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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a project conducted in the Spring of 1975 which included field interviews and observations in ten bilingual education programs in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The purpose of the study was to gather data which would facilitate the preparation of a framework and an instrument for evaluating community involvement in curriculum development in bilingual schools. The paper presents a rationale for such involvement, describes barriers which must be overcome in order for such participation to take place, and suggests a framework for evaluation of that involvement. Included as Appendix B is an "Interview Guide," which is seen as a possible facilitator for community organization as well as an instrument for data collection. A bibliographic essay completes the work. (Author/AM)

EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

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OVERVIEW

This paper reports a project conducted in the Spring of 1975 which included field interviews and observations in ten bilingual education programs in Connecticut and Massachusetts (cf. Appendix A). The purpose of the study was to gather data which would facilitate the preparation of a framework and an instrument for evaluating community* involvement in curriculum development in bilingual schools. The paper presents a rationale for such involvement, describes barriers which must be overcome in order for such participation to take place, and suggests a framework for evaluation of that involvement. Included as Appendix B is an "Interview Guide", which is seen as a possible facilitator for community organization as well as an instrument for data collection. A bibliographic essay completes the work.

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* "Community" is used in this paper to refer to parent and non-parent members of an ethnic/language minority group which sends its children to schools with bilingual programs.

RATIONALE FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There is now a clear basis in law in Massachusetts for curricula in bilingual programs which provide instruction in the history and culture of the children in those programs (2, Sect. 1). In the pursuit of information regarding how such curricula are developed for bilingual schools, it has become apparent that in many cases they are not developed at all. There is a need for curricula which incorporate community-specific elements as well as elements whose sources are national or even multicultural perspectives. Those community-specific elements -- content as well as methodology -- can only be included in the curriculum by means of some reference to, and interaction with the local community.

The curriculum in bilingual schools must be bicultural. That is, it must provide recognition for the home culture -- its values, behaviors, beliefs, and traditions -- and must also provide the child with opportunities to learn the appropriate behaviors and frames of reference which prevail among the dominant, majority society.

Insofar as bicultural curriculum is feasible, there may be two courses of action taken by programs committed to their development.

The first and most frequently observed procedure is for the program to hire teachers -- and perhaps even a "curriculum specialist" -- of the same general language and ethnic background of the community, and assign those individuals the task of selecting materials from among the large body of published items in that language which may serve the needs of the community. We will examine the pitfalls of such a solution in a moment, but suffice it to note the initial error of focussing on materials and not on curricular goals and the needs of the community.

The second course of action -- and the one advocated here -- is for the program to form a curriculum team consisting of teachers, parents, curriculum specialists, students and others from the community. The assignment for this team would be to conduct an investigation into the community in order to postulate and confirm curricular goals. It would then initiate a process of curriculum development in detail, and only after this had been accomplished would the team seek relevant materials or encourage the production of materials and teaching aids locally. Community involvement in every stage of design and development would assure the inclusion of community-specific elements in the curriculum.

Some general theory relating to community involvement is pertinent to the concerns of this paper. Qamar's article (20) on clientele participation provides support

for the concept of community involvement in terms of long range organization and leadership-building. For a sense of their own current needs, "the people are the best planners, and they make the best choices for themselves." (20, p. 2)

By participation in the process of curriculum development substantial community education may take place which can lead to future responsible and independent decisions. By means of this involvement the target population can better resist the forces of the system which, "...tend to mold the learner to the educator's own concept of society," (20, p. 3). In addition, parent participation in this and other aspects of schooling will likely, "...speed up the process of change and create active leadership." (20,p.3)

These theoretical considerations are useful in that they provide a wider perspective on the problems and potential of community development. Yet the most compelling rationale for community involvement arises from the need to counter a set of dysfunctional, disruptive and often illegal practices of the educational establishment. These practices are noted in Lurie's discussion of New York City Schools (12), and have been observed by this author in the course of this investigation. They can only be curbed by direct participation of the community in matters affecting the schooling of its children.

