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The Eight-Year Study: From Evaluative Research to Demonstration Project, 1930-1940

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Abstract

From 1932 to 1940, the Progressive Education Association (PEA) conducted its Eight-Year Study. At first, the study appeared to be a poorly funded comparison of two groups of students in secondary schools. During the last four years, as more financial support became available, the Eight-Year Study became a broadly based demonstration of a wide range of educational innovations. For contemporary educators, the story of the Eight-Year Study represents an opportunity to reconsider popular principles of program evaluation such as utilization-focused evaluation or program theory in evaluation. Rather than set plans in advance, the PEA members seemed to follow the ideas of John Dewey; they allowed the purposes to widen and broaden as the study evolved. In this way, the Eight-Year Study represented a model of democratic policy evaluation. Its tentative type of planning allowed people to set and to change their own purposes in line with the needs of the wider organization. Part of the reason that the study changed direction was it gathered more financial support and could add consultants who worked in distinct program elements. In addition, the lack of consistency matched the varied nature that characterized the founding members of the PEA. Its democratic framework may have enabled the Eight-Year Study to become the PEA's abiding contribution to American education.



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El Estudio de Ocho Años: desde la investigación evaluativa hasta el proyecto de demostración, 1930-1940

Durante el período de 1932 a 1940, la Asociación para la Educación Progresista (PEA, por sus siglas en inglés) llevó a cabo su Estudio de Ocho Años. Inicialmente, dicho estudio parecía ser un estudio comparado con escaso financiamiento, entre dos grupos de estudiantes de escuela secundaria. Sin embargo, durante los últimos cuatro años, tiempo durante el cual hubo más apoyo financiero, el Estudio de Ocho Años se convirtió en una amplia base de demostración de una variada gama de innovaciones educativas. Para los educadores contemporáneos, la historia del Estudio de Ocho Años representa una oportunidad para reconsiderar principios muy generalizados acerca de la evaluación de programas tales como, la “evaluación enfocada en la utilización”, o la “teoría de programas” en la evaluación. En vez de formular planes por adelantado, los miembros de la PEA siguieron las ideas de John Dewey; dejaron que los propósitos se ampliaran y se esparcieran a medida que el estudio evolucionaba. De este modo, el Estudio de Ocho Años representó un modelo de evaluación de políticas democrático. Su estilo tentativo de planificación le permitió a la gente poder establecer y cambiar sus propósitos en línea con las necesidades de toda la organización. Parte de los motivos por los cuales el estudio cambió de dirección fue que logró conseguir mayor apoyo financiero, pudiendo incorporar consultores quienes trabajaron en diferentes aspectos del programa. Además, la supuesta falta de consistencia concordaba con la naturaleza variada que caracterizaba a los miembros fundadores de la PEA. Su marco democrático pudo permitir que el Estudio de Ocho Años se convirtiera en la contribución perdurable que la PEA ha dado a la educación Americana.

Keywords: democratic program evaluation; John Dewey; Progressive Era education.

Introduction

From 1932 to 1940, the Progressive Education Association (PEA) conducted its Eight-Year Study. According to Lawrence Cremin, this study was the association’s abiding contribution to American education (Cremin, 1964, pp.240–253). At first, the study appeared to be a poorly funded comparison of two groups of students. During the last four years, it became a broadly based demonstration of a wide range of educational innovations. To the directors of the study, these shifts were not so much problems as they were opportunities for everyone to learn and grow. Consequently, they named the series of books that described the study *Adventure in American Education*.

For contemporary educators, the story of the Eight-Year Study represents an opportunity to reconsider popular principles of program evaluation such as utilization-focused evaluation or program theory in evaluation. On the one hand, when Michael Quinn Patton describes how to construct utilization-focused evaluations, he recommends that evaluators begin by carefully considering the effects that their efforts will have on the way people use the studies. While Patton does not recommend any particular model or method of evaluation, he notes, for example, that evaluators have to help the intended users select the ways of measuring that best fit their particular

situations. Thus, he recommends that, as a first step, evaluators work as facilitators with the primary intended users to determine what the study should measure, how the information should be collected, and how the information will be used (Patton, 1997, 20–22). On the other hand, calling their model program theory evaluation, Patricia Rogers and her colleagues suggest that evaluators should base their measurement on the outcomes a program should cause. For example, evaluation of a substance abuse program might seek to measure how the program informed subjects of the dangers involved in drug use and whether the subjects changed their behaviors as a result (Rogers, Hacsí, Petrosino, & Huebner, 2000, pp. 1–7). Unlike these two views of evaluation, the members of the PEA did not set out a clear aim in the beginning of the project that they could measure, and they did not seek to address a specific audience. Not only were they unsure how people might use the information, they did not construct a causal theory to explain any changes that might result.

Although the PEA members did not set up clear objectives in advance, they did not muddle along without any sense of direction. Instead, they began the study as something that afforded teachers and students the opportunity to have the freedom to set purposes for themselves. As a result, the PEA members seemed to follow Dewey's ideas when they undertook the Eight-Year Study.

For Dewey, the act of setting purposes was a complicated process that took place throughout an experience. Although he acknowledged that people had to have aims or purposes in order to act intelligently, he cautioned against having fixed aims or goals determined in advance. For Dewey, the function of an aim was to stimulate a person to consider more things. Thus, Dewey thought a person should have several general aims in mind at the same time because the plurality of purposes would set up conditions calling for varied observations that would lead to new questions. Although Dewey did not want to foster confusion, he wanted experiences to open into other experiences. His hope was for aims to free people's activities allowing those experiences to proceed in ways that led people to have more and better understandings. In this way, aims would progressively widen and broaden (Dewey, 1916, pp. 109–110).

Commentators have noted that the Eight-Year Study reflected Dewey's ideas. For example, recognizing the varied efforts the participants undertook in the Eight-Year Study, Craig Kridel and Robert V. Bullough, Jr. considered the Eight-Year Study to be a demonstration project that included an evaluative component comparing the relative success of two groups of students. According to Kridel and Bullough, the Eight-Year Study encouraged researchers to imitate John Dewey's approach in the laboratory school by using the study as an opportunity to investigate, to experiment, and to discover ways to tie teacher development seamlessly to curriculum reform by aiming toward social improvement (Kridel & Bullough, 2000).

