

can cite to justify what we habitually do.

#### IMPROVING INSTRUCTION THROUGH RESEARCH

A few pages back I said that the best way to learn how to do action research is to try it. Reading about what others have done provides only limited help. One of the excellent incidental effects of conducting action research is that the people involved come to some disturbing conclusions regarding their tendencies to generalize in the absence of evidence. A particular action research study might be criticized because it results in limited evidence lacking in reliability and validity, but the very insistence upon trying to get some sort of evidence is a sign of maturity.

I have the strong personal conviction that improvement in educational practices and curriculums will continue to be exceedingly slow and involve discouraging regressions until the time comes when a large number of individuals and groups are engaged in numerous action research studies of the type discussed above. This seems to me to be the alternative to improving curriculums by telling people what to do. Curriculums and educational practices in general can best be improved by doing whatever can be done to make it easy, rewarding, and exciting for teachers and administrators and supervisors to accumulate their own evidence, individually and in cooperation with others, as to the success or failure of their actions.

## *A Human Relations Approach to Instruction*

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Human relationships in the classroom was the subject of this research study carried on as a part of the Stanford Social Education Investigation. Robert N. Bush, associate professor of education at Stanford University, California, describes the procedures and findings of this study, together with those phases of the project that relate most directly to in-service education.

THIS REPORT OF RESEARCH based on classroom studies in human relationships originated as a part of the Stanford Social Education Investigation, an in-service education project carried on from 1939-1943 in ten school centers in the Western part of the

United States.<sup>1</sup> The Investigation was conducted by the School of Education of Stanford University with the finan-

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed report of this Investigation, see Quillen, I. James, and Hanna, Lavone A., *Education for Social Competence*. New York: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1948.

cial support of the General Education Board.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The project on human relations began experimentally in a few classrooms. Through additional financial assistance from the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education,<sup>2</sup> the program expanded until by 1943 approximately fifty classrooms were involved. Represented were both public and private schools, grades seven-fourteen, including experienced and inexperienced teachers of both sexes, who taught a wide variety of subject matter fields.

#### Purposes of the Project

The purposes of the studies were:

- ♦ to describe as accurately and comprehensively as possible the relationships existing between teachers and pupils in these classes
- ♦ to formulate some hypotheses concerning the nature of an effective teacher-pupil relationship
- ♦ to develop new designs and techniques for research dealing with effectiveness of teaching
- ♦ to provide in-service education for the teachers who participated in the studies.

This article will emphasize the manner of working in the schools and those phases of the project which relate most directly to in-service education. It will also touch on the research results. The entire project will be presented in detail in a volume to be published shortly.

<sup>2</sup> The work of the Commission is described in *Teachers for Our Times*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1944. For a detailed case study of one of the classrooms, see Troyer, M. E., and Pace, C. R., *Evaluation in Teacher Education*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1944. pp. 255-276.

If a school system signified that it wished to cooperate after the proposed study had been explained in detail to the superintendent of schools and his staff of administrators and supervisors, the consultant from the University outlined the project at faculty meetings in the individual schools which were to participate. Any faculty member who wished could volunteer and select one of his classes to be studied. Each teacher was assured that the results would remain strictly confidential. No local administrator, supervisor, colleague, or student would have access to the findings. They would be available solely to the teacher for use in improving his teaching. In each school, several times as many persons volunteered as the number who could participate.

The school system designated a local coordinator, usually from the supervisory staff, who assisted with the details of collecting data in the classrooms. The necessary evidence was collected over a period of a month after the semester was well under way. Approximately five class periods of students' time, three hours of teachers' time beyond the class periods, and a limited amount of supervisors' and administrators' time were used.

#### Collecting the Data

To describe the pupil-teacher relationships in each classroom, information was collected concerning:

- the teacher's and the students' knowledge of the subject matter being studied
- the similarity of the teacher's and the students' interest patterns
- the similarity of the teacher's and students' social beliefs

- the similarity of the teacher's and students' purposes
- the teacher's opinion of how well he liked each student personally, of the effectiveness of his relationships with them, of their probable success in college and in adult life, of their study efforts and methods, conduct in class, definiteness of purposes, need for prodding, emotional balance, quality of thinking, and their academic and social adjustment
- the students' opinions concerning how well they liked their teacher personally, what they thought of his knowledge of the subject, his fairness in grading, discipline ability, sympathy, fairness of decisions, organizing and planning ability, explaining ability, personal appearance, general teaching ability; and how well they liked the subject, the value of the class and its activities, and the amount they thought they were learning
- supervisors' and administrators' judgments of how well they liked a teacher personally, of his knowledge of the subject, fairness in grading, discipline ability, sympathy, fairness of decisions, organizing and planning ability, explaining ability, general teaching ability, personal appearance, objective attitude toward his students and insight into their problems, and adjustment to his job
- students' personal liking for each other
- the amount and kind of personnel information known by the teacher about the student
- students' I.Q.'s and grades.

