

DOCTORAL PROGRAMS FOR CURRICULUM PRACTITIONERS: BEFORE AND SINCE 1969

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Results of this study raise a number of questions for those involved in planning and teaching in doctoral programs designed to prepare curriculum practitioners. For example: What about specific emphases in content? What about practical internships?

IN RECENT years there has been a growing interest in the nature of doctoral programs designed to prepare curriculum specialists to work in the schools. This concern is reflected in the support of a working group on "Certification of Curriculum Workers" by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. One task of the ASCD group has been to identify the competencies curriculum workers should pursue during their graduate education.

The professional literature also reveals considerable interest among educators in identifying the experiences, training, and competencies which ought to be included in the graduate preparation of curriculum specialists. Eisele and Wootton,¹ for example,

¹James E. Eisele and Lutian R. Wootton. "Educating the Curriculum Specialist." *Educational Leadership* 29 (1): 50-55; October 1971.

have identified four functions of the curriculum specialist and listed the skills necessary to perform these functions effectively. Other authors, such as Hamm and Walker,² have made recommendations concerning the revision of university preparation programs for curriculum specialists. A review of the literature since 1965 discloses a growing number of articles similar to those noted here.

In addition, a limited number of studies have been conducted to determine the nature of doctoral programs for curriculum specialists and what experts believe should be stressed in such programs. Two of these studies seem particularly noteworthy. The first, conducted by Woods,³ compared the

²Russell L. Hamm and William L. Walker. "Preparation of Curriculum Workers." *Educational Leadership* 28 (1): 68-71; October 1970.

³Bob G. Woods. "The Preparation of Curriculum Specialists: An Analysis of the Opinions of Supervisors and Professors." *The Journal of Teacher Education* 22: 448-54; Winter 1971.

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opinions of curriculum practitioners with those of curriculum professors concerning the importance of including certain areas of study in the graduate programs of curriculum specialists. The second, by Sturges,⁴ was conducted to determine the nature of doctoral programs for curriculum directors in institutions accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Purpose

While there were data concerning the doctoral programs at NCATE colleges and universities and the opinions of practitioners and curriculum professors, there was a paucity of research about doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners working in the public schools. The purpose of the study reported here was to determine the nature of doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners since 1969 and to compare the emphasis given in those programs with programs completed prior to 1969.

More specifically, this study was designed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What has been the nature of doctoral programs completed since 1969 by curriculum practitioners?
2. Are there differences in the emphasis given to the study of various professional education and behavioral science areas in doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners prior to and since 1969?
3. What professional education and behavioral science areas did curriculum practitioners believe had been most helpful since completing their doctorate and entering the present job?
4. What areas of study did curriculum practitioners believe should be included in their doctoral program in addition to those areas examined directly by the questionnaire employed?

⁴ A. W. Sturges. "Doctoral Programs for Curriculum Directors." Unpublished monograph, 1974.

Procedures

In April 1975, a questionnaire was mailed to 552 superintendents in school districts with at least one North Central Association (NCA) accredited high school that enrolled at least 1,200 students in grades ten through twelve or 1,500 students in grades nine through twelve. This list of superintendents was obtained from the official roster of the 1974 NCA accredited high schools.⁵

These superintendents were asked to forward the questionnaire to a member of their staff who had earned a doctoral degree and held a position focusing on curriculum and instructional improvement. A total of 228 curriculum specialists completed useable questionnaires, of which 138 received their doctorates prior to 1969 and 90 since 1969. An additional 156 returned questionnaires were marked to indicate that the district did not have a curriculum specialist with an earned doctorate. Most of the districts comprising the 30 percent that did not return the instrument also probably did not have a curriculum specialist with an earned doctorate.

The completed questionnaires provided data concerning teaching and administrative experiences of curriculum practitioners prior to completing their doctorate and the emphasis given to the study of specific areas of professional education and behavioral sciences in the doctoral programs completed by the respondents.

With two exceptions, this instrument was identical to the one used in Woods' 1969 study reported earlier. The first difference was that the respondents in this study were asked to indicate whether the areas of study were given "heavy," "moderate," "limited," or "no" emphasis in their doctoral program; the Woods study asked respondents to report the degree to which these same areas of study should be stressed in doctoral programs for curriculum specialists. The other difference was that the questionnaire used in the study

⁵ Maurice M. McGlasson. "Proceedings of the Commission on Schools." *The North Central Association Quarterly* 49: 120-217; Summer 1974.

reported here asked two additional open-ended questions which dealt with (a) the areas of study which had been most helpful to the curriculum specialists since entering their present positions and (b) the areas of study the curriculum practitioners believed should have been part of their doctoral program.

