

# With the back stops here

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*Successful implementation of new programs requires planning, an appropriate strategy, and staff development.*

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## **Implementation: Neglected Phase in Curriculum Change**

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The stark reality about curriculum change<sup>1</sup> is that it seldom happens as expected. While those of us who work with curriculum have suspected this for some time, recent investigations have confirmed it.<sup>2</sup>

The most common explanation is that we fail to attend adequately to implementation. We make our way through the initiation, development, and adoption phases of curriculum change, but then we do not take steps necessary to achieve a satisfactory level of implementation.<sup>3</sup> Our innovations do not enter the classroom; they do not affect day-to-day interaction between teachers and students. Three components of implementation that seem most often neglected are planning for implementation, applying change strategies, and conducting staff development.

### **Planning**

Because much of the joy for those involved in the curriculum change process lies in creating, initiating,

<sup>1</sup> Curriculum change in this context refers to any conscious deliberate attempt to bring about change in the curriculum of a school or school system.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Decker F. Walker. "Toward Comprehension of Curricular Realities." Lee S. Shulman, editor. *Review of Research In Education*. Volume IV. Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1976; Michael Fullan and Alan Pomfret. "Research on Curriculum and Instruction Implementation." *Review of Educational Research* 47:335-97; Winter 1977.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account of levels of implementation, see: Gene E. Hall and Susan F. Loucks. "A Developmental Model for Determining Whether the Treatment is Actually Implemented." *American Educational Research Journal* 14:263-76; Summer 1977.

and developing, too little attention is given to planning for implementation. Often, by the time a new curriculum framework has been approved and textbook materials ordered, it's time for curriculum leaders to start creating, initiating, and developing something else. Curriculum change often ends with the adoption phase.

When planning does occur, it may suffer from several inadequacies. Resources are often insufficient. In most cases, at least two years are necessary for implementation to reach a routine level of use. Yet, responding to a variety of pressures, decision makers press for implementation within a few months because resources are needed in other areas, and because demands are made for instant evaluation.

Failure to plan for the involvement of those implementing the curriculum is another source of neglect. As Fullan and Pomfret put it:

Research has shown time and time again that there is no substitute for the primacy of personal contact among implementers, and between implementers and planners/consultants, if the difficult process of unlearning old roles and learning new ones is to occur. Equally clear is the absence of such opportunities on a regular basis during the planning and implementation of most innovations.<sup>4</sup>

Teachers may not have to make all the decisions, but at the very least there must be ways for them to develop a feeling of commitment to its use.

A related mistake in planning occurs in overlooking the importance of communication during the implementation process. One cannot assume that teachers will implement a new curriculum successfully if only they understand it well enough. Planning for implementation requires formal channels of two-way communication among those involved in implementation.

Many times, plans for implementation fail to account for the culture of the school as arbiter of how and what change actually occurs. Sarason's work, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*,<sup>5</sup> is

a major contribution toward understanding school culture and its relationship to curriculum change processes. Research on this phenomenon is beginning to add further clarification.<sup>6</sup> Looking ahead, the 1980 ASCD yearbook<sup>7</sup> will include a thorough examination of the culture of the school as it affects the curriculum change process.

## Strategies

Depending on the situation, several different strategies may be appropriate for the implementation process.

Most models for bringing about curriculum change assume a strategy of *reason*. The leader uses logic to get potential implementers to see the need for a particular curriculum change. Advocates of this strategy assume that when teachers are more knowledgeable, they will try to reduce the discrepancy between what is and what ought to be. Unfortunately, the reason strategy is rarely successful. According to Zaltman, Florio, and Sikorski,<sup>8</sup> the following conditions are necessary for applying a reason strategy: (a) failure to change is due mainly to a lack of knowledge about alternatives; (b) goals are well defined and generally accepted; and (c) the means to implement

<sup>4</sup> Fullan and Pomfret, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

<sup>5</sup> Seymour Sarason. *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1971.

