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ABSTRACT

A comparative case study to evaluate the administration of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I programs was conducted in eight state departments of education and 32 school districts. Interviews were supplemented by review and analysis of documents and available data at each site. General findings included: (1) evaluation was primarily considered to mean achievement testing; (2) evaluation was unrelated to other administrative activities, such as program design or change; and (3) attention was focused on evolving sophisticated evaluation techniques rather than on using test results. Some promising evaluation techniques were used by a few school districts: establishing objectives against which to evaluate the Title I program; conducting a study of the instructional process within the Title I program; and attempting to institute a content, input, process, and product (CIPP) evaluation model. (Implications of this case study findings for other federally funded educational programs were discussed, as well as the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System). (MH)

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EVALUATION OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS:
PROBLEMS, PROMISING STRATEGIES AND RECENT TRENDS

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Evaluation in Compensatory Education Programs:
Problems, Promising Strategies and Recent Trends

by

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INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of ESEA Title I in 1965 the Title I statute has required States and Local Education Agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of their Title I programs. Determining what states and school districts have done to meet that requirement and why was one of the explicit purposes of a 1976-77 comparative case study of ESEA Title I administration in eight states and 32 school districts. The study was conducted by the Syracuse Research Corporation for the National Institute of Education. This paper reports the major findings of the SRC study relative to the evaluation question. It is divided into five sections. Section I provides background to SRC's comparative case study research approach and its particular applicability to understanding grantee approaches to evaluation. Section II highlights the study's major findings the most important of which is that evaluations were conducted for reporting rather than utilization purposes. In Section III of this report some unique and promising Title I evaluation practices in three of the districts studies are described. Sections IV and V attempt to place

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current perspectives on the study's research findings by positing the study's implications for evaluations of other federal education programs (Section IV) and by relating the research findings to recent federally induced changes in the Title I evaluation system (Section V).

I. General Background

During school year 1976-77 the Syracuse Research Corporation (SRC) initiated a comparative case study of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I program focusing on intergovernmental (federal-state-local) relationships. This policy investigation involved eight state departments of education and thirty-two school districts and was reported to the National Institute of Education in November 1977 (Goettel et.al., 1977). A major component of each of the forty individual case studies was the issue of evaluation. The ESEA, Title I legislation requires that states, and school districts conduct annual program evaluations of Title I services.

As public education encounters increasing demands for accountability and basic skills education, the experiences of this national compensatory education program should be especially noteworthy since both of these elements have been prominent in Title I program requirements for several years. Lessons learned in implementing Title I evaluations should provide guidance to educational evaluators in meeting the program assessment requirements of other federal and state evaluation mandates. Moreover, evaluation results are now increasingly being regarded as vital to policy and administrative decision making; this view of the program evaluation role has been proposed for many of the large-scale federally-funded programs, including ESEA, Title I. Thus, the net experience of Title I program evaluation endeavors across the states and local districts should provide a rich and valuable source of information for the education evaluation community.

The information reported in this paper has been drawn in large measure from SRC's eighteen month comparative case study of the administration of ESEA, Title I programs. An elite interviewing/data collection technique was utilized as part of a series of case studies which were designed to include

eight SEAs, thirty-two LEAs (four in each state) and 116 participating Title I schools. The interviews were supplemented by careful review and analysis of documents and available data sources at the various levels. Evaluation was one of eight compensatory education issues that were probed in the SRC study.¹ Case study participants (totaling approximately 1,100 interviewees, including over 170 Title I parents) were carefully selected by the individual case study research teams at each level (federal, state, district, and school building). Title I and regular school district evaluation personnel, as well as administrators, teachers, Title I parents and community representatives were interviewed at the school and district levels. The issue of evaluation in compensatory education was also examined in interviews with federal and state compensatory education program administrators.²

If we agree with Cronbach that evaluation is political activity performed within a social system (Cronbach, 1977), then the comparative case study methodology used in the SRC study is an excellent framework for investigating how state and local agencies implement their Title I evaluation efforts in a manner consistent with state and local social systems. The SRC comparative case study data provides unique understandings of what states and local districts are doing in Title I evaluations, that is, the context within which ESEA, Title I evaluations occur and the processes used in implementing this requirement of the law, and the policy variables or factors that facilitate or impede evaluation efforts.

