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A Critique of Ungraded Elementary School Organization

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A CRITIQUE OF UNGRADED ELEMENTARY

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

(TITLE)

BY

Karen Doty

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CHAPTER I

EMERGENCE OF THE GRADED SYSTEM

Prior to the emergence of the graded system in the 1830's and 40's, most children were taught in one-room schools with no grade names as barriers to learning and development. The teacher taught all the children all subjects. Each child received individual attention once or twice a day. The remainder of the time the student spent studying, playing, and listening to others recite. These one-room schools did not have a graded series of textbooks or courses of study, and there were no principals or supervisors to help the teacher with problems.¹

Several events hastened the development of the graded system. The battle for public education began about 1820 and continued until 1860. Crusaders such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard fought to convince the people that free, public, tax-supported education was necessary for every prospective citizen. By 1860, the majority of the people in the North had concluded that provision of a limited form of public education was a function of the government.²

The monitorial system used successfully in England by

¹William H. Small, Early New England Schools, (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1914), pp. 178-179, quoted in John I. Goodlad and Robert Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1959), p. 44.

²Herbert M. Hamlin, The Public and Its Education, (Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1955), pp. 39-40.

Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell influenced American Educational development. The master of the school taught a group of older, brighter children the lessons. These children, monitors, each had groups of younger or less-bright children whom they taught. The monitors also checked attendance, ruled paper, handed out slates and books, examined the progress of students, and promoted students when progress was evident. The public could see that these systems were inexpensive methods of teaching large groups of children. The low cost of the system helped convince the public that free education for all children could be possible. The monitorial system was also important in discovering the need for special training of teachers.³

European education had a great amount of influence on the American system of education. Mann visited Germany in 1843 and studied the school structure. He did not approve of everything he saw, but he felt most of the German ideas could be adapted to fit the American school structure. Of particular interest to Mann were the trained teachers, modern methods, central control, operational efficiency, and the organization of the German schools.⁴ Several states adopted the Prussian eight-year elementary school plan (similar to Germany's plan) with very little change.⁵

³Edgar W. Knight, Education in the United States. (Chicago: Ginn and Company, 1941), pp. 163-167.

⁴John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1959), p. 46.

⁵Hamlin, The Public and Its Education, p. 40.

In America the need for schools to train teachers began to bring results in the 1830's and 40's. In 1838, Massachusetts opened the first public normal school. For several decades the normal schools which were started barely existed. At first the schools were looked upon with disgust by many schoolmasters and education-minded people, but eventually the normal schools became powerful in ordering the content of instruction, unifying the educational practices, and spreading the idea of a graded structure throughout America.⁶

The graded school in America was organized so that each teacher had a separate room in which to teach. Some school systems grouped the pupils according to likeness of age, some grouped according to age and likeness of scholastic achievement. Each building was large enough to accommodate several rooms. A principal was in charge of the entire building. An assembly hall in each building was large enough to seat all students in the school.

With increasingly large numbers of children to be classified and accounted for, rapid standardization of textbooks, ordering of subject matter, and teacher education to provide training in the new patterns, the elementary school had crystallized into a structure remarkable like that predominating today.⁷

Another development hastening the development of the graded structure was the appearance of new textbooks. Grammar, spelling, geography, and reading texts were printed. In 1821 Warren Colburn's arithmetic texts made their appearance. The McGuffey Eclectic Readers first appeared in 1836. These readers were

⁶Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 47.

⁷Ibid., p. 49.

filled with illustrations. Sales of these texts were very good, and many other people began to write and print texts. A number of textbook series which began to appear in reading and arithmetic had content determined by grades. Textbook series in social studies, science, and health were soon available. The work appropriate for a certain grade level determined the textbook content. In a short time the content of a certain textbook made the text appropriate for a particular grade.⁸

These developments were all instrumental in the founding of the graded school structure. In the new structure, students of similar chronological age were placed in grade and at the end of the year they either passed or failed. Grades seemed especially appropriate for handling the increasing number of children attending schools because of state-supported public education. Enrollment in the public schools of children five to seventeen years of age rose from 57% in 1870 to 72.4% in 1900. The average schooling of the American population increased from four months to fifty months in the years from 1800 to 1900.⁹

No sooner had the schools become "graded" than new problems evolved. Problems such as the rigidity of classifying children from an entire year's work, use of grade-to-grade textbooks, and neglect of personal and social needs encouraged educators to devise various schemes, plans, and experiments to solve these problems. The earliest of these experiments

⁸Ibid., p. 47.

⁹Hamlin, The Public and Its Education, p. 42.

was in 1868 when William Torrey Harris tried a plan of frequent promotion and reclassification in the St. Louis schools.¹⁰

Today we still have graded systems but the problems are becoming more difficult to deal with due to a variety of factors which have evolved over the past century. Dissatisfaction seems to be the key word when discussing today's school system. Administrators and teachers are constantly seeking new ways of improving the elements of its structure with which they feel they can no longer agree.

Daily, educators are faced with questions from parents and other concerned persons who want to know if the education of the students is being accomplished in the best manner. In trying to answer these questions administrators and teachers are forced to face some disturbing facts. Teachers, for example, realize that there are varying amounts of difference in intelligence, achievement, physical and social maturity, cultural and experiential background, and motivation of any group of learners.¹¹ This knowledge has been greatly emphasized by research in the fields of child development, personality, learning, and perception. Research has pointed toward the fact that:

learning is most effective when it is meaningful and is related to the individual needs, perceptions, and interests of the learner, when it begins where the learner is, and when it is perceived by the learner as enhancing his own self-concept.¹²

¹⁰Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 49.

¹¹Hugh V. Perkins, "Nongraded Programs: What Progress?" Educational Leadership, XIX (Dec., 1961), p. 166.

¹²Ibid.

the key to all this research seems to be the new emphasis on providing the most effective educational experiences for each individual student.

After studying the results of research, some educators have questioned whether a graded system is the best means of fulfilling the changing educational needs of the students in today's schools. Perhaps it is not the most effective means of organizing the school structure. In searching for a more effective method of organization the ungraded plan has seemed more desirable than other methods of providing the most effective teaching for each individual child. This ungraded plan is in most cases defined as one for the primary school because so far it is used almost exclusively in that area of the school structure.

Because of the great variations in interpretation of the ungraded plan the writer prefers at this time the definition given in the Dictionary of Education. It defines an ungraded primary school as:

a school having a flexible system of grouping in which children in the primary grades are grouped together regardless of age and in which extensive effort is made to adapt instruction to individual differences.¹³

Not only is there variation in defining the ungraded plan but also in assigning one specific name. Other terms frequently used, but meaning nearly the same, are nongraded plan, continuous progress, multigrade plan, flexible progress plan, and progress levels.

¹³Carter V. Good (ed.), Dictionary of Education. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959), p. 586.