While Kridel and Bullough may have been correct in noting that the PEA members followed Dewey's approach to problem solving, Kridel and Bullough overstated the ease with which this effort moved into other fields such as teacher development. In fact, since the study followed Dewey's ideas, it was not a seamless progression. The study was an experience that grew as opportunities presented themselves, and it changed direction when obstacles appeared. Some evidence for the view that the participants did not begin with clear goals comes from the different ways they characterized the inception of the Eight-Year study.

The director of the study, Wilford M. Aikin, credited an anonymous member of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) with suggesting the idea of the study at a meeting in 1930. Aikin wrote that several of the two hundred principals and teachers who attended this meeting in Washington, D.C. complained that college requirements restricted secondary schools from enacting curriculum reforms in ways that could help students develop their powers and equip them to rebuild the national life that had been profoundly disturbed by the advent of the Great Depression. As a result, the unnamed member, who may have been Harold Rugg, recommended that the PEA

establish a Commission on the Relation of School and College to explore the possibilities of coordination between school and college work and to seek freedom for the schools to seek fundamental reconstruction. In Aikin's account, since the PEA did not prepare to evaluate the success of the students in colleges until 1934, the study began as a means to give high school teachers the opportunity to be free of the feelings of external restraints (Aikin, 1942, pp. 1–2, 23, 105; Krug, 1972, pp. 256–257).

Other members of the PEA claimed the Eight-Year Study was an evaluative study; they added that the study sought to measure more than the relative success of two groups of students. For example, Paul B. Diederich, a member of the study's evaluation staff, wrote that the Eight-Year Study had two aims. The first was to see whether meeting the traditional requirements for college entrance made any difference in the academic success of the students. To test this question, the PEA compared the records of the graduates of traditionally oriented high schools with the accomplishments of graduates from high schools that did not follow such curriculums. The second question was whether freeing the secondary schools from external restraints would encourage them to develop new programs that would be better for young people, for colleges, and for the society. Diederich explained that the PEA selected a cross section of the secondary schools in the United States that prepared students for college entrance and arranged for colleges to accept the graduates of those schools with requiring them to meet the traditional entrance requirements in order to test the effect freedom had on high schools. He added that the members of the study's directing committee, the curriculum consultants, and the members of the evaluation staff took care not to impose any direction on the schools despite the fears that the participating schools would not wisely use their freedoms. Instead, they tried to act as facilitators who helped the faculty members in the participating schools to develop their own programs. Thus, while the traditional schools may have held to a uniform model of curriculum, the philosophies of the participating schools varied (Diederich, 1943, p. xvii–xix).

In part, the different accounts resulted because the study changed direction as it gathered more financial support and added consultants who worked in distinct program elements. According to Barry D. Karl, in the early twentieth century, groups of experts such as the PEA frequently sought financial support from organized philanthropies to conduct scientific studies to bring about wider social change. The process had four steps. First, a core group of interested specialists identified a problem. Second, these specialists called a conference, involved more people, enlisted popular newspaper and magazine writers to publicize the concerns, and appealed to philanthropists to support the project. Third, the experts would make the study. Finally, they wrote a final report and expected reasonable people to enact the measures they recommended (Karl, 1969, pp. 347–350).

To some extent, the PEA followed the steps described by Karl. One difficulty was that the stock market crash of 1929 and the subsequent depression depleted the resources of the philanthropic foundations. Thus, the PEA members could not find philanthropists to support the work. It was not until the foundations recovered their resources that the participants obtained more money. As a result, for the first year, the study received contributions totaling \$800. From 1932 to 1936, the Carnegie foundation supported most of the commission's work with donations that totaled \$70,000. In 1936, after the first group of students had graduated from high school, the General Education Board increased contributions until they totaled more than \$1.5 million by 1940. With the money from the General Education Board, the directing committee expanded the evaluation staff, increased the number of curriculum consultants, and conducted workshops with faculty in the participating schools (Cremin, 1964, pp. 256–258).

The dramatic increase in the flow of funds during the last four years changed the study. As money became available from philanthropic foundations, the PEA created several different commissions and committees to undertake different tasks. At first, the PEA charged the

Commission on the Relation of School and College to determine if the study was necessary, to recruit schools and colleges to participate, and to organize the effort. To aid participating schools reconstruct their curriculums, the Commission on the Relation of School and College created the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum in 1932. This commission formed the Study of Adolescents in 1934 to find out how the students developed, and it created several committees to select and order appropriate educational experiences for young people. In 1934, Ralph Tyler joined the study and began collecting lists of educational objectives from the participating schools. Since the Study of Adolescents revealed that young people formed their personalities within different sets of relationships, the PEA created the Commission on Human Relations in October 1935 to suggest ways that curriculum might demonstrate the ways human beings form relationships. As the first group of high school graduates entered the colleges in 1936, the Commission on the Relation of School and College created the College Follow-Up Staff to chart the extent that high school students profited from the freedom from college admittance requirements. In the same year, the commission added curriculum consultants who helped the faculty members in the participating high schools reconstruct their curriculums.

As the dates of formation suggest, the study added the component parts as funds became available. In fact, the director of the project, Aikin, served part-time until 1935 when funds from the General Education Board made it possible for him to devote complete attention to the study. Thus, the study did not have a director who could devote complete attention to the effort until it was almost half-finished (Giles, McCutchen, & Zechiel, 1942, pp. xxii–xxiii).

In part, the problems in financing caused the nature and aims of the Eight-Year Study to change as the study proceeded. Since the bulk of the funds supporting curriculum revision in the high schools came to the study after the first group of students had entered college, those students could not benefit from the wide range of consulting services that the PEA established. Thus, the evaluative nature of the study was limited. When money was available, the PEA created services for the participating schools thereby creating a demonstration project.

Selecting a Curriculum Ideal to Test

The fact that the participating schools in the project employed a variety of curriculum models made it impossible for the researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of one curriculum model over another. Nonetheless, this lack of consistency matched the varied nature of the founding members of the PEA. In 1918, Stanwood Cobb presented to about one hundred people gathered at the Washington D.C. Public Library a document declaring that the aim of Progressive Education was to seek the freest and fullest development of the individual, based upon the scientific study of his or her mental, physical, spiritual, and social characteristics and needs. Although Cobb's statement was the basis of organization, it was not his alone. He had formed it in cooperation with people such as Marietta Johnson, founder of the Organic School in Fairhope, Alabama; Eugene Randolph Smith, headmaster of Park School; and Laura C. Williams, sponsor of the Washington Forum. Filled with fervor to reform all of education, these founding members complained that most elementary and secondary schools harmed children because the teachers forced the students to memorize information for examinations. Unfortunately, although the PEA members knew what they opposed, they could not agree on what they favored (Beck, 1942, pp.134–139).

