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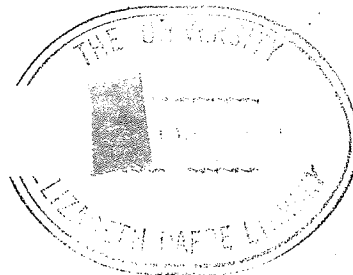
A CRITICAL STUDY OF CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE
EVALUATION OF MODERN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION PROGRAM
FOR THE J.B. MITCHELL SCHOOL

A THESIS
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BY
MARSHALL ROSCOE THOMPSON

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ABSTRACT

The Problem

This thesis reports a study in the theory and practice of total-school evaluation at the junior high level. Originating in the context of a principal's responsibility for directing the continuous evaluation and improvement of his school, this inquiry had a twofold purpose: (1) to find the means to guide the continued development of a junior high school in the Manitoba setting; (2) to employ those techniques in the preparation of an initial self-evaluation program for the J.B. Mitchell Junior High School.

An analysis of the problem showed that comprehensive evaluation, with its implications for action, is the practical way of guiding the continued development of a modern junior high school; moreover, that an evaluation program would require an instrument with three principal components: (1) an outline or other organization of critical features--provisions or conditions that indicate qualitative differences in schools; (2) a corresponding framework of evaluative criteria--standards that can be used to appraise the critical features; (3) a practical procedure--techniques that can be employed by a principal and his staff to evaluate their own school.

With respect to the second objective, limitations of time and resources precluded a comprehensive evaluation of the J.B. Mitchell School. Instead, it was necessary for the writer to plan and administer a survey-type examination of the total school situation, and to include as results of this tentative appraisal both plans for direct action and

recommendations for further investigation.

Procedure

This inquiry initially involved the study of two kinds of evaluation literature: the special references on total-school evaluation at the secondary level, and a representative selection of present-day manuals designed for self-evaluation programs in junior high schools. From those sources the investigator derived the practical instrument for a self-evaluation project at J.B. Mitchell School. As neither the general literature on total-school evaluation nor the available manuals could supply adequate evaluative criteria for junior high schools, the theory phase had to be extended to include a survey of the history and philosophy of this special school for early adolescents and an analysis of books and periodicals reflecting current thinking about its basic aims, primary functions, and desirable features.

For the project at J.B. Mitchell School, the investigator used an adaptation of Wendell G. Anderson's "synoptic-outline" method (developed in his manual, A Self-Evaluation Instrument for Junior High Schools), with each group of related critical features being examined by a three-phase approach: (1) INVENTORY--a description of the present situation at the school; (2) EVALUATION--an appraisal of this situation in the light of available criteria; (3) ACTION PROGRAM--implications for action and for further investigation. To obtain the necessary data on the school, he relied mainly upon controlled observation; that is, upon personal checking of provisions or conditions with reference to critical features derived from the evaluation manuals, the findings

being summarized on special data-processing forms. Questionnaires were employed to secure information relative to two of the evaluation areas (Staff and Co-curriculum), and frequent reference was made throughout the inquiry to official publications, school records (including minutes of staff meetings), and the files or working papers kept by the writer in his capacity as Principal of J.B. Mitchell School.

Although the pupils supplied data for one of the major evaluation areas, and the teachers contributed both information and appraisals at several stages of the investigation, limitations of time and research facilities made this project at J.B. Mitchell School basically a one-man undertaking: a principal's tentative evaluation of his school to identify weaknesses and plan improvements. The entire study was spread over a three-year period, from 1961 to 1964, with the theory portion taking roughly one year, and the practical phase requiring the other two; however, there was inevitable overlapping. During the latter period, the school was examined directly in terms of hundreds of specific features, with a thoroughness that varied from aspect to aspect according to the availability of both data and criteria.

Findings

Modern evaluation routines for junior high schools have been developed on foundations laid by the Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards, a research organization sponsored by six regional accrediting associations in the United States. The Study demonstrated the complexity and costliness of total-school evaluation, the necessity for finding features that really characterize a school (complete

measurement being impracticable), and the desirability (in a democracy) of evaluating a school in terms of its own stated philosophy of education and local objectives. What is most important, through six years of careful research it proved that the best indicators of school excellence are qualitative judgments by a school's own staff--provided they are carefully made by a proven method of inquiry and checked by an experienced review committee.

