

DEPARTMENTALIZATION
IN THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

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INTRODUCTION

The success of any school is largely determined by its organization. "Organization is the vehicle whereby educational theory and administrative policies and procedures are given expression in the actual work with children."¹ The curriculum and the organization of the program of instruction are closely related, the former being of prime importance and largely determining the form of the latter. At the highest level of importance in thinking of the curriculum and the organization through which it operates is the matter of goals. "Goals are a concrete expression of the hopes and desires of an educational program and reflect the values that society holds for boys and girls."²

Clearly defined goals result in planned learning activities through which children move closer to the established educational goals. All of these goal activities taken together make up the program or curriculum of the school. This program leads directly to the creating of an organizational plan for promoting the program.

Organization, then, is a direct outgrowth of educational goals and goal activities; it takes shape after the goals and goal activities have assumed form. Organization does not determine activities; it is determined by activities. Organization does not set up a school program; it is set up to serve a school program. Organization is not a fixed, static structure; it is a flexible, dynamic structure."³

¹Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1944), p. 254.

²"Elementary School Organization," National Elementary Principal, 41:6, December, 1961.

³Ibid., p. 7.

The fact that the nature of the curriculum is sometimes dependent upon the type of school organization is a true, but deplorable, fact.¹ Too many new plans of organization have been based on easing teacher load, making more efficient use of the physical plant, or as a cure for poor teaching. The curriculum has been considered secondly, and then only to make it fit the organizational plan.

Since the program organization has as its function the putting into effect of the curriculum, the curriculum must be considered first. Only after the curriculum has been clearly outlined can the organization be planned that will best put into effect this curriculum. Both curriculum and organizational designs have been described as varying along points of continua. For curriculum the extreme points are child-centered or subject-centered. The self-contained classroom is at one end of the continuum of organizational plans with any deviation from the pure self-contained classroom involving special teachers representing a point on the continuum in the direction of departmentalization.²

¹ James Curtin, Supervision in Today's Elementary Schools (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 172.

² Lawrence O. Iobdell and William J. Van Ness, "The Self-Contained Classroom in the Elementary School," Elementary School Journal, 63:212, January, 1963.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was (1) to trace the history of the existence of departmentalized and semi-departmentalized schools; (2) to review the research conducted to evaluate this type of organization; (3) to find the current trend of opinion and practice regarding departmentalization in the elementary school; and (4) to make recommendations based on this review of literature as to the place of departmentalization in the elementary school today.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Elementary school. The elementary school includes grades one through six unless expressly stated to include grades seven and eight.

Departmental organization. Departmentalization is that method of school organization under which each teacher in an elementary school instructs in one subject or in one group of related subjects.¹

Non-departmentalized organization. In the non-departmentalized school is the one-teacher or self-contained classroom. Kilpatrick defines it as the system of school organization under which one teacher instructs the pupils of a certain class in all the studies of a grade.²

Semi-departmentalized organization. The most common practice found in the semi-departmentalized school is for the children to spend half a day with one teacher in a homeroom. The other half day is taught

¹ Van Everie Kilpatrick, Departmental Teaching in Elementary Schools (New York: Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 1.

² Ibid., p. 8.

by specialists through a schedule of periods of time. In some plans the teachers specialize in a subject-matter area and have two or more groups of pupils each day in that area.¹

Actually there are many forms of semi-departmentalization. Several are described in this paper.

¹ Maurie Hillson, Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. lll.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE EXISTENCE OF DEPARTMENTALIZATION

Toward the close of the 18th century departmental schools came into being--particularly in New England. The two departments, each taught by its own master in its own room, were reading and writing. The pupils attended each department in turn, changing at mid-day.

Reorganization of the upper elementary grades according to a plan of departmental teaching was started in New York City in 1900. The advantages claimed for the plan soon induced other schools to try it.¹ In 1913 a questionnaire was sent out by the United States Bureau of Education to secure information relating to departmental teaching in city schools. Of the 813 replies received from cities with populations of 5,000 and over, 461 reported departmental teaching in a few, some, or all subjects. Not many had it below sixth grade, however.

In this 1913 survey some interesting views were expressed by those experimenting with departmentalization. These views were listed as "typical" by James H. Van Sickle, who conducted the survey:

1. Succeeds with the strong and industrious pupils and fails with the weak and lazy.
2. Tends to develop independence and self-reliance.
3. Danger of teachers making their subjects of more importance than their pupils.
4. Have had departmental teaching since 1896-97 and have found that it is more economical; that it requires pupils to be independent of the teacher; that they are better able to express their ideas, and that promotion can be made by subject.

¹Henry J. Otto, "Elementary Education II--Organization and Administration," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 443.

5. English should be distributed among the different teachers so that it may be coordinated with other subjects.
6. Better teaching and discipline, more interest, less loss between grades.
7. Satisfactory on the whole, but open to faults, such as over-taxing the child.
8. Efficiency of pupil higher; discipline suffers.
9. Makes the break between the grades and high school less sudden.
10. All right if child does not meet too many teachers.
11. Very superior, teachers more interested; pupils develop broader ideas.
12. Excellent if teaching force is prepared and in favor of the plan.
13. If there is a poor teacher in the departmental corps, pupils do not have her all the time.
14. Will abandon the plan as we secure better results with one teacher to a grade; discipline easier; and teachers prefer old method of having a room of their own.
15. Gave the plan a fair trial but it proved an absolute failure; perhaps the novelty of the plan caused some to think it a good scheme.
16. Difficult to coordinate the work properly; moral hold of a teacher not so strong; supervision by principal more difficult.
17. Will abolish or greatly modify it this year; pupils are not taught individually.
18. Do not care for it; would rather have one-teacher plan in first¹ year high school than extend departmental system to the grades.

The advocates and antagonists of departmentalization have been expressing their views ever since with each frequently claiming the same virtues.

¹James H. Van Sickle, "Progress in City School Systems: XIII Departmental Teaching in the Grades," Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, U. S. Bureau of Education (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 139-141.

Concurrent with the development of departmental teaching in the upper elementary grades was the development of the platoon school which involved all the elementary grades. The platoon school program for each group of children was arranged in such a way that one-half of each morning and afternoon session was devoted to what were called the fundamentals--reading, writing, spelling, language, arithmetic, history and geography. The second half of the half-day session was allocated to special subjects and activities--art, music, physical education, auditorium, library, science, and home and manual arts.¹

Specialization in teaching was used extensively. Even the "home-room" teacher who had the pupils for all the fundamentals was expected to be a specialist in those areas. By rotating classes and having some of the teachers in the special areas like auditorium and physical education take two or three sections at a time an economy in teachers and plant facilities was achieved.²

The first platoon school was established in 1900, in Bluffton, Indiana by W. W. Wirt, who later founded the second work-study-play (platoon) school in Gary, Indiana in 1907. Between the years 1907 and 1913 Kalamazoo, Michigan; Kansas City, Missouri; New Castle, Pennsylvania and Sewickley, Pennsylvania established this kind of unit.³

One of the better known examples of the platoon school was that of the Detroit school system described by Spain in 1924.

¹ Charles L. Spain, The Platoon School (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 48.

² Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1954), p. 26.

³ Byron Clayton Kirby, "An Evaluation of the Platoon School," (a doctoral thesis, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1932), p. 20.

In 1929 there were 1,068 platoon schools in 202 cities in 41 states.¹

Interest in platooning and in separate teachers for separate subjects grew through the 1910-1920 decade, even though the one-teacher per-class plan became more widely used. The debate over the respective virtues of platooning and self-contained classrooms grew more intense during the 1930's.²

In a 1927 study, 86 per cent of the classroom teachers and 50 per cent of representative educators favored departmentalization.³

In an extensive investigation made in 1929, the plan whereby the regular teacher was held responsible for all the instructional activities carried out in a particular classroom was found in 57 per cent of the six-year schools in cities with populations of 2,500 to 25,000. Various forms of departmentalization were found in from 3 per cent to 19 per cent of the six-year schools. Programs of the type which provide that one or more of the special subjects be taught by special teachers or supervisors who visit the classrooms at regular specified periods were reported for 39 per cent.⁴

By the early 1940's departmentalization had declined in popularity and in practice. In an effort to determine the prevailing trend

¹Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration (1954), p. 26.

²"Elementary School Organization," National Elementary Principal, 41:104, December, 1961.

³Evande Becker and N. K. Gleason, "Departmentalization in the Intermediate Grades," Elementary School Journal, 28:62-66, Sept., 1927.

⁴Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), p. 284-287.

in the plan(s) of elementary organization, Prince sent questionnaires to 200 superintendents of city school systems. The questionnaire had six statements to be checked; three based on practice and three on opinion.

The first statement was to ascertain whether the departmental form of organization with subject specialist teachers had been in use in recent years in the elementary grades. Out of 154 replies, 90 said "yes" and 51 answered "no".

The second "question" inquired in what year(s) was departmentalization discontinued. During the period 1917-1940, forty-four had discontinued. Strangely only one of these was between 1920 and 1931. The largest number of changes from departmentalized to straight grade occurred in the years 1932, 1935, 1937 and 1940.

