

How

Approval for Elective Courses

is gained in the states.

IN a survey of state-level curriculum policy and practice throughout the 50 states, the writers investigated approval patterns for the addition of new elective courses to the curriculum. Procedures described by the chief state officers or their representatives in the 50 states were found to be more liberal, more informal and a great deal less distinct than those followed by the same states in gaining state-level approval for new *required* courses.¹ In some states the procedures used for gaining approval were the same for required and elective courses. Even when this was true, however, much less difficulty was encountered in gaining final approval for the elective courses.

While individual methods of operation varied, some states followed procedural patterns similar enough in character to permit grouping of responses. To facilitate reporting, therefore, each state was grouped whenever possible with those sharing common procedures and classified under agencies reported by chief state officers as having responsibility

for final approval or disapproval of the proposed courses.

State boards of education, as would be expected, were cited more often than any other agency as the authority for final approval of new offerings. Although variations were many, procedures could be classified into the following six groups:

1. Plans were initiated largely through local effort. The originators of proposed courses in three states first gained approval for new courses on an experimental basis. A trial period ranging from one to five years followed. During the period of experimentation progress reports were required at various intervals. Some courses were dropped by their originators before the trial period ended. Others were revised, based upon the experience gained and submitted either directly to the State Board of Education or to the State Board through such groups as state departments or state committees on accreditation.

2. Plans for new courses often origi-

Roy L. Cox is Associate Professor of Education, Mississippi State College for Women, Columbus, and Earl M. Ramer is Professor of Education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹ See Roy L. Cox and Earl M. Ramer, "Establishing Minimum State Curriculum Requirements," *Educational Leadership* 19:24-25, 77, October 1961.

nated at the system level, but sometimes came from other levels including individual schools and state-level committees. Plans were channeled through some agency or state office which made the official recommendation. Eleven states described agencies, committees, or other responsible groups or individuals through which plans were passed or decisions reached through consultation in order for recommendations to be presented to the State Board. These agencies or offices included the following: state departments of education, state associations of principals, state associations of superintendents, state bureaus of instruction, state curriculum committees, state course of study committees, and state superintendents.

3. Plans were initiated by the State Department of Education in one state and submitted to principals' groups and the Advisory Council of Superintendents for reaction and suggestions. Plans for new offerings were then submitted to the State Board of Education for approval.

4. In one state locally initiated plans for new courses were presented to the State Professional Education Association and then to the State Superintendent for analysis and possible recommendation to the State Board of Education for final approval. In another state, locally initiated plans were channeled to the State Board through the State Department of Education.

5. Plans were initiated for new course offerings at the system or individual school level and submitted directly to the State Board of Education in two states. Approval by the State Board was found to be liberal in the states utilizing this procedure.

6. The originating system or group in one state submitted a brief outline for

the new course to a "State Bureau of Instruction." Recommendations to the State Board of Education for final approval were made through the State Department of Education.

Approval by the local system and sometimes the individual school was all that was necessary for the addition of new elective courses in twelve states. In some cases the approval of a local high school board or curriculum committee was necessary, but this was found to be largely an informal requirement.

State Departments of Education were identified as the agencies responsible for the final approval of new courses in four states. Recommendations were possible from *any* level, including such groups as state curriculum committees, local boards, or responsible officials of local systems.

1. The superintendent of one state was directly responsible for the preparation of new courses as well as the approval of proposed courses. The extent of local initiative and the character of procedures employed were not reported.

2. The State Council on Education in one state was the final authority for the approval of new courses. Initiation of procedures was a local responsibility, but plans were then processed through the State Department of Education, which made the official recommendation to the State Council.

3. In one state final approval was the responsibility of the State Commissioner of Education. Initiation of plans occurred at the local level and proposals were channeled through the State Accreditation Division.

4. Plans for elective courses were initiated at the local level in two states, but gained approval through the State Division of Instruction and the State

Supervisor of High Schools. In one of these states, proposals were submitted directly to the State Supervisor of High Schools.

5. Approval in two states was gained informally through discussions among local and state department personnel. One state stressed the importance of informal, cooperative efforts of professional organizations and colleges and universities in securing approval for new courses.

6. Course outlines were developed by the individual school in one state and sent to the Director of Curriculum for approval. The Director of Curriculum then conferred with subject-matter specialists. The course could be approved for one year at this point, or rejected. Following a one-year trial, the school could reject the course or revise it on the basis of the year's experience and resubmit it to the Curriculum Director for possible final approval.

7. Plans for new courses in one state were presented to a State Accrediting Committee for approval and were then submitted to the House of Delegates of the State Education Association for final passage.

8. In one state a school system requested the State Department of Education for approval of new courses based on the presentation of objectives, plans for content, and evaluative procedures. Approval, if granted, was for one year. During this year the Department of Education Supervisor visited the system. Final approval rested with a State Education Committee and was based largely upon success and demonstrated need for the course during the trial period.

9. Plans for new courses were made at the local level in one state and were submitted directly to the Bureau of Secondary Curriculum Development.

Courses were approved upon recommendation by the Bureau and by state subject specialists.

In summary, state boards of education, state departments of education and local systems or individual schools accounted for the majority of agencies responsible for the approval of elective courses. Miscellaneous authorities were varied and sometimes vaguely identified. Twenty broadly defined procedures were reported. Responses in a small number of states revealed uncertainty as to the exact procedure. Three states either did not reply to the question or the responses were so vague that they could not be reported. No clear pattern of procedures was found common to a majority of states. Most of the procedures, even though described in the broadest of terms, were common to a relatively small number of states.

Leadership Preparation

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ational leadership preparation—is the finding that *no* major institution (258 colleges and universities were a part of the study) reported courses in "Human Relations," "Interpersonal Relations," or such equivalent.

In short, it appears we are not really learning anything about leadership preparation. Almost a quarter century of research and theory construction in the dynamics of leadership and focus on *people in education* has not been reflected in new program design to any significant degree! If *learning* implies changed behavior (based upon internalization of new knowledge coupled with the *will* to act), we have not learned much about preparation for educational leadership.

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