

Areas of Emphasis in Doctoral Programs for Curriculum Practitioners Since 1969

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Curriculum practitioners and professors of curriculum have been, and continue to be, concerned about the nature of graduate programs designed to prepare curriculum personnel for work in public and private school districts. In 1969, research was conducted to identify the areas of study that should be included in the preparation of the curriculum practitioner.¹ The results of this study revealed very similar beliefs among curriculum professors and curriculum practitioners concerning the importance of including certain areas of professional education and the behavioral sciences in doctoral programs for the preparation of curriculum specialists.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the professional education and behavioral science areas of study rated as most important in 1969 by curriculum professors and curriculum practitioners were emphasized in doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners between 1969 and 1975. Answers to the following questions were sought:

- Have the doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners since 1969 emphasized those areas of professional education and the behavioral sciences identified as most important by curriculum professors and curriculum practitioners?

- Which areas of professional education and the behavioral sciences, if any, have received substantially less emphasis in doctoral programs for curriculum practitioners than recommended in 1969?

- Which areas of professional education and the behavioral sciences, if any, have received more emphasis in doctoral programs for curriculum practitioners than recommended in 1969?

- Have the prerequisite teaching and internship experiences recommended by curriculum professors and curriculum practitioners been reflected in the experiences completed by practitioners earning their doctorate since 1969?

Procedures

Two sources of data were used in this study. The first was the 1969 responses of curriculum practitioners and curriculum professors reported in a summary of Woods' study in 1971.² The second source was the 1975 responses obtained from curriculum practitioners earning their doctorates since 1969 employed in public school districts with one or more high schools accredited by the North Central Association (NCA).

The Sample. The 1969 sample of curriculum practitioners was randomly selected from among the members of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) with titles of assistant, associate, or deputy superintendent in charge of instruction and/or curriculum. The membership of an organization known as Professors of Curriculum was selected for the sample of college professors. Of the 60 practitioners, 52 provided usable data; of the 88 members of Professors of Curriculum, 52 provided usable data.

The 1975 sample of practitioners were identified by their superintendent. Superintendents in 555 districts with at least one high school accredited by North Central Association and enrolling a minimum average of approximately 400 students in each of three or four grade levels were mailed a questionnaire. The superintendents forwarded this questionnaire to a member of their staff who

¹ Bob G. Woods. "Preparation of Curriculum Specialists: An Analysis of the Opinions of Supervisors and Professors." *The Journal of Teacher Education* 22:448-54; Winter, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

had a doctorate and held a position focusing on curriculum and instructional improvement.

A total of 228 practitioners returned completed questionnaires; 90 of these respondents had earned their doctorate since 1969. In addition, 156 of the remaining 327 superintendents returned the questionnaire indicating that their district did not have a curriculum specialist with an earned doctorate.

The Instruments. The questionnaires used in

both studies provided data concerning the emphasis that should be/was given to the study of specific areas of professional education and behavioral sciences in the doctoral programs of curriculum practitioners. With the exception of one change, the questionnaires used in 1969 and 1975 were identical. While the 1975 respondents were asked to identify the professional education and behavioral science areas that were given "heavy," "moderate," "limited," or "no" emphasis,

Figure 1. Areas of Professional Education; Degree of Importance Curriculum Practitioners and Professors Indicated Should Be Given and Degree of Emphasis Given in Doctoral Programs Completed by Curriculum Practitioners Since 1969

