A STUDY OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE NONGRADED SCHOOL CONCEPT

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Mary T. Christian
1967

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This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

A Study of the Dimensions of the Nongraded School Concept

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Mary T. Christian

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE DIMENSIONS OF THE
NONGRADED SCHOOL CONCEPT

by Mary T. Christian

The Problem

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the dimensions of the nongraded school concept in selected elementary schools. Specifically, the objectives of the study were: (1) to find out how individual teachers and administrators perceived the concept of nongrading, (2) to determine the operational practices of teachers in nongraded classrooms, (3) to determine the nature and extent of problems encountered by teachers within a nongraded structure, and (4) to analyze the findings with implications for teacher education.

Procedures

Initially, a pilot investigation was conducted, which included classroom observation and personal interviews with principals and teachers in eight selected elementary schools. The information gathered during observation and interview sessions formed the nucleus of a detailed

questionnaire sent to administrators and teachers currently associated with schools cited in the literature as being nongraded. Questionnaire returns yielded data from 90 administrators and 240 teachers, representative of 105 nongraded school systems in 32 states.

Findings

1. The majority of participants in this study had teaching experience in both graded and nongraded schools; however, the more recent graduates had more experience in nongraded schools. Eighty per cent of the teachers, with one to five years of experience, had gained this experience in nongraded schools.

2. The perceptions of nongrading indicated by the majority of participants appeared to be conflicting and often inconsistent with the philosophical concept of a nongraded school. The principles of flexibility, continuous progress, individualization, and a personalized curriculum, which are hallmarks of the nongraded concept, were not evidenced in the majority of nongraded programs.

3. Data relative to mobility of pupils reflected a change when compared to the common practice of moving pupils at the end of the school year. Sixty-six per cent of the teachers indicated that pupils were moved from one classroom group to another when the teacher deemed it advisable. Ten per cent, however, restricted movement to the end of the school year.

4. In the area of reading instruction, 50 per cent of the teachers organized their classes into three groups, and 36 per cent relied on one reading series.

5. In the area of mathematics, 45 per cent of the teachers utilized one textbook; 61 per cent used a developmental skills approach.

6. In the area of language arts, the teachers relied heavily on large group instruction. Forty-three per cent indicated that instruction was given to the group as a whole, and 40 per cent of the participants utilized one basic text. Approximately 4 per cent individualized instruction and used the multi-text approach in this area.

7. In the area of science, total group instruction was the dominant pattern. Fifty-eight per cent indicated that science instruction was geared to the class as a whole; 8 per cent of the respondents utilized three instructional groups in this area.

8. When reporting their practices in the area of social studies, 54 per cent of respondents indicated development of experience units. Thirty-seven per cent of the teachers utilized the multi-text approach.

9. The data relating to instructional media indicated the utilization of a variety of instructional materials.

10. In comparing general operational practices, 46 per cent of the respondents noted that teaching in nongraded classes was more difficult than teaching in graded classes; 25 per cent felt that teaching was less difficult in nongraded classes; 22 per cent saw no difference.

11. Evaluation in nongraded schools included a variety of approaches. Both formal and informal evaluative techniques were utilized by 77 per cent of the participants.

12. Seventy-seven per cent of the participants used both the report card and parent-teacher conferences for reporting; only 7 per cent relied solely on report cards. However, 35 per cent continued to give letter grades on report cards.

13. The greatest single problem, as indicated by 70 per cent of the teachers, was grouping and subgrouping for instruction. Administrators felt that the greatest difficulties experienced by teachers resulted from lack of understanding of the nongraded concept and "grade-mindedness" in classroom practices.

14. Courses and experiences recommended most frequently for inservice and/or preservice teachers were child development, individualized instruction, workshops on nongrading, and student teaching in nongraded schools.

15. The largest majority of respondents indicated a preference for the nongraded organizational structure, but cited varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the existing instructional program.

16. The most frequently mentioned changes in school programs resulting from nongrading included the development of reading levels program and cooperative teaching. Administrators indicated continuance of the nongraded organization with plans for modification. Future plans included combining team teaching with nongrading, extending the nongraded structure to upper levels, developing the social studies program, increasing individualized procedures, and revising reporting systems.

Major Implications and Recommendations

1. Professional educators who are advocates of nongrading have a responsibility to the field to provide a basic nomenclature and to develop criteria for evaluation of nongraded programs.

2. Nongraded schools should reflect continuous progress, flexibility, and pupil individuality in operational programs and practices.

3. School systems should not move toward nongrading without a continuous and extensive program in retraining of administrators and teachers.

4. School systems, which are currently operating as nongraded, should take a critical look at the existing program and engage in continuous inservice training designed to help teachers and administrators incorporate the concept of nongradedness in actual operational practices in the school.

5. There is a need for teacher education institutions to give increased attention to the nongraded concept in preservice and inservice programs.

6. In light of the data procured during this study, it is recommended: (a) that proponents of nongrading establish a clearing house so that more definite guidelines may be developed to give public school personnel a greater sense of direction; (b) that colleges of education set up model, nongraded laboratory situations or schools where preservice and inservice teachers may see theory translated into practice; and (c) that research studies be conducted to ascertain the nature and extent of flexibility and pupil mobility in nongraded schools.

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By

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to explore the dimensions of the nongraded school concept in selected elementary schools. In more definitive terms, the objectives of the study were: (1) to find out how individual teachers and administrators perceive the concept of nongrading, (2) to determine the operational practices of teachers in nongraded schools, (3) to determine the nature and extent of the problems encountered by teachers in nongraded classrooms, and (4) to analyze the findings with implications for teacher education.

Definition of Terms Used in the Study

Certain terms are used frequently throughout this study and are defined as follows:

Perception.--Perception has been defined as a mode of response in which the observer's set or purpose and background of experience become the major determiners of the stimuli to which he responds.[1]

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[1]Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1959), p. 389.

Nongraded school concept.--Nongraded school has been used to refer to an organizational plan which removes formal grade lines and provides the flexibility that permits continuous progress and attention to the individual needs of all children. The nongraded concept embraces the basic principles of child growth and development, learning, school function, and pedagogical practices.

The terms "nongraded," "nongrading," and "nongradedness" were used synonymously throughout the study.

Operational procedures.--This term refers to teaching methods, materials, grouping, reporting, and evaluation procedures used by teachers in nongraded classrooms.

Teacher education.--Teacher education has been defined as the program of activities and experiences developed by an institution responsible for the preparation and growth of persons preparing themselves for educational work or engaging in the work of the educational profession.[2]

Inservice education.--This term refers to those experiences, processes, procedures and activities on the part of employed teachers and administrators that contribute to their professional growth and qualification.

Ability grouping.--This term refers to a type of instructional grouping in which pupils are classified according to their general ability or achievement in a given

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[2] Ibid., p. 550.

subject area, usually determined by results of standardized intelligence tests, achievement tests, and/or teacher-developed criteria.

Developmental levels.--This term is interpreted as a prescribed set of systematic skills in the various curriculum areas through which pupils progress at their own rate.

Individualized instruction.--This term refers to differentiation in teaching methods, materials, and study procedures and adaptation of these procedures to meet the varying interests, needs, and abilities of individual pupils.

Delimitations of the Research

1. This investigation was concerned with teachers and administrators in selected nongraded elementary schools.

2. The dimensions of nongrading considered in this study were confined to: (a) perceptions, (b) operational practices, and (c) major problems encountered by teachers in nongraded classrooms.

3. This study was not an attempt to evaluate the quality of the instructional program of any particular school, but an attempt to gain greater insight into the perceptions, practices, and problems of teachers in nongraded schools. Evaluative comments, when given, were made in terms of comparing educational theory with operational practices.

4. The limitations inherent in the questionnaire results were recognized: (a) the logical difficulties attendant to converting qualitative data, and (b) the effect of varying interpretations of terminology used by educators.

Basic Assumptions Underlying the Study

1. The nongraded school, viewed in its full philosophic purpose, offers excellent potential for realizing the goals of education in a democratic society.

2. A thorough understanding of the nongraded concept is a necessary prerequisite to successful implementation of the nongraded plan.

3. The teacher's concept of nongrading will affect the extent to which nongrading exists in classroom practices.

4. The administrator's concept of nongrading and organizational practices will affect the extent to which nongrading exists in the school.

5. The existing problems encountered by teachers in nongraded schools reflect a need for direction in teacher education programs.

Significance of the Problem

Change and reconstruction are apparent in the school's continuous effort to redefine its goals, reorganize its curriculum, and reappraise its purposes and programs. This critical review is being focused increasingly on school

structure, and numerous changes in organizational patterns have been proposed in various parts of the country. The nongraded school takes its place among these innovations and is perhaps the most publicized and fastest spreading of the newer approaches. While innovation and experimentation are far from new in this country, the present trend toward nongrading takes on dimensions of greater seriousness and deeper significance than any previous efforts for improvement.

Stuart E. Dean attributes the experimentation with the nongraded school as having grown from two basic influences: (1) the graded school pattern as created by the Quincy Grammar School of Boston in 1848, and (2) the axiomatic circumstances of individual differences, a condition long recognized but one which now takes on deeper meaning and significance in a changing world. These two elements have aided in building an understanding that improvement in school organization is imperative in our drive toward quality education for today's youth.[3]

The central theme underlying the trend toward nongraded school organization seems to basically reflect an increased awareness of the inviolable range of human differences. Yet, evidence suggests that much "confusion" exists among educators as to what the nongraded school really is.

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[3]Stuart E. Dean, "Nongraded Schools," Education Briefs (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 2.

Robert Anderson and John Goodlad, pioneers in the nongraded movement, conducted a survey in 1960 to determine practices in 89 communities in which there were reported to be about 550 nongraded schools. The report reveals many glowing accounts of the success of nongraded schools--better pupil achievement, fewer discipline problems, fewer nonreaders, and enthusiastic parents and teachers who do not want to return to grades. On the other hand, the survey also indicates that the nongraded plan is supported by persons with different conceptions of what the nongraded plan really is. In fact, Goodlad points out that few, if any, truly nongraded schools exist. Other educators also state that they have uneasy feelings after reading about or visiting nongraded schools. What they see in practice doesn't appear to follow from their own interpretations of humanitarian concern for the individual, or from newer insights into individual differences.[4]

The survey made by Goodlad and Anderson was concerned primarily with the perceptions of supervisory and administrative personnel. Other studies reported in the literature have been concerned with pupil achievement and comparison of graded schools with nongraded schools. However, no studies have been found which focuses primarily on

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[4]John I. Goodlad, "A Survey of Nongraded Schools," The Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960), p. 222.

the central role of the teacher in the nongraded school. The writer feels that this is an area of great concern. Regardless of the organizational pattern, the school can never rise above the level of the teacher's competence. A similar view regarding nongrading is reflected by Goodlad and Anderson:

> Reorganization in and of itself will resolve only organizational problems. Nongraded structure is therefore no panacea for problems of curriculum and instruction. The teacher who suddenly finds himself teaching in a nongraded school will not necessarily experience any metamorphosis in his teaching. Until he understands what nongrading permits him to do, he will teach no differently from the way he taught before.[5]

It thus becomes apparent that nongrading in and of itself does not automatically guarantee or even promise improvement in instructional practice. Therefore, hope for its success ultimately depends on the teacher. The writer believes that investigation is essential in order to find out how the teacher perceives nongradedness in terms of conceptual philosophy and the interrelatedness of this concept with actual practices and problems involved in implementing the instructional program. An analysis of these perceptions and problems should prove valuable in providing insight to teacher education institutions in reappraising or revamping their program in light of changes and innovations in the public schools.

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[5]Goodlad, op. cit., p. 224.

Since many educators criticize the nongraded organization because of the widespread misuse of the terminology of nongradedness and the lack of minimal standards and requirements, the results of this investigation may also be helpful in determining and identifying the unique elements of nongradedness and providing some criteria upon which a conceptual model may be based.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES, METHODS, AND INSTRUMENTS

Procedure

The general purpose of this study was to secure data from teachers and administrators regarding their perceptions and current practices in nongraded elementary schools. The inquiry was pursued along two lines: (1) a pilot study involving personal interviews with teachers and principals in selected nongraded elementary schools, and (2) a questionnaire sent to teachers and administrators currently associated with nongraded schools throughout the country. Additional sources of information included observation of practices in nongraded classrooms, perusal of descriptive materials from nongraded schools, and review of professional literature.

The interview phase of the study included thirty teachers and eight principals in selected nongraded elementary schools. The school systems involved in the initial stage were East Lansing, Lansing, Pontiac, and Dearborn, Michigan; Appleton and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Hampton and Richmond, Virginia. Classroom observation, whenever possible, supplemented the interviews. The sessions were designed

to tap the feelings of participants and allow for extension of ideas in greater depth through an informal kind of interaction. The information was recorded and then combined to form six general categories:

1. Facts about academic preparation and teaching experience of the respondent
2. Reactions regarding the meaning or concept of nongrading as perceived by the respondent
3. Indications as to the nature and extent of differences between operational practices in graded and nongraded schools
4. Reactions of respondent regarding the degree of satisfaction with the organizational pattern and with his teaching in a nongraded classroom
5. Opinions of respondent regarding preservice and inservice training necessary for teachers in nongraded schools
6. The most difficult problems encountered in teaching in the nongraded classroom.

The investigator used this information as a basis for extension of the study.

Development of the Instrument

Utilizing the information obtained during the pilot study, a three-part questionnaire for teachers was constructed (Appendix C). The first section of the questionnaire was designed to gather background information concerning the respondents; the second part elicited responses related to operational practices in nongraded schools; and the final section was open-ended to afford respondents the

opportunity to give their personal reactions to selected aspects of nongrading.

Although the study focused primarily on the teacher in the nongraded school, the transition from a graded to a nongraded school is initially an administrative decision. Therefore, the investigator attempted to gain greater depth as to the dimensions of nongrading by including administrators in the study. A questionnaire, similar to that of the teachers, was developed for administrators associated with nongraded elementary schools (Appendix D).

Selection, Method, and Description of the Sample

To obtain a comprehensive picture of current practices in nongraded schools, the investigator felt it necessary to survey teachers and administrators in various parts of the country. The list of schools presented by Goodlad and Anderson,[6] supplemented by nongraded schools identified in NEA Research Memo[7] served as the primary bases for selection of the sample. A packet containing (a) an introductory letter (Appendix B); (b) one administrator questionnaire; (c) three teacher questionnaires; and (d) four self-addressed,

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[6]John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1959), pp. 217-226.

[7]NEA Research Memo, Research Division, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., May, 1965.

stamped envelopes was sent to school systems in forty-seven states. When specific schools were cited in the literature, the questionnaires were sent directly to the principal of a given school; in other cases, the questionnaires were sent to the director of instruction in a given school system with the request to distribute them to the principal and teachers.

Responses to the questionnaires initially came from 41 states, 121 administrators, and 240 teachers. Of this group, 41 administrators representing 9 states indicated that the school system was not considered as nongraded, or that the nongraded organizational pattern no longer existed. Therefore, the population sample of this investigation included 90 administrators and 240 teachers, representing 105 school systems in 32 states (Appendix A).

In addition to questionnaire responses a number of participants sent handbooks, pamphlets, research briefs, bibliographies, and materials descriptive of their program.

It was the intent of the investigator to obtain data from the principal and three teachers in a given school or school system. However, it was indicated that in some schools, only one or two teachers were involved in the nongraded program. It was also indicated that a principal and/or head teacher often served in a dual capacity, as administrator and teacher. Therefore, only one or two teacher responses were forthcoming from some of the schools

represented in the study. Respondents to the questionnaire for administrators included directors of instruction, supervisors, principals, and head teachers. All respondents were working in some capacity with nongraded elementary schools.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The United States Office of Education reports that very little research has been done in the area of nongraded school organization. The surveys which have been conducted were attempted primarily for the purpose of finding out how extensively the nongraded plan is being used. Most of the studies which have been reported were designed to compare the effectiveness of the nongraded school program with that of the graded school. Other references are reflective of nongraded programs currently in operation and commentaries offered by proponents or critics of the nongraded plan. However, all literature reviewed for the purpose of this study relates to some facet of the nongraded elementary school. Since the resurgence of interest in the current concept of nongrading is relatively "new" on the educational front, a brief historical background will also be presented.

