The Role of the Lay Educational Advisory Council

Larry Dorman Langseth
Central Washington University

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THE ROLE OF THE LAY EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

by

Larry Dorman Langseth

A study submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, in the Graduate School of the Central Washington College of Education

March 17, 1950
APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

________________________
Charles W. Saale, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

________________________
D. Thompson

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L. Sparks
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is deeply indebted to Dr. Charles W. Saale for his assistance, encouragement, and guidance of this study.
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Chapter I
THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since World War II there has been a growing interest in lay advisory educational councils. Although the idea dates back at least to the close of World War I, it is only within the last four or five years that the movement has gained momentum. As far as is known only one investigation has been made to study the lay advisory council.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem. It is the purpose of this study to (1) trace the historical development of the advisory council; (2) to determine what the current practices in lay councils are; and (3) to synthesize the evaluations and recommendations of school administrators and school boards who are using lay councils.

The Procedure

The procedure which was followed in this study involved mainly the use of secondary sources such as recent magazine articles and a few books dealing with the subject. The procedure also involved the use of letters of direct correspondence with school officials being advised by lay councils and State Departments of Education using such councils in formulating state educational programs.
Review of the Literature

Since lay advisory councils are of such recent origin it is not strange that so little has been written about them. As far as the writer has been able to determine only one investigation has been made of lay councils, namely, an unpublished doctoral dissertation completed by J. Henrich Hull in 1949 at the University of Southern California at Los Angeles. Hull's study revealed that most of the lay councils now functioning were organized within the last four years. He found that of the sixty-two active committees which he was able to locate, (only forty-four of which returned questionnaires) twelve were formed in 1948, nine in 1947, and ten in 1946. Prior to 1946 not more than two such committees had been organized in any single year.

Another indication of the recency of the lay council is the date of publication of items of literature dealing with such councils. Hull found that only two such articles were published during the period from 1915 to 1919; four


2. Ibid., p. 24.
articles from 1920-24; none from 1925-29; none from 1930-34; three from 1935-39; ten from 1940-44; and twenty-four from 1945-49.

Although the general lay advisory councils have increased most rapidly in number since 1940, agricultural and vocational advisory councils have been in use for a much longer period of time. Hamlin states that there has been a generation of advisory councils in agricultural and vocational education, especially in agricultural.

The growing interest in lay advisory committees has been brought about by the gradual recognition and acceptance by educators and the public of the fact that the school alone can not educate. As one educator has expressed it, "the whole community must educate; not just one section of it, the school."

If the school is to understand fully the public and its needs and if the public is to understand what the school is trying to accomplish, it is absolutely essential that some means must be found to facilitate this mutual understanding between the school and the public. The lay advisory

council is being offered by various proponents as the best means of accomplishing this purpose.

The school board, once considered adequate as a means of interpreting the school's program to the public and the community's needs to the school, is now considered to be only partially adequate. Theoretically, the local board of education is supposed to be well balanced with all points of view, but in actual practice it is not representative of all views. Moehlman states that the trend of current public opinion within any community is normally conservative or right of center. He concludes that:

The popular representatives are generally past middle age, substantial in the economic sense, and tend to be representative of a few interests, with the lawyer, doctor and small business man predominating. ... Until it is possible through more highly perfected political organization to secure better balance in educational representation, it appears desirable to develop and use supplementary devices of an extralegal nature.²

Hamlin states that the following are alternatives to an advisory council:

1. Public apathy toward the schools

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2. Ibid., p. 348.
2. Periodic development of pressure groups to secure particular reforms when the conditions become intolerable

3. Persistent operation, year after year, of minority pressure groups which often oppose each other and the school
Chapter II
THE LAY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Three Stages of Educational Leadership

According to Worth McClure there are three stages of educational leadership.

The first is simply public relations that are designed to keep the school administration out of trouble. It is a negative type of leadership. Moreover, it shouldn't be called leadership. In this type of leadership the administration does not even attempt to "sell" its educational program. The administration simply wants to stay out of trouble and not stir up dissension.

The second stage of educational leadership is the selling stage. The administration tries to "sell" its educational program. No effort is made to have the public participate in the formulation of the school's program. It has been drawn up by the administration with perhaps, at least in some of the more democratic schools, some assistance from the faculty.

The third stage is the planning stage. At this stage the superintendent doesn't just try to stay out of trouble

or try to sell a ready-made program to the public. He seeks public participation in the planning of the school's program. He realizes that if the school is to adequately meet the educational needs of the community, members of the community must be active in formulating the educational program of the schools. The superintendent is also aware that community participation is the best possible means of interpreting the school's program to the public.

McClure takes the position that all past attempts to improve community relations—such as newspaper publicity, radio, school publications—are "but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal unless the superintendent of schools assumes his rightful place as a leader of community planning—a director of public education."

