

# PPBS—A Tool for Improving Instruction

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**T**ODAY more than ever before, school administrators are being confronted with the planning, programming, budgeting system (PPBS) concept. Conferences and seminars are being held, consultants for assisting districts in its implementation are in demand, and selected college professors are touring the major educational conferences expounding its virtues.

Through promises of increased efficiency, proponents of PPBS have succeeded in attracting the attention of a wide cross section of the educational establishment. State departments of education, educational politicians, boards of education, superintendents, school business administrators, and even a few curriculum administrators have been attracted by its potential.

Not all segments of the educational enterprise have been attracted for the same reason. Very few, in fact, have considered the improvement of instruction as the prime objective of PPBS.

## Instructional Tool or Fiscal Weapon?

A review of recent educational literature indicates that PPBS has received its greatest initial support from those who are tradition-

ally most greatly concerned about educational expenditures, or rather the limitation and control of educational expenditures. Legislators, departments of finance, boards of education, and school business administrators have been quick to embrace PPBS as a system for "getting a handle" on a complex enterprise and using its potential as a weapon to control educational expenditures. This is not to be totally unexpected considering the apparent motivation or vested interest of the aforementioned groups in relation to fiscal concerns.

It seems appropriate, therefore, that PPBS be examined from the perspective of its potential as a tool for improving the instructional program and the learning experiences of students.

Based on our experience in Pearl River, one point stands out graphically clear: If PPBS is to be a viable instructional tool in a school district, it requires leadership, commitment, and involvement of the district's instructional personnel, namely central office administrators, building principals, curriculum supervisors, and teachers. Experience

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has shown that PPBS under the unilateral direction of the school business administrator alone generally is nothing more than another glorified accounting system. On the other hand, involvement of instructional staff builds commitment toward utilizing PPBS as an instructional tool.

## Need for Concern

Why should instructional leaders be concerned about PPBS? Why not treat this concept as just another educational gimmick that will pass into oblivion with its numerous predecessors?

H. Thomas James, as Dean of the Stanford University School of Education, in a 1968 Horace Mann Lecture cited the following three reasons:

First, because this time it (PPBS) emerges with a much broader intellectual undergirding and logical sophistication; second, because politicians are seizing upon it as a means for controlling school costs which have risen steadily throughout this century at a rate faster than the total economy; and third, because it is a new manifestation of mechanistic models for thinking about human institutions, an attitude that has recurred with increasing vigor over many centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The validity of his observations has been confirmed through the increasing interest in PPB systems since James made these statements in 1968.

It may be further noted that public education is in serious trouble both in terms of public confidence in its programs and in terms of increasing financial effort to meet the ever-increasing costs.

Critics of education have charged that even the basic qualities of children needed to make a living, for example, inventiveness, flexibility, resourcefulness, curiosity, and above all judgment, are not being provided for in current instructional programs. The chief products of contemporary schooling, it is claimed, are not these qualities nor even the knowledge and skills they try to produce, but

stupidity, ignorance, incompetence, self-contempt, alienation, apathy, powerlessness, resentment, and rage. While the critics may tend to overgeneralize, instructional leaders cannot dispute the overt evidence that is obvious in many school systems. To the extent that this is accurate, we cannot tolerate these products any longer.

It is essential, therefore, that the instructional leaders of school districts at least acquaint themselves with the potential as well as the limitations of PPBS. To be insensitive to this process may well lead toward being used by it rather than using it. In other words, fiscal expediency rather than instructional priority may become the determinant of program development.

There is a need in education today for improving instruction. The PPBS process integrates the reviewing and stating of goals and objectives, examining alternatives in terms of facilities, program, personnel, materials, and supplies, providing for communication, establishing priorities involving as many power groups as possible, utilizing limited fiscal resources, developing support for change, organizing for accountability, and providing for evaluation.

Educational programs for the seventies cannot be the same programs we have so comfortably worked with and in some cases failed with in the past. Recent developments in terms of commercial educational contract proposals and plans for voucher payment systems serve to illustrate pressures for recognizing new needs in terms of staffing, programming, facilities, supplies, organization, materials, and, in fact, virtually everything we do.

Effective and relevant change in the educational enterprise will only take place through a broad base of involvement and participation. This includes students, parents, teachers, administrators, boards of education, lay persons of the community, and legislators on various levels. The advent of militant teachers organizations, students, and parents, together with the mounting fiscal pressures, precludes the old and questionable but often-utilized practice of implementing change through administrative fiat. Blind

<sup>1</sup> H. Thomas James. *The New Cult of Efficiency and Education*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969. pp. 20-21.

acceptance by the community of educational dicta from "ivory tower" school professionals is a thing of the past.

