lead to a decline in population as couples with children move away and others are deterred from migrating into the village" (p.204). The same authors also cite a study of rural areas in Sweden which showed "a connection between accelerated rural depopulation and school closures" (p.206). These studies recognize that while "school closures are more often the consequence of reduced economic activity leading to population decline rather than the actual cause" (p.206), the actual presence of a school enriches and supports community life. Closing the school signals to the residents that there is no future for the community and that its younger residents have to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

In Newfoundland and Labrador communities, the school is often the hub of social

activity. The school often reflects the skills, interests, motives, and efforts of all the people who live in the community. The school is an important resource whose nature and impact cannot be translated into monetary terms since the roles and functions performed by the school are varied and complex. School closures in rural communities, therefore, affect the wider community as well as families with children.

### **Reactions to Change**

According to Lindblom (1997), "Initiating social change is a struggle...a kind of war. Resistances to it are powerful and persistent" (p. 271). Christian (1997) further states, "Change represents different things to different people. Some view it with suspicion and greet it with resistance" (p. 9). While many people in this province were receptive to and supportive of the educational reform process, others reacted adversely to the proposed changes. Many residents viewed with apprehension sweeping changes in their education system, particularly the removal of the traditional role of the churches. The people of this province had already experienced the major social upheaval caused by resettlement in the 1960s which was promoted as a cost-cutting, progressive social measure designed to benefit people living in isolated areas of this province. Its effects and costs in personal, social, and economic terms are still felt in many areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. The resettlement program aptly illustrates Lindblom's contention that "Although it is sometimes possible to find policies or changes that are for the benefit, as people sometimes see it, of almost all, ordinarily, despite some possible common benefits, change benefits some people by injuring others" (p. 264). Thirty years later, many people in Newfoundland and Labrador reacted with scepticism when confronted with educational



change which would allegedly save money, produce graduates ready for the world of work, and propel this province into the global economic arena.

On January 3, 1996, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released a draft document entitled An Act To Revise The Law Respecting The Operation Of Schools In The Province. Article 69 of this proposed legislation outlined the criteria which would determine school viability, an integral part of the educational reform package. The proposed transportation regulations (since revoked), which suggested that small children could conceivably be subjected to ninety minutes of school bus travel per day to reach a viable school, and the imminent school closures based on these regulations aroused protests from the residents of such geographically separated communities as Burnt Islands, Englee, Westport, and Cape Ray. People view change with suspicion, unease, anxiety, and fear. They do not want the comfortable patterns of their lives to be disrupted. They do not want their children to travel long distances on school buses. They do not want to lose the schools in their home communities. As stated by Tirozzi and Uro (1997), "Change does not come easy nor is it always welcome" (p. 248). Fullan (1994) further contends that

Under conditions of uncertainty, learning, anxiety, difficulties and fear of the unknown are intrinsic to all change processes, especially at the early stages...people will not venture into uncertainty unless they or others appreciate that difficulties are a natural part of any change scenario (p. 35).

The attempt to designate schools as either unidenominational or interdenominational met with determined resistance. According to Lindblom (1997), "Societies...consist of webs of mutually supporting beliefs, behavioural customs, and

technologies. Consequently, anyone who wants change has to overcome a massive inertia” (p. 265). Many people in this province were uncertain as to what these designations actually meant. This uncertainty led to fear and anxiety. A number of organized religious congregations and bodies strongly supported the status quo and did not want to lose what they perceived to be their right to educate their children according to the tenets of their respective denominations. Their protests led to court challenges which are still ongoing. As well as the problems discussed, slashed programs and cuts in teacher allocations added more fear and anxiety to a situation already filled with both. Stoll & Fink (1996) quote the historian Gustavson who believed individuals

are afraid of drastic innovations, partly because they prefer the familiar and partly because the vested interests of most people are normally bound up with the existing set up. Added to the weight against change is what might be called an institutional inertia, a proneness to keep the machinery running as in the past unless strong pressure for change materializes (p. 1).

### Conclusion

This paper has discussed the process of restructuring the education system of Newfoundland and Labrador in the midst of economic and social changes. One of the objectives of educational reform was to improve the quality of schools and curriculum to enable students of Newfoundland and Labrador to participate in an emerging global economy. Change is a factor of contemporary life in Newfoundland and Labrador. Dealing with change is endemic to modern society. Now that the infrastructure of the school system has been altered, attention must focus on the impact that all of these economic,

educational, and social changes have had on the lives of school children in this province.

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**Stressors in the Lives of Students Within the Context of Social and Economic Changes  
and Educational Reform**

Many technological, social, cultural, economic, and educational changes have occurred in our society in recent years. Schools reflect a changing society. This paper will discuss stressors in the lives of high school students within the context of social and economic change and educational reform. It will discuss Herdman Collegiate, a Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Senior High School, as an example of an urban high school where forces of change have had a noticeable impact. It will present issues which affect the lives of many adolescents.

As in so many other areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, the population of Corner Brook is steadily declining. According to the Newfoundland and Labrador Business Fact Book (1997), the population of Corner Brook in 1991 was 22,410; the 1996 census put the figure at 21,893, and people are still leaving. There are relatively few new job opportunities here. Although there are many on-going economic initiatives, Corner Brook is still essentially a single industry town dominated psychologically, and possibly economically, by the local paper mill.

One indicator of out-migration in an area is the number of houses listed for sale. According to the Real Estate Board of Corner Brook, there are currently over 400 houses for sale in Corner Brook and the surrounding region, a number that is higher than at any other previous time. Conversely, an indicator of population growth is new children registering in a school. Very rarely do new students register at Herdman Collegiate. However, there is a significant number of transfers out.

### **Declining Enrollments and Class Size**

The school population of Newfoundland and Labrador has been in decline since 1972 when enrollment peaked at 162,818. By September 1995, enrollment had fallen to 110,456, a decrease of 32.2% from 1971-72. The overall student population is currently declining by about 3% or 3,500 students per year (Structuring the Education System, 1996, p.1).

Declining student enrollments are the result of two factors: out-migration and a declining birthrate. Statistics Canada data (Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN) indicate that upwards of 50,000 people have left Newfoundland and Labrador since 1982, and the birthrate in this province is the lowest in Canada. In 1994, there were an estimated 37,100 preschool children in the province. This figure will drop by 25% to 28,000 by the year 2008. Over the past decade enrollment decreases of more than 40% have occurred in some schools (Structuring the Education System, 1996, p.2).