¹ Generally, each of the SRC case studies describes and discusses four Title I funds allocations issues (targeting, eligibility, concentration of funds, and comparability) and four Title I program development issues (needs assessment, program design, evaluation and parent involvement). Additional central themes discussed in each case included: (a) contextual background; (b) agency structure and organization; (c) approaches to Title I management functions; and (d) state/local, federal/state interrelationships.

² The authors wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to their SRC colleagues who shared authorship for the eight case study volumes and the final synthesis report from which sources the material for this paper is largely drawn.

II. General Findings Regarding Title I Evaluation Policy and Practice

A major finding of the study concludes that evaluation primarily means "testing" to both states and local districts; evaluation rarely related locally to revisions in program design. State and local program evaluation was viewed most frequently as a mechanical exercise unrelated to other administrative activities. In general, state policy in the evaluation area was generally restricted to insuring that local test score data was submitted to the SEA on time each year. Three states that can be characterized as directive, especially in programmatic areas made somewhat more assertive efforts in this area, but even in these states the evaluative emphasis seemed to be more on technique than usage, and on state more than local utility.

With some exceptions, the general attitude in LEAs was that evaluation is essentially a necessary evil, conducted to please someone else, with little apparent relevance to local programmatic concerns. In some projects, there were active attempts to utilize evaluation data for a variety of purposes, but those attempts tended to be a function of the drive and competence of the evaluator. There is some evidence that the overall planning requirements of one state and the general emphasis on evaluation in a second helped to create environments in which Title I evaluation initiatives could be legitimized. Most of the observed improvements in local evaluation activity occurred largely in the ability of LEAs to provide their SEAs with required information, while both the interest in and the capacity of LEAs to use test score results and more comprehensive evaluative information for management and program decision purposes seemed to exist in only a handful of the thirty-two districts included in this study.

A. State Policy and Practice. In five of the eight states, nearly all energy in evaluation was devoted to assuring that each district had submitted

pre- and post-test data on the Title I participant population.³ Little if any effort was made in these states to encourage the districts to link evaluation efforts to program design or to give technical assistance to districts in this area. Three states which assumed a more directive state posture toward program administration of ESEA Title I had somewhat more aggressive evaluation policies, although more attention to evaluation seemed called for in each of these states. Two of the three had long emphasized the importance of evaluation in overall program design. This message was conveyed in one of those states more as an overall area of state emphasis (a statewide accountability thrust and formal and informal communications from SEA trained staff in the evaluation area) than in any specific state policy. A third state was particularly noteworthy for its efforts at the state level in evaluating and understanding the effects of Title I. They also frequently disseminated this information to districts in an effort to give them a tool with which to plan their future activities.

B. Local Policy and Practice. Two fundamental themes characterized evaluation procedures and activities in the LEAs included in this study. First, evaluation was typically synonymous with achievement testing--very little attention was given to process evaluation or to the systematic evaluation of "affective" program objectives. Second, evaluation was primarily done in order to fill out required reports; results rarely were used to influence program characteristics. Only about six of the thirty-two LEAs across six states were engaged in program evaluation activities that extended beyond standardized norm-referenced achievement testing of students or that attempted to relate results to program changes. Even in states that made some efforts to emphasize the usefulness of evaluations, districts generally viewed

³ Promises to maintain confidentiality of the states and districts visited preclude their specific mention in this paper or in the case study reports themselves.

their states as more preoccupied with technique than with usage, and more concerned with evaluation for state-level decision-making than local decision-making.