Techniques and vehicles for communicating with various concerned groups must be improved. Traditional levels of information, dissemination, and channels for feedback are no longer adequate. There is a need to articulate what education can do and is doing as well as to indicate what we cannot or should not do.

Limited funds, increasing costs, and expanding demands require the establishment of priorities. These priorities will need to be established cooperatively and the rationale in terms of effective communication be provided for various concerned constituents.

Recognizing that there are a variety of forces that motivate different people toward implementing PPBS, the administrator concerned with instruction should play a key role in keeping the focus on improving instruction and learning experiences for students. He should articulate instructional improvement as a prime objective for implementing PPBS so that the risk of reducing fiscal resources in educational areas that directly affect students' learning is fully understood. However, realistically the primary motive for implementing PPBS in a district and the source of such motivation are probably the key, especially if the aim conflicts with adequately meeting the needs of students and if it goes unchallenged.

## **The Pearl River Approach to PPBS**

Pearl River until three years ago reflected many of the conditions described thus far. A moderately affluent white suburban school district of 3,500 students located about 20 miles north of New York City on the New York-New Jersey state line, Pearl River lacked community confidence, reflected taxpayer resistance, and was failing to provide its students with instructional programs that would allow them adequately to develop their educational skills in accordance with their academic ability or potential.

An analysis of the seriousness of the problem and alternatives was made by the

administrative and professional staff. They concluded that ordinary measures would not be sufficient to attack the wide variety of problems of organization, staff, program, communication, community, and facilities on a broad enough front within reasonable time limits.

It should be noted that the decision to utilize PPBS techniques as a means of integrating not only fiscal but instructional concerns came after considerable and oftentimes heated discussions among the district's instructional supervisors and building administrators. Key to the acceptance of the PPBS concept was the understanding that the budget calendar would not be used as a framework for planning instructional improvement.

It was agreed, though, that curriculum development was an ongoing process that could and should be integrated with fiscal planning. There was consensus that budget development should not be a constraint for curriculum development. It was recognized, however, that fiscal resources would be a very real constraint in terms of curriculum implementation.

Once the decision to implement PPBS was made, the roles of various personnel and groups to be involved were determined.

The description of the roles and process is contained in Pearl River's "Procedure for the Preparation of the 1970-71 Educational Program":

*Teacher:* Contributes his professional judgment in defining educational objectives, considering alternatives, selecting a plan of action, programming that plan, and evaluating the results achieved in terms of the plan.

Assists building principal and district curriculum coordinators in developing educational programs.

Provides assistance in the preparation of estimated costs of various programs.

Reacts to educational program presentations.

*Building Principal:* Coordinates the educational program as it relates to his building. Advocates the best possible educational program for his building with some realization of the fiscal situation in Pearl River.

**"...so brilliantly defined and so obviously vital to survival that I sat in awe and alarm."**

This was one critic's reaction to the message of "Multiply . . . and Subdue the Earth," the NET documentary which underscores the question: Can humanity survive on this planet? Guided by ecologist Ian McHarg, the film reveals a frightening panorama of mindless abuse in our environment—a pattern which may well lead to the destruction of our natural resources if it is not checked.

*Catalog Synopsis*

**MULTIPLY . . . AND SUBDUCE THE EARTH**

16mm/67 min./b&w/sale \$270/rental \$13.00  
color/sale \$450/rental \$18.50

Our cities are over-crowded, much of the air we breathe is polluted, and the source of our future supply of food and water is in danger. These are problems caused, in part, by unplanned use of our natural environment. Suburban developments are being built with little regard for the natural life surrounding them. One study has revealed that eighty-two per cent of midtown Manhattan's population have been found to exhibit various degrees of mental illness which is thought to be partially caused by overcrowding. The central message of this film, as stated by Ian McHarg, is that man must use ecological planning and seek not a conquest of nature but unity with nature.

Produced by National Educational Television

**PREVIEW:** Preview prints are available to prospective buyers at no cost other than return postage. Send purchase orders and preview requests to the Indiana University Audio-Visual Center, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

**RENTAL:** Prints may be rented from your nearest film rental library or send orders to the Indiana University Audio-Visual Center, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

**CCTV:** This film may be used in closed-circuit television systems through a licensing agreement with the Audio-Visual Center. For a detailed statement of the electronic distribution plan, write to the Indiana University Audio-Visual Center.