The PEA remained small, and many of the members were involved in private elementary schools. Although the organization grew during Eight-Year Study, the PEA members could not easily agree what they wanted to accomplish. For example, the PEA established the Commission on the Relation of School and College in 1930, and this group met for two years to decide why it should

encourage educational reform in secondary schools. Among the twenty-six members of the commission were high schools principals, college deans, educational philosophers, and evaluation specialists who had been active in educational reform. When the conferences ended, the members of the commission drafted a report to the PEA listing seventeen reasons why secondary schools should change. For example, the first point was that high schools lacked a clear central purpose. The second was that the high schools failed to give students an appreciation of their heritage as American citizens. The third was that secondary schools did not provide students with opportunities to prepare for community life. At the same time, the commission members complained that high schools did not challenge the students' intellectual abilities and failed to create conditions for effective learning. Complaining that the need to prepare students for college dominated high schools, the commission members asserted that the curriculum did not meet the concerns of youth (Aikin, 1942, pp. 2–12).

It is important to note that, in the 1920s, many high school teachers and principals complained that college requirements prevented them from changing their academic requirements. According to Edward A. Krug, these complaints were excuses and not grievances. Krug noted that many reformers had tried to change the high schools. Most notable was the National Education Association's (NEA) creation of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) to facilitate the transition of students from high school to college. Growing out of the same complaints about the influence of college entrance requirements on high school programs, the CRSE report of 1918 proposed that all high schools offer combinations of vocational and academic courses and social studies courses instead of Latin and mathematics. Krug found that the CRSE report was widely read, but few high schools changed their programs. He blamed the inertia of the high school teachers for the lack of change adding that the teachers and principals repeated the accusations of the rigidity of college entrance requirements to disguise their own unwillingness to meet the needs of youth (Krug, 1972, pp. 24–27, 55–59, 63–67)

When the PEA members complained about the ways college admission requirements prevented high schools from changing, those complaints may have been irrelevant. As noted above, Diederich contended that one of the hypotheses the Eight-Year Study wanted to test was whether schools would wisely use the freedom from restrictions to create programs designed to meet the needs of youth. Diederich added that some educators claimed that the teachers would retain the academic curriculum no matter what freedoms they enjoyed (Diederich, 1943, pp. xvii-xix). In this way, the study could have isolated the cause of the conservatism if the PEA gave the schools freedom and the faculty members did not change the curriculums.

At any rate, when the Commission on the Relation of School and College completed its report in 1932, the commission gave responsibility for conducting the study to a directing committee of sixteen members chaired by Aikin. Almost immediately, the directing committee secured agreements from more than 300 colleges to accept the graduates from high schools participating in the study who had the recommendation of the high school principal and who presented some record of abilities such as scores on aptitude tests. With these promises from colleges, the directing committee set about recruiting schools to participate in the study. The participating schools came from every section of the country except the southeast where a similar program of cooperation was underway among several colleges and secondary schools sponsored by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The range of educational policies in the schools extended from conservative to radical. Fourteen were public schools or entire public school systems, and sixteen were private. Although the researchers sought to present a balance of public and private school experiences, they did not match these students equally. Since the public schools were usually large and could include an entire district, the majority of the students in the study attended public schools (Diederich, 1943, p. xviii).

To test the effect of freedom from restrictions on high schools, the directing committee of the Eight-Year Study wanted the participating schools to be as free as possible in selecting their curriculums. Consequently, the committee asked the educators in the participating schools to accept only two principles to gain admittance to the study. The first principle was that life in the school and the teaching methods would conform to what educators knew about the ways human beings learn and grow. As the members of the directing committee and representatives of the schools discussed this requirement, they decided that this meant the students should have opportunities to engage in activities that had three characteristics: they had meaning for the students, they involved all aspects of the students' beings, and they led to other different activities. The second principle was that the schools should rediscover their reasons for existence (Aikin, 1942, pp. 16–19).

In drafting the first principle for participation in the Eight-Year Study, the members of the directing committee restated the founding declaration of the PEA retaining their concern for the individual liberation of the students. They ignored other more comprehensive explanations of education such as the need for social reform. For example, Aikin noted that neither the members of the directing committee nor the representatives of the participating schools were willing to devote time during the meetings to questions of the guiding principles of education. Aikin added that in submitting statements to the directing committee on their plans during participation in the study, the educators from the high schools did not present any common aim as they sought to fulfill the second requirement, to form a reason for their existence. Instead, the themes that the secondary educators offered included such ideas as adapting the work to the individual student's needs, providing greater mastery of skills, and offering opportunities for the release of creative energy (Aikin, 1942, pp. 30–31).

The unwillingness of participating educators to consider social reform reflected common attitudes among teachers in the 1920s. For example, several educators became popular by proposing that curriculums follow students' interests in such models as the project method. In some cases, the projects were ways to make abstract learning more practical and immediate. These projects could begin with students planting gardens and studying the growth of plants or teachers could arrange large units of history and geography around stories of pioneers moving into the American frontier. In other cases, the rationale of projects was that children developed the habits of good thinking when they did what they wanted to do (Whipple, 1934).

The participants in the Eight-Year Study changed their perspectives about wider social aims by 1937. When the study was nearly complete, representatives from most of the participating schools decided had to help students understand and appreciate the ideal of democracy that was basic to the country's heritage. According to Aikin, once the representatives of the study accepted the democratic ideal as their overarching purpose or philosophy of education, most of the school people developed this principle into their work, and it permeated the reports of their schools as they described what they had done. To illustrate this change, Aikin quoted from the report of the Denver Public School wherein the authors acknowledged that the faculty and administration in Denver made no connection between the curriculum and the wider aims of the study until the study had been underway for four years. Having made such a connection, the officials in Denver sought to adjust all aspects of school life to the concept of democracy and made the schools into instruments of personal liberation and of social reform (Aikin, 1942, pp. 30–33).