The same writer warns that unless school officials awaken to their responsibilities of providing the right kind of leadership, that leadership will be provided by the federal government. As he so adequately expresses it:

We need to stimulate planning on the local community level if we are to preserve that home rule which is the genius of American democracy. ... Let us not forget that we shall most certainly have nationalized planning if local communities

1. Ibid., p. 614.
fail to respond to local needs. If and when that happens, then America is headed for something else besides the republic which was envisioned by the Fathers of this country.¹

Moehlman sounds a similar note of warning when he writes:

> If the American public school is to remain a classless institution, it must be representative of all interests within the state. If it is a definite partnership between the home and state, provision must be made for more active and real parental participation. If, as a popular institution, its efficiency of functioning is contingent on popular understanding and appreciation, it is only necessary to develop means for the creation of a sustaining public opinion.²

A number of writers have expressed their opinions as to why there has been such delay in lay participation.

**Reasons For Delay In Organizing Councils**

³

According to Koopman, Miel, and Misner there are two reasons why the participation of the adults of the community in the formulation and administration of the educational program has lagged so far behind that of teachers and learners.

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First, community adults are generally remote from the scene. In organizing schools for democratic living it is natural that the relationships of the individuals who inhabit the schools for several hours each day—administrators, teachers, and students—should receive first consideration. It is comparatively difficult for an educator who has a sincere belief in democratic procedures to overlook the potential contributions of the everyday members of the school group. It is understandable, however, that those who are "out of sight" might also be "out of mind." In other words, the people of the community have been thought of as a group to whom periodical reports must be made, but not as a group that has the right to participate in the formulation, execution, and appraisal of the educational program.

Second, the lag of adult participation lies in the fact that school people do not have the same jurisdiction in the community that they do within the school.

Administrators and teachers are expected to organize schools in such a way that learners may have educative experiences. Leadership of the young is recognized as the function of the school staff. The concept of community education involving the active participation of teachers in general community affairs and of community adults in school affairs is not generally envisioned. Leadership on the part of professional
educators in securing adult participation is not taken for granted as it is in the case of students.1

On the other hand, McClure expresses the belief that fear is one of the main reasons for the delay of community planning:

Fear, perhaps, has been a potent reason for the neglect of education in community planning. Educational leadership has often feared to call upon individuals and groups in the community for planning assistance, and with some reason. We all have had experience with pressure groups bearing blue-prints which they wish to impose upon an unsuspecting public. We all have met the individual who has conceived a brilliant idea in the small hours of the night and has arisen early the next morning to buttonhole us and the school board members in the interests of his personal panacea.2

According to Moehlman the teacher is holding back lay participation in planning the school’s program:

Conventional teacher attitude toward what is considered "lay interference" with an assumed professional prerogative in the complete control of the public school is one of the difficulties to be overcome. The public-school teacher is not primarily to blame since this assumption of professional infallibility and individual power is the result of distinct conditioning by institutions of higher learning. ...Few will dispute the fact that in methodology the professional teacher does have elements of superiority, but the same contention cannot be

1. Ibid. p. 281.

easily upheld with respect to the validity of lay contributions to the teaching program.1

Another reason why lay participation has been so slowly accepted is that many school men do not want the advice. As Charters has pointed out, the administrator must want the suggestions of the committee. He must not only seek advice from the committee but must assume the responsibility of maintaining the lay committee's interest in educational problems. Charters suggests two ways of maintaining that lay interest. First, the educational problems must be presented to the laymen so that they can be understood. It is obvious that no intelligent action can be taken on a problem that is only partially comprehended by the committee. Second, the members of the committee must be shown that their advice is used. It is futile to expect continued interest from a group of people whose work is not given adequate recognition. If there is anything that will kill the group's interest, it is to have its recommendations typed up as a report and then have that report filed away with no apparent results.


Early Beginnings of Lay Advisory Councils

There seems to be some disagreement as to just where the community council originated. Some claim that it began in Berkeley, California; others maintain that Chicago is its birthplace. There seems, however, to be no disagreement as to the date of its beginning, for both groups give 1918 as the year of the birth of their respective organizations.

1

In a recent book, Carr asserts that the "coordinating council" began in Berkeley, California, in 1918 and from there spread to the East. This council at Berkeley grew out of an attempt to fight juvenile delinquency.

During the same year, 1918, we find the beginning of the Community Council of the Stockyard District in Chicago, Illinois. In the 1939 annual report of this group, the claim was made that this council was "the beginning in America of a new movement, an adventure in community coordination." The report goes on to state, "The purpose of the Council was originally and still is the organization of the constructive community forces to meet more effectively the problems of the Stockyard's Community and to make it a better place in which to live." 3

From 1918 until approximately 1946 the idea of lay participation grew rather slowly. J. Henrich Hull, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on lay advisory councils, found that ten such organizations were formed in 1946, nine in 1947, and twelve in 1948. Up to 1946 he found that no more than two councils were organized in any one year from 1919 to 1945, with many intervening years passing without the formation of any councils. See Table I, page 14.

