

in group meetings, striving for consensus rather than majority opinion, and allowing ample time for discussion. In some instances, time was not adequate for discussion and expression of ideas or problems. In these instances, agreement was not reached and decisions had to be reconsidered at a future date or anticipated outcomes of action would not materialize.

Certain problems have arisen in the process of the group work. A few of these are reported here. As the curriculum work has extended to cover an increasing number of areas, some difficulties in communication and maintenance of group consensus have developed. New faculty members have experienced some difficulties in becoming oriented to curriculum work. Fac-

ulty members who are spending a great many hours in various aspects of curriculum work are at times experiencing pressure and frustration due to other demands of their jobs.

One important means of motivation for the faculty has been four major work conferences that have been held with well-known consultants from the fields of nursing and education.

The cooperative curriculum research project in basic nursing education described in this report pinpoints the contributions that curriculum workers can make to other professional schools in a university. Conversely, other professions have contributions to bring to the curriculum worker. Does ASCD have other clienteles on university campuses whom it might serve?

Cooperative Self-Evaluation Can Aid Curriculum Development

ARTHUR J. LEWIS

Beginning with cooperative self-evaluation, school faculties in one city are finding ways to clarify their objectives and to improve their services to children.

TEACHERS generally are eager to improve the quality of instruction in their classrooms (a) when they see the need for such improvement, (b) when they are given freedom to try their own ideas and (c) when they are given the assistance they want. The study described below is an attempt to provide these conditions, particularly the first, because programs of instructional improvement often fail when such conditions are lacking.

The Elementary School Planning Committee of the Minneapolis Public Schools, composed of one elected representative from each elementary school, has been conducting a study of the school day. The first part of this study determined the amount of time devoted to various phases of the school curriculum. At the conclusion of this quantitative analysis the planning committee recommended a qualitative study to determine the effectiveness of

the activities included in the school program.

Various approaches can be used in attempting to determine the quality of a school program. An outside expert or team of experts can be called in to evaluate the program. Consultants and other individuals from the central office staff can also make such a survey. Or the faculty within a given school can study the quality of the educational program within its school.

In this instance, the planning committee members voted to try this last method. They then invited a few local faculties to analyze the quality of the educational programs within their own particular schools as a basis for determining the value of this approach to curriculum improvement. Later, if the plan proved successful, the procedure could be extended to the other schools in the system.

Progress Through Self-Evaluation

The idea of having a faculty evaluate its own program of education is not new. Several state, city and regional programs of this type have been and are now being conducted. Minneapolis selected this as an experimental approach because (a) similar approaches have had notable success, and (b) this approach is consistent with what we believe to be important in any curriculum improvement program:

1. *A curriculum improvement program should take teachers where they are and help them to grow.* This will be accomplished to some degree by letting teachers themselves evaluate their own program.

2. *Teachers should not feel that they are being inspected and criticized.* This is too often the case when an outside group conducts the survey instead of having the faculty evaluate its own program.

3. *Cooperative planning yields better results.* Many opportunities for such planning will be evident when a faculty carries on its own study.

4. *Teachers profit from the experience of formulating a clear definition of objectives.* The very process of studying the quality of the program makes this step necessary.

Four Minneapolis schools—Douglas, Dowling, Kenwood and Minnehaha—volunteered to take part in the experiment, and the purpose of the study was discussed with each faculty. It was suggested that each faculty restrict itself to some specific phase of the school program instead of attempting to analyze the entire program. This was done because of the difficulty of conducting any more than a superficial study when an effort is made to analyze the entire program.

Although each staff was to work out its own approach to the study, the following steps were suggested:

1. Develop a statement of the objectives of education for your school. This step was facilitated because the Minneapolis Public Schools, through the work of the entire teaching staff and lay citizens, have just developed a *Guide to Achieving the Objectives of Education*.

