

SOCIAL CHANGE AS AN ASPECT OF THE INCREASING
SCALE OF ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY ILLUSTRATED
IN THE SECTOR OF EDUCATION*

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ABSTRACT

Writing on the subject of social change has been characterized by a general and descriptive approach on one hand and a narrow focus on institutions on the other. As conceived here under the hypothesis of increasing scale of organization of society, change in a particular organization is seen as representative of and dynamically related to an organizational transformation of the carrying society as a whole. The crucial structural concept is interdependence among groups and their participant memberships. An analysis of changes in the Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, 1854-1952, is presented as an illustration of the hypothesis.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of social change at the societal level has exercised social scientists for many years. Efforts to deal with the problem have sometimes been little more than general descriptive accounts which serve primarily to underscore the obvious, that societies do change. Other more sociological studies have focused upon institutions and have emphasized the changing values of these institutions or have attempted an analysis of micro role systems.

The approach to the problem in this paper is at once more general and more particular. It is more general, for it proposes a framework which allows the interpretation of related occurrences on many levels. It is more particular for it focuses on concrete organizations.

The assumption underlying the present approach is that the dynamics of change reside in the operation of groups and must be studied on that level.¹ Essential to such an approach are general concepts on that level of analysis. The concepts adopted here are provided by the hypothesis of increasing scale of organization of society.² Under this hypothesis, the change in a focal sub-system of society must be conceived as representative of, and dynamically engaged in, an organizational transformation of the carrying society as a whole. This proposition will be verified in the case of the Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, which will be the focal unit of analysis.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF INCREASING SCALE

Since this view is dependent upon an analysis of the organizational structure of society, certain elements necessary to this analysis must be stated and defined. These are: social group, role and society. Social group refers to a social participation structure in which the members are interdependent and in which there is a communication flow and a consequent ordering of behavior.³ Role refers to the specific participation by which an independently defined category of members is included in the integral group operation. By society is meant: "a field of differentiated and interactively related organizational units forming a framework of conceded role interdependence."⁴ In other words, society may be viewed as a scheme of role schemes or a group of groups, when the above definitions of role and group are kept clearly in mind.

It is evident that the degree of interdependence among the component groups of a society varies. Precisely this variable is the basic concern of this discussion, for the magnitude or inclusiveness of the overall scheme of conceded interdependence is the scale of society. One of the fundamental developments which we observe in the past and present world may be conceived as an increase in the scale of society. That is, larger and more comprehensive social participation structures are in process of formation.

The focal points for the observation of increasing scale of organization are: (1) existing social participation structures and (2) emergent or evolving enterprise structures whose actions operate as constraints upon other groups.

The indices of increasing scale relative to the existing social participation structures are:⁵ (1) a loss of autonomy - as the extended organizations become crucial to the ongoing of a local area (providing resources, protection, transportation), the attention of the members of the local group is directed to control centers which are often far away. Moreover, as functions are transferred to the extended organization, people become less dependent on the proximal environment. There is a transition from compact groups to dispersed membership groups. This does not necessarily imply that the local group members relocate geographically. It does imply that the operations base shifts and the rationale for group autonomy breaks down. (2) the "loosening" of local group structure. The latter is closely related to the loss of autonomy but the emphasis here is upon group sub-units among which there is an increasing independence from the formerly integral group structure. As dependence upon the extended organization increases, dependence upon the compact group decreases, (3) an increasing diversity of participation structures which are accessible to the sub-units of the local group. School teachers today, for example, may usually affiliate with a county, state or national teachers' association as well as with other professional groups which are not locally based whereas few such groups were available to them a century ago.

The indices of increasing scale in regard to emerging enterprise structures are: (1) spatially expanded operations, i.e., more and more groups

(local communities, e.g.) are included in and affected by the evolving enterprises and (2) increasing social inclusion, i.e., an increasing number of social roles within existing groups are affected by and become relevant to the emerging structure of organization. The consequences of this increasing inclusiveness, sometimes called integration, are a redefinition of role skills so that they become relevant to the requirements of the expanding organization, and proliferation of roles per se, especially in the area of control and coordination.

