

UZBEKISTAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF WORLD LANGUAGES  
TRANSLATION THEORY AND PRACTICE FACULTY

# ***SELF STUDY***

**Theme: Problems in Education and Society**

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***Group 303***

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## **Problems in Education and Society**

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According to "A Nation at Risk", the American education system has declined due to a "rising tide of mediocrity" in our schools. States such as New York have responded to the findings and recommendations of the report by implementing such strategies as the "Regents Action Plan" and the "New Compact for Learning". In the early 1980's, President Reagan ordered a national commission to study our education system. The findings of this commission were that, compared with other industrialized nations, our education system is grossly inadequate in meeting the standards of education that many other countries have developed. At one time, America was the world leader in technology, service, and industry, but overconfidence based on a historical belief in our superiority has caused our nation to fall behind the rapidly growing competitive market in the world with regard to education. The report in some respects is an unfair comparison of our education system, which does not have a national standard for goals, curriculum, or regulations, with other countries that do, but the findings nevertheless reflect the need for change. Our education system at this time is regulated by states which implement their own curriculum, set their own goals and have their own requirements for teacher preparation. Combined with this is the fact that we have lowered our expectations in these areas, thus we are not providing an equal or quality education to all students across the country. The commission findings generated recommendations to improve the content of education and raise the standards of student achievement, particularly in testing, increase the time spent on education and provide incentives to encourage more individuals to enter the field

of education as well as improving teacher preparation. N.Y. State responded to these recommendations by first implementing the Regents Action Plan; an eight year plan designed to raise the standards of education. This plan changed the requirements for graduation by raising the number of credits needed for graduation, raising the number of required core curriculum classes such as social studies, and introduced technology and computer science. The plan also introduced the Regents Minimum Competency Tests, which requires a student to pass tests in five major categories; math, science, reading, writing, and two areas of social studies. Although the plan achieved many of its goals in raising standards of education in N.Y. State, the general consensus is that we need to continue to improve our education system rather than being satisfied with the achievements we have made thus far. Therefore, N.Y. adopted "The New Compact for Learning". This plan is based on the principles that all children can learn. The focus of education should be on results and teachers should aim for mastery, not minimum competency. Education should be provided for all children and authority with accountability should be given to educators and success should be rewarded with necessary changes being made to reduce failures. This plan calls for curriculum to be devised in order to meet the needs of students so that they will be fully functional in society upon graduation, rather than just being able to graduate. Districts within the state have been given the authority to devise their own curriculum, but are held accountable by the state so that each district meets the states goals that have been established. Teachers are encouraged to challenge students to reach their full potential, rather than minimum competency. In this

regard, tracking of students is being eliminated so that all students will be challenged, rather than just those who are gifted. Similarly, success should be rewarded with recognition and incentives to further encourage progress for districts, teachers and students while others who are not as accomplished are provided remedial training or resources in order to help them achieve success. It is difficult to determine whether our country on the whole has responded to the concerns that "A Nation at Risk" presented. Clearly though, N.Y. State has taken measures over the last ten years to improve its own education system. In many respects the state has accomplished much of what it set out to do, but the need to continue to improve is still present. Certainly, if America is determined to regain its superiority in the world, education, the foundation of our future, needs to be priority number one. Teachers often develop academic expectations of students based on characteristics that are unrelated to academic progress. These expectations can affect the way educators present themselves toward the student, causing an alteration in the way our students learn, and thus causing an overall degeneration in the potential growth of the student. Expectations affect students in many ways, not just academically, but in the form of mental and social deprivation which causes a lack of self-esteem. When educators receive information about students, mostly even before the student walks into their classroom, from past test scores, IEP's, and past teachers, it tends to alter the way we look at the students potential for growth. This foundation of expectation is then transformed on to our method of instruction. One basic fallout from these expectations is the amount of time educators spend in communicating with students. We tend to speak

more directly to students who excel, talking in more mature tone of voice, treating them more like a grown-up than we do to the students who are already labeled underachievers. This can give the student an added incentive to either progress or regress due to the amount of stimulation that they receive. As educators we tend to take the exceptional students "under our wing". We tend to offer knowledge in situations to help push the good students, in comparison to moving on to the next task for the others. We also tend to critique the work of our good students more positively than the others, offering challenges to the answers they have given. The most obvious characteristic that educators present to the students is in the area of body language and facial expression. We tend to present ourselves in a more professional manner to our good students, speaking more clearly and with a stronger tone of voice. We tend to stand more upright, in a more powerful stance, than to the slouching effect we give to the underachievers. The head shakes, glancing with our eyes, hand gestures, and posture all contribute to the way we look at certain students based on our first impressions which came before we even knew the student. One major way we can avoid these pitfalls and eliminate unfair expectations that help produce failure in our students is to restrict the past information on the students to a need to know basis. Instead of telling the teacher how the student did on past examinations, just present them with the curricula that the student must learn during the time they spend in that class. This enables the educator to formulate their own opinions of that student. Also, instead of doing the IEP meetings during the middle of the year, we should wait till the end of the semester to inform the educators of certain aspects of the