As has been pointed out, any change in the organization or administration of the school system ordinarily developed because of dissatisfaction with the factors of the present school system. The writer, having had experience as a teacher, has felt this same dissatisfaction with the graded system. An interest in the ungraded plan has been nurtured by reading articles on ungraded plans and discussing it with fellow teachers and administrators.

One finds it not to be a method of teaching, but an administrative tool.¹⁴ John I. Goodlad, one of the strongest proponents of a plan for nongrading states that it is an organizational scheme -- "but most important it is an expression of a philosophy of education."¹⁵ It can be an opportunity for creative teaching once the teacher understands the flexibility of nongrading. It can also lead him to explore new instructional possibilities.¹⁶

The writer would like some day to be instrumental in putting into effect an ungraded primary plan. Because of the resistance to change she realizes that as a proponent of such a new plan she must thoroughly understand and be prepared to explain the problems this plan might solve and, of course, the new problems it might create.

This paper is an outgrowth of a study of existing material

¹⁴Florence C. Kelly, "Ungraded Primary School," Educational Leadership, XVIII (November, 1960), p. 79.

¹⁵John I. Goodlad, "Inadequacy of Graded Organization--What Then?," Childhood Education, XXXIX (February, 1963), p. 276.

¹⁶Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, pp. 59-60.

available on communities using ungraded primary plans. The writer seeks to answer two important questions:

Were the problems which initially prompted the inauguration of an ungraded plan solved?

When compared to these initial problems were the new problems, created by changing to an ungraded plan, of greater or lesser importance?

Method of Study

The writer conducted a careful survey of the literature available on ungraded plans. The number of schools which have such plans in operation are increasing each year, but material is still somewhat limited, especially the quantity of reliable research data which has been compiled. Most conclusions which have been given are only tentative due to the limited time the plans have been in effect.

A number of school systems were studied, each having an ungraded plan either in operation at the present time or having had one which is now discontinued. An effort was made in surveying the literature to identify the particular problem or set of problems which led to the adoption of the ungraded plan in a school system. From the data available, an attempt was made to determine if these problems were solved after the change was made. Particular attention was also given to the numerous variations of the same basic ungraded plan as it was put into operation at various schools.

The writer also studied the various school systems using ungraded plans to determine what new problems were created by changing from a graded system to an ungraded one.

A summary of the initial problems and the newly created ones concludes the paper. The writer offers a tentative conclusion about which set of problems is of greater importance.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEMS PROMPTING INITIATION OF UNGRADED PLANS

Fourteen school systems responded to a questionnaire by Hugh V. Perkins and gave these reasons for initiating the ungraded plan:

1. Educators were dissatisfied with promotional policies.
2. Teachers felt that they needed a longer period of study of the child before making a decision on retention.
3. Teachers were seeking a way to help the child eliminate his feelings of frustration caused by failure.
4. The ungraded plan was more consistent with the knowledge available on individual differences.
5. With the use of the ungraded plan reading and language arts programs could be improved because the child would be advanced to a higher level only after complete mastery of level he was on.
6. The ungraded plan provided fuller development and learning by the individual child.¹

John I. Goodlad in his 1960 survey of eighty-nine communities reported that there seemed to be two main problem areas causing the change to the ungraded plan. The first of these was a need for improved attention to individual

¹Perkins, "Nongraded Programs," p. 167.

differences and, second, were the strong reactions against the lock-step of grading.² Goodlad believed that educators should attempt to judge whether the school structure was adequate before making any change. This judgement should be made with two realities in mind: (1) knowledge is expanding at an explosive rate; and (2) human beings are very different from each other. Keeping these two facts in mind, Goodlad suggested three questions which could be used to judge the adequacy of the school structure.

1. Did the school structure encourage continuous progress for each child?
2. What alternatives existed for a child who did not appear to be profiting as he should in his present educational environment?
3. Did the school structure provide a reasonable balance of success and failure?³

The writer believed that the following three problems were important in prompting educators to seek a new method of organization.

1. Every child is quite different from his classmates, not only physically and intellectually but also socially and emotionally. Each student has his own rate of growth and this may vary greatly in different subjects. In a graded situation it is not possible to promote individual differences to the fullest extent.

²John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, Elementary School Journal, "Educational Practices in Nongraded Schools: A Survey of Perceptions," LXIII, (Oct., 1962), p. 34.

³Goodlad, "Inadequacy of Graded Organization," p. 274.

2. Today's graded school structure demands a decision on promotion at the end of each school year for each student. This does not give the teacher much opportunity to study the student for a long period of time. If the child has not met all the criteria for the grade level by the end of the year, he must be failed. Failure means that the child will have to repeat all the grade work the next year. The child has no feelings of success, only feelings of failure.

3. Every student should be encouraged to learn and develop to the maximum of his ability. In a graded school structure every child is treated as part of a group. The group is expected to start together and finish together. The mature student becomes bored and disinterested, and the less mature student becomes frustrated when both are taught the same material in the same manner.

Milwaukee's Ungraded Primary Plan

The oldest, largest, and best known ungraded primary plan still in existence is that in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There the reasons for breaking away from the traditional graded system were announced:

We, the parents, administrators, principals, and teachers of Milwaukee wanted a way of adjusting teaching and administrative procedures to the individual needs of these children.

We were searching for a tool that would allow us to concentrate on continuous progress and individual growth patterns rather than on traditional markings and artificial group standards.⁴

⁴Florence C. Kelly, "Ungraded Primary Schools Make The Grade in Milwaukee," NEA Journal, XL. (Dec., 1951), p. 645.

In order to get these, an ungraded primary plan was started. Previously, the school system in Milwaukee had operated on a semester-admission basis. The ungraded plan was imposed upon this in the following manner. A child in the first semester above kindergarten was labeled, P¹, meaning the first semester in the primary school. The school rooms were labeled "Primary School--teacher's name".

Children would usually enter fourth grade after six semesters in the primary school. A very bright, mature child might be ready after the fifth semester, but a slow learner might need to wait until the end of his seventh or even eighth semester to enter the fourth grade. In these latter cases, as soon as the slow learning capacity of the student was discovered, an effort was made to slow down and extend the primary school experiences. The child and his parents were informed of what changes had been made and why they were needed for the child's own welfare. The same procedure was used for a gifted child. After he was identified, he was allowed to progress at his own rate--but he was not pushed ahead academically until he was definitely mature enough emotionally and socially to be able to adjust to the move. In most cases the bright child was given experiences to enrich his intellectual development, but because of a desire to preserve his social stability he was not moved ahead of his group.⁵

In reading, the primary school was revised to contain twelve progressive levels of achievement. A wide variety of

⁵Florence C. Kelly, "The Primary School in Milwaukee," Childhood, XXIV, (January, 1948), p. 238.

ready material was made available to all teachers. The teacher determined each child's general rate-of-growth pattern and adjusted the teaching to his pattern. Goals were set for the child on his own capacity to learn and his progress measured against his own abilities.⁶ A definite effort was made to keep the range of abilities in each room to a minimum. Also, rooms were organized so that a child was not more than a year older or younger than his classmates.