The techniques used for collecting these data included standardized achievement tests, an interest inventory, an attitude scale, questionnaires, interviews, point rating scales, anecdotal records, sociometric charts, check lists, observations, and the use of school records.

#### **Program for Improvement**

The results from each classroom were summarized and graphed on a master chart made specifically for each

teacher. By means of this chart he could view the findings from his classroom in comparison with the averages for the group. The consultant, after studying the facts from each classroom against the background of those from the entire school system, returned to the community to confer with the teachers. A meeting of two-hours' duration was first held with the teachers as a group. Attention was devoted to averages and ranges of scores. This was followed by private individual conferences, each of a half-day's duration, in which the consultant presented to each teacher an analysis of his classroom teaching.

In about two weeks another two-hour conference took place with each teacher. At this time, the teacher raised questions which had come to mind as he had opportunity to digest the findings more thoroughly. An over-all summary of strengths and weaknesses was formulated and some immediate steps for improvement were outlined. The consultant remained as non-directive as possible, refraining from telling the teacher what he, the consultant, thought were his weaknesses and strengths. At the same time, the consultant accepted and encouraged candid and confidential expressions. On the basis of the evidence, the teacher took the lead in planning a program for his improvement.

A follow-up three months later indicated the teacher's acceptance of the program for improvement. All teachers thought that they had made important changes in their classroom behavior, which they outlined in detail. For example, one teacher wrote:

"I am trying to take the pupils into the

plans for future work. I am trying to realize more definitely that each pupil may have different reasons for being in the class and diversify methods to suit his needs. This is hard in a large class, but I feel that I can try, and I feel more conscious of this condition. We have discussed tests, methods, etc., in class and I think they feel it is more a partnership business than before. Also, I've tried to assist those with low social attachments to feel more secure socially—at least in this class."

### Research and In-Service Education

One of the most pertinent results of this venture which relates to the theme of the current issue of *Educational Leadership* is the practicality of combining two functions, namely, research and in-service education. The results may prove to be even more fruitful than when these two are pursued separately. The in-service goal was accomplished according to the judgments of the teachers and of the administrators and supervisors. All of the teachers who made an unsigned appraisal three months following the final interview with the consultant stated that the experience had been of marked help to them in improving their instruction, more so than any other type of assistance ever received. They unanimously agreed that it had caused them to change their classroom practices. The project's research results may be noted in the following sample of hypotheses and conclusions.

#### RESEARCH RESULTS

##### Student-Teacher Relationships

The evidence from these studies brings into bold relief the complexity and individuality of the relationship between student and teacher. Teach-

ing involves the interplay of one personality upon another. Teachers and students are striving to realize a variety of objectives. Sometimes they are harmoniously studying together toward the same ends, or they may be struggling at cross-purposes. One teacher emphasizes the knowledge or intellectual side of personality; another is primarily concerned with the development of "sound social attitudes"; another strives to develop normal and healthy interests in pupils; and still another stresses that his main purpose is to help students live harmoniously together.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the needs of a student vary from time to time, and teachers vary in their desire and ability to satisfy these needs. For example, a student who requires emotional security is not placed effectively with a teacher who is concerned mainly with the intellectual side of personality. This suggests the desirability of striving to match pupils and teachers.

In these studies, no one teacher is found to be effective with all of his pupils nor ineffective with all of them. No one teacher is found to be strongest or best in all characteristics. Weaknesses are noted in the strongest teachers, and strengths in the weakest ones. Each teacher, and each teacher-pupil relationship has its own pattern of characteristics.

Out of this complexity and individuality comes the realization that the total pattern and the inter-relatedness of the many elements in a person's teaching are probably more significant and meaningful than the nature of any one of its parts. As the focus shifts from

teacher to teacher and from one teacher-pupil relationship to another, so do the elements that are critical in making for effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

For example, for one teacher to possess a considerable amount of personnel information about her pupils enhances her relations with them, while in another case it acts detrimentally. Within a class, the sympathetic approach of a teacher is appreciated by one child; scoffed at by another. This investigation suggests that deeper insight into the nature of teaching competence may be gained from intensive study of one situation, viewing its wholeness and inter-relatedness, than by singling out one element for study in a sufficiently large number of cases to be certain of a representative sample.