School Organization in Historical Perspective

A look at the history and trends in elementary school organization reveals that the nongraded organizational plan really precedes the graded organizational plan. The

Dame schools of the seventeenth century were without grade classifications. Children of various ages and abilities were taught together in one classroom, and education was provided on a completely individual basis. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Dame school was the major source of formal education. Later came a monitorial system in which the older pupils learned from the teacher and then tutored the younger ones.[8] The ordering and regimentation, of which graded structure came to be a part, were substantially advanced by this system.

The demand for universal education precipitated problems that come with dealing with large numbers of pupils. The earliest and most widespread solution to this problem was the incorporation of the Lancastrian system of instruction which featured a large single room seating from two hundred to a thousand pupils.[9] The Quincy Grammar School, opening in Boston in 1848, set the pattern for the graded school. This pattern of school organization remained in operation for more than a century. Within twenty years from its inception the graded structure was the most widely used organizational plan in America. One of the factors that has

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[8]L. N. Webb, "Nongrading: A Modern Practice in Elementary School Education," NEA Research Memo (October, 1961), p. 3.

[9]Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1944), p. 155.

accounted for the popularity of the graded structure was its relatively efficient method of classifying large groups of students.[10]

In spite of its popularity, almost from its inception, educators have been attempting to modify the rigidity of the graded school. The St. Louis Plan, first introduced in 1876, sought to reduce the rigidity of graded structure by reclassifying students at six-week intervals. In the Pueblo Plan, 1888 to 1894, all children studied all units but progressed through them at their own rate. Both the Cambridge Plan, first introduced in 1893, and the Portland Plan discontinued by 1915, permitted bright students to move more rapidly in a double-track system, completing a nine-year program in as few as seven years.[11]

In the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, founded in 1896, Dewey and his associates challenged established practices of his time and ungraded this school. Children in Dewey's school were grouped for instruction according to interests and abilities, and there was no effort to construct the groups exclusively along chronological age lines. This arrangement was, in part, Dewey's

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[10]Fred C. Ayer, "The Status of Promotional Plans in City Schools," American School Board Journal (April, 1923), p. 42.

[11]Goodlad and Anderson, op. cit., p. 50.

answer to the "educational lockstep" which was receiving bitter criticism from the liberals.[12]

The famous Winnetka Plan was developed by Carleton Washburne in Illinois, and the Dalton Laboratory Plan made its debut in Massachusetts around 1920. These plans differentiated academic from nonacademic phases of the curriculum and then encouraged students to move through the academic work at their own rate. In the few controlled studies available, data revealed academic superiority for students in the Winnetka Plan on 23 of 30 comparisons with students in conventional programs.[13]

These and other schemes are not always seen as attempts to break down vertical, graded structure, but they were designed to modify the effects of grading by helping students of varying abilities to move ahead unhampered by uniform grade expectations. They were a product of the creative thinking of their time and paved the way for the broad-scale attack upon existing school organizational patterns.[14]

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[12]Max Winge, The Philosophy of Education (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1965), pp. 221-222.

[13]Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 32.

[14]John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., Revised Edition, 1963), p. 51.

These attempts to modernize curriculum and organization met with varying degrees of success; however, they were generally short-lived due to the deeply ingrained and seemingly indestructable graded plan. Jameson reflects this view:[15]

> Our educational beaches are crowded with all manner of grouping plans and practices. Each incoming tide brings out of the experimental seas still more innovations. Some plans, proclaimed and instituted years ago, have been washed back to sea. Others, including the strictly graded concept, have defied the waves and sands of time and cling tenaciously to today's scene.

Thus, one organizational plan or structure replaced the other but left the graded school basically intact. However, it may be said that these attempts paved the way for a later large-scale attack upon the graded organizational plan.

The Emergence of the Nongraded Elementary School

As has been noted, the nongraded school is anything but a new concept. Its philosophy was embraced in organizational patterns that preceded the Quincy School. However, its prominence as a challenging innovation in school organization may be considered relatively new. Due to the many different attempts to break the lock-step of graded organization, it is difficult to cite a definite chronology for

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[15]Marshall C. Jameson, "How Shall We Teach?" National Elementary Principal, XL (December, 1960), p. 17.

[16]Dean, op. cit., p. 9.

the emergence of the modern nongraded elementary school. The literature reveals a plan in operation at Western Springs, Illinois, in 1934. In Richmond, Virginia, since 1936, the junior primary unit has replaced kindergarten and first grade. The College Avenue School, Athens, Georgia, nongraded its program in 1939. In modern setting the first formally recorded program of nongrading in the primary grades with an unbroken record is credited to Milwaukee in 1942. A second landmark was the adoption of the program in Appleton, Wisconsin, in 1947. Since then, the movement has spread slowly though steadily. At the present time the trend is appreciably accelerated. The increase is so rapid that reliable figures are no longer available.[16]

There are, however, some estimates of growth. Goodlad estimated that, while in 1957-1958 there may have been 40 to 50 communities so involved, by 1957-1958 there were as many as 500.[17] In a 1958-1959 survey Stuart Dean found that 18 per cent of the urban areas in the United States indicated some degree of involvement with nongraded primary units.[18]

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[16]Dean, op. cit., p. 9.

[17]John I. Goodlad, "Individual Differences and School Organization," Individualizing Instruction, The Sixty-First Yearbook, NSSE (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 213.

[18]Stuart E. Dean, Elementary School Administration and Organization, U.S. Office of Education (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 8.

In May 1964, the NEA Educational Research Service made a postal card survey to find out how many large urban school systems had nongraded or partially nongraded elementary or secondary schools. Questionnaire cards were sent to 441 school systems with enrollments of 12,000 or more; replies were received from 353, or 80.0 per cent. Nearly a third of the school systems reported in the ERS Survey had one or more schools with a nongraded sequence.[19]

Although information is not available regarding the exact number of schools that have nongraded, it is clearly evident that nongraded elementary schools are proliferating.

The Nongraded Concept Reviewed

A review of the literature reveals that the most extensive writing in the area of nongrading has been done by John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson. These two educators pioneered the nongraded movement and wrote the first book devoted exclusively to coverage of the subject, The Nongraded Elementary School. Recently, however, there has been a mentionable increase in the number of articles and a slight increase in the number of books relating to the nongraded school concept. As more interest is engendered in the subject of nongrading, it is not surprising to find more

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[19]"Nongraded School Organization," NEA Research Bulletin, XXXIV, No. 4 (October, 1965), 93-95.

extensive exploration in the literature and more schools joining the ranks of the nongraded. Coinciding with this surge of interest, it is not too surprising to note varying and often contradicting perceptions of what nongrading really is. Goodlad concluded from his survey in 1960 that much confusion existed in the mind of those conducting nongraded schools regarding the school function they seek to serve.[20]

Currently, nongrading still seems to mean different things to different people. Anderson cites "nongradedness" as being a rather unfortunate term, since it refers primarily to what is not, rather than what is. This calls attention to the undesirability and illegitimacy of the opposite concept, "gradedness"; consequently, the purpose becomes essentially antiseptic.[21]

Initially, some educators referred to nongrading as an organizational device and nothing more. The following citation by Anderson seems to extend this concept:[22]

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[20]Robert H. Anderson and John I. Goodlad, "Self-appraisal in Nongraded Schools: A Survey of Findings and Perceptions," The Elementary School Journal, LXII (October, 1962), 33-40.

[21]Robert H. Anderson, Teaching in a World of Change (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1966), p. 53.

[22]Anderson, op. cit., p. 54.

> Nongradedness refers to two dimensions of the school and its atmosphere: the philosophy (or the value system) that guides the behavior of the school toward the pupils, and the administrative organizational machinery and procedures by means of which the life of the pupils and teachers is regulated. In short, nongradedness is both a theoretical proposition and an operational mechanism. . . . It is a concept of the proper way to provide for children's educational needs and a plan for implementing that concept.

No definitive model of nongrading is found at this time; however, certain basic elements implicit in the nongraded philosophy appear consistently in the literature and in school programs where this approach has been implemented. Almost without exception, statements refer to (1) the removal of grade lines, (2) the notion of continuous progress, (3) awareness of individual differences, (4) provision for differentiated rates of pupil progress, (5) means for individualizing instruction, and (6) eliminating or lessening the problems of retention and acceleration. Anderson offers the following statements in summarizing what he feels would be true of a full-fledged nongraded school:[23]

> 1. Suitable provision is being made in all aspects of the curriculum for each unique child by such means as (a) flexible grouping and subgrouping of pupils, (b) an adaptable, flexible curriculum, and (c) a great range of materials and instructional approaches.
>
> 2. The successive learning experiences of each pupil are pertinent and appropriate to his needs.

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[23] Ibid., p. 61.

3. Each child is constantly under just the right amount of pressure. Slow learners are not subjected to too much pressure, as they are in the graded school, nor are the talented learners exposed to too little.

4. Success, with appropriate rewards, is assured for all kinds of learners so long as they attend to their tasks with reasonable diligence and effort. Such success spurs the child to a conviction of his own worth and to further achievement.

5. Grade labels and the related machinery of promotion and failure are nonexistent.

6. The reporting system reflects the conviction that each child is a unique individual. There are no report cards with A's and F's.

7. The teachers show sophistication in their curriculum planning, evaluation, and record keeping.

8. For certain purposes, pupils enjoy regular social and intellectual contacts with other pupils of like mind and talent and, for other purposes, with pupils of different minds and talents.

9. The school's horizontal organization pattern allows for flexibility in grouping pupils and in utilizing the school's resources. It is possible to have a nongraded, self-contained classroom pattern, or a more flexible arrangement such as the Dual Progress Plan, informal cooperative teaching, or full-fledged team teaching, in combination with the nongraded arrangement.

The "Levels" Approach in Nongrading

The use of "levels" in the nongraded program is applauded by many educators who have changed to the nongraded structure; in fact, the majority of programs cited in the literature utilize the levels approach. Under a

nongraded-primary system, the curriculum is divided into levels--a series of short steppingstones that vary in number from seven to as many as thirty-two. Levels are most frequently described in terms of reading achievement; in a few systems, levels have also been established for arithmetic and spelling, but this arrangement is far less common. At each level, certain skills are to be acquired, and progress to a succeeding level depends on attainment of these skills.[24]

In spite of its popularity, some educators are critical of the levels approach. Stendler, for example, argues against replacing grade levels with achievement levels; it is her opinion that substituting three levels per grade for the old single-grade standard does not offer much of an improvement.[25] Howard reflects a similar point of view:

> . . . It is difficult to conceive of classifying children in any way very different from the graded way; so we substitute a "new" pattern of levels that are really not markedly different from the "old" pattern of grades except that there are more of them, and they do allow children to move through them at different rates. It is difficult to conceive of grouping children in ways other than by ability, so we

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[24]Louis T. Di Lorenzo and Ruth Salter, "Cooperative Research on the Nongraded Primary," The Elementary School Journal, February, 1965, p. 271.

[25]Celia B. Stendler, "Grouping Practices," Those First Years (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, Department of Elementary School Principals, 1960), pp. 151-59.

> continue under the new levels plan to group children homogeneously according to reading ability.[26]

Howard further states that if a school wishes to introduce the levels plan as an initial step toward non-grading, it should recognize the limitations as well as the presumed advantages of such an approach; the greatest need being to define levels as a hierarchy of skills or learnings that contribute to larger skills and learnings which are also defined.[27]

Johnson notes that in sifting through the various programs now labeled nongraded, one realizes there is little agreement among advocates as to the specific structure except that the terms 1st grade, 2nd grade, etc. are replaced with expressions such as "levels" or "blocks," a very minor change that lacks dynamic implications if the elementary school is to experience a mighty uplifting.[28]

Hunter rejects any organizational scheme that uses only one measure--be it intelligence quotient, reading grade

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[26]Elizabeth Howard, "Let's Have a Nongraded School," Howardletter Number Six, Science Research Associates, Inc., November 15, 1965, p. 2.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Glenn R. Johnson, "Lots of Smoke, But Little Fire," Educational Forum, XXIX (January, 1965), pp. 154-164.

placement, total achievement, or any other one dimension--as a basis for creating class groups.[29]

Frazier is highly critical of the levels approach, especially when the levels are set up to correspond to sequentially arranged materials, usually textbooks in a reading series, through which abler learners move more rapidly and the less able move slowly. He feels that this criterion of progress combines quantity and rate to carry the old conception of the curriculum to a new point of impoverishment, and the boundaries of the narrowed program close in even more tightly on all learners.[30]

Goodlad also has reservations regarding the levels plan of providing for individual differences in schools labeled nongraded. He notes that too often, the levels are defined according to narrow, subject-matter expectations and does not necessarily take cognizance of the many unique traits emerging in the individual.[31]

Goodlad and Anderson mention two shortcomings in the levels plan of nongrading as it has emerged:

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[29]Madeline Hunter, "The Dimensions of Nongrading," The Elementary School Journal, October, 1964, pp. 20-25.

[30]Alexander Frazier, "Needed: A New Vocabulary for Individual Differences," Elementary School Journal, LXI (February, 1961), 260.

[31]Robert H. Anderson and John I. Goodlad, "Self-Appraisal in Nongraded Schools: A Survey of Findings and Perceptions," Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 343.

> The first is the common practice of setting up homogeneous classes based on levels. . . . The second major shortcoming of levels plans stems from difficulties inherent in curriculum analysis. Curriculum plans, with a few notable exceptions, provide detailed descriptions of content to be taught, but few clues to the concepts, principles, or values underlying this content.[32]

Nevertheless, the levels plan of introducing nongrading continues to be a popular one.

Research and Evaluation

Authorities agree that there is a dearth of scientific research in the area of nongrading and not nearly enough research on a broad scale. In fact, Goodlad suggests that the concept of nongrading is best supported by "some plausible sounding claims and theories rather than by research."[33] The lack of clear-cut models of gradedness and nongradedness is one of the major difficulties of controlled research in this area. The problem is further complicated by the limitations of traditional achievement tests, which are geared to the curriculum and practices of graded schools. However, there has been noted an increase in descriptive reports, doctoral theses, and studies made by professional councils or associations, which give some insight into the progress and merit of the nongraded organization.

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[32]Goodlad and Anderson, op. cit., p. 212.

[33]Ibid.

Kent C. Austin conducted a study for the purpose of getting information concerning the development, objectives, operation, and public relations of the ungraded primary unit. The operation of sixty-one nongraded primary units in Park Forest, Illinois was studied in detail. The data showed that both parents and teachers were generally satisfied with the operation of the Park Forest Ungraded School.[34]

Studies of current nongraded programs in action in specific schools or districts have been conducted to provide guidelines for initiating new programs or improving existing ones. Dufay's study was conducted in order to uncover the procedures or implementation of the nongraded primary school that are likely to lead to a successful incorporation of the structure by the professional staff of Central School District No. 4, New York. He investigated problems, failures, and successes of participating schools. Of implementation difficulties noted, the two most often cited were: (1) gaining of parental acceptance, and (2) gaining of some teacher acceptance and support.[35] A similar study was conducted by Roberts utilizing the case study approach by comparing two

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[34]Kent C. Austin, "The Ungraded Primary School," Childhood Education, February, 1957, pp. 260-263.

[35]Frank R. Dufay, "The Development of Procedures for Implementation of the Nongraded Primary in Central School District No. 4" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, New York, 1963).

nongraded elementary school programs and facilities in Brevard County, Florida.[36]

Ritzenhein's investigation was designed to survey personnel perceptions of nongraded programs in Detroit schools; to delineate the basic principles of the nongraded concept; and to contribute to an understanding of nongraded primary units as they function in Detroit Public Schools. In her study, teachers and principals reported (1) that there is need for increased knowledge in child growth and development, (2) that indiscriminate transfer of teachers might handicap nongraded program development, and (3) that some type of pupil classification index should be devised for nongraded schools.[37]

A number of comparative studies have been reported. Skapski conducted a study designed to evaluate the ungraded primary reading program in a public school in Burlington, Vermont. The study emphasized the difference in achievement in two situations: first, when ample provisions were made for individual differences and second, when virtually no such provisions were made. The reading achievement of the children in the nongraded reading program was significantly

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[36]George Myers Roberts, "Case Studies of Two Non-graded Elementary School Programs" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Tennessee, June, 1964).