For many of the local programs, the almost exclusive focus on achievement testing (to the exclusion of process evaluation or attention to the outcomes of "affective" program components) would seem to be a predictable outcome of state and federal evaluation requirements. States played a significant role in determining which data would be collected and how. And, as indicated above, almost all data required were standardized, norm-referenced test score data. Some LEAs, however, went beyond state requirements. One large school district, for example, required schools to report information on program characteristics, parent participation, auxiliary service components, pupil services, and attendance services. Another district not only utilized and reported to the SEA criterion-referenced test results (rather than standardized, norm-referenced tests), but also developed a comprehensive evaluation report of all compensatory education services in the LEA including the state program, ESAA, Title I Migrant, and Bilingual Education. These exceptions aside, it was clear that state reporting requirements provided the sole rationale and design for most local evaluation efforts. Local program personnel thus regarded evaluation as a necessary activity conducted for someone else's purposes.

Another general observation on local evaluation efforts is that attention to evaluation was attention to technique, not to usage. Indeed, the technological capacity of many school districts--the ability to mount a major testing program, compare pre- and post-test results, produce school summary data, produce listings of individual pupils by school to submit a Title I evaluation report to the SEA in mid-summer, and often to do some reasonably sophisticated and interesting analysis of test results--these technological capacities far exceeded the capacity and/or willingness of LEA policy-makers and managers

to utilize evaluation results as a management tool. State policy was often an important factor here. States would frequently comment quite favorably about sophisticated evaluation techniques in particular districts without questioning how the evaluations were being used to help the district design future activities.

III. Some Promising Local Practices

As suggested above, SEA requirements for evaluation generally consisted of little more than aggregating standardized, norm-referenced test score data accumulated from testing Title I students. Of the thirty-two LEAs included in the study, the study teams identified three that went beyond this minimum. Two of these were in large metropolitan city school districts with fairly large research and evaluation staffs at the central office level. The third consisted of a medium-sized city district serving also as the state's capital city.

A. District 1., Evaluation Activities. In this large district, each school has a designated evaluation chairperson responsible for coordinating evaluations and testing programs at the school level (for all programs). Each school was expected to establish objectives, or checkpoints, against which it can evaluate its program. Also, through a needs assessment activity, the school's present status was ascertained. Schools were required to report information on Title I program characteristics, parent participation, auxiliary service components, pupil services and attendance services. The district's Office of Research and Evaluation prepared an annual series of evaluation mini-reports which review the outcome or status of the various program components.

While the state and the district had overlapping standardized testing program requirements in the reading and mathematics areas, the district's testing was conducted utilizing a matrix sampling of questions. Thus, data were available on state, district and school levels but not for the individual student. A reduction in testing time from three hours to one class period was realized as a result.

Another interesting aspect of the testing program in this district was that only test scores of pupils who had been in school at least eighty percent of the possible instructional time were used in computing the evaluation of the school's program

The district's Office of Research and Evaluation provided two exemplary services to its schools. A computer print-out providing standardized testing information from all sources was prepared annually. This information included an analysis of the school's student population and offered individual pupil achievement scores. The schools could use these data for planning and evaluating program thrusts as well as to identify those children who scored below the median for inclusion in appropriate Title I components.

Further, the Office of Research and Evaluation assigned its staff to the Title I technical assistance teams so that expertise in this area could be shared with area curriculum coordinators, school administrators, school faculty members and Title I personnel in the district. In this way, the individual schools could develop and implement curriculum procedures based on evaluation findings and have the benefit of evaluation staff assistance as special program materials are developed, tried out and revised.

B. District 2., Evaluation Activities. Another large-city district, this one employed a staff of professionals probably unique in terms of their qualifications and numbers.

Two types of evaluation are performed in this district relative to Title I. The first consists of the traditional assessment of Title I student achievement based on a fall and spring check. In addition, similar groups of students not participating in the programs were identified and tested.