In spite of the occasional intervention of federal agencies, the federal judiciary and recent Supreme Court decisions favoring bilingual education, the only viable counterforce to local school district intransigence is the local community.

It will help to briefly describe some of the practices alluded to above. No politician or coalition of educators stands a better chance of altering these practices than an organized parent and community group which is prepared for a sustained challenge to the local school administrators. Although some of the practices relate more to administrative procedures that to the content of instruction, they form part of the unstated curriculum of the school and directly affect the character and quality of instruction.

Here then are six examples of practices noted by the author in the course of this study:

1) There is a consistent hyper-enforcement of the transitional nature of the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) law in Massachusetts, which leads to an interpretation of the law as requiring an absolute <u>maximum</u> of three years for transition to English dominance. This hyper-enforcement of one provision of the TBE Law is balanced neatly with under-enforcement of the requirements for the teaching of the language and culture of the child.

The law states clearly:

> A child of limited English-speaking ability enrolled in a program in transitional bilingual education may, at the discretion of the school committee and subject to the approval of the child's parent or legal guardian, continue in that program for a period longer than three years. (20, Sect. 2, Para. 4, emphasis added).

In spite of such a provision, none of the programs observed reacted favorably to requests for extensions.

2) Some bilingual teachers are required to teach subject matter for which they have no credentials, to teach up to four or five different subjects, and to work with children across age or grade levels which would be totally unacceptable in any school program for Anglo, middle class children.

3) Under the pretense of providing personnel for bilingual programs, some schools have used state or federal funds for needs unrelated to the bilingual programs.

4) Children are arbitrarily assigned to bilingual classes without the benefit of language dominance testing or any other objective measure which would help assure their being placed in a class that could meet their needs. Potentially misleading criteria

such as ethnic surname, results of standardized tests given only in English, subjective judgements of monolingual teachers and counselors, and other extraneous factors are consistently being used to place children in classes taught in Spanish and other languages. Children considered to be behavior problems by Anglo teachers are prime candidates for assignment to the bilingual program regardless of their language skills.

5) In a sometimes sincere effort to provide for the needs of a given community, the schools have hired curriculum specialists who may merely be of the same general language background as the community. They may indeed be as myopic toward the specific socio-economic and cultural conditions which surround that population of a given town as any monolingual Anglo might be. A counselor from Spain or a teacher from Puerto Rico may not necessarily have a clear understanding of the needs of the Puerto Rican population of Hartford or Springfield. In addition to the error of assuming that all Spanish-speakers are alike, some school administrators use these professionals to substitute completely for the participation of the community in delineating its own curriculum needs.

6) At least two communities were noted teaching Spanish and Portuguese as a first language (L_1) with the same sets of language arts objectives and the same methodology utilized in the teaching of English as L_1 to Anglo students. In this case the methodology is the curriculum. The unstated curriculum teaches children a Spanish that is broken down and analyzed as if it were English, and denies the unique personality, character, and particular modes of communication which exist in all speech communities.

The above examples of observed practices in bilingual programs in Massachusetts and Connecticut are only a few of the practical challenges which cry out for community involvement and confrontation. But it would be misleading to suggest that such involvement will or could appear overnight. Indeed, very little community participation was observed in the programs visited, although no claim is made that a thorough evaluation was conducted of any of these programs.

Two of the projects reviewed in federal documents (19, 5) which appear to have exemplary parent participation components, have relied on a long process of community development, and have established mechanisms for coordination of community involvement.

The community coordinator made over 200 visits during the five months reported in the Lame Deer project of the Northern Cheyenne Bilingual Program (19, p. 50). The Garfield Complex assigns an important decision-making role to the parent council which is charged with deciding which proposals will receive portions of a several-thousand dollar fund set aside for mini-grants in the community (5, p .22) Participation by parents in the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) in Worcester, Massachusetts has been growing over the last four years, and is just now beginning to include some parent involvement in the curriculum. In Hartford, federal funding over four years and almost complete community control in some aspects of school operation have provided a fertile setting for parent participation observed in La Escuelita. But such direct participation is the definite exception, not the rule.

