

*It seemed fitting to build this month's Research Column around the theme of the 1954 ASCD Convention and of the 1954 ASCD Yearbook—that of "Creating a Good Environment for Learning." Several members of the 1954 Yearbook Committee were asked to point out any implications which they believe the new ASCD yearbook may have for cooperative curriculum research. Statements furnished by Robert S. Gilchrist, Lucile Lurry, Sybil Richardson and Fannie Shaftel are referred to in the following article.*

ROBERT S. FLEMING

## Some Research Implications of the 1954 Yearbook

THE COMMITTEE responsible for planning and developing the 1954 ASCD Yearbook, *Creating a Good Environment for Learning*, feels that this document has important implications for cooperative curriculum research. By no means does the committee suggest that the concepts presented in the book are complete or final. Actually the volume summarizes the status of thinking on many aspects of the learning environment and points up numerous activities for improving learning in our schools.

*Creating a Good Environment for Learning* points out multiple opportunities for research. The yearbook suggests that each teacher, school faculty and school system must face this problem. The basic questions which confront all groups have to do with discovering how an environment can be created which will foster maximum learning and growth of children. How to do this effectively involves the classroom environment and all other phases of school life.

Several situations are described in which action research is already under way. These situations are outlined in enough detail to give the reader a full account of what was done, how the work

was carried out and some of the results. These examples should encourage many groups to develop descriptive accounts of their efforts since the heart of a school program is so closely related to the quality of its learning environment. Hence, such a story may form an excellent basis for interpretation of a program to the public and enable teachers, administrators and patrons to study their program more objectively. In a sense the accounts provide an evaluation of work in progress, and aid in formulating next steps.

How can groups be encouraged and assisted in developing and using comprehensive summaries of their efforts to create an effective learning environment?

Many groups experience difficulty in action research at the point of identification and clarification of a problem to be investigated. Although individuals are aware of some of their questions and concerns, the establishment of priority, the isolation of a clear-cut problem, are often difficult. The new yearbook should stimulate questions which will aid in the clarification of problems worthy of intensive study. These questions may vary from com-

munity to community; local cooperative research may serve as a basis for reasonable solutions.

### Research Issues

Undoubtedly one aspect of the yearbook which will receive much attention is the chapter, "People Are Important." Of especial interest is the section giving emphasis to the importance of the teacher, his understanding of himself, his values. By what procedures can a teacher assimilate and understand the significant research which is now available in the area of personality growth and development, changing one's values and making one's practice consistent with his values? This book will help individuals and groups formulate leads, or hypotheses, which will be worthy of study.

Another area that deserves research is that of the expectations of parents for their children. What do most parents of eight-year-olds expect of their children? Do parents and teachers have different expectations? What is the effect of this conflict on boys and girls? On teachers and on parents? The yearbook should assist groups in understanding such problems and should give some direction as to areas of needed research.

Who creates a learning environment? What is the role of the teacher, the administrator, the parent, the child, in this essential aspect of a school? Such questions, too, are local and can be investigated by wise use of important elements in problem solving.

According to Lucile Lurry, ". . . particularly at the secondary school level is action research needed in understanding the learning process and what follows for learning environment. The yearbook tells the story of how one high school faculty worked together with its pupils to develop a more adequate pro-

gram of general education. Such significant change in the character of general education in the American high school is limited. A description of ways a teacher uses needs of pupils as a basis for determining valid content for a learning unit is given. Also depicted is how creative evaluation devices can reveal significant behavior changes in pupils. Appropriate research is long overdue in creative evaluation which is consistent with present-day purposes of the public school." This material should be useful to similar groups as they plan research designs for similar programs.

Fannie Shaftel raises a series of interesting questions which still need attention through research: ". . . I feel that any yearbook about the learning environment must be very much concerned with 'learning for what?' Perhaps the thing that lies uppermost in my mind now is a concern for creating learning situations in which children may be helped to develop the sturdiness of 'self' that will enable them to make critical choices not alone on the basis of conformity to the group but because of a set of values, convictions that are guide-posts to behavior. To what extent do our methods of teaching and types of instructional materials drive children into a kind of group-mindedness that is mainly conformity? Do we 'individualize' instruction only in terms of 'pace,' 'maturational levels,' etc.; or do we really plan situations in which children can be *different* and can *differ* with each other and yet *belong* in the group?"

Again the research implications of the concepts considered in the yearbook are evident. There is need for understanding research findings already available as well as planning appropriate extensions.

The area of evaluation is given a

prominent place in the document. The concepts considered have grown out of a variety of research studies of the past. Yet today, basic research is needed in ways of employing an "evaluation approach" in curriculum development. Although the principles of evaluation described are considered sound, we need an abundance of cooperative research which refines, interprets and makes possible the widespread use of such concepts at all levels of our educational system. How can evaluation concepts be developed and understood which will facilitate, not impede, educational progress? How can we overcome the "blocks" that limit the inauguration of cooperative evaluation based on purposes considered important by teachers, pupils and parents? This may call for drastic changes in our concepts of grouping, reporting, testing, promotion, college entrance, graduation and accreditation.

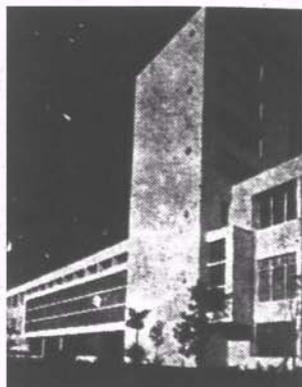
*Creating a Good Environment for Learning* should challenge teachers and educational leaders to undertake action research designed to discover those practices which seem most consistent with and useful in contributing to the growth, development and learning of all children.

—ROBERT S. FLEMING, coordinator of curriculum research, ASCD, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

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