The second type of evaluation consisted of a study of the instructional process within the context of the Title I program. This district has experi-

mented with a variety of programs in reading and mathematics as well as in social studies, science and music. Examples of research questions systematically explored and reported on by the district's evaluation teams include the following:

1. Was the Title I (reading) program implemented as proposed?
2. What services were rendered to the Title I (reading) students by the team of resource and demonstration teachers?
3. What type and amount of individualized instruction was characteristic of the three programs in Title I reading?
4. Was the basal curriculum taught? To what extent was the Title I reading programs' supplemental instruction integrated with the total (basal) curriculum?
5. To what extent were the reading achievement goals met?
6. How did the results of the Title I reading program compare with the results of other district reading programs?
7. Did the Title I reading programs differ significantly in pre-post gain trends as measured by standardized tests, when considered by school, by grade, by attendance in the program, and across entire programs?
8. Did the Title I reading programs differ significantly in longitudinal (cross-sectional and cohort) trends for the past three years?

Evaluation reports, thoroughly prepared and carefully documented, and based on the findings with respect to the above questions, were shared with program managers, district administrators and the district-wide PAC. (The final evaluation reports in a recent year, for the Title I programs in reading, in mathematics, and in social studies averaged 96 pages each.) The district has used these reports to determine the effectiveness of alternative program components, on a cross-comparative basis, on a cost-benefit basis, and as compared with teacher/student satisfaction and performance. All of these were

considered by district officials in making decisions concerning program continuance, modification or elimination. (It should be noted that this process did not apply solely to the district's Title I programs; the procedure was routinely performed for all of the district's experimental and/or project-type programs.)

C. District 3., Evaluation Activities. One of the most comprehensive, though still largely unproven, efforts at systematically building evaluation procedures into the ongoing management process at the district and school levels was underway in this district at the time of the site visit. Here, there was an attempt to operationalize the CIPP (context, input, process and product) evaluation model in each one of the LEA's schools, with particular emphasis on those receiving Title I funds.

In this medium-sized city school district, the staff from the central evaluation office launched a comprehensive in-service training activity designed to instruct Title I teachers and principals not only in how to administer tests, but also in how to use the results to improve instruction. Attention was also given to interpreting the results of the testing program to parents and members of the PACs. The evaluation here would soon rely heavily on criterion-reference tests, under construction during the period of our study. The district has annually published a report of its comprehensive evaluation of state and federal compensatory education programs. This report showed the extent to which district instructional objectives were being mastered by pupils participating in one or more of the compensatory education programs as a group as well as on the individual programs. The report also examined schools as the unit of inquiry and for the year of our study the conclusion was that

the available data, "reinforce the idea that the school (rather than program) is the meaningful unit to look at."

Thus, the breadth and the focus of the Title I evaluation in this LEA were a result of district officials' intention to use evaluation information as a management tool for improving the implementation of compensatory education and other programs in the district.

D. Summary and Conclusions. Overall, these instances of evaluation practice are perhaps more significant because they depart from the norm rather than for their levels of sophistication relative to evaluation design or execution. This is not to detract from the programs for in terms of Title I evaluation practice, they appear to be distinguished by the very fact that they exist in their current form.

The three LEAs in which these approaches were in operation shared these commonalities:

(1) The district's evaluation staff, as a separate unit at the central office, worked closely with the agency's Title I administrators and program officers.

(2) There was considerable interest, if not actual pressure, emanating from the district's administration (and as a result from the research office) for more than a routine aggregation of test scores and statistics relative to their Title I program evaluation.

(3) The desire to evaluate Title I programs extended to other experimental, project-type programs in the district. The evaluation thrust is not restricted to Title I programs.

(4) Considerable, often impressive cadres of expertise and talent were evident in the district's central office research evaluation staffs. And in two of the three cases, this was further exemplified by substantial numbers of these specialists supported by local agency funds.