According to Carr by 1940 there were more than 700 community councils in the United States. Michigan alone is reported to have 125 councils, most of which are less than four years old. From the information given it isn't possible to determine whether or not all of these 700 community councils have lay members. The writer of this paper contacted many councils which were not lay councils since there was not a single lay member on those councils. Many of the educational councils contacted have only faculty members working with the administration. In all probability, then, many of the 700 councils reported by Carr are not lay councils. Hull was able to locate only sixty-two committees and only forty-four of those returned questionnaires for the study which he made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1944</td>
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<td>1940</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>99</td>
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Although Hull and Carr are not agreed as to the exact number of committees, both studies reveal their paucity and in both the recency of the movement stands out quite clearly. Seventy per cent of the committees that were contacted by Hull have been organized since 1946. See Table I, page 14. The date of publication of items dealing with advisory committees also shows the recency of the movement.

TABLE II

Year of Publication of Forty-three Items of Literature Dealing With Educational Advisory Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945-49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-39</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-34</td>
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<td>1920-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915-19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

See Table II, page 15. It will be noted that only two articles dealing with lay councils were written from 1915-1919; only four from 1920-24; none from 1925-34; three from 1935-39; ten from 1940-44; and twenty-four from 1945-49.

Purposes of Lay Advisory Councils

Lay advisory councils grew out of the recognition of the need for understanding the public and what it expects from the schools and for having the public understand the educational program being offered by the schools. Leaders have long recognized the need for community participation in the planning of the school's program. As far back as 1918, Joseph Kinmont Hart wrote:

The democratic problem in education is not primarily a problem of training children; it is the problem of making a community within which children cannot help growing up to be democratic, intelligent, disciplined to freedom, reverent of the good of life, and eager to share in the tasks of the age. A school cannot produce this result; nothing but a community can do so.

More and more school administrators are becoming convinced of the ineffectiveness of trying to sell their educational wares. Gradually they are becoming aware of

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the public's sales resistance to a ready-made, hand-me-down school program. Many superintendents and principals, and even school boards have long recognized this resistance but have either been in a quandary as to what to do about it or have been too timid to attempt anything as bold as inviting community participation.

One superintendent who recognizes the futility of trying to sell the educational program of the school writes:

After a number of efforts at interpreting the schools through newspaper articles, annual reports, talks by school staff members, a film or two, etc., we have come to the conclusion that before we tell (or sell) we must lay a foundation.

We have tried to lay this foundation by giving large numbers of people opportunities to assist us in the planning of curriculum, building program, adult education, recreation, teachers' salaries, etc.

One of the finest features of the community council is its provision for democratic action. It not only provides for democracy—it is democracy. It is democracy in its purest form.

As McClure so descriptively expresses it:

Planning, when conducted in accordance with democratic principles, is one of the finest

---


expressions of American democracy. Here we gather information; we define problems; we break them down in order to apply the information we have gathered; we propose and criticize possible solutions; we endeavor to persuade each other on differing points of view; and we finally come up with a program which can be put to the test of stern experience as a basis for further improvement.

Kindred has perhaps the best, all-inclusive list of specific purposes for the organization of an advisory committee. The following list is an adaptation of his:

1. To interpret school conditions and needs to fellow laymen and to enlist their support for improvements
2. To survey the community for the purpose of getting the facts on which to build a public relations program
3. To help identify educational needs and to solve related problems
4. To help develop a curriculum better fitted to the needs of youth
5. To evaluate public opinion about the local school program
6. To provide moral support for school officials who undertake courses of action which otherwise would not be possible

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7. To create community confidence in the work of the school
8. To harmonize differences between the school and the community
9. To increase as much as possible the community use of school facilities
10. To make recommendations on building conditions, student social functions, and living conditions of teachers
11. To serve as a clearing house for important educational issues

In his study, Superintendent Hull found that most of the problems bringing about the organization of the committees were based on a need to improve school-community relations, augment the program, change the curriculum, build and finance buildings, change the boundaries of school districts, or to select sites. A more detailed summary of the reasons found by Hull can be secured from Table III, page 20.

Various Organizations Represented in Lay Councils

Since there is no legal basis for lay councils, it is up to the board of education, or the administrative personnel when authorized by the board, to extend to the
TABLE III

Classification of Problems and Situations Listed as Reasons for Organizing Lay Educational Advisory Committees by Forty-Four School Districts in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem or Situation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Public Relations and Community Development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reorganization Redistricting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Site Location</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Building and Finances</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Curriculum Program</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Aid the War Effort</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Survey Recommendation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. No Problem Identified</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. No Answer Given</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

various organizations and individuals an invitation to participate in the council.