Present-day evaluation manuals for junior high schools, owing much to the Cooperative Study's principles of evaluation and practical experience, emphasize self-evaluation in terms of eight major areas of the total school situation: Philosophy and Objectives, Pupil Population and School Community, Staff, Physical Facilities, Program (General), Program (Special Areas), Co-curriculum, and Student Services--each of which is divided into sub-areas and critical features. (A forty-page outline in Appendix A of this thesis gives some idea of the thousands of features to be examined in a modern comprehensive evaluation.) By their selection and phrasing of the features to be examined within each sub-area, these manuals provide many secondary evaluative criteria; that is, answers to the question: Which provisions or conditions are desirable in a good junior high school, and to what extent should they be found? They do not provide the primary criteria, however; that is, answers to the question: Why are these features desirable?

The literature on the junior high school as an educational institution provided some standards for judging the critical features, albeit in forms difficult to employ in practical situations. Thus, these writings showed that "junior high school" in its most widely-accepted

connotation implies two basic aims (a special program for early adolescents, and an effective transition from elementary school to senior high school), six primary functions (integration, exploration, guidance, differentiation, socialization, and articulation), and several organizational features (such as an integrated three-grade program, teacher specialization, attention to individual differences through both administrative and teaching flexibility, a co-curricular program, and a full range of guidance services).

From his examination of the selected manuals, the investigator deduced that two basic evaluation techniques have proven their worth: the "checklist-evaluation" method (developed by the Cooperative Study) and the "synoptic-outline" method (used by some of the most recent manuals)--the latter being particularly suited to initial evaluation programs in schools of similar size and resources to J.B. Mitchell.

The results of the application of these principles and procedures to seven major areas of the total situation at J.B. Mitchell School--Program (Special Areas) being the only principal category omitted entirely from this first evaluation--are to be found in Chapters V and VI of the thesis: a two-hundred page report organized into nineteen divisions, each with Inventory, Evaluation, and Action Program sections. Collectively these investigations revealed seventy-seven inadequate situations at the school, and suggested the possibility of several more; moreover, they focused attention on over one hundred implications for a follow-up program.

Conclusions

This report contains the essential elements for the preparation of a self-evaluation instrument applicable to any junior high school:

- (1) a plan for evaluating the school in terms of commonly-accepted general areas and sub-areas of the total school situation, together with an outline of critical features significant at that level;
- (2) a framework of criteria (albeit incomplete) for evaluating those features;
- (3) descriptions of two well-established self-evaluation procedures;
- (4) illustrations of the practical adaptation of one of these basic methods to a modern junior high school.

Furthermore, it provides comprehensive reports on nineteen sub-areas of the total situation at J.B. Mitchell School--reports which not only identify provisions or conditions in need of improvement, but also indicate some desirable courses of action and evident priorities for them. Thus, having found the means to guide the continued development of a junior high school in the Manitoba setting, and having employed those techniques to produce an initial self-improvement program for the J.B. Mitchell School, this study has in some measure attained its two primary objectives.

While the thesis does not presume to add new knowledge to the science of education, it was planned with these four practical outcomes in mind--each of which helps to define its importance as a research study: (1) a contribution to the progress of a particular school through the preparation of a program for guiding its continued development; (2) a contribution to the professional growth of the principal and teachers of that school through their involvement in a local self-evaluation project; (3) a contribution to the supervisory program of the Winnipeg School Division through the presentation of a full report

on the evaluation of one of its junior high schools; (4) a contribution to educational research in Canada through the critical study of American criteria and procedures for total-school evaluation at the secondary level. Although a complete and objective appraisal of these contributions could not be made as part of this study, the writer has presented evidence (in Chapter VII) to show the extent to which each expected outcome has probably been realized.

Perhaps no less important as an outcome of this study is the clear-cut evidence that comprehensive evaluation is a very demanding and time-consuming enterprise, one that is not likely to be successfully undertaken by a teaching staff as a spare-time project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present-day principal is expected to play many roles, not the least demanding being his responsibility for directing the continuous evaluation and improvement of the total program of his school. It was in this general context that the investigation reported here had its origins and growth.

