THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL FIRST GRADE PROGRAM: A HERMENEUTIC INQUIRY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The quality of the educational system within the United States was subjected to exceptional scrutiny by the public in the 1980s (Bredekamp, 1987). As a result, the trend in recent years has been toward an increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills throughout education (Bredekamp, 1987; Elkind, 1986). Eisner (1985), reports that a historical view of educational practices provides many examples of simplistic, mechanistic solutions to complex problems. Education, as described by Macdonald and Purpel (1987), is dominated by the currents of technological, linear and positivistic thinking in our contemporary culture. The history of schools and the reactions to perceived educational problems and larger societal issues have profoundly impacted education (Sirotnik & Oakes, 1986). The more recent response to the problems of education has been the application of technological solutions. What many curriculum theorists and educators have ignored is the "interaction between curricula and political, social, economic, cultural, and artistic forces, which exerted powerful influences over the design and shape of what is taught in the American schools" (Lincoln, 1992, p. 84).

In 1985, personnel of the Edmond Public Schools in Edmond, Oklahoma, searched for a solution to a perceived problem within their first grade classrooms. Several students within the first

grade classrooms were viewed as being unready for the first grade curriculum. A committee was organized in the school district to study the possible implementation of a developmental first grade program within the district. The proposed program would provide a grade between kindergarten and first grade for children who were viewed as being "unready" for first grade. The purpose of the committee was as follows: (1) to study the success and failure of similar programs; (2) to examine current research regarding such programs; and (3) to designate curriculum and materials that would be needed if such a program were implemented. The committee was developed and utilized to avoid possible failure of the program. A program of the same title and intent had been implemented previously and then dissolved after one year due to poor implementation procedures and misplaced students.

Throughout history, educational issues have been examined and criticized for not meeting the needs of children (Boyd, 1979; Combs, 1987; Eisner, 1985; Tanner & Tanner, 1980). In an attempt to meet the needs of children, Edmond Public Schools implemented a program for children unready for traditional first grade.

Statement of the Problem

Elkind (1986) posits that the trend toward formal academic instruction for younger children is based on misconceptions about early learning. Even with the trend toward for more academic instruction, there has been no change in what children need for optimal development or how children learn. Bredekamp (1987),

emphasizes that a growing body of research that has emerged affirming that children learn most effectively through a concrete, play-oriented approach. Early childhood education has experienced other changes as well. Children are now in programs for full-day child care instead of socialization and play. School systems as well as Corporate America are becoming visible sponsors of child-care programs (Bredekamp, 1987). The changes in the society have brought about changes in early childhood education programs.

> Programs have changed in response to social, economic, and political forces; however, these changes have not always taken into account the basic developmental needs of young children, which have remained constant. The trend toward early academics, for example, is antithetical to what we know about how young children learn. Programs should be tailored to meet the needs of children, rather than expecting children to adjust to the demands of a specific program (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 1).

The problem addressed by the study regards the trend of formal academic instruction as reflecting the antithesis of what early childhood educators know about how children learn. Curricular inquiry of specific programs is necessary to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of such programs. Are such programs meeting the needs of children? Are the programs adjusting to the children or are the children adjusting to the programs?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine and interpret the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the implementation committee members during the process of implementation of a developmental first grade program in the Edmond Public Schools. The underlying

assumptions and beliefs will be examined as they relate to developmentally appropriate practices and curriculum, as well as to historical and socio-political issues. Within the last decade, transition programs have been criticized for not being developmentally appropriate (Bredekamp, 1987; Doremus 1986; Rhoten 1991; Roberts 1986; and Shepard & Smith 1988). During the same era, Edmond Public Schools implemented a transition (developmental first grade) program in the elementary schools. The study will attempt to find the meaning of the underlying beliefs and assumptions on which the transition program was implemented, the perceived necessity of such a program and its intended purpose. The findings of the committee and its role during the implementation process will also be examined and interpreted.

Theoretical Structure and Procedures

Theoretical Base

Child development specialists such as Piaget and Vygotsky have provided insight into how children develop and learn. Piaget (1952), distinguishes between different types of knowledge: physical, logical-mathematical, and social-conventional. Physical knowledge is external to the individual and observable, such as seeing a ball roll. Logical-mathematical knowledge is mentally constructed relationships that the individual forms within his/her head, such as classifying or sequencing systems, not objects, projected by the observer, such as a student classifying adults within a school as teachers. Social-conventional knowledge, as

described by Kamii (1990), is agreed-upon conventions within society, such as months, holidays, and the letters of the alphabet.

Vygotsky (1978) provides a more defined framework regarding the nature of knowledge. He advocates two forms of attaining knowledge through concepts: spontaneous concepts and school-learned concepts. Spontaneous concepts are learned through direct experience without instruction (or need of) from an adult. School-related concepts originate in society or culture. It is unlikely that the internalization of these concepts would result from self-constructed knowledge. An example of school-learned concepts is provided by Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992), "for example, the Fahrenheit scale informs us that ice freezes at 32 degrees, while the Celsius scale names the freezing point at 0" (p. 14). This type of information is passed on from generation to generation with little chance for constructing such knowledge from direct experiences.