The few studies employing the concept of increasing scale of society have been concerned with its application to the phenomenon of urbanization. In these studies an attempt has been made to account for the increase in the number and size of concentrations of population in high density locations. Greer, for example, writes:

...the image of the city must be contained within an overall picture of urban society; 'urbanization' and 'urbanism' on this approach, become adjectives referring to a society, not merely its population concentrations.⁶

Van Hoey, commenting upon these investigations, states:

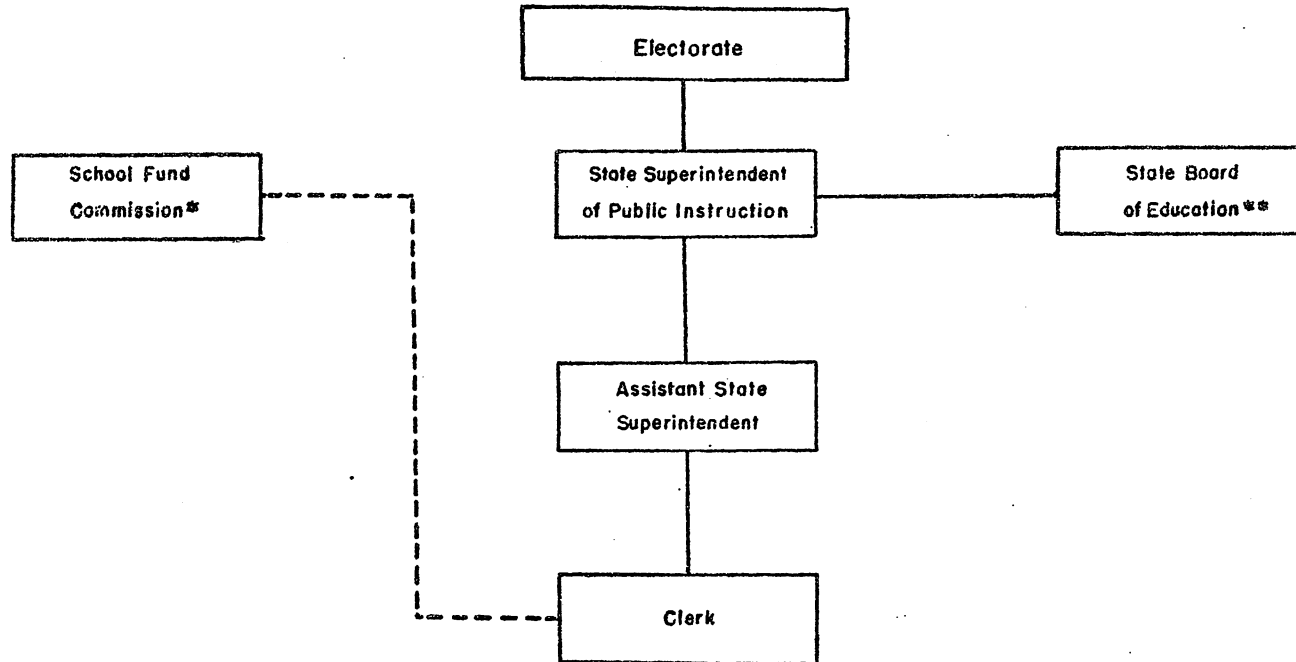
...urbanization is characteristically a process of integration and differentiation whereby segments of social space are differentially related by inclusion in a continuous field of organized relationships culminating in certain locations of high centrality in the distribution of activity, information and material, hence in the distribution of population...Cities are consequently regarded as composite indices reflecting the total process of increasing scale of society.⁷

The same logic may be employed in the present study. That is, the terms which are commonly used to describe the process which has taken place and is taking place in the area of education, viz., consolidation, unification or centralization, may also be seen as descriptive of sectors of enterprise within the total society. In fact, the degree of centralization of the educational enterprise in any given society may be a more powerful index of the scale of organization of that society than urbanization. This is substantiated when it is remembered that two important functions of education are the equipping of individuals with the role skills relevant to the defined needs of groups in the society and the transmission of the ideological validations of societal structure and action. Assuming that the organizational structure of the educational enterprise will tend to reflect the content of that which is taught, this structure then becomes an index of the structure of the carrying society.

From the present point of view, the change in the public education enterprise in Kansas, as represented by the following charts,⁸ is a manifestation of, and cannot be fully understood apart from, the organizational transformation of the carrying society. We shall identify in what follows some of the major points of interest which become salient in this framework.

