ABSTRACT
        Although it is not without flaws, decentralization of
the school administration--returning decision-making power to school
principals and classroom teachers--can contribute to a return to
humanistic education and to the elimination of assembly-line
education. Researchers, curriculum developers, and educational
publishers can help in this movement by keeping in mind a number of
factors when designing reading programs. (1) The principal is the key
to the quality of the instructional program; research must be
translated into appropriate materials that will create a support
system for principals. (2) Reading materials must be less rigid and
must have high intrinsic appeal. (3) Reading materials must allow for
more individualization and for more freedom in a child's approach to
learning in school. (4) Teachers need a testing program that
capitalizes on strengths and diminishes weaknesses. (5) Suggestions
for record keeping would assist teachers in developing their
observation skills and would help them sort out pertinent information
about children's skills. (6) Training materials for paraprofessionals
are badly needed. (7) Suggestions for how to review curriculum
materials would be helpful to principals and teachers. (LJR)

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS
IN THE DESIGN OF READING INSTRUCTION

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This paper's topic, "School Organization and Implementation

Factors in the Design of Reading Instruction," should be understood

in terms of what the "real" world wants the researchers, the

developers of curriculum, and the educational publishers to consider

as they prepare instructional materials for teachers and students

to use in the reading program. Instead of considering "The

real world" solely in terms of school organizational factors and

existing teaching practices, this paper will begin with the

consideration of children as a prime factor in the reading program

design.

If we continue to organize schools, to design programs

and to offer schooling in direct conflict with our knowledge of

children and how they learn, we will continue to foster the

problem, and impede the solution.

Our national obsession with cognitive development

as measured by test scores, seems to be nurtured by the schools,

the researchers and the publishers. We rank and rate children,

rewarding and stigmatizing them according to their ability to

do well on miniscule tasks that schools can measure quanti-

tatively. Humanistic schools and humanistic curriculum are

still not the goals of education today. We have a professed but

uncommitted devotion to human needs and the improvement of

a quality of life, which values physical vitality, caring,

imagination, resourcefulness, cooperation and moral commitment,

yet we continue to seek and use mechanisms to sort individuals

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into slots. We have allowed quantitative standards, which are central to our economic and highly developed technology, to become the yardstick of a child's worth.

As educators, our practices contradict our knowledge of children and how they learn; we do not provide the educational environment that recognizes children as organic wholes who think, act and feel in the same moment.

As program designers, we prepare programs as though children develop in an assembly line fashion, one part at a time until the product is complete.

As researchers, we focus on part of the whole and foster one-sided perceptions that force program designers, publishers and teachers to lose sight of the total sense of children.

If we agree with Vincent Rogers' view that teaching children and organizing schools should be based on the best evidence that is currently available, it would seem that we must make a concerted effort to resolve the conflicting ideologies purporting to know what is good for children. Instead of relying on unsupported data that gives credence to the goals and objectives of these ideologies, we should develop long-term research studies. We must avoid basing instruction on crass generalizations. Resulting instruction can only be non-essential and will be difficult - if not impossible - to reform or revise.

Moore and Carricker in the March 1974 Phi Delta Kappan stated that educators are not willing to accept and use research findings, no matter how they are packaged, because they resist research as a concept.

Walter McGinitie in the Reading Research Quarterly 1975-1976, Vol. 10, #1, in his research, suggests that "for research to be translated into more effective teaching, it may be necessary for research to be done on the translation process itself: what are the processes by which research results influence instruction, or fail to influence it when it seems they should?" Further, he poses an important question, does research influence instruction, by asking, who takes the research results and uses them as guides in building instructional programs, and where do the respective responsibilities of the teachers and the researchers end? Who can disseminate the research and lay out clear and definite alternative procedures? Clearly, the ideology that a child's worth is measured by his cognitive development and test scores has prevailed. Unnoticed and unheralded is the research by Roger Farr and his associates, which states, "We are convinced that anyone who says he knows that literacy is decreasing is ignoring data. Such a person is at best unscholarly and at worst dishonest." This study, "Reading Achievement in the U. S. - Then and Now", as reported in the Journal of Reading, Vol. 19, #5, March 1976, also states that "despite a multi-million dollar testing business, few longitudinal and easily accessible records on the performance of children exist."

In school organization, however, something is happening that may assist those of us who have a commitment to marry the school's program with the child.