A progress sheet for reading was kept on each child. On it were marked the books read and what date they were completed. This same type of record was kept in spelling, arithmetic, and other areas.

In order to inform parents of their child's progress in the primary school, a progress card was sent three times a semester. The child's progress was given in learning skills and social development. He was marked on his own ability and effort, not his ability and effort as compared to his classmates. Only two symbols were used for marking--"C" showed that he was making progress and "D" showed a need for improvement.

A series of planning conferences were held near the end of each semester by the teachers and principal. At these conferences the social and learning groups were discussed so that necessary changes could be made. In this manner each child was insured of being placed in the group best suited to

⁶William M. Laners, "Milwaukee's Ungraded Primary Plan," American School Board Journal, CXLV. (Nov., 1962), p. 12.

his needs at the present time; therefore, his progress could be kept continuous.

A statement by Florence C. Kelly, Director, of the Division of Primary Curriculum and Instruction, summarized the Milwaukee Plan:

The ungraded primary organization is a means of making functional a philosophy that has been talked about for years. It is a most effective way of adjusting teaching and administrative procedures to meet the individual differences among children. It permits adaptations to the variations in pupils' mental ability, physical variations, and social development. The ungraded primary organization is not a method of teaching, but rather an administrative tool, designed to promote a philosophy of continuous growth.

The ungraded primary school is more than a theoretical plan of organization; it is an accomplished fact.⁷

It appeared that in Milwaukee two problem areas causing them to change to an ungraded primary plan had been solved. They had an administrative procedure which helped them to adjust teaching methods to meet the individual needs of each child. They also had a plan which enabled them to study individual growth patterns and concentrate on continuous progress for each student.

The success of the ungraded primary plan could be shown by two facts. It began in one school in 1942, and by 1960, was in operation in 114 of the city's 116 elementary schools. This was all done on a voluntary basis and as late as 1962, no one had returned to a graded plan.⁸

⁷Kelly, "Ungraded Primary School," p. 79.

⁸Ibid.

Park Forest's Ungraded Plan

In 1949, a unique situation presented itself to educators in Park Forest, Illinois. This was a newly created community needing an elementary school system. The teachers were nearly all young and inexperienced. The admission of children was to be on a yearly basis instead of semester. Being a completely new system, the problem of deciding what would be the best plan of operation was foremost. After studying various ways of setting up a school system, the ungraded plan was selected.⁹

Park Forest's problem was the need for a plan suited, first, to yearly admission but providing for individual differences; and second, to young, inexperienced teachers.¹⁰ Children who would be in grades one, two, and three were called the ungraded primary school. Children in this primary school were grouped on bases of social and emotional maturity, social compatibility, and especially on evidenced readiness for a reading program. Reading progress was used as the most important factor in the child's advance through the primary program. In each classroom the students were again grouped into three levels of learning based on reading ability.

The child's movement from level to level within the room was made whenever necessary. Also, the child could be moved from one room to another if he were achieving above his present class or below it. In these cases the child participated in

⁹Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 72.

¹⁰Kent C. Austin, "The Ungraded Primary School," Childhood Education, XXXIII, (Feb., 1957), p. 260.

the reading program of his new room for approximately two weeks, giving him a chance to adjust to the new classroom. At the end of the two weeks he was, in most cases, eager for the change to be made complete.

At all times the parents were kept informed of the child's progress through parent-teacher conferences. These conferences were valuable also in reaching a stage of parental cooperation which greatly helped both the teacher and the child. Parents were also given a handbook with a full explanation of the ungraded primary plan. In the early fall an "Open House" night gave teachers an opportunity to explain the program and answer parent's questions. Parents were free to examine books, materials, and the physical facilities were made available by the school. Throughout the school year bulletins were sent to parents informing them of changes, new materials, and so forth.

In Park Forest, the teacher was the only person working directly with the children except for the music teacher who was with them thirty minutes once a week. However, there were special service personnel available to help the teacher when the need arose. These people were a guidance counselor, school nurse, speech correctionist, and a teacher for hard-of-hearing children. A full-time building principal, a district curriculum coordinator, teacher-librarian, and a teacher working part time with audio visual aids were also available as supervisory consultants for the teacher.¹¹

One special feature of the Park Forest Ungraded Primary

¹¹Austin, p. 261.

School was the thirty-minute early dismissal of students every Tuesday evening to provide time for teachers to attend professional staff meetings.¹² These in-service education programs were scheduled in different manners depending on the needs of the teacher, school, or administration. Examples were grade-level meetings, building meetings, teacher's organization meetings, and general administrative meetings. These meetings helped to keep Park Forest's schools operating smoothly, to inform teachers of new methods, materials, ideas, etc., and to solve problems which could arise in the school structure.

When evaluating Park Forest's plan, one finds that they had provided many means by which teachers (inexperienced and experienced) could receive professional help when it was needed. Their "Big Sister" plan of assigning each new teacher to a teacher with several years of experience has made the ungraded plan easier for these new teachers.¹³ They had someone to turn to for advice and help in minor problem situations.

The ungraded primary seemed to work quite well in a plan suited to yearly admissions. An assignment to a certain class in the fall did not mean that the child could never move from that class during the year. The flexibility of the ungraded plan insured that each child would be moved to the class best meeting his individual needs.

In 1955, a study of the Park Forest Ungraded Primary School

¹²Ibid., p. 262.

¹³Ibid.

by Kent C. Austin revealed that 94% of the parents were at least partially satisfied. The teachers responding to the same questions showed that 96% of them were satisfied. Only 3% of the parents and no teachers said they were "dissatisfied" with the program, and one teacher and 1% of the parents indicated they were "very much dissatisfied".¹⁴

These data, gathered in 1955 in the sixth year of the program, offer very real encouragement for the view that children are apparently benefiting from the nongraded organization pattern.¹⁵

Nikola Tesla's Multigraded Development Plan

During 1960 at Nikola Tesla Elementary School, in Chicago, the staff became interested in a plan for ungrading the school. For a year the entire staff studied everything they could find on the graded and ungraded structures and whatever research statistics were available. They found that research findings very closely paralleled the data they had compiled on their own students.¹⁶ This data was related to the student's mental ability and academic achievement differences and also the greater variation and wider spread among them as they grew older.