[37]Betty Ritzenhein, "Survey of Personnel Perceptions in Nongraded Programs in Eight Detroit Elementary Schools" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University, 1963).

higher than that of the children in the traditional reading program.[38]

Kluwe attempted to determine the relative effects of two types of kindergarten primary programs, an integrated program and a traditional program. Her findings indicated superiority of the integrated program over the traditional program in promoting the personal and social adjustment of matched groups of children representing various socio-economic levels.[39]

Eldred and Hillson, in investigating the nongraded school and mental health, concluded that the nongraded organization could be far more effective than the traditional organization in producing healthy personalities and reducing problems.[40]

An investigation of the effects of nongrading in arithmetic was undertaken by Hart. The findings in this comparative study indicated a significant superiority for the nongraded pupils.[41]

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[38]Mary Skapski, "Ungraded Primary Reading Program," The Elementary School Journal, XXII (October, 1960), 43.

[39]Mary Jane Kluwe, "An Investigation of the Effects of an Integrated Kindergarten-Primary Program" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1957).

[40]Donald M. Eldred and Maurie Hillson, "The Nongraded School and Mental Health," The Elementary School Journal, LXIII (January, 1963), 218-222.

[41]R. H. Hart, "The Nongraded Primary School and Arithmetic," The Arithmetic Teacher, IX (March, 1962), 130-133.

Ingram studied the effect of a nongraded primary cycle on the achievement of third grade pupils at the termination of the cycle. The nongraded pupils were compared with pupils who had been taught under the graded organizational pattern. The pupils in the nongraded classrooms were found to be superior to pupils in graded classrooms in paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, and language.[42]

Hamilton and Rehwoldt reported on the multi-grade, multi-age plan in Torrance, California. This plan groups children varying three or four years in age at the primary and intermediate levels. A consistent pattern of gains greater than those of children in single grade classes was observed in academic achievement, personal and social adjustment, and desirable behavior characteristics.[43]

Buffie sought to determine whether the difference in mental health and academic achievement between the control group, taught in a typical or traditional graded setting, and the experimental group, taught in a nongraded environment, were significant after test scores had been adjusted

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[42]Vivian Ingram, "Flint Evaluates Its Primary Cycle," Elementary School Journal, LXI (November, 1960), 76-80.

[43]Warren Hamilton and Walter Rehwoldt, "By Their Differences They Learn," National Elementary Principal, XXXVII (December, 1957), 27-29.

for intelligence. All significant differences and all trends in the two areas measured favored the nongraded children.[44]

Maurie Hillson and his associates attempted a controlled experiment evaluating the effects of nongrading on pupil achievement. At the end of the one and one-half years of the three-year experimental period, analyses of grade level achievement for three measures related to reading achievement favored the nongraded organization at a level which was statistically significant. Hillson notes that the experimental period has now been completed, and assessment of this experiment has been tentatively made, but as yet not reported in the literature.[45]

The findings of a study by Carbone contrast sharply with the findings of Hillson and his associates. Carbone conducted an investigation of the relative effectiveness of graded versus nongraded schools through a controlled matched group experimental design. He found no evidence to indicate that pupils who had attended the nongraded primary schools achieved at a higher level during their intermediate years

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[44]Edward George Buffie, "A Comparison of Mental Health and Academic Achievement: The Nongraded School VS the Graded School" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, School of Education, Indiana University, August, 1962).

[45]Maurie Hillson et al., "A Controlled Experiment Evaluating the Effect of a Nongraded Organization on Pupil Achievement," The Journal of Educational Research, LVII (July, August, 1964), 548-550.

than pupils who had attended the graded schools. On the contrary, the pupils from the graded primary classrooms were found to be superior in achievement to the pupils in the non-graded primary classrooms.[46]

Moore reported findings similar to those of Carbone. He investigated the differences in reading and arithmetic achievement between children in an ungraded primary organization and children in a conventional graded school organization. Moore found that the mean score of pupils enrolled in graded classes exceeded the mean score of pupils enrolled in ungraded classes in nearly all measures of achievement. He concluded that the ungraded organization is largely an arrangement that attempts to provide for the individual differences of pupils along a single dimension, that of rate of progress. Therefore, it is not realistic to expect improved academic achievement in pupils on the basis of changing from the conventional graded to the ungraded organization. He further concluded that the attainment of high pupil achievement is not inherent in the nongraded organization and can be attained equally well in the modern conventional graded pattern.[47]

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[46]Robert F. Carbone, "The Nongraded School: An Appraisal," Administrator's Handbook (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), pp. 22-26.

[47]Daniel I. Moore, "Pupil Achievement and Grouping Procedures in Graded and Ungraded Primary Schools" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1963).

The brief review of the studies in the area of nongrading indicates conflicting evidence to some degree; however, most of the findings support the nongraded plan. Goodlad has maintained that the apparent conflict may not be real and that it is possible that investigators have simply compared pupils in two differently labeled "graded schools." Halliwell also observed, as a result of his investigation, that the problem of assessing the value of nongraded programs is quite complex and that much more research will be needed before such programs can be evaluated with any degree of validity.[48]

Advantages and Disadvantages of Nongrading

Perkins has stated that the nongraded pattern of organization, together with the body of philosophical and psychological principles which give it meaning, has the opportunity for influencing profoundly the pattern and organization of elementary education in America and possibly secondary and higher education as well.[49] Many educators concur with this point of view and are enthusiastic in their support of nongrading; others have pointed out some of the

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[48] Joseph Halliwell, "A Comparison of Pupil Achievement in Graded and Nongraded Schools," The Journal of Experimental Education, XXXII, Fall, 1963, 102-106.

[49] Hugh V. Perkins, "Nongraded Programs: What Progress?" Educational Leadership, III (December, 1961), 169.

problems and questions that are being raised. Stuart Dean has compiled a list representative of the "pros" and "cons" of nongrading.

These are some of the reasons for considering nongrading desirable.[50]

1. It recognizes and provides for individual differences among children.
2. It offers flexibility in administrative structure.
3. It abolishes the artificial barriers of grades and promotions.
4. It permits the pupil to progress at his own rate.
5. It promotes improved mental health in teacher and pupil.
6. It respects the continuity and interrelationship of learning.
7. It stimulates major curricular revision.
8. It is in harmony with the educational objectives of a democratic society.
9. It is administratively feasible for all levels and age groups.
10. It is program oriented, not operationally controlled.

These are some of the reasons the nongraded school is not considered desirable:

1. It leads to soft pedagogy; lacks fixed standards and requirements.
2. It places an impossible burden on the teacher.

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[50]Stuart E. Dean, "The Nongraded School--Is There Magic In It?" School Life, December, 1964, pp. 22-23.

3. It results in a lack of information on pupil progress to parents.
4. It is difficult to put into practice because teachers are inadequately and insufficiently prepared.
5. It replaces grade requirements by reading levels.
6. It does not have minimal standards for all children.
7. Its curriculum sequence tends to lack specificity and order.
8. It is only an improved means to an unimproved end.
9. It does not guarantee that improved teaching will result.
10. It suffers from widespread misuse and even abuse of the term "nongraded."

To sum up the case for the nongraded school, both advocates and critics alike generally agree that nongrading is not a panacea for all of the current educational problems, and that the success of the plan is ultimately determined in the classroom.

The Role of Teacher Education

Because America's schools today are undergoing rapid transformation, teacher education is challenged to devise ways of preparing teachers to cope with these changes. Eurich cites the changing role of the teacher as an urgent problem of teacher education and notes that the program must reflect the changing organization of the schools.[51]

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[51]Alvin C. Eurich, "A Symposium on Teacher Education," The Journal of Teacher Education, XIV (March, 1963), 27.

Several educators have indicated that one of the major problems in implementing successful nongraded school programs is the inadequate preparation of teachers. In responding to the allegation that "nongrading is difficult because teachers are inadequately and insufficiently prepared," Anderson comments: "True. Therefore, let's start a revolution in teacher education."[52]

Numerous other statements in the literature allude to the fact that programs for the preparation of elementary school teachers seem to be planned and carried out in terms of what has traditionally been considered good. Dawson asserts:

> If there is to be improvement in the quality of American education, it must begin in teacher training institutions. Thus the introduction of new media or attempts to improve the curriculum of our schools are like seeds sown on barren land if these innovations are not accompanied by a critical look at training of teachers. . . . In our college courses we have expounded on the developmental tasks of children, the uniqueness of the individual, and the child development point of view, but we have continued to prepare graded teachers trained to parcel out prepackaged content at nine and ten month intervals.[53]

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[52]Anderson, op. cit., p. 62.

[53]Martha E. Dawson, "A New Look At An Old Idea--The Nongraded Elementary School," Pioneer Ideas in Education, Committee on Education and Labor (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December, 1962).

Dawson's comments concur with other nongraded school advocates who feel that teacher education institutions should become more concerned with nongrading, team teaching, and other innovations in education, if tomorrow's teachers are to meet the demands of tomorrow's world.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' RESPONSES

The information obtained from responses of the teachers was compiled and summarized. An analysis of results is presented.

Teaching Experience in Graded and Nongraded Schools

The investigator attempted to determine the teaching experience of the respondents in both graded and nongraded schools. Figure 1 presents a summary of responses.

Upon inspecting Figure 1 it may be noted that a large percentage of the participants with ten years or less of experience had gained their experience in nongraded classrooms. Forty-two per cent of the participants had one to five years of experience in graded classrooms, and twenty-one per cent had six to ten years of experience in graded schools. In contrast, it may be noted that ninety-five per cent of the participants with ten years or less of experience had gained this experience in nongraded classrooms. The data presented in Figure 1 might possibly lead persons in teacher education to consider the new and changing school organizational patterns in teacher training programs.

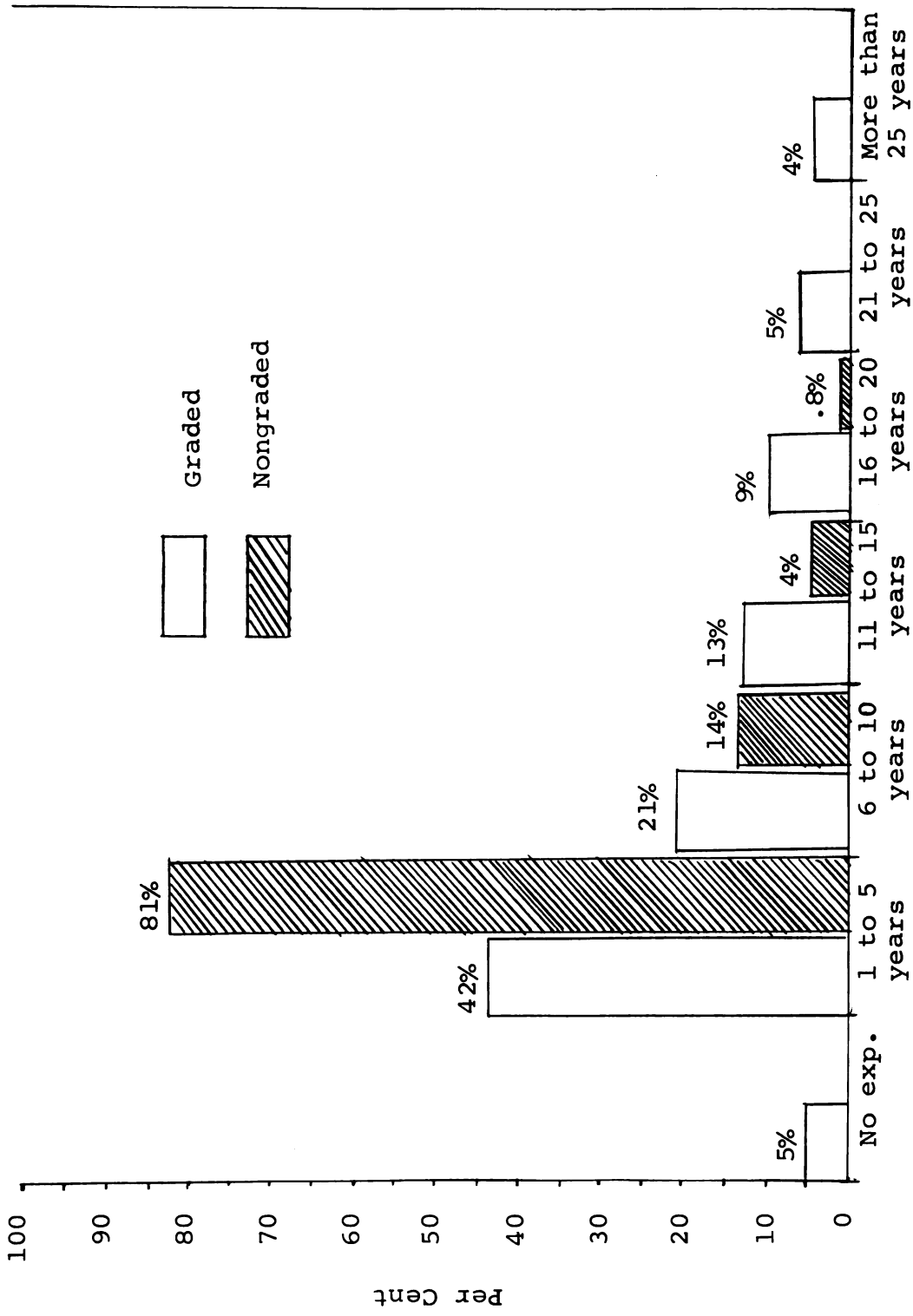

Figure 1. Experience of teachers in graded and nongraded schools.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Nongraded School

At the present time the professional literature is somewhat lacking in a clearly defined description of a nongraded school. In constructing the questionnaire the writer presented six definitions of the nongraded school. Three of the definitions, items 2, 4, and 6, were considered to be in harmony with the philosophy of the nongraded school, as previously defined for the purpose of this study. The remaining definitions, items 1, 3, and 5, were considered inconsistent with this basic philosophy. The respondents were asked to check the items which best described the nongraded school as they perceived it. The teachers' perceptions are revealed in Table 1.

The data presented in Table 1 bring into focus some inconsistencies in perception of the nongraded school. Thirty-six per cent of the participants indicated that a nongraded school is one in which the word "grade" is simply dropped in referring to pupil placement. However, seventy-one per cent indicated that nongrading is designed to promote flexibility and continuous progress. Forty-six per cent indicated that a nongraded school is one in which grades are replaced with reading levels. Yet, fifty-five per cent indicated that a nongraded school is one in which pupils follow an instructional program in each area of the curriculum according to their ability.

Table 1. Teachers' perceptions of the nongraded school

Concepts	Number of Responses	Per Cent
The Nongraded School is one in which:		
1. the word "grade" is simply dropped in referring to pupil placement	88	36.7
2. pupils are given an opportunity to move from one skill to another with little regard to age or number of years in school	117	48.8
3. grades are replaced with reading levels	112	46.7
4. pupils follow an instructional program in each area of the curriculum according to their ability	132	55.0
5. grade designations are dropped and children are assigned to homogeneous classes	65	27.0
6. the organizational pattern is designed to promote flexibility and continuous progress	171	71.2

The investigator further analyzed the data to determine: (a) the percentage of participants who evidenced consistent perceptions by checking items 2, 4, and 6, exclusively; (b) the percentage of participants who evidenced inconsistent concepts by checking items 1, 3, and 5, exclusively; and (c) the percentage of participants who evidenced mixed perceptions as indicated by checking both consistent and inconsistent descriptions of a nongraded school. This analysis is presented in Figure 2.

The data in Figure 2 suggest that more than half of the respondents (65 per cent) evidenced mixed perceptions of nongrading. Only 8 per cent checked items, exclusively, which indicated a relatively consistent view of nongradedness.