There are numerous barriers to effective community involvement in the schools. Some of these are related to the most obvious issues of language and culture; others are tied to issues of class and political power. A brief review of these barriers will provide background for the framework of evaluation proposed in this paper.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

High mobility of the population is one factor which makes it extremely difficult to generate consistent,

sustained participation of the community in matters related to schooling. Numerous variables contribute to this mobility -- including seasonal employment, facility of transportation, etc. -- and most programs in this region made note that mobility was greater among Puerto Ricans than among Greeks and Portuguese.

Recent immigrants from Europe are inhibited from involvement in the schools due in part to the historical professional control of the schools in the old country. These traditions form barriers of class and status which are difficult to overcome. To a lesser extent this old world elitism still obtains among the traditional communities of Puerto Rico. Poor parents approach the schoolyard painfully aware of the difference in status between themselves and the teacher.

Of a slightly different nature is the professionalization of instruction in our own schools which leads the teacher and principal to distrust any judgements of laypersons in matters of schooling. The result is the same: parents are discouraged from meaningful participation in the schools.

The difficulties of internal communication among members of the same language/ethnic group may be an additional hindrance to community organization. The variation within each group includes sharp differences in political leanings class, levels of formal education, degrees of acculturation, extent of bilingualism and

ethnic consciousness, and religious affiliation among others.

None of the minorities should be considered as a monolithic block. Wide variation is the rule for speakers of Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. Experience tells us that this must be so for all but the most isolated, remote communities. Such diversity requires extraordinarily favorable conditions to develop optimal working relationships within a given community, and to permit constructive application of community energies to the needs of the schools.

The need for sustained, long-term involvement is also a barrier to effective participation. The reality of the political environment and school bureaucracy is such that parents must demonstrate a staying power over several academic cycles before any changes amy be observed in the schools. The Lame Deer and Garfield projects, -- and numerous others -- have institutionalized the role of parents and incorporated paid community organizers to provide for some continuity. As the Lame Deer program grew, they included funds for "subsistence" payments to community "volunteers" in order to expand, legitimize and institutionalize the involvement of the community in the bilingual program (19, p. 65).

The involvement of parents within the schools in paid and volunteer positions may help maintain the level of

community participation. The staying power of the community over several years will be the telling factor in determining whether bilingual education programs merely fade away due to purposeful neglect of administrators who do not believe in them or in the people who ought to be served by those programs.

The effectiveness of community involvement as suggested here may be clouded by the issue of community control. With little previous experience or political organization, control of the schools via the school committee or principalship ought not to be the first line of attack for the community which sees the need for change in the curriculum (20, pp. 3-4). The example of the Amish is very instructive in this regard. Community control and the eventual establishment of a completely separate and independent system of schooling were accomplished only after it became apparent that the public shcools were placing requirements on the Amish which seriously threatened their cultural and religious integrity (8, p. 34 & 113 ff.)

Political disenfranchisement and the lack of experience in Northamerican politics can hinder the immigrant and migrant as well from attaining full participation in the political process which surrounds schooling in this country. The advantage of working on curriculum development is that -- if the process is at least minimally accepted by the schools -- there is a direct link

established between the community and the classroom. Control may be exercised over curricular decisions that may at least temporarily put off the need to deal with political control via the school committee. The issue of control will return, however, at the moment the school system recognizes that change in the curriculum may require a reallocation of resources or realignment of priorities in the schools. At that moment, the community will have to assert its right to participate fully in making decisions that affect the future of its children.

An alternative to working in the system is to set up independent schools as the Amish have done, and as many groups have done through church or synagogue schools. The community members may be limited in experience and technical skills as well as resources. This may make it difficult for them to set realistic goals or to implement plans for independent schools. The example of the Amish, none of whom have more than eight years of schooling, suggests that this factor is not necessarily a limiting one. The Amish form committees, determine curriculum, hire and fire teachers, build the schools and assess tuition fees. Using both external criteria and those of the Amish themselves, it appears that these schools are remarkably successful (8, p. 95 and p. 105 ff).

