FACULTY RESEARCH EDITION

of

The Savannah State College Bulletin

Published by

The Savannah State College

Volume 28, No. 2 Savannah, Georgia December, 1974

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OPINIONS OF BLACK AND WHITE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ABOUT CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED CHILDREN

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Rationale for the Study

If the primary activity of schools is the teaching of children, then all children should benefit from an education consistent with their actual capabilities, regardless of their socio-economic condition. Teachers who are sensitive to the capabilities and needs of children can promote learning through a curriculum planned with these capabilities and needs in mind.

Attempts have been made to assess the sensitivities of teachers through research which measured attitudes and opinions. An attitude has a cognitive element and an affective reaction (White, 1969, p. 95). An opinion is an unverified judgment, usually used interchangeably with belief and is directed to the cognitive domain (White, 1969, p. 95). Opinions often influence attitudes.

Many teachers' attitudes can be modified as a result of increased awareness, exposure, and knowledge. Teachers should actively seek the information and experience that will give them a better understanding of economically deprived children (Stone, 1969). The development of positive attitudes and opinions by teachers can significantly affect the learning opportunities provided these children.

Although teachers may bring positive behaviors to a learning situation, there may be other problems to encounter. Teachers who are sincere in their efforts to teach all children, regardless of their academic levels, sometimes are hindered more through administrative limitations or blocks than any other source. Williams (1970), elaborating upon some of the limitations, asserts, "An analysis of opinions regarding hindrances to programs for disadvantaged youth reveals that . . . uniform and large classes throughout the system is number one." He also suggests that lack of equipment and teacher-denial of permission to try new procedures are hindrances. Elementary teachers indicated that system-wide policies and procedures which are inflexible are their second greatest hindrance to effective programs.

Schools should present the type of program and climate that will allow their students to learn according to their own rates (Cochran, 1971, p. 27). Smith, Cohen, and Pearl (1969,

p. 9) stated, "The schools must allow persons with different capacities to function where they can be most useful." The school that serves the economically deprived should not be different from other schools. All schools should provide for the needs of all their students. In this respect there may be some minor differences in schools, but there is no need for a special curriculum for the economically deprived (Havighurst, 1971, pp. 175-188). The school only has to make some provisions for the individual differences of its pupils.

This study may provide pertinent data on some of the opinions of elementary teachers concerning appropriate procedures for curriculum development for economically deprived children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine certain opinions that Black and White elementary teachers had concerning curriculum development for economically deprived children.

Methodology

Population

The inner city population in this study was composed of the teachers from five elementary schools in the Atlanta Public School System and five elementary schools in the City of Savannah and Chatham County system. The rural population was composed of teachers from schools located in a North Georgia shared services area, a Central Georgia shared services area, and a South Georgia shared services area.

The final numbers in the population were 104 rural elementary teachers and 171 inner city elementary teachers. The rural areas, to qualify for this study, had to be located outside a 50 mile radius of a metropolitan area (100,000 or more in population).

The teachers that participated in the study taught in elementary schools whose student population was considered economically deprived. This condition was determined by the requirements of a school's having 50 percent or more of its student population eligible to receive free or partial-pay lunches.

Fifty-nine percent of the teachers in this study were white. However, Whites and Blacks in the urban group were almost identical in percentage, as contrasted to 22 percent Blacks and 78 percent Whites in the rural group. Only 51, or 19 percent, held the master's degree or had approximately 30 semester hours beyond that level; 81 percent held the bachelor's degree; one person did not respond to this question. Seventeen percent of the inner city group held the master's degree, and nine percent of the rural group held that degree. In contrast, three

percent of those in the inner city group and eight percent of the rural population had earned the master's degree plus 30 semester hours.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument for the study consisted of an opinionnaire totaling 55 items. In order to obtain certain opinions of teachers about curriculum development it was necessary for the researcher to develop the instrument, *Opinionnaire on Curriculum Development* (OCD).

The Opinionnaire on Curriculum Development (OCD) was based upon Tyler's (1969), Taba's (1962), and Berman's (1968) concepts of curriculum development. The OCD consisted of five categories: (a) sources of the curriculum, seven items; (b) objectives, 11 items; (c) learning opportunities, 16 items; (d) methods and materials, 11 items, and (e) evaluation, 10 items. The instrument contained 55 items in its final form.

