longer existed, there was no one to step forward with the interviews as proof or disproof. No one was defensive about the "Report." Its future rested with the faculty. When, after several meetings, the faculty had failed to involve the members of the former committee, who felt that they had done an honest study that required no defense, and had been unable to meet the challenge of the "Report," they voted to refer it to the Advisory Council (composed of representatives of the faculty elected by grades and the administration) for its consideration. Although the Advisory Council, too, questioned the objectivity of the generalizations in the "Report," there was no doubt that the variety of evaluations being carried on could only confuse pupils and parents. The faculty voted to follow the Advisory Council's recommendation by organizing a workshop to study the area of pupil

evaluation and reporting. Therefore, although the findings of the "Report" were never wholly accepted by the faculty, the study served to focus the group's attention on a problem that was specific and real to them.

Group progress in the direction of accomplishment is a slow, often tedious process. To the onlooker it may appear to be time wasted. For the participant it may be painful; it will surely require much effort. For the deeply involved, exciting new areas of thought and the satisfactions of shared effort are a reward and a spur. If this account can contribute to a better understanding of the feelings and activities involved in a preliminary effort that channeled group energies into a larger project and to an appreciation of how administrative leadership may facilitate group effort, this recounting will have served its purpose.

Can We Sharpen the Concept of Action Research?

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This article reviews various definitions of action research and raises some questions concerning its characteristics.

DURING the past few years much has been said and written concerning action research. Some of the statements have been helpful, but others have confused the situation because the definition of the term has been so loose.

Action research as it has been defined by some has many of the characteristics of evaluation. Lippitt and Radke analyzed eight studies using the action research approach and identified the following common characteristics: (*The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* March 1946, p. 171-175.)

"Sensing a need to discover facts; decisions as to what needs to be known; construction of instruments for gathering data; use of the objective ap-

proach; emphasis on sustaining morale during the drudgery of data collection; concern for changes in behavior; careful collaboration and interpreting findings; and new endeavors emerging from past experience as a likely outcome."

Shane and McSwain in *Evaluation and the Elementary Curriculum* (p. 54-55) describe the evaluative process:

"Sensing a problem; clarifying values that bear on it; developing criteria for studying the problems; expressing the criteria in terms of sought behavior; establishing situations where behavior can be studied; using instruments in the study of behavior; analysis of behavioral change; and taking action compatible with the findings."

In comparing these two descriptions it is difficult to see much real difference between action research and the evaluative process. If action research and the evaluative process are the same why should we use two terms?

Action research and good in-service training also seem to be synonymous. C. W. Hunnicutt (*Educational Leadership,* January 1950, p. 279) describes action research as follows:

"The major characteristics of action-research programs may be summarized briefly: (1) a group need to study a problem is recognized; (2) the members of the group share in planning the design and procedures of the study; (3) they select or construct research instruments and techniques; (4) they participate in collecting data; (5) they collaborate in analyzing and interpreting the data; and (6) they cooperate in the applying of findings in practical situations."

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In the same issue, two pages later, (p. 281) Mary Beauchamp describing in-service training writes:

"If we operate on these principles—widespread participation, real problems, and provided time—notable progress in the solution of problems and improvement of teacher morale should and does result. The principles stated above cannot be implemented unless study or discussion groups are organized, during which time teachers have an opportunity to isolate the various aspects of the problems, to collect data about the different ways of treating the problems, and to draw conclusions and recommendations."

Here too there seems to be very little difference in these statements supposedly describing different terms.

If action research is nothing more than a synonym for the evaluative process or for in-service training, we create confusion by instituting another term.

Let's look more closely at action research.

Is action research really research? Does it involve a clear statement of the assumptions made and the hypothesis being tested; a systematic plan for collecting data; and the use of procedures designed to obtain objectivity? Are the conditions of experimentation described clearly enough so that persons outside of the situation may use the data in forming their own conclusions?

Stephen Corey writes:

"Anyone who tries to get better evidence of the success or failure of his teaching or administrative or super-

visory activities, and modifies what he does in light of this evidence, is conducting a type of action research." (*Educational Leadership*, Vol. 7, December 1949, p. 149.)

Later in the same article he adds: (p. 152)

"Speaking generally, and by way of summary, the minimum essentials of design for action research involve:

—The statement of an hypothesis or prediction which implies a goal and a procedure for reaching the goal.

—A determination of the relation of the specific goal to a larger total situation.

—A description of the goal so that some sort of evidence as to the degree to which it has been achieved can be procured.

—A description of the procedure to be employed so that another person will know what action was taken.

—Provision for collecting evidence describing the goal situation before and after the designated procedure has been applied.

—The formulation of generalizations regarding the relationship between the practice or action and the desired goal."

Corey in another article (*Educational Leadership*, May 1952, p. 484) recognizes the need for determining the degree to which such criteria are applied.

". . . Problem solving at any level of methodological sophistication involves problem definition, hypothesizing, a design to test hypotheses, procuring of evidence and generalizing from this evidence. If the quality of definition, hypothesizing, designing, evidence getting and generaliz-

ing is high, the research is of excellent quality."

Where is the level at which we can place confidence in research? It is not enough to say that all problem solving is at some level on a continuum.

Characteristics of Action Research

If action research is to be taken seriously some criteria by which we make judgments concerning the quality of the study must be established. Would such criteria be any different from those by which we have always judged research?

Some proponents state that action research differs from other research in the following ways: the persons being studied are involved in the planning and executing of the study; the persons engaged in the study place major emphasis on improving their own situation and have little concern whether the results are applicable elsewhere; the study is designed primarily to satisfy the needs and concerns of those involved in the situation with little sense of responsibility for making the problems, method and results clear to anyone outside the situation; the researches are more concerned with securing satisfying results than with validating the method of study.

If these are the characteristics of action research and if we accept action research as our tool for moving ahead we are confronted with some serious problems. Must each local group do all the research it uses? Or can we extrapolate from local studies and infer that because a procedure looks good in a few schools it has desirable qualities for other situations? Can we coordi-

Will the counties share with the state group, and, if they do share, what can be done with the data?

Whatever the results of the pilot studies, the basic problems remain and must be solved if progress is to be made in the supervisory program in this state. It is hoped that county people, working locally, may be able to provide the necessary insight. In this way the answers to problem situations may be found. Out of the program may come the information and experience that will enable the state, the counties and the colleges to work together in a spirit of cooperation and service.

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nate the local studies of different researchers, with different conditions and methods, and draw sound generalization? Who will do the generalizing? Do we propose to have some individuals who confine their research efforts to seeking common elements in the various action researches and the results obtained by them? If so, how can we insure the objectivity of interpretation?

And to further confuse the situation we are beginning to encounter the terms cooperative research, evaluative research, and service research. Are these not merely attempts to describe in the title the method used? Does action research fall in this category?

Let us be sure of the odds before we place our bets. Let us further clarify the meaning of the label and its implications before we give our wholehearted endorsement to "action research."