Many of the factors previously outlined (pp. 9-13 above) such as high mobility and lack of intra-group cohesiveness mitigate against the establishment of independent

schools. Our principal interest here is ultimately to determine ways in which ethnic/language minority groups that are now excluded can have a substantial role in curriculum improvement in the public schools. And of c he most difficult barrier to be overcome is the res ce of the system itself to challenge from any quarter. That resistance is stiffened when the challenge comes from persons who are of a different ethnic and language background, and who contend that they will not allow their children to surrender their culture and their souls to some "inevitable" process of assimilation.

FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

This study has provided preliminary data about community involvement in curriculum development in bilingual schools. It is from that data and the consideration of the barriers to effective community involvement that the interview guide (Appendix B) has evolved. That guide is intended to provide a model for focussing interviews with parents, teachers, program directors and others, and will elicit data which may then be analyzed to determine the extent and quality of community involvement.

Some of the indicators sought are: percent of potential parents who are active in a P.A.C., frequency of meetings, frequency of community participation in regular school activities, size of leadership group, etc.

Other indicators reveal the quality of community participation: What kinds of decisions does the P.A.C. make? Which decisions are of an "advisory" nature, and which are an exercise of direct authority? Is the P.A.C. provided with organizational and other resources as required by state bilingual education regulations? Is curriculum approval by community groups a routine gesture, or is there ongoing review during the process of curriculum development? What is the membership of the town curriculum committee? What does it do? Is there a role for community members in screening candidates for teacher and aide positions in the bilingual program? What is their role in the preparation of grant proposals and subsequent allocation of funds? Are parents involved in training teachers to be sensitive to and respond to the language and cultural background of the children?

It is understood that there may be different reasons for wishing to carry out an evaluation of community involvement, depending on the agency initiating the action. It is proposed here that the evaluation itself be a point of departure for organizing the community around issues of participation in the schools. Conducting the survey can lead to a critical awareness of the school situation and can suggest avenues for organization and participation.

A scholarly and thorough study of community involvement in a number of bilingual programs may be of passing academic interest. However, the application of this evaluation framework to a process of community organization and development may provide a basis for further community action, and may substantially improve the implementation of bilingual education programs.

XXX

APPENDIX A

Schools and communities visited
in connection with this project:

1974-75

Holyoke, Massachusetts	Morgan School
Hamden, Connecticut	Hamden-New Haven Cooperative Education Center
Lynn, Massachusetts	Washington Community School
Hartford, Connecticut	La Escuelita (Ann Street School)
	Bilingual/Bicultural Curriculum Center
Framingham, Massachusetts	Multi-Community Language Center
Worcester, Massachusetts	Adams Street School
Springfield, Massachusetts	Chestnut Junior High School
Northampton, Massachusetts	Bridge Street School
New Bedford, Massachusetts	Bilingual Education Department
Ludlow, Massachusetts	East Street School

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Community involvement in curriculum development in bilingual schools

DATE:

I. DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL/PROGRAM - Basic Data

Name: _____
Address: _____
_____

Telephone: _____

School Personnel interviewed:

_____
_____
_____

Name & title of principal, head teacher or director: _____

A. CHILDREN SERVED (Attach Massacnusetts form c-4-74, TBE)

LANGUAGE/ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS AND GRADE LEVELS	NUMBERS

B. SCHOOL STAFF - BILINGUAL AND ESL

CATEGORIES OF PERSONNEL, LANGUAGE SKILLS & TRAINING	NUMBERS

C. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING, CLASSROOMS, MATERIALS OBSERVED, ETC.:

II. PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A. Describe the composition of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC):