Organization of the State Department of Education: 1879

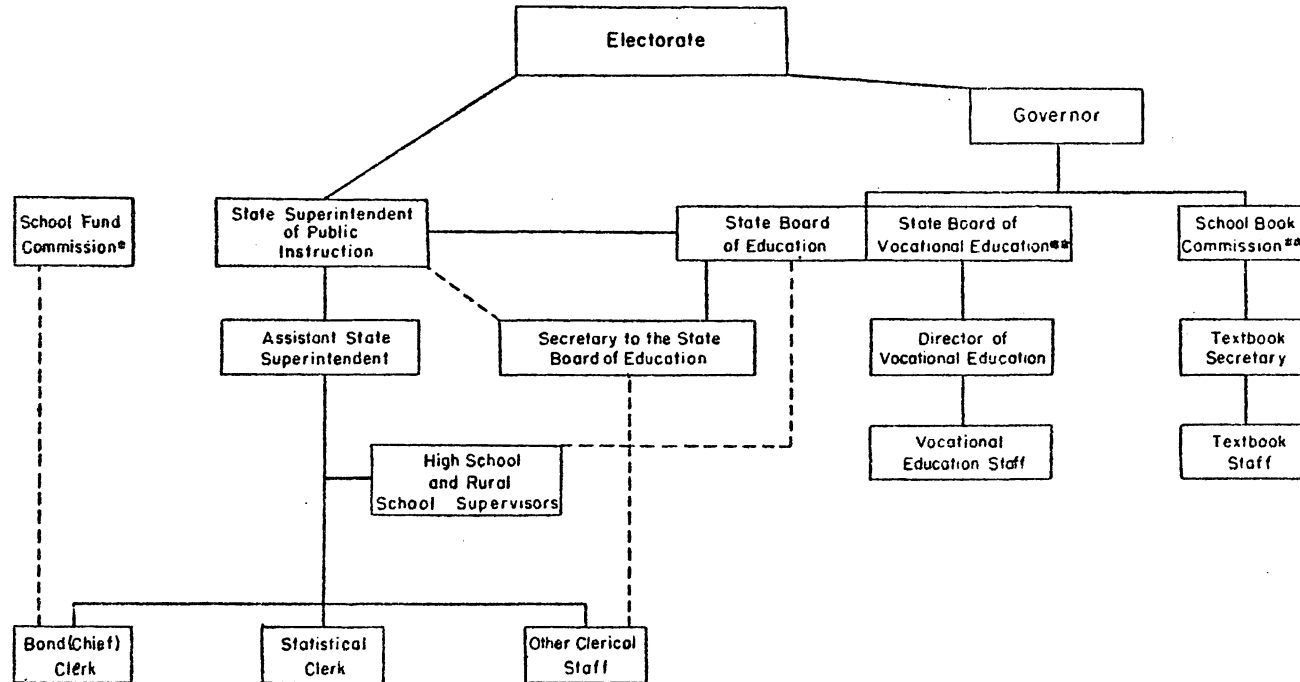
CHART I



*The School Fund Commission was composed of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Attorney General, and the Secretary of State.

**The State Board of Education was composed of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the chancellor of the State University, the president of the State Agricultural College, and the president of the State Normal School at Emporia.

CHART II
Organization of the State Department of Education and Related Agencies: 1935

