

THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION THAT EFFECT
CURRICULUM CHANGE IN THE PUBLIC
SCHOOL SYSTEM OF NOVA SCOTIA

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PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to trace the sources of influences that have effected, and are effecting, curriculum revisions in the public schools of Nova Scotia.

As the content of education is determined by the government of Nova Scotia, which is ultimately responsible to the people, it is the viewpoint of the writer that the need for any revisions in curriculum must first of all be recognized by the people or the officials in education who in turn influence the government to implement needed changes.

Through the study of various reports and other publications, the various influencing sources will be analyzed and their effect on curriculum revisions will be assessed. The ultimate purpose of this paper will be to isolate these various sources of influence and to indicate the way in which principals and supervisors may most effectively utilize these sources to have needed revisions made.

I would like to recognize the valuable assistance of Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Chief Supervisor of Curriculum and Research for the province, in guidance, information and suggestions so kindly and freely given.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum has been defined as that minimum content which it is necessary for everyone to have in order to be able to live a satisfactory life in a modern society.¹ The purpose of society determines the purpose of the schools and the purpose of the schools determines the content of the curriculum, the methods employed, the kinds of schools, and the amount of education given to children. When the functional relationship between a society and its schools is not considered, and when the functional relationship between the purpose of education and the content of education is overlooked, any discussion of curriculum becomes anaemic and sterile.

At one time the three R's were considered to be the core subjects of the curriculum, and this tradition still exercises considerable influence on educational thought. Today, through a casual examination of the curriculum of Nova Scotia one will readily determine that this idea of the three R's has been expanded considerably over the passage of time.

¹The Content of Education, (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1948), p. 13.

The struggle for public control over the schools came with the waning influence of the church over education together with the gradually accumulating belief that education was an obligation of the state. In the early 1800's these two principles of public support and control for democratic education were well established on this continent.¹

It is an axiom that institutions operated by society tend to lag behind social change and the school curriculum, as one of these institutions, is not exempt from this process. In almost every instance a subject is included in the curriculum because there is a social demand for it.

In Nova Scotia changes in curriculum can only be implemented after approval by the government. This curriculum revision comes about only after the public is convinced of the necessity of it, as the government in this province is ultimately responsible to the people. By the people the thinking members or vocal groups of the public are referred to.

To assume, however, that changes could not take place until the greatest majority of the public desired

¹L. Thomas Hopkins, Interaction : The Democratic Process, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1941), p. 126.

it would place the rate of curriculum improvement at a slower pace than it is. Thus we can define "public" and "public opinion" as the groups of people or the individuals in society who are the leaders.

From this it will be noted that the factor of leadership figures prominently in curriculum revision. If progress is not ahead of what we term public opinion, there can be little, if any, actual progress. The thinkers and innovators in field positions in education try out new ideas in curriculum, and those innovations that prove successful and are accepted by the public, eventually draw the front of educational progress forward to encompass these new ideas.

Another source of leadership stems from the officials in education who analyze the need for curriculum revisions as they appear in the schools or are expressed by the public, and from the value of these needed changes, proceed to convince the public, teachers and government to advance the entire front of the process of education in order that these needs might be filled.

The basic philosophy underlying curriculum revision in Nova Scotia is two-fold in nature. Primarily, there exists the idealistic concept of education encompassing the basic concepts of human freedoms. To this has been added the idealistic concepts of philosophy

in general and the influence created by the discoveries in psychology since the turn of the century. However, the basic beliefs in the philosophy of education have not changed. Answers to the questions: "Why educate our children?" and "How should our children be educated?" have not been changed.¹

The philosophy underlying the whole process of revision has been based on a belief in social change, and as a result, there has been an emphasis towards education becoming more vocational in nature. The underlying circumstance here is that one must work for a living. Therefore, today, it is considered that we must have an education to live as it is necessary to have an education to make a living.

Another facet of philosophy underlying revisions in curriculum is operational in that it encompasses the kaleidoscopic practical philosophies of the various teachers and principals in the schools. Their ideal and philosophy of how something should be taught, the extent to which it should be taught, and the approach taken to a prescribed subject have a definite effect on

¹Interview with Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Director of Curriculum and Research for Nova Scotia, February, 1960.

curriculum revisions in Nova Scotia. The experiences provided the pupils by the teachers will be given in light of the idealistic philosophy behind the curriculum varied to a greater or lesser degree by the teacher's own operational philosophy of curriculum content and experiences.

As the philosophies and aims of the educators are modified in the light of changing society, the curriculum is revised to meet the changing needs. The various factors of finance, technological advancements, standards of living, way of life, and philosophies of life will, as they vary, determine the nature and content of education demanded by the public as, increasingly, people must have more education than they ever had before.

CHAPTER I

CURRICULUM CHANGES FROM 1850 to 1933

In the year 1850 the story of curriculum development in Nova Scotia began with the appointment of J.W. Dawson as Superintendent of Education. In his first report to the Legislative Assembly in ~~1951~~¹⁸⁵¹, Mr. Dawson made the observation that he had found the common schools very diversified in character, studies, and efficiency. He noted that some were merely primary schools of low grade, teaching only reading, writing and arithmetic, while others taught, in addition, classics and modern languages. He stressed the primary importance of introducing uniform, useful and unobjectionable elementary books into the schools.¹ At this time there was no curriculum or course of studies as such, although the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic, geography, grammar, and composition were required by law to be taught in the common schools.²

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: Richard Nugent, 1851), p. 50.

²Ibid.

As an initial effort to correct this situation the superintendent endeavoured within a year to hold one meeting within each district of the province. It was his stated intention to inform the public of the state of the public schools in Nova Scotia and to arouse their support and interest. He found the attendance at these meetings very small and described them as an "experiment so novel as that of assembling the people to consider a subject in the provincial opinion of many so commonplace and unimportant."¹

From the minutes of one of these meetings held by the Superintendent of Education we note the concern that "The want of uniformity both in the books and in the method of teaching...prevents the improvement of their [the teachers'] schools."²

From these reports it can be determined that, in the years immediately following 1850, the pressure for an exact, indeed the first, course of study stemmed from the leaders in education themselves and certainly not from a public that was uninformed and apathetic. It would seem that during these times tradition played a prominent part in the type of education given to the

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²Ibid., p. 50.

children of that time. There did not seem to be any forces active in asserting an influence that might result in the establishment of a curriculum other than one sponsored by educational leaders.

The initial efforts of the Superintendent towards improvement were directed towards the raising of teaching qualifications which culminated in the establishment of a Provincial Normal college in Truro in 1854. This resulted in little effort being made to reconstruct the courses of study offered in Nova Scotia or to establish a set curriculum for some years. Even as late as 1866, in an address delivered before the Board of School Commissioners of Halifax City, the supervisor of schools for the city pointed out that at that time most of the schools in the city were merely miscellaneous gatherings and that the suggested leadership given by the city in reorganizing the grade system would "...secure to almost every child in this city a regularly progressive course of instruction."¹ Thus, as early as 1866 the city of Halifax began to take the lead in improving the subject content offered

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report of the Common, Superior, Academic and Normal and Model Schools In Nova Scotia), (Halifax: A. Grant, 1866), p. 139.

the youth of the time. This influence again originated in the leaders in education and not from a still apathetic public.