1. Describe the history of the PAC and continuity of leadership. How are members chosen or appointed?

2. How often has the PAC met in the last 12 months?

3. Where do meetings take place?

4. How many persons usually attend?

5. Describe the principal's view of the responsibilities of the PAC:

6. Describe the parents' views of the responsibilities of the PAC:

7. What is the budget for the PAC this year?

8. Describe how members of the PAC receive information re: meetings, school activities, bilingual program annual proposal, etc.:

B. Parent/community contact with the school

1. Describe several recent occasions when parents or other community members visited the school:

2. Check reasons for recent parent visits in addition to those described above:

- Teach a unit in class as resource person ___
- Open house ___
- PTO/PTA meeting ___
- Conference with principal re:
  - discipline ___
  - poor work ___
  - health problems ___
- Participate in materials review ___
- PAC Meeting ___
- Advise teachers on cultural activity/holiday ___
- Conference with teacher-discipline problem ___
- Conference with teacher-regular progress report ___
- Participate in in-service training for teachers/staff re: language and culture of children ___

3. Indicate paid or volunteer positions held by parents or other members of the bilingual community in this school/program:

Paid	Vol.	POSITION
___	___	Classroom aide
___	___	Teacher
___	___	Library assistant
___	___	Lunchroom monitors
___	___	Principal
___	___	Guide on field trips
___	___	Community coordinator
___	___	Program director
___	___	Advisor for extra-curricular activities
___	___	Chaperone for field trips/dances
___	___	OTHER:_____

C. COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

1. Is there a paid community coordinator for the program?

2. How would you describe her/his duties?

3. What is the source of funding for the position?

4. What restrictions or limitations are placed on organizing activities? Describe:

5. How is the community coordinator involved in the annual census as required by state law? Other parents?

III. THE CURRICULUM

A. Broadly state the curricular goals of the school or program:

B. Describe the specific ways in which this curriculum meets <u>local needs</u> in Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Art, Science and Music; indicate how this differs from the curriculum of nearby all-Anglo classes or schools:

C. Describe the composition of the curriculum committee for this school/program, and the curriculum committees at elementary and secondary levels for this district:

D. Describe the origin and method by which a recent change in the curriculum was considered, adopted and implemented in this school/program:

E. Describe the ways in which local needs were assessed in order to adapt the curriculum for the bilingual community:

F. Who made the decisions to follow the procedures in "D" and "E" above?

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

A. Are non-school personnel involved in the committee(s) which approve materials for this school (town)? Who are they? How are they selected?

B. How is the PAC involved in decisions regarding purchase of materials for the bilingual program?

C. Which individuals have been involved in a review of currently used or proposed materials to check for racial, ethnic, cultural or sex bias?

D. What impact did their recommendations have?

V. FUNDING

A. What are the sources of funds for bilingual education? Indicate amounts &/or percentages:

Town School budget _____

TBE State re-imbursement _____

Title VII (or other Fed) _____

Other: _____ _____

B. Who determines the budget allocation for the PAC?

C. Describe community participation in the preparation of any grant (Title VII, III, etc.) proposals submitted for this school/program:

APPENDIX C

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The practical literature in the field of community involvement in curriculum development is limited, while more sources were encountered which deal with the political struggles for "control" of the schools. Other useful sources may be found in the literature dealing with community development and community action theory (not included here). Alternative schools have generated a good deal of literature which may be of assistance to those highly motivated groups who already are organized and committed to alternative shcools within the system or "free" schools outside of it.

Reports of federally-funded education projects are a rich source of at least superficial data regarding hundreds of bilingual programs across the country. Most reports are filed in the ERIC system, and one can assume at least a modicum of exaggeration on the part of proposal writers who are trying to substantiate refunding requests.

Two reports with exemplary community participation components and curricular goals aimed at meeting the needs of the local community were reviewed.