Vygotsky and Piaget posit theories that are similar in nature. "It is important to realize that in real life these types of learning are interrelated" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 14). The nature of learning should supplant the curriculum within our schools. The teaching and learning process within our schools should be an interactive process. The following assumptions regarding children, teaching and learning within an interactive process of education provide the theoretical framework for this study.

1. Children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure.

2. Children construct knowledge.
3. Children learn through social interaction with adults and other children.
4. Children's learning reflects a recurring cycle that begins in awareness and moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally to utilization.
5. Children learn through play.
6. Children's interests and 'need to know' motivate learning.
7. Human development and learning are characterized by individual variation.

The assumptions stated above are provided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, in Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum Content and Assessment in Programs Serving Children Ages 3 Through 8, (1990). These guidelines were published in an effort to inform educators of developmentally appropriate practices for young children.

The information regarding how children learn and develop is vast. Yet, many schools are providing programs and educational experiences for children that are not based on these theories. These theories and more are the foundation for developmentally appropriate practice. Simplistically, developmentally appropriate practices are subsumed by early childhood theories. By examining and interpreting the underlying beliefs and assumptions associated with developmentally appropriate practices, the researcher and the reader can better understand the purpose of the committee and its role.

Research Questions

The focus of the study is to gather data which will allow a deeper understanding of the purpose and necessity of the developmental first grade program. Interpretation of the data centered around the following questions:

1. What were the underlying beliefs and assumptions on which this school district's developmental first grade program was implemented?

2. What are the historical influences that affected the decision to implement a developmental first grade program?

3. What determinants of social and political beliefs existed in the decision to implement a developmental first grade program?

4. What did the committee members mean when they discussed the implementation of a developmental first grade program in relation to a developmentally appropriate program?

5. What determinants did the committee use to choose the curriculum and materials implemented in the program?

Data Gathering

This study is qualitative in nature. The study is a search for understanding and meaning of the above research questions in consideration of the boundaries and limitations of each individual's own understanding and knowledge. Data were gathered through the perspective of hermeneutic inquiry, i.e., a study of interpretations and meanings, as described by Charmaz (1983), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Smith (1991). For this researcher, it is a search for

meaning of curricular terms used by the members of a school district.

Data include information gathered from indepth interviews, oral histories, newspaper articles, census materials, original documents and secondary sources. Indepth interviews were conducted by the researcher. The subjects chosen to be interviewed were members of the developmental first grade implementation committee in Edmond Public Schools. Interview questions can be viewed in the Appendix. Data from the interviews and the various sources are presented in Chapter IV.

Data Interpretation

Interpretation yielded by the specified sources is an ongoing process for the researcher and the reader. The meanings and understanding expressed by the respondents were interpreted by utilizing the hermeneutic process as described by Charmaz (1983), Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Smith (1991). This process involves continuous interacting elements that cycle and recycle information until consensus and understanding emerge. The elements of the hermeneutic process are discussed in Chapter III. The researcher's interpretation of the data is included in Chapter V.

Participants

The participants of the study are associated with Edmond Public Schools. The Edmond Public School system is located in Edmond, Oklahoma. This is a suburban community which rests directly north

of Oklahoma City. Population of this community is approximately 54,000.

The respondents chosen for the study were members of the developmental first grade implementation committee in Edmond Public Schools. They were members of the curriculum committee, criteria committee, and/or teacher selection committee. Every member of the curriculum committee was contacted by the researcher. All members were interviewed except three. One member declined to be interviewed due to retirement, one member had moved, while another member could not be interviewed due to time restraints of the committee member. Two other respondents were chosen to be interviewed to gain information from the other subcommittees. The members of the curriculum committee were primarily teachers. Therefore, the additional two respondents were chosen based on their non-teaching positions within the district (other than teachers) to provide a more balanced response. The two individuals chosen were members of both the criteria committee and the teacher selection committee. The emphasis was placed on the curriculum committee in an effort to gain a better understanding of the research questions. The participants' association with Edmond Public Schools were those of teachers, administrators, counselors, psychometrists, and/or parents. The sample population was chosen as a result of inquiry into the necessity and the appropriateness of the current developmental first grade program.

Significance of the Study

Change and reform are evident in society. The issues surrounding the perceived need for change and/or reform are fundamental areas of concern for educators. Dialogue regarding practices, ideas, beliefs, perspectives, and meanings of education is necessary to provide an awareness of current practices to a consciousness level. Discussion of such issues provides an opportunity for reflection and consensus of meanings.

The study presents an opportunity for the reader to have a greater understanding of developmentally appropriate practices which will help deter the perceived need for an end product to be completed by all children at the same time. The conduct of the study was also organized to search for the meaning, understanding, and sociopolitical issues that were foundational to a new curriculum program. The study therefore, can be utilized, from a hermeneutic perspective, when examinig any curriculum program. In essence, the study looks at process and meaning and utilizes the developmental first grade program as the vehicle of inquiry.