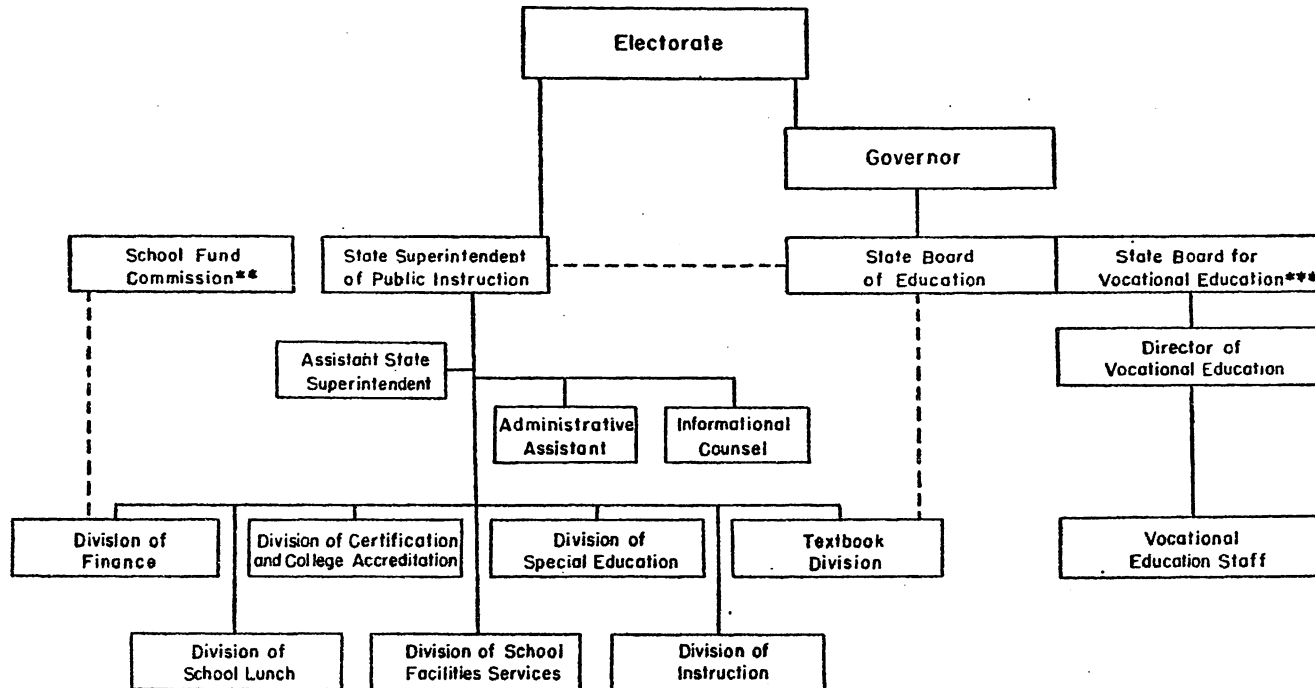


*The School Fund Commission was composed of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Attorney General, and the Secretary of State.

**The State Board of Education was also the State Board for Vocational Education. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction was the *ex officio* chairman of the Board. The other members were appointed by the Governor.

***The School Book Commission was composed of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Printer, and five other members appointed by the Governor.

CHART III
Organization of the State Department of Public Instruction and Related Agencies: 1952*



*Adapted from an organization chart in the *Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Instruction of the State of Kansas, 1951-1952* (Topeka, undated), p. 4.

**The School Fund Commission is composed of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Attorney General, and the Secretary of State.

***The State Board of Education is also the State Board for Vocational Education. All members are appointed by the Governor.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS OF INCREASING SCALE

In order to illustrate the hypothesis of increasing scale of organization of society, it is necessary to take a longitudinal approach to the problem under discussion. In the present case, in order to understand the changes represented by charts I, II and III, it will be necessary to select two periods of time for comparison. The first period in this case will be the time from 1854, when Kansas became a United States territory, to 1861, when Kansas became a state. The second period will be less strictly defined. The focus will be the time around 1952 and later, but the events discussed transpired at a much earlier date. Our discussion will be cast in the framework provided by the following questions:⁹

What social structures existed?

What expansive enterprises came forth?

What new role schemes were conceived?

What constraints determined the differential participation in these evolving role schemes?

I. What social structures existed?

Education among the white inhabitants of Kansas prior to statehood was a function of three social groups: the church, the family, and the community. The church furnished some of the earliest educational opportunities by converting Indian missions into free schools for white children.¹⁰ But more often education, as an enterprise, was supported by private subscriptions, as was the case in Lawrence, where Dr. Charles Robinson of the New England Emigrant Aid Society offered a room behind his office as a school. Here, on January 16, 1855, twenty pupils started on a three-month term, the number increasing within a week to thirty-five. The teacher was paid from fees collected from the families of the pupils.¹¹

The following account, which is representative of many to be found in the historical literature of Kansas, is quoted at length because of the picture which it gives of the educational situation during the territorial days. The narrator is a Swiss immigrant to Doniphan County in 1856.