Analysis of Data

Doctoral Programs Since 1969

Table 1 presents the proportion of respondents completing their doctorates since 1969 who indicated "heavy," "moderate," "limited," or "no" emphasis was given in their graduate program to the study of 33 areas of professional education. The areas of professional study which were emphasized (heavy and moderate ratings) in most programs were the supervision of instruction, organization and administration of public schools, and processes of curriculum development and improvement; all three are crucial for curriculum specialists working in the public schools. In addition, over one-half of the curriculum practitioners reported that their graduate programs placed "heavy" or "moderate" emphasis on the study of child and/or adolescent psychology, educational issues and trends, learning theory, educational measurement and evaluation, curriculum theory, and curricular trends—present and future. The areas most often omitted from programs completed since 1969 were the study of research pertaining to curriculum and instruction, educational problems of rural disadvantaged youth and urban disadvantaged youth, interaction analysis techniques, programmed instruction, and advanced study of instructional methods in two or more disciplines. Over 45 percent of the respondents reported these areas were not part of their graduate training.

Eighty-three percent of the curriculum practitioners who had completed their graduate work since 1969 reported they were required to take work in the behavioral sciences. The data displayed in Table 2 show the degree to which these respondents indicated

18 areas of behavioral science study were emphasized in their doctoral programs. At least one-third of all respondents who received their degrees since 1969 indicated heavy or moderate emphasis was given to the study of leadership behavior, social psychology, and the psychology of personal adjustment; approximately one-fourth stated that the study of public opinion and communication, group dynamics and role theory, and contemporary social problems were also given this level of emphasis. On the other hand, 70 percent or more of the graduate programs completed since 1969 did not include the study of the American Negro, cultures of rural and/or urban disadvantaged groups, sensitivity training, racial and cultural relations, general anthropology, and contemporary economics.

Doctoral Programs Completed Prior To and Since 1969

A comparison of the responses by curriculum specialists completing their degrees prior to and since 1969 using tests of chi square revealed only three differences that were statistically significant. Those completing their degrees since 1969 were significantly more likely to have the study of test construction (.05 level) stressed in their graduate program and significantly less likely to have the study of educational measurements and evaluation (.05 level) and the educational problems of urban disadvantaged youth (.05 level) stressed (Table 1). None of the behavioral science study areas were stressed significantly more or less in programs completed since 1969 (Table 2).

There were, however, several other differences in the professional education areas presented in Table 1 which suggest that programs completed from 1969 through 1975 placed more emphasis on the study of supervision of instruction, the process of curriculum development and improvement, curriculum theory, selection of visual materials, advanced study of general instructional methods in one discipline, and statistics. Less emphasis seemed to be given since 1969, than in doctoral programs completed prior to

Professional Areas	Prior to 1969				After 1969				Chi Square
	1*	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
1. Learning theory	20	50	26	4	23	42	32	4	1.1400
2. Child and/or adolescent psychology	18	43	36	4	19	49	28	4	1.1897
3. Educational measurement and evaluation	24	50	26	1	30	26	42	2	8.9439**
4. Test construction	1	17	63	20	9	14	49	28	9.3386**
5. History of education	4	25	59	12	4	23	61	12	0.0897
6. Comparative education	1	12	54	34	4	14	52	30	1.8569
7. Philosophy of education	17	35	41	7	11	46	44	0	6.1626
8. Sociology of education	10	26	44	20	12	16	54	18	2.8561
9. Education problems of urban disadvantaged youth	5	12	37	46	7	4	21	68	9.5833**
10. Education problems of rural disadvantaged youth	3	4	27	67	2	2	18	79	2.5745
11. Educational issues and trends	24	52	30	4	11	56	32	2	6.0062
12. Organization and administration of public schools	62	27	7	4	60	30	7	4	0.1097
13. Supervision of instruction	49	38	13	0	43	47	7	2	4.2945
14. Historical overview of curricular trends	2	35	53	11	7	28	51	14	3.8537
15. Processes of curriculum development and improvement	27	31	40	3	35	37	23	5	5.2812
16. Preparation of curriculum materials	8	27	45	20	11	30	40	20	0.5581
17. Curriculum theory	20	28	45	6	19	37	44	0	4.4487
18. Curricular trends—present and future	12	38	41	9	14	40	44	2	3.1687
19. Formulation of teaching objectives	7	21	45	27	2	18	51	30	2.7009
20. Advanced study of general instructional methods in one discipline	13	17	31	39	10	33	25	32	5.9600
21. Advanced study of instructional methods in two or more disciplines	6	17	29	48	11	16	28	46	1.0087
22. Theory of instruction	7	36	45	12	12	33	46	9	1.5241
23. Techniques of analyzing teaching behavior	10	28	42	20	5	16	47	32	5.6557
24. Interaction analysis techniques	5	19	35	41	5	9	25	61	7.1919
25. Selection and utilization of instructional materials and media	7	17	42	35	7	18	61	14	8.8417
26. Preparation of visual materials	4	9	39	49	2	12	49	37	2.9708
27. Programmed instruction	5	7	43	45	2	4	46	49	2.1998
28. Elementary educational statistics	15	27	49	9	11	28	61	0	6.7813
29. Advanced educational statistics	17	22	41	20	11	35	30	25	4.9433
30. Design of research studies in curriculum and instruction	16	28	49	7	12	33	49	5	0.8553
31. Planning and conducting school surveys	8	24	39	29	11	19	40	30	0.6639
32. Methods of evaluating instructional programs	14	22	47	17	9	23	56	12	2.0539
33. Critique of research on curriculum and instruction	4	4	2	90	0	0	0	100	5.9325