The first procedure in developing a curriculum was an effort to secure more uniformity in the use of books, following the outline of subjects to be taught. The Reverend Alexander Forrester, in the *Journal of Education and Agriculture* of August, 1858, notes that the teacher does not have it in his power to diminish the number of branches of curriculum taught, but the classes or different branches of the same branch of study was left to the discretion of the teachers.

Then, he goes on to point out that:

The whole or almost the whole of the books forwarded this year belong to the Irish National series....The Province has never before been in the same stage of advancement towards a uniformity in system, in the style of Education. It is of incalculable value for cheapening the expense of education to parents.¹

This is an indication that the ever present financial difficulties in the province were instrumental in keeping the advancement of curriculum at a slower pace than the educational leaders wished. Although tradition and finances were strong influencing factors

¹Stephen B. Forrester, The Journal of Education and Agriculture for Nova Scotia, (Halifax: Vol. 1, No. 2, August, 1858), p. 89.

in curriculum changes in the early years, the leadership in effecting a change in curriculum continued to stem from the educational leaders themselves and not from other groups.

In July, 1880, a group of educators and clergy formed an organization entitled the "Provincial Educational Association" which enabled the teaching profession to take revision of the curriculum under consideration. Representatives of the Association were drawn from the Provincial Normal School, the Inspectoral staff, and teachers from the schools of the province.¹ The educators realized by this time that the work of various schools was at cross purposes with itself from year to year and, further, that the public were beginning to realize this. This emergence of public interest would seem to be the source of an influence which led the government to establish this Provincial Educational Association and to permit them to draft the first curriculum. In his report to the Legislative Assembly in 1882, Dr. Allison stated that the first curriculum had been sanctioned and that it covered "simply the ground of common school work and was designed to be followed

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1883), p. xvii.

by a curriculum for high schools."¹ This first curriculum authorized Reading, Spelling, Language, and Arithmetic for Grades One and Two, with the prescribed addition of Geography, Writing and Drawing in Grades Three and Four while in Grades Five and Six it expanded to include History, and Science. In Grades Seven and Eight, the new curriculum prescribed Reading, Spelling, Grammar, Composition, Geography, History, Algebra, Geometry, Book-keeping, Writing, Drawing, and Latin Oral Lessons.² Further reports testified to this emergence of public opinion: "Inquiry and active direction to improvement, in quality, of the instruction given in the public schools have characterized many communities."³

The city of Halifax continued to show leadership in curriculum revision through their reports to the Superintendent of Education. In 1891 we find this criticism of the curriculum in a report by W.A. Conrad, Chairman of the Board of School Commissioners for Halifax City, "In the academy the subjects taught are too numerous

¹Ibid., p. xviii.

²Ibid.

³Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1891), p.73.

and diversified."¹ This is an indication that the City of Halifax schools were not meeting the needs of the pupils through the procedure of adding more subjects to the course of study.

Another influence was making itself felt by the newly formed Dominion Educational Association. In a report of their first convention it is noted that: "The school curricula in Canada are bound by the traditions of the past and they [educators] have given undue prominence to classics, theoretical mathematics and the dry technicalities of grammar, geography and history."² This is the first indication of a new approach to thinking about curriculum in that the practical aspects were then beginning to be considered. Concern over curriculum must also have been spreading throughout the country and the formation of a Dominion Educational Association must have resulted from an increased awareness on the part of the leaders of both education and the public. It gives further indication of the continuing strength of the influence of tradition on

¹Ibid., p. 115.

²Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1892), p. 172.

curriculum development. The implied need for change also shows the basic pressure for curriculum change resulting from social, scientific and technological change in society.

In 1893 these influences resulted in a further curriculum change in Nova Scotia. Science was emphasized and the academic courses were made uniform in all grades although there was still no distinction between elementary and secondary schools. The course was formulated by teachers "...and was an outcome of a series of Provincial Educational Associations in which committees representing all the leading schools in the province...discussed and modified the original draft."¹

This curriculum change was in force until 1908 when further revisions were made. The new changes in curriculum were brought about partly because of increased criticism as expressed by the press and the public at the time. In his annual Report to Mr. A.H. McKay, Superintendent of Education, in 1907, Mr. Inglis C. Craig, Inspector of Schools for Cumberland and West Colchester counties reports that,

¹Province of Nova Scotia; Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1893), p. 11.

Unusual interest has been manifested in this part of the province with discussion of the course of study as given in the local and provincial press. Public opinion here is very decidedly in favour of continuing the present policy of adapting the course of study as much as possible to the changing conditions of modern times.¹

He continues his remarks by summing up the thinking of the public leaders as: "What the people want and need most is a thorough study of those subjects which form the best basis for a technical education and for the practical arts."²

This is the first indication that the press of that time was beginning to have an influence in directing the thoughts of the public in their consideration of the school curriculum.

This also indicates that the educators tended to see a continually growing influence stemming from the changing social structure of the times and the increased awareness of the public of the need for a curriculum with courses of study in it that are better adapted to the needs of the pupils and, in part, at least, more utilitarian for society itself.

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1907), p. 115.

²Ibid.

Superintendent A. H. MacKay in his report states that there was at that time "...a disposition so generally and generously manifested to make such modifications in our courses of study as the general advance of educational development and the special needs of our own country call for...."¹

Again, we see reflected here the influence of the pressure from the changing needs of the country, brought about by technological growth, becoming increasingly stronger. This influence was supplemented by an advancement in the knowledge of the educative process. This latter influence showed that the leaders in education were making a critical study of the entire field of education in the light of newly discovered methods.

As we read reports of this time we find another criticism of the course of study in that it was judged to be overburdened with a diversity of subjects. This was coupled with the charge of overpressure in learning that was being levied on the curriculum in force in 1907. David Sloane, Principal of the Provincial Normal College in his report of 1907, discussed this aspect of the curriculum and lent his voice to the swelling criticism

¹Ibid., p. xlviil.

of the too-crowded curriculum.¹ Even the report of the Superintendent in that year noted that the curriculum was overloaded with subjects.²

From these criticisms expressed by educators and public leaders alike, we find an increasing pressure directed at keeping the course of studies abreast of changing conditions, not by further increasing the number of courses offered, but by eliminating those which had no further value. Already, the fallacy of attempting to meet the needs of the pupils by simply adding subjects was beginning to be recognized.