It should be pointed out at this time, however, that even though there is no legal basis for the lay council, there is no question as to the legal right of the school board to authorize such a council. The right is clearly within the permissive powers of the board. Moehlman states that "each board possesses fairly wide powers of a permissive nature which enable the district to provide for certain types of educational activity over and above minimum essentials that are necessary to its peculiar cultural needs."

If the council is to be truly representative of the community, it is essential that all of the various organizations of the community be invited to send representatives. With no claim of completeness being made the following are organizations which should have a member on the committee: Rotarians, Kiwanians, Lions Club, Business and Professional Women's Club, League of Women's Voters, Council of School Clubs, American Federation of Labor, Congress for Industrial Organization, Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Urban League, United

Nations Committees, Foreign Policies Associations, Council of Jewish Women, Church Councils, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The number and type of organizations of which the council is composed will, of course, vary with the size of the community. The important thing is to have as many different groups represented as possible. The wider the representation the more accurately will the council reflect public opinion.

In some instances membership is extended to outstanding individuals, students, teachers and non-teaching personnel. The superintendent and members of the board of education are ex-officio members with no voting powers. In some cases the board may select one of its own number to represent it and that member, of course, will have voting power.

The Size and Method of Selection of The Council

1
Kindred reports that the size of the council varies from three to five hundred. Most of the committees which Hull studied have less than forty members. Moehlman recommends an advisory commission of from nine to twenty lay members "depending on size and diversity of interests."

1. Kindred, L. W., op. cit., p. 43.
Adequate representation of all the important groups and organizations should determine the size of the commission. At the same time the council should not be permitted to become unwieldy.

The most common procedure used to select the members of the advisory committee seems to be to have the various organizations choose their own representatives. Of the forty-four committees contacted by Hull, twenty-one were selected by the organizations which were invited to participate; twelve were appointed by the board; seven resulted from voluntary enrollment; one was recruited; one was selected at a conference; and the remaining two did not respond to the question.

The Qualifications of Lay Council Members

There are a number of qualifications which every member of the advisory council should have. These qualifications should be kept in mind by those who select the members:

1. The prospective member must have enough interest to attend the meetings regularly.

2. He must be willing to take the lead in discussions on school issues outside of the lay council's meetings.

---

3. He must be willing and able to report the results of the council's activities to the group which he represents.

4. He must be able to contribute to the work of the council.

5. He must believe in democracy enough to practice it.

Term of Office and Frequency of Meetings

1. Kindred found that the term of office runs from six months to five years. Hull reports that one year terms are the most common.

Both Kindred and Hull found that the council's meetings are usually held monthly. Seventeen of the councils studied by Hull meet monthly and ten meet when called together.

Miscellaneous Data on the Organization of the Councils

Most of the councils elect three officers: president, vice president and secretary-treasurer.

Most of the councils hold evening meetings which last on the average two hours in length.

1. Kindred, L. W., op. cit., p. 44.
3. Ibid., p. 155.
Professional leadership and lay leadership is thought to be on a 50-33 per cent ratio.

Lay membership varies from eighty to one hundred per cent.

Criteria For Evaluating the Structure of the Council

After a lay council has been set up in a community it might be well for those responsible for its organization to pause for a moment to check on the structure of their newly created organization. They should ask themselves: Is it everything that it should be? Have we forgotten anything? As a guide to be used in such an evaluation the following criteria may be of great assistance:

Does the advisory council:

1. Grow out of the needs of the community?
2. Represent all of the interests in the community?
3. Represent the majority opinion of the community, rather than that of special groups or professional interests?

2. Ibid., p. 156.
3. Adopted from Editorial Staff "Principles of Community Organization," School Executive 64:60 (November, 1944)
4. Include youth in its membership?
5. Conform to and involve the legal governmental structure of the community?
6. Provide as simple a structure as possible?
7. Have a large enough membership to be truly representative of the entire community and still small enough to secure effective action?

Subcommittees of Advisory Councils

Much of the work of lay councils is done by committees. It is obvious that when councils have as many as one hundred members or more, or even forty or fifty, it is impossible for such a large number to operate efficiently. Therefore committees are formed in many of the larger councils and these sometimes are broken into subcommittees.

The Community Coordinating Council of Stephenson, Michigan has for example, the following problem study committees:

1. Education Committee
2. Farm and Land Use Committee
3. Home and Family Life Committee

1. By direct correspondence from the office of the superintendent.
Problems Discussed by Councils

In his survey Kindred grouped the various problems that he found to be taken up by the lay councils. He found that most of the problems pertain to instruction and deal with such questions as kindergarten education, intercultural education, distributive education, curriculum revision, discipline, child development, report cards, student activities, and citizenship.

Another group of problems dealt with are the special services for pupils, such as medical care, dental care, cafeteria arrangements and recreation.