Professional Education Areas	Professors Degree of Importance#			Practitioners Degree of Importance#			Practitioners Degree of Emphasis Given*		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
1. Learning theory	85.0	15.0	0.0	82.4	17.6	0.0	22.8	42.1	35.1
2. Child psychology and/or Adolescent psychology	70.0	25.0	5.0	72.6	23.5	3.9	19.3	49.1	32.6
3. Educational measurement and evaluation	45.0	42.5	12.5	46.2	44.2	9.6	29.8	26.3	43.9
4. Test construction	10.0	57.5	32.5	9.6	59.6	30.8	8.8	14.0	77.2
5. History of education	2.5	50.0	47.5	11.5	48.1	40.4	3.5	22.8	73.7
6. Comparative education	7.5	37.5	55.0	7.9	43.1	49.0	3.5	14.0	82.4
7. Philosophy of education	45.0	50.0	5.0	41.0	43.1	5.9	10.5	45.6	43.9
8. Sociology of education	42.5	47.5	10.0	49.0	39.2	11.8	12.3	15.8	71.9
9. Education problems of urban disadvantaged youth	37.5	45.0	17.5	41.2	45.1	23.7	7.0	3.5	89.5
10. Education problems of rural disadvantaged youth	22.5	52.5	22.5	24.0	54.0	22.0	1.8	1.8	96.4
11. Educational issues and trends	67.5	30.0	2.5	69.2	28.9	1.9	10.5	56.1	33.4
12. Organization and administration of public schools	27.5	47.5	25.0	30.8	50.0	19.2	59.6	29.8	10.5
13. Supervision of instruction	72.5	22.5	5.0	72.6	21.6	5.9	43.9	47.4	8.8
14. Historical overview of curricular trends	20.0	50.0	30.0	21.1	48.1	30.8	7.0	28.1	64.4
15. Processes of curriculum development and improvement	77.5	20.0	2.5	82.7	15.4	1.9	35.1	36.8	28.1
16. Preparation of curriculum materials	45.0	37.5	17.5	46.2	34.6	19.2	10.5	29.8	59.7
17. Curriculum theory	70.0	25.0	5.0	67.3	26.9	5.8	19.3	36.8	43.9
18. Curricular trends—present and future	50.0	47.5	2.5	53.9	44.2	1.9	14.0	40.4	45.7
19. Formulation of teaching objectives	62.5	27.5	7.5	62.7	31.4	5.9	1.8	17.5	80.7
20. Advanced study of general instructional methods in one discipline	27.5	40.0	30.0	20.8	43.8	35.4	10.5	33.3	56.2
21. Theory of instruction	62.5	25.0	12.5	57.7	30.8	11.5	12.3	33.3	54.3
22. Techniques of analyzing teaching behavior	52.5	42.5	5.0	51.0	45.1	3.9	5.3	15.8	79.0
23. Interaction analysis techniques	42.5	42.5	15.0	42.3	44.2	13.5	5.3	8.8	86.0
24. Selection and utilization of instructional materials and media	40.0	47.5	12.5	42.3	48.1	9.6	7.0	17.5	75.4
25. Preparation of visual materials	7.5	50.0	42.5	5.8	55.8	38.4	1.8	12.3	85.9
26. Programmed instruction	12.5	50.0	37.5	9.6	53.9	36.5	1.8	3.5	94.7
27. Elementary educational statistics	22.5	55.0	22.5	25.0	53.9	21.2	10.5	28.1	61.4
28. Advanced educational statistics	10.0	37.5	52.5	9.6	36.5	53.9	10.5	35.1	54.4
29. Design of research studies in curriculum & instruction	32.5	52.5	12.5	31.4	52.9	15.7	15.9	28.3	55.8
30. Planning and conducting school surveys	12.5	55.0	32.5	9.6	51.9	38.5	10.5	19.3	70.2
31. Methods of evaluating instructional programs	75.0	17.5	7.5	73.0	21.2	5.8	14.2	22.1	63.7
32. Critique of research of curriculum and instruction	37.5	45.0	15.0	41.2	47.0	11.8	8.8	28.8	61.4

Column number 1 indicates percent of 1969 curriculum professors and curriculum practitioners who indicated the area as being of "great importance"; number 2, "moderate importance"; and number 3, "relatively unimportant."

* Column number 1 indicates the percent of 1975 practitioners completing their doctorate since 1969 indicating "heavy emphasis" given to the area in the graduate program; number 2, "moderate emphasis"; and number 3, "limited or no emphasis."

sis in their doctoral programs, the 1969 respondents indicated whether these same areas of study were of "great importance," "moderate importance," or "unimportant."

Analysis of the Data

Since the questionnaire designed for the 1976 study included four options for each area of professional education and the behavioral sciences, and the 1969 study only included three options, the "limited" and "no" emphasis responses to the 1975 instrument were combined. With this collapsing of categories, comparisons were possible between the 1969 and 1975 responses. Analyses of the data focused on the "great importance-heavy emphasis" comparisons and the use of descriptive statistics (percentages).

Findings

Comparison of Most Important and Most Emphasized Areas of Study. To determine whether the areas of professional education that were reported as *most important* by curriculum professors and practitioners in 1969 were emphasized most in doctoral programs completed by practitioners since that time, the ten areas of study that recorded the largest percentages of respondents indicating "great importance" in 1969 and "heavy emphasis" since 1969 were identified (Figure 1). Of the ten indicated as most important in 1969 by professors and practitioners, nine of the areas were the same although the rankings varied slightly. These nine areas were learning theory, processes of curriculum development and improvement, methods of evaluating instructional programs, supervision of instruction, child and/or adolescent psychology, curriculum theory, educational issues and trends, formulation of teaching objectives, and theory of instruction. The one difference in the responses of curriculum professors and practitioners was that the professors reported techniques of analyzing teaching behavior in their top ten, while practitioners included curricular trends, present and future.

