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WHAT DO PARENTS AND TEACHERS WANT OF THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

THE COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS PROGRAM :

AN ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT

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Patricia M. Cooper

ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This field study report represents an examination of some survey and workshop techniques used to extend the development of community interest in three nominated schools, to elicit their perceptions of the educational responsibilities of the School and to extend the implementation of those perceptions to the operational classroom level. The report includes a critique of the techniques of the survey and workshop program; comment on the nature and quality of survey and workshop results; an interpretation of results and their implications and some recommendations based on the findings.

The survey and workshop program achieved the provision of a widely based body of knowledge regarding parents' and teachers' aims priorities. It provided the means to measure agreement and disagreement between teachers and parents, parents and parents, teachers and teachers. It made possible the identification of specific areas of disagreement and their extent. The program identified some shared concerns of parents and teachers; it also recognised shared perceptions of the school's achievement and provided a rare opportunity for teachers and parents to work co-operatively to a better understanding of the complementary roles of home and school.

The data which emerged from the study suggests considerable agreement between parents and teachers about the direction and extent of the responsibilities of the school for development of the whole child.

Further, substantial confidence in the school enterprise is expressed by parents and teachers who took part in the survey. This attitude was confirmed at small-group workshop meetings where parents and teachers worked co-operatively and constructively toward an understanding of the complementary roles of school and home in achieving agreed aims.

The program concluded leaving a feeling that it had helped to establish a foundation of information and expertise on which schools could continue to develop a cyclical and organic approach to aims formulation. The provision of information and experience with strategies for teachers and parents to work with will encourage and facilitate the interpretation of aims into operational classroom terms at various levels appropriate to the education of primary school children.

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