The third statement on the checklist was, "We still use departmentalization with special teachers in grades 3 to 6 inclusive." Out of 124 replies, 20 were still using it, 72 had discontinued and 32 still had some departmentalization in those grades.

Question number four asked for their opinion. One hundred nine educators replied that they believed straight grade teaching superior to departmentalization, while 22 did not.

One hundred and thirty superintendents marked the fifth statement which was, "I believe it is better to have 'specialists' for art, music, health, and other subjects." Eighty-nine of these indicated that when they could have them, they preferred specialist teachers for art, health, and other subjects provided these persons either taught in other areas or were supervising or itinerant teachers. Seventeen of these officials

stated they preferred specialists for art and music only. Forty-one school administrators apparently preferred not to have specialists of any kind on the elementary level.

The sixth and final statement read, "Where possible, I believe it is better to use a platoon type of organization, with one teacher being responsible for the 'fundamentals' and other teachers handling art, music, physical education, and other subjects." Fifty-five superintendents indicated that they favored this type of organization, while 63 did not.

Prince concluded, "It would seem reasonable to assume from an analysis of the replies received, that departmentalization in the elementary grades is definitely on the way out and is being replaced by various types of straight grade work."¹

According to a study made by Otto, 66 per cent of a total of 532 schools surveyed were using departmentalized teaching in some degree during the 1943-44 school year. Fifty-five per cent began departmentalization somewhere in primary grades while 21 per cent began it in grades four or five. (This study included grades seven and eight.)

The variety of subjects taught on the departmental plan included the entire offering in the elementary school. The subjects named most frequently were music, art, physical education, arithmetic, science, social studies and handwriting. The prevailing practice was to restrict the departmental teaching to three subjects or less in the primary grades, to four subjects or less in the fourth grade, and to five

¹ Thomas C. Prince, "Trends in Types of Elementary School Organization," American School Board Journal, 106:37-38, June, 1943.

subjects or less in grades five, six, seven and eight. Some schools, however, departmentalized as many as seven subjects in first and second grades and as many as eleven subjects in grades seven and eight.¹

In 1950 a survey was made by Mary Dunn which showed a declining trend in departmentalization during the three decades between 1920 and 1949.² Since only 104 questionnaires were sent out and only 61 per cent were returned, the value of this study would seem quite limited.

Dunn found that in:

1920-1929----Departmentalization or semi-departmentalization ranged from 10 per cent in the primary grades (1-3) to 51 per cent in grade six.

1930-1939----Departmentalization or semi-departmentalization ranged from 14 per cent in the primary grades to 45 per cent in grade six.

1940-1949----Departmentalization or semi-departmentalization ranged from 8 per cent in the primary grades to 27 per cent in grade six.³

A Research Bulletin of the National Education Association reviewed a survey made in 1947. Questionnaires were sent to all superintendents of schools in cities with populations over 2,500. Replies were received from 1,598 (about half of those to whom questionnaires were sent). Fifty-one per cent reported departmentalization in one or more elementary grades in one or more schools of the system. Fifty-three per cent of the superintendents noted no particular change in the popularity of

¹ Henry J. Otto, "Survey Data on Departmentalized Teaching in Elementary Schools," Journal of Educational Research, 12:105-112, Oct., 1948.

² Mary Dunn, "Should There Be Any Set Type of Elementary-School Organization," Elementary School Journal, 53:201, December, 1952.

³ Ibid., p. 202.

departmentalization; but in contrast to the 12 per cent who said that it was on the way in, 35 per cent stated that it was on the way out.¹

During the decade, 1940-49, more schools reported departmentalization on the way out than on the way in, although so called special subjects such as music, art, and physical education increasingly were being taken care of in the big cities by persons other than the regular classroom teacher. Toward the end of the 1950-59 decade, departmentalization once more was picking up its advocates with practice of it found most frequently in the upper elementary grades, particularly in the 8-4 pattern.²

There were increased demands for emphasis on science and mathematics during the 1950's. In order to determine whether these proposals were reinforcing or reversing trends toward departmentalization, Roland E. Barnes of Queens College conducted a survey in 1959. The survey was also designed to collect data about the current status of practices in departmentalization.

Only the first six grades were included in this study. Departmentalization was defined as "a method of school organization in which a teacher or supervisor instructs in one subject or in one group of related subjects."³

From 49 states came 806 usable returns, representing 79.2 per cent of those sent. Of the 806 schools reporting, 351, or 44 per cent, indicated that one or more subjects were departmentalized. Small-city schools had more departmentalization than did larger city schools.

¹ Ibid., p. 200.

² John I. Goodlad, "Classroom Organization," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 223.

³ R. E. Barnes, "Survey of Status and Trends in Departmentalization in City Elementary Schools," Journal of Educational Research, 55:291, March, 1962.

Over half (54 per cent) of the subjects listed were departmentalized before 1952-53. About 33 per cent of the subjects listed were departmentalized between 1952-53 and 1956-57. About 14 per cent of all subjects were departmentalized during the 1958-59 school year of the previous school year (1957-58).

The ten most frequently departmentalized subjects in rank order were: music, physical education, art, arithmetic, science, reading, social studies, library, English and language arts.¹

This list corresponds closely to that compiled by Otto fifteen years earlier, the major difference being the appearance of reading on the list as the sixth most frequently departmentalized subject. Reading was the second in rank order of the subjects newly departmentalized in the school years 1957-58 and 1958-59. Other subjects most frequently listed as being newly departmentalized in those school years were: music, first; physical education, third; arithmetic, fourth and science, fifth. These subjects were departmentalized mainly in grades four, five and six or combinations of those grades.

About 64 per cent of the 351 schools reported three or less departmentalized subjects. Four to six such subjects were reported by 28 per cent of the schools and seven or more subjects by 8 per cent of the schools.²

If the three most frequently departmentalized subjects (music, physical education, and art) were the subjects departmentalized by the 64 per cent reporting three or less subjects organized in this manner,

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 292.

this would compare to "a self-contained classroom except for areas such as art and music" which was one type of organization listed in a survey of elementary principals conducted in 1961.

In the spring of 1961, the Research Division of the National Education Association asked 721 elementary school principals for their opinions on questions of current interest in elementary education. A stratified-random process was used for selection of this representative sample. There was 98 per cent response to the questionnaire.

To find the present status of self-contained and departmentalized organization, all principals were asked:

"How is your school organized in grades 1 through 6?"

The answers indicated two major divisions, with 42 per cent of the schools having all grades self-contained for all subjects and 40 per cent of the schools having all grades self-contained except for special areas such as music and art. Nine per cent of the principals reported that the primary grades were self-contained, while the upper grades were departmentalized. There were some differences in practice by size of school system as shown in Table I.

TABLE I
 TYPES OF ORGANIZATION REPORTED
 BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF VARIOUS SIZES*

Type of Organization Reported	Per Cent of Schools by District Size			
	Large	Medium	Small	All
All grades self-contained for all instructional areas	49.1	45.6	38.4	42.4
All grades self-contained except for special areas such as art and music	28.5	39.6	43.3	40.3
Primary grades self-contained upper grades departmentalized	12.0	10.4	7.6	9.2
Other	10.4	4.4	10.7	8.1

*Glen Robinson, "Principals' Opinions About School Organization,"
National Elementary Principal, 41:41, November, 1961.

An explanation for the higher percentage of departmentalization of special subjects in smaller school districts is that small school systems tend to have itinerant teachers for subjects such as music and art while the large systems tend to have supervisors in these areas with the classroom teachers instructing the pupils.¹

The Educational Research Service recently identified 97 large school systems which in 1964-65 were using departmentalization in one or more elementary schools. Thirty-three of the 97 systems reported

¹Glen Robinson, "Principals' Opinions About School Organization,"
National Elementary Principal, 41:41, November, 1961.

that departmentalization was used in grades four through six only; its use however, was reported to some degree in every elementary grade.

Only twelve of these school systems reported that departmentalization was used in all their elementary schools. In 15 systems less than ten per cent of the schools were departmentalized.

In the 1960 edition of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Shane and Polychrones stated that "departmentalization is widespread," that "such organization per se is neither demonstrably helpful nor definitely harmful to children" and that "while there may be a trend to the unit (self-contained) classroom, it is not a massive trend."¹

¹Otto, Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 1950, op. cit., p. 427.

DESCRIPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS OF SELECTED SCHOOLS

Where schools are departmentalized, there are a number of plans in use, varying from special teachers for a few special subjects to complete departmentalization. "With such diversity of practice, it is difficult to illustrate desirable programs for departmentalized schools....."¹

Although the last few years have seen an increase in literature inclined toward more departmentalization, there have been no suggestions that envisage complete departmentalization for the elementary schools. The plan most often found can be characterized as semi-departmentalized grouping.²

Tulsa Plan

Since 1926 Tulsa public schools have had the semi-departmental type of elementary school organization. Tulsa remains one of the few large school systems that makes extensive use of this form of organization. Early in 1959 at a meeting of superintendents of large school systems in San Francisco, four other school systems professed to use the semi-departmental organization at the elementary school level.³

In the Tulsa semi-departmental type of elementary school organization, children in grades one through six receive instruction from the homeroom teacher for half the school day in the fundamental subjects of

¹ H. A. Riebe, M. J. Nelson, and C. A. Kittrell, The Classroom (New York: The Cordon Company, 1938) , p. 263.