More specifically, this thesis summarizes a three-year project in total-school evaluation at a relatively new junior high school in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The inquiry began in 1961, towards the close of its fifth year of operation.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

This investigation began with two questions:

1. What means are available to assist the principal of a modern junior high school in carrying out his responsibility for guiding its continued development?
2. Which provisions or conditions for the education of pupils at the J.B. Mitchell School are in need of improvement, and what priorities should be assigned to measures designed to remedy evident weaknesses?

On analysis, the dual problem posed by these questions was seen to involve two related projects:

1. A careful examination of the literature relative to the evaluation of junior high schools to identify
 - a) the critical features of junior high schools and their programs; that is, those provisions or conditions that indicate qualitative differences in schools of this type;

- b) the criteria which are available for the evaluation of critical features;
 - c) the procedures which have been developed for total-school evaluation at this level.
2. An evaluation of the J.B. Mitchell School involving
- a) the development of a practical plan for an initial total-school evaluation;
 - b) the administration of this evaluation project;
 - c) the planning of a follow-up action program to effect needed improvements.

Definition of Terms

None of the terms employed in the title of this report or in the exposition of the problem is so technical that it is likely to be misunderstood in context. However, "junior high school", "evaluation", and "need of improvement" tend to be used so loosely in educational literature that their respective limits for purposes of this study must be made explicit; and "action program", as a term from the vocabulary of the modern evaluation manuals, has a specialized connotation that may not be self-evident.

Junior high school. That there is no simple definition of "junior high school" acceptable to most authorities is clearly illustrated by the following quotations from four standard references:

Junior High School: the lower part of a divided secondary school comprising usually grades 7, 8, and 9; less frequently consists of grades 7 and 8 or 8 and 9.¹

¹Carter V. Good (ed.), Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1945), p. 231.

The junior high school is an organization of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades into an administrative unit for the purpose of providing instruction and training suitable to the varied and changing physical, mental, and social natures and needs of immature, maturing, and mature pupils. "Maturity" here means the arrival of adolescence. ²

The Junior High School. This is the intermediate school which is designed to carry the pupil over from the content and techniques that are typical of the elementary school to those which characterize the senior high school....

The school usually includes grades seven, eight and nine.... In some places only grades seven and eight are included.... There is a trend at present to retain seventh graders in the elementary school because of their lack of maturity. In many six-year secondary schools, grades seven, eight and nine are called the Junior High School, are taught by a separate staff, and have graduation exercises at the end of the ninth year, even though the children continue to attend the same school for the tenth year. ³

The junior high school is an educational program which is designed particularly to meet the needs, the interests, and the abilities of boys and girls during early adolescence. A school building, grade organization, and certain administrative features are important in the junior high school only to the extent that they have a bearing on that educational program. ⁴

These quotations, however, bring into focus a unifying element; namely, the needs of early adolescents--the pupils who comprise the majority in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. If there is a central theme underlying the origins and growth of the junior high school as part of the reorganization of secondary education in North America, it is that the junior high grades should be handled as a transitional level of the public school system to meet the special

²Ralph W. Pringle, The Junior High School--A Psychological Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1937), p. 68

³Gertrude Noar, The Junior High School--Today and Tomorrow (second edition; New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1961), p. 340.

⁴William T. Gruhn and Harl R. Douglass, The Modern Junior High School (second edition; New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 4.

needs (particularly the psychological needs) of this age-group. "Junior high school", then, is more than a label for a special building enrolling pupils in two or more of grades seven to nine. It denotes a special educational program, for a special group of pupils whose special needs cannot be met adequately in the traditional elementary school or in the senior high school. In consequence, throughout this project the critical features of the total school program have been evaluated with reference to the abiding aims and functions of this special program for early adolescents.⁵

Evaluation. This term often signifies little more than subjective appraisal or casual testing. However, used correctly in research studies, it has both wide and narrow connotations. As a broad concept, it defines a process having three phases: (a) the selection of criteria for judging the worth of the feature(s) to be evaluated; (b) the development of procedures for applying the evaluative criteria to the feature(s) so selected; (c) the evaluation proper--the "synthesizing[of] the evidence yielded by these procedures into a final judgment of worth," with its implications for an action program to overcome revealed weaknesses.⁶ In its narrower sense, the term is used to indicate the third phase alone, the judgment of worth in the light of the criteria

⁵It is recognized that the definition of "junior high school" is incomplete without a further explanation of these abiding aims and functions. However, because they are meaningful only in the context of the history and philosophy of the junior high school and of current thinking about that institution, the reader is asked to accept this as a working definition until he has completed the reading of Chapter III.