These are followed by the problems of school finance-taxation, plant extension, salary increases and schedules. Other problems considered are the teacher shortage and conditions of employment.

Hull's classification of subjects taken up by the councils of thirty-seven school districts reveals much the

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1. Kindred, L. W., op. cit., p. 44.
same grouping of problems. He classified one hundred and six subjects and found that sixty of them dealt with programs, services, and curriculum; thirty-one with facilities and finances; eight with public relations; six with personnel matters; and one with the morals of pupils.

Many of the councils contacted by direct correspondence were initially organized for the purpose of conducting a general survey of the educational program. Some of the councils became permanent and it is the hope of the superintendents that many of the others which are now engaged in making surveys will become permanent.

Battleboro, Vermont, for example, has a temporary Educational Advisory Council which is conducting a comprehensive survey under the direction of Yale University. The superintendent writes that five of its fourteen members are lay people and expresses the hope that the committee will become permanent.

The School Survey Committee of Danville, Illinois, recently completed a sixteen months' study of buildings, population, the school program and finance. It was appointed by the school board in February, 1948, and the superintendent

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1. Wallace, John W., by direct correspondence dated Nov. 7, 1949, received in connection with this study.
expresses the wish that it will become a permanent laymen's committee. He states the committee was composed of six men, one woman and the Superintendent of Schools. Its layman membership was chosen to represent various vocational fields and in terms of ability. They have served as a guiding committee in a citizen appraisal of the schools, and with the help of five hundred citizens, local educators and the College of Education of the University of Illinois, have completed a sixteen month's study in the four specified fields, have incorporated their study and recommendations in an eighty-five page booklet printed by the Board of Education, and have volunteered as a panel to present their findings to service clubs, women's clubs and P.T.A.'s in order to help "sell" the recommended building and educational program.

Another city reporting a long term school development program that was outlined by a temporary committee is

**Halifax, Virginia.**

Cities which replied that they had permanent lay councils were:

- Piqua, Ohio
- Concord, Michigan
- Portland, Maine
- Town of Rockingham, Bellow Falls, Vt.
- Poteau, Oklahoma
- Battle Creek, Michigan
- Paxton, Illinois

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Amarillo, Texas
Stephenson, Michigan
Longview, Washington
Madrid, New Mexico
Santa Cruz, New Mexico
Council Bluffs, Iowa
Tipton, Iowa
Mason City, Iowa
Sac City, Iowa
Joplin, Missouri
Kansas City, Missouri
Mountain Grove, Missouri
Bonne Terre, Missouri
Halifax County Schools, Halifax, Va.
Marion, Va.
Radford, Va.
Independence, Iowa
Polk County (three councils), Bartow, Florida
Kennebrink, Maine
Lorain, Ohio
Center Line, Michigan
Bay City, Michigan
Wayne, Michigan
Concord, Michigan
Ivan Mountain, Michigan
Questa, New Mexico
Yuma, Arizona
Safford, Arizona
Prescot, Arizona
Mesa, Arizona
Fair Haven, Vermont
Willmington, Vermont
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Enid, Oklahoma
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Austin, Texas
Galveston, Texas
Waco, Texas
Little Rock, Arkansas
Fort Smith, Arkansas

The superintendent at Radford, Virginia, disclosed that he has only a Health Council which is concerned with the health of the pupils, clinics, correction of defects, aiding indigent children, handicapped children, etc. The superintendent at

1. De Haven F. E., by direct correspondence.
Bremerton, Washington, also reported a School Health Council.

A new slant in advisory councils is reported by the Poteau Public Schools. Each elementary school teacher has a council of a minimum of twelve parents and friends who meet every six weeks. The junior high school, the senior high school and the junior college have separate Educational Advisory Councils for each subject field.

Accomplishments of Lay Committees

Hull's study of forty-four lay committees has several extremely relevant facts about the enthusiasm with which those committees were received:

1. 66% reported community enthusiasm
2. 75% showed board member enthusiasm
3. 93% replied that the organization had been beneficial to children
4. 77% of the replies indicated that the committees represented the community as a whole

3. Ibid., p. 197.
4. Ibid., p. 191.
5. Ibid., p. 199.
43% of the respondents had or knew about special
requests to become members

Much understanding results from a group of people
with different points of view just facing each other
across the table. Sometimes problems are solved even
before they become school problems.

Kindred lists a number of accomplishments for the
committees. The following is an adaptation of his list:

1. Improved educational facilities.
2. Better community health facilities.
3. Improved community recreational facilities.
4. Greater use of the school plant.
5. Better community understanding of the school
   program.
6. Increased interest and participation of citizens
   in school affairs.
7. Improved teacher tenure and welfare.
8. Better pay schedules for school employees.
9. Stimulation of teachers to improve professionally.
10. Closer relationship of the school and community.