² Hillson, op. cit., p. 111.

³ Fred C. Broadhead, "Pupil-Adjustment in the Semi-Departmental Elementary School," Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965) , pp. 119-120.

reading, writing, arithmetic, language, spelling, health, safety and social studies. The homeroom work develops basic skills which children will need as they face more complex learning situations in formal schooling or after graduation.

During the half day opposite the homeroom the children follow a four period schedule of work with special teachers in specially equipped rooms. Library and physical education classes meet daily, while art alternates with science-geography and music with speech arts.¹

True learning involves the process of thinking by the child--of relating information and understandings gained from one learning experience to others in the solution of others. The Tulsa belief is that by increasing the number and variety of meaningful associations relating to a specific learning situation, the child's learning will be facilitated. The child will express learnings and ideas in one field as they may relate to another, if the opportunity is given. This involves the thinking process.

In order to correlate the program of instruction so that this opportunity is offered the child, a high level of communication is imperative among teachers, principals, supervisors and administrators.²

During the 1956-57 school year the elementary schools of Tulsa used the following methods of correlating art, library, speech arts, music, physical education, science-geography, and the homeroom subjects; (1) informal communication among teachers; (2) posting unit sequence charts and lesson plans; (3) principal-teacher conferences; (4) charts or diagrams showing relationships among instructional areas; (5) specially planned meetings of principals with teachers;

¹A. V. Ogle, "How Tulsa Teaches the Grades: Semidepartmentalized Elementary Education Method," American School Board Journal, 136:23, April, 1958.

²Ibid., pp. 24-25.

(6) planning with children; (7) exchange of lesson plans; (8) discussions in regularly scheduled teachers' meetings; (9) study of curriculum guides; (10) suggestions from supervisors and (11) visits of teachers to other rooms.¹

Children like the Tulsa plan of elementary education. It is felt that rather than causing emotional maladjustment of children, it actually provides the boys and girls with emotional release to be with several teachers rather than with only one.

A system wide study in Tulsa showed that a high percentage of parents favor the semi-departmentalized plan. In fact in a few communities in Tulsa where schools are too small to be organized in this manner, parents requested that they be so organized at the earliest possible date.²

East Brunswick Plan

In the East Brunswick Plan advocated by Richard C. Anderson, all teachers who would ordinarily teach fourth, fifth or sixth grade specialize in one of two divisions: language arts-social studies or mathematics-science. Each teacher instructs two groups of children a day in his special subjects. Teachers are assigned on the basis of academic background and the supervisors estimate of competence.³ [The East Brunswick plan also involves ability grouping. This aspect of the plan will not be discussed in this report.]

Anderson contends it is important that teachers know their subject thoroughly.

¹ Ibid., p. 25.

² Ibid.

³ Richard C. Anderson, "Case for Teacher Specialization in the Elementary School," Elementary School Journal, 62:254, February, 1962.

Other things being equal, the deeper the teacher's understanding of his subject, the greater the likelihood of excellent instruction. Some teachers who have mastered an area of knowledge may be able to lead their pupils to a comprehension of the basic ideas of the discipline. It is difficult to believe that a teacher who has only a superficial understanding of an area of knowledge could achieve such results. This is the key premise of the departmentalized school.¹

Other advantages of specialization, according to Anderson are that teaching assignments can be more sharply focused which would make lesson planning easier and it should make it easier for the teacher to keep in touch with developments in teaching methods, materials, equipment, and the professional literature in one or two fields rather than trying to keep up with all.²

Three objections to specialization which deserved serious consideration were discussed by Anderson. First is the criticism that it is of utmost importance that the teacher know the child, and this is much easier in a self-contained classroom. In the East Brunswick plan each teacher has two groups for one-half day each. This is enough time to establish rapport and a feeling of friendliness.

Knowing the child in relation to his educational development would be easier for the specialist. The teacher who has mastery of an area of knowledge has a frame of reference for evaluating the child's development. The teacher who is master of his area can read signs in a child's behavior that tell him of the child's misunderstanding. The teacher who must instruct children in an area in which he is poorly prepared thinks of motivation as extrinsic to the learning task itself.

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

"The generalist teacher is often incapable of leading his pupils to a sense of joy in learning and thinking because intellectual enterprise has never held any excitement for him."¹

Secondly, some educators argue that the child needs the security of studying with one teacher all day. They believe that the child suffers socially and emotionally from being subjected to the varying standards--behavioral and academic--of different teachers in a departmentalized school. There is little or no evidence available to show that departmentalization has undesirable effects on children's social and emotional adjustment.²

Several reasons for believing that departmentalization will enhance children's adjustment are promoted by Anderson.

1. Good teaching involves a variety of techniques. Any one teacher is limited as to methods and approaches. A variety may be good in that:
 - a. Not all children respond equally well to every technique and approach. The greater the variety, the greater the probability that some of them will be particularly well suited to each child.
 - b. A uniform environment is dull. Departmentalization may be more interesting and stimulating to the child.
2. No teacher gets along equally well with all his pupils. The teacher should find it easier to be patient with these pupils for a half day than a whole day.
3. A child needs to identify and is offered several models.
 - a. There is a better chance to get male teachers in departmentalized system. Boys need adult male models.³

¹Ibid., p. 256.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 257.

An ethical question is raised by Anderson: Educators should seriously consider the proposition that public schools have an obligation to provide children with more than one major teacher a year.

Because every teacher attempts to mold his pupils in his own image, it is not safe to assume that one teacher will offer children live moral, emotional, and intellectual options. In a democracy is it fair for a school to impose a single adult personality, a single set of values, a single way of thinking upon the child?¹

In answer to those who say the self-contained classroom leads to the integration of learning experiences and the education of the 'whole child': Where is the research on this?

Anderson maintains those who are its [self-contained classroom] proponents need to sharpen the concepts, interpret them precisely in terms of children's and teacher's behavior and prove the ideas empirically.²

Dual Progress Plan

The Dual Progress Plan, originated by George B. Stoddard, is a current plan for semi-departmentalization in the elementary school. It has been described as "one of the most interesting challenges to the self-contained plan of organization."³ The Dual Progress Plan was demonstrated and appraised from 1958-1963 in the Long Beach, New York and Ossining, New York school systems under financial aid from the Ford Foundation.

Under this plan a home teacher is placed in charge of two rooms

¹ Ibid., p. 258.

² Ibid., p. 259.

³ James B. Burr and others, Elementary School Administration (Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1963), p. 78.

on a half day basis for each. She is responsible for registration and counseling; she teaches the language arts and social studies. Physical education is taught during the same half day by a specialist. The other half day the child attends classes which cut across grade lines and are ability grouped in mathematics, science, arts and crafts, and music.

The grade progress of a pupil is based on his abilities in language and social studies (the cultural imperatives). Why are these considered so important as to be called cultural imperatives and solely determine the grade placement of a child?

Language in this context refers to speaking, reading and writing in English. The child who is deficient in this language complex is regarded as deficient in all-around intelligence. In fact, tests of general intelligence heavily depend on vocabulary, the understanding of sentences, the following of directions, and the solving of verbal problems. The tests contain nothing of importance with respect to mathematical or scientific insight and nothing at all in art or music. A child who cannot learn to read, after a reasonable amount of effort on his part and formal instruction in school, is downgraded in intelligence and runs the risk of being labeled mentally defective. He runs no such risk by being unable to solve technical problems, compose music, play a musical instrument, or paint a picture. Failure in communication through language, while it may be compensated for by special talents, is likely to indicate or induce a general inferiority in the person.¹

¹George D. Stoddard, The Dual Progress Plan (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), pp. 11-12.

Social studies as a cultural imperative may be defined as "a unified complex of learning elements in behavior, history, government, and current events, spreading out naturally from the self to the larger community."¹

A child is interested in all events and problems if they are presented at an appropriate level. Primary children discuss the problems of a toothache and the exploration of outer space.

When Sputnik burst upon the scene, it did more than make the headlines of newspapers, journals, and quarterlies for the elite; it promptly appeared in the primary grades across the land, at times with a startling attention to relevant mechanical aspects. Does one adult person in a hundred really know more about the chemistry and mechanics of rockets than the alert pupil in the sixth grade? It is doubtful. The informed adult proceeds not to a greater scientific maturity, but to some understanding of the economic, military, and social implications of rockets. He is expected to do this and he does so, which is one way of defining a cultural imperative. Anybody who has looked at the mechanism of a submarine, a jet airplane, or a computing machine senses that the American adult gets along well without much technical learning. Rather, his mind is entangled with the implications for industry, business, transportation, communication, and military security. He knows, or soon learns, that governments may rise or fall in relation to their ability to achieve along these technological lines. This knowledge is not in science and not in engineering; it is in the social studies. Like the language arts, they too, constitute a cultural imperative--a common vehicle of conversation and decision, a touchstone to apply to every mature adult.