Declining school enrollments, together with a government policy of fiscal restraint and the process of educational reform, have led to reductions in the number of school boards and their operating budgets. For example, District 3 School Board was created in 1997 when the number of school boards in the province was reduced to 10 as a result of one of the recommendations of the Williams Royal Commission (1992). Encompassing the area once served by the Western Integrated School Board, the Roman Catholic Humber-St. Barbe School Board, and the Deer Lake Integrated and Pentecostal School Boards, District 3 School Board has the same operating budget and the same number of



district personnel as the old Western Integrated School Board. Nineteen schools operated under the Western Integrated School Board; there are 36 schools within the jurisdiction of District 3. Consequently, the support services that board office personnel provides to schools have been reduced. The current situation appears to be in accordance with the contention of Comfort (1997) that

In most cases, change requires transformation to a new state within the same system, employing the same personnel, operating from the same geographic space, interacting with the same competitors and partners, and often accomplishing more difficult tasks with the same or fewer resources (p. 376).

According to the Department of Education of Newfoundland and Labrador the pupil-teacher ratio has steadily improved, changing from 19 in 1979-80 to 14.8 in 1995-96 (Structuring the Education System, p.4). People who are not directly involved in the education system may interpret this to mean that classes in this province do not exceed 15 pupils per class. However, there are two reasons why there is a low correlation between pupil-teacher ratio and class size. First, in calculating the pupil-teacher ratio, not only classroom teachers are counted; librarians, guidance counselors, vice-principals, and principals, most of whom have limited or no specific classroom duties, are also included in the calculation. Secondly, it is current government policy that schools in rural areas with low student enrollment will be designated as "small schools" which are defined as having a mean grade enrollment of 12 or less, or a mean grade enrollment of 25 or less for any schools where senior high courses are offered. Small schools will continue to receive

funding for the additional teachers necessary to offer a core program.

In District 3 there are 15 small schools, one of which is St. James All Grade School in Lark Harbour. In 1996-97, for example, that school had 63 senior high school students and 5 teaching units assigned to it. In 1997-98 it had 5 teaching units assigned to 60 senior high school students. These numbers translate into class sizes which are generally lower than the provincially mandated pupil-teacher ratio. In comparison, however, it is not uncommon for urban schools such as Herdman Collegiate to have classes in excess of 30 students in core subjects. Within the jurisdiction of any school board, there may thus be great variation in class sizes in rural and urban areas, especially in core subjects in the high school program.

Herdman Collegiate has been affected by declining enrollments. This school had a student population of 735 in 1996-97. The 1997-98 student enrollment was 642. Since 1995, the student population has decreased by over 200. As a result of this decline in student enrollment, in the past three years there has been a reduction of five teaching units which has in turn created a significant increase in class size for many courses. For example, in 1997-98, some single class registrations were as follows: Literary Heritage 3202--36 students; Language 3101--33 students; Physics 3204--31 students; Advanced Writing 3103--37 students.

Teaching large classes presents a challenge to even the most experienced teachers. When a one hour class period is divided among thirty students, each student's fair share is two minutes of the teacher's time. In this situation, it is obvious that many students will

not receive the individual attention they need for reinforcement, remediation, or personal contact. Some students are able to forge ahead on their own; others who cannot, however, may become apathetic and disinterested. When students are frustrated, they sometimes engage in negative behaviours. It is more difficult for a teacher to control a class of 30 students than it is to control a class of 20 students. To circumvent many of the negative student behaviours that are common in classrooms, individual attention is often the solution. This, however, is virtually impossible when a teacher has 30 or more students to instruct.

Teacher workload is increased with large classes since it is more time-consuming to plan and prepare lessons. Time considerations mean that when classes are large, teachers simply may not give as many assignments and quizzes. According to Froese-Germain (1998), "Indeed, there's a growing body of research showing that smaller class sizes, and general investment in teachers, does have a positive impact on student achievement" ( p. 22). Students are the losers in overcrowded classrooms.

#### Co-curricular Activities

Economic restraint has negatively affected co-curricular activities. These activities, which include sports, music, drama, student councils, and environmental groups, are an integral part of a school culture and create a climate for effective academic learning. The rapport established through the interaction of staff and students participating in these activities is incalculable. For the past three years, the availability of teachers to travel with student groups has been curtailed. The current formula is one substitute day per eight staff

members. At Herdman Collegiate there are 37 teaching units. This translates into less than five substitute days available for teachers to accompany school groups which participate in regional, provincial, and national competitions in volleyball, basketball, soccer, track and field, archery, weightlifting, music, and drama. While students at Herdman Collegiate have continued to compete successfully in the above named areas, it is always a time consuming procedure to engineer the means by which students can participate in these events.

The people who devise regulations may not always realize that the lessons in fair play, cooperation, team spirit, self-discipline, tolerance, and courtesy, which students learn through participation in co-curricular activities, transfer into the academic arena.

Furthermore, although the purpose of education seemingly more and more is viewed as the key to economic success, according to the Aims and General Objectives of Public Education for Newfoundland and Labrador, as quoted by Molloy (1975), "Education is the process by which human beings are enabled to achieve their fullest and best development both as private individuals and as members of human society" (p. 384).

### Budgets

#### Maintenance Budgets

Government fiscal policy has decreased operational grants to school boards. This in turn has led to a decrease in the maintenance budgets for individual schools. For example, for the past three years, there have been reductions in the maintenance budget for Herdman Collegiate. Minimum work has been done in painting, plastering, and basic repairs. Today, Herdman Collegiate badly needs a facelift. In addition, the day to day

maintenance is inadequate: garbage is not always emptied; soap, toilet paper, and paper towels are not always provided; floors are not washed or waxed on a regular basis; and graffiti is not always promptly removed from walls.

There appears to be a correlation between the physical appearance of a school building and the attitude and spirit of the students who attend that institution. A building does not have to be brand new, but it must be cleaned and well maintained. It is futile to talk about raising the levels of student achievement and preparing students for a global marketplace if it is not first demonstrated to them that their overall sense of well being is important by providing a school building which they can take pride in maintaining. Students will not generally litter and deface a well-maintained property. As observed by Pearson (1990), "A well-managed [maintained] school [building] does not guarantee a good education, but it does create a structure in which it is easier for all children to learn" (p. 110).

#### Operating and Instructional Budgets

Decreased operational grants to school boards have resulted in decreases in operating and instructional budgets for individual schools. Three years ago, the operating budget for Herdman Collegiate was in excess of \$50,000. For the school year 1997-98, the operating budget was less than \$35,000, a reduction of 30%. The result is that fewer books, magazines, tapes, lab and art supplies, and computer equipment are purchased.

In the Learning Resource Centre at Herdman Collegiate, for example, students who are searching for information on a given topic may have very little current material

from which to choose. Theoretically, with the Internet, students have ready access to vast stores of information. As stated by Levin and Young (1994), computers provide "the means for individuals to rearrange information to suit their needs and to store it for ready retrieval " ( p. 304). However, a class of 30 students with 20 computers attached to a single telephone line cannot effectively search databases within a one hour class period. At Herdman Collegiate, the money to make equipment truly accessible to all students is simply not available.