A comparison of these nine areas of professional education considered the most important in 1969 with those receiving greatest emphasis since 1969 showed that only six were among the top ten in recent doctoral programs: supervision of

instruction, processes of curriculum development and improvement, learning theory, child and/or adolescent psychology, curriculum theory, and methods of evaluating instructional programs. The area of professional education given heavy emphasis in the greatest proportion of doctoral programs completed since 1969 was organization and administration of public schools. While six out of every ten respondents reported this area of study was given heavy emphasis in their program, it was not among the ten most important noted in 1969 by curriculum professors or practitioners.

A similar comparison was made for the areas of behavioral sciences viewed as most important and most emphasized. In the 1969 study, the curriculum professors and the practitioners agreed on nine of the ten most important behavioral science areas that should be stressed in doctoral programs (Figure 2). The nine areas of study in the behavioral sciences collectively viewed as most important were leadership behavior, group dynamics and role theory, sensitivity training, nature of inquiry, communication theory, psychology of personal adjustment, social psychology, public opinion and communication, and contemporary social problems.

Eight of these nine areas were among the ten given heavy emphasis in the greatest proportion of doctoral programs completed since 1969. The only one of the nine not included among the ten most emphasized behavioral science areas was sensitivity training.

Areas Receiving Less and More Emphases Than Expected. While there was considerable agreement concerning the study areas rated as most important and emphasized most often, closer analysis reveals a large number of areas that had received less emphasis since 1969 than one would expect based upon the 1969 responses of curriculum professors and practitioners. The professional education areas of learning theory, child and/or adolescent psychology, educational issues and trends, processes of curriculum development and improvement, curriculum theory, formulation of teaching objectives, theory of instruction, methods of evaluating instructional programs, and techniques of analyzing teacher behavior all received considerably less emphasis than one would expect based upon the proportion of 1969 respondents

who indicated they were of great importance. Those behavioral science areas showing the greatest difference between what was viewed as most important in 1969 and what was given greatest emphasis in 1975 were leadership behavior, nature of inquiry, group dynamics and role theory, communication theory, sensitivity training, and psychology of personal adjustment (Figure 2). All of the behavioral science study areas received substantially less emphasis than the 1969 study indicated they should.

An examination of the data recorded in Figures 1 and 2 disclosed that only one area of study was given more emphasis than expected. That area was the study of the organization and administration of public schools, the area of professional education given heaviest emphasis in doctoral programs since 1969.

Pre-Degree Experiences. Administrative and teaching experiences required prior to earning and during pursuit of the doctorate were also examined. In 1969, the curriculum professors recommended that, prior to receiving their doctorate, curriculum practitioners should have completed a minimum of two years of teaching;

curriculum practitioners recommended three years of teaching experience. Ninety-eight percent of the 1975 curriculum practitioners reported that they had completed three or more years of teaching, and over 70 percent had at least three years of administrative experience by the time they had earned their degree.

Another experience which over half of the professors and practitioners indicated should be part of doctoral programs for curriculum practitioners was the internship in a public school setting. Only 14 percent of the 1975 respondents indicated that such an internship was part of their doctoral program.

Conclusions and Implications

Based upon these findings, the following conclusions appear to be justified:

1. Considerable agreement exists between the areas of study rated as most important in 1969 and those emphasized most often in doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners between 1969 and 1975.
2. The study of the organization and ad-

Figure 2. Areas of Behavioral Sciences Degree of Importance Practitioners and Professors Indicated Should Be Given and Degree of Emphasis Given in Doctoral Programs Completed by Curriculum Practitioners Since 1969