What happens chemically in the atmosphere is of immediate concern to all who consider the question of human health and survival. What the chemists, physicists, and engineers produce along technical lines soon becomes a matter for great debate in medicine, education, and politics. Everybody has views on public health, schooling, and national affairs. Any person devoid of interest or a modicum of insight into these matters is brigaded with those to whom the language arts are beyond comprehension.²

¹ Ibid., p. 13.

² Ibid., pp. 13-14.

The classroom teacher should be well prepared to teach language and the social studies. He has studied them from his entrance in school, and they have saturated his out of school life from about age one. In short, the cultural imperatives cover what everybody knows, teaches, and expects of others. In this great area of learning no child should be allowed to perform below full capacity.¹

Health and hygiene are also considered cultural imperatives in the United States schools of today. Because it is an imperative and also for practical reasons physical education is included in the graded segment. It is not, however, a factor in pupil promotion.

The cultural electives, which include mathematics, science, music and art, are a different situation.

It is indeed wonderful to discover special musical, artistic or mathematical talent in a child, and to bring this talent to high fruition. Still, if the child lacks special talent, failures along such lines should not be considered either as a mark of general deficiency or of social obtuseness. They should not be an occasion for holding him back in school.²

In the Dual Progress Plan all specialized subject matter is taught in sections based on the ability and interest of pupils. Thus bright third graders will be brigaded with older pupils who are at about the same level, let us say, in mathematics or science.³ A fifth grade pupil may play in the high school band or orchestra.⁴

In this way the talented are benefited greatly by this plan, for the curriculum in these fields, in most schools, is designed for those of

¹George D. Stoddard, "The Dual Progress Plan in Elementary Education," The Educational Forum, 25:272, March, 1961.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Stoddard, The Dual Progress Plan, p. 3.

low aptitude.

Although some teachers who worked with the plan felt it did not serve well the needs of the slow learner, Stoddard disagreed. He pointed out that in theory, the slow learner should be allowed to remain slow except in the language arts and social studies. Even in these areas he should not be pressed to get too far beyond the informational and descriptive aspects of the subject matter. It is unlikely that truly dull persons in the population are going to become mathematicians, scientists, or scholars, although their chance to reach the higher skills in music, art or sports may not be ruled out.

There is more than learning at stake. A failure to recognize the difference between what is required by social custom and what is expected if a child shows aptitude and interest is a source of bad behavior and neurosis.¹

Hence the long-range effect of the Dual Progress Plan should be to increase individual differences in performance. We hope the dull do not get duller as the bright get brighter, but we do not regard dullness or disinterest as inherently obnoxious. Perhaps the long range effect on the slow learner will be to decrease his sense of discouragement, his need to escape. For gifted students, by the time of high school it will permit truly advanced work in English, social science, mathematics, science, art, music, or a foreign language, or in various combinations of these subjects.²

A full evaluation of the Dual Progress Plan is not yet available. Midway through the five year experiment the following observations were possible:

1. Even with the major dislocations caused by the new plan, the expected rate of academic growth is maintained.
2. The majority of parents favor the plan.

¹ Stoddard, The Educational Forum, 25:273, March, 1961.

² Ibid., p. 275.

3. The majority of pupils like the plan and enjoy working under it.
4. The teachers are divided in their acceptance or approval of the plan, but with experience in it and the correction of certain defects, they increasingly register approval. In the first year most teacher difficulties revolved about the extra work required and the newness of curricular materials. It is clear that the plan calls for a vast amount of new work in curriculum, teacher preparation, and examinations.¹

Third through sixth grade pupils took part in the Dual Progress Plan in Long Beach and Ossining. An adaptation of the Dual Progress Plan is used in many of the so called "seventh and eighth grade schools," or "intermediate schools" which have become a popular type of organization in fast growing areas in states like California. Under this plan boys and girls remain a part of the self-contained organization, while becoming oriented to departmentalization characteristic of public secondary schools.²

Other School Systems Using Departmentalization

In West Hartford, Conn., a teacher of a given grade level may teach a subject to all classes at the same grade level. His subject may be mathematics, science, social studies, or language arts. There are almost as many patterns as there are elementary schools in the West Hartford system.

In Cleveland, Ohio, (grades four through six) language arts and mathematics are taught by the homeroom teacher. There may be an exchange of classes with other homeroom teachers who have special skill in teaching

¹Ibid., p. 276.

²Paul J. Misner, Frederick W. Schneider and Lowell G. Keith Elementary School Administration (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1963), p. 84.

social studies or science.¹

"In a modified form the Platoon type of organization may be found today in Detroit schools."²

Most of the ninety-seven school systems who were using departmentalization in 1964-65 reported that more than one pattern of departmentalization was used in their elementary schools. These patterns were usually tailored to fit the skills of the teachers in each school. The pattern used most frequently (reported by 45 school systems) was: language arts and social studies taught by one teacher, arithmetic and science by another, and the special subjects by additional teachers.³

¹ National Education Association, "Departmentalization in Elementary Schools," NEA Research Bulletin, 44:28, February, 1966.

² James B. Barr and others, loc. cit.

³ National Education Association, op. cit., p. 27.

EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

Academic Achievement

Efforts to determine scientifically whether departmental teaching, as such, produces better results have been confined almost entirely to subject-matter outcomes.....The advocates of the platoon school have been among the most ardent supporters of departmental teaching. The studies which have been made to evaluate the platoon school have failed to show unquestioned superiority of that form of organization in producing subject-matter achievement.¹

Actually, there were not many studies of achievement. In the 1941 edition of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research only two experimental studies on departmentalization at the elementary school level were reported.

....one study (1923) showed that pupils made higher achievement scores under the single teacher plan in grades 5 to 8 inclusive, whereas the other study (1930) showed departmentalization to be about as effective in grades 4, 5, and 6 as the one-teacher-per-grade plan.²

No references for these studies were given, but a controlled experiment conducted by Gerberich and Prall during the school year 1929-1930 was not listed in the bibliography following the article.

Gerberich and Prall compared the achievements of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade pupils in two elementary schools, one organized on the traditional plan, the other departmentalized. Both teachers and pupils were carefully equated; the teachers on the bases of training and experience, the pupils on the basis of results of tests in arithmetic, spelling, reading, English, and geography. The same textbooks were used

¹ Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration, pp. 302-303.

² Otto, Encyclopedia Educational Research, p. 443.

in the two schools and time allotments for each subject were exactly the same in the comparable grades.

Eight differences showed higher achievement for departmental organization, three of which were fairly conclusive. These were fourth and sixth grade arithmetic and fourth grade English. Three of the seven differences indicating higher achievement under the grade plan were reliable, these three being fourth and fifth grade geography, and fourth grade reading.

The general feeling that pupils in the lower grades are less likely to profit from the departmental organization than those in the upper grades was not supported in the data resulting from this experiment as the most significant differences favoring the departmental system were in grade four--arithmetic and English, while grades five and six combined showed only one subject in which occurred a significant difference favoring departmentalization--sixth grade arithmetic.

Gerberich and Prall concluded that there seemed to be "little evidence upon which to base any general conclusions concerning the effectiveness of either plan of organization."¹

Otto felt that studies comparing the academic achievement of children in platoon schools with children in other types of schools were not, strictly speaking, "evaluations of departmental teaching per se since the platoon school involves features other than specialization in teaching."²

¹J. R. Gerberich and C. E. Prall, "Departmental Organization Versus Traditional Organization in the Intermediate Grades," Elementary School Journal, 31:671-677, May, 1931.

²Otto, Encyclopedia Educational Research, p. 444.

He would seem to be right in this opinion if Kirby's evaluation of the platoon school is used as an example. Kirby compared other things besides achievement, but in his findings stated, "...in a limited number of cases the platoon schools surpass the traditional units in achievement in spelling, arithmetic and reading."¹ This could hardly be considered favoring departmentalized instruction, for in the platoon schools studied by Kirby, spelling, arithmetic, and reading were all taught by the same teacher in the home room periods.²

A comparison of results obtained in departmental and non-departmental teaching in two elementary schools of "strikingly similar environmental backgrounds" was made in 1949-50 by Roy C. Woods. In this study departmental teaching meant that a class had different teachers in each subject similar to the system used in high schools; whereas the non-departmental or traditional teaching was the type where one teacher was responsible for all the subjects taught in a given grade. This test involved eighth grade students only.

On the basis of an intelligence test given the students in September, 1949, it was found that the students of the departmental school had a median intelligence quotient of ninety-two while in the non-departmental school the median intelligence quotient was seventy-eight. Since the departmental school had an advantage of fourteen points in intelligence quotient it should have considerably outdistanced the other school in achievement. This was not the case.

Achievement tests were given in October, 1949, and May, 1950.

¹Kirby, op. cit., p. 132.

²Ibid., p. 16.

Only total scores and total differences were compared as the chief aim was to discover how the general achievement of the pupils in the two types of school organization compared.