Results

The results of the teachers' responses to the items in the OCD are appropriately arranged in the accompanying table. Black and White teachers responded similarly to more than 81 percent of the items. The responses to items in the opinionnaire have been discussed in two categories, agreed and disagreed. This was done by combining the percentages in the "strongly agree" and "agree" columns to form one response, *agreed.* The same was done for the "strongly disagree" and "disagree" columns to form one response, *disagreed.* Differences in the responses of Black and White elementary teachers occurred in approximately 19 percent of the items in the *Opinionnaire on Curriculum Development.* Black teachers agreed 10 percent or more than White teachers on items: 2.7, 2.11, 3.13, 4.1, 4.6, 5.4, and item 5.5. White teachers disagreed 10 percent or more than Black teachers on items: 2.11, 3.13, 4.1, 4.6, 4.10, 5.4, 5.5, and item 5.8.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES OF BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS TO THE ITEMS ON THE OPINIONNAIRE ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

	Percent of Black Teachers N = 108						Percent of White Teachers N = 162					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank
1.1 The curriculum of a school should take into account the full range of cultural values present in a community (language, religion, etc.).		5	6	60	28	1	1	2	5	72	19	1
1.2 The curriculum of a school should provide opportunities for learners that will include content from the various areas of organized subject matter.		4	2	65	29			2		84	13	1
1.3 The curriculum of a school should take into account problems that may affect learning (e.g., poor motivation) which may be unique to that particular school community.		6	6	58	29		1	4	2	71	22	
1.4 Student interests should not be considered as a major determinant in the development of the curriculum for the school.	21	57	7	11	3	1	21	59	6	14	1	
1.5 The characteristics of children at their various stages of development should not be an important determinant of the curriculum.	27	61	4	9			30	63	4	2	1	
1.6. That no two individuals learn in precisely the same way should be taken into account as the curriculum is being developed.	1	6	2	56	35		1	4	1	67	27	
1.7 The characteristics and ideals of a democratic society should be taken into account when planning the curriculum of a school.	1	3	9	68	18	1	1	4	2	72	21	1

	Percent of Black Teachers N = 108						Percent of White Teachers N = 162					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank
2.1 Objectives should be formulated only by those professionally trained in education.	9	40	16	25	8	2	7	48	13	25	6	1
2.2 Objectives should be stated whenever possible in specific behaviors which result from learning opportunities.		7	12	69	12		2	3	9	76	9	1
2.3 Objectives should take into account individual differences among pupils.		2	4	58	37		1	1	4	69	25	
2.4 Objectives should take into account the intellectual development of pupils.	1	3	3	73	20		1	1		79	19	
2.5 Objectives should take into account the emotional development of pupils.	1	1	6	66	27		1		4	76	19	
2.6 Objectives should not take into account the physical development of pupils.	16	53	6	18	7		21	57	4	16	2	
2.7 Persons not professionally trained in education have little to offer in formulating objectives.	14	55	10	16	6		10	67	13	8	2	
2.8 Pupils are not qualified to participate in the process of setting up objectives.	12	71	7	9		1	13	67	11	7	1	1
2.9 Once objectives have been developed, they do not need to be reviewed.	35	60	2	3	1		28	67	1	2	1	1
2.10 Objectives should determine the nature of the evaluation of learning outcomes.	1	5	9	67	15	4	2	7	8	76	5	1
2.11 The curriculum should be regarded as only the sum total of all the courses of study in the school.	6	43	18	28	1	4	9	59	13	16	2	1
3.1 Multiple type of grouping for subject areas within the classroom permit learners to have experiences appropriate to their needs and abilities.	2	3	8	70	17			4	5	76	13	1

	Percent of Black Teachers N = 108						Percent of White Teachers N = 162					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank
3.2 Children need a variety of experiences in the classroom in order to make learning attractive.		1	2	57	40		1	1	0	65	32	1
3.3 Learning is more likely to occur in classrooms free from excessive tension.		1	2	50	47		1	1	0	62	36	
3.4 Homework should be used primarily to inform the parents about the school program.	17	62	8	12			13	58	11	15	3	
3.5 Children who want to tell about their own experiences make learning in the classroom more difficult.	20	63	6	6	4		22	70	0	2	5	1
3.6 Fundamental skills are learned less through lifelike experiences.	15	68	6	10	2		21	62	6	8	2	
3.7 There should be discussion within the classroom of both negative and positive aspects of the community.	1	3	7	75	10	4	1	3	7	75	15	
3.8 Children should have frequent opportunities to express themselves in ways related to their needs in the classroom.	1	1	2	73	23		2	4	2	73	20	
3.9 Children should be encouraged to write only about things that interest them.	6	67	9	16	1	1	7	72	11	7	1	1
3.10 Lifelike learning situations provide the best opportunities for children to use problem-solving techniques.		1	6	75	17	1		4	4	81	12	
3.11 Experiences in the classroom need not be satisfying to the learners.	29	52	6	11	1	1	22	59	7	10	1	
3.12 Experiences in the classroom must be within the learner's range of capability.		4	3	62	31		2	5	5	70	17	1
3.13 Freedom of movement is not a characteristic of classrooms in which desired learning takes place.	16	53	11	15	4	2	17	64	10	7	1	1