Behavioral Science Areas	Practitioners Degree of Importance*			Professors Degree of Importance*			Degree of Emphasis Given**		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
1. Leadership behavior	78.4	17.7	3.9	80.0	17.5	0.0	14.0	22.8	63.1
2. Nature of inquiry	67.3	29.9	5.8	65.0	30.0	5.0	5.3	12.3	82.5
3. Group dynamics and role theory	65.4	30.8	3.8	72.5	22.5	5.0	12.3	14.0	73.7
4. Communication theory	64.7	33.3	2.0	65.0	30.0	2.5	5.3	15.8	78.9
5. Social psychology	48.1	51.9	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	8.8	26.3	64.9
6. Contemporary social problems	41.2	51.0	7.8	35.0	57.5	5.0	5.3	21.1	73.7
7. Sensitivity training	63.5	26.9	9.6	67.5	25.0	7.5	1.8	5.3	92.9
8. Psychology of personal adjustment	51.9	36.6	11.5	55.0	30.0	15.0	5.3	28.1	66.7
9. Racial and cultural relations	38.0	56.0	6.0	32.5	55.0	7.5	1.8	10.5	87.7
10. Public opinion and communication	48.0	48.9	4.0	45.0	47.5	7.5	8.8	19.3	72.0
11. Cultures of urban disadvantaged youth	34.0	50.0	16.0	27.5	55.0	12.5	3.5	7.0	89.5
12. Social organization	24.0	58.0	18.0	34.0	61.7	4.3	7.0	19.3	73.7
13. General anthropology	21.2	61.5	17.3	17.5	65.0	17.5	1.8	3.5	94.8
14. The American Negro	24.0	52.0	24.0	17.5	55.0	22.5	1.8	1.8	96.5
15. Cultures of rural disadvantaged youth	20.0	56.0	24.0	17.5	65.0	17.5	1.8	3.5	94.7
16. Political organization of urban communities	11.5	53.9	34.6	15.0	50.0	35.0	1.8	12.3	85.9
17. Survey of contemporary economics	3.9	53.0	43.1	2.5	52.5	42.5	3.5	3.5	91.0

* Column number 1 indicates percentage of 1969 curriculum professors and curriculum practitioners who indicated the area as being of "great importance"; number 2, "moderate importance"; and number 3, "relatively unimportant." Table does not show percent of respondents who omitted items.

** Column number 1 indicates the percent of 1975 practitioners completing their doctorate since 1969 indicating "heavy emphasis" given to the area in the graduate program; number 2, "moderate emphasis"; and number 3, "limited or no emphasis."

ministration of public schools has been given the heaviest emphasis in doctoral programs completed by curriculum practitioners between 1969 and 1975.

3. With limited exceptions, professional education content (areas of study) reported as most important to include in doctoral programs for curriculum practitioners has received substantially less emphasis in recent programs than was recommended in 1969.

4. Areas of study in the behavioral sciences have not received a level of emphasis in recent doctoral programs of curriculum practitioners commensurate with the 1969 perceived degree of importance of these areas.

5. The recommended two years of teaching experience prior to the completion of the doctorate has been met by curriculum practitioners who earned their doctorates between 1969 and 1975.

6. The internship has not received the emphasis in recent doctoral programs commensurate with its perceived degree of importance in 1969.

These findings and conclusions reveal considerable agreement between the most recommended areas of study in both professional education and the behavioral sciences by curriculum professors and practitioners for doctoral programs and the nature of doctoral programs actually completed by curriculum practitioners. However, the degree of emphasis given these recommended areas in doctoral programs, particularly in the behavioral sciences, has been much less than the 1969 study implied was desirable. This discrepancy raises an important question for those concerned with planning and teaching in graduate programs designed to train curriculum specialists and generalists for work in the public schools. Why has there not been greater congruence between the degree of emphasis recommended for the areas of study and actual practice?

There are several responses to this question that need further examination by those responsible for designing doctoral programs for curriculum practitioners. For example:

• Could it be that the current stress on the production of credit hours to justify staff positions is precipitating a trend toward designing doctoral programs that are dominated by courses within the candidates' major department and, to a lesser

extent, by courses in other departments within or outside the Colleges of Education?

• Has the current economic crunch and the risk of leaving a job to complete residency resulted in doctoral students and professors feeling pressured to build programs that can be completed in the minimum number of hours, thus limiting work in the behavioral sciences and time for an internship?

• Could the lack of congruence between the importance of the content areas and intern experiences and emphasis given them in doctoral programs be due to the fact that the recommendations noted in 1969 have not been systematically built into the curriculum at institutions training curriculum practitioners?

• Is it possible that the reason less emphasis is being placed on certain areas of study in education and the behavioral sciences is due to changes that have occurred in the schools and society during the five years following Woods' study, which required different content than seen as of great importance in 1969?

Based on the evidence produced in this study, there is no way of determining which, if any, of these explanations actually contributed to the results reported in the study. It is possible that all may have contributed to the discrepancies noted. Obviously, more research is needed to determine the more important area of study and types of professional experiences and competencies needed to produce the most effective curriculum practitioners for today's schools. [E]



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