

## CHAPTER 7

### 7. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has dealt primarily with the crisis and the future of the modern school. For this purpose, the roots of the alleged problems or crisis of the school were firstly viewed within a brief historical context (chapter 2). The succeeding three chapters have traced the main or general crisis line of the school in several contexts, namely, in the modern/contemporary North American regional context (chapter 3), in the left liberal context (chapter 4), and in the left radical context (chapter 5). Finally, the alleged problem or crisis of the school was viewed from a Scriptural perspective (chapter 6). Now, in this final chapter, the general conclusion of the study as well as some other findings and some recommendations on the findings of this study, will be presented.

#### 7.2 BRIEF RE-STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

As has been stated in paragraph 1.2, it is today a platitude or a reality of educational thought to say that the school as an institution is in deep trouble or in crisis. The term "crisis" is frequently used in the titles of books and academic articles and speeches by leading public figures on issues in education and schooling. In most Western societies the later 1970's have been a period of increasing dissatisfaction with educational institutions in general and with the school as an institution in particular.

Several topical problems of the school underlined the necessity for undertaking this study. Firstly, what the critics accuse the school of varies widely. It was, therefore, necessary in this study to outline

some fundamental problems of the school. Secondly, the modern school remains in deep trouble in spite of the fact that the calls to improve the school situation have been met by many positive suggestions. Therefore, this study needed to explore the reasons why criticism of the school has failed to solve the alleged problems of the school. Thirdly, there appeared on the scene in the past decade or so some extremely radical critics of the school whereas the school and its particular role fulfilling in society have only been (uncritically) accepted in Christian-reformational circles. The so-called "deschooling" philosophy therefore had to be viewed from a Scriptural perspective. Lastly, an investigation into the reasons why schools today should pass through such a bombardment of criticism had to be made from a Scriptural perspective.

### 7.3 GENERAL CONCLUSION

Based on the research of this study, the following conclusions which pertain to the definite aims for the study can be drawn:

- \* The modern school is certainly beset by an abundance of problems and limitations. For this reason it is currently being attacked both by conservative critics and by radical critics.
- \* Although what the critics accuse the school of varies widely, the fundamental problems of the school centre mainly around issues of ontology, anthropology, epistemology, societal relationships, the ethical, and the religious ground motif.
- \* Most critics of the school, especially the left liberal and the left radical critics, base their criticism of the school upon a radically humanistic view of man.
- \* The most crucial reason why the humanistic critics have failed to solve the alleged problems or crisis of the school is that they have seized the problems of the school and tried to solve them within the confines of a humanistic dualistic religious ground motif which is

totally a-Scriptural/anti-Scriptural.

- \* Although the de-schooling philosophy of the left radical critics clearly reveals the rigidities, weaknesses and various shortcomings of the existing school system, it can never become an actual social reality since it overlooks the God-given ontic law for the school; in addition, the de-schooling philosophy is, to a large extent, a romantic and utopian theory which is incompatible with the socio-economic realities of contemporary society.
- \* The school as a social institution, therefore a form of positivization of the ontic law for the school, should continually be reformed according to God's will (law) for the school. Much talk about the crisis and death of the school may and should be the signal to reform the school.
- \* The school as a social institution will function properly in future on condition that it is guided and determined by the sound Scriptural religious ground motif of creation, fall into sin and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

#### 7.4 SOME OTHER FINDINGS

The following ancillary findings were not anticipated:

- \* Modern humanistic critics (left liberals and left radicals) share, to a large extent, Rousseauan notions that society corrupts the innate goodness of man, and the traditional education and schooling destroy rather than build upon the natural curiosity and interests of the learner.
- \* The educational ideas of the left liberal school critics reflect ideas advanced even earlier, especially by the proponents of progressive education during the first half of this century. The left liberals' emphasis on addressing the interests and needs of the child, on eliminating coercion and competition, on making the curriculum more

flexible, and on using the school as a tool of progressive social reform all echo themes already introduced by the progressives decades earlier.

- \* Although the deschooling philosophy is a highly romantic, optimistic and utopian theory, it is nevertheless valuable inasmuch as it may serve as a theoretical catalyst which might stimulate thought and action relating to educational amelioration.
- \* To the left radical critics, the crises in education and schooling are seen in humanistic rather than pedagogical terms. They are questioning the root structures of present-day institutions and are demanding that such institutions be completely disestablished in favour of more humane, free, and open alternatives. Their criticism of society is therefore presented in the form of school criticism.
- \* The basis for the criticism of both the left liberal and the left radical critics is their rejection of the notion of that society to which schools direct the socialization process of the child. The left radical critics are, especially, more concerned with an analysis of the modern society of which the school is supportive than the left liberal critics.

#### 7.5 SOME PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

Although modern humanistic critics do not base their criticisms of the school on a sound Scriptural religious ground motif, they may make some modest impact on the practice of education and schooling. In this light, and based upon the findings in the study, the following practical proposals (to mention only a few) seem pertinent.