Besides studying these research findings, and comparing them to their own school, the members of the staff visited schools with ungraded programs in operation. After these efforts to study what educational system was best suited to

¹⁴Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, pp. 74-75.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Jerome H. Gilbert, "Multigraded Developmental Plan Focuses on Pupil Achievement," Chicago Schools Journal, XLIII, (Feb., 1962), p. 210.

their school, the Nikola Tesla staff summarized their need for a change as four major assumptions:

1. The form of the educational structure should take into account what is known about child development and learning theory.
2. This structure should provide for continuity of learning.
3. Such continuity in the skill areas should eliminate the need for retention at any specific grade or time of year.
4. An organization which provides larger time blocks in which children can mature and develop will improve the personal-social adjustment of children.¹⁷

Nikola Tesla's special problem could be identified as an attempt to put into practical use the ideas of these four assumptions by means of a change from the graded structure to an ungraded structure.

The Multigraded Developmental Plan, as it was called at Nikola Tesla, included the kindergarten through the third grade. Children were grouped by number of years in school experience, achievement levels in reading, and mental abilities. These were determined by teacher evaluations and standardized test scores. In each class the teacher had groups at two or three reading levels, two or more spelling levels, and two arithmetic levels. A student might even need to be sent to another room for arithmetic if he needed to work with those either above or below the levels in his classroom.

Nikola Tesla's ungraded plan was like Park Forest's plan to the extent that it also had reading levels. There were eight levels in this plan: level 1 - experience charts and picture reading; level two - several primers and pre-primers; level three -

¹⁷Ibid., p. 212.

first reader; levels 4 - 8 - two graded readers from two different series for each level.¹⁸

After the completion of each basic reader a related test was given. The more able students used the supplementary reader for enrichment and the less able (who had not learned the skills sufficiently) used the supplementary reader as a basic textbook. These slower learners were provided with a greater variety of instructional aids with the intent of providing a number of approaches to what was being taught, maintaining interest, and supplying a new means of reinforcing what had already been taught.

In each skill area, grouping practices are based upon criteria related to the specific purposes to be achieved, and learning is thought of as a continuous process whereby each new unit of instruction is evolved from the previous one.¹⁹

A student could take three to five years to reach the fourth grade. Factors which determined his rate of progress were: reading achievement, achievement in the communicative skills, arithmetic achievement, and also consideration of his physical, social, mental, and emotional maturity. Most students needed four years. The most mature students finished in three years and the least mature in five years.

The report card at Nikola Tesla had been changed but more important were the parent-teacher conferences held at least twice a year. These enabled the teacher and parent to agree on certain goals and values related to the child's success at school.

¹⁸Gilbert, "Multigraded Developmental Plan," p. 212.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 213.

The ability of the teacher and parent to agree and cooperate on developing a guide to learning for the child was of great importance to the effectiveness the learning situation would have on the child's development and progress in school.

In evaluating the Nikola Tesla ungraded plan against the major assumptions which caused the change, the writer believes that the multigraded developmental plan substantially carried out most of what the staff was attempting to do. The only assumption not given further attention by the staff was that personal-social adjustment would improve when this ungraded plan was in operation. The writer could not find any information to satisfactorily conclude that the ungraded plan helped substantiate this assumption.

Appleton's Continuous Progress Plan

With a knowledge of the interrelation of mental, physical, and emotional aspects of growth, the use of academic achievement alone as a method of grouping students could possibly impede their intellectual development. Because of the grading structure and the ideas of promotion, pressures by parents and teachers alike are often placed on the child to complete certain tasks for his given age or grade level even though he is not mature enough.²⁰

In Appleton, Wisconsin, educators were aware of these hazards and began seeking a way for removing them. Finally

²⁰Lois Smith, "Continuous Progress Plan," Childhood Education, XXXVII, (March, 1961), p. 321.

the decision was made to remove the pattern of organization which hampered the educators. Grade labels were removed and a new method of organization developed in 1951, which was called the "Continuous Progress Plan".²¹ In developing this new program educators tried to keep in mind four important basic principles of child growth: (1) individual differences among children; (2) continuity of growth; (3) need for feelings of achievement and personal worth; and (4) necessity for readiness to face developmental tasks.²²

In order to make the program include these four principles a number of changes had to be made. Large blocks of time called kindergarten, primary, and intermediate were developed. Most students moved through these three blocks in seven years. Grouping was by chronological age with the understanding that the child could be moved when a younger or older group could provide a better learning situation. These moves were made when the school and parents were in agreement as to the advisability of the change.

Each room was organized to provide for individual differences with a wide range of materials. The standard of achievement was: "all that the child could do".²³ In the skill subjects (reading, spelling, arithmetic) progress was marked on a card kept in the folder of the child. Any individual child's progress easily could be seen by looking through his folder.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 322.

The problem approach was used in the social studies and science areas. A wide range of texts and materials insured that each child could contribute on his own level.

Descriptive, written progress reports were made to parents along with the use of the face-to-face parent-teacher conference.

When we use research and study to discover how children grow and learn and then try to fit our school program to what we know, we come closer to our goal of having all children living and learning up to limits of their potentialities.²⁴

Lois Smith's statement, along with the program, seemed to provide evidence that Appleton was successful in removing the pattern of organization which to them was a barrier against effective learning for every child. Not only did the educators in Appleton feel the new plan was successful, but that it was a means of further providing for individual differences. After only a few years they regrouped the students in a multi-age system. Each primary class consisted of about thirty children aged six to eight and each intermediate class of children aged nine to eleven.²⁵

No longer could teachers think of the students in terms of a specific grade or of their chronological ages. The children had to be treated as individual learners. The teacher had to teach each child as much and as fast as he was capable of learning.

After five years, James Retson pointed out in 1956 some

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵James N. Retson, "Are We Back To the Little Red Schoolhouse?" Grade Teacher, LXXXIII, (Feb., 1966), p. 108.

of the reasons for the change to this multi-age continuous progress plan and its success:

1. The teacher had a child longer than one year and yet she didn't have the same class for three years.
2. Only one-third of a class was new each year so the teacher had more time to spend with the beginners.
3. There was more flexibility in ability grouping and a greater range of abilities. The child could work at his own level of achievement in any subject.
4. The size of a child did not stereotype him year after year.
5. Leadership qualities could be developed as the shy children grew older and associated with younger ones.
6. The teacher could make better judgments about acceleration and retention because she had the child a longer period of time.
7. The transition for a child retained or accelerated was easier because he was in a situation which was not entirely new.
8. Mixed ages were a more natural setting for children.
9. The barriers of age and grade were broken down and replaced by a respect for abilities.
10. Six year olds developed independent study habits earlier.
11. There was less time lost in teacher and pupil getting acquainted.
12. The size of classes could be consistent since there was no need to keep all children of a certain age together.²⁶

²⁶Ibid., p. 109.