	Percent of Black Teachers N = 108						Percent of White Teachers N = 162					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank
3.14 Teacher-pupil planning is unsound when practiced with elementary pupils.	19	68	9	3	1		18	65	11	5	1	
3.15 Opportunities for expression should not be both verbal and non-verbal.	19	69	4	6	2		25	64	1	8	1	1
3.16 Enrichment activities are best conducted for bright students because they benefit most from these experiences.	24	58	9	9			22	63	6	7	1	
4.1 Teachers within a school should strive to use the same general methods of instruction in order to avoid confusion in the minds of learners.	12	54	8	23	3		18	58	12	12		
4.2 Community resources are valuable assets to the instructional program.			1	65	33	1	1	1	1	70	27	
4.3 Periodic remedial instruction outside the regular classrooms is an asset to the instructional program.		3	13	62	22		1	4	13	70	13	
4.4 Individualized instruction cannot be provided in most schools.	7	34	12	36	10	1	9	37	6	42	6	
4.5 The use of audio-visual aids can provide better opportunities for learning in most classrooms.	1	3	3	70	23	1		2	3	67	27	1
4.6 Commercial television should not be used in the classroom as a method of instruction.	8	45	22	22	1	2	11	56	19	12	1	1
4.7 Multi-ethnic texts help in preparing children to accept other people.		1	19	63	16	1		2	18	69	9	2
4.8 A wide range of textbooks is preferable to a single text for pupils.	1	6	9	63	21		1	2	13	66	18	
4.9 Materials should be provided to embrace all aspects of the program — intellectual, emotional, and physical.	1	1	1	63	33		1	1	2	66	31	

	Percent of Black Teachers N = 108						Percent of White Teachers N = 162					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undicided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Blank
4.10 Some curriculum areas should receive materials at the expense of other curriculum areas.	6	29	39	23	2		7	41	22	27	4	
4.11 Experimenting with various instructional methods and materials is one characteristic of schools which are most effective.		5	15	70	10	1	2	4	13	69	12	
5.1 Pupil progress should not be evaluated more often than at traditional "report card" times.	32	54	2	6	6		24	65	5	5	1	
5.2 The parents of a child should be informed frequently of his performance.	1	5	4	65	24	2	1	3	2	73	21	
5.3 Pupils should participate, under the guidance of the teacher, in evaluating their own progress.		4	3	77	17				6	81	13	
5.4 Pupils who engage in self-evaluation are not likely to assess their progress accurately.	5	52	16	26	2		7	66	19	7		
5.5 There is little value in parents' active participation in the evaluation of their children in school.	11	48	20	18	2	1	11	71	14	4	1	
5.6 The objectives of the total school program need not be evaluated regularly.	17	73	3	6	1	1	21	73	2	3		
5.7 Evaluation of learning outcomes should be related directly to the objectives of the school program.	1	17	11	61	9	1	2	18	14	58	6	2
5.8 The effectiveness of the instructional personnel is not related to the effectiveness of the curriculum.	17	61	10	10	2		18	72	5	5	1	
5.9 The relevance of the content of the subject areas should be reviewed constantly.	1	6	6	73	14		1	3	6	74	16	
5.10 Community members should have the opportunity, periodically, to assist in the evaluation of the school program.		6	17	65	11			6	19	64	11	

Summary and Conclusions

This study sought to determine certain opinions that Black and White elementary teachers had relative to curriculum development for economically deprived children. On the basis of the findings these conclusions were made:

1. Black and White teachers responded similarly to more than 81 percent of the items in the OCD.
2. Black and White teachers indicated that persons who are not professional educators have much to offer in formulating objectives but Black teachers agreed less that these people had a right to formulate objectives.
3. The curriculum is more than the sum total of all the courses of study in the school.
4. Opportunities for expression within the classroom should be both verbal and non-verbal.
5. Community resources are valuable assets to the instructional program.
6. Both groups were split as to their opinion on providing individualized instruction in most schools.
7. White teachers, more than Black teachers, agreed that pupils could evaluate their own progress accurately.
8. More White teachers than Black agreed that parents' participation in the evaluation of their children's progress in school has value.

Implications

Teachers seem to have some theoretical knowledge and understanding of curriculum development at the instructional level. They probably need more opportunity for practical application and knowledge. This opportunity for knowledge and experience should be provided by their respective schools and systems. Teachers should be allowed more opportunities to engage in decision-making at the instructional level. They should take part in curriculum planning at most levels, if not all levels of their concern.

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