2. Kindred, L. W., op. cit., p. 44.
11. Better financial support of the school.
13. More unity among various community groups.
14. A lessening of pressure exerted by special interest groups.

An endorsement which is typical of those given by superintendents who have been extremely successful with lay councils, and who heartily recommend them to fellow administrators is the one given by the superintendent at Salem, Illinois:

The tenure of teachers was improved; misleading stories by disgruntled or uninformed citizens were frequently nipped in the bud by public relations members who were in possession of the facts; greater faith was placed in the activities and purposes of the school; salaries were kept at a high level for the faculty; progressive changes could be undertaken without unfair community criticism; citizens became more interested in children and in school activities; faculty members were stimulated to improve themselves professionally; and the relationship in general between the school and the community was immeasurably improved.¹

Virgil M. Rogers, who has organized lay councils at both River Forest, Illinois, and at Battle Creek, Michigan, where he is now superintendent, states that "every significant improvement in instruction and every important

¹. Campbell, Clyde M., op. cit., p. 52.
curriculum change, including textbook selection, committee activities, and in-service education programs, has come through the council's deliberations."

State Advisory Councils

Lay advisory councils have by no means been confined to the local district level. We have a number of notable examples of state councils.

One of the most outstanding examples of lay participation on the state level is the Florida Citizens' Committee on Education which was appointed in 1944 by the outgoing and incoming governors and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The committee consisted of fifteen citizens, only two of which had ever had any previous connection with education. It made preliminary studies, reported its findings to the 1945 legislature which then asked the committee to expand its studies and make further recommendations to the 1947 legislature.

As a result of this Committee's work the following

major changes in Florida's school laws were brought about:

1. State appropriations were doubled.
2. A comprehensive Minimum Foundation Program was established.
3. The annual period of service of all members of the instructional staff has been extended to ten months.
4. Taxing units have been reduced from seven hundred to sixty-seven, one to each county.
5. Five-member policy-determining boards of education will be elected on a county-wide rather than a local basis.
6. Certification of county superintendents has been raised.
7. Many provisions to improve teacher welfare have been adopted.
8. The higher education program has been reorganized into a state-wide system.

Another example of lay participation at the state level is found in the New Hampshire Lay-Professional Councils, twelve of which blanket the state. Each council consists of thirty-six members— one third local school board members, one third professional educators, and

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1. Ibid., p. 15.
one-third laymen. Appointments were suggested by school superintendents. Here again, major changes in school laws have resulted.

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The director of vocational education for the Alabama Department of Education reports that there is an advisory council on the state level for Trade and Industrial Education and that there are a number of advisory committees scattered throughout the state working with the Trade and Industrial Education Program.

Among other states that are carrying on similar lay activities are Georgia, Kentucky, and New York.

National Lay Councils

Lay advisory councils are also found at the national level. An example of lay participation in educational reform on a nation-wide scale is

...the work of the Citizens Federal Committee on Education, an advisory group to the United States Office of Education, consisting of representatives of agriculture, business, homemakers, labor, manufacturing, Negro groups, professions, religious groups, and veterans. To date this committee has sponsored at least one report—a progress report prepared by the Subcommittee on Teachers in America. It is an excellent example of a report prepared by laymen for laymen.2


Another example of lay participation on the national level is the Committee on Education of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. It is composed of laymen and approaches the problem from the layman's point of view. It was organized primarily to study educational problems and to pass that information on to the hundreds of local education committees that were created by the local chambers of commerce.

According to the general manager of the United States Chamber of Commerce, one of the reasons why there hasn't been more intelligent cooperation between educators and business men has been the lack of understanding of each others needs. As he has so well expressed it:

"One bar to intelligent cooperation between educators and business men has been a lack of understanding each of the needs of the other. There has been too much disposition on the part of business men to look on educators as impractical theorists who don't know the value of a dollar; and on the part of educators to regard business men as a bunch of penny-pinching skinflints. The way to clear up such misunderstanding as these, is to get together and talk things over."  

Through its Committee on Education, the National Chamber of Commerce is working to bring together in the local communities the educators and business men to

1. Ibid., p. 54.

discuss the basic problems of education. This committee has prepared a booklet entitled "A Challenge to Every Business Man," which shows very clearly how the local business men should go about getting the local school board to organize a lay committee on education.

Criticisms of Lay Educational Councils

Although there have been some negative reactions to lay councils, there have been no negative results. A few writers have expressed their fears of advisory committees, but so far their fears have not materialized. The most common fear expressed by this decided minority is that the "divine right" of school boards and professional educators is being threatened. The charge is that the council is usurping the legal prerogatives of the school board.