Much has been written about the importance of computers in schools. According to Levin and Young (1994), "The original rationale for bringing computers into schools had to do with preparing students to deal with computers in the workplace" (p. 304). However, it is obvious that simply having computers is not enough. A commitment to include accessories, to continually upgrade the hardware, and to ensure that networks are operational is essential. Otherwise, the benefits this technology can provide will be lost to students who will then be subjected to further pressure and stress since they do not have the resources to enhance their performance within the learning environment.

### Curriculum Shifts

#### Entrepreneurial Initiatives

The economy of Newfoundland and Labrador has traditionally been dependent on primary industries, especially the fishery and the forests. Potential mines at Voisey's Bay and the offshore oil industry hold promise for future prosperity but are uncertain in the face of global developments which the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are virtually

powerless to control. In recent years, efforts have been made to apply innovative technologies at the community level in order to engender economic viability. Aquaculture is one such development. Another area which has potential is the tourist industry, but the success of provincial tourism initiatives is contingent on a host of variables including federal policy with respect to transportation costs. Government agencies offer financial assistance in various forms to prospective entrepreneurs who are attempting to create a business base in this province. For the past two years, grants of up to a maximum of \$3,000 have been available to high school students who wish to create their own summer employment.

Compulsory courses which aim to develop the entrepreneurial, technological, and employability skills of students have been introduced into the high school program. The introduction of these courses coincides with attempts to improve the economic viability of this province. According to Levin and Young (1994), "Important policy decisions, whether they occur in education or in other fields, are made through political processes" (p. 63).

#### Atlantic Provinces Curriculum

In 1999, the Atlantic Provinces Curriculum is scheduled to be adopted in Newfoundland schools. There will be fewer course requirements in the humanities, and more emphasis will be placed on science and technology than is currently the case. At a time when business and industry demand that high school students be trained to enter the global arena of technology and business expansion, education and economic policies are

increasingly interrelated. However, while it is recognized that this province needs to establish a sound and broader economic base, the Department of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador cannot lose sight of the benefits provided by a liberal education.

It is the position of this paper that emphasis on entrepreneurial, mathematical, scientific, and technological training to the detriment of the humanities is both anti-intellectual and potentially stressful. It appears that education is becoming less and less concerned with the development of the powers of the mind, powers that help us not just to cope with the world but to interpret, understand, and transform it. The reality is that students who do not receive a liberal education may be shortchanged by the education system and are not prepared to cope with life situations which require debate, precision of thought, insight, sound judgment, and imagination.

Instant communications have created the awareness that people share the same problems world wide: devastation of the environment, depletion of natural resources, destruction of animal habitats, destruction of the ozone layer, and world poverty. The preamble to the decree on school reform issued in the then Soviet Union on April 4, 1984, states: "The immense tasks posed by the final years of this century and the early years of the next one will be accomplished by those who are sitting at school desks today" (Pearson, 1990, p.21). It is the school children of today who will provide Newfoundland and Labrador with the human resources of knowledge, imagination, energy, and commitment necessary for the well being of this province, this country, and the world. The



quality of education students receive must be ensured.

### **Stressors in the Lives of Students**

According to Short and Talley (1997), "Schools have served as both a mirror of and a context for broad social change" (p. 234). Students do not leave their personal problems at the school entrance. The problems students bring to school are the problems of society at large, and stressors in the lives of students impede their academic success. Marginal and "at risk" students are those who have a high probability of academic failure. They are often academically capable students who miss opportunities and do not live up to their potential because of disruptive elements related to their personal lives. At Herdman Collegiate, according to information received through an analysis of student academic report cards and interviews with teacher advisors, there are 187 students whose academic achievement is being jeopardized by issues such as health problems, substance abuse, family instability, work commitments, pregnancy, single parenthood, and poverty. While these issues have always been present in one form or another, when combined with economic and social changes, they become overwhelming for many adolescents.

### **Changing Family Structures**

Many students come to school from foster care situations and single parent families or from homes where both parents work full time. The changing structure of families has altered the way many parents interact with their children. How families operate and how children are raised have altered dramatically. Adolescents are often viewed as sophisticated and quite well informed about drugs, sex, and modern technology.

Parents and teachers often adopt this perception of adolescents and behave accordingly.

As stated by Elkind (1997),

Postmodern parents need to have competent children. Postmodern parents need children who can cope with divorce, who can deal with out-of-home childcare from an early age, and who will be left unfazed by all the violence, sexual activity, and misleading advertising they see on television (p. 39).

However, today many young people do not complete their education until they are well into their 20s. Others cannot afford to maintain themselves because of low paying jobs or no jobs at all. It is paradoxical that while young adolescents are increasingly regarded as mature and independent, adolescence has been extended and the responsibilities and true independence of adulthood have become elusive for many young people.

Fullan (1991) states "that family background correlates strongly with educational performance and occupational achievement" (p. 14). Hett & Rose (1991) further state that "Children from divorced families studied in non-clinical settings have been characterized as exhibiting greater personal, social, and school-related problems than children from intact families" (p. 39). Hett (1983), as quoted by Hett & Rose (1991), "found evidence which suggests that family separation and divorce is a factor associated with children's school-related problems" (p. 39). Hett (1983) "found differences between children from separated and intact families in such areas as academic achievement, emotional adjustment and such school-related problem behaviours as "acting out" " (p. 39).

### Poverty

Poverty has always been an issue in Canada as a whole and for Newfoundland and Labrador in particular. Increasing child poverty is related to the increasing number of marriage breakdowns, high levels of unemployment, and the decline in the availability and value of social supports such as unemployment insurance and social allowances (Levin and Young, 1994, p. 299). Levin and Young (1994) further state that "A great deal of research shows that poverty is related to lower achievement in school, to greater risk of dropping out, and to lower eventual occupational status and income" (p. 299). Stoll and Fink (1996) cite Smith who "correlates the disparity in socio-economic levels with school performance and indicates that pupils in the highest out perform the lowest disadvantaged areas by two to one on secondary examination results" (p. 8).

An analysis of student registration forms indicates that there are 43 students at Herdman Collegiate who come from families whose apparent annual incomes are less than \$20,000. Some of them are unable to purchase books and school supplies at the beginning of the school year because money is unavailable. Consequently, they are academically disadvantaged from the beginning of the school year. When students fall behind in their school work, it is difficult to catch up. This is especially true for semesterized one credit courses--that is, courses which are taught from either September to December or from January to June.

There are 33 students at Herdman Collegiate who come to school without breakfast and whose lunch is often a bag of chips because they have very little money or

food at home. The physiological needs of students must be met before they are able to concentrate on academic pursuits.

