

What Franklin Bobbitt Might Say If He Could Only See Us Now

To all you stalwart schoolmen
And the factories you run;
To all you frazzled teachers and
The "frills" you've learned to shun;

To the planners and researchers
And their scientific schemes:
Congratulations! Thank you! You've
Surpassed my wildest dreams!

I applaud your test-tube language
And your number-covered forms,
Your units of performance, your
Standards, and your norms.

I celebrate your objectives, so
Behavioral, so complete.
I love the way your test results
Make knowledge look so neat.

Distar? Workbooks? M.B.O.?

I never had such tools.

I dared not hope technology
Could so control the schools.

I like those curriculum engineers:
Bereiter, Mager, and Popham,
With "Back to the Basics" and ETS.
There's not much left to stop 'em.

Your direct instruction, contracts,
And curriculum in carts;
Your labels and your tracking,
Your Apple data charts—

It's all shown me how much I lacked,
How much I didn't know.
How I could've used it all,
Those many years ago.

You've scientized the whole shebang!
Efficiency? You employ it.
Just one thing still bothers me:
Why don't the kids enjoy it?

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All 91 responding districts favored curriculum development by committee. The average preferred committee size, 10 persons, was not related significantly to the size of the district. Nearly all of the respondents favored teacher membership on these committees, more than three-fourths favored participation by administrators, and half favored parental involvement.

The low average rate of actual parent involvement in curriculum development contrasts with apparent general support for parent participation, particularly on curriculum committees. Parents had little input into the curriculum process in 88 percent of the districts.

Of those districts that believed parents should participate, more than half reported that parents were either heavily involved or had some input. (The survey inquired about the degree of parent involvement but not the actual nature of their participation.) Findings suggest that significant parental involvement in curriculum development exists only where it is actively supported by the schools, and further that the nature and degree of this participation varies from district to district.

We found significant involvement of the school principal, although not as high as that of teachers. Recent literature in the field of curriculum change (e.g., Berman and McLaughlin 1978) indicates that building-level commitment by principals has been a key to successful institutionalization of program change; results of our survey appear to confirm this research.

6. *Curriculum implementation.* We asked the districts to tell us whose responsibility it was to ensure that a new curriculum was implemented. Nearly all respondents (89 percent) agreed the primary responsibility rested with the principal. However, about half of the respondents indicated that teachers and directors of curriculum had responsibility for implementation. This point should stimulate school districts to reexamine the potential of combined leadership in curriculum development.

We also found that, statistically, the higher the frequency of teacher involvement in implementation, the higher the frequency of curriculum director involvement. However, no significant relationship was found between principals' and teachers' re-

sponsibilities. From these findings we can hypothesize two patterns of implementation: one at the building level guided by principals, and one at the district level possibly coordinated by a director of curriculum.

With an open-ended question, we asked the districts to indicate how they could tell if a curriculum is being properly implemented. More than 70 percent reported that they relied on classroom observations by supervisors or principals, a view consistent with the perception that principals are largely responsible for curriculum implementation. Forty percent said they relied on standardized test results; nearly 30 percent reported using meetings or teacher lesson plans to judge success of implementation. Most districts relied on more than one method.

7. *Curriculum evaluation.* We asked the districts whether they favored qualitative (descriptive) or quantitative (statistical) evaluations of curriculum. Sixty-two percent favored both. About a quarter favored only qualitative evaluation information, while only 13 percent favored a quantitative approach alone. This may be interpreted in at least three ways: either quantitative methods are not commonly understood, or a new evaluation trend stressing qualitative approaches is taking effect, or school districts tend to prefer more informal measures of success over objective test instruments. Clearly, more study is needed here.

8. *Comments.* Content analysis of the unstructured comments section indicated that most respondents supported "teacher ownership" of curriculum—again consistent with the results of items four and five. Comments included the following:

"Teachers need to be involved right from the start."

"If teachers don't feel committed [to the change], no one else will."

"I can't imagine trying a change in curriculum without getting the teachers to participate in the decision."

Of equal weight, however, is the call among the respondents for both periodic updating of curriculum and for administrative support for teachers implementing change. This endorsement of administrative support for curriculum development also is consistent with the response for item 5.

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