These twelve points would seem to substantiate the writer's belief that Appleton had successfully solved its initial problem of creating a new pattern of organization to provide most effectively for individual differences among its students.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's Primary School

In University City, Missouri, one specific problem faced the staff of Nathaniel Hawthorne School: how to solve the problem of promotion?²⁸ Members of the staff read literature on new methods and wrote letters to various places trying these new methods. They arrived at a set of basic conclusions not at all new. Most important of these was: that annual promotions are not necessary if an adequate system can be devised for accounting for the continuous progress of the pupil.²⁹

Teachers found that two factors which could be used to determine progress were the number of semesters a child had been in school and the reading level of a child, decided by graded tests and general performance. They used these two and set up a primary school including three years (not kindergarten). This plan provided six semesters with a reading level to correspond to each semester. Seventh and eighth semesters were established for the slower or more able students. If a child was marked "6-8" he was in the sixth semester and the eighth level of reading; if marked "8-6" he was in the eighth semester but only the sixth level of reading.

To assign the classroom unit properly suited to the

²⁸Fred E. Brooks, "A Faculty Meets the Needs of Pupils," Educational Leadership, XI, (Dec., 1953), p. 174.

²⁹Ibid., p. 175.

individual needs of a child, teachers tried to follow three principles:

1. Pupils should stay with a teacher for a period of at least one year.
2. There should be a normal range of ability in each group.
3. Pupils should be grouped as closely as possible by chronological age.³⁰

Within each classroom the flexible system of reading levels provided further aid to the child for insuring effective learning at his own level of ability. Actual grouping for the Fall was determined by a reading readiness test given in kindergarten, a social maturity test, a coordination test, and the teacher's judgment.³¹ Because of the size of Nathaniel Hawthorne School, there were four groups entering the primary school and an effort was made to keep these groups as nearly alike in range as possible.

Did Nathaniel Hawthorne solve its problem of promotion: Fred E. Brooks said that while there were many problems left for the teacher to solve in the primary school, "it has become evident that the problems of promotion and failure have been eased."³² Perhaps the solution was not absolutely complete but at least it was partial and that showed progress.

Other school systems have changed their pattern of organization to one for ungrading. Of course, in each instance there are minor variations in the actual provisions of the program. The number of reading levels may vary from six to

³⁰Ibid., p. 178.

³¹John I. Goodlad, Fred E. Brooks, Irene M. Larson, and Neal Neff, "Reading Levels Replace Grades in the Non-Graded Plan," Elementary School Journal, LVII, (Feb., 1957), p. 254.

³²Brooks, "A Faculty Meets the Needs of Pupils," p. 178.

twelve, arithmetic may be taught on ability levels or treated as an individual problem, social studies and science content may be based on a unit, problem approach, or an interest of the children. Initiation of an ungraded plan may be done gradually as children advance, or all grades may be ungraded together the first year. The student's progress is reported to parents through the use of a report card, written descriptive report, or parent-teacher conference. Some schools use a combination of the written report or report card and the parent-teacher conference.

The variations found in the different systems using ungraded plans are not serious ones. These variations are necessary to make the plan fit each school system. Primarily, the ungraded plan is meant to meet the needs of individual students.

The outstanding feature of the system is that it abolishes for all children the repeating and the skipping of grades and yet allows each child to work at all times at the grade level which fits his educational foundation and mental maturity.³³

³³Leonard B. Wheat, "The Flexible Progress Group System," Elementary School Journal, XXXVIII, (Nov., 1937), p. 175.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS CREATED AFTER CHANGE TO UNGRADED PLAN

The writer believes that the preceding pages of this paper provide some evidence that the ungraded primary plan solved some problems facing today's educators. Problems centering around individual differences, continuous progress (unbroken by grade levels), and promotion or failure were among the problems discussed.

Solution of these initial problems, which solution was never complete, did not prevent the appearance of new problems. Sometimes the change to a new type of organization or to a new method created more problems than originally confronted the persons involved. Changing from a graded plan to an ungraded plan was an organizational change in the structure of the school system. Did this organizational change from a graded system to an ungraded system create new problems? The answer would have to be a firm "yes". The question is: what were these newly created problems, and why did they appear?

Grade-minded Habits of Teachers

An important problem which had to be dealt with after the initiation of an ungraded plan was that of helping teachers to refrain from habits of grade-level-expectation. Some teachers still tended to think of students in terms of a grade

when making lesson plans, obtaining material, or judging achievement. Recognition and planning for the wide range of ability present in any class was necessary when using an ungraded plan. This plan would make necessary teaching that was both above and below a specific grade level.¹ This great range of ability was apparent at all levels and seemed to grow wider as the students grew older. For example, Goodlad says that:

in the average first grade there is a spread of four years in pupil readiness to learn as suggested by mental age data. As the pupils progress through the grades, the span in readiness widens. Furthermore, a single child does not progress all of a piece; he tends to spurt ahead more rapidly in some areas than in others. Consequently a difference of one grade between his reading attainment and his arithmetic attainment at the end of the second grade classification may be extended to a three- or four-grade difference by the end of his fifth year in school.²

The teacher had to be aware of the differences in each child and be prepared to adjust the teaching method to make learning effective for every student at the student's own level. The teacher did not have to prepare a different lesson for each child but a lesson which would be appropriate for each child when applied at his own level.³ The flexibility of an ungraded plan provided the teacher with freedom to move children

¹Goodlad, "Inadequacy of Graded Organization," p. 275.

²Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 3.

³Madeline C. Hunter, "Teachers in the Nongraded School," NEA Journal, LV (February, 1966), p. 14.

from group to group whenever the child needed to be moved. Many times the teacher in a newly ungraded plan hesitated to move the child from group to group because the habit of assigning a certain place to a student and keeping that place stable was deeply instilled in the teacher's mind. The assignment of a particular grade to a child permitted the teacher to assume that the instructional material for that grade would be appropriate for the student.

To eliminate the grade name often gave the teacher a feeling of insecurity because she could no longer assume that all children in her room would learn certain grade content during the school year. Clinging to the expectations of a certain grade gave the teacher more security. This, of course, violated part of the operational rules of the ungraded plan.⁴ The child was not being treated as a child progressing at his own rate, but as one progressing according to the expectations of a grade-minded teacher.

Relationship of Various Personnel With Ungraded Rooms

Another problem related to personnel was that of the relations between the upper and lower elementary school teachers in the ungraded plan.⁵ Upper elementary teachers needed to be favorable to the plan and to understand its operation in the lower ungraded rooms. Assistance from these upper grade teachers was necessary to assure the use of correct

⁴Goedlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 172.

⁵Interview with Sue Armstrong, former teacher, Springfield, Illinois, June 16, 1966.

terminology by the teachers themselves and the students in the upper graded rooms.⁶ If the children involved in the ungraded rooms think of themselves in terms of being assigned to a primary room, then the upper grade teachers and students must also refer to them as such. When the students were promoted to the upper elementary school, the teachers had to be prepared to accept them and fully understand what progress the students had made in the lower ungraded situation.