Arthur J. Lewis is assistant superintendent in charge of elementary education, Public Schools, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

2. State these objectives in terms of the behavior of children.

3. Find or create situations in which children's behavior, as related to the objectives, may be studied.

4. Observe the behavior of children in order to obtain evidence regarding the achievement of the objectives.

5. Analyze results and make necessary changes in the program.

After a discussion of the over-all plan of study, each faculty selected a committee to steer the development of the program within the local school and selected the specific objective which it wished to study. It is interesting to note the variety of choices. One faculty chose to evaluate its program in terms of the mental health of the children in the school. Another chose to evaluate its program of mathematics, particularly the readiness program. Still another faculty decided to evaluate its program in terms of the attitudes of children. A fourth faculty, in a school for physically handicapped children, decided to study its program to see the extent to which it met the needs of the child with cerebral palsy.

A Program for the Handicapped

As an illustration of the method being followed, a brief description of this latter project may be of interest. This study was initiated at Dowling School, which is especially for physically handicapped children.

The faculty first examined and accepted the objectives of education as stated in the Minneapolis publication, *Guide to Achieving the Objectives of Education*. The faculty members next

compiled a list of problems which they faced in working with cerebral palsied children. The majority of the problems submitted showed concern for perceptual and conceptual disturbances which interfered with the ability of these brain-injured children to acquire skills. There also were problems as to what should be expected from these children in music, in art and in the various other subject areas. The faculty then decided that it needed more information about these children. Only so could the faculty see how well the school was meeting the children's needs. Accordingly, a careful study was made of each child, and all pertinent data were listed: a record of his handicaps, and the treatment he was receiving; his I.Q.; his special problems; and the observations of his teacher. After studying the record of a child one teacher remarked, "When I see how much he is out of the room for treatment, and the multiplicity of his handicaps, I realize that I am expecting too much of him." There were several other indications that teachers gained additional insight simply by studying the children.

Faculty members soon realized, however, that they needed a better understanding of cerebral palsy: its effect on the child's behavior; the problems which it creates. Accordingly, the school's orthopedic consultant discussed with the faculty the physical and neurological aspects of cerebral palsy. He became so interested in the study that what started out to be one meeting developed into three. A research study to determine the perceptual patterns of the children was also developed by the doctor and the faculty.

The need for a different type of music instruction for these children soon became apparent. A music consultant was therefore invited out, after she herself had first been helped to understand the problems these children face.

Other things are happening, too. Teachers are trying out new arrangements in their classrooms and in their daily programs. Parents are being brought into the study, in order that the school and the home may work together. One of the staff members has developed a bulletin for parents suggesting the types of clothes that are suitable for cerebral palsied children, and a bulletin on aids for feeding is being compiled. To anyone visiting the school it is apparent that the faculty is making noticeable progress.

Although the approach used by the other schools is different, definite progress is being made in each instance.

Plans have been made to determine the effectiveness of this experimental approach to curriculum improvement. As a first step, representatives of each of the four faculties met in a planning session and developed the following statement of the desirable outcome of such an approach:

1. Such local studies should provide a better program of education for children.

2. It should help teachers in their understanding of children, in their understanding of the curriculum and the need for curriculum change.

3. It should improve working relationships within the staff.

To determine the extent to which

the program for children is being improved, the following technique is being used: pupils in selected classrooms are keeping diaries of activities in the classroom. These diaries have been analyzed by a procedure developed by Miss Margaret Lindsey. The analysis reveals among other things the types of experiences provided in the classroom, the balance of such activities, the opportunities for children to make choices, and the extent to which co-operative planning is practiced. The same pupils will be asked to keep diaries at the end of the year. It is hoped that an analysis of these diaries will provide a basis for evaluating changes in the educational program.

Several techniques are being used to study changes in teachers. At the beginning of the study teachers completed a questionnaire indicating their attitudes toward their colleagues, toward the curriculum, and toward curriculum change. They also filled out the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory, an inventory which indicates teachers' feelings about children. The same questionnaires will be used at the completion of the study. Each teacher is identified on all questionnaires by a number known only to the teacher himself. This makes it possible to analyze changes revealed by the questionnaires without personal reference. Teachers will also be interviewed at the conclusion of the study.

It is hoped that through such techniques we may judge the effectiveness of having faculty members analyze their own program of education as a means of curriculum improvement.

Copyright © 1954 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.