The departmental school scored higher in achievement on the October test, its median age equivalence being eleven years five months, while the median age equivalence for the non-departmental school was ten years ten months--a difference of seven months. The May test showed unexpected results. The departmental school had raised its median age equivalent exactly one year to twelve years five months. The non-departmental school had raised its median age equivalent to thirteen years and six months, which was a gain of two years and eight months!

Woods concluded that non-departmentalized teaching seemed to favor the poorer student. However an accurate estimate of the advantage was impossible because of the variation in mental abilities.

A short analysis of the differences in the two types of organization was made by Woods:

From this study it seemed that the learning process in the unitary school was, perhaps, more unified and continuous because the one teacher knew exactly what was being done in every subject. It was also found that assignments were more uniform, that is, distributed more evenly. On the other hand nearly all the pupils of the upper grades preferred departmental work, and it was apparent that the teachers in departmental work were more highly specialized in their particular fields. It was also noticeable that the departmental system lacked coordination in that one teacher knew very little concerning what the other teachers were endeavoring to teach at any particular time. That factor resulted in pupils having so much outside work to do on certain nights that they found it quite burdensome, while at other times they had little or nothing to do. The last mentioned factor could, of course, have been eliminated if there had been closer teacher contact and closer supervision on the part of the principal.¹

¹Roy C. Woods, "Relative Merits of Departmental and Non-Departmental Elementary Schools," Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 118-119.

This analysis hardly seems adequate for the amazing findings of this study. It is this writer's opinion that any type of organization for teaching that could attain growth in mental age of two years and eight months from October to May with a group of students whose median intelligence quotient was seventy-eight demands further investigation!

Gibb and Matala published research findings in 1962 of a study they had made on the use of special teachers of science and mathematics in grades five and six. The intent of the study was (1) to determine if science and math could be taught more effectively by special teachers than by regular classroom teachers. (2) If they could, what would be the shortcomings, if any, of this approach for the total elementary curriculum and the education of the elementary school child. (3 and 4) If science and math could be taught more effectively to children of high intellectual ability or low intellectual ability by special teachers than by the classroom teacher.¹

Thirty-two fifth and sixth grade classes participated; some for two years and some for one year of the study. These classes were chosen from four different school systems with both types of organization used in each system.

The findings showed that: (1) There was no significant difference in gains made in mathematics achievement between children taught by one teacher and those taught by several teachers. (2) There was a significant difference in gains made in science with the children taught by

¹E. Glenadine Gibb and Dorothy C. Matala, "Study on the Use of Special Teachers of Science and Mathematics in Grades 5 and 6," Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 133.

special teachers making significantly greater gains. (3) Children in the one-year fifth grade having several teachers made significantly greater gains in social studies than those having one teacher, but this was not true for children participating in the study for the two years or for the one-year sixth grade. (Social studies achievement was included to see what happened in other phases of the curriculum in a study primarily concerned with science and mathematics.)

Gibb and Matala concluded that using a special teacher in science is probably a better kind of organization for more effective learning by all children regardless of intellectual ability. There is no reason to believe that children of different intellectual abilities achieve more effectively in mathematics under one plan or the other.¹

This study did not end with achievement scores, however. Eight children were selected at random from each of the thirty-two classes participating in the study. Each child was interviewed by one of the evaluators. Purpose of the interviews, all similarly structured, was an attempt to get information regarding (1) change of interest in science and mathematics, (2) preference for classroom organization, and (3) ability to solve problems either in science or mathematics.

The findings from these interviews were: (1) There was no evidence that special teachers created a biased interest in the selected content areas of mathematics of science. (2) There was a significant preference among children for several teachers. Furthermore, children in sixth grade favored several teachers to a significantly greater extent than

¹Ibid., p. 148.

did fifth grade children. Also, some systems as a whole favored several teachers while other systems favored one teacher. (3) Classroom organization had little relationship to children's performance in solving problems in the interviews. The only difference that could not be attributed to chance was higher success in mathematics for children in Grade six taught by special teachers.¹

This study was important in that it was the only one found in this review of literature in which individual interview techniques were used to evaluate pupil achievement along with the standard achievement test scores. Also finding pupil attitude by this method would seem helpful along with objective checklists more commonly used.

Pupil Adjustment

Some of the main criticisms of the departmentalized organization for elementary school are in the area of personal and school adjustment of the child. Some educators argue that the child needs the security of studying with one teacher all day. They believe that "the child suffers socially and emotionally from being subjected to the varying standards--behavioral and academic--of different teachers in a departmentalized school."²

Writing for the Elementary School Journal in 1960, Fred C. Broadhead made note of these criticisms, but pointed out that: "A thorough search of the Education Index and Dissertation Abstracts for the last ten years reveals no research indicating whether the semi-departmental type of elementary school organization "promotes good or poor

¹ Ibid., pp. 148-149.

² Anderson, Elementary School Journal, February, 1962, p. 256.

social adjustment among pupils."¹

Broadhead's research on pupil adjustment was conducted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where the elementary schools have had the semi-departmental type of organization since 1926. In Tulsa, the child receives instruction from the homeroom teacher for half the school day in the basic subjects of reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, language arts and social studies. During the remainder of the school day, the child receives instruction in other classrooms from various other teachers who have specialized training in science, art, music, speech, physical education or library science.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether there were measurable differences in adjustment between fifth graders whose school experience had been in self-contained classrooms and fifth graders whose school experience had been entirely in the semi-departmental system.

The SRA Junior Inventory was used to evaluate the social adjustment of all Tulsa fifth graders who had been in the Tulsa semi-departmental type of school organization in all the grades from the first to and including the fifth.

The Tulsa semi-departmental fifth graders showed better adjustment as measured by the problems identified than the self-contained classroom fifth graders (the group used to establish norms for the test.) The better adjustment on the part of the Tulsa semi-departmental pupils was most noticeable in the "school" area. The semi-departmental fifth grade

¹Fred C. Broadhead, "Pupil Adjustment in the Semi-Departmental Elementary School," Elementary School Journal, 60:385, April, 1960.

girls showed better adjustment than the semi-departmentalized fifth grade boys.

Broadhead stated that since no evidence of adjustment inferior to that of the self-contained classroom norm group was found, "the semi-departmental type of elementary school organization must not in itself promote poor adjustment in school children."¹

A. Hugh Livingston in commenting on Broadhead's study, pointed out that one major variable was not controlled; that being how much pupil adjustment might be attributed to the nature of the community in which the pupil lived. By comparing scores of a group of students who had been in Tulsa schools all five grades, but in self-contained classrooms in grades one and two with the norm group Livingston also found the Tulsa group better adjusted. Inasmuch as both Tulsa groups scored more favorably than the norm group, Livingston felt a community influence might account for part of the difference Broadhead found.²

This writer had wondered about Broadhead's test group being a fair group to test for adjustment in that when defining his group he cast out all students who had not been in Tulsa schools from grade one through five. The fact that all members of the test group had been in the same school system for five years might very well have contributed to their adjustment, especially school adjustment, as much or more than the type of school organization they were in.

¹ Broadhead, Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization, p. 125.

² A. Hugh Livingston, "Does Departmentalization Affect Children's Adjustment?" Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 153.

Therefore, the next comparison Livingston made was as interesting as Broadhead's original study. Livingston compared the mean scores of the 831 pupils in Broadhead's study, who had been in the semi-departmental organization in grades one through five with the mean scores of the 223 pupils who had been in self-contained classrooms in grades one and two and in the semi-departmental organization in grades four, five and six. The former group had better adjustment as shown by their lower scores in each of the five areas of the test. The largest difference between the two groups was found in the school area of the inventory.

Livingston felt it was not reasonable at that point to conclude that semi-departmental organization leads to better adjustment on the part of elementary school pupils. Still the evidence he reported indicated that the longer a pupil was exposed to this organization, the more satisfactory his adjustment as measured by the inventory.¹

The Experimental Teaching Center of New York University investigated the effects of the Dual Progress Plan on children's adjustment. The findings are not yet available, but hopefully they will help clarify the issue: "On the basis of data now available," Anderson asserts, "it must be assumed that the adjustment of children in departmentalized schools is, at least, not inferior to that of children in self-contained classrooms."²

Other Types of Evaluations

Perhaps the most comprehensive comparative study in this field

¹Livingston, op. cit., p. 156.

²Anderson, Elementary School Journal, February, 1962, p. 156.

was conducted by Margaret Rouse in 1946. For her doctoral thesis, "A Comparison of Curriculum Practices in Departmental and Non-Departmental Schools," Rouse studied 20 schools of both types of organization selected at random from towns of varying sizes. She used the observation, summary and check list method along with interviews. The four things studied were: (1) Differences in scope of schools, (2) Differences in general pattern of curriculum organization, (isolated subject or correlated), (3) Differences in curriculum practices (number and lengths of periods, number of interruptions, etc.) (4) Differences in classroom procedure.