Administrative decentralization in decision-making is on the upswing. In a recent article in Educational Leadership, 50% of school districts surveyed were moving toward decentralized decision-making.

The study examined 10 issues or key decision areas in the operation of schools. It reported that building level personnel had the most influence on all issues. These included selection of basic reading materials, inservice programs, selection of personnel (including the principal), staffing patterns, organizing school for instruction, and curriculum modification.

Growing interest in placing decision-making closer to the client should have far-reaching impact on efforts to provide appropriate materials and programs for teachers and children.

It suggests a changing role for central administrators, curriculum specialists, principals, teachers, students and parents, whether the decentralization is purely administrative or includes community participation and/or community control. Key to the degree of shared ownership or power in this organizational pattern, however, is the redistribution of resources, insuring implementation of local decision-making.

In a 1975 publication of ASCD - Impact of Decentralization on Curriculum - several studies were presented on this trend. The resulting viewpoints underscored a commonality of practices and problems relating to curriculum and program.

1. Decentralization has given the
    local unit or school the flexi-
    bility and autonomy to develop
    its own instructional program.

2. It is generally unclear by whom
    and/or on what level within the
    school district curriculum develop-
    ment activity is initiated.

3. In decentralized districts there
    are few mechanisms or strategies
    for diffusing new instructional
    programs, for helping teachers
    learn what new materials are
    available and for helping them
    modify their teaching practices.

4. The increased mobility of students
    within the local school systems
    has caused some districts to return
    to more standard district-wide
    programs.

Apparently decentralization fosters ambiguity. As
reflected by the problems noted above, it seems that unless the
problems are resolved, decentralization will foster the status
quo, rather than the review, renewal and regeneration, of
program. On the other hand, if we agree with Goodlad that
"the single school is the largest and proper unit for edu-
cational change" decentralization, at least, provides the setting
and resources to encourage self-renewal.

Under the leadership of a "futurist" superintendent,
this author's own district began its move toward administrative
decentralization in 1968. A consolidated small city school
district, it covers an area of 155 square miles and serves
approximately 8000 students. It is a microcosm of the total
educational scene, reflecting trends and problems noted in both

large city and urban districts, as well as small town and
rural communities.

The superintendent's strategy for administrative
decentralization appeared to be in response to students'
and parents' demands for a greater voice in decisions affecting
education in the community, a justification given by most other
districts for change to decentralization. In reality, however,
the leadership used this justification of responsiveness to
legitimize and foster a strong administrative philosophical
view that:

1. Educational alternatives must be
    provided for students.

2. The teacher's function must change
    from a dispenser of knowledge to a
    facilitator of learning.

3. The central office and curriculum
    personnel exist to serve the prin-
    cipals and their staffs as they,
    in turn, provide an educational
    environment and program responsive
    to the needs of the students in the
    community.

A monumental budget crisis accelerated the change and
was used as the "cover" for the process of decentralization.

Principals were allocated staff and resources for
all programs on a per-pupil basis. Drastically depleted funds
were distributed to the schools, while only pupil personnel
services were distributed from the central office. Principals
and staffs could organize the building and program as they
wished. Services of special area teachers, use of para-
professionals, choice of programs and ma rials were decided

at the building level. Even resources for custodial services
and building maintenance materials could be channeled into
teaching staff and instructional materials, if the staff so
decided.

During the years that followed the initiation of
decentralization, each problem that emerged was addressed in
light of the three above stated administrative philosophical
themes. This approach to district problems alleviated, to a
great degree, two problems cited in the ASCD publication on
decentralization, level of initiation of curriculum develop-
ment, and student mobility.

Initiation of curriculum development and curriculum
activity was encouraged at all levels, particularly at the
building and classroom levels. A support system was established
through building principals' agreement to pool some of the
resources allocated to their schools. These became research
and development funds administered by the Curriculum Director.
Individual teachers, building staff, cross building or grade
level staff, and principals were encouraged to develop pro-
posals for curriculum improvement and staff development. These
would be screened by a principals' committee, reviewed by
building staff and approved or disapproved for funding by
the principals. The scope of proposals covered the full range
of curriculum and staff development topics.

Installation of Man: A Course of Study in several
schools, including staff training and purchase of materials,
values clarification workshops for staff of one building,
development of a teacher resource center for the district,

purchase of a station wagon for field trips in the developing
community-as-a-classroom program, exemplify the range of activity.
Everyone had an opportunity to initiate activity - everyone
had a chance to review and evaluate the proposals before
final approval of the project.