19) Northern Cheyenne Bilingual Program, "Lame Deer Project"

Because of its unique geographical and ethnic situation and the small number of students in K, 1 and 2, the Lame Deer Project is limited as a model for larger urban bilingual programs. Key elements in the project encourage Native American parents and tribal elders to participate in every phase of the schools. A community coordinator is funded to organize and communicate with the community. The advisory committees hold periodic reviews of the progress of the program and the curriculum. A Cultural Advisory Board has the complete authority to make all decisions regarding what elements of the authentic Native American culture are to be included in the curriculum. The report includes a candid description of some of the difficulties of maintaining community momentum in the face of staff and community leadership changes.

5) Garfield Education Complex, "Summary of three years..."

This report of a Title III project gives an indication of community participation from the perspective of a mini-school district in East Los Angeles, California. There was an experimental grouping of four elementary schools,

one junior high and one high school into an "educational complex" with Parent Advisory Boards at each school. The project included a bilingual component, and the parents had direct control over a mini-grant fund to be used at their discretion.

6) González, Sylvia, A process for examining cultural relevancy...

For a generalizable approach to cultural relevancy, Sylvia González' doctoral dissertation provides an alternative to the "social pathology model" of viewing cultural differences. González' work provides the basis for any community to do its own description which may then result in ethnic/language parameters for inclusion in the curriculum of that community.

8) Hostetler & Huntington: Children in Amish Society

An isolated community with recent experience with separate, community-controlled schools is treated thoroughly and sensitively in this book. The chapters on the Amish elementary school and the teachers in them give clear indications of just how community-specific instruction can be. Of course the legal/political battles of the Amish are outstanding examples of public schooling versus the people. A brief treatment of these issues is included. This is a useful and insightful book.

9) Council on Interracial Books for Children, BULLETIN

The Council devoted two issues of its Bulletin to special issues on Puerto Rican Materials and Chicano Materials. These issues contain articles not only on textbook evaluation and reviews of bias in books for children, but also news of community involvement: "Chicano community presses for better library service," "New study confirms educational slaughter of Puerto Rican children." Also of interest are articles from the perspective of Hispanic women, and source information on periodicals and distributors of materials. The "Checklist for evaluating Chicano material," (Vol. 5), could be a useful guide for any community evaluating the materials provided for the instruction of their children, and might be used in conjunction with the process suggested by González (supra.)

12) Lurie, Ellen, How to change the schools

To get right to the action there is no better source than this book! Lurie's experience in the community-control fights in New York give a big-city focus to the entire book, but there is much useful information for

any group of parents. As a manual for parents, the 293 pages may be too much for groups with limited literacy skills, but a community organizer armed with a copy of this handbook would make a formidable foe for any school administration. You won't find a conciliatory tone here. Political confrontation is urged where necessary. Turn to Chapter Two and read about, "The stuff kids learn," and "What is wrong with the curriculum."

13) Macías, Reynaldo F.,"Opinions of Chicano community parents..."

In order to find out what the community really thinks of the schools, Macías conducted some surveys of parents. They had strong -- and sometimes surprising -- opinions regarding the instructional content. Macías' allusion to the implications of methodology in terms of cultural content and style speaks directly to some of the concerns of this paper in viewing the curriculum more broadly than the mere stated units of instruction. The journal in which this article appeared, Aztlán is consistent in presenting excellent articles in all fields of Chicano studies research.

17) National Study of School Evaluation, Evaluation Guidelines for Multicultural/Multiracial Education

Once a parent group decides to take a close look at the schools, they will be greatly assisted by the exhaustive evaluation format set forth by the NSSE. This booklet is designed primarily for secondary schools, but may be of assistance for other levels. Included are teacher and student "opinionnaires", and probing questions into all phases of schooling and instruction which are intended to reveal the extent of commitment to and activity in the specific realms of multicultural/ multiracial education.

26) United Bronx Parents, 'How parents can evaluate and improve their child's school books"

The UBP distributes this guide (25¢), and also markets Ellen Lurie's book ($2.25). Note address in bibliography. Action-oriented community groups such as the UBP may provide parents concerned with bilingual education with some immediately useful ammunition and strategies while academic studies continue to rest heavily on library shelves.

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