Out of fourteen statistically significant differences found between the two types of organization, eight were practices approved by specialists in education. The only approved difference favoring departmentalization was music being taught as a separate subject. The seven approved significant differences in the non-departmentalized schools were:

1. Class participation in safety practices.
2. Curriculum organized on basis of correlated curriculum.
3. Grouping pupils for reading instruction.
4. Preparing and giving oral reports in language class.
5. Use of visual aids in social studies.
6. Oral reports in social studies.
7. Correlation of art with other subjects.¹

Kirby's report on the effect of the platoon type of organization upon achievement in spelling, arithmetic and reading has already been summarized. This 1930 study sought answers to several other questions. Based on the "health and leisure" statements of the "Seven Cardinal

¹ Margaret Rouse, "A Comparison of Curriculum Practices in Departmental and Nondepartmental Schools," The Elementary School Journal, 47:34-42, September, 1946.

Principles of Education," Kirby endeavored to study the effect of the platoon type of organization on the attendance and the per cent of underweights in seventy schools.¹

Kirby found the per cent of attendance higher in platoon schools and that the per cent attendance had increased in schools after they had organized on the platoon basis. The per cent of underweights was lower in platoon than in traditional schools and the per cent of underweights decreased in the majority of schools after they were organized on the platoon basis. Since health is one of the major factors entering into attendance and weight must be considered in checking one's health, it was concluded that health was possibly better in the platoon type organization which had a special teacher for instruction in "physical habits, posture, sanitation, work and play."²

Attitudes Found in Evaluation

The attitudes of teachers and students toward a teaching-learning situation are, of course, a major factor in its success. These attitudes vary by individual situations. This is to be expected.

During the second semester of 1928-29 a form of semi-departmentalization was tried, in grades three through six inclusive, in one school in Cleveland. At the end of the semester all the teachers voted against the plan, while 75 per cent of the pupils voted for it. In the room of the strongest teacher, 90 per cent of the pupils voted against the plan. In

¹Kirby, op. cit., p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 130.

the rooms of the weakest teachers almost 100 per cent of the pupils voted for it.¹

The assistant superintendent of schools of Cleveland, H. M. Buckley, explained the teachers' lack of response to departmentalization by pointing out that they had all been trained for, and had their experience in, the traditional school. "So long as we continue to train teachers as general practitioners, to that extent we delay the program for departmental work in the lower grades."²

Supt. Buckley said of the traditional teacher:

The fundamental difficulty in the way of departmentalizing in the elementary schools is the lack of teachers with the ability and specialized training to cause them to be outstanding in any given line... Furthermore, the higher salaries and the greater prestige for teaching in the junior and senior high schools have drawn from the elementary grades those with the ability and training to do outstanding work in a special line.

It cannot be too strongly urged that a teacher with mediocre ability can do an average piece of work in fourteen subjects more easily than she can do an outstanding piece of work in one subject. In fact the lower 50 per cent of our teachers are probably incapable of doing work of a high order in a single subject. The weak teacher cannot specialize; her weakness would show up instantly.³

After these comments one wonders to what degree Supt. Buckley's elementary teachers were willing to cooperate on his next project--whatever it happened to be.

The favorable attitudes of pupils in Tulsa under semi-departmentalization and in Long Beach and Ossining, under the Dual Progress Plan have been discussed previously.

¹ H. M. Buckley, "Difficulties in Introducing Departmental Teaching," Elementary School Journal, 30:574, April, 1930.

²Ibid., p. 575.

³Ibid.

Specific features of the Dual Progress Plan found to be most often liked by students were: (1) changing classes, (2) specialist teaching, (3) ability grouping, (4) preparation for junior high, and (5) the science program.

Features complained about most often were: (1) lack of privacy (having desks of their own), (2) lack of coordination among teachers which resulted in overlapping or piling up of homework.¹

These opinions were expressed in twenty minute essays in which they were requested "to write down all the things that say what you think about the Dual Progress Plan and how you feel about it."²

In the Gibb-Matala study of special science and mathematics teachers discussed earlier, children were asked to state their preference for classroom organization during personal interviews.

Some of the reasons reported by children who preferred several teachers were:

1. Seems easier.
2. Get to know more people.
3. Better prepared for high school.
4. It is not so monotonous. Each teacher has a different way.
5. Learn more that way. One teacher may not know all about one subject.
6. Just like it.
7. Class gets restless with one teacher.
8. Get tired of listening to one teacher all the time.
9. Certainly you can't get all of them mad at you on the same day.

The following reasons were given by those preferring one teacher:

1. Easier to listen to one teacher.
2. Just like one teacher.
3. Don't have homework.

¹Stoddard, Dual Progress Plan, pp. 103-104; 125.

²Ibid., p. 102.

4. Don't like to switch around.
5. Get more out of one teacher. I have had several teachers.

There were those who could not state a preference for these reasons:

1. Depends upon the teachers
2. Don't know. Haven't had both kinds.
3. Never thought about it before.¹

Summary

Studies on pupil achievement have resulted in inconclusive and sometimes contradictory results. Woods' study indicated superior total achievement for the slow learner in a self-contained classroom. Gibb and Matala's study showed special math teachers made no significant difference but there were significant gains made in science achievement by children taught by special science teachers.

Sixth graders who had had special math teachers showed greater problem-solving ability.

Underweight and absenteeism, indicators of health, were lower in a platoon school where there were special teachers for physical education.

Where the practices of teachers in self-contained and departmental type organizations are significantly different, those of the former are more often approved by educators.

Departmentalization has not been shown to be detrimental to the adjustment of children.

¹Gibb and Matala, Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization, pp. 145-146.

The majority of pupils in most studies preferred having several teachers.

Research must be studied carefully and its limitations understood; there is something research cannot do: tell us what is best. Whether a particular result is good or bad is a value judgment. The researcher makes his value judgment when he selects his dependent variables or "success" criteria.¹

If the criterion for comparison between departmentalization and non-departmentalization is higher pupil achievement on standardized tests the result may not favor the same type of organization it would if the criterion is basic understanding of concepts, problem-solving ability, social development, or personal adjustment.

The goals set for the various areas of the curriculum are value judgments. Research comparing the results of teaching by a specialist and by a classroom teacher must be examined in the light of these goals.²

¹David C. Sanders, "School Organization: How Do You Decide?" National Elementary Principal, 42:25-28, September, 1962.

²Ibid.

CURRENT OPINIONS AND TRENDS

Much is being written about departmentalization today. The virtues and criticisms have, for the most part remained the same as those listed by Van Sickle in the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education in 1913.

These arguments are often expressed by the advocates of departmentalization:

1. The content and goals of today's curriculum are beyond the capabilities of a single teacher, especially in the intermediate grades.¹
2. When teachers are teaching in the field they know best they do a better job, show more interest and have better morale.²
3. A degree of departmentalization facilitates the transition from simple elementary school organization to complex secondary school.³
4. Having several teachers is good for students in that new personalities bring freshness to the program,⁴ a variety of techniques

¹ "On Departmentalization: What Grades?" Catholic School Journal, 65:88, February, 1965; H. C. Hart, "Classroom Structures Rapidly Changing," Education, 86:200, December, 1965; Sound Off: Partial Departmentalization Above Grade 3 is the Answer to Better Instruction," Instructor, 72:10, February, 1963; Gibb and Matala, op. cit., p. 131.

² "Elementary School Organization," National Elementary Principal, 41:103, December, 1961; Richard C. Anderson, Elementary School Journal, 62:254, February, 1962; B. B. Hirsch, "Departmentalization: The Space Age Elementary Program," New York State Education, 51:34, October, 1963; "Departmentalization in Elementary Schools," NEA Research Bulletin, 44:28, February, 1966.

³ Catholic School Journal, February, 1965, loc. cit.; Instructor, February, 1963, op. cit., p. 11; NEA Research Bulletin, February, 1966, loc. cit.

⁴ Instructor, February, 1963, loc. cit.

- to which different children may respond, and more models are given with whom the child may choose to identify.¹
5. Departmentalization provides for a more fair distribution of teaching talent. More students receive the services of the superior teacher.²
 6. Departmentalization eases teacher load by decreasing the number of preparations a teacher must make each day.³ Greater instructional efficiency results.⁴
 7. Specialization should make it easier for the teacher to keep in touch with developments in teaching methods, materials, equipment and the professional literature in one or two fields instead of in all.⁵
 8. Pupils like more than one teacher.⁶
 9. A better balanced program results because teachers in a self-contained classroom tend to avoid their weak subjects and emphasize their strong subjects.⁷

¹Anderson, op. cit., p. 257.

²Dorothy G. Peterson, The Elementary School Teacher (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), p. 372.

³W. H. Conley, "Departmentalization Eases Teacher Load," Catholic School Journal, 63:4, May, 1963.

⁴Peterson, op. cit., p. 371.

⁵Anderson, op. cit., p. 255.

⁶Ibid., p. 257; NEA Research Bulletin, February, 1960, loc. cit.

⁷Hirsch, op. cit., p. 35.