Directs the development of an education program for his building with the assistance of teachers and the District Curriculum Coordinators.

Prepares, with the assistance of teachers and the District Curriculum Coordinators, the estimated costs of his educational program.

*District Curriculum Coordinator:* Coordinates the educational program in his area. Advocates the best program on a K-12 basis that promotes articulation and student achievement. Has primary responsibility for "project planning" once educational goals are established. Project planning involves a detailed plan of action to accomplish the specified objectives. It includes a time schedule and development of evaluation methods.

Coordinates the development of a K-12 educational program working with the building principals and teaching staff.

Assists the building principals in preparing the estimated cost of this program.

*Central Office Staff:* Reviews budgets on a K-12 basis and makes recommendations to the superintendent of schools on the educational program and the allocation of resources.

*Superintendent of Schools:* Establishes systemwide educational goals and priorities. Allocates limited financial resources based on a systemwide viewpoint and in terms of district goals. Recommends an educational program and budget to the Board of Education.

*Citizens' Budget Advisory Committee:* A group of community residents will review the entire program. This committee will serve two purposes: (a) to make suggestions and recommendations to the superintendent and the board, and (b) to give the community a greater voice in shaping the educational program of the district.

*Board of Education:* Reviews and approves a program that provides for the educational needs of the students in Pearl River that is fiscally responsible and educationally defensible.

The overall PPBS leadership in Pearl River is provided by the superintendent. It is significant, however, that the major influence and control of the PPBS process is exercised through the office of the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

In the two years that we have been

working with PPBS in Pearl River, we have been able to improve instruction through providing necessary fiscal resources in priority areas.

Specifically, the implementation of PPBS has expedited the adoption of new elementary reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies programs and has enabled us to purchase necessary textbooks, supplies, and equipment to support them. We have modified the organization of our Middle School in order to implement the concept of coordinated studies teams. Our curriculum at the secondary level has been broadened to include required health and family living courses at three grade levels as well as new elective programs in senior English and social studies. Staff has been added to accommodate increasing enrollments as well as to provide for the expansion of guidance and psychological services.

In short, our focus has been on improving learning experiences for students through the involvement of all segments of our educational system and our community.

In addition, the PPB system has provided us with descriptive curriculum summaries that outline our educational programs on a K-12 basis integrating goals, objectives, program descriptions, student loads, staff ratios, and costs of personnel supplies, equipment, and other expenditures.

The instructional accomplishments in Pearl River were not achieved without the investment of dedicated time, effort, and cooperation on the part of the total instructional staff. We were fortunate to have a staff that was concerned about deficiencies and was unwilling to live with them. This, we recognize, is only the beginning. Continued program analysis, evaluation, development, and refinement of our PPBS process must occur.

### **Instructional Benefits from PPBS**

From the instructional point of view, PPBS has provided Pearl River with the means of reestablishing a basis of confidence and support in the educational program. Communicating our fiscal requirements for the instructional program in a PPBS format

has enabled us to obtain affirmative budget votes since we have focused our concern on the achievement of students as well as the tax dollars. As a result, we have been able to show the members of our community that they receive a dollar's return on every educational dollar they invest. In short, we have been able to implement needed instructional changes in the face of tight fiscal constraints.

Other instructional benefits of PPBS include the following:

The focus on objectives has enabled our professional staff to have a better understanding of where they are and where they are going. We have been able to lay the groundwork for opening discussions regarding meaningful evaluation of program objectives.

Our school district activities are better coordinated both vertically and horizontally.

We have been able to establish priorities on the basis of more and better information about our critical areas.

PPBS has not been a cost reduction system for Pearl River nor have we substituted it for competence and common sense in curriculum administration.

The PPBS jargon of inputs, interactions, outputs, and feedbacks may hold a fascination for some that takes their attention away from the instructional tasks at hand. This has been avoided in Pearl River. PPBS has not become an end in itself, and sound educational practices have taken precedence over the requirements of this system when the two have been in conflict.

Based on our experience, we have concluded that administrative personnel in charge of instruction have a priority responsibility for becoming familiar with the potential of PPBS. If the instructional leadership defaults on this responsibility and PPBS is mandated by other vested interest groups, the order of emphasis may well change to BPPS, with budget coming first followed by instructional programming and planning.

In Pearl River we have succeeded in emphasizing programming, planning, and budgeting in that order, and as a result PPBS has proven to be a viable tool for the improvement of instruction. □

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