Procedures and Practices in Nongraded Classrooms

In determining the dimensions of a nongraded school, the investigator attempted to get some insight into the practices and procedures the teachers followed in teaching the basic areas of the curriculum. Table 2 describes the procedures followed in the teaching of reading.

Ability grouping for reading instruction appeared to be the most widely used procedure. Seventy-four per cent indicated the use of ability groups. It is also apparent that a combination of procedures were used. In regard to instructional materials, the data reveal that 76 per cent of

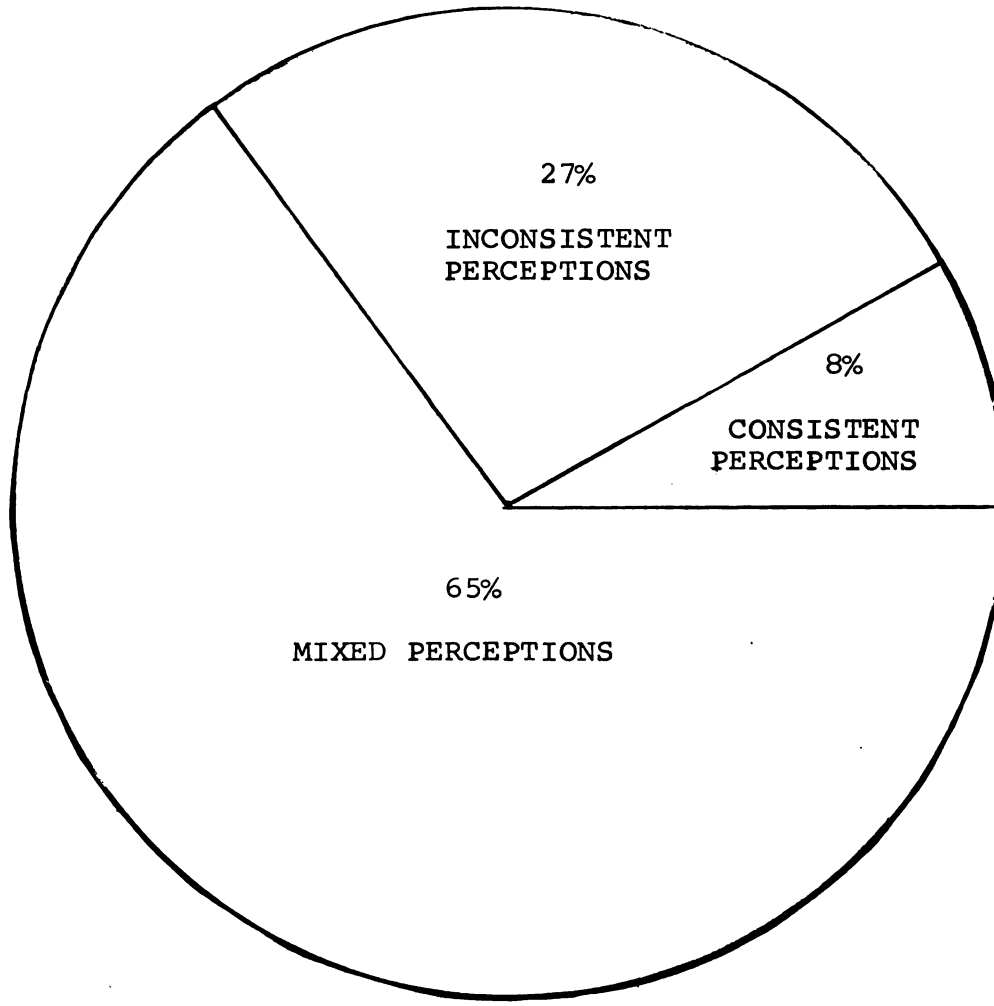

Figure 2. Consistency of teachers' responses to selected items regarding nongraded concept.

the participants used the basic reader in combination with supplementary texts. Only 8 per cent of the participants made exclusive use of the basic reader. Since individualized reading was indicated by more than half of the respondents (56 per cent), it is surprising to note the relatively small number of respondents who utilized trade books extensively.

Table 2. Procedures and practices used in the teaching of reading

Operational Practices	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Ability grouping	178	74.1
Reading levels	165	68.8
Interest grouping	66	27.5
Combination of grouping patterns	124	51.7
Individualized reading	135	56.3
Basal readers only	20	8.3
Basal readers and supplementary texts	183	76.3
Multi-series texts	89	37.1
Some use of trade books	59	24.6
Extensive use of trade books	46	19.2

Table 3 brings into focus the practices and procedures teachers follow in a nongraded classroom in the area of mathematics. The greatest number of respondents (61 per cent) followed a sequential development skills approach. Ability grouping was evidenced by more than half of the respondents; however, only a small percentage of respondents

individualized instruction in mathematics. This may be attributed, in part, to the nature of mathematics and the need for a systematic approach in order to ensure sequential development of skills.

Table 3. Procedures and practices in the teaching of mathematics

Instructional Practices	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Ability grouping	130	54.2
Mathematics levels	100	41.7
Individualized instruction	88	36.7
Sequential development skills approach	148	61.7

The investigator attempted to determine how teachers in the nongraded classroom approached the teaching of science. Table 4 reflects the teaching practices in this area.

Table 4. Procedures and practices in the teaching of science

Instructional Practices	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Instruction by television	89	37.1
Instruction primarily through textbooks	34	14.2
Unit approach	177	73.8
Units developed around recurring themes	88	36.7
Differentiated instruction	52	21.7
Independent projects	112	46.7

It is clearly indicated in Table 4 that the unit approach in science is most widely used by respondents. The data reflect some tendency toward considering the individual needs and interest of pupils. Twenty-one per cent of the teachers gave differentiated instruction, and 46 per cent indicated independent projects in science.

The data presented in Table 5 reflect the instructional procedures used by respondents in the area of social studies.

Table 5. Procedures and practices in the teaching of social studies

Instructional Practices	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Instruction primarily through basic texts	57	23.8
Multi-texts approach	90	37.6
Experience units, primarily	130	54.2
Units developed around recurring themes	117	48.8
Instruction by television	36	15.0
Individual projects	57	23.8
Some use of trade books	67	27.9
Extensive use of trade books	41	17.1

The majority of the participants in this investigation utilized experience units in teaching social studies concepts. Fifty-four per cent reported the use of experience units, and 48 per cent indicated the utilization of the thematic approach to social studies. It appears noteworthy that 37 per cent indicated the use of multi-texts.

Changes in organizational patterns and curriculum tend to reflect changes in instructional media. Table 6 gives some indication of the instructional media utilized by respondents in their nongraded classrooms.

Table 6. Instructional media utilized by teachers

Instructional Media	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Books on various levels in each subject matter field	170	70.8
Programmed materials	47	19.5
Films, movies, recordings, and audio-visual materials	219	91.3
Self-teaching or independent study materials	124	51.7

The data presented in Table 6 indicate the use of a variety of instructional materials. It is interesting to note that fifty-one per cent of the respondents reported the use of self-teaching or independent study materials. The data also indicate a tendency to recognize various learning rates within a class, through the use of books on various levels in each area of the curriculum. Seventy per cent of the participants indicated the use of books on various achievement levels.

Continuous diagnosis and evaluation would seem to be as essential, if not more, in a nongraded classroom as in a graded situation. Table 7 reflects the testing and

evaluation practices in the nongraded classrooms included in the study.

Table 7. Pupil evaluation practices in nongraded schools

Testing and Evaluation Procedures	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Use of standardized tests at beginning and end of term	86	35.8
Use of standardized tests at various intervals	114	47.5
Formal and teacher-developed instruments and techniques of evaluation	185	77.1
Individual testing	128	53.3
Evaluation of pupil in light of his previous growth record	179	74.6
Evaluation of pupil in light of his standing in the class	105	43.8
Evaluation of pupil in light of regional or national norms	83	34.6

Seventy-seven per cent of the participants indicated the use of both informal and formal measures of evaluation. Emphasis upon the individual may be noted in Table 7, as the data point out that 74 per cent of the participants evaluated pupils in relation to their own growth profile.

Many educators have indicated that changes in reporting practices appear to be a concomitant factor in nongrading. Table 8 reflects the reporting practices of participants in this study.

Table 8. Reporting practices in nongraded schools

Procedures Used	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Pupil progress reported through report cards only	18	7.5
Letter grades given on report cards	85	35.4
No letter grades given on report cards	87	36.3
Report cards and parent-teacher conference	186	77.5
Parent-teacher conference only	37	15.4

It appears that the combination of report cards and parent conferences is the most widely used reporting practice among participants. Seventy-seven per cent indicated the use of report cards with parent-teacher conferences. Only 7 per cent relied solely on report cards. The elimination of letter grades was indicated by 36 per cent of respondents; however, it is interesting to note that an almost equal number of participants (35 per cent) still used letter grades on report cards.

Respondents were asked to indicate the composition of classrooms in relation to the ability range of the pupils. The data presented in Figure 3 indicate that classrooms are about equally divided between those with pupils' abilities spreading over a wide range and those with a narrow range. Fifty per cent of the participants indicated that their classes were composed of pupils with a wide range of abilities. A somewhat narrow range is indicated by the 25 per

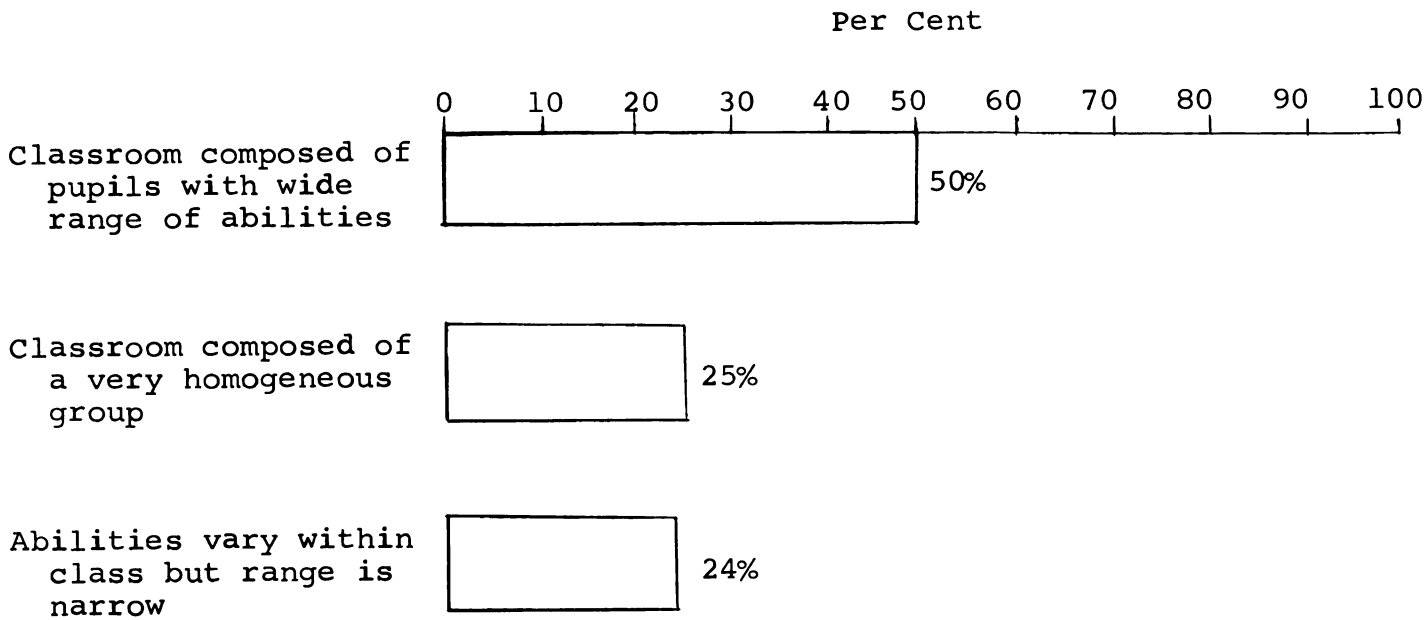

Figure 3. Organization of classes within nongraded schools.

cent who reported having homogeneous groups. An additional 24 per cent also indicated a somewhat narrow range of aptitudes and abilities.

Continuous progress is considered one of the hallmarks of the nongraded school. Figure 4 brings into focus this mobility.

The data reflected in Figure 4 indicate a great deal of flexibility in the movement of pupils. Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents indicated that pupils were moved from one classroom situation to another when the teachers deemed it advisable. The data also reveal a continuation of the lock-step movement in some nongraded schools.

Classroom organization.--The investigator attempted to determine how teachers organized their classes for instructional purposes within a nongraded structure. Table 9 presents the practices of respondents in the area of reading.

Upon inspecting Table 9 it may be noted that, just as in the typical graded classroom, use of three reading groups tends to be the most popular practice. Fifty per cent of the group taught reading by dividing the class into three reading groups. The utilization of two and four reading groups was indicated by a smaller number of teachers; 15 per cent used two reading groups, and 16 per cent organized the class into four groups.

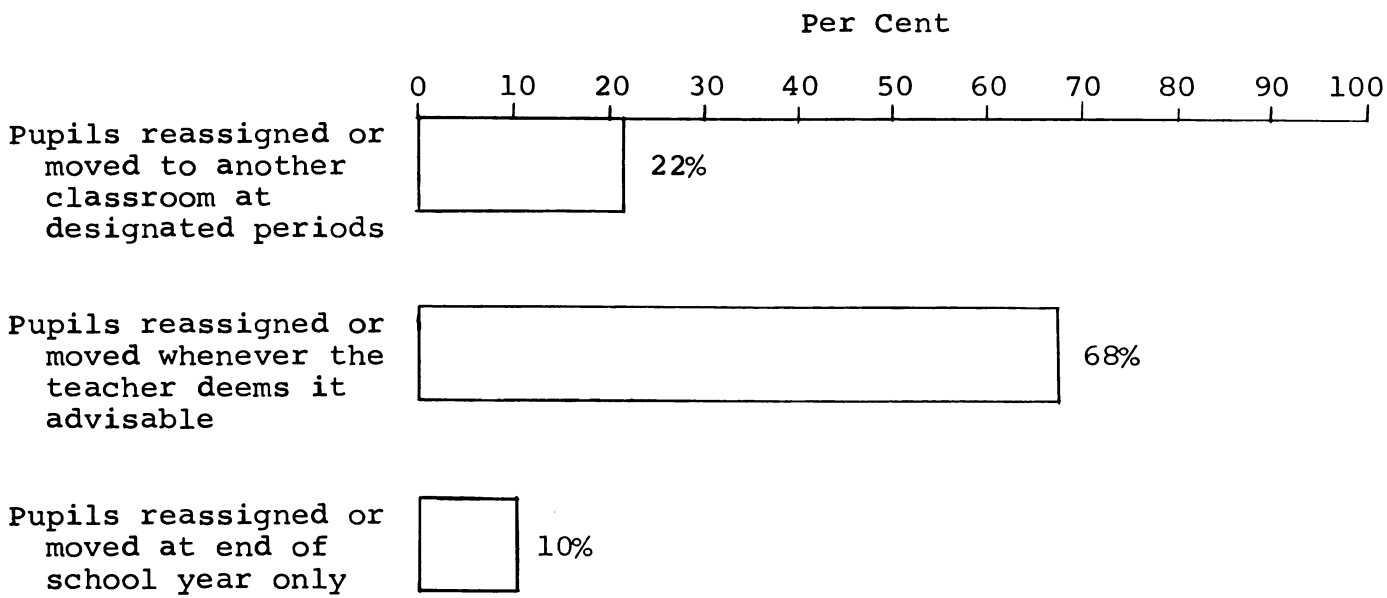

Figure 4. Mobility of pupils within nongraded schools.

Table 9. Classroom organizational practices in the area of reading

Grouping Procedure	Number	Per Cent	Utilization of Texts	Number	Per Cent
Individualized	8	3.3	Multi-texts	23	9.6
One Group	11	4.6	One series	87	36.2
Two Groups	38	15.8	Two series	53	22.1
Three Groups	120	50.0	Three series	42	17.5
Four Groups	40	16.7	Four series	22	9.2
Five Groups	13	5.4	Five series	8	3.3
Other*	10	4.2	Other*	5	2.1
Total	240	100.0		240	100.0

*More than five groups (flexible-varied).