Special teachers, such as music, art, physical education, speech, and guidance had to refrain from using graded terminology when working with the students of the ungraded primary classes. The cooperation of all these persons associating with the children who were participating in the ungraded rooms was necessary to successfully eliminate grade labels.

Grouping and Classifying Procedures

One of the most difficult problems which was created was "how to group?". Hazel C. Hart reported that several methods used were chronological age, social, emotional, or learning maturity, or reading achievement.⁷ Each school system using an ungraded plan had its own method for classifying and grouping the students. In all cases, the primary idea seemed to be to reduce the range of ability with which the teacher had to work.

⁶Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 187.

⁷Hazel C. Hart, "Classroom Structures Rapidly Changing," Education, LXXXVI (December, 1965), p. 201.

One of the major factors used in many systems to determine what group was best for the child was reading achievement. The assumption was that reading achievement was closely correlated to achievement in the other curriculum areas.⁸ This fact was not necessarily true as has already been explained by Goodlad (see page 30 of this paper). When reading progress is used as the basis for grouping it:

"(1) reflects a continuing tendency toward 'grade-mindedness' in teachers and administrators, at the less dangerous level of reading-progress alone; (2) tempts parents to think in terms of 'fast-average-slow', and to harbor resentments against having their children in the slower groups."⁹

Other methods of grouping met with resistance also. Ability grouping did not promote curricular differentiation, the basic characteristic of the nongraded structure. Curricular differentiation implied that grades would be removed so that, "learning activities appropriate to differing abilities, quite irrespective of grade level", could be introduced.¹⁰ Achievement grouping also was quite difficult when an effort was made to apply it to all areas of the curriculum. Interest grouping or grouping according to work and study habits did not seem to be easily applicable either.

Some combination of these various methods of classifying and grouping would need to be made in order to find a suitable

⁸Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, pp. 64-65.

⁹Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 91.

one for the ungraded plan. Parental endorsement to classifying children on the basis of age or ability turned to opposition when the truth about their own child had to be faced. "Their pride is wounded if their child is assigned to any but the "best" group."¹¹

Communication with Parents

A number of problems besides those of grouping were evident in dealing with parents. Milwaukee made the mistake of not having enough parent-orientation meetings. A specific example was the lack of understanding on the part of parents when the progress card showed reading growth as: what type of book the child had read, his attitude, and the effort he had put forth. Parents expected to learn the number of books the child had read which, of course, did not indicate growth in reading.¹² These written reports caused difficulty in most school systems using ungraded plans. Springfield, Illinois in 1964, Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1951, and other cities were conducting studies to improve their progress reports. By means of parent-orientation meetings the practices of the ungraded plan, the method of reporting progress, and other aspects of the plan could be explained. Administrators and teachers were available during these meetings to answer parent's questions.

Parents seemed to have difficulty understanding the

¹¹Albert H. Brinkman, "Now It's the Ungraded School," P.T.A. Magazine, LV (June, 1961), p. 26.

¹²Kelly, "Ungraded Primary Schools Make the Grade," p. 646.

child's progress when grade names were eliminated. Decatur, Illinois abandoned their non-graded plan primarily because, "the time required for interpretation to the parents remained so great that it seemed unjustified; that is, we were unsuccessful in developing a new vocabulary that was self-explanatory or even moderately helpful".¹³

Changes in Reporting Pupil Progress

The method of reporting progress to parents needed to be changed in most school systems. Previously pupil progress had been measured by comparing a pupil's achievement with that of his classmates and by comparing pupil progress against a kind of arbitrary standard of what sixth grade achievement ought to be, fifth grade achievement, etc. The important difference when using a nongraded plan was that a pupil's achievement was measured against his own abilities. Most schools used both the written card or descriptive report and the parent-teacher conference. In most instances, the number of conferences outnumbered the written reports during the year. Parents, however, hesitated to give up the report card with its symbols or numbers that indicated pupil progress.¹⁴ "Reporting to parents was difficult during the periods when written reports were used, but personal conferences proved

¹³Letter from Charlotte Meyers, Assistant Superintendent in charge of Elementary Education, Decatur Public Schools, Decatur, Illinois, June 16, 1966.

¹⁴Goodlad and Anderson, "Educational Practices in Nongraded Schools," p. 36.

most rewarding when they were used," said Mrs. Armstrong.¹⁵ The reporting of pupil progress was a means of communicating between parents and teachers. Therefore, great care had to be taken in arriving at a satisfactory method.

Promotion of Slow-learners

A problem which appeared early in Milwaukee's use of an ungraded plan was, "bunching of so called slow-learning pupils in the final semester of primary school".¹⁶ The causes of bunching were: failure to carefully study children early in their primary school years to determine rate of growth and achievement, and failure to alter the slower student's programs to provide the student more time to learn as they moved along through the primary school.

In many ungraded plans promotion of children in the primary school was not considered until the end of the three years of attendance in the primary school. This frequently reduced the number of retentions which would have had to be made in a graded school at the end of first, second, or third grade. Even though this was an improvement for the grades included in the primary school, the children still had to meet certain standards before promotion to fourth grade.¹⁷

Early detection of the slower learning child was necessary to prevent the problem of bunching. In an article written in

¹⁵Armstrong, personal interview.

¹⁶Kelly, "Ungraded Primary Schools Make the Grade," p. 646.

¹⁷Willard S. Elsbree and Harold J. McNally, Elementary School Administration and Supervision, (New York: American Book Co., 1939), pp. 261-262.

1962 entitled "Milwaukee's Ungraded Primary Plan", Lamers commented that when the student's slow capacity to learn was discovered his program was immediately slowed down and his primary experiences extended. When this was accomplished there was no "pile-up" of problems at the end of the sixth semester.¹⁸

Necessity for Curriculum Revision

Another problem created with the initiation of an ungraded plan was that elementary school curriculum guides were ordinarily organized with a series of topics or units that followed one another in a graded sequence. The change to an ungraded plan did not assure a change in the curriculum or course of study. Without changing the curriculum, the school structure (using the ungraded plan) and the curriculum pattern were incompatible.¹⁹

A number of schools ignored this important fact in the early years of changing to ungraded plans. Teachers found themselves faced with a curriculum guide that was useless. The new plan required appropriate lessons to provide for individual differences. It was essential that textbooks and materials be redistributed to satisfy the needs of teachers as they discovered the wide range of abilities and accomplishments in the classroom.²⁰ Until the inappropriateness of the graded

¹⁸Lamers, p. 12.

¹⁹Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, pp. 212-213.

²⁰Goodlad, "Inadequacy of Graded Organization," p. 276.

content was dealt with, the teacher could not actually provide learning experiences that provided for individual differences.

