

Problem Centered Team Teaching

OTTO HOLLAWAY

FOR many years a criticism of the public schools has been that they lack articulation among the divisions of the school organization and among the various discipline areas within each respective school. These separate segments frequently have little relationship to each other. We are forced, therefore, to seek more promising practices if we expect to make education relevant and meaningful to all students.

I would propose a concept entitled "problem centered team teaching" which is both a curriculum orientation and a pattern of school organization to overcome many of the shortcomings and inadequacies of our present programs.

Characteristics of Problem Centered Team Teaching

1. The problems may cut across any and all subject-matter areas, which may be drawn upon freely as they contribute to the solution of the problem.

2. Problem centered team teaching is committed to the concept of educating the total child intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

3. Such teaching is most effectively implemented with a large block of time, consuming from one-third to two-thirds of the school day.

Such a schedule enables the students and teachers to go out into the community and grapple with realistic problems in their natural setting.

4. Problem centered team teaching cares for individual differences by providing a large range and variety of learning situations operating in the classroom simultaneously.

5. Such teaching is guidance-oriented. The teachers come to know each student as a distinct person, his interests, concerns, perplexities, needs, limitations, and aspirations.

6. Teaching of this kind is dependent upon sufficient planning—at various levels. There must be planning at the school-community level, group (or team) level, and the team-pupil level, which is possibly the most essential. The total faculty planning and the team planning may be done by determining broad general objectives and setting limits, or it may be done by developing resource units from which teams can draw various learning units.

7. Drill in such teaching is an integral part of the ongoing learning process. The need for drill is diagnostically determined as pupils work and interact in the various experiences they encounter. The drill is then done on a remedial and individual or small group basis in terms of unique needs.

8. Problem centered team teaching meets the criterion of social adequacy by enabling students to cope with current life situations and adjust to and adapt to an ever changing social

environment. Students are learning how to learn so that they can continue their education long after they have left the school.

9. Such teaching is psychologically sound. It is well founded upon the most recent research in the areas of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education. It reflects the most promising concepts of learning, growth, and development.

10. Such teaching reflects and implements democracy as a way of life. It provides opportunities for students to interact and participate in the ongoing democratic processes of helping to formulate policies, identify and select problems, choose various alternatives, draw generalizations and conclusions, and evaluate outcomes and processes of learning. In such situations, democracy is *caught not taught*.

11. Problem centered team teaching situations could have teachers assigned to different levels of responsibility with higher salaries and higher status given to senior teachers and team leaders. However, the writer strongly recommends that *peer* relationships in team teaching are superior to differentiated assignments. Peer relationships provide opportunities for leadership to evolve and constantly shift from one individual to another as the nature of the learning situation changes. The *peer* relationship is more democratic and will, in turn, result in superior human relationships.

12. Such programs must emphasize the *team*, rather than the individual teacher, in the stages of cooperative planning, execution, and evaluation.

13. In these programs each member of the team may specialize in a different curriculum area and help all members of the team plan, teach, and evaluate in that area. Through such a procedure, each individual becomes increasingly proficient in other areas of knowledge.

14. Such teaching promotes the nongraded theory of continuous pupil progress with flexibility and adaptability in terms of length of period, varied opportunities for learning experiences, and use of the community as a laboratory for learning.

15. This teaching can effectively use teacher aides for nonprofessional tasks, freeing teachers to carry on the more creative, ingenious phases of the educational program.

16. Teachers in this program should

utilize appropriate mechanical and electronic equipment to assist in making the instruction work meaningful and relevant.

At the Elementary Level

Problem centered team teaching in the elementary school can capitalize on the positive attributes in the problem centered self-contained classroom. Some of the attributes are the following:

1. Teachers will adapt the curriculum to the needs of the children as well as to the needs of the particular community of which the school is a part.

2. Teachers will know their students in terms of their backgrounds, experiences, needs, aspirations, and limitations.

3. Greater flexibility will be possible than in the more traditional departmentalized *turn* teaching situations that seem to be increasing in the elementary schools.

4. Pupils will be more actively involved in planning their learning activities, in selecting and implementing various alternatives, and in cooperatively evaluating learning procedures and outcomes.

5. Individual differences will be more readily cared for inasmuch as a wide range and variety of learning situations will be operating in the classroom simultaneously.

At the Secondary Level

Problem centered team teaching at the junior and senior high school levels is in a position to recapture the notable attributes of the better core curriculum classes and the integrated classes. Some of these attributes are the following:

1. Pupils' needs, teacher competencies, and the curriculum pertinent to the needs of the group can be considered in making team assignments.

2. Problem centered team teaching will more nearly facilitate equal educational opportunities for all children and youth.

3. This approach provides an opportunity for youth to live in a warm, intimate, and friendly relationship with their peers and their teachers.

4. Integrated learning experiences can be provided for each pupil in accordance with his unique interests, needs, and capabilities.

5. This approach encourages the total development of youth rather than placing major emphasis on their intellectual attainments.

6. Problem centered team teaching challenges teachers to use their capabilities academically as well as to implement their understandings of human growth and development and the learning process.

7. Grouping in problem centered team teaching is accomplished in harmony with the

basic American values of the worth and dignity of each individual and of equality of opportunity.

A word of warning should be emphasized here, namely, that no school organization or curriculum concept can of itself assure that a poor teacher will become an excellent teacher. An organizational concept can only provide opportunities, encouragement, and an environment for excellent teachers to become better and for poor teachers to improve.

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