These pressures resulted in a change in the course of study in 1908 which reduced the number of papers required for a pass in grades nine, ten, and eleven from eight to six, and in grade twelve from an amazing twenty to nine. Although the number of courses on the curriculum remained the same, these reduced requirements seemed to be an attempt to answer the demands of the teachers and the public that the curriculum be adjusted to fulfill the needs of the pupils and that the number of required courses be reduced in

¹Ibid., p. 62.

²Ibid., p. 132.

order that more electives might be allowed in the high school grades. In this way the pupil could select the subjects that would most fully meet his needs.

However, as early as 1910, we find the Supervisor of Halifax City schools pointing up a new influence. The young men of the times were demanding a night school so that they might get the education which they claimed had been denied to them in their early childhood.¹

The same Supervisor also reflects the continuing and increasing pressure of changing conditions that effect curriculum change when he states that:

...modern conditions have eliminated the vocational activities that formerly gave reality and meaning to the theoretical and literary training of the schools. Their fault lies in the want of adaptation to existing conditions. This implies that our course of high school studies is very defective in not giving the majority of our pupils to a desirable extent a realistic or practical knowledge of their environment.²

In this he calls for more emphasis on subjects preparing directly for occupation. This influence would of course originate from existing conditions in the metropolitan area, where the need for a curriculum

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1910), p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 224.

which was less academic in nature seemed to be paramount.

In the report of the Superintendent of Education to the Legislative Assembly in 1912, reference is again made to this pressure of the needs of children combined with the need for keeping pupils in school longer. The superintendent points out that pupils'"...interest can only be secured by placing before the pupils the work in which they find genuine pleasure, which responds to their inclination, their talents and their hopes as to the future."¹

In the same report we find reference to the influence of teachers in retaining certain subjects in the curriculum when it is reported to the Superintendent that, "The demand for compulsory Latin and Greek certainly does not come from the mass of industrial and tax paying patrons of our schools and colleges. It comes directly or indirectly from those engaged in teaching them."² This would indicate that educators of the time were tending to align themselves with tradition while the industrial and general public were beginning to press for more changes.

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1912), p. 153.

²Ibid., p. 154.

By 1925 we note the first reference to active and organized activities by the teachers' professional groups in examining and criticising the curriculum of Nova Scotia. The report of the general meeting of the Provincial Education Association for that year notes that, "The Teachers' Union then presented comments on the text books and examination questions for consideration of the Department of Education..."¹ Also we find the reference that, "A communication from the Teachers Union criticizing certain features of the High School exams and the High School Arithmetic was sent to the office of the Superintendent of Education."² This reflects an increasingly critical appraisal by the teachers themselves of the subjects on the curriculum and the text books. Previous leadership among educators originated with the department of education, but, with growing teacher interest, a new influence was beginning to make itself felt.

In 1929 a further observation of teacher need and request was reflected by a County Inspector who

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education), (Halifax: Kings Printer, 1925), p. 206.

²Ibid., p. 205.

stated that the rural teacher"...should be provided with a real curriculum covering the work of the common school grades."¹ Again in 1930 an inspector writes: "I would like to suggest that a more detailed curriculum be published to help and guide the plethora of low class teachers....The curriculum is so vague that the inexperienced teacher is more or less at sea...."² More and more, it seems, the teaching personnel and their needs were making their influence felt.

In his report of 1931 the Superintendent of Education discussed curriculum again and pointed up the continuing influence of pupil need towards effecting curriculum change when he states:

If Grade seven does not offer the kind of studies suited to his particular bent the pupil may drift away from school...Hence the importance of devising a curriculum which will attach real value to prevocational work and thus retain and develop pupils who otherwise cannot profit to the full from the traditional and academic curriculum..."³

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1929), p. 45.

²Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1930), p. 67.

³Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1931), p. 28.

However, in response to these pressures of business, teachers, and pupil needs, the superintendent reported that in 1930 two steps were taken:

The first was the authorization by the Council of Public Instruction of a representative committee of educationists commissioned to examine fully into the program of school studies especially as it relates to the present social, economic needs of the province.¹

The committee would have full power to appoint subcommittees through which details of the course of study would be worked out.

In 1932 the superintendent states that, "Everywhere the curriculum is under discussion, revision and reconstruction", and he refers again to the committee as attempting to "adjust the curriculum to the intellectual, economic, and social needs of the province."²

This led to the revision of 1933 when additional courses were added as electives to the program of studies as well as a revision of the courses taught previously.

By 1933 the revisions in curriculum had progressed from an initial attempt to standardize books through the

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²Province of Nova Scotia, Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly, (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education), (Halifax: King's Printer, 1932), p. xxviii.

stage when curriculum revision was thought to be a matter of addition of courses, to the realization that curriculum revision must be a revision of the existing courses to correct weaknesses and to eliminate or add courses as shown by the needs of the pupils.

The influences effecting these changes ranged from the initial source of one person in 1850 to a variety of sources in 1933 when pressures were being exerted from teachers, the public, business, and the press; all of which were considered to have stemmed from changing social and economic conditions.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF INFLUENCES FROM 1933 to 1950

Although the newly revised curriculum appeared in the March, April and May issues of "The Journal of Education" in 1933 as a report of the Curriculum Revision Committee, the High School curriculum was not completely revised until January, 1934. This was reported by the Superintendent of Education in the spring of 1934 when he announced that the new curriculum for all grades would not come into effect until the school year 1934-1935 due to the resulting changes in textbooks as well as to allow time for teachers to study the report and thoroughly equip themselves for an application of the principles underlying the new program of studies.¹ This indicates that the teachers themselves were not the prime movers or influence behind the curriculum revisions of that time and that their cooperation in the formulation of the new course had not been obtained to any extensive degree.

In 1933 the influence of tradition exerted a strong pressure on the implementation of curriculum

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the year Ended July 31, 1933. (Halifax: King's Printer, 1934), p. xli.

revision in that it was considered to be one of the major obstacles in the way of complete acceptance of the proposed curriculum revisions. This feature was recognized by the Chief Inspector of schools when he reported in 1933 that the educational authorities and the public suffered from a weakened sense of the values of the high school period for character development.¹ In this he expressed the concern he felt for the complete success of this new and much broader curriculum. He further believed that education was not viewed by the public of that time as an integral process as they placed, in his opinion, excessive value on written examinations.²

This attitude would be a carry over from the traditionally subject-centered curriculum where the subject matter was the main, and sometimes only, thing taught in the schools. The Chief Inspector pointed out that the educational system they had at the time of his report in 1933 was an echo of other times and peoples and he noted emphatically that the high school teachers had to realize that fact.³

¹Ibid., p. 78.

²Ibid., p. 79.

³Ibid.

Even before the curriculum revisions were instituted then, the conservative influence of tradition was considered by at least one person as a force that had to be met and overcome.

