

PPBS: Hazard or Promise?

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EDUCATION in some areas has, in the past few years, put on the trappings of PPBS—a planning, programming, budgeting system. To some disenchanted educators the new costume fits them something like a sheep in wolf's clothing, since PPBS is really a centralized managerial control system to be adopted sparingly, if at all, by American education. To others, PPBS offers a firm fit, neatly tailored and definitely needed for U.S. schools, where public support in dollars and good words seems to be flagging.

The group which speaks against PPBS frequently asks the following or similar questions:

1. Is PPBS worth the time, staff, paper-work, and other resources which it demands? Ought not such energies be going into making what we already know works work? Don't we really know how to plan in education without adopting a military industrial model which may be ill suited for planning for future generations in a future still unknown?

2. Can everybody in the education profession, all personnel be involved in the PPBS design? Or is PPBS just for the emerging new breed of educational decision makers?

3. How will PPBS handle what we have known of in several decades of research as

group dynamics, social psychology, and human relations? Will the mechanistic aspects of PPBS adjust to humanized education?

4. Can we really *cost-out* the finished human being? Isn't PPBS merely another argument of the behaviorists as opposed to the ideas of the gestalt field theorists, the perceptual psychologists? Isn't PPBS a brash braggart's voice rather than the voice of a profession willing to admit that many answers are still not known? Will the few alternative paths offered by the PPBS lock out innovation?

5. Isn't PPBS really a "fiscal weapon," a control thrust which may be identified with a certain philosophy of authoritarian administration as contrasted with yet another philosophy of administration which views administration as assistance, facilitation, and helping the millions of classroom teachers in the classrooms where the action really is?

Proponents of PPBS, on the other hand, have some answers and some questions of their own which assume the following direction:

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1. PPBS is worth the time and effort. Much that we do in education is merely traditional. Why a five-day week, for example? Why English for 12 years instead of just every other year? As an example, *planning* may let us know the need for the educational system to accomplish certain things; our *program* may offer several alternative ways to meet these accomplishments; this is the only way we can sensibly *budget* for the system. The line item negotiation approach we now take is still mostly guesswork.

2. There is no new breed of educational decision makers riding the coattails of PPBS. Most of the closest adherents of this new management approach have in the past been consistent leaders in curriculum and instruction. Persons merely knowing the language of PPBS can do nothing unless they also know curriculum and instruction; for in educational PPBS, learning is at the heart of the system. Everyone including the teachers, parents, and students should be a part of a total team approach.

3. Can the mechanics of PPBS fit in with a humanized system? Where PPBS has failed it has been due to a lack of recognition of the human element. It should be remembered that good management entails good human relations.

4. Many critics of PPBS associate this phenomenon with such things as performance contracting, guaranteed fiscal results, and the like. However, PPBS like any tool is only as good as its handlers. Those who claim that PPBS can cost-out a fully educated human being are seeing probably an impossibility, something definitely outside the present state of the art. What PPBS can do is to help us more meaningfully use our resources to make better learners of our most precious resource, our children. True, much is not known about learning theory, but if the science of education is to evolve, it will be along lines of PPBS—aspects of which can be traced to John Dewey's school.

5. Administrators should know that PPBS is no heavy-handed authoritarian club, no secret fiscal weapon. If anything, PPBS throws a more glaring light on administration and serves more as a threat for educational administration than for the classroom teachers. In its main use, PPBS ought to facilitate learning in the classroom and aid the teacher toward this end.

Thus run the two opposing views on PPBS. Within these views lie the hazards as well as the promise of the planning, programming, budgeting system. □

Educational Leadership Announces Proposed Themes for 1972-73

Manuscripts relevant to the proposed themes for the 1972-73 issues of *Educational Leadership* are now being solicited. Topics, and deadlines for receipt of manuscripts for examination, are the following:

October: "Protest and Conflict: Why?" (May 15, 1972)

November: "Using Resources at the Local Level" (May 15)

December: "Education for Career Development" (June 1)

January: "Curriculum Management: A Panacea?" (July 1)

February: "Shifts in University/School Role" (August 1)

March: "Innovation as an Ongoing Process" (September 1)

April: "Whatever Happened to Curriculum Content Revision?" (October 1)

May: "Methods That Can Make a Difference" (November 1).

Length of manuscripts should be approximately 1400 words (about five pages), typed doublespaced. General style should conform to that of the journal. Photographs or other illustrative materials are requested.

Decisions on materials will be made as promptly as possible, and all unused manuscripts will be returned.

Materials should be addressed to: Robert R. Leeper, Editor, *Educational Leadership*, 201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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