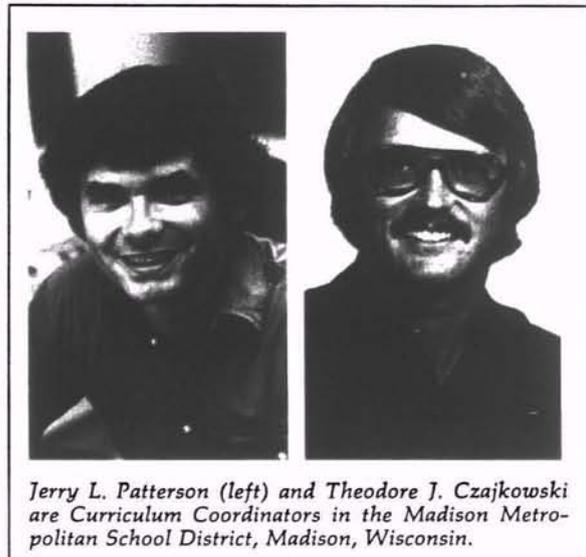
<sup>6</sup> See: Karen Seashore Louis and Sheila Rosenblum. "The Effect of School Structure and School Culture on the Implementation of Planned Change." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Ontario, March 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur W. Foshay, editor. *Considered Action for Curriculum Improvement*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, forthcoming.

<sup>8</sup> Gerald Zaltman, David Florio, and Linda Sikorski. *Dynamic Educational Change*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.

change are clearly communicated and feasible. Such conditions are rarely found in educational institutions. However, they are more likely to be found at the implementation stage than at other stages in the change process.

Although not universally effective, *power* strategies have been used successfully for achieving imple-



mentation. A power strategy is one that usually emanates from the top down, and the school or teachers have little control over the decision to participate. Conditions appropriate for a power strategy include situations where change must occur rapidly and where the implementers are so opposed to the change that the change strategist decides it will be productive to change behavior first and hope that attitude change will follow. An example of a power strategy is the federal requirement that handicapped students have an individual education plan. Even though many times the incentive for compliance with a power strategy is to avoid negative sanctions, such a strategy may achieve a degree of implementation when reason will not.

One of the more successful strategies for implementing change is *influence*.<sup>9</sup> Other labels used to describe it are persuasion, seduction, and manipulation. The major premise of this strategy is that implementation will take place if conditions are made sufficiently appealing for the implementers. For example, if a feature associated with a new middle school curriculum is additional planning time for teachers, the teachers may become committed to implementation because of the increased planning opportunity, not the innovation *per se*.

The decision of which strategy or combination of

strategies to use depends on the basis of commitment for change, the incentive for changing, and the settings in which the change is to occur. Consideration of these factors can help reduce the high mortality rate of implementation efforts.

### Staff Development

Several recent studies have found that implementation failed because curriculum leaders neglected to provide adequate staff development opportunities.<sup>10</sup> It was assumed that teachers already had the expertise to implement the change. Two areas of staff development deserve mention here. First is re-education—the development or refinement of competencies necessary to implement the innovation. This may take the form of a consultant for a publishing firm explaining the instructional techniques of a commercial program, or it may include a series of sharing sessions among colleagues on teaching ideas for a new curriculum unit. Whatever the form, re-education is a necessary component of staff development. If teachers can't perform the instructional behaviors required of them, implementation cannot take place.

A second component is resocialization—the development or refinement of roles and role relationships required for implementation. This means changing certain interactive skills, attitudes, and habits. Or, as Fullan and Pomfret describe role relationships, it means teachers being able to "... recognize the range of behavioral alternatives open to them, ascertain which ones are applicable in a given setting, and change accordingly."<sup>11</sup> Giacquinta concluded from his research that resocialization is difficult if not impossible to bring about.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, resocialization is essential for implementation to be successful.

Explanations for neglect of implementation in the curriculum change process range beyond and are more complex than the factors discussed in this article. For example, many forces beyond the control of those involved in implementation shape the destiny of the proposed change. But by acknowledging past inadequacies and acting on them in the future, we can implement new programs more effectively and get on with other phases of the curriculum change process.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance: P. Berman and M. McLaughlin. "Implementation of Educational Innovation." *Educational Forum* 40:345-70; March 1976. See also: Joseph B. Giacquinta. "Educational Innovation in Schools: Some Distressing Conclusions About Implementation." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Ontario, March 1978.

<sup>11</sup> Fullan and Pomfret, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

<sup>12</sup> Giacquinta, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

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