Replacement of Grades With A System of Levels

After eliminating grades and setting up blocks of time or levels to replace the grade name there was the possibility that in some school systems the block standards would become as rigid as the grades had been.²¹

According to Perkins, "there is danger that without a strong commitment to a program based on the individual rates of maturing and needs of children, the sequence of stepwise levels may result in the replacing of grade standards by another set of standards different in name only."²²

Making certain that the ungraded program did not become just another name for the same graded structure was a problem faced by all schools that made the change. Without actually providing a compatibility between the nongraded structure and continuous pupil progress, integrated learning and longitudinal curriculum development, the ungraded plan was not a complete organizational change.²³

Results of Questionnaire Study by Goodlad and Anderson

Goodlad and Anderson summarized the problems or

²¹Hart, "Classroom Structures Rapidly Changing," p. 201.

²²Perkins, "Nongraded Programs," p. 169.

²³Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 216.

difficulties that had to be overcome as a result of initiating an ungraded plan. The data for their summary was obtained by compiling the answers to a questionnaire which they sent to administrators or supervisors of thirty-four schools employing ungraded plans. The 1957 questionnaire study asked this question: "What were the most difficult blocks or problems to overcome?"²⁴ The problems were listed according to how frequently they were mentioned in the responses which were as follows:

Grade-level expectation habits of teachers
 Reluctance of traditionalists among teachers
 to try something different
 General problems of providing understanding
 to parents
 Problems of retraining or orienting new staff
 members to the plan
 Problems of designing an appropriate report
 card or reporting procedure
 Grade-level-expectation habits of parents
 Dealing with the parents whose children need
 more time in primary
 Continuous influx of new pupils and parents
 unfamiliar with the plan
 Fears and doubts of teachers
 Students moving away who have been under the
 plan ("loss of investment")
 Problems of grouping and classifying children
 Insufficient materials for various achievement
 levels
 Leaders too impatient, not really thoroughly
 informed
 Problems of being a "pilot school" among
 traditional schools
 Insufficient number of other schools in school
 district using the plan
 Teachers violating the operating rules in one
 way or another
 Reticence or inability of staff to explain the
 plan's basic values to parents

²⁴Ibid., p. 170.

Creating an adequate nomenclature for the new
system
Persuading Board of Education to approve the
new plan
State-mandated reports requiring grade designation.²⁵

The writer found that the problems which were created after initiating the ungraded plan were common in nearly all the schools making the change. Not to recognize that problems existed would have meant certain failure of the ungraded plan. Only after the administrators and teachers recognized what problems were caused by the new plan could they begin to work and study possible solutions.

²⁵Ibid., p. 172.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Influence of Business and Scientific Managerial Methods

School systems are always being confronted with problems. The search for possible solutions to these problems frequently results in changes, some major and some minor. Seldom, if ever, does a change in the school structure take place without creating new problems. The search for solutions to the new problems again brings about changes. Thus a never ending cycle presents itself.

Prior to 1840 the American school system had no grade names. The graded structure emerged after 1840, became more prominent after the Civil War, and is still the dominant method of organization.

The graded system was accepted because it seemed to answer the problems of: classifying increasingly larger numbers of children in the public schools, using textbooks which were becoming standardized with graded content, teachers who were being trained in new methods of education, and adjusting the curriculum to meet the demands of the changing idea of educational goals.

The twentieth century brought about an increasing concern with the world of business. American society increasingly

revolved around the methods and procedures of business and is increasingly impressed with scientific procedures, experimentation and research. The public demands that the educational system be improved in terms of efficiency, economy, and public relations.

Many educational innovations have appeared from 1900 to the present time. With the development of a new method or plan, the plan's proponents hoped that it would solve or answer at least part of the problems facing educators. The public schools have been forced to absorb many ideas prevalent in a world preoccupied with costs, surveys, statistics, reports, and reforms: a society increasingly influenced by scientific and business managerial methods.

Efficiency in handling materials, money, in accomplishing goals, in performing tasks, in planning activities, and in planning effective use of time has become the goal of the nation, not only in the business world but also in the educational world. Efficiency, as defined by The Winston Dictionary, is "the quality of producing the desired result or the maximum effect with the minimum effort or expense."¹ An attempt has been made to eliminate all waste in the educational system in order to make it efficient. Waste means unnecessary cost and use of materials and supplies, parts of the curriculum which do not teach material applicable to the needs of the society at a particular time, and school buildings not being used in the evenings and during the entire year, has to be eliminated.

¹The Winston Dictionary, (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1957), p. 308.

For the first twenty years of the twentieth century, education was strongly criticized because it was not organized to meet the demands of a society revolving around business procedures and practices. Consequently, sensitive administrators have been employing various new methods and techniques in attempts to make the organization of the school more compatible with the ideas centering around the business world.

Grading of students gave the school an appearance of uniformity and efficiency. Students were admitted according to age and placed in a first grade class. Teachers followed a curriculum set up by the school system and taught that curriculum to all the students in their room. At the end of the year each student either passed to the next grade or failed and was retained in the same grade for another year. Progress of the students was determined by comparing each student's achievement against that of his classmates and against a kind of arbitrary standard that was frequently expressed in courses of study and textbooks. The report card contained symbols (numbers or letters) to show the student's rating (not actual progress) in the room. Following these procedures in a certain manner, and being consistent was of great importance in giving an appearance of being business like and scientific.

Change in Educational Organization

Administrators tended to organize the schools around business managerial methods. The annual report to the school board began to include more cost figures, plans for economizing.

and statistical results of past activities in the schools. This was necessary to satisfy the demands of the board members who were frequently the business leaders of the community. The organizational pattern was dominated by new, detailed report forms used for ordering supplies and requesting janitorial services; for keeping academic histories of the students; for conducting cost surveys to enable one school to compare its costs with those of another school; for testing procedures to determine how effective learning was in specific subjects or how student achievement of one school compared with student achievement in other schools; and for efficiency rating scales which were developed to determine school, administrative, teacher, or student efficiency.

As can be seen, in many respects educational organization has been modeled after business and scientific procedures, and even where the actual procedure was not imitated, the thinking often followed business or scientific modes of thoughts. Grading, for example, places students into certain groups, usually chronological. By using grading as a form of organization, the educator can look at a student's grade classification and have a general knowledge of what the child is being taught. This is true because the educational organization, is such that the content of curriculums, courses of study, textbooks, and other instructional materials are in most cases related to a specific grade and the grade is related to a certain chronological age span.

Grading is similar to scientific and business thinking. The scientist classifies each item he is working with and deals with each one in a specific manner, keeping elaborate records and charts of all that is done. The result of the scientist's work is either success or failure; just as in the educational system the student either succeeds or fails after his year's work. Business, of course, is very mechanical and methodical in its activities. Classifying and accounting, keeping elaborate records, making detailed reports, using the most "efficient" method to perform tasks, and rating its activities are all necessary to the working organization in the business world. One can find this same type of detailed recording, classifying, rating, and performing with speed and accuracy in the educational organization.