### Students Expelled From Home

Sometimes parents expel their adolescent children from home. The living expenses for these children are generally transferred to social services. However, there are cases where students move from the house of one friend to that of another. The stress entailed by such a lifestyle means that these students are frequently absent from school, thereby adding academic concerns to the economic and family problems they already have. At Herdman Collegiate, there have been at least 5 known cases in the past 2 months where students have been evicted from the family residence.

### Single Parenthood

A changing social atmosphere and more accommodating school systems have made teenage pregnancy and parenthood more visible. Despite the availability of birth control, adolescent females still get pregnant. Despite the increased accessibility of abortion, many young, single women who become pregnant are choosing to raise their children.

In the past five years there have been approximately 40 young women at Herdman Collegiate who have become single mothers. Six of them have had to withdraw from school because of childcare demands and lack of family support to remain in school. Those who do remain in school find it difficult to care for a child and be attentive to their studies as well.

One phenomenon in the past two years has been the number of male students who are taking responsibility for the children born to their single girlfriends. Although their numbers are relatively low, they do represent a change in attitude and behaviour. Young men who share parenthood experience difficulties similar to those of their female counterparts. For example, one young male student at this school is very often so tired in the morning, after spending a night looking after an infant, that he simply slumps over his desk. It is almost impossible for him to be an alert and attentive student.

### Working Students

Many students work part-time for a variety of reasons. It is very difficult to work up to twenty hours per week and to achieve academically as well. Absenteeism from school is a frequent occurrence for many of these students. An analysis of Herdman Collegiate's student daily attendance records for the month of March, 1998, reveals that the names of five students who work part-time appeared on the absentee list more than 5 times each.

### Health Concerns

During this decade, wellness and preventative medicine have led to a surge in the popularity of health foods, healthy eating plans, and fitness programs. It is recognized that there is a high correlation between physical health and psychological well being, and as a result unhealthy behaviors such as cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, and eating disorders receive a great deal of media attention. Various agencies promote the positive aspects of healthy living. However, there are still many adolescents who have not yet

received and internalized these messages.

At Herdman Collegiate, there are students who congregate outside the school building to smoke cigarettes. There are students who use and abuse drugs and alcohol, and there are those who, for a variety of reasons, lack proper nutrition. Students also have health concerns which are beyond their control to prevent. There are students who suffer from chronic health conditions such as Crohn's disease and multiple sclerosis. Seventy-two students in this school suffer from severe respiratory ailments. There is one female student in particular for whom any change in air conditions can result in a life threatening asthma attack. Three students this year have had extensive surgery followed by long periods of convalescence. Two have been hospitalized for severe depression. Five students have been involved in motor vehicle accidents which have resulted in a variety of injuries. At least 13 students have been injured in sports and recreation-related accidents. Illnesses and accidents have psychological consequences which may be overwhelming and consequently interfere with a student's academic progress.

### Death and Dying

As part of the life cycle, some students have to cope with the death of parents, relatives, and friends. Much has been written about the trauma that grief may inflict on children and adolescents.

In the front lobby of Herdman Collegiate, there is a memorial to students who have died while attending this school. As this paper is being written, many students are mourning the sudden death of a fellow student. It is difficult for people of any age to deal

with the loss of a close friend, but it is especially difficult for adolescents who may not have yet confronted the issue of their own mortality.

### Alternative Lifestyles

This is an issue that is openly discussed today but was "kept in the closet" for generations. Individuals openly disclose their sexual preferences and students hear and view these discussions. Adolescence is a time of establishing one's sexuality, and this issue is confusing for many young people. As well, young homosexual males can become targets for young men who are trying to establish their "manhood" through aggression and other types of inappropriate behaviour.

### Probation

At Herdman Collegiate there are more than 27 students who are on probation and who are repeat offenders. At least two students in the past year have had their schooling suspended because they have been sentenced to the Correctional Centre in Stephenville. These students will ask to be dismissed from class because they have to "go to court." Based on the observations of this writer, there appears to be no real stigma attached to breaking the law, and students who are sentenced by the court to do community service while attending school generally regard the whole procedure as nothing more than a slight inconvenience.

### Student Burnout

At Herdman Collegiate, there are students who engage in sports activities, music programs and other demanding, time consuming co-curricular activities as well as

attempting to excel in a full academic program. All too often, these students begin to feel pressured and burned out and often become ill. This year, for example, several exceptional students worked long and hard to make many school based activities successful. At the same time they needed high academic averages to qualify for university scholarships. Teachers and staff felt that as a result of all these efforts and pressures, these students were more susceptible to a succession of viruses, and their health and general well being suffered as a result. There are students whose drive to excel in the 1998 Rotary Music Festival contributed to their becoming totally exhausted as a result of their efforts. These students need to learn how to balance the demands they place upon themselves.

#### **Post-secondary Education and Employment Prospects**

It is recognized that students have always faced many of the issues previously discussed. Today, however, some of the students at Herdman Collegiate also voice their concerns about issues related to economic and social changes which are outside the realm of their control.

Students may be unaware of the subtleties and intricacies of government policy, but they are indeed aware that post-secondary education is becoming more and more expensive. Since there are so few job opportunities for high school graduates, students feel compelled to enroll in post-secondary institutions in programs which they hope will lead to employment. However, the cost of university tuition has increased considerably in recent years. Many Herdman Collegiate graduates who are university bound must attend either Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John's or an out of province institution if the



programs they want are not available locally at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook. It is impossible to attend university outside Corner Brook for less than nine thousand dollars per year. Other students choose to attend private institutions where the cost of tuition is also very high. For example, at Keyin Technical College, tuition costs range from \$2,000-2,500 per term. After completing their post secondary education, many students will spend years of their adult lives repaying their student loans. In a time when employment prospects are uncertain, this may be a daunting prospect.

Students have been told repeatedly that education is their key to future employment and prosperity. However, Levin & Young (1994) state that "For fifteen years Canada has had relatively high levels of unemployment, especially among young people, including those with a good education" (p. 297). The Royal Commission Report on Employment and Unemployment, Building on Our Strengths (1986), claims that Newfoundland and Labrador's youth unemployment problem is an extreme expression of Canada's problem as a whole. This province's rate of youth unemployment is higher than that of any other province and has been so for many years (p. 5). The reality that students must face is that graduation from post-secondary institutions is not a guarantee that employment will follow.

According to Levin and Young (1994), "Although preparation for work is by no means the only task for schools, it is certainly a major expectation and one that is held strongly by students" (p. 298). Globerman's conclusion, as cited by Levin and Young (1994), is that

Most cognitive skills, general and specific, are acquired either formally or informally on the job after a worker wins an entry job. This suggests that education has its impact, if any, in helping people get a job, rather than in helping them do the job once obtained; or perhaps formal education helps people learn on the job, suggesting an emphasis on "learning to learn" rather than on particular skills (p. 299).