Those opposed to departmentalization have ready answers. They say that:

1. To departmentalize in order to prepare an elementary child for the departmental junior high school is not logical when it has never been proved to be the best form for junior high.¹
2. Meaningful interrelationships among the various parts of the curriculum tend to be ignored or denied in departmentalization.²
3. Departmentalization imposes a rigidity upon the curriculum that is "out of step with modern thought."³
4. Departmentalization is appropriate for a strict subject-centered program in which subject matter takes precedence over the overall development of children.⁴
5. Thorough knowledge of the child is an important factor in the effectiveness of efforts to educate him. Departmentalization demands that a teacher meet more children and have fewer contacts with them.⁵
6. A child needs the security of studying with one teacher all day. "We may have learned how to split an atom, but we have not yet learned how to split a young child among six or seven teachers

¹ Lobdell and Van Ness, op. cit., p. 214.

² National Elementary Principal, December, 1961, p. 102.

³ Curtin, op. cit., p. 176.

⁴ Burr and others, op. cit., p. 77.

⁵ Otto and Sanders, op. cit., p. 77.

a day with anything but harmful results."¹

What something "could be" and what it actually "is" are often not the same. One can easily find situations in which the human relations and the promising practices possible in a self-contained classroom do not actually exist.²

Although the teacher in the self-contained classroom is free from schoolwide divisions of the instructional day, the "major prevailing pattern" in the elementary classroom is for the teacher to teach separate subjects in separate blocks of time. "The curriculum of the elementary school according to The National Elementary Principal, "is largely departmentalized."

Stoddard answers one of the major criticisms of departmentalization: that it encourages the teacher to be a teacher of subject matter,³ when he says:

The idea that if teachers know a great deal about subject matter they therefore know less or care less about children is really a slander. Rather, it can be said with confidence that a zeal for expertness on the part of a teacher is consistent with, and often conducive to, a greater sharing in the lives of his pupils. Who can forget the electrical effect of a Leonard Bernstein on children and youth? It is the teacher of all subjects in the self-contained classroom who gets nervous about the questions bright children may ask; if his pupils are eleven or twelve years of age, ⁴unconscious defense measures may take the form of child rejection.

Concomitant with these conflicting opinions is found a trend toward modifying the self-contained classroom.

¹ Dorothy G. Peterson and Velma D. Hayden, Teaching and Learning in the Elementary School (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1961), p. 515.

² Tillman, op. cit., p. 84.

³ Burr and others, loc. cit.

⁴ Stoddard, The Educational Forum, p. 274.

In studying the question of departmentalization as opposed to the self-contained classroom type of organization, an ambiguity of terms becomes evident. The plan of organization in which one teacher is responsible for all the child's learning experiences with the exception(s) of music, art and/or physical education is defined typically in two ways depending on the viewpoints of those doing the defining. To those who favor the pure self-contained classroom, the teaching of art, music, and/or physical education by special teachers is a degree of departmentalization. To other educators, this arrangement is considered to be merely a modified self-contained classroom and hardly to be categorized with departmentalization.

Rouse did not consider special teachers for these areas to constitute departmentalization; as she defined terms for her doctoral study she stated:

For the purpose of this study.....the term "non-departmental" school is applied also to schools in which one teacher teaches all of the academic subjects to a group of pupils, but a special teacher teaches music and/or art.¹

Nor did a national survey made by Dean in 1959 about which Otto said:

It should be noted that for this survey the employment of special teachers, such as in art, did not constitute departmentalization.

Gibb and Matala defined the one-teacher plan of their comparative study and added:

¹ Margaret Rouse, "A Comparative Study of Departmentalization and Nondepartmentalization as Forms of Organization for the Elementary School Curriculum" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, The University of Texas, Austin, 1945), p. 37.

² Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration, 1964, p. 75.

Although there may be special teachers for one or more subjects, such as art, music, and/or physical education, the organization is considered to be primarily that of a self-contained classroom.¹

The Educational Research Service of the National Education Association defined departmentalization for a recent survey and concluded their definition with the statement:

This should not be confused with the use of special teachers, such as art or music, to supplement the teaching in an otherwise self-contained classroom.²

In an article entitled, "The Self-Contained Classroom in the Elementary School," Lodbell and Van Ness pointed out the discrepancy now existing between a commonly accepted definition of self-contained classroom and in its practical use when they say:

In the true self-contained classroom, the children are taught all subjects by one teacher. In actual practice, however, certain subjects--usually art, music, and physical education--are often taught by special teachers, and the regular classroom teacher has the children for all other school activities.³

The proponents of the self-contained classroom believe it provides the essential framework for educating the "whole child" and that the best course is to try to reach the full potential of what the self-contained classroom "might be." One can, of course, find many situations in which the human relations and the promising practices possible in a self-contained classroom do not exist.⁴

Because of the widely accepted belief in the philosophy of the

¹Gibb and Matala, op. cit., p. 128.

²National Education Association, "Departmentalization in Elementary Schools," NEA Research Bulletin, 44:27, February, 1966.

³Lodbell and Van Ness, loc. cit.

⁴Rodney Tillman, "Self-Contained Classroom: Where Do We Stand?" Educational Leadership, 18:82-84, November, 1960.

self-contained classroom, many efforts in recent years have been directed toward strengthening it. Quite often this "strengthening" has meant modifying it by giving the general elementary teacher help or by replacing her with specialist consultants or specialist teachers in physical education, music, arts and crafts, remedial reading and speech, library and foreign language. The self-contained classroom, as employed today is described by Heathers as "a patchwork".¹

Certainly the prevailing pattern on this background is that of special teachers in music, art and/or physical education. There seems to be a general feeling that these subjects require a special talent and teaching skill different from the rest of the curriculum.²

Doesn't it take special skill, talent and understanding to make modern math meaningful; to help children understand the basic concepts of science and the scientific method; to encourage creativity in expression in language; to instill in pupils an appreciation for and enjoyment of poetry and literature; to not only lead children to integrate the various areas included in the social studies, but to also see the structure and methods which make up the disciplines of these subjects?

Where is the research that shows that the "average" classroom teacher needs help from special teachers in music, art or physical education more than the other curricular areas?

In the survey conducted by the Research Division of the National Education Association in 1961, thirty per cent of the principals

¹ Glen Heathers, "The Dual Progress Plan," Educational Leadership, 18:89-91, November, 1960.

² Curtin, op. cit., p. 176.

indicated that they preferred departmentalization. The subjects most frequently specified by those preferring departmentalization were science and math. Sixty-one per cent recommended special teachers for these subjects. Next came English, mentioned by 54 per cent; then social studies, mentioned by 40 per cent. Less than 30 per cent felt music and art should be departmentalized, and only 20 per cent recommended it for physical education, as shown in the following table:¹

TABLE II
SUBJECTS SPECIFIED BY PRINCIPALS
PREFERRING DEPARTMENTALIZATION

Subject or area	Percent of principals recommending departmentalization
Science	61.2%
Mathematics	60.7
English	54.1
Social Studies	39.7
Music and Art	27.8
Physical Education	19.8
All subjects	13.1

This is the same survey discussed earlier in which 83 per cent of the principals reported their schools had all grades in self-contained classrooms or self-contained except for special areas such as music and art. Yet science and mathematics were recommended for departmentalization three times as often as music, art, or physical education. Were these principals basing their preferences on the observed needs of their individual teaching staffs?

¹Robinson, op. cit., p. 41.

Otto points out that:

Traditionally, music, art, and physical education have been designated as areas needing experts. Whether these are actually the areas which require specialists, particularly in light of more recent teacher-preparation programs, is problematical. One would probably need to examine the preparation and experience of a faculty before any valid decision could be made on what specialist is most needed to help the general classroom teachers.¹

What are educators saying about the future that might affect the status of departmentalization in the elementary school?

The changing elementary mathematics program may call for some changes. Rosenbloom predicts:

There will be increasing experimentation in the use of special teachers for mathematics and science. A successful experiment of this kind is directed by J. R. Mayor, Director of Education, American Association for the Advancement of Science. It certainly seems odd that school systems should employ special teachers for art, music, and physical education, and not for academic subjects.

The self-contained classroom may no longer be sacrosanct. There will certainly be experimentation² with team teaching and departmentalization in elementary schools.

The National Elementary Principal reports that:

In the Disciplines Seminar, assembled in Washington, D. C., in 1961 as part of the Project on Instruction, a dozen specialists in the humanities, the physical and biological sciences, and the social sciences reviewed the nature of their disciplines and the implications for curriculum planning in elementary and secondary schools. Three ideas common to all presentations came through forcefully. First, most of what is being taught is woefully out-of-date. Second, the mere substitution of new content for old is not the answer to up-dating the curriculum. Third, basic to each discipline are methods of inquiry and structures or systems by means of which the field is organized for discovery, accumulation, and communication of knowledge. The learning of these methods and structures is necessary to understanding the field in any general or specialized way.

¹ Henry J. Otto and David C. Sanders, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1964), p. 82.

² Paul C. Rosenbloom, "What is Coming in Elementary Mathematics," Educational Leadership, 18:100, November, 1960.

These ideas are not new. But, they take on unique significance because of the unprecedented expansion of knowledge since 1950, and they must be taken into account in all aspects of school planning. They have implications for planning the curriculum and for organizing the school.....