However, the philosophy underlying the new curriculum and the possibilities it suggested for a wider course of study aimed at meeting the varying needs of all the pupils had been recognized by the teachers and public. Mr. L.A. DeWolfe, Director of Rural Education in 1933 noted in his report that, "All organizations: the inspectors, helping teachers, education office, and outside organizations had coordinated their efforts with one purpose in mind - a better and more practical education for all."¹ (Italics his.) This statement gives a good indication of the widely diversified nature of the groups who were influencing curriculum revisions that had begun in 1931 when the Committee of Public Instruction authorized the Department of Education to appoint a committee to consider the program of studies in the public schools with a view to adjusting it to the intellectual, economic, and social needs of the province.²

¹Ibid., p. 96.

²Journal of Education for Nova Scotia, March, 1933, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1933), p. 39.

By the spring of 1935 when the Director of Rural Education submitted his report to the Superintendent, the concern expressed a year earlier by the Chief Inspector of Schools regarding public acceptance of this revision in curriculum was dispelled in part when Mr. L. A. DeWolfe reported that the curriculum had, during the previous year, been a favourite topic of discussion. He had found that the people were very interested in it and wanted to know more about its scope and purpose. He further reported that a very intelligent public opinion prevailed at that time, and that the thinking people were in favour of what the departmental officials understood as modern education.¹

However, he thought that the influence of tradition was still very strong among the majority of persons concerned. This he found especially true of the teachers in that he found them too academic in their approach to curriculum. Mr. DeWolfe went on to note that the public and the teachers still regarded education and knowledge as synonymous. "Even the rare teacher", he said, "Who ventures out of the rut is soon pushed back by traditional opinion."² It would appear from these

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1934, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1935), p. 90.

²Ibid., p. 100.

statements that the fears expressed by some officials over the influence of tradition on the full acceptance of the broader curriculum were not altogether groundless and the teachers themselves were, for the most part, allying themselves with tradition in an effort to maintain a strictly subject-centered curriculum.

However, there were groups at that time who were working in an effort to bring about a more universal understanding and acceptance of the philosophy underlying the new curriculum. In this regard Mr. L.A. DeWolfe reported in 1935 that Women's Institutes had devoted a fair share of their attention to their local schools, and that they, in common with Parent-Teachers' associations, were endeavouring to become acquainted with the spirit of the new curriculum.¹ These sources of influence, then, together with the leaders in education, were offsetting the traditional pressures imposed by the previous academic curriculum. Thus, during the first year following the introduction of the new curriculum the main course that these influencing forces took was that of informing themselves and other members of the public about the new curriculum and its purpose.

¹Ibid., p. 96.

In 1936 the Superintendent of Education reported that a new influence had been brought to bear to have the curriculum further broadened to include courses in a variety of subjects taught by special institutions as credit in school leaving certificates. He revealed that the regulations had been changed so that a pupil in the senior high school grades who had studied a full-time course in Arts, Crafts, Agriculture, or Commerce could claim these as credit.¹ This influence appears to have stemmed from two sources: the changing philosophy which indicated that the child should be educated in practical ways, and the Home and School Associations who were becoming very interested in the utilitarian arts as courses in the schools.

Mr. L.A. DeWolfe, Director of Rural Education in 1936, reported again in that year that the influence of tradition was not being easily overcome. He found that the teachers, as a group, had not yet grasped the spirit of the new curriculum, and as they had apparently not studied the philosophy behind the subject, were using the new curriculum as they had the old one.²

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1935, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1936), p. xxxvi.

²Ibid., p. 83.

It would appear from this that the pressures exerted by tradition were very strong indeed as the Superintendent found it necessary in 1937 to repeat that the curriculum was not conceived as a rigid, static program of studies but that it was rather a flexible instrument adapted to the changing demands of society and especially to the vocational, social and aesthetic needs of the new age.¹

A rapidly developing source of influence recognized by the education officials was that of the Home and School associations. This organization had succeeded in influencing the public more than any other. More and more they were developing public interest in the work of the schools through their interpretation of the schools' activities to a great many members of the public.²

At this time, Education Week had been instituted, and this resulted indirectly in an influence which helped the public recognize and further understand the purpose of the schools. As a result, a series of

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1936, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1937), p. xliii.

²Ibid., p. xlvi.

educational articles appeared from time to time in various local newspapers throughout the province.¹ This influence of the press has been recognized at various times in reports by education officials, and, from their references to it, the influence was indicated to be a beneficial one.

During the war years the influence of the Home and School Associations grew. These associations resulted in quickened interest on the part of the members of the communities in the welfare of the schools. The Inspector of Yarmouth and Digby Counties in 1940 noted that this organization "...more than any other is quickening public interest in extending the field of, broader and better education."² Another Inspector in the same year noted that the real function the Home and School was performing was that of keeping the public informed of educational needs and objectives as well as quickening public interest in child welfare.³ The

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1937, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1938), p. 43.

²Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1938, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1939), p. 43.

³Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1940, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1941), p. 76.

Director of Rural education summed up the magnitude of the influence of Home and School associations in 1940 when he stated that, "Much of the general interest in education is due to the Home and School."¹

Although the curriculum of 1933 had been designed in order that it might meet the varying needs of the people it served, the Superintendent reported as late as 1941 that the main problem at that time lay in persuading the towns to avail themselves of the expansion possible under the new curriculum which in reality had been prescribed some years earlier.² This again can be traced to the influence of tradition on the acceptance of curriculum revisions by the majority of the public. It was an influence that did not seem to have been completely overcome during the time the curriculum revisions of 1933 were in effect. If the teachers had exerted a more definite influence in the promotion and interpretation of the curriculum this traditional influence might have been overcome more easily.

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1939. (Halifax: King's Printer, 1940), p. 94.

²Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1940. (Halifax: King's Printer, 1941), p. 82.

However, by 1942 the Superintendent gave first indication that public opinion was changing. He noted that the war inevitably caused a critical examination of social institutions which brought forcibly before the public the necessity of more humanized and effective schools.¹

This influencing factor was supplemented by another which showed itself in the failures of the rural senior high school students and led the people to condemn education in general rather than condemning the education offered to them.² Due to this influence, based in the necessity of meeting the needs of the rural school students, the Superintendent noted the formation of an important movement in the growing public sentiment in favour of educational reform.³

A year later the Director of Rural Education noted that some Home and School Associations were leading in this field as they were becoming more education conscious, and were pressing for the introduction of

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1941, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1942), p. ix.

²Ibid., p. xxx.

³Ibid., p. xxxi.

more modern methods in the schools. He goes on to say that the teacher was often the handicap.¹ Thus the lead-for more revisions in the curriculum stemmed for the most part from the Home and School organization while the teachers were thought to be responsible for an influence directed towards the retention of an academic curriculum.

In 1945, the Home and School continued to develop public interest in the needs of the school by providing discussions on educational problems. Their preoccupation with material improvements in school grounds had been lessened by the establishment of the larger unit of school administration. This change of needs stimulated in all groups a greater interest in curriculum needs.²

The influence of the Home and School was, by this time, spreading to other groups. This organization received the continued support of the clergy, the universities, and the staff members of various govern-

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended, July 31, 1942, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1943), p. 92.

²Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended, July 31, 1944, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1945), p. xl.

ment departments.¹ This people's movement had thus reached to all sections of the province, drawing together all who were interested in the welfare of the children in working for their highest good.

As a result, the Superintendent of Education reported in 1945 that, "Everywhere, in legislatures, in village communities, in group discussions, through the press...and in all social planning on whatever scale education is rapidly coming into focus...."²

As a result of these increasing pressures from all walks of life, Dr. H.F. Munro, Superintendent of Education, in his report to the Legislative Assembly in 1945 outlined a twelve point program of improvements that he planned for education in Nova Scotia. The last point concerned curriculum revision in that Dr. Munro foresaw the need for, "...a levelling up of cultural standards for teachers and pupils through a curriculum blending 'the long results of time' in due balance with the needs of the new age...."³

¹Ibid., p. xlii.

²Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1944, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1945), p. xliv.

³Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1945, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1946), p. xxxii.

In his report to the Superintendent in 1946 the Inspector of High Schools for the province stated that, "In every discussion of mathematics, most high school teachers were of the opinion that the present courses should be revised...."¹

In the same year the Chief Inspector of Schools reports that the desire for better school facilities and broader educational opportunities was widely evident among lay people and he continues by saying:

...of no less importance is the development of a school program more closely designed to meet the needs of the present day pupil - a program sufficiently broad to provide for academic, practical, and moral requirements of a modern public school education.²

These statements show it was considered that the needs of society and the pupil were not being met by the curriculum and that, as well, the teachers in the classroom were beginning to exert a great deal of pressure as they had finally come to recognize the fact that the materials that were prescribed were not effective in meeting the needs of the pupils. Thus, it was considered that underlying the influence that

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1946, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1947), p. 102.

²Ibid., p. 224.

the teachers placed on the need for curriculum revision was the changing aspect of society with its consequent need to fulfill the needs of the pupils in the schools. This underlying pressure of society was also reflected in public opinion. It can be seen that the teachers spoke through the departmental officials with whom they discussed their problems, as well as through their professional organization.

The clamour for revision grew until Dr. H.F. Munro reported in 1947 that:

The time has now arrived to revise the present curriculum in the light of experience with the old and the changes in public sentiment and social conditions. The public has come to demand more of the schools in the teaching of vocations, citizenship, health,...and many other topics related to everyday life.¹

He could see that a complete revision of the entire curriculum was needed and not that of merely adding courses which had been done in the past.

Mr. Harold M. Nason, the present Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for the Province of Nova Scotia, says that the main influencing factor behind the revisions of curriculum beginning in 1947 was that of public opinion in that the public consisted of many

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1947. (Halifax: King's Printer, 1948), p. xxxiv.

people new to this province who demanded that changes be made.¹ Behind all this we must recognize the trend in thinking of the paramount influence of changing social and pupil needs which were considered as not being met by the existing curriculum.

Dr. Munro referred to the professional and technical side of the problem when he pointed out that the great needs in this respect were for, "... the rebuilding of the teaching profession and the evolution of a modern curriculum."²

The emergence of the Home and School Associations as a powerful influence toward curriculum revision was noted in 1947 by the Superintendent in his report to the Legislative Assembly when he gave credit to these associations as being mainly responsible for placing music in the schools and homes of the province.³ Again in 1948 he noted that the Home and School had become an integral part of the educational life of the province. "Through them", he said, "department

¹Interview with Harold M. Nason, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for Nova Scotia, February 15, 1960.

²Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1947, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1948), p. xxxv.

³Ibid., p. xxxii.

policies and plans receive understanding support, and they, in turn, inform the less interested public."¹ In these statements the Superintendent recognized the tremendous influence the Home and School Associations had become in helping to expedite revisions in curriculum.

It was recognized by this time that effective curriculum changes meant revision of the curriculum itself and not only the text books. To carry out these necessary changes the government of Nova Scotia in August, 1947, established the Division of Curriculum and Research in the Department of Education.²

From the beginning, one procedure was featured. It was the development of teacher interest followed by their cooperation in providing a sound basis on which curriculum revision could go ahead. It was reported in 1948 that an increasing number of common school teachers had shown an interest in combining a study of their own problems with work on some aspects of the curricular program.³

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1948, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1949), p. xxxv.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

In that same year the Council of Public Instruction approved the appointment of a Curricular Advisory Committee to counsel and advise the Superintendent and the director of Curriculum as to policy and procedure. This committee included two inspectors, two school supervisors, three teachers, two lay representatives, and, in an ex-officio capacity, seven professional advisors.¹

This represents a tremendous increase in participation by various groups which would reflect the concern for education manifested in many facets of the public, as well as in the leaders in the department of Education.

A growing concern on the part of teachers was one of the first features that Dr. Allan B. Morrison, Director of Curriculum and Research, found during his first year in office. In his first report in 1948, he notes that, during the organization of elementary study groups, it was found that many primary teachers were very much concerned about the problems of primary reading.² As a result the changes in curriculum after 1947 began with reading which in turn was followed by

¹Ibid., p. xxxvi.

²Ibid., p. 132.

revisions in arithmetic and social studies.¹ This need for revision in reading must have been felt most acutely by the teachers and the public at that time which again demonstrates the basic influencing factor of pupil needs.

By this time the teachers' professional organizations were becoming interested and were working towards improvement in curriculum. The new Director of Curriculum noted that an exchange of information was maintained in 1947 with the Teachers' Union of the Province as well as with the Headmasters' Association.² Another organization that was an increasingly stronger influence in curriculum revision at that time was indicated by the Director of Rural Education when he noted that through the influence of the Home and School Association, laymen were helping to plan the curriculum.³

Thus, by the end of the year 1948 more varied influences were being brought to bear from teachers in the classroom, inspectors of schools, the public, the

¹Interview with Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Director of Curriculum and Research for Nova Scotia, February, 1960.

²Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1948, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1949), p. 133.

³Ibid., p. 145.

Home and School Association, the Teachers' Union as well as a professional committee established by the Department of Education. This combination of forces contrasts sharply with the comparatively small groups of professional people who influenced the changes in 1933 and the still smaller and less diversified groups who initiated or influenced earlier curriculum changes.

In the spring of 1950, after two years of work by the Curriculum Revision Committee, it was reported that more and more teachers were thinking about their teaching problems, and were becoming more willing to participate in some phase of curriculum improvement.¹ This increased interest on the part of the teachers tended to produce an even greater demand for additional changes in other subject fields and grade areas.

The Director of Curriculum reported that considerable interest had been shown by the Home and School Associations in what was happening in the way of curriculum change in 1950.² The Teachers' Union and the Headmasters Association had signified an increased willingness to cooperate in any way possible.

¹Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1949, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1950), p. xxxvi.