This observation is particularly apt since there are two labour market issues that directly affect students who are enrolling in specific courses in post-secondary institutions. First, it is difficult to predict what types of employees will be required in the labour force more than a few years in advance. The availability of jobs for Canadian graduates depends on such variables as the overall state of the economy, changes in technology, changes in the economies of other countries, and political developments such as trade agreements. Second, the Canadian economy is regionalized. The overall availability of jobs can be quite different from one area to another (Levin & Young, 1994, p.298). For example, if the economy in Grand Prairie, Alberta is booming, it does not follow that there will be employment opportunities on the Port au Port Peninsula in Newfoundland. Future forecasts of employment prospects are unlikely to be totally accurate and should be viewed with caution and a certain degree of scepticism.

#### Student Needs in a Changing Society

Reeder, Maccow, Shaw, Swerdlik, Horton, and Foster (1997) state that "These are difficult times for the development of children and adolescents" (p.603). Similarly,

Keys and Bemak (1997) state "Today's schools face educating a population of students whose personal and social problems create barriers to academic success" (p.255). The student issues and concerns discussed in this paper--personal and social problems, societal changes, costly post secondary education, limited employment opportunities, and an uncertain labor market--are among the stresses which, according to Carlson, Paavola, and Talley, 1995; Power, DuPaul, Shapiro, & Parrish, (1995), as quoted by Reeder et al (1997) may be "associated with rising rates of depression and suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, and other health problems among children and adolescents" (p. 603).

These trends show no sign of abating in the foreseeable future, and the combination of all these variables create an environment of uncertainty among students. If it is an expectation that students acquire the multiple skills and competencies needed to succeed in this global economy, then they must be provided with the means to cope with what Stoll & Fink (1996) call the "Change, instability, and resistance in all facets of society, not just education, [which] are compelling realities for contemporary life" (p. 5). Fullan (1994) states that it is necessary "to make the educational system a learning organization--expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy, but as a way of life" (p. 4).

Within the current context of societal change, budgetary restraints, and educational reform, students have a legitimate need to receive direction and guidance, particularly in areas such as stress management, time management, and career counselling. In view of cutbacks in teacher allocations, classroom teachers do not have either the time or the

expertise to fulfil this mandate. School counselors and school psychologists are the people who are trained to provide guidance, direction, and coping strategies for students.

It is the position of this paper that counseling services need to be expanded.

Phillips, Boysen, and Schuster (1997) assert that

Psychology has a rich store of information to offer for improving the effectiveness of schools. This is particularly true in the context of school reform, as educators struggle with the complex tasks of making schooling a more successful and cost-effective enterprise for all students" (p. 254).

Yet, at Herdman Collegiate, one counseling position was eliminated in 1997-98. Since counselors are assigned on a ratio of one counselor per one thousand students, in view of declining enrollments it is highly likely that there will be further reductions in counselor allocations. Any further reduction would seriously interfere with the range of counseling services available to students.

### Conclusion

Students live in a world of constant change, challenged by a myriad of personal and social concerns. According to Miller, Galanter, & Pribram, as cited by Egan (1994), "An ordinary person almost never approaches a problem systematically and exhaustively unless...specifically educated to do so" (p. 8). Students need to be educated to address the complex issues which confront them. The education system has an obligation to provide the means whereby students can forge what Rudduck, Day, & Wallace (1997) refer to as a "commitment to learning and achievement [which] can have a long-term influence on their

prospects and possibilities" (p. 85). This process can be facilitated by expanding rather than curtailing guidance and counselling services to students in schools.

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**The Changing Role of School Psychologists Within the Context of Societal Change and  
Educational Reform**

Social change, both within our society and throughout the world, is occurring at a phenomenal pace: government priorities have changed, there have been massive changes in education, and there have been significant lifestyle changes. In order to remain competitive in a global economy, business and industry have downsized, thereby transforming the workplace. The widespread creation of contractual and part time positions has resulted in less job security and fewer employee benefits in many sectors of the economy. There is little doubt that all of these changes have created difficulties for many people, and these difficulties are especially critical for young adults who are either entering or preparing to enter the labor market. Furthermore, increasing numbers of youths who are still in school and their families must cope with the serious issues of poverty, unemployment, family instability, substance abuse, and the resultant mental health problems.

It is the position of this paper that one of the tools that can help students address the complex issues which confront them and achieve their academic, social, and personal potential is the availability of intensive counselling and psychological services in this province's schools. Current literature supports this position. According to Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears (1998), "The need for effective counselling programs for young people and their families has never been greater" ( p. 123). Paisley and Benshoff (1998) further state that "Personal support for individuals facing challenge is essential" (p. 30). Yet, in Newfoundland and Labrador, where fiscal restraint, declining student populations, and the process of educational reform are all ongoing and interrelated, it is probable that

there will be further reductions in the number of guidance counsellors and psychologists available to schools. The school counselling and psychological services that are available must be analyzed and redefined in a cost effective manner.

### Traditional Role Description

Although the literature clearly distinguishes between the roles of school counsellors and school psychologists, in general usage among the students and staff in the schools of Newfoundland and Labrador, the term "counsellor" is frequently used to refer to both. According to the Herdman Collegiate Policy Manual for the Guidance Program, "Counselling generally could be defined as an activity that is concerned with helping individuals learn new ways of dealing with and adjusting to life's situations" (p. 5).

Lambert (1993) describes the school psychologist as

the cognitive, social, and behavioral scientist in the school. Utilizing psychological theories and empirical evidence, the school psychologist designs, administers, and/or participates in a system for providing school psychology services to promote the educational development and mental health of school-age children (p. 163).

This paper, recognizing the overlap between the roles of school counsellors and school psychologists from the generalist perspective, will focus on school psychologists.

Johnson, as cited by Greer and Richardson (1992), states that "The educational reforms of the past several years have forced all educators to examine critically both their current and perceived roles" (p. 93). In conceptualizing the traditional role of the school

psychologist, Wiener & Davidson (1992) state that

Three main requirements seem to be levied. First, psychologists are asked to explain a child's inability, difficulty, or problem....Second, psychologists are asked to advise teachers on how to resolve, bypass, modify, or even get rid of the difficulty....Finally, school psychologists are asked to substantiate, typically from behind the protection of tests, judgments already made by teachers or administrators (p. 26).