student instead of giving them all the information earlier in the year. Finally, it is up to the educator himself to evaluate their own teaching methods to be able to recognize, and change, the way they present themselves to the entire class. To be able to know what we are doing, and how we are doing it, at different times in the day is crucial to the aura we present to the students. Schools are often blamed for the ills of society, yet society has a major impact on our education system. The problems that schools are facing today are certainly connected to the problems that are society faces, including drugs, violence, and the changing of our family structure. There are many methods that schools have begun to use in order to deal with the problems they are faced with and still offer the best possible education to our youth. The use of drugs in the general population has become a very serious problem in society and within the school system. There are two aspects to drug use that teachers are having to deal with now. The first is in trying to teach the new generation of crack babies that are now entering the schools. These students have extremely low attention spans and can be very disruptive in class. Early intervention programs designed to target these children and focus on behavior management within the school setting have been effective in preparing these students for school. Educators have also identified drug use among students as one of the most significant problems that our schools face today. According to the text, the rate of drug use among students has declined in last few years, but recently there has been an increase in alcohol abuse among teenagers. Intervention programs such as APPLE, (a school based rehabilitation facility) have been implemented in many schools with the cooperation of

school counselors and community agencies to treat drug using teenagers. Other programs, such as D.A.R.E have been implemented in many elementary schools to provide education about drugs to young students. Violence, both in society and in the school system has also been identified as a serious problem. The influx of weapons in schools creates a dangerous situation for teachers, administrators and other students. One remedy for this problem has been introduced in many public city schools; the use of metal detectors. While this method is not foolproof it does send the message that violence will not be tolerated in schools and that severe measures will be implemented in order to curb it. Educators are also being trained to identify those students who may be violent and to provide non-violent crisis intervention. It is an undeniable fact that our society has a serious problem concerning violence and that the violence on the streets is certainly connected to the violence in the schools. It seems questionable that even these measures will significantly reduce the problem in schools, but certainly the process of teaching can continue in a less stressful atmosphere by having these measures in place. Unfortunately, there are other problems such as the changing family structure that do not have such clear cut solutions. Some of the problems that teachers are faced with concerning the family include poverty, single parent homes, abuse and/or neglect and homelessness. Statistics state that 41% of single, female headed households live below the poverty level and that students who live in single parent homes score lower on achievement tests, particularly boys whose mothers are the head of the household. Obviously, single parent families are a fact in our society today, given the rising rate of divorce

and single women having children, and it is true that this change is having a severe effect on students today, but this should not effect the quality of education that is provided, but rather, encourage educators to be more aware of the difficulties these students face in order to adapt their teaching style, as well as the curriculum to reach these students. Similarly, child abuse and/or neglect has become a major issue in society and schools. It is not clear whether there is a rise in the occurrences of abuse or whether better awareness has increased the statistics, but it cannot be argued that this a significant problem and one that effects those educators who have to help students who are either abused or neglected. Strict regulations concerning the accountability of teachers regarding the reporting of child abuse or neglect are in effect. Teachers are required to be trained on the ability to identify abuse. Community agencies, shelters and child welfare agencies have begun working in conjunction with schools in order to deal with the problem with as little disruption in the student's education as possible. Homelessness is another major problem in our society. The rate of homeless people has grown significantly since the early 1980's deinstitutionalization movement and more recently due to the rising unemployment rate have led to more families and children being homeless than ever before. This social problem has become a significant problem for educators. Low achievement, which may be in part due to low attendance as a result of a transient lifestyle, physical problems associated with living on the streets and child abuse are all issues that educators are confronted with when working with students who are homeless. Unfortunately, because of the lack of government funds, this



problem continues to grow in America. On the other hand, schools have begun to deal with this problem by hiring additional counselors, some who work specifically to coordinate service with shelters in order provide assistance to these families and more precisely to the children. This effort clearly demonstrates that educators are genuinely concerned about providing education to all children. Clearly our schools and society face the same problems. It has become necessary for all people, not just educators, to be more aware of the problems. Although some intervention programs have been implemented and in some cases are very successful, it is becoming more apparent that these problems are going to continue and will have a direct consequence on our future in this country. Unfortunately, we as a society tend to look for the "quick fix" to our problems without realizing the consequences for the future.