The reliance on business and scientific methods and procedures in the educational organization did not decrease after the depression of the late 1920's and early 1930's, but some of the limitations and faults of the approaches became apparent. The influence of a more sophisticated version of scientific and business managerial methods was apparent in increased experimentation in the fields of testing, methods of teaching, and growth and development. Educators began to seek new ways of organizing the schools.

Findings Question the Use of A Graded Structure

Some of the findings of psychology and sociology and the results of educational experimentation throughout the nineteenth

century and in the twentieth century have contributed to an atmosphere already filled with questions about the educational practice of grading. A number of events have led to this questioning and examining of the organizational structure of the schools. The objectives of education are being examined with special emphasis on mental health and personality and social adjustments of children. Young people should be instructed in social problems and their possible solutions as preparation for adult life. Physical, emotional, and social differences of children have been revealed through studies of human development, but more important to educators is the wide range of intellectual differences among children of any specific grade. Wide variation in the child's achievement in various areas of learning is also apparent.

Research into the effects of school practices has uncovered some interesting facts about promotion and retention of pupils in a graded system. A great deal of the evidence points to the negative effects nonpromotion has on the student. Special emphasis is given to the child's need for feelings of success. Learning theory suggests that subject matter be organized so that the learner has to use deductive and inductive thinking. These are only a few of the findings prompting educators to examine the various methods for organizing schools. A plan is needed which will meet the educational needs and demands of society at the present time.

A Plan to Combine and Compromise

One of the plans which developed and was introduced into the school systems of communities scattered over the nation was the ungraded primary. This plan is a combination. It attempts both to provide for individual needs and differences and at the same time to satisfy public demand for efficiency and use of scientific methods. In order to accomplish both these goals a great deal of careful planning is necessary. The school system which attempts to use this combination has to identify the objectives and goals of its educational organization. Although most of the organizational structure of the school is determined by the administrators, the assistance of the teaching staff in the planning stage provides more cooperation from them when the changes are made. Whether or not this combination is workable will be evident after the plan is used for several years.

Provision for continuous, individual progress is the primary objective of the ungraded plan. The precise scheduling practiced in the graded systems is avoided by using greater flexibility of time and amount of learning. Elaborate detailed record sheets are kept on each student; tests are given, not necessarily to compile data, but as diagnostic tools; and experiments are being carried out to determine appropriate class size, effective teaching methods, and suitable curriculum guides. All of these practices are still concerned with the managerial aspect of the school organization, but the ungraded primary plan seems to include them more easily than the graded, in fact, they seem to be a necessity to its success.

The ungraded primary plan is also a compromise between an over-emphasis on grading and no grading at all. In the twentieth

century, the idea of no grading has developed, but so far it has not been widely practiced. Some educators have looked at the elementary school in the past few years as an institution that admits children of approximately the same age but of varying abilities. This school provides six, seven, or eight years of schooling to all children, and the school seeks to guide the students to function to the best of his ability while in school. These educators favor lower nonpromotion rates, de-emphasized grade standards, and flexible concepts of capability. Some exponents of this viewpoint have used "automatic" or "social promotion" to support their position in practice. Social or automatic promotion is the practice of promoting every student at the end of the school year. This promotion does not change learning rates or provide conditions which encourage individual growth. Eventually the problem of the lack of ability on the child's part has to be solved and social promotion only prolongs the solution.²

The extreme opposite of no grading is an over-emphasis on grading. Some schools do not consider any factors in the child's development other than chronological age when classifying students. In these same schools the curriculum is organized by grades with content to be taught only in the grade for which it is specified. The student's progress is evaluated annually on accomplishment or failure for the entire year. The use of the ungraded primary plan necessitates some classifying and grading but not complete dependence on grading, therefore, it is a compromise between the two extremes.

²Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, pp. 39, 40, 53.

The nongraded plan emphasizes a flexibility of movement for the student within a framework of achievement levels. During the primary school years the student has goals to attain but no specific time element attached to the attainment of these goals. Of course, a decision will have to be made in the case of a very slow learning child, but this decision would be after his third or fourth year in the primary school. Perhaps schools to provide different kinds of learning situations other than formalized academic for these slow learners might solve this problem.

Summary

This paper first pointed out the wide variety of problems in a graded structure which prompted initiation of an ungraded plan. It seems that in most instances partial and sometimes complete solutions to the problems of a graded method of organization were evident. This is not to say that the ungraded plan solved all the educational problems of any specific school system, but that the plan seemed to eliminate any specific problem that the educators were attempting to solve. One specific problem is: how to provide for continuous individual progress.

Second, this paper explained that the change from a graded system to an ungraded system creates new problems. The literature available on ungraded plans discusses some possible solutions for these new problems. Primarily, these solutions center around the suggestion that continuous education of the teachers and parents involved with the ungraded plan is necessary to the plan's success. As long as the graded system remains dominant, I believe that the education of teachers and parents will be

necessary when a school system changes to an ungraded plan. This education will also need to extend to the teachers colleges, to state departments of education, and to national organizations for education. If the ungraded plan becomes widely accepted and understood, then the need for educating teachers, parents, and the public will no longer be a primary factor to its success.

Finally, I have concluded that the problems prompting initiation of an ungraded plan seem to be solved satisfactorily enough so that many of the school systems continue using the plan. In some cases more changes are made and more study and revision of curriculum, progress reports, etc. is necessary. It is possible that continuing use of the plan in some school systems is due to an inability of the administrators to admit that the change was not a good one.

But, what about the newly created problems? There are possible solutions to these problems. For example, the problem of educating parents may be solved through the use of small discussion groups, general meetings including all parents, written handbooks, parent-teacher conferences, or parent-administrator conferences. There is the possibility that some problems which have arisen in the graded structure may not be solved and appear in the ungraded structure. Two examples of this might be: (1) How long can students be held at one level? (2) Nearly all teachers complain that the teacher of the previous grade has passed on her problem children instead of retaining them. Only after years of experimentation will the possible solutions to problems become apparent to educators.

The decision about which set of problems is greater cannot be conclusive until more schools have participated, more years have passed, and more research data has been made available as to the effectiveness of learning when the ungraded primary plan is used. I believe that the conclusions of this paper are, at best, tentative ones due mainly to the short time the plans have been used. The problems created after initiation of an ungraded plan appear, at this time, to be of lesser importance than the problems prompting the plan's initiation. If this is true, then the use of the ungraded plans should be continued.

If the use of the ungraded primary plans enables schools to break away from the severe rigidity of the organization of the graded system, then educators can examine and experiment with new methods of administration and organization. Through this study and experimentation the best plan of organization eventually may be reached. I believe that the ungraded primary plan may provide a means of making the break from the graded structure possible for today's educators.

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