

Self-Evaluation in Promoting Teacher Growth

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INTRODUCTION

In 1933 the Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards, involving the six regional accrediting associations, was organized with a view to developing promising principles and practices for accrediting secondary schools. Prior to this time accrediting procedures used in colleges and secondary schools were based, in the main, on inflexible standards.

Although this state of affairs existed, school people had voiced dissatisfaction with the then used accrediting procedures. In consonance with this significant trend of thought, practices evolved from the Cooperative Study that were democratic and qualitative, and which tended to liberalize secondary education. Thus, the time-honored emphasis on quantity was redirected in terms of qualitative evaluations.¹

As a result of the study the following volumes were published: *Evaluation of a Secondary School*, *Evaluative Criteria*, *Educational Temperatures*, and *How to Evaluate a Secondary School*. These materials were used rather widely by schools after their appearance. After six years of experimentation, it was recommended that an effective way of appraising the program of a secondary school was by making a self-evaluation through applying the *Evaluative Criteria* followed by having the self-evaluation checked by a visiting committee. In order to bring the materials up to date, the *Criteria* was revised in 1950.

Educators who have used the instrument in improvement programs or as a basis for accrediting schools have praised it as a promising means of promoting teacher growth. Expressions with respect to the stimulative effects of the *Evaluative Criteria* are to be found in a series of papers read before the Commission on Secondary Schools of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, March 26, 1941.²

PURPOSE AND PROCEDURE OF STUDY

This paper is concerned with determining, in part, the stimulative effects on a group of Negro teachers that resulted from participation in self-evaluation programs during the period 1950-1952.

Specifically, this paper seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What stimulative value did teachers in the schools gain from participating in the self-evaluation?
2. In what ways did the participating teachers change in providing improved conditions for educating children?

The teachers included in the study represent the eight Oklahoma Negro schools completing the self-evaluation during the last three years. The name of the schools, their locations and dates of accreditation appear in Table I.

¹For a complete statement of the guiding principles developed see: Walter C. Eells, "Bases for a Method of Accrediting Secondary Schools," *Educational Record Supplement*, 19:114-42 (January, 1938).

²These papers were read by E. E. Morley, Heights High School, Cleveland Heights, Ohio; C. L. Bird, Wilson High School, Wilson, Arkansas; C. B. Manley, Will Rogers High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Ralph Robb, Community High School, Clinton, Illinois. They appear in *The North Central Association Quarterly*, 16:176-187 (October 1941).

TABLE I
*Oklahoma Negro High Schools and Their Locations Accredited by the
 North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 1950-1952**

NAME OF SCHOOL	CITY OF TOWN	DATE ACCREDITED
Manual Training	Muskogee	1950
Blaine	Perry	1950
Attucks	Ponca City	1950
L'Ouverture	McAlester	1950
Lincoln	Chickasha	1951
Faver	Guthrie	1952
Douglass	Lawton	1952
Lincoln	Anadarko	1952

* Data taken from *The North Central Association Quarterly*. 27:132-135 (July, 1952).

As a means of gathering data, the writer developed a questionnaire which sought to elicit testimonial evidence from teachers who participated in the self-evaluation during the period included in this study. The questionnaires were sent to the principal of each school in such quantities as to permit teachers who had participated in the self-evaluation to execute the form. Although there are now fourteen Oklahoma Negro high schools holding membership in the North Central Association, those eight schools that completed the self-evaluation during the period 1950-1952 were selected because of the belief that the teachers in these schools were likely to recall the experience more vividly; and because it was expected that the time that has elapsed would preclude the possibility of a high degree of turnover. The eight schools returned a total of eighty questionnaires, representing approximately ninety-six per cent of the teachers employed in the participating schools.

This study has certain limitations which, of necessity, need to be made explicit in order that the data may be interpreted with greater facility. First, the writer is aware of the limitations often associated with the use of the questionnaire. Secondly, although the interest here is in attempting to gather evidence of teacher growth, recognition is given to the impossibility of determining the numerical increments of growth that might have accrued.

FINDINGS

It is believed by some school people that a major test of the effectiveness of an in-service experience is to be found in the changes that are brought about in teachers. To the question, What value did you gain from the experiences? An analysis of the questionnaires revealed that most of the teachers stated the value of the experience in terms of changes that took place in their professional knowledge, skills, interests and appreciations. These, of course, are the usual kinds of outcomes expected to result from a learning experience.