* A rating of 1 indicated heavy emphasis; 2, moderate emphasis; 3, limited emphasis; and 4, no emphasis.

** Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table 1. Percent of Curriculum Practitioners Who Had Earned a Doctorate Prior to and Since 1969 Indicating Different Degrees of Emphasis Given in Their Graduate Program to Specific Areas of Professional Education

Areas of Behavior Sciences	Prior to 1969				After 1969				Chi Square
	1*	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
1. General anthropology	0	4	20	76	2	4	25	70	2.7034
2. Survey of contemporary economics	1	4	28	67	4	4	23	70	1.9603
3. Communication theory	5	20	36	38	5	16	37	42	0.5806
4. Nature of inquiry	4	15	31	50	5	12	42	40	2.3054
5. Sensitivity training	4	12	23	62	2	5	18	75	3.5507
6. Political organization of urban communities	4	16	30	50	2	12	26	60	1.5407
7. Psychology of personal adjustment	5	24	43	27	5	28	40	26	0.3601
8. Social psychology	7	25	43	26	9	26	47	18	1.4716
9. Social psychology methods	4	17	32	47	5	9	37	49	2.112
10. Group dynamics and role theory	14	20	34	33	12	14	39	35	1.060
11. Leadership behavior	28	21	30	20	14	23	46	18	6.070**
12. Cultures of urban disadvantaged groups	4	8	29	59	3	7	16	74	4.0280
13. Cultures of rural disadvantaged groups	1	2	20	77	2	4	14	81	1.627
14. Contemporary social problems	4	24	48	25	5	21	46	28	0.6032
15. Public opinion and communications	6	25	36	33	9	19	44	28	1.6782
16. Social organization	11	18	40	32	7	19	35	39	1.308
17. Racial and cultural relations	4	11	28	57	2	11	16	72	4.6665
18. The American Negro	3	6	18	74	2	2	16	81	2.0615

* A rating of 1 indicated heavy emphasis; 2, moderate emphasis; 3, limited emphasis; and 4, no emphasis.

** Statistically significant at 0.1083 level.

Table 2. Percent of Curriculum Practitioners Who Had Earned a Doctorate Prior to and Since 1969 Indicating Different Degrees of Emphasis Given in Their Graduate Program to Specific Areas of the Behavioral Sciences

that date, to educational issues and trends, specific techniques of analyzing teaching behaviors, and reviewing and critiquing research on curriculum and instruction.

Only three areas of study in the behavioral sciences showed any substantial change from pre-1969 responses to those of the 1969-and-after group. Although the evidence does not show a statistically significant difference, doctoral programs have placed less emphasis on the study of leadership behavior, cultures of urban disadvantaged groups, and racial cultural relations since 1969.

Areas of Study Considered Helpful

When the respondents were asked to identify the areas of the behavioral sciences and professional education that had been most helpful in their present position, the responses for those completing their degrees prior to and since 1969 were quite similar. The four areas of professional study mentioned most frequently by both groups were the processes of curriculum development and improvement, supervision of instruction, organization and administration of public schools, and learning theory. Over one-third of the curriculum specialists in both categories believed these areas had been helpful. All four of these study areas received heavy emphasis in the graduate programs completed both before and since 1969 (Table 1).