Project success, however, was not measured by the
test scores of the students. The criteria for review were
based on the belief that teachers and children perform best
when what they do is something they choose to do.

The problem of students encountering different
reading programs as they moved within the district needed to
be addressed. Thirteen elementary schools, spread over 155
square miles, feeding into two junior high schools, a 17%
economically disadvantaged student population and a mobile
college community population added to the complexity of
program articulation for these students.

The Board of Education's reaction to these develop-
ments reflected community and national concern about reading
and student achievement. They viewed a diversity of materials
and a variety of teaching styles, simplistically, as the cause
of the problem. What the research has confirmed over and over
again about children's learning and effective teaching was
completely ignored or not accepted as significant or important
by this "back to basics" ground swell.

Vocal partisan views within the community, expressing.
reaction to uneasy social conditions and to growing frustration

with governmental and instructional bureaucracies, were publicly

discussed. In response, the Board issued a special order:

review of the district's reading program. The charge was

general enough to represent the variety of hidden agendas

within the Board and within the community.

Some hoped that the review would find the one and only

reading program that "works", others expected it would ferret

out incompetent teachers, still others wanted it to pinpoint

poor administration, thus documenting the need to return to a

strong centralized school system.

After six rocky years, the leadership, because of its

firm commitment to an administrative philosophy, withstood

the test, was able to actually address an important and

needed element of decentralized decision-making in the

instructional reading program.

Supported by central office administrators, building

level principals and their staffs developed parent involvement

programs to provide a vehicle for understanding and involvement

in program planning at the local building level. A district-

wide reading committee of teachers, administrators and

parents was formed to review the district reading program.

Leadership and support for this effort were provided at the

central office level, with the Curriculum Director assigned

to serve as project leader.

Using techniques for total staff involvement, the staff

on the district committee, supported by representatives from

each building, developed an agreed-upon list of basic reading

skills, instructional objectives for the skills, and criterion

test items for the objectives. At the same time they were

correlating the skills list with the major reading programs in

use in the district, developing a student record form and

preparing guidelines for teachers to use in the placement of

students and choice of materials. Presently over eighty teachers

are working on various sub-committees, each directed by one

of their number. The Curriculum Director and building princi als

serve as resources to each committee.

In actuality the development of a district skills

list and record keeping format is a strategy to promote the

recognition and support of individualized programs for students

and serves to capitalize on teachers' abilities to examine

students' needs and provide appropriate learning environments.

Committee efforts have resulted in the development of tools

for teachers, rather than shackles for children.

Eight years of involvement in the process of de-

centralizing decision-making toward a goal of improving

education for the children of the community offers a wealth

of experience and insights. Limiting the view, however, from the

standpoint of program design and from the view of school-

organizational factors, the following points suggest

themselves.

> 1. The principal is key to the quality
>   of the instructional program in
>   all schools. Program researchers
>   and developers must apply their
>   efforts to identify those principals
>   who are effective leaders of reading
>   programs. Research must be trans-
>   lated for program developers in order

to design appropriate materials
that will create a support system
for principals. Principals need
service, information, and skills
in order to provide the leader-
ship for m... ...ging the program
at th... ...vel.

2. Tea... ...hools are asking
for ... ...aterials that have
more flexibility, are less rigid,
and have high intrinsic appeal.
Research and the literature agree
that the teacher, and not the
material, is the main ingredient
in a child's reading progress.
But, it is the effective teacher
who wants and needs effective
material.

The effective teachers in the University of Texas

study, (which will be cited later), were successful classroom

managers in that their assignments to students were interesting,

varied, and attuned to the abilities of students. Students'

work was individualized and appropriate, recognizing, that dif-

ferent children and even the same children at different levels

of development require different treatment for optimal results.

It would seem that:

3. "Seatwork" must be examined by
developers. It must be planned,
not for teachers, who coined the
phrase, but for children. De-
velopers must provide choices
which are, whenever possible,
open-ended options. Developers
need to ask of their programs,
"Do these materials foster group
norms and group expectancies
despite our claim that our goal
is to provide materials for
individualizing instruction?"