On the basis of frequency of mention the respondents prized most highly the fact that, through participating in the self-evaluation, they increased their knowledge of pupil growth and development. In recent years increasing emphasis has been placed upon the belief that a competent teacher, in addition to knowing her field of specialization, should have rather specific knowledge about children.

Asserted one teacher, "I discovered factors that influence the behavior of children—family background, socio-economic status, ability, etc." In addition, the respondent stated that she "gained skill in gathering and

interpreting information about individual children and groups of children."

Similarly, another teacher expressed the value of the experience in this fashion:

"Much enrichment on my part was gained through a better understanding of the students' needs, *which will be invaluable*, in helping them to make the proper adjustment to the home, school, community and develop a sense of moral security which will carry them through adult life."³

Some teachers pointed out that the experience stimulated a recognition of the interdependence of various aspects of the school program. On this point one respondent contended that "I received a better understanding of the workings of the entire school." Another asserted that the experience enabled the participating teachers to "learn more about other departments of the school." Still another respondent felt that the experience resulted in a better articulation of different parts of the school program. He opined that "it *the self-evaluation* stimulated the development of a closer relationship between the grades and the high school and broadened my view of school work."⁴

Learning about the school and community, its background, resources and needs was valued highly by a number of the respondents. Moreover, listed for its stimulative effect was the fact that the experience in participating in the self-evaluation aided a number of the teachers in discovering their own personal strengths and weaknesses.

Other outcomes that were emphasized included: learning more about guidance; increasing skill in handling children; learning to work with others; learning how to implement a philosophy of education; and increasing knowledge of available teaching resources.

A good program of in-service education should eventuate in providing increasingly better conditions under which children learn. That the respondents have attempted to provide improved conditions for educating children is reflected in the testimonial evidence offered. A majority of the teachers reported that since participating in the self-evaluation, they have redirected their efforts through improved planning for and with the students for whom they assume responsibility. Instead of restricting class work to projects pre-planned *in toto* these respondents stated that educative experiences are now emerging from child needs, with recognition being given to individual differences, as well as community needs. Accordingly, there has been somewhat of a shift of emphasis from subject matter to child as a learner. A very searching statement bearing on the desirable focus for teaching was made by one of the responding principals who put the matter this way:

"For one thing I find myself asking, Does this job or project or course of action satisfy some pupil or community need?"

Some of the teachers felt that they are providing improved conditions by an emphasis upon helping students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes believed to be necessary for living competently in a democratic society. This has been accomplished by affording the students opportunities for pupil-teacher planning, by a reorientation of the concept of discipline, viewing it as guidance in democratic living. In this connection, according to one respondent:

"The aims and objectives which we adopted make it almost mandatory that we (1) provide a more democratic classroom

³ Italics mine
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set up, (2) avoid mere verbalism in teaching, and (3) think in terms of guidance instead of punishment for the so-called problem children."

In similar vein, another teacher stated that:

"I feel that my teaching is more democratic. Students help plan, suggest and give their opinions."

Still another teacher has provided a permissive atmosphere where "pupil-teacher relationship is closer, i.e.: pupils are permitted to plan and execute their plans."

Another way in which teachers stated that they improved conditions for child learning was by enriching the curriculum. Each participating school has what may be classified as a subject-centered curriculum. However, within the framework of such curriculum organization, the teachers are utilizing films, film strips, field trips and other forms of teaching aids which, of course, tend to enrich and vitalize the curriculum.

Other means in current use include: re-examining of concepts of learning, effecting improved ways of motivating children, becoming more tolerant, and continuing self-evaluation. Three respondents who are attempting to find ways of improving conditions under which children learn, have been stimulated by the self-evaluation to pursue further graduate study toward an advanced degree

SUMMARY

This paper presents testimonial evidence gathered from eighty Oklahoma Negro teachers with respect to the stimulative effects resulting from participation in a self-evaluation program during the period 1950-1952. These teachers comprise the faculties of the eight Oklahoma Negro high schools accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools during the past three years. On the basis of an analysis of the responses, the following summary seems warranted:

1. In general, teachers valued the experience of participating in the self-evaluation, because they felt that it provided a basis for improving their professional knowledge, skills, appreciations.
 2. Some of the specific outcomes that teachers valued most highly included: increasing their knowledge of child growth and development; recognizing the interdependence of various aspects of the school program; and learning about the school and community—its background, resources and needs.
 3. The major ways by which respondents attempted, as a result of the experience, to provide better learning conditions were: improve planning for and with children, aiding students in developing attributes necessary for democratic living, and enriching the curriculum within the framework of a subject-centered curriculum.
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