Cancelli and Duley (1992) state that "despite the variety of services provided by school psychologists over the years, the role of assessment continues to be the predominate [sic] element of service" (p.119). For teachers, psychologists tend to be seen primarily as testers. Wiener and Davidson (1992) conclude that psychologists are generally given the status of experts, "having access to knowledge denied to teachers, and especially through testing, to a procedure with special authority" (p. 27). School board personnel have perceptions similar to those of teachers: the school system requires formalized procedures for the identification of, programming for, and placement of children with special needs. Wiener and Davidson (1992) contend that given the expectations of teachers and school systems, "It is not surprising that psychologists commonly function in a reactive, responsive mode, accepting the limited requirements pressed on them and working mostly as assessors of individual children" (p.27). The traditional view of the school psychologist as essentially a remedial agent, who reacts during crises and intervenes to solve problems, is too restrictive.

### Changing Role Description

Although the tasks inherent in their traditional role should continue to be their responsibility, school psychologists need to be active agents for change. At a time when psychologists are routinely assigned administrative, disciplinary, supervisory, and teaching duties which curtail their ability to fulfil their primary roles, it is both practical and advisable to redefine their role descriptions. Phillips, Boysen, and Schuster (1997) believe that

The roles of psychologists in relation to schools must shift from predominantly assessment and classification emphases to one [sic] in which psychologists play a key role in creating school environments in which all students reach for and achieve high academic standards (p. 250).

Philips et al (1997) further contend that

To date, most schools have offered psychologists only limited and circumscribed roles, typically centred around the mass processing of students for special-education placement. Yet psychology has a rich store of information to offer for improving the effectiveness of schools. This is particularly true in the context of school reform, as educators struggle with the complex tasks of making schooling a more successful and cost-effective enterprise for all students (p. 254).

During periods of fiscal restraint, there are often incompatible role expectations.

Sladeczek and Heath (1997) address this issue when they state that

School psychologists, school counsellors, special education teachers, and other

special needs service providers working in the schools are faced with increasing demands for diagnostic, assessment, and intervention services while simultaneously undergoing budgetary cutbacks (Bartell, 1995; Carney, 1995; Cole, 1996; McKay, 1995). Increasing budgetary constraints have resulted in a recognition of the need to move towards a more cost effective model of service delivery in the field of school psychology (e.g. Cole, 1996; Janzen, Paterson, & Paterson, 1993) (p. 1).

### Consultation

For many years consultation as an indirect method of service delivery has received widespread attention in the United States. A surge of interest in the potential of consultation as a delivery system for psychological services was evident in the American school counselor literature of the 1970s. However, for a variety of reasons, theory, research, and practice in consultation decelerated in the 1980s. The 1990s, however, mark a period of considerable growth for consultation theory, research, and practice in Canada (Sladeczek & Heath, 1997). This approach, widely hailed in business and industrial circles, can be applied to a school situation to facilitate application of interventions designed to enhance the learning environment.

In an age of declining enrolments and fiscal restraint which have translated into reduced personnel allocations, it must be realized that school psychologists cannot operate efficient and comprehensive psychological programs without the support, cooperation, and good will of the administration and the instructional team of their respective schools. The principal and staff members must be supportive, active participants if a school-wide

program is to be successful since much of the implementation of the components of such a program must be delegated to staff members who are willing to accept and discharge these responsibilities. Even with the cooperation of the school's administration, faculty, and other professionals, a comprehensive program of psychological services may require a five year period to implement and evaluate its various elements.

The implementation of a comprehensive program of psychological services must include a determination of, and concern for, the well being of both faculty members and students, since, according to Kaplan and Geoffroy (1990), "Frustrated or unhappy teachers and students can neither teach nor learn effectively" (p. 7). It is the position of this paper that attention to physical health will translate into more positive mental attitudes for both students and teachers and hence more effective student learning.

According to Street (1994), "[Wellness] implies vitality, energy, stamina, and physical resources to withstand most stressors that can cause illness or disease" (p. 173). Wellness is a recognition that "positive mental health seems to directly relate to vibrant physical health" (Street, p. 173). The concept of wellness, which implies both mental and physical health, must be integrated into the perspective of staff participation in the implementation of school psychological services. School psychologists can provide a leadership role in helping to create a school climate with an emphasis on cooperative involvement in promoting the personal well being and welfare of teachers and students. This can be achieved as part of the consultative process.

The term "consultation" has not been operationally defined in the literature

although several definitions and models of the consultative process have been proposed. Medway, as cited by Anserello & Sweet (1992), defined consultation as "collaborative problem-solving between a mental health specialist (consultant) and one or more persons (consultees) who are responsible for providing some form of psychological assistance to another (client) [or client system]" (p. 173). Kurpius (1978) stated that "the process of consultation tends to be triadic--consultant, consultee, and client or client system. This means that the consultant helps the consultee who is experiencing work-related problems" (p.335).

There are two different types of consultant-consultee relations within the traditional model of consultation. First, there is the triadic-dependent relationship in which the school psychologist assumes the role of the expert from whom the consultee seeks advice. In this model, the consultee depends on the expertise of the consultant for help with the third party, the client. Assistance to the client is provided indirectly through the consultant-consultee relationship. Included in the triadic-dependent model (traditional model) are the client-centered case consultation model, the consultee-centered consultation model, and the behavioral-consultation model. Secondly, there is the collaborative-dependent relationship in which the consultant is perceived as an expert by the consultee but takes on the additional roles of educator and facilitator. As in the triadic-dependent model, the consultee is seeking the advice and expertise of the consultant, but in this model the consultant seeks also to educate the consultee about the problem solving process itself. These two models are useful when school psychologists are working with



individual clients and families who are confronting normal, developmental problems (Keys et al, 1998).

Within the school environment, teachers encounter students who exhibit learning or behavioral problems. In this situation, the teacher approaching the school psychologist for consultation is the consultee; the student on whose account assistance is sought is the client. One problematic issue is the children in school whose learning needs cannot be met in a regular classroom without intervention. Keeping these learning disadvantaged children in the regular stream can be done only by making adjustments in teaching strategies and classroom management. Traditionally, the school psychologist, with knowledge gained through tests and their interpretation, would recommend placement of these children into special education classrooms. Today, however, with mainstream education a primary focus, the school psychologist who possesses effective consultation skills can facilitate the interpersonal, listening, and communications skills required to enable the classroom teacher to make the practical curriculum changes necessary to ensure that the children involved develop to their optimum potential.

A recognition of special education needs, complex curriculum demands, changing family dynamics, and new media influences on learning styles all demand more intensive and complex responses from teachers. Davison (1992) states that "teachers need support to help them cope with change and consultants [school psychologists] can help to fill that role" (p. 68). One purpose of consultation is to help personnel to become more efficient and effective. By providing support, consultants help develop a climate of interdependent

problem solving, or they may share their expertise in solving a specific problem.

