

## EDITORIAL

People question the whys and wherefores of education. To respond, educators need to know that what we do works. And how do we know this? Program accountability is established through evaluation, systematic evaluation, supported by the full resources of our institutions. By systematically evaluating programs, change in education becomes founded in objective data. What is done is justifiable.

Program accountability requires educators to gather evaluative data. This is an obvious requirement; yet educators at all levels of schooling function without the necessary data. Besides the usual instructional uses of evaluation, educators require evaluative data to counter criticism or to acquiesce if necessary. The validity of the criticisms must be considered. Without the empirical data, educators are left in the untenable position of using unsupported claims which are often based on personal experiences and casual observations. Lack of confidence in the profession results. Subjective feelings about programs are useful but more confidence is generated by objectively derived knowledge. With appropriate evaluative data, educators can expose ill-advised opinions for what they are before these opinions damage the fibre of the instructional fabric. Appropriate evaluative data derives from systematic observation of the various aspects of a program. Educators are fully aware that evaluation is an integral part of teaching. We should more consistently transform this awareness into action.

Systematic evaluation requires the allocation of resources. When an individual teacher undertakes evaluation, he allocates time and energy to the procedure. When an institution undertakes evaluation, expert staff is charged with the responsibility of conducting the investigation and they are given time, money, support staff, and appropriate materials to properly meet the challenge. Without adequate resources, the evaluation may become unsystematic, the procedures may be unsatisfactory, and the resulting conclusions may be unjustifiable.

Effective evaluation is systematic. The researcher ensures that the data are gathered from well-designed studies which account for alternate explanations of the effects of instruction. He may focus on a segment of a course, on a pattern of courses or on a system of education. He operates within a comprehensive model of the evaluation process. The various elements of a program are given appropriate consideration and no element is slighted whether it be instructional objectives, student entering behavior, teaching method, or assessment techniques. By maximizing the breadth of

observation, all the domains of human behavior (cognitive, psychomotor and affective) are investigated which meets the criticism that particular goals, usually those in the affective domain, are not considered by a specific evaluation. A major element of systematic evaluation is objective, reliable and valid observations. Moreover, multiple criteria are often used so that consumers of evaluative data may investigate various aspects of educational programs within the different behavior domains. Systematic evaluation, then, is assessment which uses multiple criteria; which employs highly valid, reliable and objective measures; which is broad; which is conducted within a comprehensive model of the evaluation process; and which has a well designed experimental plan.

Systematic evaluation provides a basis for change in education. Systematic evaluative research will assist the decision maker in choosing among alternatives and in separating biased positions from the relatively unbiased. Well intended but inadequately examined changes lie at the root of much wasted effort in education whereas changes based on systematic evaluation produce improved instruction. What is attractive should also be effective.

Daniel McDougall

#### *Editorial Policy for the Book Review Section*

The Journal of Educational Thought has initiated an expanded book review section, which will eventually include: (1) short descriptive book notes, (2) conventional critical book reviews, and (3) article-length review essays on significant themes or major works.

The book review editor is preparing a "Guidelines for Reviewers" that will be available early in 1975. Persons interested in submitting review essays are invited to write directly to the book review editor.