

*Through an open system, dynamic  
and exciting changes are evolving . . .*

THE search for a change model or a change process has occupied the minds of many researchers and educators throughout the United States. The results of their work have been most poignant in the educational program in the public schools.

Two parallel positions seem to be emerging from the various thrusts, namely the systematic, organized change model and the process-involved complex. I think that both have potential for effectiveness, but both need to be examined for the possibility of immediate and long-range effectiveness and for intensity of effect on the educational program.

### **Structured Change**

The works of Guba, Clark, Brickell, Bemis, and others are important examples of the systematic approach, or the organized plan, for the development of change. Guba's model, involving the major steps in the change process of research, development, diffusion, and adoption, represents a most logical way of organizing a theory for school systems to effect a desired change.

In Guba's model, the research would provide the background for new ideas; the development would point out the problems that exist in a school system and the potential solutions for these problems; the diffusion would make the

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data available, both within the system and outside; and the adoption would provide for the installation within any system. This particular process has been used many times by the instigators of national curriculum projects and by organized centers for instructional change. The results of such operations have been felt in many school districts in the United States.

I would like to suggest, however, that when change occurs by such a method, the following factors may be operative:

1. An inducer, or change agent, is highly active in the process. In most schools, this would mean the superintendent, or his representative, has decided what changes ought to take place, is directing the change process, and is observing, guiding, watching, and manipulating for the desired change.
2. The teachers within the system, even if they have participated in the analysis of

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the area in which change should take place, are given an unusual amount of direction in order to arrive at the expected change. (It reminds me of many social studies units in which students are given two or more alternatives of what they would like to study, even though all the while the teacher has in mind which one has to be the winner.)

3. That, although changes do take place in the area that has been selected for change, there is relatively little or no additional change that comes from the self-actualization or inventiveness of the teacher. For instance, if a new math program that is highly conceptual in its orientation is introduced, the teacher uses the math material to arrive at the concepts. The experience, however, has limited effect on how the teacher sees, or arrives at, concepts in social studies, language arts, science, etc.

4. The teacher feels little or no responsibility to serve as a self-correcting agent in the event the material does not bring about

the desired outcome. The responsibility for the change rests with the inducer of the change. Consequently, the teacher feels little responsibility for the results. There must be continued reinforcement by the outside agent to ensure movement toward the desired goals.

Again, it is important that I restate my position that the structured method of curriculum change can indeed bring results. Since this method seems so logically organized, many people have presumed that it is the most efficient way to bring about needed changes in American education. My own hypothesis is that the systems method, even with its logical approach, is limited. It is actually, by itself, a slower route for change. Nevertheless, this structured method can be enhanced and made effective by aligning it with a more involved process of change.

## Process-Involved Change

There are a limited number of school districts which are on the cutting edge of educational frontiers. In some of these districts, a different philosophical position regarding change is being utilized. There is a happy union of the process approach, incorporated with the best of the systems approach.

For the instigating of such meaningful and effective change by school districts, certain essential beliefs concerning the nature of man are crucial. These include:

1. Man is in process of becoming—man is capable of becoming, growing, learning, and developing.

2. Human behavior is understandable—each individual is logical in his own context. Each individual's resistance is a learned,

healthy response and should be interacted with in a positive way.

3. Human beings have common psychological needs—affection, preeminence, gregariousness, etc. Each human being, unless severely damaged, wants to expand his life space and wants to become more self-actualizing.

4. Human beings who are to be affected by a decision must have the opportunity to be involved in the decision process.

5. An over-dependency relationship on the part of man is degrading to him and is conducive to debilitating behavior.

6. Human beings in a system need outside, variable support.

The above points are basic considerations for an open school system. An open system is one in which the rules facilitate the development of the people and apply equally to all. It is a system that is free and easy and one in which changes in teachers', administrators', and children's behavior are natural. In such a system, the allocation of reward is focused on the growth of people, not toward service to the system.

If a school system is open—and it is this author's hypothesis that it is only in the open system that expanding change can take place—the setting is then available for a variety of approaches. With an open system, change is produced through many experiences which develop new understandings, new perceptions, and new skills. Some of the ongoing activities in an open system include the following:

1. Preschool meetings for staff, on a voluntary basis, in which group techniques are used.

2. Summer workshop programs on staff-developed needs, in which teachers are paid

a regular salary for participating in a workshop. Emphasis in such a workshop is on self-improvement only. There are no requirements to produce documents to "show and tell" to the community and to the Board of Trustees.

3. Demonstrations by teachers, to other teachers, of ongoing experiences in the classroom. Teachers are released from classroom activities to participate in the demonstrations. Contract substitutes are available to work with the classes.

4. Ongoing sensitivity training groups, T-groups, and confrontation groups are a regular part of the staff development program.

5. Grade level meetings, area level meetings, child study groups, and groups studying learning and child growth and development are available on a voluntary basis.

6. Summer schools are operated as experimental schools to try out ideas that have been developed throughout the year in the workshops, study groups, and demonstrations.

7. Consultants are available. They do not rate, they do not evaluate, but they work with classroom teachers and resource teachers to plan, in depth, experiences with children.

In fact, if a system is open, the major ingredients of a systematized approach can be compatibly introduced and absorbed. National curriculum-designed materials, research projects, area study programs, etc., are open for consideration by members of the staff, but without the teachers feeling that this is an "on-the-hill" requirement, decided for them by other people. The necessity of continual inducement, reinforcement, and evaluation of a systematized approach is no longer a necessary part of the program.

To enhance the potential of change,

more adequate feedback than is available through the regular evaluative processes is developed. Methods suggested by Flanders in interaction analysis, micro-teaching, audio-taping of lessons, and video-taping become the usual activities utilized in each classroom in the district. Teachers are free to use any or all of the techniques, free to observe the effectiveness of their own approaches, and free to erase materials prior to anyone's observing the results of the experiences in the classroom. Self-improvement is the only purpose of the new feedback system. Any relationship to re-hiring, merit pay, or assignment of teachers is not considered.

The advantages that accrue from an open system are:

1. A commitment of most of the staff to self-examination and change
2. The infusion of the ideas of many professional people into the developmental stages of the learning process
3. The enhancement of the uniqueness of each person, who can change in his own particular way
4. The appreciation by the members of

the staff for creative work done by their colleagues

5. The self-correcting that takes place when each person is free to evaluate his own teaching activity and is able to make corrections without any feeling of failure, discrimination or low evaluation

6. The development in the system of a program that reflects the collective, involved intelligence of the group rather than the master input of one or a few people.

The systems approach to change in American education cannot yet be discarded. The American educational scene and the American social scene seem reluctant to become involved in a more democratic educational program. However, for the few places which might experience a potential for open change, the possibility of multiple approaches is available for American education.

Because of the prevalent attitude, the organized approach to change is most comfortable. There are, however, "lighthouse" districts in which, through an open system, dynamic and exciting changes are evolving. Hopefully, this open system can be the model for the future of American education. ☞

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