

Curriculum Research

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California Workshop on Action Research

A PLANNING COMMITTEE representing CSSA, ASCD, and other cooperating groups met several times over a period of six months to define purposes, select a location, prepare announcements and registration forms. Each applicant stated on the registration form his special interest and the type of help that he wanted.

An orientation booklet was prepared to present as much information on as many of the administrative details as could be provided for in advance.

Committee Organization

Once the workshop got under way the greater part of its work was carried on by committees. The steering committee, composed of two representatives of each of the three basic work groups and three members of the staff, was responsible for over-all planning and policy making.

An important function was discharged by the Audio-Visual Committee. This committee previewed films related to guidance and curriculum, and planned general sessions based on such films as "Invisible Committees," and "The Eye of the Observer."

The evaluation committee assisted in appraising each general session, as well as in evaluating the entire workshop.

Workshop members were organized into three basic work groups, each with 14 or 15 members. The basic work group was the core or "home base" group, made up of the same people throughout the workshop. Its task was to determine training needs of its own group members and to suggest how these needs might be met in the workshop. The focus of the work group was on (a) "Cooperation—how is it secured?" and (b) "Research—how can problems be identified and attacked?"

The basic work groups met for approximately 20 hours during the two weeks of the workshop.

General sessions afforded a means of presenting content information and of practicing skills in working in a larger group. These sessions were devoted to presentation by lecture, panel or symposium of information essential to understanding and practicing action research.

Special interest groups were set up to provide practice in the specific skills of action research. A preliminary list of topics for the special interest groups had been determined by analysis of the problems submitted on application records before the workshop. This list was evaluated and revised through discussion in a general session. Several topics were selected for study.

Evaluation of the Conference

In addition to the evaluation sessions "built into" each of the major activities of the conference, evaluation forms prepared by the staff committee were distributed at the end of the first and second weeks. A summary of the evaluations revealed the following highlights:

1. *Preconference Planning.* Preparation of the conference registration booklet received high praise. Written remarks indicated that the list of conference participants, some information about them, and the bibliography were worthwhile.

2. *The Physical Environment.* There was a strong expression of the value of "group" living on the campus. Some of the off-campus participants stated that they would like to have been able to live on campus. Others of this group said that they particularly enjoyed the lunch sessions because these gave them opportunities to become better acquainted with workshop members.

3. *Workshop Groups.* The plan of having basic groups, special interest groups, and general sessions seemed to meet with general favor. For example, many stated that the special interest groups provided opportunities to meet and work with different staff members and participants as well as to follow a topic of special interest.

4. *The Workshop as a Whole.* The participants made many statements that referred to some phase of group process. Human-relationship factors, as one of the two dimensions of "action research," received more comments than did the areas of research

design and techniques. There were many expressions that pertained to improved insight into group work and their own concept of self as it related to group work. For example, in response to a specific question, "What happened to your problem at the workshop?" no one stated frustration or regret if his problem did not receive direct, specific attention. One comment was, "I did not receive direct help upon my problem but this did not bother me because of the things I was learning about my own training needs in cooperative group work."

What Next?

The ultimate evaluation of a workshop lies in what happens afterward. Much has already happened since the Occidental Workshop. One section of the annual conference of the California School Supervisors Association was devoted to action research. More than 200 members of the California School Supervisors Association, Southern Section, devoted their two-day January conference in San Diego to a consideration of the methods and application of action research. Leadership for this sectional conference was provided largely by participants in the summer workshop.

These and other conferences, institutes and faculty meetings in California schools will carry on and extend the insights and skills of action research so well demonstrated in the Occidental Workshop sponsored by ASCD and CSSA in the past summer.

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