Evidence from the case studies emphasizes that the dynamic factors of teachers' and pupils' interests and social beliefs are more active in some teacher-pupil relationships than in others. They operate in no constant direction in all cases, but should be taken into account in studying any one relationship, for the factor of interest or of social belief may assume significant proportion and become a dominant influence as a teacher and a pupil work together. There tends to be greater rapport between teachers and pupils where social beliefs are similar. Yet the method of handling controversial problems seems to be of more importance than teacher-student agreement in its influence on the teacher-pupil relationship.

One of the most elusive, difficult, and significant problems with which this investigation has been concerned is that of the place of the personal relations of

pupils and teachers as they work together in school. By personal relations are meant the feeling tones, the emotional reactions of liking and disliking that surge back and forth between any two people who are thrown together daily in face to face association. Assuming that the welfare of the pupil is the ultimate criterion for appraising the teacher-pupil relationship, what part should the personal relations between teachers and pupils play?

The widest variations have been found in pupils' and teachers' personal reactions to each other, but the evidence suggests the hypothesis that in any given pupil-teacher relationship a positive feeling tone on the part of the pupil for his teacher is probably more significant in promoting learning and other types of pupil development than is a positive personal feeling of the teacher toward the pupil. From this it follows that teachers should strive to have their pupils like them: with this fundamental proviso, that teachers consciously and clearly understand what they are about and that they make the effort, not out of any of their own personal demands or needs, but in terms of the welfare of the pupils. There is a considerable amount of latent hostility in the relations between teachers and pupils which stems from the nature of the social situation into which they are thrust. The teacher needs a realistic understanding of this and should strive to overcome it; one approach is through promoting in students a personal liking of himself.

#### **Teacher-Administrator Relationships**

Administrators are important people in the lives of teachers. It is apparent

from these studies that, of all the human relations in the school, apart from the central teacher-pupil relationships, those between administrators and teachers are of paramount importance. Teachers seldom feel neutral about their administrators. These relationships are all-pervasive in character. In them may be sensed the "tone" or "morale" of the school, and when they are disturbed the quality of teaching may seriously deteriorate. Unfortunately, the normal circumstances of school life tend to push administrators and teachers apart rather than to bring them together so as to release their creative powers.

#### Teachers Want to Improve

The findings of this investigation support the conclusion that teachers desire to improve their effectiveness. Supervisors are fortunate indeed not to be handicapped by a lack of motivation on the part of teachers. It was encouraging to find that the teachers remained objective, even when confronted with unpleasant and negative facts relating to their competence. This was probably due to the factual and objective nature of the evidence, the non-directive manner in which the findings were presented, and especially to the strict confidence with which the results were treated. The teachers were unanimous in their judgment that no person in official supervisory or administrative authority over the teacher should have access to the information. This was an essential aspect of the study which should be retained.

The strong feeling of teachers on this point, together with other experiences in the studies, illustrates the

value of supplementing regular supervisory services with consultants who are independent of the local administrative organization. In this way the teacher is partly relieved from the ever-present tension and potential threat to his security which prevails when those in administrative authority over him scrutinize his professional skill. With outside consultants a rather direct approach to some of the most intimate and dynamic aspects of teaching may be made. The importance of working individually with a teacher with sufficient intensity to gain insight into his special problems is highlighted in these studies and suggests the desirability of such emphasis in supervision.

Full recognition of the uniqueness and complexity of each teacher, each pupil, and each teacher-pupil relationship requires that dogmatism concerning what constitutes "good teaching" or who is a "good teacher" should be viewed with suspicion. The divergence of supervisors' and administrators' ratings of teachers from those of pupils suggests that they have different standards for judging them. Certainly these differences indicate that conclusions concerning a teacher's effectiveness should not be based upon the judgment of one group. The appraisal and improvement of teaching is an exceedingly complex proposition that permits of no easy generalization.

Upon the basis of experience with this approach to curriculum and instruction problems, the Stanford School of Education is establishing a Consultation Service in 1949-50. It will be available to teachers, supervisors, and administrators in public and private schools in the Western Region.

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