According to Siegal and Cole (1992), "the ultimate goals of school psychologists' services are to enhance children's learning, to make services available to all students, and to use multiple approaches to service delivery" (p. 7). The school psychologist, through the consultation process, may provide indirect services to all students through direct service to teachers, parents, or the entire school. Rather than services always being directly provided to students or their parents by the school psychologist, they may also be carried out by teachers, through consultation with the school psychologist, or through his or her impact on school personnel or the school system at large.

According to Mayer, as cited by Umansky & Holloway (1984), "through consultation, a teacher can learn skills and strategies to solve a problem and apply those skills to future problems" (p. 330). Thus, consulting with one teacher concerning one particular child can potentially affect thousands of children during a teacher's career. With this concept in mind, the school psychologist has a responsibility to provide further in-service training for teachers to help them develop an assessment and problem solving approach to classroom difficulties and to become more aware of their own resources to produce changes in students and in their own behaviour. Thus, there is a focus on the development of preventative strategies and an emphasis on professional development. Teachers must be encouraged to seek out the collaboration of their colleagues and other resource personnel in problem solving, and the logical person to initiate and facilitate this approach is the school psychologist.

### **The In School Team (IST)**

The formation of an In School Team will enable the psychologist to effectively utilize the skills associated with the consultative process. Central to the inception of an In School Team (IST) is the realization that psychological services do not have to be, and indeed cannot be, provided solely by the school psychologist who is instrumental in setting up the IST. To give the concept of such a team credibility, the psychologist has to be visible and accessible within the school (Siegal & Cole, 1992).

The purpose of an IST is to consult with classroom teachers who have concerns about individual children and to provide rapid front-line response to those concerns because delays between requests for help and actual delivery of services are often the norm in a school situation. The emphasis in implementing an IST must be on its benefit to students who require psychological services. The formation of an IST will enable the psychologist to use service time economically. By eliciting input from the student, teachers, and parents, he or she is better able to clarify and integrate sources of information, including perceptions, attitudes, and expectations for the child.

The core membership of an IST may include administrators, referring teachers, special education teachers, and school counselors who adopt a consultative role. Initial referrals are made to the IST rather than directly to the school psychologist. The remainder of the referral process has several distinct stages or phases:

1. Informal discussion between the referring teacher and the special education teacher. If the problem cannot be resolved on the basis of this informal discussion, then

referral is made to the IST.

2. The actual referral first requires assessment of the situation. The school psychologist will conduct initial interviews with the child, the parents, and school personnel in order to secure pertinent information necessary to identify the salient components of the problem. A second area of the initial assessment is concerned with identification of specific dysfunctional target behaviors for application of intervention strategies. In addition to those of the child, dysfunctional behaviors of significant others may also be targets for change.

However, it must be emphasized that the role of the school psychologist is not to be a provider of solutions in a hierarchical relationship, but rather to act as an animator of reciprocal communications channeled to facilitate constructive changes in attitude at school and home.

3. The implementation of intervention strategies. The IST discusses possible interventions. A decision is made with respect to a particular strategy of intervention, and the roles of the participants in the intervention are clearly delineated. If interventions beyond the resources of the school psychologist and other school personnel are required, the IST may refer the clients to an outside agency for in-depth treatment such as psychotherapy and family counseling.

The consultative process employed in this model encourages consultees' involvement, sharing of information, and the implementation of mutual decisions. The IST is likely to be most effective in open climate schools characterized by a collaborative

atmosphere and open communication and alliance between administration, teachers, and parents (Wiener and Davidson, 1992).

Based on Wiener's own experience as Senior Psychologist for a School Board in Metropolitan Toronto, Wiener and Davidson (1992), report several benefits of an IST:

1. An IST not only met the needs of a greater number of students more efficiently, but could potentially free up the time of psychological staff for more proactively oriented work.
2. More students were served than through traditional referral processes.
3. Teachers, team members, and consultants all claimed that participation in the team was beneficial, their understanding of learning problems increased, and they learned more about programming for students with special needs.
4. Referring teachers got help quickly.
5. Referral rates to psychological services decreased.
6. The perception of the role of school psychologists changed. Prior to the inception of the teams, they were viewed mainly as specialists who conducted formal assessments of children, but this changed when they began to participate in the ISTs. Team members and referring teachers felt that the attendance of the psychologists allowed for immediate interpretations of children's behavior and suggestions for appropriate intervention strategies.
7. The psychologists reported that participating in IST meetings made them feel integral members of the school staff, their appreciation of the expertise of teachers

increased; and they obtained the satisfaction of knowing that children were being well served.

These observations are confirmed by Sladeczek and Heath (1997) who state that Wiener and Davidson's (1990) study on the efficacy of collaborative consultation as a prereferral intervention system represents one of the few empirical studies carried out in Canada. Heretofore, the research had been limited to reports of successful individual case studies or anecdotal information concerning the process of programmatic consultation. Wiener and Davidson (1990) found that collaborative consultation using resource teachers as in-house consultants coupled with an ecological approach to assessment decreased referrals to psychologists and other consultants, or special education placement by half (p. 7).

This process serves to demonstrate that the traditional role of the school psychologist is wasteful, that it fails to take into account much of what school psychologists can offer, and that it neglects to integrate them fully into school settings and systems. The IST, when properly implemented, can broaden the scope of psychological services offered within a school.

### Collaborative Consultation

There are occasions, however, when the resources within a school are insufficient to meet student needs. According to Keys et al (1998), "The increasing complexity of problems facing today's youths and families, however, suggests that new ways of helping are needed" (p. 123). On such occasions, the school psychologist must then initiate and

facilitate the process of collaborative consultation among various community agencies. Keys et al further state that "Collaborative consultation...actively involves parents, educators, youths, and counselors as equal participants and experts in problem solving a specific issue" (p. 127). School psychologists can no longer isolate themselves from community-based services and other service providers. They must view themselves as participants who seek to facilitate the integration of services among community agencies and institutions in an attempt to serve students and families facing difficult issues and challenges. As stated by Tirozzi & Uro (1997), "By working collaboratively with other school staff and community members, psychologists' commitment to our nation's children and youth becomes apparent, and their investment in furthering educational reform remains indisputable" (p. 249).

### Individual Counselling

While it is recognized that current trends and practices lean toward a reduction in the number of individual referrals to the school psychologist in an attempt to improve the efficiency of program delivery, one of the primary tasks of the school psychologist is to provide individual counselling services to those members of the school population whose difficulties require individual attention. By definition, as stated by Gibson and Mitchell (1990), "individual counselling is a one-to-one relationship involving a trained counsellor [school psychologist] and focuses on some aspect of a client's adjustment, developmental, or decision-making needs" (p. 124). In order to meet the needs of a client so that a change may be initiated, the school psychologist, as a professional in the field, must bring

appropriate knowledge and skill to the counselling relationship.