IV. Implications of SRC Case Study Findings for Other Federal Aid Programs in Education

Although ESEA Title I is the largest federally supported program for public education in the country it is by no means the only one. A number of other federal education programs are currently operating in the nation's schools including programs supported by the Emergency School Assistance Act, Follow Through, The Vocational Education Act, The Bilingual Education Act and most recently the Education for all Handicapped Children Act. Some of these programs have recently attempted to implement new stricter evaluation requirements in order to enhance program accountability. For example, Section 112 of the 1976 Vocational Education Amendments requires states for the first time to evaluate the effectiveness of each of their grantee programs. Similarly the 1978 Amendments to the Bilingual Education Act specifically require that grantee programs provide measurable goals for determining when children no longer need assistance and include specific evaluation plans consistent with USOE guidelines. (Section 721 (a) P.L. 95-561). Since Title I was the first program to mandate specific evaluation requirements, it seems reasonable to surmise that some of the trends that have characterized evaluation implementation in that program will tend to emerge in these other programs as well. The following tendencies, based on the SRC Case Study experience, should therefore bear careful watching:

1. An increased pressure on grantees to demonstrate positive returns on the invested dollar and in the words of one state Title I administrator to "load their programs for success" i.e., to select program participants who are likely to show achievement growth.

2. A tendency to narrow the evaluation focus to one or two outcome variables to be measured and to require a reporting on these measures even when the programs in operation cover different areas.
3. A heavier reliance on testing, particularly standardized norm-referenced tests measuring growth in the cognitive domain.
4. A tendency toward increased fragmentation of services to students as programs mandate demonstrations of discrete isolable impacts, and with this a tendency for the evaluators of these discrete programs to be physically and substantively isolated from the agency's core evaluation and research staff.
5. An increased emphasis on conducting and reporting on summative evaluations without consequent attention to formative evaluation activities.
6. A tendency to look for short-term gains in student performance without consequent attention to long term growth.
7. A tendency to leave evaluation to the hands of professional evaluators and to limit the evaluational role of others (such as program staff, parents and classroom teachers) both in designing the evaluation and in utilizing its findings for program improvement purposes.

V. Recent Title I Evaluation Developments and their Implications:
The Title I Evaluation and Reporting System

Because ESEA Title I was the first federal education program to require specific grantee evaluation requirements, the evaluation system for this program has had some time to develop and change. The years since the SRC case studies have been marked by increasing efforts of the Federal Government to improve grantee evaluations most notably through mandating a new Title I Evaluation and Reporting System for grantee agencies (known as TIERS), and by funding Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) in each of the 10 HEW regions to assist grantees in their evaluation activities. It therefore seems appropriate to conclude this paper by describing and analyzing these new elements in the Title I evaluation picture, paying particular attention to the question of their current and potential impacts on altering the general conditions observed in the SRC site visits⁴. The discussion will begin by briefly recounting the history of the newly mandated Title I evaluation models and the TACs, and will proceed from that point to assessing actual and likely future impacts from the perspective of the prior research findings of the SRC case studies.

⁴Since the NTS Research Corporation is one of the designated TACs (responsible for HEW Region 3) discussions with Dr. Orland's colleagues plus some of his personal experiences in rendering Title I technical assistance to LEAs have proven extremely useful in reporting on this question.

A. Mandated Models and TAC Background

The education amendments of 1974 set the stage for the imposition of mandated local evaluation models in Title I and the creation of Title I Technical Assistance Centers. Section 151 part (d) of the amendments required the USOE Commissioner to provide models for Title I evaluation, "which shall include uniform procedures and criteria to be utilized by local education agencies, as well as by the State agency in the evaluation of such (PL 93-380, Sec. 151, part (d)). Part (f) of this section required that the models "specify objective criteria which shall be utilized in the evaluation of all programs and shall outline techniques...and methodology...for producing data which are comparable on a statewide and nationwide basis." (PL 93-380, Sec. 151, Part (f)).