Aikin did not explain why the representatives of the participating schools waited so long to connect their efforts to the need to reinforce democracy. Nonetheless, when the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum published its report, *Reorganizing Secondary Education*, authors V. T. Thayer, Caroline B. Zachary, and Ruth Kotinsky claimed that the standards of an appropriate education could come from an examination of the ideal of democracy. Since the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum supervised the Study of Adolescents and the various curriculum

committees, it was a central part of the Eight-Year Study. According to Thayer and his colleagues, new social conditions made it imperative for high schools to change the curriculums. Examples of these social conditions included the rise of anti-democratic groups caused by the advance of the Great Depression, the ways that industrialization and urbanization had taken away opportunities for children to participate in essential activities in the home, and the lack of employment opportunities during the depression. The result was that high schools had increased enrollments and the high schools had become important institutions. Further, Thayer and his colleagues asserted that the rise of science had reduced the need for labor and increased wealth and the new technologies caused insecurities as life styles changed. Thayer and his colleagues added that researchers had created new theories of learning that recognized the need for students to develop skills of thinking by understanding and directing their experiences. To Thayer and his colleagues, these changes made learning less a way to accumulate information and more a method for students to reshape themselves and their surroundings. The problem, according to Thayer and his colleagues, was that teachers in secondary schools and colleges ignored these changes and tried to have students acquire as much of the academic disciplines as possible. To reorganize secondary education, Thayer and his colleagues thought the high schools should meet students' needs in ways that reinforced democracy (Thayer, Zachary, & Kotinsky, 1939, pp. 3–25).

In their report, *Reorganizing Secondary Education*, Thayer and his colleagues borrowed the name, the style, and the organization of the report issued in 1918 by the CRSE. Published when all states had recently adopted compulsory education, the CRSE report described twenty cardinal principles of secondary education that school people should consider as they coped with rapid social change, increasing numbers and different types of students, and new ideas in educational theory. In making these recommendations, the CRSE had accumulated the findings of several subcommittees concerned with the function of various subject matters (NEA, 1918).

The 1939 report of the PEA's Commission on Secondary School Curriculum for the Eight-Year Study followed in three important ways the pattern of the CRSE cardinal principles report. The first way was that the PEA's commission did not describe plans the secondary schools should follow. Instead, imitating the CRSE, the commission described a set of ideas. The second way was that the PEA commission charged various sub-committees to show how to translate these basic ideas into practice. In 1932, the Executive Board of the PEA had created the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum headed by Thayer and his colleagues to focus attention on the needs of youth and to further experimentation in curriculum revision. Consequently, the commission started the Study of Adolescents to determine what the students needed in order to grow and it created several sub-committees devoted to the study of curriculum approaches in such areas as art, language, science, mathematics, and social studies. Thayer and his colleagues claimed the curriculums should offer means to satisfy the students' needs as defined by the Study of Adolescents. At the same time, they warned that this research could not define the standards toward which students should grow. Instead, they noted that the research could offer insight into the essential values of the adolescent. It could illuminate trends that enhanced or retarded the students' abilities to realize their desires. In turn, the sub-committees could show school people how they could provide standards that enabled the youth to grow in desirable directions. This led to the third way the PEA commission's report was similar to the cardinal principles report. Both documents contended that the way to determine the standards for appropriate education could come from an examination of the ideal of democracy (Thayer et al., 1939, pp. v-ix, 54–59).

In making the standards of education come from an examination of the ideal of democracy, Thayer and his colleagues may have thought they were following the ideas of Boyd Bode, a professor at The Ohio State University. Bode served on the directing committee of the Commission on the Relation of School and College, and for the first year he was a member of the Commission

on Secondary School Curriculum. More important, Bode had close relations with the commission members. For example, in 1924, when Bode was the head of the Department of Principles and Practice in Education at The Ohio State University, he hired Thayer who in 1932 became the chair of the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum. Although Thayer left Bode's department in 1928, they became such friends during those four years that Thayer claimed Bode had shaped his entire pattern of thinking (Bullough, 1981, pp. 64–66).

In 1938, Bode published his book, *Progressive Education at the Crossroads*, in which he criticized progressive educators for placing too much faith in the individual. According to Bode, progressive educators nurtured the pathetic hope that they could find out how to educate children by cataloguing the children's interests and protecting the children's freedoms. Bode complained that progressive educators made children's freedom into a form of absolutism because they forbade adults to interfere in the children's desires to do things (Bode, 1938, pp. 39–41).

When Bode noted that progressive educators commissioned studies of adolescence in order to determine children's needs, he worried that progressive educators believed they could find a pattern of instruction in a listing of the children's needs. Bode argued that this hope was similar to an architect expecting the plans for a building to emerge from a study of the materials out of which the building would be constructed. To Bode, the students' needs came from the students' way of life. Thus, educators had to construct the curriculum in reference to the social order. Since the progressives admired democracy, Bode urged them to recognize the complex relationships the democratic ideal created in the modern world. He believed that in this way progressive educators could find the proper direction for curriculum development (Bode, 1938, pp. 67–71). This is the view that Thayer and his colleagues expressed in their commission's report.

Although Thayer and his colleagues appeared to follow Bode's ideas, Bode disagreed. In a review of *Reorganizing Secondary Education*, Bode noted that the report began well by pointing out that teachers should treat students' wishes in ways that improved those desires. Nonetheless, Bode complained that the report soon fell into apart because it claimed the direction of these changes came from the democratic tradition. If Thayer could make this claim for the American tradition, Hitler could make a similar claim for a Nazi tradition. If the report by Thayer and his colleagues represented the PEA's program for reorganization, Bode concluded that it would fail because it did not represent a fundamental reorganization. When democracy appeared as a standard, it contradicted the hope behind democracy that intelligent people could find answers for themselves (Bode, 1940).

In his reply, Thayer expressed shock and disappointment. He went on to quote from his report to show that his committee did not conceive of students' needs in a limited sense. Further, Thayer retorted that his committee adopted democracy as an ideal because it implied standards that provided a frame of reference without resorting to eternal principles similar to those a dictator might impose (Thayer, 1940).