²Ibid., p. 136.

in making the revision program more effective.¹

The rate at which interest in curriculum changes was expanding and the consequent growing influence that other groups were beginning to exert was noted by the Chief Inspector of Schools in 1950 when he reported that:

At Municipal Borad and Council meetings, at Home and School and Farmers' Associations, and at local ratepayers' meetings, one is thoroughly impressed by the willingness to plan, work and even sacrifice in an effort to improve the offerings of the public schools.²

This rapid growth in the number of sources of information influencing curriculum revision placed even more increasing pressures on government and the curriculum Branch of the Department of Education to keep the course of studies revised so that it might meet the needs of the pupil and the changing society in which he lived.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 205.

CHAPTER III

PRESENT DAY SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

CHANGES IN SOCIETY

From our study of the influencing factors that have effected curriculum change in Nova Scotia, the underlying basic influence that has predominated all others seems to be that of changing society bringing with it increased and changing needs for individuals. Even today it is the opinion of both the Director of Curriculum and the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education in this province that the changes in society which change the pupils' needs to meet them are still the underlying factors in curriculum revision.¹ Mr. H. M. Nason, the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, states as well that education over the years has failed consistently to keep step with changing society.²

¹Interviews with Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Chief Supervisor of Curriculum and Research for Nova Scotia and Harold M. Nason, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for Nova Scotia, February, 1960.

²Interview with Harold M. Nason, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for Nova Scotia, February 1960.

It is a sociological fact that changes in social organizations do not keep pace with changes in society and those organizations that tend to become institutionalized fall behind social change.¹ Mr. Nason attributes the increase in sources of information effecting revisions in school curricula in part to the fact that we have had many new people come to Nova Scotia in recent years and these newcomers have been very vocal in demanding that changes be made in the curriculum of the schools.²

Mr. Nason referred to some influencing factors that have had a definite effect on our curriculum when he mentioned the strong influence of our so-called machine age. He elaborated further on this point by observing that the average Nova Scotian is content with using machines that are too complicated for him to understand. He also pointed out that many people have let themselves become dominated by these machines to the extent that even their leisure time is controlled. All this he sums up as a change of values that the public has accepted.³ This factor has been very

¹Interview with Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Chief Supervisor of Curriculum and Research for Nova Scotia, February, 1960.

²Interview with H. M. Nason, op. cit.

³Ibid.

influential in molding the nature of the demands of the public.

UNIVERSITIES

Offsetting this influence has been that of the universities. Over the years this great influencing source of information has exerted a great influence on the type of curriculum presented in the public schools of Nova Scotia. The universities have exerted their pressure by demanding standards of entrance to which the pupils in the high schools must rise and, consequently, the curriculum of these high schools must provide the high school pupil with a suitable course of study.¹ High schools in Nova Scotia lead some of the students to university and the curriculum must meet this standard.

However, it is the opinion of Dr. A. Morrison, Director of Curriculum and Research, that the pressures universities exert on curriculum are not direct influences. Their criticisms of the schools have a long term effect in that, as a result of these criticisms, the school administrators, supervisors, and teachers become aware of these lacks and make modifications in their programs in an effort to strengthen indicated weaknesses.²

¹Interview with Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Chief Supervisor of Curriculum and Research for Nova Scotia, February,, 1960.

²Ibid.

A concrete example of this type of influence can be found in the recent criticisms of the universities regarding the lack of ability on the part of high school graduates in expressing themselves. This, they indicate, is found in the slipshod condition of English compositions in freshman year university. This criticism has been recognized as valid by school personnel and their local efforts to correct this have culminated in a change in the Grade twelve English course this year which will result in more emphasis on English composition in this grade.¹

Also, the changes in terminology in rapidly advancing subject fields on the university level have rendered most of the type of subject material and textbooks used in some subjects useless. An example of this type of influence originating in the universities is found in the study of chemistry. This very rapidly advancing field of study has left the textbook that has been used for this subject in the high schools of Nova Scotia quite useless as a means of preparing students for university work in that field.² This is

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

an example of the indirect pressure of changing technological information operating through the universities to effect revisions in school curricula.

TRADITION

Closely allied to the influence of the setting of standards by the universities is the strong influence of tradition. Tradition has tended to keep our school curriculum in Nova Scotia on an even keel as far as revisions are concerned.¹ We have seen that teachers have allied themselves with tradition over the years which has kept revisions in the curriculum in Nova Scotia from being too drastically changed at any one time.

BUSINESS

A major influence effecting change in curriculum today originates in the business world. The criticism of this group states that there is a lack of competence shown by young people in the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic.² This has resulted in teachers recognizing this weakness, particularly in arithmetic, and lacking the materials with which they

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

might correct the situation, they have exerted a pressure to have the elementary and secondary school arithmetic courses revised in this light. This was done with the introduction of revised courses in arithmetic in Nova Scotia Schools.¹

Mr. H. M. Nason points out that the business world has exerted a pressure to have school children in the elementary grades given a better grounding in the fundamentals and are themselves willing to provide the business training required which is based on the fundamentals taught in the classroom.²

PRESS

The influence of the press as a source of information effecting curriculum change in Nova Scotia is an important one in that it helps to mold public opinion. Through periodic articles appearing in the press, problems in education have been brought more forcibly to the attention of the people. This has had the effect of shortening the time it takes for changes to be demanded by an informed public and then implemented in curriculum revision.³ However, it is

¹ Ibid.

² Interview with H. M. Nason, op. cit.

³ Interview with Dr. A. B. Morrison, op. cit.

Dr. Morrison's opinion that the press lacks consistency in its role as a source of influence.¹

TEACHERS

Still another source of influence lies in the teachers themselves. Through the professional organization, the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, much pressure has been applied through their assistance in research and revision of curriculum. In his report for the school year 1948-1949, Dr. A. Morrison notes that "The Teachers' Union and the Headmasters' Association have signified their willingness to cooperate in any way possible in making the revisions of the program more effective."²

In 1956, at the Annual Council of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, the first provincial curriculum committee for that organization was established.³

In 1957, The Teachers' Union passed a resolution asking the Director of Curriculum and Research for the province to accelerate any study which has been

¹Ibid.

²Annual Report of The Superintendent of Education of Nova Scotia for the Year Ending July 31, 1949, (Halifax: King's Printer, 1950), p. 113.

³Minutes of the Thirty-fifth Annual Council of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (1956)

made of the advisability of a two-track curriculum in the senior high schools, that the study be carried to a point where definite recommendations could be made and offered their full assistance and cooperation in this study.¹

This is a definite indication of the increased awareness on the part of the teachers of their function in carrying out research leading to indicated curriculum revision. This interest is again shown in a survey of the newly instituted science courses in 1959 that was conducted by the Teachers' Union when they sought an evaluation of the course by securing various teachers' opinions throughout Nova Scotia.² Now that the provincial organization of teachers has shown such a definite interest in curriculum revision and assessment, a more powerful influence is added to effect curriculum change.