One writer has answered this charge by stating that since board members are ex-officio members of the council, the council is not likely to encroach upon the duties of the school board. Moreover, when these councils are created the members are emphatically informed that their functions are only advisory and that the board is under no obligation to accept its recommendations. The advisory council needs only to be reminded that it is the creation

of the board and has no legal basis for its existence. It can be dissolved when the board sees fit.

In addition, the constitution of the lay committee usually contains a clause which clearly defines the rights of the committee and draws a clear-cut line of demarcation between the rights of the council and those of the legally constituted school board. A clause similar to this is usually found: In no event shall any action taken by the council presume to encroach upon the authority, duties, or prerogatives vested in the board of education.

In answer to the charge that the office of the superintendent or principal is being weakened and that professional leadership is being replaced by lay incompetence, one school administrator writes: "And let no one say that this narrows and weakens the authority of the superintendent; on the contrary, it places a much heavier responsibility upon him, but with it all, a much greater opportunity for leadership."

Another criticism of the lay council is the danger that it might be dominated by a few strong personalities and become a pressure bloc. Kindred is one writer who

2. Kindred, I. W., op. cit., p. 44.
warns of this possibility. Hanson, warning of the same danger, writes:

I fear there is danger in this proposal. If such an organization survives the trials of newness and really becomes established, it will exercise tremendous power, become a local pressure bloc. It would not be responsible to the voters in any way and, consequently, might become quite irresponsible and selfish.

Those interested in such groups recognize this danger and usually propose that membership be distributed to practically all of the community's groups. However, there is a probability that many of the groups, largely composed of the less gifted population elements will soon lose interest (they usually do in community enterprises) and that a few dynamic leaders will take possession of the machine and run a petty dictatorship. Even if it does not become an ax-grinding organization, there is danger that the legally elected board of education will eventually rest too strongly upon it and abdicate its own responsibilities.¹

In answer to this danger it can be said that if each group that is represented on the council is careful in its selection of an able, well qualified representative there is little danger of a few dynamic leaders forming a petty dictatorship. This danger, at least, has not yet become a reality. The literature has not yet revealed such a negative result. Nor has the literature yet revealed the

complaint that a school board has relinquished its legal responsibilities.

Another criticism is that the board can choose all of the members of the council. It is true that a school board has the legal right to choose all of the members but the facts reveal that the boards are making no effort to control the membership of the councils. Rather, they are seeking advice and counsel from as many different groups as possible. Hull's study indicates that in forty-eight per cent of the cases the community organizations were asked to select their own representatives. In only twenty-seven per cent of the cases were the members appointed by the board or the administration. The other percentages of this study were: sixteen, voluntary enrollment; two, recruitment; two, conference; and five, blank or unanswered.

Kindred suggests that the Parent-Teacher Association furnish the advice in place of the council. Campbell states, however, that more men will participate in the lay council than in the Parent-Teacher Association.

2. Kindred, L. W., op. cit., p. 44.
It is also quite apparent that a well selected council is going to be much representative of the various groups in the community than will the Parent-Teacher Association. There will also be much more capable leadership in the council. There is, to be sure, leadership in most Parent-Teacher Associations, but the council will be a council of leaders. Every individual selected will be a leader. He was chosen by his own group because of his recognized ability.

Errors To Be Avoided In Organizing Councils

When organizing the lay committee there are a number of things which can be done to help make the organization a success. One of the most important of these is to have adequate representation on the committee. The very essence of the plan is representation by all of the groups in the community. Inadequate representation will defeat the purpose of the council.

Another mistake which administrators can avoid is not to force the issue. If the community is too strongly opposed to the plan, it is advisable to wait for the psychological moment. One of the best psychological

1. Grieder, Calvin "Citizens' Advisory Committees--Have They a Rightful Place?" National Schools 28:29-30 (Sept., 1941)
moments, and one which frequently presents itself in school affairs, is an acute financial problem such as sufficient taxes for the school system's support, a long-delayed building program, or the purchase of new school sites.

It is also of paramount importance when starting a lay council to have an administration that is receptive to the plan. If either the principal or superintendent or the school board is opposed to the plan it is doomed to failure from the start. Hull states that "it appears that these organizations have to be nursed along at first by some one who really believes in democracy and avoids using the organization as a tool for purposes of control."

In a similar vein, Moehlman warns against the use of the advisory commission as a pressure group to achieve more rapidly a program that is considered essential by the profession. He warns that the lay commission will see through the attempt to exploit it and, as a result, will be more skeptical of the teaching profession.


Too large a council is another mistake that is to be avoided. If the group is too large it will become unwieldy. Most of the committees contacted by Hull had less than forty members. Moehlman recommends a committee of from nine to twenty lay members. Adequate representation of all the diverse interests of the community should determine the size.

A clear-cut line dividing the functions of the advisory council and those of the board of education is another must to be observed when the council is being organized. If the members of the lay group are informed from the beginning of the true nature and scope of their powers and authority and are told that those powers are strictly advisory, much misunderstanding can be avoided. The lay group must realize from the start that the school board is still legally in control of the schools and is under no obligation to accept any of the committee's recommendations.