It may also be noted in Table 9 that the use of one basic series continues to hold forth in the nongraded classroom. Thirty-six per cent of the respondents indicated a utilization of one basic series for reading. An additional 22 per cent used two reading series. With the increased emphasis upon individualization of instruction in the nongraded philosophy, it is significant to note that only 9 per cent of the teachers used multi-texts.

An attempt was also made to determine organizational practices in teaching the language arts, exclusive of reading. Table 10 reflects the practices in this area.

The data presented in Table 10 reveal a tendency toward one-group instruction within nongraded classrooms. Forty-three percent of the participants gave instruction in

the language arts to the classroom group as a whole. Only a small number of the respondents used individualized procedures or multi-texts for language arts. Organization of the classroom into two groups and the utilization of two series of textbooks appear to be the next most frequently utilized practices. Approximately 20 per cent of the teachers taught the language arts by organizing the class into two instructional groups. Twenty-one per cent also used two printed sources for instructional purposes.

Table 10. Classroom organizational practices in the area of language arts

Grouping Procedure	Number	Per Cent	Utilization of Texts	Number	Per Cent
Individualized	8	3.3	Multi-texts	1	4.6
One Group	104	43.3	One series	96	40.0
Two Groups	50	20.8	Two series	52	21.7
Three Groups	36	15.0	Three series	22	9.2
Four Groups	4	1.7	Four series	2	0.8
Five Groups	0	0.0	Five series	21	8.8
No Response	22	9.2	No Response	36	15.0
Other*	16	6.7	Other*	21	8.8
Total	240	100.0		240	100.0

*More than five groups (flexible-varied).

Table 11 gives some insight into the way the teachers approached classroom organization in the area of mathematics.

Table 11. Classroom organizational practices in the area of mathematics

Grouping Procedure	Number	Per Cent	Utilization of Texts	Number	Per Cent
Individualized	7	2.9	Multi-text	18	7.5
One Group	37	15.4	One series	108	45.0
Two Groups	116	48.3	Two series	63	26.3
Three Groups	35	14.6	Three series	28	11.7
Four Groups	7	2.9	Four series	1	...*
Five Groups	6	2.5	Five series	2	0.8
No Response	15	6.3	No Response	16	6.7
Other*	17	7.1	Other*	4	1.6
Total	240	100.0		240	100.0

*Less than .5%.

The majority of the teachers (48 per cent) had two instructional groups for instruction in mathematics. It is interesting to note, however, that 45 per cent utilized one mathematics series. It is somewhat revealing to note that, as with reading and the language arts, only a very small number of teachers organized their classes for individualized instruction. In the area of mathematics, only 2 per cent used an individualized approach, and 7 per cent used multi-texts.

Science in the elementary school offers many possibilities for the exploration of ideas and the utilization of special interests. Data presented in Table 12 reveal the prevailing practices in organizing for instruction in science within nongraded classrooms.

Table 12. Classroom organizational practices in the area of science

Grouping Procedure	Number	Per Cent	Utilization of Texts	Number	Per Cent
Individualized	8	3.3	Multi-texts	12	5.0
One Group	140	58.3	One series	107	44.6
Two Groups	30	12.5	Two series	50	20.8
Three Groups	21	8.8	Three series	19	7.9
Four Groups	1	...*	Four series	5	2.1
Five Groups	1	...*	Five series	6	2.5
No Response	14	5.8	No Response	24	10.0
Other	25	10.4	Other	17	7.1
Total	240	100.0		240	100.0

*Less than .5%.

Table 12 reveals wide utilization of one and two groups for instruction and reliance on one and two textbook series. Upon reviewing the data it appears that approximately 70 per cent of the teachers gave science instruction by organizing the class into one or two groups. Considering the emphasis upon the development of critical thinking and problem solving in the area of science, it is interesting to note that 64 per cent of the individuals represented in Table 12 utilized one or two textbooks for instruction.

Table 13 reveals the procedures teachers used in organizing classes for social studies.

Table 13. Classroom organizational practices in the area of social studies

Grouping Procedure	Number	Per Cent	Utilization of Texts	Number	Per Cent
Individualized	7	2.9	Multi-texts	12	5.0
One Group	136	56.7	One series	113	47.1
Two Groups	44	18.3	Two series	36	15.0
Three Groups	15	6.3	Three series	17	7.1
Four Groups	0	0.0	Four series	0	0.0
Five Groups	3	1.3	Five series	2	0.8
No Response	10	4.1	No Response	28	11.7
Other	25	10.4	Other	32	13.3
Total	240	100.0		240	100.0

In the area of social studies Table 13 reveals the tendency toward presenting social studies concepts to the class as a whole. Fifty-six per cent of the teachers gave instruction to the group as a whole, and 47 per cent utilized one series. Since reading is required in the content areas, it appears significant to note that only a small percentage of the teachers organized their classes in more than two groups. However, additional comments offered by respondents suggested the utilization of varied and flexible grouping in related unit activities.

An additional item related to grouping was included in the questionnaire for the purpose of eliciting information regarding changes in instructional groups occasioned by nongrading. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate whether the number of groups in the classroom had

increased, decreased, or remained basically the same. Table 14 yields this data.

Table 14. Changes in the number of instructional groups in the classroom

Content Areas	Increased		Decreased		Groups Basically the Same	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reading	82	34.2	27	11.3	103	42.9
Science	27	11.3	15	6.3	156	65.0
Social Studies	30	12.5	13	5.4	159	66.3
Mathematics	83	34.6	21	8.8	101	42.1
Language Arts	48	20.0	17	7.1	138	57.5

Considering the emphasis on flexibility inherent in the nongraded school structure it appears especially noteworthy in Table 14 that very little change was effected in relation to the number of instructional groups within the classroom. The greatest change indicated was in the areas of mathematics and reading, but in every subject area a discernable majority of respondents indicated that the number of instructional groups remained, generally, the same as in the graded classroom. However, a small number of participants reacted to the item with comments. Their comments indicated flexible or varied grouping and large-group-small group instruction associated with team teaching.

Teaching Procedures and Teaching Tasks in Graded and Nongraded Classrooms

Respondents were asked to compare teaching tasks and teaching procedures in graded and nongraded schools. Table 15 shows the information regarding operational practices in the classroom.

Table 15. Comparison of operational practices in graded and nongraded schools

Degree of Difference in Operational Practices	Number of Responses	Per Cent
No difference in operational practices	29	12.1
Slight difference in operational practices	73	30.4
Great difference in operational practices	126	52.5
No response to item	12	5.0
Total	240	100.0

It may be noted in Table 15 that the majority of respondents (52 per cent) indicated a great difference in operational practices while 30 per cent indicated a slight difference in operational practices. Only 12 per cent found no difference in operational practices and 5 per cent did not respond to the item. It was noted in some instances by respondents that they had not taught in the graded school and thereby could not make a comparison. Less than .5 per

cent of respondents indicated that their only experience in the graded school was student teaching, and their comparison was made on this basis.

Inspection of Table 16 reveals that opinions were quite varied in regard to the ease or difficulty in teaching in nongraded classrooms. However, the largest number of respondents (46 per cent) felt that teaching in a nongraded classroom was more difficult than teaching in a graded class. In their comments regarding this item, respondents attributed the increased difficulty to the need for more diagnosis and evaluation, record keeping, and planning for individualized instruction. A constant footnote to this item suggested that although respondents felt the teacher's task to be more difficult in the nongraded classroom, they found teaching to be more personally rewarding.

A representative sample of responses follows:

1. Nongraded is more difficult because there is no graded structure to hide behind; you're thinking through a new system.

2. It is much more time-consuming--clerical work and individual record keeping more difficult, but the results more than compensate for effort expended.

3. Nongraded is much more difficult in many areas. Planning for individualized instruction takes much more time and materials; continuous diagnosis and varied techniques of evaluation are imperative in assessing individual pupil progress.

Table 16. Comparison of teaching tasks in graded and non-graded schools

Degree of Difficulty	Number of Responses	Per Cent
No difference in ease or difficulty in teaching	55	22.9
Teaching in nongraded classes less difficult	62	25.8
Teaching in nongraded classes more difficult	111	46.3
No response to item	12	5.0
Total	240	100.0

It is interesting to note that the respondents who felt that teaching in a nongraded classroom was easier (25 per cent) offered comments in direct contrast to those above. Many of these respondents felt that planning was much simpler and other instructional practices less complex. This was attributed to the presence of well defined levels in instructional areas and less need for extensive planning due to the "homogeneity" of pupils in their classroom. The following samples of responses reflects the nature of their comments.

1. Nongraded is easier, because children are more or less on the same level.

2. Planning is much easier, because children with like abilities are together. Therefore, I can plan once for the entire group.

3. Nongraded is less difficult--all pupils are engaged in similar tasks.

The lowest number of respondents (22 per cent) who indicated no difference in ease or difficulty in teaching and found no difference in operational practices commented that nongrading was an organizational tool and nothing more; therefore, no instructional or procedural change would be effected in the classroom.

The final section of the questionnaire for teachers elicited their personal reactions toward selected aspects of the nongraded school. The essential questions raised in this part of the questionnaire were:

1. What are your most rewarding experiences in teaching in a nongraded school?
2. What are the most crucial problems you face in teaching in a nongraded school?
3. Would you prefer teaching in a graded or nongraded school? Why?
4. What courses or inservice work do you feel should be offered to persons who are going to teach in nongraded schools?
5. What techniques and experiences do you feel teachers should have prior to teaching in a nongraded school?

Most Rewarding Experiences of Teachers

All of the respondents listed at least three of their most rewarding experiences in teaching in a nongraded school. With few exceptions their comments reflected an inner personal satisfaction which is concomitant with pupil success. Specifically, more than three-fourths of the respondents listed the following "rewards" inherent in their teaching in a nongraded classroom: (1) meeting individual needs more

effectively; (2) working with happier, relaxed, less frustrated children; (3) having pupils progress at their own rate; (4) increased self-confidence and independence of pupils as shown in class activities; (5) high pupil interest and enthusiasm; and (6) growth of positive self-concept, leadership, and desirable personal qualities which come when each child experiences a measure of success.

Other comments mentioned less frequently but rather consistently alluded to: (1) flexibility of the structural pattern; (2) freedom from restricting "graded" barriers; (3) improved parental attitudes; (4) better human relations among faculty; and (5) professional growth through inservice training.

Most Crucial Problems of Teachers

Respondents were asked to list the most crucial problems encountered in teaching in a nongraded classroom. Table 17 presents these findings.

Inspection of Table 17 reveals a numerous array of problems encountered by respondents. Many of the problems seem typical of those which may beset teachers in any classroom situation; however, some appear unique to nongrading. The largest number of respondents (70 per cent) listed various difficulties related to grouping and subgrouping practices. Their comments indicated a concern for pupil placement, progress levels, and group mobility. The next

Table 17. Summary of responses regarding current problems encountered by teachers in nongraded schools

Most Difficult Problems of Teachers	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Grouping and subgrouping	168	70.0
Lack of sufficient time for planning	142	59.2
Use of graded textbooks	124	51.7
Lack of nongraded instructional materials	110	45.8
Establishing criteria for evaluation	104	43.3
Insecurity in parent-teacher conferences	102	42.5
Overcrowded classes	98	40.8
Interpreting program to parents	95	39.6
Pupil placement	94	39.2
Record keeping	92	38.3
Scheduling	88	36.7
Techniques of diagnosis	85	35.4
Explaining nongraded philosophy to others	82	34.2
Developing individualized instructional materials	76	31.7
Meeting needs of the "extremes" in the classroom	71	29.6
Planning for individualized instruction	65	27.1
Inadequate number of trades books	65	27.1
Transfer records	54	22.5
Using instructional aids effectively	45	18.8
Homogeneous grouping	42	17.5
Lack of direction in social studies	41	17.1
Difficulty in communicating because of terminology	36	15.0
Achieving balance in the school day	35	14.6
Cooperative planning among staff	35	14.6
Pressure by parents at end of third year	16	6.7
Discipline problems	14	5.8
No problems	12	5.0
Lack of pupil understanding of nongraded concept	5	2.1

problem mentioned most frequently was the lack of time for planning and implementing the program. Time is a crucial element in any classroom; however, it was indicated that record keeping, cooperative planning, evaluation, and attempts to meet individual needs were much more time consuming in a nongraded classroom. Use of graded texts due to lack of nongraded instructional materials and difficulty in developing individualized materials appeared constantly as crucial problems. Other problems of frequent mention were related to interpreting the nongraded philosophy, record keeping, parent-teacher conferences, diagnosis, and evaluation.

Attitudes of Teachers Toward Nongrading

A summary of teachers' responses regarding their reactions toward teaching in a nongraded school is presented in Table 18, which follows.

Table 18. Teachers' reactions regarding their preference of teaching in graded or nongraded schools

Reaction of Teacher	Number of Teachers	Per Cent
Prefers nongraded--without reservation	194	80.8
Prefers nongraded--with reservation	22	9.2
Prefers graded	7	2.9
No preference	5	2.1
No response to item	12	5.0
Total	240	100.0

It is readily apparent in Table 18 that the greatest number of respondents indicated a favorable attitude toward teaching in a nongraded school. Eighty per cent expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the nongraded organizational pattern. In giving reasons for their preference of the nongraded school, many responses assimilate statements made relative to their most rewarding experiences, as may be noted in the sample of comments which follows:

1. I prefer the nongraded approach, because it is in harmony with my philosophy of teaching and what we know about child growth and development.

2. I prefer teaching in the nongraded school, because I am satisfied at the end of the day. I feel an inner personal satisfaction that I am meeting the needs of children.

3. Nongraded--It provides the best possible education for the individual child and this is what we all desire, isn't it?

4. I prefer nongraded because it helps good students who are often neglected and alleviates pressure and comparisons.

5. I like the nongraded approach because it matches the fluid and often sporadic growth in childhood and eliminates superimposed expectations which are not realistic.

A relatively small percentage of the respondents expressed a preference for the nongraded school, in principle, but appeared to have misgivings about specific facets, which are reflected in the sample of comments which follows:

1. I adhere to the principle of nongradedness, but I am not sure it is really being implemented.

2. I prefer teaching in a nongraded school--if it's truly nongraded. Instead of asking how many readers have been covered, as in the graded school, nongraded teachers ask how many levels have been covered. I fail to see the difference.

3. I favor the nongraded school, but with this reservation--the intermediate grades should also be nongraded. Terminating the nongraded pattern at the primary level, I feel, makes a farce of continuous progress.

4. Generally, I believe in what the nongraded school purports to do, but I don't think we are doing that. For example, we're still grading A, B, C, D, and F.

5. I prefer the nongraded school, but I feel that our levels approach is much too restricting. We use the same old basic series with some "new" names attached.

A discernable minority of respondents (3 per cent) preferred the graded school. Without exception, their comments related to dissatisfaction with the nongraded structure as implemented in their respective schools. The following sample of comments is representative of their reactions:

1. I prefer the graded school, because the nongraded school leaves much to be desired. The organizational pattern creates a halo effect for the bright children and "brands" the slower learners.

2. Our change to nongraded has done more harm than good. The children remain together throughout the primary years, and the bright groups tend to exhibit an air of superiority and disassociate themselves from the others.

3. Graded!!! Why? At least I know what it is!

4. I prefer the graded school, because of my training I feel secure. Our "two-day workshop" orientation to nongrading has accomplished no more than removing the grade designations. A "graded" school by any other name remains the same.

5. Teaching in the nongraded school has not been rewarding to me. I have a multiplicity of discipline problems because slow-learners are all concentrated in one unit--and every year it happens to be mine.

An analysis of individual responses suggests that the grouping pattern or basis for setting up classes in a given school affects the attitude of respondents toward nongrading. It appears significant to note that the nature of responses frequently implied implications of heterogeneous or homogeneous grouping patterns.