We felt a closer relationship to the school than is possible in these later days when education is standardized and much of the

government of the schools is vested in boards and commissions. In our day the school was our own creation. During the early Kansas territorial days the government was in such constant turmoil over the slavery question that almost nothing was done toward organizing school districts. The initiative for school organization, therefore, was left to public-spirited farmers in each community.

In our community somebody called a meeting to consider the building of a schoolhouse. At that meeting everybody agreed that a school was a necessity; but without any means of levying taxes to build a schoolhouse, another way had to be found. The patrons of the district decided on a central site, and there they met one morning at daybreak. A captain was chosen to direct building operations. Soon axes were ringing in the woods, trees were felled, trimmed, dragged by ox-teams to the building site, where they were squared, notched, heaved in place, and chinked to withstand wind and snow...By night the schoolhouse was complete and ready for occupancy...Next arose the question of a teacher. We had no examining board and no laws covering qualifications for teachers. Somebody, however, suggested that Mrs. Lewis, the wife of our community doctor, would be a good teacher. I do not know how it was determined that she was qualified, but she was chosen by a show of hands, and accepted the post. Of course there was no levy to pay the salary of the teacher and no authority for levying a tax. It was agreed by a vote that the tuition should be one dollar for each pupil and that the school would be of four months' duration. Those who could not afford to pay tuition in cash paid Mrs. Lewis in produce.¹²

This account outlines a relatively simple and autonomous group operation. Families, faced with the problem of educating their young merge into a compact local group and take the action which they feel to be necessary, making use of available resources. Specialization is almost non-existent. The allocation of roles is by common consent with no separate control group involved. Against this background we ask the second question.

II. What expansive enterprises came forth?

A. The answer to this question involves first a description of the action of various groups with respect to the question of the extension of slavery into Kansas. Only a sketchy outline will be given here.

On May 30, 1854, President Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska bill into law. Embodied in this act was the famous principle of "Squatters' Sovereignty" or non-intervention. The heart of the bill was in Section 32:

...it being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States.¹³

The passage of this bill had the practical effect of making Kansas Territory the setting for a bitter struggle between two sets of groups. One set was made up of pro-slavery groups, located mainly in Western Missouri. These groups, bearing such names as "Social Bands," and "Sons of the South," were made up of men who construed the objectives of the Kansas-Nebraska bill to be the facilitation of the extension of slavery into Kansas.¹⁴ Some of the less gentle activities of these groups helped to create the name of "Bleeding Kansas" for the territory. Later, the legislature of several Southern states appropriated money to support the activities of such groups in Kansas.¹⁵

The other set was made up of Abolitionist groups, sometimes referred to as "Freestaters" or "Free-Soilers." The first of these was the New England Emigrant Aid Company, which was incorporated by the General Assembly of Massachusetts on February 21, 1855. The ostensible purpose of this and other similar organizations was to "assist emigrants to settle in the West,"¹⁶ but it was no secret to anyone that the assistance was to go to a particular kind of settler, namely, one who would work and vote to make Kansas a free territory and ultimately a free state. These organizations were well financed and were also supported by several New England and North Central state legislatures.¹⁷

Several of the activities of these two sets of groups have a crucial bearing on increasing societal scale. First, they stimulated the creation and distribution of newspapers. By February of 1855, less than a year after settlers began to arrive in Kansas, there were three "Free-Soil" newspapers in Kansas.¹⁸ There were also a number of pro-slavery newspapers with such names as "The Squatter Sovereign." While these newspapers were in some cases little more than propaganda media, they nevertheless served the function of knitting together people of the same persuasion and they were the precursors of more bona fide news organs.

Second, these groups sought affiliation with national political parties. When the Kansas Republican party was organized in May of 1859, part of its platform read: "...we believe the time has come for the people of Kansas to take a position and affiliate with a party national in its organization and objects..."¹⁹

Third, these groups sought to gain political control of the Territory by setting up legislatures and promulgating constitutions. These efforts had several important results. One was the involvement of the Federal government in state affairs since a territorial constitution, to be valid, required the approval of the U.S. Congress. Further, the activities of these contending groups undoubtedly hastened the formation of a governmental

body for the Territory and the eventual admission of Kansas into the Union. And it is significant for our subject that the various constitutions offered by both groups contained sections providing for a statewide system of free schools.