Another means of preventing mistakes is to have all of the council's recommendations in written form together with all of the facts and opinions on which they are based. If the report is written the school board

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1. Kindred, L. W., *op. cit.*., p. 44.
and school officials will find it much easier to use the recommendations; and, in addition, when the report is being written, the lay group is more apt to think through more clearly its recommendations.

Still another error to be avoided is to refer to the council any problems which are not pertinent to the educational program. Administrators should be careful not to refer to the advisory council any problem which is strictly administrative in character or routine and which should properly be handled by an administrator.

An additional bit of advice which will help to insure the success of the lay group is to attach prestige to the members—give them complimentary tickets to all of the school activities, have their pictures in the school's annual, write newspaper accounts of their activities, and use the radio to publicize their efforts.

Perhaps one of the best ways of insuring the success of the lay council is to keep it busy on a worth-while program. Hull has the following suggestions on how to improve the council's program:

1. Keep an active agenda before the community.

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1. Kindred, L. W., op. cit., p. 44.
2. Campbell, C. M., op. cit., p. 52.
2. Give complete consideration to community advice.
3. Accomplish something definite at each meeting.
4. Be sure that everybody understands the purposes and the program of the group.
5. Let the group plan its meetings.
6. Be certain that the group is an active working group rather than an honorary one.
Chapter III
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The problem of the lay advisory council grew out of the recognition of the need for the school's understanding the public and its needs and for having the public understand the educational program being offered by the school.

Although the growth of the lay council has been most rapid during the last few years, the need for such a council has long been recognized. As far back as 1918, Joseph Kinmont Hart expressed the belief that only the community, and not the school alone, could educate the child.

There is some disagreement as to just where the first lay council was organized. Both Berkeley, California, and Chicago claim the distinction of being its birthplace. It appears that both cities organized a lay group in 1918. The council which was organized in Berkeley had as its purpose the combating of juvenile delinquency. The one begun in Chicago was to organize the "constructive community forces to meet more effectively the problem of the Stockyard Community and to make it a better place in which to live."
From 1918 up until approximately 1946 the idea of lay participation grew rather slowly. Hull found that from 1919 to 1945 not more than two councils were organized in any one year, with many intervening years passing without the formation of any councils.

Many of the early councils did not advise in all areas of school administration. They were consultants only in agricultural and vocational education.

Many of the lay committees have been, and are still being organized on only a temporary basis. They are created for some particular purpose and are disbanded upon completion of that project. A general school survey is one type of a project for which many of the temporary committees have been created. A financial crisis, the urgent need for another school building, or the purchase of a school site are other examples of problems often tackled by temporary lay committees. Valuable as these temporary lay councils are, it is strongly urged that they be made permanent. Planning is not a function of school administration that should be done sporadically. It needs constant attention.

Some of the specific purposes for the creation of a lay advisory council are:

1. To interpret school conditions and needs to fellow laymen and to secure their support for
improvements.

2. To present to the school officials the educational needs of the community.

3. To develop a curriculum better fitted to the needs of to-day's youth.

4. To create community confidence in the work of the school.

5. To conduct surveys of the school's needs in terms of finance, buildings, sites and improvements.

6. To increase the community's use of the school facilities.

7. To serve as a clearing house for important educational issues.

Conclusions

1. Lay educational advisory committees
   a. Consist of members elected from representative groups
   b. Most are of recent origin
   c. Elect three officers: president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer
   d. Hold evening meetings
   e. Usually contain less than forty members
   f. Include from 80 to 100% lay membership
g. Includes some professional leadership
h. Are either temporary or permanent
i. Have either immediate or long range objectives
j. Have the discussion type of meeting

2. They are increasing in number.
3. They have proved their value.
4. There is a growing interest in their use.
5. Educators who have used them report that they have benefited the educational program.
6. They make possible the two-way theory of communication between the board and the people.
7. They are used to advise in all areas of school administration.
8. Where they have been used, these committees have been well supported by the public and school officials.

Recommendations

1. All of the organizations and interests of the community should be represented on the advisory council.

2. The members of the council should be selected by the organizations which they represent and not by the school board.

3. The invitation to organize should come from the school board.
4. The great majority of the members should be lay people.
5. Lay officers are recommended.
6. The public should be kept informed as to the work of the council.
7. The meetings should be held monthly.
8. The total membership should be in the vicinity of twenty-five to thirty-five members.
9. The meetings should be the informal discussion type.
10. The members should be active and interested people who attend regularly.
11. Professional leadership should not be ignored.
12. Democratic procedures should be used.
13. The educational program of the school should be given the most attention.
14. Lay leadership should be developed as much as possible.
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