Courses and/or Inservice Training Recommended for Teachers

The participants were asked to express their opinions regarding undergraduate or inservice training necessary for teachers in nongraded schools. The responses were quite numerous; however, there was considerable agreement in their recommendations, as may be noted in Table 19.

Of the 240 participants responding to this item, 85 per cent felt that some course should be offered which inculcated the philosophy of the nongraded school. Workshops on the nongraded school at the graduate level were recommended by 50 per cent of the respondents, and 30 per cent recommended

nongraded school workshops on the undergraduate level. More than half of the respondents felt that student teaching in a nongraded school should be provided, if possible.

Table 19. Recommendations regarding courses and/or inservice training for prospective nongraded school teachers

Recommended Courses	Number of Responses	Percentage
Philosophy of the nongraded school	204	85.0
Individualized instruction	132	55.0
Child growth and development	155	64.6
Graduate workshop on nongraded school	120	50.0
Student teaching in the nongraded school	165	68.8
Psychology of learning	113	47.1
Individual differences	95	39.6
Undergraduate workshop on non-graded school	74	30.8
Group dynamics	42	17.5
Multiple responses	41	17.1

Next in frequency, recommendations concerned the closely related areas of child development and psychology of learning. Fifty-one per cent of respondents felt that there should be greater emphasis in the general area of child growth and development; 47 per cent indicated psychology of learning; and 39 per cent suggested individual differences. Respondents largely agreed that more stress in these areas would precipitate a greater understanding of the concept of nongradedness.

Many of the respondents commented on the nature of course offerings at the undergraduate level. The major concern here was not an increase in the number of courses, but a change in the organization, methods, and content of professional courses. Of frequent mention were (1) greater individualization of instruction in college classes; (2) more laboratory-type experiences providing techniques of analysis, discovery, and experimentation; and (3) more effort by professors of education in directing experiences which would involve implementation of the nongraded concept.

Multiple responses included curriculum revision, diagnosis, remediation, audio-visual instruction, and team teaching.

Techniques and Experiences Recommended by Teachers

Respondents cited techniques and experiences which they considered essential for successful teaching in a nongraded school. A listing of comments and their frequencies are summarized in Table 20.

The data in Table 20 show that more than half of the respondents (128) felt that teachers should in some way be exposed to the philosophy of the nongraded school. Directed observation and participation was recommended by 102 respondents, and 65 felt student teaching to be desirable. Visiting successful nongraded schools was recommended for inservice teachers by 82 respondents. These experiences comprised

a total of 377 responses, by far the largest number relative to a given area.

Table 20. Opinions of teachers regarding techniques and experiences essential for teachers in nongraded schools

Recommended Techniques and Experiences	Frequency of Mention
Exposure to the philosophy of nongraded school	128
Planning for individualization of instruction	112
Techniques in grouping procedures	109
Directed observation and participation in non-graded schools	102
Techniques of evaluation	95
Record keeping	91
Visits to successful nongraded schools	82
Techniques in parent-teacher conferences	78
Working with multi-age and multi-level groups	76
Understanding scope and sequence of levels	75
Student teaching in the nongraded school	65
Broader use of multi-media for instruction	61
Cooperative planning	46
Techniques of diagnosis	28
Curriculum construction	24
Techniques of remediation	21
Developing materials for enrichment	18

Experience in planning for individualized instruction was listed as essential by 112 respondents. The majority of respondents who commented on this item felt that, generally, methods presented in college courses were geared to the graded concept of planning for two or three groups in the classroom, with individualization more the exception than the rule. Similar reactions were reflected in relation to grouping procedures. Respondents frequently indicated a need for greater understanding of varied types of grouping;

coupled with some experience in working with multi-age and multi-level groups. Next in frequency were techniques of evaluation and record keeping.

The above findings account for approximately 70 per cent of the total number of responses regarding essential techniques and experiences. The remaining 30 per cent cover a wide range of suggestions. These, as can be noted, refer to parent-teacher conferences, scope and sequence of levels, multi-media, cooperative planning, diagnosis, curriculum, remediation, and enrichment.

General comments indicated a greater need for prospective teachers to engage in more laboratory-type experience and more actual "doing" experiences with children.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSES OF ADMINISTRATORS' RESPONSES

The information obtained from responses of the administrators included in the study was compiled and summarized. An analysis of results follows.

Academic Preparation of Administrators

The investigator was interested in determining the academic background of the ninety administrators participating in the study. The academic preparation of the respondents is presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Academic preparation of administrators

Academic Preparation	Major Field							
	Elementary		Secondary		Administration		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
B.S. degree	38	42	20	22	0	0	32	36
M.A. degree	31	34	0	0	56	62	3	3
Study beyond Masters	..	..	2	2	4	4	0	0
Doctorate	..	..	..	..	5	6	1	1

It may be noted in Table 21 that the majority of respondents (64 per cent) received their undergraduate training in education, 42 per cent at the elementary level and 22 per cent at the secondary level. All respondents had earned the Master's degree, the greatest number (62 per cent) majoring in some phase of administration.

In comparing the number of years of experience administrators had in both graded and nongraded schools, it is shown in Figure 5 that the majority of the administrators with 1 to 5 years of experience (69 per cent) had gained their experience in nongraded schools. Forty per cent of the group with 6 to 10 years of experience had gained their experience in graded classrooms. It may be noted that in each category, excluding the first five-year period, the percentages indicate more experience in graded schools. Many of the respondents indicated teaching experience in the elementary school prior to assuming their present administrative role.

Administrative Profile of Schools

In an attempt to gain general information regarding the schools represented in the study, the respondents were asked to indicate (1) the grades replaced by the nongraded structure, (2) the primary basis for setting up classes, and (3) the length of time school has been nongraded. This information is presented in Tables 22 through 24, which follow.

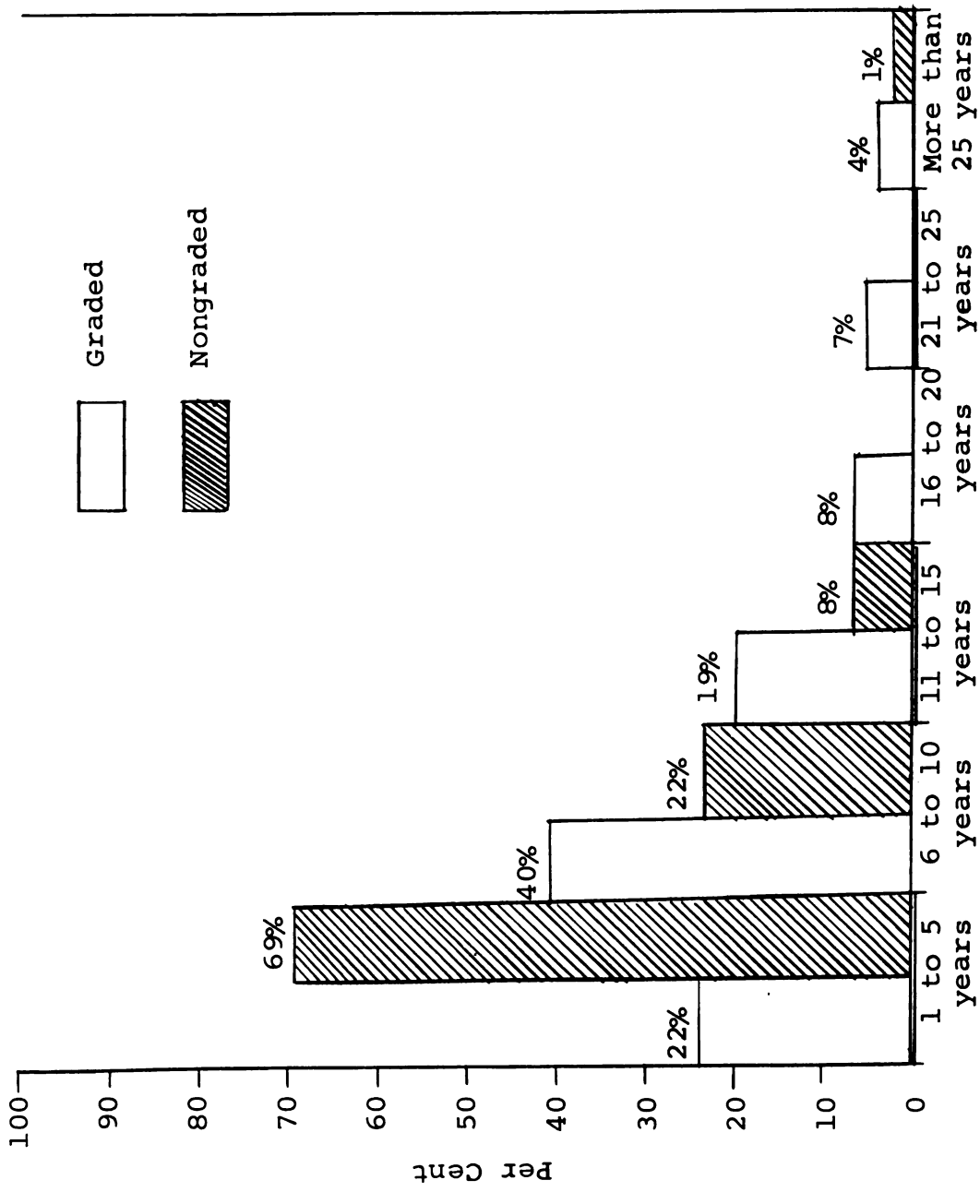

Figure 5. Experience of administrators in graded and nongraded schools.

Table 22. Grades replaced by nongraded structure

Grades Replaced	Number	Per Cent
Primary unit only		
K-3	38	42.2
Primary and intermediate		
K-8	50	55.6
Other	2	2.2
Total	90	100.0

Table 22 shows that 42 per cent of the schools represented in this study are nongraded at the primary level only. Two schools were reported to be nongraded at the primary level and departmentalized at the intermediate level. The largest number of respondents (55 per cent) indicated that grades had been eliminated at both the primary and intermediate levels. These findings reflect an extension of nongrading to the intermediate grades within recent years. The 1957-58 survey by Goodlad and Anderson pointed out that very few schools had included grades four, five, and six in their nongraded structure.

It is apparent in Table 23 that homogeneous grouping was most widely used as a basis for assigning pupils to classes in the nongraded schools reported in the study. Some type of ability grouping was reported in 67 of the 90 schools, reading achievement being the most prevalent criterion mentioned. Fifteen participants reported heterogeneously grouped classes, and chronological age was used as the

primary basis in only 4 schools. Under the category of "other," respondents indicated peer style grouping, multi-factor grouping, and a combination of grouping patterns based on interest, emotional, and social maturity.

Table 23. Primary bases for assigning pupils to classrooms in nongraded schools

Criterion Used	Number	Per Cent
Homogeneous grouping	28	31.1
General achievement	3	3.3
Reading achievement	25	27.8
Chronological age	4	4.4
Heterogeneous grouping	15	16.7
General achievement and reading	11	12.2
Other	4	4.4
Total	90	100.0

Of the 90 schools represented by the responding administrators, Table 24 shows that the largest number of schools (41) had been nongraded from 4 to 6 years; the second largest number of schools (23) were nongraded within the last three years. Schools nongraded within the last ten years comprised 86 per cent of the sample. Four schools were reported to have been nongraded for more than 20 years.

Table 24. Length of time schools have been nongraded

Number of Years Nongraded	Number of Schools
1-3	23
4-6	41
7-9	10
10-12	6
13-15	5
16-18	1
19-21	2
22-24	1
25-27	1

Perceptions of Nongradedness in Individual Schools

At the present time there is little definite information as to what one means when he describes a nongraded school. Nongrading has a different point of reference for individual educators. It was thus imperative for the writer to determine what was meant by nongrading in each school. The administrators were therefore asked to describe what nongrading meant in their specific school. The following representative sample of comments reflects their perceptions:

> An organizational pattern which permits flexible grouping, continuous progress, and team teaching.
>
> An attempt to provide flexibility and freedom for pupils to progress continuously through the skill areas of language arts and mathematics.
>
> Pupils progress at own rate. They are accelerated when ready or put in a group working more slowly when needed.
>
> Continuous progress for each child in each subject area.

Nongradedness does not mean an organizational pattern.

An organization that (vertically) has no borders, boundaries, or road blocks by years or quarters; no failures at placement levels.

Continuous progress in reading and mathematics.

Pupils move from one reading level to next. At the end of the first year, pupil may go to level 4 which is a first reader instead of level 5 which would be a second reader.

A series of reading levels through which the children progress as they are able.

Placing children on instructional levels for instruction rather than placing by traditional grade levels.

Children are grouped homogeneously by achievement in reading and mathematics.

Gearing a program to the child, not a child to a program. Recognizing individual differences and implementing a program to fit the differences.

A complete erasure of grade lines and "requirements"; multi-aged (three-year spread) with complete emphasis on the individual.

Children move through fourteen levels in reading and mathematics rather than six grades.

The first three years are considered a block of time and information. Grade designations have been replaced by nine levels. Children are allowed to advance at their own rate.

A flexible system of grouping in which children in the primary grades are grouped together in order to make extensive effort toward adapting instruction to individual needs.

Eight required levels replace the primary grades; level 9 for enrichment. Children move from one level to the next as soon as they finish their requirements.

The sample of comments serves to indicate the gamut of perceptions regarding nongrading and the meaning of nongradedness in individual schools. The majority of the respondents, however, indicated the use of instructional levels replacing traditional grade demarcations. Inherent in most of the comments was some mention of flexibility, continuous progress, and the opportunity for the pupil to progress at his own rate.

Procedural and Curriculum Changes Resulting from Nongrading

One would assume that changing from a graded school to a nongraded school would lead to procedural and curricular changes. Therefore, the investigator asked administrators to list practices which had been introduced as a result of nongrading. A sample of comments reflecting curricular changes is presented:

> We have given increased attention to revision of curriculum and report cards to support our philosophy.
>
> More inservice work is provided to increase teacher understanding of the needs and problems of children and ways of meeting them more effectively.
>
> We have grouped somewhat homogeneously to narrow the ability spread within a specific class.
>
> Levels are set up for reading and mathematics that children progress through according to ability.
>
> Advanced pupils are allowed to complete the elementary school in less time.

Some experimentation with new materials is being done.

There is no grading nor reporting via report cards but communication with parents through conferences several times a year.

We are using cooperative teaching and multi-aging as avenues to continuous progress for each child in each subject area.

Submitting report cards to parents at different times upon the completion of a basic series reading text.

The emphasis is now on individual growth, diagnosis of needs, and preparing suitable programs.

Children move among classrooms during a day; they may have two or three teachers during the day but keep these same teachers for the school term.

We are now moving into two-age groupings in the primary unit. Records are kept to show achievement levels of each child, and the program is planned so that it can be a continuous progression.

We have completely eliminated reading groups.

There are no failures; the enrichment program is not just "on paper."

Children may now be re-assigned at any time during the school year, if deemed advisable.

More extensive use of audio-visual materials and multi-level materials for individuals and groups.

We now group heterogeneously rather than attempt to make unattainable "homogeneous" classes based on spurious achievement scores.

We now afford released time for teacher planning.

We make use of team teaching techniques. There is a master teacher for each area and for each level who is largely responsible for planning, executing plans, and evaluating with teammates and with principal.

> We have narrowed the ability span in each class section thereby increasing teacher efficiency.
>
> Though the original achievement levels were based on reading achievement levels, cross grading was done in other subject levels.
>
> A team of three teachers and a teacher aide are working with around 85 children.
>
> We are now placing children or more than one age group within a classroom. This helps to further remove the artificial grade lines and allows a teacher more flexibility in grouping and planning for the needs of individual children.

There was no discernable pattern evidenced by administrators regarding procedural and curriculum changes. However, development of achievement levels and change toward some type of homogeneous grouping were indicated most frequently.

Reaction of Administrators Toward Nongrading

The attitude of an individual toward an innovation or any educational endeavor plays a significant part in its success. Thus, it appeared relevant to determine the attitudes of the administrators in this study toward the nongraded organization and the instructional program within the nongraded pattern. The reaction of the administrators are reflected in Table 25.