- \* Educators, administrators, teachers, parents, and anyone else who is involved in the field of educational teaching in the school should seriously consider the various problems which presently exist within the school and should continually be willing to reform the school situation according to God's will (law) for the school.

- \* The child should never be deified or taken as the absolute norm in the classroom. A more positive attitude toward children should, however, be nourished both in the classroom and in teachers' training programmes.
  
- \* The school should refrain from an overemphasis on grades and other forms of external coercion. In addition, a spirit of co-operation rather than excessive competition should be promoted in the various teaching-learning situations in the school.
  
- \* Since the child in the school is a human being, intimate personal contact between the teacher and the child is of vital importance for the ideal of educational teaching of the child. Great care should, therefore, be taken in introducing computer-assisted-instruction into the classroom. Although programmed learning through the use of teaching machines tied into computers is seen by many as the required revolution in teaching and learning, it should always be kept in mind that interaction with a computer is not equal to interaction with a human being. One should not confuse individualization of instruction with personalization. Instruction can be personalized only by a person. The introduction of computer-assisted instruction should not be viewed as the panacea for what is wrong with schools and education.
  
- \* Along with the acknowledgement of the authority of the teacher in the didactical field, the concept of mutual respect between teachers and students should also be emphasized, both in the classroom and in teachers' training programmes. Open communication between teachers and students should be continually promoted at all levels of education and schooling.
  
- \* The Scriptural view of freedom and discipline should be practised in the school. Arbitrary school rules and rigid authoritarian discipline for their own sake should be gradually replaced by emphasis on self-discipline, based on the encouragement of mutual respect for the rights of other children.

- \* Although the limits to what the school (as a formal teaching agency) can undertake in terms of performing its primary function of teaching, there should be close co-operation and inter-relationship between informal, non-formal and formal provision for education of the child. Teaching (and educational) programmes, built around agencies and functions in the community, for instance libraries, museums, institutional local churches, factories (learning networks in Illich's terminology), should be carefully developed in conjunction with the school curriculum in an effort to enhance the experience of students and linking the educational system with the actual lives of students.
- \* Since the school and the family must stand on the same line concerning the spirit and direction of education, parents should have a voice (authority) in the determination of the spirit and direction of the school. For this purpose, the role and function of statutory bodies, like parental committees or school committees, should be intensified.

#### 7.6 FURTHER AVENUES OF RESEARCH

This research has opened up various other avenues of research. Only a few are mentioned.

- \* The scope of the present study was not large enough to allow for penetrating research into the educational theory of each of the left liberal and left radical school critics. This research has now opened up some lines for research into their philosophy of education. A study of the theory of education and learning of A.S. Neill, Paul Goodman, or Ivan Illich, for instance, could be undertaken.
- \* Penetrating research on the relationship between the philosophy of education of Homer Lane, the founder of "The Little Commonwealth", and the philosophy of education of A.S. Neill, the founder of "Summerhill School" has to be performed since A.S. Neill drew his ideas of freedom partly from Homer Lane and tried to apply some of these methods to the children at his Summerhill School. Likewise, research on the relationship between the philosophy of education

of John Dewey and the philosophy of education of Paul Goodman should be undertaken since Goodman, throughout most of his writings, refers to Deweyan theory and progressive education and lists the latter as one of the great "missed revolutions".

- \* The criticism and alternative ideas to the present school system by other left radical school critics (who have been treated in this study) could be compared with those of Ivan Illich. This kind of comparative study can clarify Illich's position in the left radical camp.
- \* Illich's deschooling philosophy could be studied and compared with the theology of demythologizing of Bultman in order to trace the religious and theological background of Illich's deschooling philosophy.
- \* In the present research only a brief assessment of the future of the school could be given on the basis of the evaluation of the school criticism. Therefore, a much more penetrating futurological study of the modern school has to be undertaken.

#### 7.7 POSSIBLE SHORTCOMING OF THE STUDY

One possible shortcoming of the study should be acknowledged. Although the title of this research project is The modern school: its crisis and its future, nearly all the attention was paid to the (alleged) problems or crisis of the modern school, and not nearly so much attention was paid to its future. This was, however, done intentionally because the study was not envisaged as a futurological study of the modern school. The intention was rather to briefly assess the future of the modern school by means of tracing the general crisis line of the modern school and by evaluating the latter from a Scriptural perspective.

## 7.8 CONCLUSION

In this, the final chapter of the study, an effort was made to draw some general conclusions from the discussions of the previous chapters. Other findings and several practical proposals, as well as a few further avenues of research have also been presented.

The whole study may be concluded with the following single sentence:

A school should be a full-fledged Christian school where all of its principles, purposes, facets, and processes are illuminated and governed by the illuminating and redeeming light of the Bible, the infallible Word of God, in order to meet any crisis, and in order to function properly in the days yet to come.