If present school content and ways of organizing that content are out of date, patterns of school organization that encourage traditional organizations of content must be carefully scrutinized. Patterns of organization that encourage longitudinal, sequential exploration of the fields of knowledge are to be encouraged, whether or not these patterns measure up on evaluative criteria appropriate to traditional school structures.¹

Conant looked to the future in The Education of American Teachers and said:

My guess is that, in spite of all the talk about the importance of specialists in the elementary school, self-contained classrooms will continue to be the dominant pattern for kindergarten and the first three grades during the next ten years. During these years, however, there will be an increasing tendency to use specialists in grades four through six.²

A nongraded and largely self-contained arrangement for the primary unit is advocated by Woodring. However for the upper elementary level he advocates a graded departmental arrangement with several teachers rather than a single teacher per class.³

"The basic philosophy of the self-contained classroom is excellent and probably should be retained," Ackerlund says. But he feels that teacher specialization will not destroy that philosophy if teachers

¹National Elementary Principal, December, 1961, op. cit., p. 72.

²James Bryant Conant, The Education of American Teachers (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963) , p. 147.

³"Toward Improved School Organization," National Elementary Principal, December, 1961, p. 104, citing Paul Woodring, A Fourth of A Nation (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1957) , p. 225.

work as a team and meet once each week for planning.¹

In The Elementary School of the Future, Delacato stated:

The elementary school of the future will consist of self-contained classrooms. Children will be taught in all subjects, excepting handicrafts, art, music, and in part, sports, by their classroom teachers. This will also be true in some instances for the foreign language field until all teachers are properly trained in languages.

The self-contained classroom will be the rule for grades 1 through 5. Grade 6 will have partial departmentalization as an orientation procedure for the departmentalized Junior High School program.²

¹George Ackerlund, "Some Teacher Views on the Self-Contained Classroom," Phi Delta Kappan, 40:285, April, 1959.

²Carl H. Delacato, The Elementary School of the Future, (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1965), p. 69.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This study was undertaken to (1) trace the history of the existence of departmentalization in the elementary school; (2) to review the research conducted to evaluate this type of organization; (3) to find the current trend of opinion and practice regarding departmentalization in the elementary school; and (4) to make recommendations based on this review of literature as to the place of departmentalization in the elementary school today.

The program organization of a school has as its function the putting into effect of the curriculum. Departmentalization as a form of organization had its beginnings in the late 1700's, but it later disappeared. A plan of departmental teaching in the upper elementary grades started in New York in 1900 proved quite popular. Departmentalization in some form has been practiced by various school systems in the United States ever since.

Notable, in the history of departmentalization was the platoon school founded by W. W. Wirt in Indiana in 1900. The platoon school spread rapidly during the next thirty years. It is a form of semi-departmentalization that can still be found today.

The popularity of departmentalization has fluctuated. However it is difficult to compare the percentage of schools using it at any given time because of the differences in studies. Results of a survey taken in 1913 showed over half of schools in cities of over 5,000 practiced departmentalization, but not many had it below grade six. From then until 1950 most studies showed about half of the schools sampled practic-

ing departmentalization. A small survey by Dunn in 1950 showed a marked decrease in this type of organization. However, in a study by Barnes in 1959, forty four per cent of the schools sending returns from forty-nine states reported departmentalization in one or more subjects. Less than 17 per cent of the principals reported their school organized in any kind of departmental plan in a 1961 survey made by the research division of the National Education Association. The Educational Research Service found 97 large school systems using departmentalization in one or more elementary schools during the 1964-65 school year.

The five subjects listed as most frequently departmentalized by Otto in 1943-44 and by Barnes in 1959 were: music, art, physical education, arithmetic and science.

Complete departmentalization is rarely found in the elementary school. The schools of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and East Brunswick, New Jersey, are examples of semi-departmental organization.

The Dual Progress Plan being demonstrated in two New York State schools is an interesting plan combining graded progress in core subjects with non-graded progress and homogeneous grouping in special subjects.

Most evaluative research has been involved with comparing pupil achievement in a departmentalized type of organization with other types. The results have not proved anything conclusive and have often been contradictory.

Departmentalization has not been shown to be detrimental to the adjustment of children. The majority of students in most studies prefer having several teachers.

More research is needed which is designed to evaluate all the

goals of the curriculum and not just achievement as shown on standardized tests and pupil adjustment.

Typical of the arguments in favor of departmentalization which have appeared in the literature since 1960 are: that no teacher is capable of teaching all the areas included in today's curriculum, especially in the intermediate grades; that when teachers are teaching what they know best they teach better and have more time to keep up with their field; that the program is better balanced in that teachers tend to avoid their weak subjects, and students will not be confined to a weak teacher or strong teacher for all day long all year; that pupils like having more than one teacher and it gives them several models to choose from; that it makes the transition to departmentalized secondary schools easier; and that good teachers in a departmentalized form can be as concerned for the learner as the self-contained classroom teacher, with the added advantage of knowing the subject matter well enough to know how to best present it to the learner.

Viewpoints expressed by those against departmentalization found most commonly in the literature since 1960 are: that departmental organization is most compatible with a rigid, subject-centered curriculum; that it makes integration of knowledge more difficult for the student; that teachers cannot know their students as well as a regular classroom teacher; that the child needs the security of having one teacher all day.

The literature indicates that the self-contained classroom is frequently meant to include one teacher responsible for most of the children's learning experiences with special teachers taking over instruction in music, art, and/or physical education.

Principals in a 1961 survey expressed science, math, and English as the subjects they thought should be departmentalized if any departmentalization was done.

Several noted educators have predicted more departmentalization in the intermediate grades in the future.

Conclusions

After studying the history of departmentalization in the elementary school and considering the research, studies, opinions, and statements found in this review of literature it seems, to this writer, that although the self-contained classroom is strongly supported by the "majority of reputable opinion,"¹ some departmentalization will continue to modify that type of organization.

This is already happening in the areas of music, art, and physical education, although the research shows no sound basis for these being the areas most needing specialist teachers.

Since it is definitely more desirable to base educational decisions on wise use of valid research evidence than on "general feelings" or current trends the growing popularity of the modified self-contained classroom with specialists in music, art and/or physical education can hardly be defended. More research, patterned after the Gibb and Matala study, could help in determining what areas might best be served by special teachers.

In order to fairly evaluate departmental plans in elementary schools more research is needed which is designed to evaluate all the

¹ Peterson and Hayden, op. cit., p. 515.

goals of the curriculum; not just achievement as shown on standardized tests and pupil adjustment.

Whether departmentalization would improve instruction in a given school would be a matter for study and decision in that particular school. The entire staff should be concerned with both the type of information found in this report on departmentalization and in analyzing their own situation for the purpose of modifying a program to fit their needs.¹

¹National Elementary Principal, December, 1961, op. cit., pp. 18 and 127; Otto and Sanders, op. cit., pp. 83-4.

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DEPARTMENTALIZATION
IN THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1958

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Departmentalization first became a common form of organization in the elementary school during the early years of this century. Recently the literature has contained much discussion of its advantages and disadvantages.

The purpose of this study was (1) to trace the history of the existence of departmentalized and semi-departmentalized schools; (2) to review the research conducted to evaluate this type of organization; (3) to find the current trend of opinion and practice regarding departmentalization in the elementary school; and (4) to make recommendations based on this review of literature as to the place of departmentalization in the elementary school today.

An exhaustive study was made of the literature to determine the prevalence of departmentalization since its origin in the late 1700's and its reappearance in 1900. Between 1913 and 1950 some departmentalization was used in the elementary school in about half the school systems in the United States. Its use has been less common in the 1960's.

All the available research done to evaluate departmentalization during this period was studied. Most of the research was concerned with subject matter achievement. The results have been inconclusive and largely contradictory. Since 1960 there have been several studies of pupil adjustment in the Tulsa schools which have a semi-departmentalized type of organization. Departmentalization has not been found to be detrimental to the adjustment of children. The number of underweight children and absences were found to be lower in a platoon school.

There has also been one study of curriculum practices, in which educators favored more of those curriculum practices in the nondepartmental school where there were significantly different practices.

Descriptions of the semi-departmental schools of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and East Brunswick, New Jersey, were studied and reported along with the recently demonstrated Dual Progress Plan which combined graded progress in core subjects called "cultural imperatives" and non-graded progress in special subjects--the "cultural electives".

Articles and books published since 1960 were studied to find the current opinions of educators. Those most often expressed, both for and against, were reported along with several predictions as to the future of departmentalization in the elementary school.

Through the entire review of literature the term "self-contained classroom" was found to frequently refer to a form of organization in which one teacher was responsible for most of the children's learning experiences with special teachers taking over instruction in art, music, and/or physical education.

The writer concluded that although the self-contained classroom is strongly supported by the majority of reputable opinion, some departmentalization will continue to modify this type of organization.

The choice of music, art, and physical education as the subjects most frequently departmentalized was questioned due to lack of research in this area.

Research of different types is needed to fairly evaluate departmentalization in the attainment of all goals of the curriculum.

As a school evaluates its curriculum and organization, any suggestions for departmentalization should be considered carefully. The entire staff should study the type of information found in this report as well as their own situation in order to reach a wise decision.