Moving toward a Demonstration Project

When the Eight-Year Study began, the Commission on the Relation of School and College had held annual conferences of representatives from the schools to determine how to form curriculums. The PEA's effort to seek cooperation from the participating schools was part of the effort to free the schools from principles of curriculum organization imposed by outside institutions. Unfortunately, these conferences were inadequate because they lasted only a few days. In 1936, with increased funds from the General Education Board, the PEA began summer workshops as an experiment in the in-service training of teachers. At the same time, in 1936, the Study of

Adolescents began to explore the needs of youth as a basis for curriculum theory, the sub-committees for curriculum areas had generated instructional ideas, and the evaluation staff was seeking ways measure the results of curriculum innovations. Since the information from these efforts could help teachers, the PEA held the first six-week long seminar for teachers of science and mathematics at Ohio State University in 1936. They held a similar workshop at Sarah Lawrence College in 1937. Open to teachers across the United States, the Sarah Lawrence conference required teachers to bring some definite instructional problem on which they were working. In 1938, the PEA set up additional workshops in New York, Colorado, and California (Ryan and Tyler, 1939, pp. 5–7).

The workshops did not consist of formal classes. Instead, the teachers and the sub-committee members worked cooperatively, exchanged ideas, and sought practical teaching innovations. In each of the workshops, the participants concentrated on ways to meet individual students' needs. Usually, the teachers spent the mornings in small group meetings that focused on some particular subject such as science, social science, or student guidance. In the afternoon, groups might meet to consider topics such as evaluation or test making. In all these cases, attendance at these meetings was voluntary. Consequently, many teachers worked independently (Ryan and Tyler, 1939, p. 15).

When the workshop coordinators tabulated the participants' responses to questionnaires, they found several things that participants thought had made workshops productive experiences. For example, the groups of teachers worked best when program directors formed teams in which all the members could contribute. This meant that the directors had to choose staff members and participating teachers who could work cooperatively and who could bring instructional problems to the workshops that would lead to other considerations without being so broad they defied resolution. Further, the teachers in every group at the summer workshops noted they could not complete their work until they had some understanding of a general philosophy of education. Although the members of the various groups focused their conversations on specific subject matters, they had turned to questions about the function of the subject matter in general education at some point in the process. Nonetheless, the members of the summer workshops agreed that specific instruction in the philosophy of education would not have been helpful. They contended that the understandings of philosophy had to arise from their struggles with specific issues. They claimed they would not have benefited from attending lectures comparing various philosophic systems (Ryan and Tyler, 1939, pp. 38–46).

Since a philosophy was to arise from efforts to solve classroom problems, these summer workshop participants expressed the view about democratic teaching methods that permeated the Eight-Year Study. This was a bias to work inductively. For example, the curriculum sub-committees urged teachers to use inductive methods of curriculum construction and instruction. In this model, curriculum would begin with the recognition of the students' problems and the belief that the subject matter would provide the means to solve those difficulties.

To some extent, when Thayer and his colleagues planned the work of their Commission on Secondary Curriculum, they followed an inductive format. That is, they looked to the researchers on the Study of Adolescents to suggest the framework that the curriculum sub-committees would follow. In the final report of the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, *Reorganizing Secondary Education*, Thayer and his colleagues claimed that the Study of Adolescents had found most students had similar needs and that the needs fell into the categories of immediate social relationships, wider social relationships, economic relationships, and personal living. Thayer and his colleagues added that the curriculum sub-committees had found ways that teachers could take these four categories of needs into account and help the students change these needs in desirable ways. In all cases, the direction in which the teacher would direct the changes was toward the democratic

tradition that implied the worth of the individual, the relationship the individual had with his or her group, and the free play of intelligence to solve problems (Thayer et al., 1939, pp. 44, 50, 86).

When the sub-committees on curriculum translated these general statements into specific suggestions, their reports recommended an inductive method of instruction. Taking their direction from the three tenets of the democratic tradition that Thayer and his colleagues expressed, the subcommittees recommended that teachers value the problems that the students faced, concentrate on the relationships the individual had with the group, and enhance the free play of intelligence. Bode had made these same recommendations when he wrote *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* (Bode, 1938, pp. 120–122).

A description of the report of the Committee on the Function of Science in General Education illustrated the ways the subcommittees on curriculum infused a bias for induction into its work. Published in 1938, the report served as the model for the other curriculum committee reports. In suggesting why and how teachers could tailor the instruction to the needs of students, the report noted that teachers should concentrate on the relationships the individual had with the group. It recommended that lessons should enhance the students' ability to think. Since the committee was drafting a manual to teach science as a part of general education, the authors set out what they called a frame of reference. This included a definition of the purpose of general education as meeting the needs of individuals in ways that promoted the realization of personal potential and the most effective participation in a democratic society. Since the definition depended on what the members of the committee on science thought were student needs, the authors repeated the claim of Thayer and his colleagues that students' needs fell into four categories. For the authors of the science report, their frame of reference listed the student needs as personal living, immediate personal-social relationships, social-civic relationships, and economic relationships. The authors of the report of the committee on science claimed the areas of pure or applied science could aid in meeting the students' needs because the disciplines could illuminate the ways the students' lives were changing and how society developed. Finally, the frame of reference included the recognition that democracy required three interrelated qualities: optimum development of personality, reciprocal individual and group responsibility for promoting common concerns, and the free play of intelligence (PEA, 1938, pp. 23–57).

Building on their frame of reference, the members of the committee on science described a method by which science teachers could construct an appropriate curriculum. The process began with teachers making investigations to discover the problems and interests of the specific students in the classrooms and conducting surveys of the community to determine such factors as occupational conditions, civic atmosphere, and religious climate. Thus, the process began in an inductive fashion. To the information about the specific students and the local community, the teachers could add reports from professional educational organizations, findings from authoritative books on science, information from textbooks, and patterns of organization from courses of study from other schools to determine the scientific material that could be included in the curriculum. From this information, the teachers, students, and other curriculum makers could decide what materials to include and how to present them. Although the report suggested several models teachers could follow in designing the courses, the committee on science refused to recommend any specific one. The members claimed that teachers should select the style of the curriculum that best suited the needs of the students and the characteristics of the community (PEA, 1938, pp. 443–454).

