

IGE: Will It Work?



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What are the problems with IGE that are affecting its use? And where is the supervisor in all of this?

The question, "IGE: will it work?" poses a dilemma for educational innovators. Its answer may vary from yes, it will work if used as a management system without much consideration for the instructional aspects of an effective program; to no, it will not work if teachers and administrators are not committed and/or are not given adequate support.

On the other hand, the question, "Does IGE work *now*?" has a definite answer. As presently implemented, IGE is not working well. Why? Too many school systems are unwilling to commit themselves to the given structure, extra constraints on time, or the suggested curriculum of IGE; some schools simply are unwilling to buy into the "alphabet soup."¹ They may accept and function under the basic ideas and processes of IGE, but they do not wish to be "labeled."

Individually Guided Education has been promoted to schools through two agencies: The Institute for Development of Educational Activities,

Inc. (/I/D/E/A/), the educational arm of Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio; and Wisconsin R & D Center for Individualized Schooling. The latter group claims the actual founding and development of IGE. In the initial stages of implementation, however, both groups were partners. Today, each group has gone its separate way pursuing developed goals. Each claims *x* number of schools in its camp (most being elementary schools). In the past few years, however, IGE schools have decreased in number. Some have quietly converted to "underground" status because they no longer wish to be classified as an IGE school, but they continue to utilize some of the IGE ideas or processes. This underground movement is gathering momentum, although how fast the movement is growing is difficult to deter-

¹ Charles Kofoid, Dean, School of Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania in a July 1978 letter to Robert J. Krajewski.

mine since current published reports seldom reflect a loss of schools.² When asking (IGE) schools what kind of organizational structure they have, most indicate the use of some IGE elements. These responses, however, may not meet specific IGE criteria, so a muddled total is obtained at best.³

Why do schools drop IGE? The Wisconsin group cites lack of teacher commitment and lack of financial support as the primary reasons.⁴ Both reasons may stem from a lack of central administrative office support.

How IGE Schools Operate

The Wisconsin R & D version of IGE includes a suggested curriculum⁵ whereas the /I/D/E/A/ version suggests a structured program through implementation of its 35 outcomes. The /I/D/E/A/ IGE Change Program has three integral components:

1. Education for the individual child with continuous progress contingencies;
2. Shared decision making;
3. Continuous improvement provisions for teachers.

Each league⁶ of IGE schools is supposed to have a facilitator—an intermediate agency⁷ employee who acts as overseer or coordinator and is responsible for planning with the schools and holding league meetings. The facilitator is viewed as the hub of the IGE wheel. The principal is expected to be the overseer/coordinator for the Instructional Improvement Committee,⁸ learning community/unit⁹ leaders, and unit teachers.¹⁰

Two questions are immediately apparent: (a) Of what significance is IGE to ASCD members, and (b) Can the IGE system work better if supervisors are involved and if so, why?

Of the approximately 42,000 ASCD members, an estimated half of them are involved with instructional and curriculum improvement in either principals' or supervisors' positions. Between five and ten percent of the ASCD membership are teachers, and still others are support personnel within the school.¹¹ Therefore, the subject of this presentation is significant.

Principals are expected to be instructional leaders. In actuality, they seldom function in that

role. They tend to function more or less as catalysts for instructional improvement, and as such, they can be the leaders for instruction within the school. It is crucial, however, that the supervisor become involved in shared decision making, continuous progress contingencies for educating individual children, and continuous improvement provisions for teachers. But from the beginning, one curious omission has been apparent in IGE: *there is no specified provision for supervisors*. This phenomenon has been referred to elsewhere as "supervisory neglect."¹² Without supervisory interaction and input with facilitators, principals, unit leaders, teachers, and the Program Improvement Council (PIC), IGE cannot be successfully sustained in the schools. This is not meant to sound pessimistic; on the contrary, this should be regarded as a sign of optimism since it points to

² Jon S. Paden, et al. *Reflections for the Future*. Dayton, Ohio: /I/D/E/A/, 1978. p. 41.

³ John M. Bahner, Robert J. Krajewski, and Samuel G. Sava. "The /I/D/E/A/ Change Program for IGE: A Dialogue." *Journal of Teacher Education* 27:211-15; Fall 1976.

⁴ "Why Schools Drop IGE." *Wisconsin R & D Center News*, Spring 1978. p. 5.

⁵ Herbert J. Klausmeier. "Individually Guided Education: 1966-1980." *Journal of Teacher Education* 27:199-205; Fall 1976.

⁶ League—A group of schools working cooperatively to implement IGE.

⁷ Intermediate Agency—An institution (such as a school district, university, or service center) having a written agreement with /I/D/E/A/ to work with leagues of IGE schools.

⁸ Either Instructional Improvement Committee (IIC) or Program Improvement Council (PIC)—A decision-making body especially concerned with schoolwide policies and operational procedures. The PIC/IIC develops and coordinates the learning community activities; it is composed of the principal (as chairperson), learning community leaders, and others upon invitation.