The U.S. Office of Education interpreted these sections as requiring that they develop Title I evaluation models that could produce aggregable results of Title I students' cognitive achievement gains across states and school districts, while still allowing LEAs significant local program flexibility in determining program substance and evaluation instrumentation. The RMC Corporation under contract with USOE developed three such models; a norm reference model (Model A), a comparison group model (Model B) and a special regression model (Model C). The models are all similar in that they posit expectations of what a Title I student's achievement level would be without Title I services, thus allowing for a comparison between actual achievement with such services and hypothesized performance without it. They differ in the way in which a no treatment expectation is derived. In the norm reference model it is

derived from normative test data of students having the same percentile pre-test status as the Title I students, in the comparison group model it is from data of a comparable preselected group of students not receiving Title I services, and in the special regression model it is derived from data of students scoring above a predetermined Title I participation cutoff score and applying a statistical procedure to create a no treatment expectation for Title I participants.

Each of the models allows for the reporting of Title I achievement gain through a common reporting metric known as the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE), thus facilitating data aggregation and cross-site comparisons. Under proposed regulations current Federal plans are to require the districts to implement any of the three evaluation models for their Title I programs or an alternative model approved by USOE and the SEA. (Proposed regulations Part 116a.31 of Title 45). Any alternative model proposed must develop a performance expectation for Title I students in the absence of Title I services and be able to report in the common reporting metric.

Full utilization of the evaluation models in all school districts and the reporting of results in the common metric is scheduled for FY 1980 Title I programs, after the publication of final regulations in this area. However, states and districts have been gradually preparing themselves to implement model requirements since 1976, with significant assistance from the USOE funded Technical Assistance Centers (TACs).

As with the creation of the mandated evaluation models the creation of the TACs grew out of the 1974 Education Amendments.

USOE was required by the law to provide technical assistance to implement the evaluation models (PL 93-380, Section 151, Part E). Initially, however, no USOE monies were designated for such purposes. Under Congressional pressure USOE agreed in 1976 to cut 10 million dollars from a national independent evaluation of Title I impacts and to use those funds to create regional TACs which would assist states and LEAs in conducting their Title I evaluations. Contracts for operation of the TACs were awarded by USOE through competitive bid in the fall of 1976 and TACs continue to operate today.

The main purpose of the TACs has been to assist states and LEAs in meeting the new Title I evaluation and reporting requirements. TACs function in response to specific grantee requests for assistance and thus only operate to the extent they are perceived in the field as providing a useful advisory service. NTS as one of the regional TACs has developed a series of Title I evaluation workshops in response to grantee needs. The workshops address such issues as the steps to take in implementing each of the models, selecting the appropriate test instrument for measuring student achievement and the development of quality control procedures to help insure accurate data reporting. In addition, NTS staff respond to specific assistance requests from the field by telephone such as when a particular test can be administered without violating model assumptions or how to interpret a test publisher's norms tables.

Where feasible and appropriate NTS staff have worked with grantees on the question of utilization of evaluative information from the models and other sources for state and local program decision making. Attempts to expand efforts in this area (such as through

holding a workshop on the topic of evaluation utilization) have thus far been stymied by USOE fears that such a TAC role exceeds USOE's mandate in this area i.e., that the authorized USOE technical assistance role is largely restricted to "teaching the models."

B. Implications For SRC Research Findings

Two major conclusions seem to be emerging at this time concerning the impact of the models and TACs on the conditions observed in the SRC case studies. The first is that the most basic findings previously reported from these studies continue to hold true. Neither the models themselves nor the TACs have changed basic grantee attitudes toward evaluation utilization. An NTS colleague who has conducted nearly 100 evaluation workshops as a TAC representative described the situation this way.

"I do feel the LEA evaluations are better than they were. But, I don't feel that the LEAs are utilizing test scores any better than before...Nothing about the models or TIERS prevents them from making more frequent and better use of evaluative information. It is their lack of knowledge on what to do with data and the lack of help from the present TAC effort which perpetuates the LEAs "non-use" of evaluative data for local decision making and planning."

Jane David's 1978 study of evaluation utilization at the LEA level reached similar conclusions. Dr. David found that local evaluations were not used either as a basis for judging the effectiveness of Title I programs or a guide for program decision-making (David p. 37). Concerning the question of the impact

of the evaluation models on local utilization, she states the following:

"The models address only the "symptoms," that is, technical weaknesses of the outcome measures and procedures for data collection and analysis. I suggest that this approach...cannot by itself affect local use of evaluation." (David p. 42).