In the Report of the Curriculum committee to the 1958 Council of the Teachers' Union, we find a statement by Dr. Morrison that the Department of Education was most desirous of having teachers in the

¹Minutes of the Thirty-sixth Annual Council of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (1957), p. 34.

²Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Annual Council of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, (1959), C51.

field evaluate the changes in courses and texts. He also said that although such opinion had been asked for in each curriculum pamphlet, it had not been received to any important degree.¹

This would indicate that, although some teachers worked on curriculum revision committees and the provincial organization of the teachers had actually assisted the Curriculum Branch in assessment and revision of various courses, the teacher in the field, for the most part, was not exerting the personal influence that would be so valuable and beneficial.

However, Dr. Morrison pointed out one instance in which the influence of the teachers has been effective in bringing about a revision. The example here is the revision of the French Course replacing the French reader, "Sept d'un Coup" with another book. This was brought about by continued criticisms on the part of the teachers who found it unsuitable for use in the schools. This book will be quietly dropped from the course of studies at the end of the school year, 1960.²

¹Minutes of the Thirty-seventh Annual Council of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, (1958), p. CM66.

²Interview with Dr. A. B. Morrison, op. cit.

Another way in which the teachers exert an influence on curriculum develops as a result of field work carried on by the Curriculum Research Branch of the Department of Education. This field work is carried on formally through teachers' institutes, study clubs and organized discussion groups in which teachers express their criticisms and suggestions.

Informally, officials of the Curriculum Research Branch discuss matters with school officials and learn from their comments where weaknesses and difficulties exist. When a general pattern of comments is indicated the Curriculum Research Branch investigates and makes revisions that are found to be necessary.¹

PUBLIC OPINION

Present day public opinion is the most important influence exerted on curriculum revision.² Although it has been determined many times earlier in this paper that public opinion reflects requirements brought about by changing social, economic and technological conditions, there is one instance where the lack of this public opinion has resulted in a suggested revision not being implemented after it was suggested. Dr. Morrison, in

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

exemplifying this, explained that oral French is not being taught in the elementary grades of the public schools of Nova Scotia because the public demand for it does not exist.¹

However, a positive side of public opinion is shown today in that the public demands a broader secondary school education for its youth. This is of course associated closely with the fact that more and more students are remaining in school longer. As a result, the addition of a non-matriculation course in the senior high school grades has been approved by the Minister of Education and will be developed immediately.²

All these influencing sources of information are effecting curriculum revisions to a greater or lesser degree in Nova Scotia today. The underlying force behind these are the social and economic changes which seem to be so much more evident today.

The task of the educator is to evaluate these influencing forces and, trying to keep them in proper perspective, use them to initiate changes in curriculum that will best enable the school program to meet the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

needs of the pupils which are dictated by the traditions of the past, the social structure in which they live, the purposes for which they live, and all those values that are considered necessary for them to have in order that they might develop to their greatest potential. In this way the educator will develop a curriculum that will meet all the needs of the pupils and so provide each pupil with the training that he will be able to use in making his most worthwhile and effective contribution to the world in which he lives.

CHAPTER IV

PRINCIPALS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES IN CURRICULUM REVISION

From the very first stages of curriculum revision in 1850 we have seen the importance of leadership among education officials in initiating and carrying out needed changes in the curriculum. At the very beginning the leadership came from one person, the newly appointed Superintendent of Education, who found the educative process in a mire of confusion characterized by the lack of uniformity in the teaching levels of the same grade in different schools. In addition he found, as we have seen, an almost complete lack of continuity from one year to another.

As the years passed we found that the leadership was taken on by an increasing number of different groups in response to the basic pressure that has affected curriculum revision in Nova Scotia. This basic influence we have found educators to have believed to be the pressure that changing economic, technological, and social conditions has placed on our schools in order that the pupils might be given an education that will

fulfill their intellectual and practical needs.

Then, with the institution of broadening services, through the appointment of area inspectors, the leadership in making curriculum revisions was taken up by these officials. Most recently the old style of inspectorial supervision has become insufficient. Our prime purpose of supervision now is to help teachers create with increased interest and skill an environment in which each child will develop to the limit of his potentialities.¹ Thus, we must recognize, as did Dr. Dawson in the early 1880's, that the key person in our system of education is the teacher. Our first step then is to teach teachers, first directing them towards the knowledge of new information regarding education and the training in new methods that will better able them to develop their pupils to their greatest potential.

My first suggestion then would be for the principal or supervisor to initiate or increase the in-service training of the teachers who work with him. Such in-service training would take many forms.

One form would be the introduction through discussion and study of newly devised methods that the

¹Report of the Provincial Standards Project,
1955-1958 (Halifax, N.S.), p. 2.

teacher might try out in the classroom followed by observation and an analysis of these new methods as they help or hinder the development of the individual pupil together with an assessment of the results achieved by the pupil in meeting his needs and the needs of society.

Before this can be done, of course, the supervisor or principal must establish with his teachers a definite concept of the aims of education together with the philosophy underlying the school program in Nova Scotia. These aims must then be considered in light of local needs and conditions. From this an application of the curriculum to meet all the needs of the pupils can be devised. This involves making local changes in the application of curriculum in a particular school system. Through innovations that are developed and tried within a school system in an effort to most effectively develop individual pupils, adaptations of curriculum can prove effective. These few proven innovations will, over a period of time, diffuse to other schools where the application will eventually meet wide approval. The innovations, although originating ahead of the present front of educational procedures and practices, upon widespread acceptance, will eventually bring the educational front forward to

encompass these same innovations. Through this method a great deal can be done over an extended period of time. As changes in curriculum can only be implemented after approval by the government a widespread acceptance of a new procedure by the public resulting from an innovation will lead to government approval since the government is responsible to the people of the province.

Mr. Nason has pointed out that often we accept opinions as expressed by individuals or groups without evaluating them. He states further that we must have reliable information by which to judge public opinion.¹

This indicates another form of in-service training by which the principal, working with his teachers, can meet the pressures of public opinion and add their influence to this opinion in an effort to strengthen it or modify it. The principal and his staff must work with public opinion through the acquisition of objective information that will state the facts found in the results of the educative process. This means that the principal and his teachers, working together with the Department of Education, must devise a system of objective testing to substantiate their own and public

¹Interview with Harold M. Nason, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for the Province of Nova Scotia, February 15, 1960.

opinions in the achievement of the present school system. One such assessment has been conducted by the Provincial Standards Project which was begun in 1954.¹ In this project it was agreed that inspectors and supervisors, who have the statutory responsibility to act as provincial advisors in education, should have objective information which would make it possible to give educational authorities a reliable picture of what the schools were achieving. An effort, therefore, had to be made to develop a skilled and clinical approach to all the activities undertaken in the interest of our school children. They agreed that the approach had to be scientific, yet philosophical enough to embrace the facets of a child's make-up that are beyond objective measurement. From this thinking came a decision to initiate a long range project aimed at discovering objectively the achievement of Nova Scotia pupils of Grades three, six, eight and eleven in English Language, Reading, and Mathematics.²