⁹ Either Learning Community or Unit—A small decision-making, operational group within the school composed of teachers and students.

¹⁰ *Journal of Teaching Education* 27: Fall 1976; theme devoted to "Individualization of Learning and Instruction."

¹¹ Interview with John Bralove, Business Manager, ASCD, July 8, 1978.

¹² Francis E. Bloomer and Robert J. Krajewski. "The Supervisor in IGE: A Neglected Role." *Texas Tech Journal of Education* 3:177-86; 1976.

the basic need for and potential of principals and supervisors working together to improve instruction.

Granted, principals should be instructional leaders of the school, although whether this is feasible is often argued. The most plausible opposing argument is that principals lack adequate preparation for this role, at least for the level of instructional involvement required in an IGE school. I'm convinced that principals should be instructional leaders, though this depends on the preparation principals receive in instructional supervision. Unfortunately, most elementary and secondary principals have not had and do not receive such training, and present state administrative/supervisory certification requirements will verify that fact. As long as principals are prepared as educational managers, implementation of IGE and its concepts will be a continuing struggle. In addition, if the PIC chairperson does not have instructional analysis expertise, shared decision making cannot be accomplished.

The basic concepts of IGE—that teachers want to help students and that children are going

to respond positively to learning programs that meet their needs—are excellent. Most children like participating in the IGE program. They enjoy the opportunities and responsibilities of expressing themselves freely, participating in shared decision making, and setting their own goals. On the other hand, this process places a heavy workload on teachers in the present structure of the IGE program. It also pays little attention to the interaction between teachers and supervisors. Continuous progress is assumed; similarly, it is assumed that teachers will automatically assist one another in instructional improvement. These assumptions are seen as invalid by leading writers in supervision. Role delineation requires that the supervisor have more knowledge and training concerning supervision than the teacher does. Harris, in particular, cautions that overemphasis on self-training in supervision encourages overconfidence in teachers' attempts at improvement and is likely to promote failure.¹³

¹³ Ben M. Harris. "Limits and Supplements to Formal Clinical Procedures." *The Journal of Research and Development in Education* 9:85-89; Winter 1976.

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Teachers Need Support

Although the question "Will IGE (as we know it today) work?" can only be answered by the future, the question "Should IGE work?" can be answered with an emphatic *yes*. Can it work with the present constraints existing in the schools? A qualified *yes*—if principals are willing to spend long, extra hours in an effort to make the program successful, and if principals have sufficient knowledge and skills in instructional supervision. The same must hold true for the unit/learning community leaders.

Unfortunately, principals who have the required knowledge and skills and who can afford the time needed for the program to operate effectively are very rare indeed. Even in those rare cases, few will be able to accomplish this feat without the professional help and skills of a trained supervisor. Currently, in most cases, the principal and unit/learning community leader share the responsibility of instructional improvement—with neither having sufficient time to devote adequately to this important task. This, of course, has some inherent disadvantages, since unit leaders:

1. Are frequently fulltime teachers;
2. Have little or no training in supervision;
3. Often perform these additional responsibilities without additional compensation; (Naturally it is more difficult to attract persons knowledgeable in curriculum development or supervision for this position. Sometimes the principal must take those who volunteer.)
4. In many cases are not held in high esteem by their peers.

This also has some inherent disadvantages, since principals:

1. Have too little time to spend on instructional improvement because of other pressing duties;
2. Have little or no training in supervision;
3. Often perform these additional responsibilities without additional compensation.

Pressure and workloads on teachers in an IGE school are at times overwhelming. Therefore, it is crucial that they receive support for their work. Support, however, is an area of major

breakdown of IGE. With the principal responsible for chairing the PIC/IIC, interacting with teachers for achievement of IGE objectives, and directing instructional improvement, teachers often do not receive the proper support they need. Many times teachers have good ideas, but find it impossible to communicate these to the principal.

Similarly, principals and teachers together find it difficult to share their ideas and to gain the full support of the central administrative offices and of those individuals charged with the responsibility of supervising programs. How can that be corrected? The answer lies in the direct involvement of the supervisor. In fact, a well-trained supervisor may be the key person in building and operating a successful IGE program. IGE can be better implemented when a supervisor provides necessary upper level and in-school support. At the upper levels, the supervisor can be a liaison who can interact with the facilitator and the administration. At the school level, the supervisor can interact with the PIC, principal, and teachers. The supervisor, being outside the unit, may have greater influence on teachers, thus improving conditions for learning situations.

Conclusion

Will IGE work? It can, and I believe it will, if reevaluation, reconsideration, and adjustment of roles within the program are effected. The supervisor, having been trained for the curricular/instructional role, is the proper person for implementing the IGE program. I, therefore, recommend that the supervisor be afforded more responsibilities: (a) in the IGE facilitator role; (b) in the PIC operation (chairperson or cochair); and (c) within the units' operation. If IGE is to work, the supervisor must no longer be neglected. ¹⁷



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