In More Than Joy: What Does Research Say About Open

Education, Lyn Martin, New York Agathon, 1976, indicates

children who have independence and self-direction will develop

higher achievement motivation, have fewer discipline problems,

and will learn more effectively. Process materials, discovery ap-

proach and Piagetian curriculum foster internality, and internal-

izing appears to be an indication of school and later life

success. Therefore:

> 4. These ideas are compelling
> reasons for developers of pro-
> gram to help the teachers, through
> the use of reading materials, to
> allow more freedom in a child's
> approach to learning in school.
> It has been amply demonstrated
> that children who direct their
> own learning achieve as well
> on standardized tests as
> traditionally taught groups.
>
> 5. Many teachers view programs
> imbedded with pre and post testing
> and other monitoring devices
> as tools that measure them
> rather than the students.

This author's experience is supported by Brophy

and Evertson in the book, Learning From Teacher - A Developmental

Perspective, published by Allyn & Bacon, 1976. This publication

details a two-year study conducted by the Research and Develop-

ment Center for Teaching Education, University of Texas, Austin.

The study, entitled, The Texas Teacher Effectiveness Project,

using cognitive criteria, examined teacher effectiveness as

determined by student learning gains on standardized norm

referenced achievement tests.

The researchers found that teachers who said they were

least concerned about standardized achievement tests and

the scores of children on tests were the most successful in

producing learning gains as measured by the tests. Testing

simply supported what teachers already knew from experience based

on observation of student work, and a working knowledge of
skills their students "should" know. Few saw testing as important
and few tested formally very often. This leads us to consider:

5. This dilemma - student testing
    seen as a teacher evaluation tool
    by some, and, as a confirmation
    tool of what teachers already know
    by others, should be taken into
    account by the developer of the
    ading program. Can we do
       teachers what everyone pro-
       �archers that we do for students -
       ide a program that capital-
    izes on strengths and diminishes
    weaknesses?

6. Program developers should also
    include suggestions in their
    materials for record keeping.
    This would assist teachers in de-
    veloping their observation skills
    and would help them sort out
    pertinent information about child-
    ren's skills. In turn, this would
    help teachers make appropriate
    decisions for instruction and
    program.

Researchers and program developers should examine the
work of the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation. Several
publications detail the efforts of this group of educators
who have addressed themselves to concerns about the use of
narrow accountability themes and activity which dominate our
schools. Their suggestions and ideas respond closer to most
teachers' needs, documenting and assessing children's learning,
than do criterian referenced and standardized testing. The
study goes further, suggesting a re-examination of a range of
evaluation issues and perspectives about schools and schooling.

7. Paraprofessionals and volunteer
    parents are heavily involved in
    school programs, particularly in the
    reading program. Sample training materials

designed to increase paraprofessional
and parent understanding particularly
as it relates to reading skills are
sorely needed. Principals and teachers
could also make use of these materials
in a variety of ways.

8. All major developers and pub-
lishers should "get together" to
develop a materials review format
that, in itself, could be used
as an inservice activity in
districts examining new reading
materials. Developers and planners
cooperatively planning a check-
list of program elements, would
provide building principals and
teachers with knowledge and
understanding of the varying
focuses and emphases of programs
they review.

There is constant reference in the
literature concerning the pervasive
lack of stated philosophies, and
goals of education at the school
district, as well as building,
level. This tool, or format as
suggested above, might prove an
excellent strategy for district
and building level committees to
address their own internal dif-
ferences in philosophies concerning
children's learning and what school
is all about, particularly as it
relates to the reading program.

In summary, researchers and publishers who are committed
to translation of their efforts into more effective teaching
and learning, must focus their efforts toward supporting the
efforts and skills of principals and teachers. This paper
purposely did not discuss what reading skills to teach, or
methods to use in teaching reading. The literature and research
in this area is overwhelming: it would seem that researchers

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and developers have abetted school people in losing sight of the place of the reading program and reading goals for children. Unfortunately, our concentration on the minutia of learning, and in particular of learning to read, has convinced the children that school does not relate to their "real" world.

Let us join in our efforts to perpetrate the ripple effects of recent significant changes that have taken place in the education of children. Let us support <u>alternatives</u> in the school organization, instruction, and learning materials. Let us seek ways in all our efforts to develop effective teachers as managers of children's learning and the learning environments. Let us keep before us a notion of close relationship between schooling and the total life of the community.

If our collective insights could focus on improving the quality of life for our children, the national obsession with testing and the subsequent spin-off activities in our classrooms might give way to a rising spirit and vitality in American education.

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