However, while the position chosen by an individual school psychologist is personal and arbitrary, it may not be advisable, considering the changing school environment and curriculum, to adopt a specific modality. An eclectic approach may be more appropriate and desirable in terms of providing effective and efficient services to a school's population.

### **Flexibility of Working Hours**

According to Greer & Richardson (1992), "Traditional organizational structures dictate that school counselors should be treated similarly to how other teachers are treated" (p. 93). Similarly, school psychologists are required to work the same regular school hours as classroom teachers. Yet, they must be alert to emerging societal trends that affect their practice and training. For example, changes in family structure may mean that some parents are unavailable for consultation during the regular school day. Since school psychologists should be available to consult with parents at times convenient to both parties, it is obvious that they should have time flexibility built into their work schedule.

School psychologists must work with other agencies to relocate resources within the community. Psychological services must extend beyond the school and should be designed around community needs and delivered within the community. If the duties of school psychologists are defined, and if the duties performed are objectively evaluated, then the needs of students can be better addressed. Flexi-time would enable school psychologists and school administrators to think in proactive rather than reactive terms.



## **Research**

As stated by Kratochwill, Schnaps, and Bissell (1985), school psychology, as a division of professional psychology, shares a tradition of "emphasis on scientific methodologies and empirical investigation as a basis for theory and practice" (p. 58). A great deal of information relevant to the practice of school psychology is generated by scientific research in the field. Since budgetary restraints have caused a reduction in professional allocations, many school psychologists operate under time constraints which may prohibit them from becoming actively engaged in research. Also, funding for research is not always available. Gibson and Mitchell (1990), however, present a number of reasons why school psychologists should be encouraged to conduct research:

1. Research findings can provide factual data to reinforce or guide professional judgment and improve practice.
2. An awareness of both the reservoir of accumulated knowledge dealing with human behaviour and the results of research studies can broaden, deepen, and alter our understanding of this behaviour.
3. Research investigations can affirm or disprove hypotheses or assumptions a practitioner may have regarding problems encountered in practice (p. 442 - 443).

It has been established elsewhere in this paper that the consultative process is fundamental to the ability of school psychologists to expand their influence beyond that of the traditional role. However, Sladeczek and Heath (1997) state that

Empirical research on consultation in Canada has been largely limited to the present decade (e.g., Cole, 1990; Cole & Brown, 1996; Cole, Siegel, & Yau,

1992; daCosta, 1995; Ross & Regan, 1990; Siegel & Cole, 1990; Wiener & Davidson, 1990) and dominated by Cole and colleagues' extensive work on the three-pronged model of collaborative consultation and school team consultation (p. 12).

That research demonstrates the advantages and viability of consultation as a method of delivering psychological services in Canadian schools.

Further research needs to be conducted in consultation practices. The exact nature of consultation needs to be operationally defined. The literature currently available outlines the value of consultation and extols the benefits thereof. What is never clearly delineated, however, is a step by step process describing how to initiate and implement consultative procedures. It is not known, for example, how much value school psychologists place on consultation skills and the extent to which Canadian school psychologists engage in consultative practices in their day to day functioning. Furthermore, where consultative practices are used, the nature of the consultation (behavioral or collaborative) is unclear and has not been documented (Sladeczek and Heath, 1997, p. 12).

There is little empirical basis for training school psychologists in a particular consultation model, and there is little data to support the efficacy of particular consultation approaches. Consequently, empirical data generated through the research process is required to enable practitioners to determine whether the mental health consultative approach or the behavioral approach is most applicable in a particular situation.

Researchers need to turn their skills toward explicating strategies that support indirect service delivery.

### Education and Training

There are various theories, therapies, and modalities within which school psychologists are trained. Strict adherence to one particular knowledge base may be limiting, however, because many of the diverse issues and challenges faced by students cannot be adequately addressed from one particular perspective. As referenced earlier in this paper, an eclectic approach is often what is required to deal with the ramifications of complex issues. Familiarity with the models categorized within psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, and existential-humanistic theories is essential but not sufficient for the practice of school psychology at a time when students are ambivalent and uncertain because of the impact of complex, rapid-paced societal change. School psychologists must be aware that many of the societal issues clients confront have historical, cultural, or political influences which may directly affect the impact of interventions.

For example, within our society, minority groups are becoming more and more visible. Such social and cultural diversity demands a response from the educational system in general and school psychological services in particular. It is recognized that members of native minority groups, as well as immigrants, experience considerable stress as they interact with mainstream society, and as a result frequently experience identity crises and considerable loss of self-esteem. The resultant behaviour may include substance abuse, family violence, depression, academic underachievement, and increasing instances of suicide.

Educators encounter a myriad of complex issues in dealing with children who are members of minority groups. These children require primary, secondary, and tertiary

psychological intervention if they are to achieve congruence with respect to the school environment and the remainder of the social structure. As stated by Cole and Siegal (1992), "School psychologists, together with educators and other mental health professionals, can help meet the needs of minority children and their families by developing a broader knowledge base, effective skills, and cultural sensitivity" (p. 141).

All of these considerations suggest that the scientific models, methods, and research of current training and education programs for future school psychologists be incorporated into a broader based liberal education which helps to provide the communication skills, the high degree of literacy, and the ability to think clearly and analytically--some of the attributes essential in the development of the thoughtful, multifaceted psychologists needed in today's schools to deal with current, complex societal issues.

### Conclusion

Whatever the changing societal and economic structures may be, the primary focus of the school system must be the education, welfare, and well being of students who must be regarded as the beneficiaries of change. Bergan (1985), states that

The complex technological society in which we live creates enormous demands on individuals. The promise of psychology is that it may enhance social progress by assisting individuals, families, and other social institutions to respond adaptively and productively to the demands of a rapidly changing technological culture (p. 435).

While school psychological programs have traditionally focused on a reactive

stance, it is now recognized that all students benefit from comprehensive school psychological programs. The goal of a school psychology program is to enhance children's learning through primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. As described by Siegel & Cole (1992), "primary prevention services are provided for the benefit of all students; secondary prevention services are provided for the benefit of students who are at risk; tertiary prevention services for those who are experiencing significant difficulties with school adjustment" (p. 9).

At a time of increasing education expectations and declining resources school psychologists can provide knowledge to guide reform decisions and to provide services to students, teachers, and families. As cited by Phillips et al (1997),

Educators have much to gain from more extensive involvement of psychologists in schools, but many do not know it. School reform efforts provide a window of opportunity to address this issue. Psychologists have a responsibility to inform educators about their potential contributions to meet school and student needs. Likewise education has an obligation to carefully consider how the application of psychological knowledge can improve the schooling process. A true collaboration between psychology and education in the context of school reform could do much to revolutionize schooling (p. 254).

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