

EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION - THE GOOD AND BAD

Evaluation is a necessary part of life, whether it is good or bad. Each of us is constantly evaluating our actions to see whether they are producing the results that we desire. Unfortunately, some individuals' goals and perspectives are so restricted that the individuals are unable to make objective evaluations. As a result they fail to see the greater picture, how their goals and actions fit into those of their society. The result is that they seldom learn or progress. Institutions are no different from individuals in this respect. They must constantly evaluate their course of action to see if they are achieving their goals. If the goals are out of sync with society and the world then the institution is doomed to fail. Oh, it might continue for some time but ultimately it will be replaced with one more, attuned to the needs of the society that it serves.

We have seen what has happened to some of the major industrial complexes, such as the automobile, the steel and the electronic industries. They became so self-centered that they failed to recognize that the world was changing. Their battle cry was "Business as usual". Their evaluation system insured this goal. What is true in industry is just as true in Education.

Evaluation is the rudder for an individual or institution.

Regardless of the destination, it is the evaluation process that will guide the individual or institution. If the wrong evaluation process is used then neither the individual nor institution will their goal. Evaluation in general has two primary objectives; one is to provide feedback data to assist in determining the progress towards one's goal and the second is to promote consistency and uniformity in an organization. Both goals are

important but they measure different things and to a great extent are mutually exclusive of each other. True, there is often overlapping areas but in general each type of evaluation must be used for the purpose for which it was designed.

All evaluation procedures begin with and can measure any product or the desired behavior. Unless the desired product and/or behavior are first determined no effective evaluation process is possible. Evaluation is simply a feedback system to provide information as to the progress toward, or achievement of, a goal or objective. If the goal or objective is not known then no reliable feedback data about the progress or achievement of the goal or objective is possible.

Evaluation procedures are extremely effective in directing efforts toward a goal. If the wrong procedure is used the organization will not move toward its desired goal.— For example, the evaluation may focus on behavioral factors with little or no relation to the desired product. If certain behavior is desired then the desired behavior becomes the product and evaluation of behavior is appropriate. However, if the desired product is something else, then behavior should only be considered when there is a direct relationship between a behavior and the achievement of the goal or objective.

This is not to imply that behavior is not important or that an organization shouldn't demand certain behavior on the part of its personnel. What needs to be understood is that effective evaluation must be designed to measure the things that are directly related to the specific desired goal or objective.

Educational evaluation in most cases has been ineffective in

improving student achievement because it is measuring the wrong things.

An analysis of most educational evaluation systems indicates a focus upon broad generalizations and ambiguous goals rather than specific learning goals and objectives for students. The problem is compounded because the focus is on teacher behavior and personal characteristics which usually has little to do with student achievement. If teacher effectiveness in promoting learning is to be measured, then student achievement must become the desired goal.

If certain personal characteristics and behavior are desired they should be delineated and become desired goals. Once this is done it will be easy to develop an instrument to evaluate an individual's progress and achievement of the desired goals. These factors should not be included in the evaluation of the teacher's effectiveness in promoting student learning unless it can be shown that there is a direct relationship between the specific behavior and student achievement.

A further analysis of educational evaluation indicates that in most systems the educational goals are so poorly defined that it is almost impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the particular teacher or system. What usually happens is that some standardized group test is used. This will give some indication of how the school is doing in comparison with other schools. However, this will provide little useful data to a school to help it determine how effective its program is in achieving its goals.

An effective evaluation system for any school is not a difficult task if the goals and objectives of the school are clearly delineated and known by everyone involved in the learning process. The goals and/or objectives must be stated in such a manner that one knows when they have been achieved. Unless the goal or objective can be measured the school should not assume responsibility for teaching it. If something can't be identified it is difficult or impossible to develop an effective instructional program to achieve it. One has no feedback data to help know whether the learner is progressing toward the goal or if it is ever achieved. There are some goals that might be worth pursuing that are in this category, but they should not be a part of the learning program for which the school is accountable.