Data in Table 25 present the reaction of administrators to the nongraded organization and instructional program. Approximately 90 per cent of the administrators were highly

satisfied or satisfied with the nongraded organizational structure. There appears to be less satisfaction with the instructional program within the organizational structure. Thirty-seven per cent indicated some degree of dissatisfaction with the instructional program. It is significant to note that only 1 per cent indicated total dissatisfaction with the organizational structure, and 5 per cent total dissatisfaction with the instructional program.

Table 25. Reaction of administrators toward nongraded organization and instructional program

Reaction of Administrators	Organizational Pattern		Instructional Program	
	No.	%	No.	%
Highly satisfied	60	66.7	26	28.9
Satisfied	21	23.3	25	27.8
Some degree of dissatisfaction	8	8.9	34	37.8
Totally dissatisfied	1	1.1	5	5.6
Total	240	100.0	240	100.0

Future School Organizational Preferences Among Administrators

The investigator was interested in determining the future stability of the nongraded school among the 104 nongraded schools represented in the study. The administrators were asked to cite the school organizational pattern they would select, if given a choice.

Only one administrator stated that, if given a choice, he would select the graded structure. All others indicated that they would prefer the nongraded organizational pattern in their school. Some of the respondents were specific in their comments and stated that they would organize their schools:

with a nongraded team teaching combination

with multi-age classes

with nongraded homogeneous classes

with nongraded heterogeneous classes

with nongraded classes from kindergarten through grade six

with teacher cycling over a two to three year span in a nongraded unit

with a nongraded primary unit and departmentalized intermediate unit

The administrators' remarks, while favoring nongradedness, did indicate that there is little consistency as to how the nongraded school should be organized. The largest number of administrators seemed to favor the homogeneous grouping

pattern and team teaching; respondents favoring heterogeneous classes and multi-age classes were in the minority. As was reflected in the teachers' comments, some of the administrators preferred the nongraded pattern, basically, but evidenced concern about the way it was currently being implemented. There was also a great deal of variability as to the reasons for preferring the nongraded school.

Administrators' Recommendations for Courses and/or Inservice Training

One objective of this study was to determine the implication of present practices in nongraded schools for teacher training. On the bases of their experiences with teachers in nongraded schools, the administrators were asked to recommend courses for preservice and inservice teachers. Their responses are summarized in Table 26.

Upon inspecting Table 26 it appears that understanding of the philosophy and structure of nongrading is essential; 90 per cent of the respondents recommended courses dealing with this concept. Eighty-one per cent of the administrators recommended courses concerned with individualized instruction and child development. In light of the large number of respondents recommending courses in child development and individualization of instruction, it seems surprising to note that, comparatively, a small number (35 per cent) recommended courses involving diagnosis and remediation.

Table 26. Administrators' recommendations for preservice and inservice training

Recommended Courses	Number	Per Cent
Structure and philosophy of nongraded school	81	90.0
Child growth and development	73	81.1
Individualization of instruction	73	81.1
Grouping for instruction	70	77.8
Workshop on nongraded school	68	75.6
Curriculum theory	65	72.2
Students teaching in nongraded school	64	71.1
Group dynamics	49	54.4
Psychology of learning	42	46.7
Individual differences	37	41.1
Diagnosis and remediation	32	35.6
Team teaching	29	32.2

Recommended Techniques and Experiences Essential for Success in Nongraded Schools

The administrators represented in the study were asked to recommend techniques and experiences which they believed were essential to successful teaching in the nongraded school. These recommendations and their frequencies follow in Table 27.

Table 27 brings into focus the need for a variety of experiences before delving into nongrading. Fifty-one administrators recommended that teachers have experience in planning individualized instruction. Forty-five respondents recommended student teaching in nongraded or individualized

settings. An additional 42 respondents recommended experiences with multi-age groups.

Table 27. Administrators' recommendations of techniques and experiences essential for teaching in the nongraded school

Techniques and Experiences	Frequency of Mention
Observation of nongradedness in the classroom	55
Opportunities for planning individualized instruction	51
Student teaching in nongraded or individualized instruction setting	45
Experience with multi-age groups	42
Experience with a variety of grouping patterns	36
Techniques used in parent-teacher conferences	31
Experiences in decision-making and group dynamics	28
Experience in team teaching or cooperative teaching	24
Development of materials for multi-level groups	24
Experience in diagnosis and remediation	21
Experience in developing individual pupil records	19
Creative experiences in children's literature	5

Problems of Teachers as Viewed by Administrators

In an elementary school, the principal should be keenly aware of the problems teachers face. Upon inspecting Table 28 the reader might gain some insight into the problems of teachers as observed by the administrators.

Table 28. Problems of teachers as viewed by administrators

Current Problems	Number	Per Cent
Meeting individual needs	74	82.2
Lack of understanding of non-graded philosophy	63	70.0
Providing adequate individualized materials	59	65.6
Reporting to parents	53	58.9
Establishing criteria for evaluation	52	57.8
Proper placement of pupils	51	56.7
Mobility and flexibility of classroom grouping	48	53.3
"Grade mindedness" and traditional practices	47	52.2
Collective decision-making	42	46.7
Record keeping	36	40.0
Allowing pupils to advance	35	38.9
Time for planning	22	24.4
Human relations	21	23.3
Teaching social studies	4	4.4

It seems significant to note that a majority of the administrators (70 per cent) felt that teachers were lacking in understanding of the nongraded philosophy even though they were teaching in a nongraded school. A larger number of respondents (82 per cent) felt that teachers were experiencing difficulty in meeting individual needs of pupils. The data also indicate that in spite of the flexibility which is said to be a part of nongraded schools, some teachers were still adhering to traditional practices and strict guidelines. Administrators indicated that much "grade-mindedness" still exists among teachers; fifty-two per cent considered this to be a major problem.

Problems related to grouping, evaluation, human relations and reporting to parents were frequently mentioned. This is highly consistent with the crucial problems as reported by the teachers (Table 17).

Future Plans Regarding the Nongraded Program

An attempt was made to determine the future direction of nongraded schools included in the investigation. The administrators were asked to indicate plans for extending and/or modifying existing programs. In response to the questions, many plans were indicated. The administrators pointed out that they planned to:

nongrade the entire school

establish materials center

implement team teaching

develop social studies program

develop mathematics program

move toward parent-teacher conferences only

use more programmed instructional materials

extend individualized procedures

revise reporting system

develop diagnostic prescriptive type materials

conduct research on follow-up pupils

nongrade other content areas

use lay personnel in program

create post kindergarten room for disadvantaged pupils

study spiral approach in social studies

utilize problem solving approach in content areas

extend nongraded concept through junior high and high school

initiate cooperative teaching

develop sequential units in science and social studies

initiate library summer program

study more effective system of record keeping

Among the numerous prospective plans, those mentioned most frequently include team teaching; extending program to upper levels; developing social studies programs; extension of individualized procedures; and revision of reporting system. Only one respondent indicated a return to the graded system; all others planned to continue the nongraded structure and modify or extend their existing program.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The principal purpose of this study was to explore the dimensions of the nongraded school concept in selected elementary schools. Specifically, an attempt was made (1) to find out how individual teachers and administrators perceived the nongraded concept, (2) to determine the operational practices of teachers, (3) to determine the nature and extent of problems encountered by teachers in nongraded classrooms, and (4) to analyze the findings with implications for teacher education.

The nongraded school was viewed by the writer as an organizational structure which removes formal grade lines and provides the flexibility that permits continuous progress and attention to the individual needs of all children; the concept embraces the basic principles of child growth and development, learning, school function, and pedagogical practice.

To provide a knowledgeable basis and gain greater insight into the various dimensions of nongrading, an intensive review of the literature was pursued. This review

focused primarily on (1) the historical development of elementary school organization, (2) the emergence of the nongraded school, (3) a review of the nongraded school concept, and (4) the role of teacher education in relation to public school innovations. The review revealed a paucity of actual research in the area of nongrading, but numerous descriptions of schools currently operating under the nongraded plan were cited. In addition, an attempt was made to examine the nongraded concept in depth through citations in the literature offered by educators regarding the nongraded idea.

In order to procure data for this study, interviews were held with teachers and principals currently working in nongraded schools. The information gathered during interview sessions was summarized and categorized to formulate the nucleus of a questionnaire for teachers and a questionnaire for administrators. The survey instruments were sent to administrators of schools cited in the literature as being nongraded. Questionnaire returns yielded data from nongraded schools representing a wide geographical distribution; specifically, one hundred five school systems in thirty-two states. Responses from two hundred forty teachers and ninety administrators comprised the total sample.

The information accumulated through use of the questionnaires was summarized, and the analysis of data resulted in the following findings:

Findings

1. The majority of the participants in this study, both administrators and teachers, had experience in teaching in both graded and nongraded schools. The more recent graduates had more experience in nongraded schools. Eighty per cent of the teachers and 69 per cent of the administrators, with one to five years of experience, had gained this experience in nongraded schools.

2. The majority of teachers revealed a lack of sound understanding of the meaning of nongrading; their comments revealed mixed perceptions of nongradedness. A minority of the participants perceived the nongraded school as one in which (1) pupils follow a developmental skills approach, (2) the instructional program in each area of the curriculum is geared to the ability of individual students, and (3) the program is flexible so as to promote flexibility and continuous progress. Only 27 per cent of the teachers perceived of the nongraded school as one encompassing the dimensions above.

3. The data reflect that misconceptions were also apparent among administrators in nongraded schools. In response to the question, "What does nongrading mean in your particular school?" the perceptions appeared varied and conflicting. The majority of respondents perceived a nongraded program to be one in which reading levels followed a basic reading series, and each child was required to complete each

level. An almost equal number of participants perceived nongrading to be synonymous with homogeneous grouping. Still another group perceived of nongrading as an arrangement in which pupils are grouped heterogeneously, "rather than attempting to achieve unattainable homogeneous classes." A small minority perceived of the nongraded program as a complete erasure of grade lines and "requirements" with emphasis on individual needs.

4. Administrators indicated no consistent pattern for assigning pupils to classroom groups. The largest number of respondents, 31 per cent, used homogeneous grouping for classroom assignment. Twenty-seven per cent set up classes on the bases of chronological age, general achievement, heterogeneous grouping, and a combination of the above mentioned factors.

5. The data relative to the academic range of pupils within nongraded classrooms revealed no predominant pattern. Fifty per cent reported that classroom units included pupils with a wide range of abilities. Twenty-five per cent indicated homogeneous grouping; an additional 24 per cent reported that the academic range was somewhat narrow.

6. Data relative to mobility of pupils reflected a change when compared to the common practice of moving pupils at the middle or end of school year. Sixty-six per cent of the teachers indicated that pupils were moved from one

classroom group to another when the teacher deemed it advisable. Ten per cent, however, restricted movement to the end of the school year.

7. In the area of reading instruction, 50 per cent of the teachers organized their classes into three reading groups, and 36 per cent relied on one reading series. Other instructional procedures included ability grouping, individualized reading, and a combination of grouping patterns.

8. In the area of mathematics, instruction was limited to one textbook in 45 per cent of the classrooms. Sixty-one per cent of the teachers utilized a developmental skills approach. Other procedures included ability grouping and individualized instruction.

9. In the area of language arts, the teachers relied heavily on large group instruction. Forty-three per cent indicated that instruction in the language arts was given to the group as a whole; 20 per cent divided the class into two groups. Forty per cent of the participants utilized one text in this area. Only 3 per cent of the participants utilized individualized instruction. The multi-text approach was used by 4 per cent of the teachers.

10. In the area of science, total group instruction was the dominant pattern. Fifty-eight per cent pointed out that science instruction was geared to the class as a whole; eight per cent of the respondents utilized three instructional groups in this area.

11. When reporting their classroom practices in the area of social studies, 54 per cent of respondents indicated development of experience units. Thirty-seven per cent of the teachers utilized the multi-text approach.

12. The findings relating to instructional media indicated the utilization of a variety of instructional materials. When responding to the "checklist" section of the questionnaire dealing with instructional media, 70 per cent indicated the use of books on various levels in each content area. However, when responding to questions relative to instructional practices, the majority of respondents indicated the use of one text for instruction.

13. In comparing general operational practices in graded and nongraded schools, 52 per cent of the teachers pointed out that there were great differences in operational practices, and 30 per cent indicated slight differences. Forty-six per cent noted that teaching in nongraded classes was more difficult than teaching in graded situations; whereas 25 per cent felt that teaching was less difficult in nongraded classes. Twenty-two per cent saw no difference.

14. Relatively few changes were noted in the number of instructional groups in nongraded classrooms. In each content area listed, without exception, the largest number of respondents indicated that groups remained basically the same. The greatest change occurred in reading and

mathematics. In these areas, 34 per cent of the respondents indicated that the number of groups increased.

15. Evaluation in nongraded schools included a variety of approaches. Both formal and informal techniques were utilized by 77 per cent of the participants. Seventy-four per cent of the teachers reported that pupil progress was evaluated in light of the individual's growth record; 43 per cent evaluated pupils in relation to their standing in the class; and 34 per cent used national norms in evaluating pupils.

16. Only 7 per cent of the teachers relied solely on report cards for reporting pupil progress. Seventy-seven per cent used both the report card and parent-teacher conferences for reporting, and 15 per cent used parent-teacher conferences only.

17. The data relative to problems encountered by teachers revealed that an overwhelming majority of the participants had some problem; only 8 per cent indicated that no problem existed. The greatest single problem appeared to be grouping and subgrouping for instruction, as indicated by 70 per cent of the group. Insufficient time for planning and lack of nongraded materials were considered crucial problems by approximately one-half of the responding group. In sharp contrast, only 6 per cent noted problems with parents, and discipline was considered a problem by only 5 per cent of the teachers.

18. In spite of the endorsement of nongrading, administrators by no means considered the nongraded school a remedy for all instructional problems, as indicated by their view of teachers' difficulties in the classroom. Eighty-two per cent indicated that teachers had problems meeting individual needs; 72 per cent felt that problems resulted from a lack of understanding of the nongraded concept; and 52 per cent pointed out that teachers had problems due to grade-mindedness and traditional practices.

19. In recommending courses for preservice and inservice teachers, 85 per cent of the teachers and 90 per cent of the administrators recommended a course on the philosophy of the nongraded school. Eighty-one per cent of the administrators suggested courses in child development and individualized instruction.

20. Techniques and experiences considered essential were offered by respondents, the largest number suggesting opportunities for developing skill in individualized instruction. Student teaching in nongraded schools was also highly recommended by both groups.

21. In reacting to their preference of teaching in a graded or nongraded school, 80 per cent of the teachers preferred the nongraded school, without reservations. Only 3 per cent indicated a preference for graded classes. The reasons teachers gave for their choices appeared to be quite significant.

22. Reactions of administrators to existing programs varied. Sixty-six per cent were highly satisfied with the nongraded organization, but only 28 per cent were highly satisfied with the instructional program. Only 8 per cent cited dissatisfaction with the nongraded organizational pattern, but 37 per cent expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with the instructional program.

23. Of the curriculum changes indicated by administrators, most frequently mentioned were setting up reading levels, increasing inservice programs, and initiating cooperative teaching. Noteworthy, but less frequently mentioned, were setting up multi-age groups and eliminating traditional report cards.

24. Eighty-nine of 90 administrators included in the study indicated continuance of the nongraded organization with plans for modification. The most frequently mentioned future changes were to combine team teaching with nongrading, extend the nongraded structure to upper levels, develop the social studies program, increase individualized procedures, and revise the existing reporting system.

25. The nature of comments offered by respondents who grouped homogeneously or according to a criterion of achievement tended to indicate more "gradedness" in classroom practices; whereas, respondents who grouped heterogeneously or according to a criterion other than ability tended to indicate greater differentiation and individualization of instruction.

Conclusions

The study of professional literature, analysis of data received from three hundred thirty questionnaires, personal interviews, and observation in nongraded classrooms enabled the investigator to gain a rather comprehensive view of various dimensions of nongrading. Upon this basis, and subject to the limitations of this study, it appeared justifiable to offer the following conclusions.