Since the Committee on the Function of Science in General Education was the first to publish its report, the other committees such as the Committee on the Function of the Social Studies in General Education sought to blend those suggestions with the findings from the Study of Adolescents. While the authors thought the perspective they took would result in revolutionary changes in secondary schools, they did not recommend any specific form of curriculum

organization. They believed the changes would come from the teachers' growth in insight and thoughtful personal experimentation (American Education Fellowship, 1940, pp. v–ix).

It is important to note that the reports of the curriculum committees were reports of the conclusions from the demonstration project. The activities of the curriculum specialists and the child psychologists took place after the first group of students had graduated from the participating schools. While the workshops for teachers represented reasonable demonstration projects, they had not begun in time to be important parts of the evaluation project. Even Bode's complaints about the tendencies of progressives to build curriculums on lists of students' needs came late in the study. To some extent, the lack of funding delayed the start. For example, the funds to support the curriculum consultants did not arrive until 1936.

The alterations in the Eight-Year Study were not the exclusive result of increased financial support. They were an aspect of the model of thinking the members of the study followed. As one set of problems revealed another set of difficulties, they opened new questions that led to new thoughts. As a result, the participants in the project could not have considered these aspects in 1930 before they began their efforts. Nonetheless, the lack of planning did not deprive the Eight-Year Study of practical effects. For example, Daniel and Laurel Tanner credit the Eight-Year Study with making the idea of teacher workshops to bring about curriculum change an important aspect of teacher in-service training for most school districts (Tanner and Tanner, 1990, pp. 235).

Growth as the Criterion of Educational Evaluation

Faced with the difficulty of determining the effects of the new curriculums, the progressive educators devised methods of evaluation in the same inductive manner they used to create the curriculum. In 1932, when the directing committee of the Commission on the Relation of Schools and Colleges secured the consent of 300 colleges to waive their traditional entrance requirements, the directing committee had not specified what the schools would have to provide to satisfy the admissions officers of the colleges. As a result, the directing committee established a Committee of Records to help determine what information about the students to gather, how to collect it, and how to present it (Aikin, 1942, pp. 11–16).

The Committee of Records worked for two years selecting different tests the participating schools could use to verify the mastery their students had achieved in various fields. Educators from several schools complained that general tests reduced the possibility of curricular innovation because such tests would measure the students' abilities to recall specific subject matters in traditional fashions. It fell to Ralph W. Tyler to solve this problem. In 1934, Tyler joined the study as research director for the Eight-Year Study to coordinate the work of the College Follow-Up Staff. He made a preliminary study of the research needs and devised plans to construct evaluation instruments. In 1936, when Tyler received a substantial contribution from the General Education Board, he established an evaluation staff and to help participating schools evaluate their work in relation to their own goals (Smith, Tyler, & Staff, 1942, pp. 3–5).

According to Tyler biographer Morris Finder, the Eight-Year Study had reached a crucial impasse before Tyler joined the program. The Carnegie Corporation threatened to recall their funding of the Eight-Year Study unless the PEA used the General Culture Test that the Pennsylvania Study of School and College Relations had developed. Finder claimed that the representatives of the participating schools resisted because the test would impose a curriculum; the teachers would gear instruction toward the test. When Tyler suggested that tests should cover what the students learned in the classes, the PEA hired him to direct the research and the Carnegie Corporation restored the funding (Finder, 2004, pp. 16–17).

Tyler and his staff chose to use *evaluation* rather than *measurement* because the former implied a process through which the educators in the participating schools clarified the values they pursued. In this process of evaluation, the staff assumed that teachers sought to change students' behavior and these changes represented the objectives. To find out if the teachers succeeded in bringing about these behavioral changes, the evaluation staff used more than one measure or test because the evaluators realized that the traits of human behavior were complicated and interrelated. Thus, the evaluation staff used observational records, questionnaires, lists of activities, and interviews as well as typical paper and pencil tests. Most important, in this process, evaluation was the responsibility of everyone in the school, and everyone shared in the preparation and application of the procedures (Smith, Tyler, & Staff, 1942, pp. 5–15).

When the evaluation staff worked with the educators in the participating schools, they followed a set of procedures that involved seven steps. First, the faculty members formulated a statement of the objectives they sought in the curriculums. Second, they sorted these objectives into different categories and levels of generality or specificity. Third, the teachers defined what behaviors they wanted the students to exhibit. Fourth, they noted what situations would call forth those behaviors. Fifth, the teachers selected the measures that would indicate the relative success of the students for each objective, and in the sixth step, the evaluation staff refined those measures. In the last step, the faculty and the evaluation staff decided what the accumulated information indicated about the program (Smith, Tyler, & Staff, 1942, pp. 5–34).

In following these steps, the evaluation staff and the teachers in the participating schools developed methods to assess such apparently elusive qualities as the ability to think clearly. The way they did this was to break the general activity into constituent parts. In one example, the evaluation staff selected the ability to interpret data; the ability to apply principles from the sciences, from the social sciences, and from logic; and the ability to understand the nature of proof. To measure these abilities, the staff broke these parts into related behaviors such as the ability to perceive relationships in data and the ability to recognize limitations of data. To measure student achievements, the staff and the teachers constructed tests wherein the students would perform the functions in ways their successes could be measured (Smith, Tyler, & Staff, 1942, pp. 35–47).

Since Tyler formed the evaluation staff after 1936, most of the work in evaluation with the schools took place after the educators had decided to integrate their efforts around the social ideal of democracy. As a result, the efforts the evaluation staff undertook considered the development of skills that would lead to widespread social reform while they preserved the original concern for personal liberation. For example, the evaluation staff sought to enable school people to inculcate social sensitivity among the students and to measure their success in teaching students to be aware of social problems, to avoid dogmatic precepts, and to participate in groups concerned with social action. In these efforts, the evaluation staff formed two committees to take statements about objectives for social sensitivity and make analyses that would provide the foundation for its evaluation. From 1935 to 1938, a Committee on the Evaluation of Reading held meetings to develop instruments that would help teachers appraise students' reactions to reading. The committee chose to measure various personal reactions such as satisfaction with reading, the desire to read more, the desire to know more, and the desire to express oneself creatively. In 1938, the evaluation staff began studying ways to understand, to teach, and to measure personal and social adjustment. Using information from the Study of Adolescents, the evaluation staff distinguished between personal adjustment, feelings of adequacy, and social adjustment, abilities to develop relationships providing adequate and effective interactions. Defining adjustment as a series of compromises that allowed the individual and the group to avoid conflicts, the evaluation staff chose to use paper and pencil surveys to measure the essential traits such as acceptance of oneself, enjoyment of home life, and activities that involve members of the opposite sex. The advantages of questionnaires were that they

groups of students could complete them, they could be measured objectively, and the results from one individual could be compared to the results from another person (Smith, Tyler, & Staff, 1942, pp. 157–162, 245–251, 349–361).