⁶Chester W. Harris (ed.), Encyclopedia of Educational Research (third edition; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), p. 482.

used. Both uses of "evaluation" will be found in this report, in contexts where the import should be clear without further definition.

Need of improvement. As "improvement" implies a direction of change for the better, for the more efficient fulfilment of purpose, need of improvement in a program exists when the process of evaluation, having established its "final judgment of worth", makes clear any deficiencies relative to purpose. In this project the purpose is to meet the special educational needs of a special group--the pupils of the J.B. Mitchell Junior High School.

Action program. No project in total-school evaluation would be complete without a plan to effect the improvements known to be desirable. Such plan, if it is to promote the more efficient fulfilment of purpose, must concentrate on improvements that are practically possible; moreover, it must assign priorities to them. This corollary to evaluation is referred to in the literature on total-school evaluation as the improvement program or, more precisely, the action program.⁷

Importance of This Study

In directing a self-evaluation project at the J.B. Mitchell School, the investigator did not expect to make an original contribution to the theory of total-school evaluation. Rather, he had in mind four principal outcomes:

⁷This term has been borrowed, with permission of the author, from Wendell G. Anderson, An Instrument for the Self-Evaluation of Junior High Schools (Urbana, Illinois: Wendell Gaylord Anderson, 1959), Introduction, p. 2. (Mimeographed.)

1. A contribution to the progress of a specific school through the preparation of an action program to guide its continued development.
2. A contribution to the professional growth of a particular junior high school staff through the awakening of its principal and teachers to a greater understanding of comprehensive evaluation and of their personal responsibilities for the continuous evaluation and improvement of their school.
3. A contribution to the supervisory program of the Winnipeg School Division through the presentation of an evaluation report on one of its junior high schools.
4. A contribution to educational research in Canada through the critical study of modern American techniques for total-school evaluation.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Of the seven chapters in this report, the first three comprise the introductory division, the next three report the conditions and results of the evaluation project at the J.B. Mitchell School, and Chapter VII summarizes the recommendations and conclusions. To these have been added two appendices.

Immediately following this discussion of the problem and its importance is an exposition of the development of criteria and procedures for the evaluation of secondary schools in North America. This second chapter has three main divisions: (1) a brief historical survey of the half-century of experimentation with accrediting routines that culminated in the investigations of the Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards; (2) a more detailed study of the principles and procedures for total-school evaluation that were developed by the Study; (3) an analysis of the working criteria and procedures that are implicit in modern evaluation manuals. Chapter III completes the theoretical

part of the report by showing the possibilities and limitations of general secondary level evaluative criteria and procedures when applied to the junior high school, and has two principal divisions: (1) an assessment of the current situation with respect to practicable evaluation routines for a project of this nature; (2) a brief account of the history of the junior high school, followed by a more thorough exposition of its aims, objectives, functions, and features, as seen by both the pioneers in the junior high school movement and its present-day exponents and critics.

The fourth chapter is concerned with scope and method, and begins with the setting for this project--the school in the system. This description is followed by a discussion of the factors which limited the scope of the investigation and staff participation in it. The greater part of the chapter, however, is devoted to an outline of sources of evidence, an exposition of the method of procedure, and a brief statement of the organization of the self-evaluation report.

The details of the report on J.B. Mitchell School are presented in two chapters dealing respectively with Educational Environment and Program. Each chapter reports on a group of related areas of the total-school situation, one sub-area at a time. The report on each sub-area records the results of a three-phase approach to evaluation: (1) a survey of the current provisions or conditions in the school; (2) an evaluation of the situation revealed by this survey; (3) recommendations for effecting the improvements thereby shown to be needed.

Chapter VII, Conclusions, answers the questions which launched this investigation, and hazards an appraisal of its success as a

research project.

The appendices contain material of two kinds: the first, a synopsis in outline form of the specific features for junior high school evaluation that are emphasized in the representative evaluation manuals; the second, copies of forms and questionnaires used to facilitate the collection and processing of data, plus copies of memoranda illustrating how the instructional staff of J.B. Mitchell School was involved in this project during the 1962-1963 school year.