1. There is a strong possibility that future graduates in the area of teacher education will be teaching in nongraded classrooms or schools in which the traditional organizational patterns have been modified.

2. The actual perceptions of nongrading indicated by the majority of administrators and teachers appeared to be conflicting and incompatible with the philosophical concept of a nongraded school. The principles of flexibility, continuous progress, individualization, and a personalized curriculum, which are hallmarks of the nongraded concept, failed to be built into the majority of nongraded programs.

3. There appeared to be little significant difference between the way teachers operate in nongraded classes when compared with the typical graded class.

4. In spite of the fact that the nongraded school provides an opportunity for creativity and flexibility in teaching, the majority of the teachers still relied heavily

on mass instruction, one textbook, and the same curriculum for all.

5. Nongrading is said to be realistic in a democratic society because of its underlying respect for individual differences. Yet, less than one-third of the participants indicated individualization of instructional practices. The concept of individualism was not evidenced in operational practices.

6. The conflict in perceptions of nongrading becomes evident when teachers and administrators view nongrading as being synonymous with homogeneous grouping.

7. In a number of schools, nongraded classes were organized around reading achievement, often in accordance with textbook levels--beginning with a pre-primer level and extending to a third reader, second semester level. These rigid textbook levels substitute nine or twelve lock-steps for the typical three lock-steps in the conventional graded situation.

8. In nongraded schools included in this study, respondents indicated that pupils are able to move on the basis of personal development rather than age or years in school. There appears to be opportunity for flexibility in pupil mobility from one classroom unit to another. In this area there appeared to be a major difference when compared with graded schools.

9. Grouping procedures appeared little different from those found in graded schools. The maintainance of three groups was the predominant pattern. The majority of participants, while not operating differently, saw the need for different procedures.

10. If the trend toward nongrading is to bring about improvement in education, there appears to be little doubt that those now engaged in nongrading and those anticipating teaching in tomorrow's schools need extensive training and experiences in nongrading and its ramifications. The findings of this study indicate a lack of perceptions and know-how on the part of the practitioners.

11. The data of this study substantiate Anderson's assertion that the majority of today's nongraded schools are but modest efforts to achieve nongrading within an inadequate theoretical frame of reference. In many cases, the vocabulary of nongradedness is utilized to describe a conventional graded program.[54]

12. It appears that while the majority of participants in this study have some limitations in making the nongraded concept a reality, there are some concomitant factors which have been implemented with success. Reporting and evaluation procedures seem to have improved in a large number of the nongraded schools included in this study.

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[54]Anderson, op. cit., p. 51.

Implications and Recommendations

In light of this investigation, the following implications are presented:

1. Professional educators who are advocates of nongrading have a responsibility to the field to provide (a) a basic nomenclature and (b) criteria for evaluation of nongraded programs.

2. A nongraded school should reflect continuous progress, flexibility, and pupil individuality in its operational programs and practices.

    a. "Continuous" progress programs should not cease at the primary level.

    b. Greater individualization of instruction should characterize the nongraded program.

    c. Grouping practices should reflect the flexibility inherent in the nongraded school concept.

    d. Curricular revision becomes a necessity for full employment of the nongraded school concept.

3. School systems should not move toward nongrading without a continuous and extensive program in retraining of administrators and teachers.

4. School systems, which are currently operating as nongraded, should take a critical look at the existing program and engage in continuous inservice training designed to help teachers and administrators incorporate the concept of nongradedness in actual operational practices in the school.

5. There is a need for teacher education institutions to give attention to the nongraded concept in preservice and inservice programs.

    a. Teacher education programs should provide the opportunity for laboratory-type experience in a good nongraded school program.

    b. Programs offered in teacher education should seek to bridge the gap between theoretical assumptions and practical application in the area of child growth and development.

c. Teacher education institutions should offer courses or workshops, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, which focus primarily on the nongraded school and/or innovations in education.

d. Teacher education would facilitate a greater understanding of individualized and innovative techniques if similar procedures were to be used in college courses.

6. In light of the data procured during this study, it is recommended:

a. that proponents of nongrading establish a clearing house so that more definite guidelines may be developed to give public school personnel a greater sense of direction.

b. that colleges of education set up model, nongraded laboratory situations or schools where preservice and inservice teachers may see theory translated into practice.

c. that research studies be conducted to ascertain the nature and extent of flexibility and pupil mobility in nongraded schools.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS IN THE STUDY

State	School System	Administrators Responding	Teachers Responding
Alaska	Anchorage	1	1
Arkansas	Little Rock	1	1
California	Garberville	1	1
	Los Angeles (UCLA)	1	1
	Los Angeles	1	1
Connecticut	Avon	1	2
Delaware	Wilmington	1	3
Florida	Englewood	1	1
	Ft. Lauderdale	1	1
	Melbourne	1	2
	Miami	1	3
Georgia	Athens	1	3
	Atlanta	1	3
	Broxton	1	1
	Douglas	*	1
	Nicholls	*	1
Hawaii	Waimanolo	*	3
Illinois	Barrington	*	1
	Chicago	2	4
	Glencoe	1	2
	Ottawa	*	3
	Park Forest	1	1
	Rockford	1	3
Indiana	South Bend	*	1
Iowa	Cedar Falls	1	3
	Decorah	1	1
	Waterloo	1	3
Kansas	Topeka	1	2

Appendix A--Continued

State	School System	Administrators Responding	Teachers Responding
Louisiana	New Orleans	*	1
Maryland	Aberdeen	1	1
	Adelphi	1	3
	Annapolis	1	1
	Baltimore	1	4
	Baltimore County	1	2
	Rockville	1	2
Massachusetts	Gloucester	1	1
	Newton	1	3
	Quincy	1	3
	Sudbury	1	3
Michigan	Dearborn	1	3
	Detroit	1	3
	East Lansing	1	3
	Kalamazoo	1	3
	Lansing	1	3
	Muskegon	1	1
	Rochester	1	2
	Warren	1	
Missouri	Columbia	1	3
	Kansas City	*	3
	St. Louis	1	2
	Tarkio	1	1
	University City	1	2
New Hampshire	Gorham	1	2
	Milford	1	2
New Jersey	Norwood	1	1
New York	Bainbridge	1	3
	Bethpage	1	3
	Cheektawaga	1	2
	Deposit	*	3
	East Williston	1	4
	Farmingdale	1	1
	Glen Cove	1	3
	Groton	1	2
	Hastings-on-Hudson	1	3
	Ithaca	1	1
	Liverpool	1	3

Appendix A--Continued

State	School System	Administrators Responding	Teachers Responding
	Marion	*	1
	Niagara Falls	1	3
	Roslyn Heights	1	2
	Williston Park	*	1
	Yorktown Heights	1	2
North Carolina	Durham	1	2
Ohio	Chagrin Falls	*	3
	Columbus	*	3
	Leetonia	1	1
	Youngstown	1	1
Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	1	3
	Tulsa	1	2
Oregon	Hillsboro	1	1
	Milwaukee	1	3
Pennsylvania	Pittsburgh	*	2
South Carolina	Rock Hill	1	2
Texas	Corpus Christi	1	3
	Pasadena	1	1
Vermont	Burlington	1	1
Virginia	Alexandria	1	7
	Charlottesville	1	3
	Chesterfield	1	1
	Dumeries	1	3
	Fairfox County	1	*
	Hampton	1	4
	Norfolk	1	1
	Petersburg	*	2
	Portsmouth	*	3
	Richmond	1	3
	Salem	1	3
	Waynesboro	1	1
	Williamsburg	1	3

Appendix A--Continued

State	School System	Administrators Responding	Teachers Responding
Washington	Bellevue	*	1
	Lynwood	1	2
West Virginia	Elkins	1	1
Wisconsin	Appleton	2	5
	Ford du Lac	1	1
	Green Bay	*	2
	Milwaukee	1	2

*No response.

APPENDIX B

HAMPTON INSTITUTE
HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

April 22, 1966

Dear Sir:

No doubt you are aware of the increased interest educators are showing in nongraded schools. Each month more and more schools are changing from the "graded" structure to the nongraded organizational pattern. I have been informed that your school has an outstanding nongraded program. I should therefore like to invite you and three members of your staff, whom you select, to participate in a nationwide study which focuses on the perceptions, problems, and practices in nongraded schools.

I am conducting this study as a part of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree at Michigan State University. As a college teacher of methods courses and student teaching, I am greatly aware of the need for colleges to train prospective teachers to work effectively in nongraded schools. The findings of this study will be used to recommend needed changes in teacher education programs.

In order that colleges may prepare quality teachers for schools such as yours, it is essential that we get some insight into teaching and learning as they exist in real classroom situations. Thus, I sincerely hope that you and three teachers on your staff will take this opportunity to make a contribution to teacher education by reacting to the enclosed questionnaire and returning it at your very earliest convenience.

If you should like to have a summary of my findings, I shall be happy to send it to you at the end of the investigation.

May I express my sincere appreciation to you for your cooperation. I look forward to receiving your questionnaire within a few days.

Sincerely yours,

Mary T. Christian

Mary T. Christian

Enclosures

APPENDIX C

Dear Teacher:

I am attempting to ascertain what the common perceptions, problems, and practices are in nongraded classrooms throughout the nation. The findings of this study will be used to recommend changes in teacher education programs. Because of your success in a nongraded situation, I should like very much to have you react to the enclosed questionnaire. Your reactions will be invaluable to college professors who must train teachers to work in outstanding schools such as yours.

May I express my sincere appreciation to you for your cooperation. I look forward to receiving your questionnaire within a few days.

Sincerely yours,

Mary T. Christian

Mary T. Christian

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (TEACHERS)

NAME OF SCHOOL_____CITY_____STATE_____

TEACHING AND/OR ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE:

Graded Elementary School: Position_____
Number of Years_____

Nongraded Elementary School: Position_____
Number of Years_____

LENGTH OF TIME SCHOOL HAS BEEN NONGRADED_____

* * * * * *

Please check the items below which best describe the nongraded school as you perceive it.

_____1. A school where the word "grade" is simply dropped in referring to pupil placement.

_____2. A school where children are given an opportunity to move from one skill to another with little regard to age or number of years in school.

_____3. A school where grades are replaced with reading levels. Example: Level 1--pre-primer; Level 2--primer; etc.

_____4. A school where each pupil follows an instructional program in each area of the curriculum according to his ability.

_____5. A school where grade designations are dropped and children are assigned to homogeneous classes.

_____6. An organizational pattern designed to promote flexibility and continuous progress.

PART II: Please check the items which best describe the procedures and practices in your classroom.

_____1. Ability grouping in reading
_____2. Reading achievement levels
_____3. Interest grouping
_____4. Combination of various grouping patterns
_____5. Individualized reading
_____6. Basal readers only
_____7. Basal readers and supplementary readers
_____8. Multi-series texts
_____9. Some use of trade books
_____10. Extensive use of trade books
Other:

_____11. Ability grouping in mathematics
_____12. Achievement levels in mathematics
_____13. Individualized instruction in mathematics
_____14. Sequential development skills approach in mathematics
Other:

_____15. Science instruction by television
_____16. Science instruction primarily through textbooks
_____17. Unit approach in science
_____18. Science units developed around recurring themes
_____19. Differentiated instruction in science
_____20. Independent projects in science
Other:

_____21. Social studies instruction primarily through basic text
_____22. Multi-text approach in social studies
_____23. Experience units used primarily in social studies
_____24. Social studies units developed around recurring themes
_____25. Social studies instruction by television
_____26. Individual projects in social studies
_____27. Some use of trade books in social studies
_____28. Extensive use of trade books in social studies
Other:

_____29. Books on various levels in each subject matter field
_____30. Programmed materials
_____31. Films, movies, and audio-visual materials
_____32. Self-teaching or independent study materials
_____33. Tape recordings and records
Other:

_____34. Use of standardized tests at beginning and end of term
_____35. Use of standardized tests at various intervals
_____36. Formal and informal measures of evaluation
_____37. Individual testing
_____38. Evaluate child in light of his previous growth record
_____39. Evaluate child in light of his standing in the class
_____40. Evaluate child in light of regional or national norms
Other:

_____41. Pupil progress reported through report cards only
_____42. Letter grades given on report cards
_____43. No letter grades given on report cards
_____44. Report cards and parent-teacher conferences
_____45. Parent-teacher conferences only
Other:

_____46. The children in my class have an extremely wide range of abilities; they are working on many different levels.

_____47. My present class consists of an average group; abilities and variations in aptitude are not too extreme.

_____48. My present class is a very homogeneous group; all children have about the same general ability. Other:

_____49. Children are reassigned or moved from one classroom to another at certain specified times.

_____50. Children are reassigned or moved from one classroom to another at any time the teacher feels it advisable.

_____51. Children are reassigned or moved to another classroom at the end of the year only. Other:

Please indicate the number of groups, levels within the class, and basic textbook series used in each area of the curriculum listed below.

Content Areas	Number of Groups	Number of Levels	Number of Textbook Series
Reading			
Science			
Social Studies			
Mathematics			
Language Arts			
Other: (Please comment)			

Please react to changes in instructional groups occasioned by nongrading by checking the appropriate column below:

Content Areas	Number of Groups Increased	Number of Groups Decreased	Groups Basically the Same
Reading			
Science			
Social Studies			
Mathematics			
Language Arts			
Other: (Please comment)			

Compare teaching procedures in graded and nongraded classrooms. Please check the appropriate response and elaborate where feasible.

Difference between Graded and Nongraded Practices	Reaction (check)	Comment (if any)
1. I have found no difference in operational practices between graded and nongraded classes.		
2. I have found a slight difference in operational practices.		
3. I have found a great deal of difference in operational practices		
4. Teaching in a nongraded structure is more difficult.		
5. Teaching in a nongraded structure is less difficult.		
6. There is no appreciable difference in ease or difficulty in teaching in a nongraded class.		

Further Comments:
(if any)

PART III:

1. What are your most rewarding experiences in teaching in a nongraded school?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

2. What are the most crucial problems you face in teaching in a nongraded school?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

3. Would you prefer teaching in a graded or nongraded school? Why?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

4. What courses or inservice work do you now feel should be offered to persons who are going to teach in nongraded schools? Be specific.

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

5. What techniques and experiences do you feel teachers should have prior to teaching in a nongraded school?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

* * * * * * *

Please return this questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed for your convenience. Many thanks for your cooperation.

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (PRINCIPAL)

NAME OF SCHOOL_____CITY_____STATE_____

TEACHING AND/OR ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE:

Graded Elementary School: Position_____
Number of Years_____

Nongraded Elementary School: Position_____
Number of Years_____

ACADEMIC PREPARATION:

Undergraduate Degree_____Major Field_____

Graduate Work and/or Degree_____Major Field_____

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN OF SCHOOL: Check the organizational pattern which applies.

Primary Unit Only	Intermediate Unit Only	Both Primary and Intermediate Units	Other
_____	_____	_____	_____

PRIMARY BASIS FOR SETTING UP CLASSES:

Homogeneous Grouping	General Achievement	Reading Achievement	Chronological Age	Heterogeneous Grouping
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

LENGTH OF TIME SCHOOL HAS BEEN NONGRADED:_____

1. Describe what is meant in this particular school by "nongraded"?

2. What are you doing differently in your new organization when compared to the type you had before?

3. On the whole, how well satisfied are you with the non-graded organizational structure? the instructional program?

4. Knowing what you now know, and given your choice, which organizational pattern would you select? Why?

5. What courses or inservice work do you feel should be offered to persons who are going to teach in nongraded schools? Be specific.

6. What techniques and experiences do you feel teachers should have prior to teaching in a nongraded school?

7. In light of your observations, what do you think are the most difficult problems encountered by teachers in your school?

8. What educational practices have been developed following implementation of the nongraded structure? Are there plans for extensions or modifications? If so, in what areas?

* * * * *

So that I may keep in touch and share my findings, I should appreciate having your name and address and the teachers whom you selected to participate.

Name of Administrator_____

Address_____

Name of Teacher_____

Address_____

Name of Teacher_____

Address_____

Name of Teacher_____

Address_____

Thank you. Please return in the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed for your convenience.