To these observations this additional insight from the SRC case studies can be added. Since most states and local districts were observed to be structuring their administrative activities around Federal expectations, the recent Federal emphases on grantee evaluation technique and reporting requirements without similar attention to the utilization question should act to reinforce grantee feelings that their Title I evaluation responsibilities consist solely of providing data for other peoples use. The major change in Federal performance expectations emanating from TIERs is to expect grantees to pay considerably more attention to insuring that the data submitted to USOE is technically sound. This is not an insignificant change in Federal performance expectations but neither is it one which should by itself alter the conditions observed in the case studies concerning evaluation utilization.

While there is no reason to believe that the existence of the evaluation models and TACs have thus far changed state and local attitudes toward data utilization, there is reason to hypothesize that this situation could change markedly in the coming few years. Both the creation of the models and the TACs have put forces in motion which may lead to increased utilization of evaluation information for state and local decision-making. The most basic of these is the

heightened awareness of grantees to the issue of evaluation. The SRC case studies observed that States and LEAs generally devoted little administrative attention to evaluation beyond making sure that pretest and posttest scores were submitted for all Title I students. The imposition of the models, with their comparatively detailed and rigorous technical requirements has drastically changed that situation. State and LEA administrators are being sensitized, both by the new requirements and the TACs, to the fact that evaluation is a serious and complex responsibility, consisting of considerably more than "entering some numbers on a report form." It is not insignificant that in all three of the districts observed as having the most promising Title I evaluation approaches, Title I officials were made cognizant by central LEA personnel of the importance and seriousness of the program evaluation task. This message has reached many more Title I administrators in recent months as a result of all the "noise" associated with the imposition of the new evaluation system.

Moving from a grantee awareness that evaluation is a serious business to a realization that it can and should be used to help improve their own programs is admittedly a large step. The former, however, is probably a necessary condition for the latter to occur. What is then needed is an external agent to encourage and aid grantees in taking that step when district conditions are not by themselves fortuitous in that regard. There is evidence that TACs are willing and anxious to take on such a new responsibility and that recent changes in the Title I legislation may result in USOE allowing them to do so.

Federal interest in the question of evaluation utilization is reflected in the 1978 Education Amendments where for the first time the issue is specifically addressed in the legislation. Section 124 of Public Law 95-561 (Part G) states that, "...the results of the evaluations will be utilized in planning for and improving projects and activities carried out under this title in subsequent years." Draft Federal regulations on the specific issue of evaluation utilization for program improvement are expected shortly. Recently, a TAC technical subcommittee on evaluation utilization (made up chiefly of TAC representatives from the various regions who make recommendations to USOE concerning TIERS), has been specifically encouraged to investigate the question of a TAC role in evaluation utilization that goes beyond the implementation of the three mandated evaluation models. While it is impossible to say at this time whether the TAC role will in fact be expanded to directly tackle the utilization question the recent activities of Congress and USOE have served to considerably strengthen such a possibility.

Summarizing briefly the existence of the mandated evaluation models and the TACs have not thus far affected the most basic conclusions from the SRC case studies regarding grantee approaches to Title I evaluation. Recent evidence indicates that evaluation is still viewed largely as data to be collected for someone else's use, and grantee attention to evaluation continues to focus upon issues of technique rather than usage. However, both the models and the TACs have helped set forces in motion which may soon change that picture. The evaluation models and TACs have heightened grantee awareness about the evaluation question, a necessary precursor for significant change.

And TACS have themselves become a direct force for change by pushing for a larger role in helping grantees use evaluative data for their own purposes. When combined with a new Federal emphasis in this area as reflected in the 1978 Education Amendments it seems reasonable to conclude that circumstances now appear ripe for beginning to alter the persistent conditions observed in the SRC case studies concerning grantee utilization of Title I evaluation data.

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