In these ways, the evaluation staff devised strategies of measurement that fit the aims of the school people. Tyler could apply his method to any type of school although he forced teachers to use behavioral objectives and to plan the curriculum in ways that pointed to measurable changes in students' behavior. Thus, Tyler's method held student growth to be the aim. In line with the inductive bias of the Eight-Year Study, Tyler's approach began with the concrete situation or problem the teachers faced. It asked the teachers to think about their aims and to state those objectives in ways that enabled to recognize success or failure. Consequently, evaluation in Tyler's hands was specific to the situation. Instead of devising a test, he wanted to help the teachers in the classrooms resolve the problems they faced.

Tyler created his method of evaluation because representatives from the participating schools feared that a system of evaluation would dictate a specific curriculum approach. As noted above, the directing committee took pains to avoid pressuring the schools to adopt any model of curriculum or teaching. Indeed, Tyler's method of creating curriculums through the adoption of measurable changes in students' behavior remains an important contribution of the Eight-Year Study. Nonetheless, the participating schools could not use it until well after the first group of students had graduated from the participating schools. Thus, although the Eight-Year Study provided an opportunity for Tyler to create and demonstrate his rationale for curriculum development, it did not affect the curriculums of the first graduates from the participating schools.

Completing the Evaluation Project

To complete the evaluation portion, the College Follow-Up Staff faced a daunting task. First, the directing committee had selected participating schools that differed widely. Thus, the staff could not make simple comparisons. Second, the College Follow-Up Staff did not begin its work until the study was half over. Therefore, the members had to find ways to measure the effects of work already finished. Descriptions from Milton Academy and the Ohio State University Schools illustrate the extent of the first problem by showing the differences among the participating schools. Explanations of how the College Follow-Up Staff constructed its measures illustrate the ingenuity they used in evaluating a program that was nearly complete.

In the volume *Thirty Schools Tell their Story*, the educators at Milton Academy described their school as one that retained a conservative approach. The authors contended that the primary aim of Milton Academy was to shape the curriculum for the aptitudes of each student. Claiming the academy had followed a policy of holding conferences between students and advisors and among parents and faculty for more than 33 years, the authors described how the faculty had created a variety of ways for students to master the subject matters. While acknowledging that instruction within the academy remained focused on mastery of academic subjects, the authors noted how, during the Eight-Year Study, faculty shortened the periods of drill for the various sections of the College Board Examinations. The authors proudly noted that student success rates remained high despite having less direct preparation for the examinations. At the same time, the authors noted how a few students had undertaken independent studies under close faculty supervision (*Thirty schools*, 1943, pp. 483–490).

On the other hand, at the Ohio State University School, the subject matters had little separate identity. In general, the students enrolled in core courses that included several subject matters related in functional ways. Not only did the students work cooperatively on these projects,

but the administrators, the counselors, the teachers, and the parents worked in cooperative, democratic relationships. In addition to frequent conferences among these parties, faculty representatives served on more than twelve committees that take responsibility for various areas of governance. Even student evaluation comprised a medley of measures. Organized in cumulative folders, the measures included records of accomplishments, performance on achievement tests, anecdotal records of teachers, and reactions of parents (*Thirty schools*, 1943, pp. 718–745).

In 1938, the students of the Ohio State University School wrote and a major publishing firm released the 300-page *Were We Guinea Pigs?* to record their accomplishments. Claiming that the aim of the school was to fit every student to the place in life for which he or she was most suited, the students described how they worked together with their teachers on several projects. The first was to change their classrooms into a home. This required studies of such subjects as home economics to select furniture, of architecture and aesthetics to design the layout, and of science and literature to select the library resources. To perform the work, the students formed committees and divided the responsibilities. They wrote the text in a similar cooperative way. Since the students governed and shared the work, they claimed there were no problems with discipline. Each student accomplished as much as he or she was able (Ohio State University School, 1938, pp. 3, 29–54, 295–299).

Despite the differences among the experiences of students in participating schools, the original question remained as to whether students from high schools freed from college entrance requirements would do as well students who met those requirements. In July 1936, the Commission on the Relation of School and College used the funds it received from the General Education Board to set up a staff of four deans from prestigious universities, a college instructor, and a university placement officer to evaluate the college experiences of the graduates of the participating schools. Although this College Follow-Up Staff began its work after the first group of students had entered college, they sought ways to compare the students' progress with those of students from traditional schools (Chamberlin, Chamberlin, Drought, & Scott, 1942, pp. 1–3).

The College Follow-Up Staff had to define and to measure college success. To accomplish this goal, the staff chose to use such things as student grades, honors, questionnaires, interviews in which students revealed their interests and activities, reports from instructors, and a series of tests of reading and research skills as measures of college success. In addition, the College Follow-Up Staff had to select control groups and collect data after the students had left the participating schools. Since they could not set up control groups, the staff chose use a process of statistical matching to create comparisons. The staff matched about 1500 of the graduates of participating schools with students who were attending the same type of university and were similar in regards to sex, race, age, type of secondary school, home community, and social or economic class. In 1936, the first year the graduates entered college, the staff conducted several interviews and distributed questionnaires frequently. As more students entered college, though, the frequency with which the staff sampled the students declined. In all, the staff collected data from four years for the 1936 graduates of participating schools. They collected data for three years from the 1937 graduates, for two years from the 1938 graduates, and for one year from the 1939 graduates (Chamberlin, et al., 1942, pp. 3–14).

In the staff's report, the authors acknowledged the many problems that they encountered. For example, College Follow-Up Staff noted that some of the participating schools offered traditional subject matter curriculums and required that students take College Board Examinations while other schools offered radical curriculums and did not ask students to pursue traditional examinations. To assess the differences in these distinct curriculum approaches, the College Follow-Up Staff measured the differences between the graduates of the most progressive schools and their comparison students (Chamberlin, et al., 1942, pp. 17–21).