B. In addition to the activities of these two groups which had such a large bearing on the political development of Kansas, four other enterprises must be mentioned.

The first is the Union Army. As of May, 1864, Kansas volunteers exceeded by some 4,500 the draft quota. All told, nearly 22,000 Kansas men served in the Union Army.²⁰ The involvement of this many men with this arm of the Federal government undoubtedly had a profound effect upon the social organization of the communities which they left and to which some of them returned.

Second, the railroad companies loom large in the changing organization of the state. During the 1860's and the early 1870's, seven railroads were built in Kansas, two of which crossed the state from east to west. By 1885, there were four thousand miles of railroad in the state. Figuring prominently in this development were:

1. groups formed expressly to bring railroads to and across Kansas, such as the "railroad conventions."
2. various towns, communities, and counties which voted grants of money to aid in the construction of railroads.
3. the U.S. Congress which granted ten million acres of land for the building of railroads.
4. the railroad building companies, who not only used the land for the construction of roadbeds and for right-of-ways, but who also sold their grants to settlers. These companies advertised widely in the eastern states as well as in Europe and it was due to this advertising that colonies of Bohemians, Russians, Germans, Swedes and Mennonites came to Kansas in the 1870's to buy railroad lands in Central and Western Kansas.²¹

The third group bears directly on our subject. The State Teachers' Association has been an active and forceful entity in educational affairs from the time of its formation in 1863 down to the present. It is significant that early State Superintendents of Public Instruction were all leaders in the association in its early years and used it as a forum for popularizing their programs. By 1906 the association had 1500 members and maintained five "departments" and seven "round tables" for specialized interests. In addition to the State Association, there were nine district associations and associations in every county,²² a fact which eminently qualifies the group as an "expansive organization."

Finally, the state government was an emergent enterprise. An analysis of this group would include attention to the voters, the political parties which

helped in large measure to determine the direction of voting, and the various branches of the state government as such, especially the legislature.

No attempt is made at this time to relate the activities of all of these enterprises to one another. The point being made is that groups were emerging, that they were interdependent and increasingly so, and that there was obviously a movement in the direction of centralization of control with an attendant diversification of roles and a dispersing of membership.

III. What new role schemes were conceived?

It is not necessary for the present purpose to describe all the role schemes which evolved in connection with the enterprises just mentioned. One comparative example will illustrate the principle by pointing up one of the rather dramatic changes in what might be called the "educating of children" group. This example will illustrate changes in: (1) assumptions concerning desirable attributes of relevant participants (2) specified indices serving to locate these qualifications and (3) selective avenues of access determining these acquisitions.²³

In the pioneer school the care of the school building was the concern of the teachers and the older students. No separate custodial role skill was specified.

Compare this with the current recommendation of Prof. J.W. Truax of Kansas State Teachers' College of Emporia relative to the care of buildings in unified school districts:

'The employment of a Director of the Physical Plant is highly recommended, Truax states. He should have a background of Industrial Arts along with some teaching experience. It is very helpful for him to have had some course in business.

.....

The director should visit each building not less than once a week and give close supervision to all phases of the care of the physical plant. He should be able to show the custodians how to do their work, but he should not do it for them. Author's note: an excellent example of the way in which integration produces differentiation. He should do all of the maintenance and custodial buying and keep records of the same.²⁴

Professor Truax goes on to state that the State Teachers' College has designed courses which would prepare a person to hold the position which he has described. This is an example of the way in which the educational system is affected by the increasing differentiation of roles which accompanies the increasing scale of society.

IV. What constraints determined the differential participation in these evolving role schemes?

This question is designed to specify what coercive actions from expansive enterprises become organizational concerns of which existing groups and to bring out what restructuring takes place in these groups in the framework of interdependence between them and the enterprises. Group operations in this sense may be compared with sanctions at the interpersonal level. The question further asks how the existing structures rate relative to eligibility for participation in the evolving enterprises, and what channels of access are available to them for the acquisition of various attributes.²⁵

In the context of the present study, the question is, what group actions forced the transition of public education from community-controlled action to state-controlled action. Again, an example must suffice to show the direction which research could fruitfully take.