The behavioral science areas that were reported as being most helpful by both groups were, in rank order, leadership behavior, group dynamics and role theory, communications theory, and public opinion and communications. As noted earlier, all but communications theory were given heavy or moderate emphasis in the programs completed since 1969; prior to 1969 these areas were all emphasized in at least one-fourth of all the doctoral programs completed by the curriculum practitioners (Table 2).

Suggested Areas of Study for Future Doctoral Programs

Ninety-eight of the 225 curriculum practitioners who participated in this study indi-

cated additional study areas they believed should have been part of their doctoral programs. The wide variety of areas identified were categorized as follows:

Category	Number of Respondents		
	All	Prior to 1969	Since 1969
Administration	54	14	40
Behavioral Sciences	43	14	29
Curriculum Development	23	9	14
Evaluation	18	5	13
Internships	13	3	10
In-service	9	1	8
Research	9	3	6
Change Process	9	2	7
Federal Programs & Funding	7	1	6

The additional areas of study most frequently mentioned by those completing their degrees prior to and since 1969 were directly related to topics traditionally considered as part of educational administration, the behavioral sciences, and curriculum development. The areas of educational administration reported most often were, in rank order, public school finance and budgeting; systematic management techniques such as management by objectives; public and community relations; personnel and professional negotiations; and accountability and school law.

Under the category of behavioral science, the specific area which dominated the responses was the study of how to work effectively with small groups. Other areas of behavioral science study that were suggested two or more times were modern economics, the school as a social system, coping with a bureaucracy, behaviorism, humanism, and learning disabilities.

Areas of curriculum development which practitioners believed should have been part of their graduate study were related to specific methods of planning and managing curriculum development projects, designing and implementing models, systems theory and management, and procedures for involving the lay public in curriculum development.

In comparing the responses of those who completed their doctorate since 1969

with those completing their degree earlier, few differences were noted.

Conclusions and Implications

Based upon these findings, it appears that the following conclusions can be drawn about the doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners in school districts with at least one North Central Association accredited high school:

Doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners since 1969 place most emphasis on areas of study in professional education, especially on those areas related to curriculum development, supervision of instruction, and learning. The study of the behavioral science areas has received limited emphasis.

The study of disadvantaged youth, minority groups, and modern economics—all related to pressing issues in our society—has not been emphasized in doctoral programs designed for curriculum practitioners since 1969.

There is a trend for current doctoral programs designed for curriculum specialists since 1969 to place *more* emphasis on the study of test construction, instruction, supervision, curriculum development and theory, instructional methodology, and statistics, and *less* emphasis on the study of techniques of analyzing teaching behavior, critiquing research on curriculum and instruction, leadership behavior, and disadvantaged urban youth.

Since 1969 the internship is being used less as a learning experience in doctoral programs for curriculum specialists.

The areas of study most helpful to curriculum specialists in their present positions are those areas which received greatest emphasis in their graduate training.

Practitioners believe that doctoral programs designed to prepare curriculum specialists to work in the public schools should place more emphasis on the study of educational administration and the behavioral sciences.

The results of this study raise a number of questions for those involved in planning and teaching in doctoral programs designed to prepare curriculum practitioners. For example, if we believe the curriculum specialists in larger school districts, such as those represented in this study, need to understand and be able to deal with the major issues that face this country and the communities in which they work, is there not a need to place more emphasis in their graduate programs on the study of such areas as the culture and problems of black Americans, race relations and intercultural adjustment, disadvantaged youth in rural and urban settings, and modern economics? If we believe that students learn best when they are actively involved and have an opportunity to learn through actual experiences, should not an internship with a curriculum practitioner be part of more doctoral programs? If curriculum specialists believe that more emphasis should be placed on the study of educational administration in their preparation to serve as curriculum specialists in the public schools, should not more graduate programs emphasize the study of such areas as educational finance, public relations, management techniques, and school law?

These and other similar questions which emerge from the data reported here suggest that there are several areas of study that might be added to doctoral programs for curriculum practitioners, programs that already are very demanding, time consuming, and costly. Thus, any changes in these programs will probably demand that either existing courses be modified to include different content and goals or that some courses that are presently part of programs will need to be dropped and others added. The decisions concerning what changes need to be made in advanced graduate programs for preparing curriculum practitioners is vitally important to the improvement of elementary and secondary schools and need to be based on the best evidence available. Most practitioners and professors of curriculum and instruction will agree that more evidence is needed. □

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