The results were favorable if not spectacular. For example, the College Follow-Up Staff found that the graduates from the participating schools in the study earned slightly higher grades. They appeared more intellectually curious, objective in their thinking, and resourceful. Since these small differences appeared consistently, the College Follow-Up Staff claimed that benefits did not occur by chance. They concluded that the participating schools did a somewhat better job of preparing the students for college. The greatest differences came when the follow-up staff compared the results of the students from the most progressive schools such as the Ohio State University School with the students from less innovative participating schools, such as Milton Academy. The staff proclaimed that students profited more from the more experimental schools (Chamberlin, et al., 1942, pp. 206–209).

The College Follow-Up Staff claimed their study showed that colleges could safely leave the preparation of students to the teachers in the secondary schools. The teachers could find ways to serve the different students in their classes and produce students who could complete college work. The follow-up staff added that the teachers in the participating schools had advanced beyond the college faculty members. While those teachers had worked together to form consistent philosophies of education, the college faculty members had not. In most cases, college training consisted of a sequence of unrelated courses taught by professors who were unconcerned with the students (Chamberlin, et al., 1942, pp. 210–213).

Perhaps the most important finding the College Follow-Up Staff made was the difference between the graduates of the more progressive schools and the more conservative ones. The Ohio State University School had designed the curriculum in the ways that the curriculum consultants for the Eight-Year Study recommended because the faculty members sought to meet the needs of the students and to help them learn to think rationally and become cooperative citizens. Milton Academy represented the type of school that the consultants disliked because the faculty considered curriculum reform to be reducing time spent in drill over Latin verbs. Although the students of the Ohio State University School did not study strictly defined academic courses, they did better in college than did the graduates of Milton Academy.

Influence of the Eight-Year Study

In 1942, the College-Follow-Up Staff could not comment on the success of the students who went to work instead of college or the success of the students after college. Although the Eight-Year Study had shown that radical the changes in high school programs led to improved student performance in college, the PEA members complained that the experiment did not cause widespread curriculum reforms in secondary schools.

In 1950, Frederick L Redefor, the former director of the PEA during the study, claimed that most of the experimental schools returned to conservative practices within eight years of the Eight-Year Study's end. Redefor based his conclusion on the results of a survey he conducted during a meeting he had called of the heads of the participating schools. He found that two of the participating schools had closed and several of the schools had new headmasters or principals. Although a few school leaders reported that the faculty members in their schools retained liberal educational viewpoints and sought to overcome subject matter distinctions, no school engaged in developing programs of general education as the Eight-Year Study had emphasized. Only one school reported continuing work on the core curriculum that had been popular among the participating schools. Most important, no school reported that the needs of the adolescents dominated curriculum planning as they had during the study. Most of the participating school officials told Redefor that their schools had retreated toward traditional college preparatory

programs. Furthermore, Redefer complained about the poor sales of the books written by the committees involved in the Eight-Year Study. The basic volume sold 6,400 copies and other reports sold about 1,000 copies apiece, though there were over 325,000 secondary teachers at the time and more than 500 teacher training institutions (Redefer, 1950).

Redefer's complaints about the books reflected his own feelings more than they described the situation. Since the books about the Eight-Year Study were destined for libraries rather than coffee tables, low sales figures seem reasonable. In fact, other studies showed that the Eight-Year Study had extensive impact on curriculum research. For example, in 1950 William W. Brinkman concluded that most of the descriptions of practices and principles of secondary education came from the Eight-Year Study. If there was a problem, Brinkman thought the difficulty was that educators adopted the findings or the examples set by the study without subjecting them to adequate criticism (Brinkman, 1950, pp. 90–91).

Two factors make it difficult to recognize the influence of the Eight-Year Study. First, the way the PEA set about this effort was roughly similar to the conclusions they derived. That is, the various committees and subcommittees engaged in forms of inductive thinking. They moved from particular situations to derive some general principles for action. Further, when those committees decided how to structure lessons, they recommended that teachers use the same from to teach the students to think in the same inductive pattern. Since this method of thinking led to diverse results, it was difficult to gauge how many schools followed it. Second, the model of the research the PEA followed called on experts to raise public awareness to a set of problems and to make recommendations for people to consider. This requirement that citizens consider the findings reduced the role of direct planning for utilization. The public could use the findings as they wished. According to Karl, the uncertainty of democracy had caused some liberal social scientists during the 1920s to call for a form of dictatorship such as found in Mussolini's Italy. He added that the model of the surveys retained faith in people's rationality. In that way, the model followed the ideas John Dewey expressed in his book, *The public and its problems* (Karl, 1969).

In *The public and its problems*, Dewey noted that people could not understand modern, urban societies. Consequently, they needed experts to illuminate the complex events that unfolded around them. Unfortunately, the experts tended to remove themselves from common interests and to become a class of their own. To make experts share in a democratic form of government, Dewey recommended that experts work to improve the methods and conditions of the public debates. He thought that experts could perform inquiries and disseminate information enabling people to have intelligent discussions about public issues. As a result, the public could cast intelligent votes during elections for particular policies, and they could oversee the execution of those plans (Dewey, 1927, pp. 205–209).

Although the vagaries of democratic policy setting may hide the influence of the Eight-Year Study, they illustrate the differences in the model of evaluation that the PEA used and the more focused models program evaluators use today. While focus, utility, and causal theories are important, other less stringent paths can be beneficial especially if an important goal is the growth of the participants. For theorists such as John Dewey, the hope that one experience could change another experience required that planning be tentative at best. The tentative nature of the planning made it democratic because people could set and change their own purposes in line with the needs of the wider organizations.

In one sense, the effects of the Eight-Year Study may have been ironical; the study may have had such extensive influence that it hastened the demise of the organization. The Eight-Year Study attracted large numbers of educators to join the PEA. In 1932, the association had 5,400 members, and the membership reached a peak of 10,440 by 1938. Unfortunately, when the Eight-Year Study ended, the association could not find other donors for other projects. Worse, other educational

organizations, such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development, adopted the new education and competed with the PEA. According to Patricia Alberg Graham, the ideas from the Eight-Year Study became so widespread that younger educators looked upon them as the conventional wisdom. Amidst considerable criticism, in 1955 the PEA disbanded, and two years later its journal *Progressive Education* ceased publication (Graham, 1967, pp. 139–142).

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