From this project the Department of Education has secured a body of reliable data concerning the attainments of pupils in the basic skills, and this data

¹Report of the Provincial Standards Project,
op. cit., p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 3.

is used to help explain the work of the schools to themselves and the general public. By this method the educationalists were able to assess the criticisms of business that the school program was not giving a good grounding in the fundamentals. The first tests indicated a weakness in the field of arithmetic problems.¹ Reading showed the pupils to be strong in word recognition but weak in reading comprehension.²

Now that public opinion has been assessed in the light of the results of the testing, the factual data has been used in deciding supervisory moves and in recommending changes in instructional methods and materials. One resulting modification is the introduction of revised editions of school readers to correct a discovered lack of comprehension.³

The principal should have information such as this to inform the public that school standards have been assessed and to point out fallacies in the opinions of some public groups. This information the principal could use in explaining the results of the schools

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Interview with Dr. Alan B. Morrison, Chief Supervisor of Curriculum for the Province of Nova Scotia, February, 1960.

³Ibid.

to public groups and thereby influence their thinking and action in moving towards the provision of new materials by the government that will aid in achieving better results. By doing this the principal will be creating a new influence in favour of a professional approach to education which in turn will further help to plan a school program suited to the needs and interests of Nova Scotia children. In summing this up Mr. Nason states that the greatest single weakness in education to-day is the lack of sufficient research that will enable us to get objective information. Such information will enable us to build a school system that will, in turn, help us to provide the students with courses suited to their needs.¹ However, as Dr. Morrison cautions, there is a danger in looking exclusively for objective information as there are many factors in the training of human minds that cannot be assessed objectively. He comments further that, if we are going to base our judgments solely on objective information, we will have to wait a long time for future revisions. He agrees, however, that this information will be very useful in determining present weaknesses, making short-term analysis of their causes and finally

¹Interview with H. M. Nason, op. cit.

making the suggested improvements.¹

Through a program of obtaining objective information and the judicious use of the results, the principal and his staff can influence public opinion in favour of a professional approach to education and thereby direct that public opinion favourably in obtaining those revisions that are found to be necessary as revealed subjectively and objectively.

In his report to the Minister of Education in 1948-49, Dr. Morrison emphasized that improvement of a course outline or a change of text books will not ensure better teaching which he states is the crux of curriculum improvement. He stated that teachers must have available to them adequate supervisory assistance and encouragement to carry on in-service activities.²

Mr. Nason agrees that the teachers must be instructed first in each new approach that is being introduced and the new methods involved in teaching by the revised method before their introduction into

¹Interview with Dr. A. B. Morrison, op. cit.

²Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Department of Education for the Year Ending July 31, 1949, p. 113.

the classroom is attempted.¹

The principal then has an important task in seeing that the teachers have a full knowledge of each new method, that they are convinced of their usefulness, and are applying these new methods in the daily course of their teaching. Together with objective testing to assess the progress made by the pupils, a fund of teacher information and interest will be maintained and increased with the consequent improvement in the standards achieved by the pupils in developing to their greatest capacities.

It is the opinion of Dr. Morrison and Mr. Nason that a great need in our educational system today is a more highly trained professional group of teachers.² Such a professional group would have a sound background for judging the results of their teaching and the methods used. This would entail an increase in the amount of pre-service training required by the teacher and this feature is one that the principal must bring to the attention of the public through his contacts with interested, vocal groups such as the Home and School Associations.

¹Interview with H. M. Nason, op. cit.

²Interview with Dr. A. B. Morrison, op. cit.

If such a highly trained group were established, Dr. Morrison suggests that it might be then feasible for teachers to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of the pupils in the individual schools as he suggests they do in England.¹ This, of course, he points out is not practical as the majority of teachers in Nova Scotia do not have the background to make such changes in the most effective and beneficial manner.

But since, for the present, we lack such an enlightened majority, it is the task of the principal and supervisor, meanwhile, to work with the teachers we have in evaluating the efficiency of the methods and text books now in use in the light of meeting the needs of the pupils and developing their potentialities to the fullest extent. From these evaluations, which should be supported by objective evidence, the principal would increase the influence of a professional group of teachers in obtaining revisions in curriculum. As the in-service teachers grew in knowledge and insight their addition to the professional influence would be greatly felt and would be reflected in the thinking of the public.²

¹Ibid.

²Interviews with Dr. A. B. Morrison and Mr. H. M. Nason, op. cit.

It has been pointed out that a stabilizing influence on curriculum revision has been that of tradition. In the past the teachers have seemed to ally themselves closely with tradition and have been the last to break away from it. The principal by his assessment of the results achieved in the past as measured objectively as well as subjectively, can and should influence the thinking of the public by pointing out those features that have been proven to stand the strain of time and note those that have become outdated and now no longer measure up to curriculum needs. The danger here of course is of allowing tradition as allied with university requirements to dominate the curriculum. A broadening of this traditionally academic course has been under discussion for some years and will be placed into effect next school year.¹ This, of course, is the addition of a non-matriculation curriculum to the senior high school program in an attempt to provide an academic course that will meet the intellectual and other needs of those students who will not complete all high school grades. Over the past few years the school personnel have come to demand this change as the increasing

¹Interview with Dr. A. B. Morrison, op. cit.

enrolments in high schools together with ever changing needs of the pupils have made such a step imperative.¹

A great influence in effecting curriculum revision has been the Home and School Associations. We have noted their influence in having Music placed on the course of study and their help in working out details of new revisions in curriculum. The principal, after a study of all features, as expressed by other sources of influence should use this very important and vocal group as a means of informing the less-informed public of the necessary changes needed in curriculum and the features about new modifications that the public should know. Through the securing of their understanding approval and support the principal will have proceeded a long way towards hastening other necessary revisions.

We have noted criticism of the press as a source of influence effecting curriculum revision in that it has, in the past, been too inconsistent. Through more activity in professional organization groups, the principal could help make the press a more effective influence. This could be accomplished through the dissemination of more information to the

¹Ibid.

press regarding the purposes and features of proposed new changes. The emphasis that should be given to the press by a professional group is that of relating improvements in curriculum with explanations of new methods and materials. The publication of this information would lead to a better informed public resulting ultimately in a more rapid acceptance of new ideas followed by a consequent strengthening of public opinion.

The suggestions outlined in this chapter have been directed towards obtaining curriculum revision in the most realistic length of time. My suggestions have included a more professional approach in directing and leading public opinion as expressed by the various groups and other sources of influence effecting curriculum revision. Such a professional and scientific approach should result in an increased awareness of the needs of curriculum and an increased respect for the profession on the part of the thinking public. As a result of this increased respect would come more rapid approval of future changes that were found to be necessary and desirable in the endeavour to develop a curriculum that will more completely meet the intellectual needs of all school children.

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