Because of the size of the state of Kansas and its relative isolation from markets for its products, the transportation media, at first railroads and later the automotive and aviation industries, have been very important to the development of the state. Research could be directed to the need for people with mechanical and engineering skills, the need for people capable of handling the commercial aspects of these enterprises, such as sales and repair, and the need for people with legal and clerical skills to handle the increasingly complicated relationships between governmental bodies and corporations and between variously skilled categories of individuals brought about by the transportation industry. It is obvious that the need for these skills would effect the type of education offered and in turn the kinds of teachers and facilities required. The fitting of teachers for the transmission of these skills inevitably brings higher education into the picture and as soon as teachers are submitted to long-term training in centers far removed from their local communities, the probability of teachers organizing into a group with state-wide rather than local commitments is created. As has already been stated, this is precisely what has happened in Kansas. The State Teachers' Association has been very influential in moving the state legislature in the direction of uniformity in teaching standards, and the facilities for education and in the equalization of the financial load for education across the state.

In summary, the actions of the transportation enterprises became a constraining factor on the educational enterprise. This in turn had the effect of producing a dispersed membership group (the teachers association), the actions of which became a constraint on the legislature and other governmental agencies. The developments related to this sector of enterprise are by no means the only occurring ones. They do throw into focus the changing character of role structures and population distributions in the educational system in relation with the demands of evolving enterprises in the larger society.

CONCLUSION

A crucial requirement for the understanding of social change is to keep in focus the interactive framework of social groups. Organized group operations and their internal structure must be seen, not as isolated events and self-sufficient units, but as factors of constraint bearing upon other such groups. If this is done, we observe social change as a process of organization in concrete instance in the direction of widening structures of interdependence among groups and their participant memberships. Interdependence is here the crucial structural concept.

FOOTNOTES

*I am indebted to the teaching of Professor Leo F. Van Hoey of the University of Kansas for the conceptual framework presented in this paper.

1. For a seminal discussion of this crucial sociological issue see Don Martindale, Institutions, Organizations and Mass Society, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1966), Ch. 6.
2. This concept, first used fully by Godfrey and Monica Williams in The Analysis of Social Change, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1945), was applied by Eshref Shevky and Marilyn Williams in The Social Areas of Los Angeles, (University of California Press: 1949). The theory contained in the concept is further elaborated by Eshref Shevky and Wendell Bell in Social Area Analysis, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), Scott A. Greer in The Emerging City, Myth and Reality, (New York: The Free Press, 1962), and Leo F. Van Hoey in "Emergent Urbanization: Implications of the Theory of Social Scale Verified in Niger, West Africa," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 1966).
3. Scott A. Greer, Social Organization, (New York: Random House, 1955). p. 18.
4. Definitions of role and society from Leo F. Van Hoey, op. cit., p. 4.
5. The following points are taken from Greer, The Emerging City, pp. 49-50.
6. Ibid., p. 27.
7. Van Hoey, op. cit., p. 2.
8. Charts taken from John L. Eberhardt, Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, (Lawrence, Kansas: Governmental Research Center, University of Kansas, 1955).
9. Van Hoey, op. cit., p. 5.

10. Margaret Whittemore, Historic Kansas, A Centenary Sketchbook, (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1954), p. 137.
11. Loc. cit.
12. Elise Dubach Iseley, as told to Bliss Iseley, Sunbonnet Days, (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1935), p. 32.
13. Cited by Daniel W. Wilder, The Annals of Kansas, (Topeka, Kansas: Geo. W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1875), p. 32.
14. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
15. Ibid., p. 83.
16. Ibid., p. 33.
17. A sociological analysis of these societies would be most informative in revealing the connections among northern politics, industrial interests, labor groups and abolitionist groups.
18. Ibid., p. 43.
19. Ibid., p. 202.
20. Ibid., p. 423.
21. Bliss Iseley and W. M. Richards, Four Centuries in Kansas, (Wichita, Kansas: The McCormick Mathers Co., 1936), pp. 203-6.
22. See John L. Eberhardt, op. cit., pp. 21-2.
23. Van Hoey, op. cit., p. 6.
24. "Care of Buildings in Unified Districts Outlined by Emporia State Professor," Kansas Schools, 22, 4-5, (December-January, 1965-66), p. 4.
25. Van Hoey, op. cit., p. 7.