Evaluation correctly done is critical to the success of any program; evaluation incorrectly done is extremely detrimental to any program. A good evaluation program requires that there be an outcome or product that is identifiable and measurable and that this outcome or product is known by all persons involved in achieving it. Once these factors are known, then an instrument can be developed to determine the progress and/or achievement of the product. The evaluation will not only tell the progress of the individual, but will provide data that will enable one to determine the effectiveness of the various components of the system.

An effective evaluation system for education must include students, teachers, and administrative personnel. The base for all evaluation must be student progress, for that is the primary

reason for the school or system. The following procedure is recommended.

1. The school must state in measurable terms those objectives it expects students to learn and for which the school accepts responsibility for the student's achievement. It is important that all objectives-academic, behavioral, or any others for which the school desires and is willing to accept responsibility are stated.
2. The objectives should be on a continuum, from simple to complex. They should be categorized according to subject and behavior. Objectives should be identified as to whether they are essential, desirable, or optional.
3. The objectives should be communicated to students and parents, and made available to anyone wanting them.
4. Every teacher and administrator must have a copy of the complete list of objectives.
5. A flexible instrument to measure each objective must be developed. This instrument will be used to determine what the students' skills are at the beginning of the program. This will provide a base line for instructions and for measuring achievement.
6. Evaluation will focus on individual achievement since it is the achievement of the individual that is important. After all, if individuals achieve, the group must achieve.
7. When a teacher assigns a student an objective, the teacher must evaluate the student's achievement of the objective at the completion of the particular instructional strategy. This provides the teacher with the necessary data to determine if the student achieved the objective and how successful the

instructional strategy was. The teacher is now able to determine whether the student is ready to move on to another objective or whether the teacher needs to try another instructional strategy. It also makes sure that the students do not skip needed skills and are working at their functioning level.

8. Random checks using statistical samples should be made periodically. The testing should be short and focused on skills or knowledge that records indicate the student has mastered.

The three problem technique is very effective in this type of evaluation. The student is given three problems related to the objective to be learned. If the student answers all three of the problems correct, it can be assumed that the objective has been learned. If the student answers two problems correctly then it is most likely that the student knows the objective, but has made a computational or clerical error. However, it is recommended that the student review the lesson and be retested. If the student misses all three problems it can be assumed that the objective has not been achieved. Therefore, the instructor must decide if the objective is appropriate for the learner or if it needs to be changed. If the objective is retained then a new instructional strategy must be selected.

9. The school or system may want to establish norms or guidelines to indicate the level and rate of achievement for students of different abilities and backgrounds, such as: socio-economic, racial, ethnic, or cultural. These data should never be used on individual cases, but would be valuable in helping the system to evaluate self and how it might compare with other systems.

10. The teacher evaluation will consist of two parts. The first

part will focus on behavioral objectives required of teachers by the school board and administration. The second part of the process will evaluate the teacher's ability to facilitate students' achievement. Teachers must be able to show that students have achieved or if they didn't. If the students hadn't shown achievement then the teacher must show that they used instructional strategies that a competent teacher would have used. This means that the teacher must keep accurate records of the student's progress and instructional strategies used with each student.

11. The evaluation of the principal must consist of three parts. The first will evaluate the principal on compliance with the district's policies and behavioral requirements. The second will evaluate the principal's administrative performance. The third and most important will evaluate the principal on the performance of the students in the school.

12. The superintendent evaluation will consist of three parts. The first will evaluate the superintendent on compliance with the district's policies and behavioral requirements. The second will evaluate the superintendent's administrative performance. The third and most important part of the evaluation will be based upon the achievement of students in the district.

13. Staff and ancillary personnel evaluation will consist of two parts. The first will evaluate the teacher on compliance with the system's policies and behavioral requirements. The second will evaluate the individual on the performance of the tasks delineated in the job description. It is extremely important to point out in this type of evaluation system that the achievement of the specific objectives adopted by the system is

being measured. Therefore, comparisons with other systems must be done with great care to insure that achievement of the same objectives is being measured. Evaluation is an indispensable tool for improving performance of individuals and a system. It is also a devastating instrument if used incorrectly.