Limitations

The intent of the study was not to evaluate the current program that is in place in the Edmond Public Schools or to bring about the demise of the program. The intent of the study was to find the meaning of the underlying beliefs and assumptions predicated in the implementation of the developmental first grade program. Therefore, the study possibly may not be used as a guide for others in

curriculum evaluation or design since the study does not examine or interpret utilizing curriculum evaluation and/or design techniques or methods. It is the researcher's hope that bringing meaning to a consciousness level will bring about a more reflective and communicative practice in education.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are relevant in understanding the meaning and purpose of the study.

Developmental First Grade: This type of program is designed for children who have been labeled as being unready for first grade. The program is a transition grade between kindergarten and first grade.

Developmentally Appropriateness: The National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987), defines "developmentally appropriateness" as having two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Age appropriateness is defined as the following:

> Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences (p. 2).

Individual appropriateness refers to each child being a "unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth as well as an individual personality, learning style and family background. Both the curriculum and the adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences" (p. 2).

Hermeneutic Inquiry: Hermeneutic inquiry is the search for consensus of greater meaning and understanding through continuous dialogue and reflection regarding values, beliefs, assumptions and practices. "In educational terms, the hermeneutic imagination throws open the challenge to inquire into what we mean when we use words like curriculum . . ." (Smith, 1991, p. 188).

Dissertation Contents

The search for ways to meet the needs of children is and has been a recurring event. The lack of school improvement does not stem from a lack of effort. Several models, methods, techniques and theories have been tried to no avail (Kamii, 1985; Katz & Chard, 1989). Yet, through dialogue and communication of meaning, an opportunity for increased human potential is possible. The study of hermeneutic inquiry and the importance of finding meaning and understanding in curricular issues is the foundation for this study. Chapter I presents a brief overview of the dissertation contents. Chapter II provides an indepth look at transition programs, developmentally appropriate practices, hermeneutic inquiry and sociopolitical influences on curriculum in educational programs.

Justification for the use of qualitative research is provided in Chapter III. A discussion of hermeneutic inquiry and the process used to collect and interpret data will also be included. Chapter IV provides a compilation of data gathered from indepth interviews, oral histories, newspaper articles, census materials, original

documents and secondary sources. Interpretation of the data is included in Chapter V along with suggestions for further study and the researcher's comments.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the research literature in the following areas: Transition programs, developmentally appropriate practices; six-year-old characteristics; hermeneutics; and socio-political influences. The first section regarding transition programs presents a historical perspective of the evolution of such programs as well as a brief overview of different viewpoints regarding transition programs.

The developmentally appropriate practices section is divided into many parts which present the many variables necessary to provide appropriate classrooms for children. The section on six-year-old characteristics presents a brief overview of common six-year-old traits. The philosophy of hermeneutics is described in the next section which is followed by socio-political influences that impact educational issues. The sections were deliberately chosen to include the many facets that are involved in any decision made regarding children and/or education.

Transition Programs

Transition grades are grades in-between the traditional kindergarten and first grade. Students placed in such programs are viewed as being "unready" for the next grade. Transition grades are sometimes called, developmental first grade, transitional first

grade, kindergarten plus, junior first grade, readiness first or pre-first grade. Rhoten (1991), states that approximately 17.5% of all elementary schools in the United States currently implement transitional classes between kindergarten and first grade for children "unready" for first grade curriculum.

The argument for placing children in a transition grade is founded on the premise that these students could benefit from smaller class size and that instruction can be aimed at their particular level. In such an environment, the students will hopefully be blessed with the gift of time. The gift of time will enable these students to mature developmentally, gain confidence and maintain a positive self-concept. The alternatives, stated bleakly, are retention in the previous grade or promotion to possible failure and frustration (Leinhart 1980; Sandoval & Fitzgerald 1985; Zinski 1983; Jackson 1975).

The gift of time was first promoted by Arnold Gesell (1925). Gesell posits that human beings, beginning at infancy, advance through developmental stages not solely dictated by chronological age (Gesell Institute, 1980). The developmental growth pattern varies in each individual. Each stage adds to an individual's readiness to achieve certain tasks. Ilg, Ames, Haines, & Gillespie (1978); and Zinski (1983) describe the Gesellian belief that it is futile to expose a child to tasks above their developmental level and that the child should be kept from such tasks until they achieve an appropriate developmental stage of readiness. They posit that Gesell suggested a transition type program or retention until the

children are developmentally ready to progress. Many transition programs are founded on this assertion. An opposing side to transition programs has emerged.

The vast majority of research disputes any form of retention (Meyer, 1992). The need for transitional programs has evolved through inappropriate classroom curriculum (Bredekamp 1987; Doremus 1986; Roberts 1986; and Shepard & Smith 1988). The push for academic mastery in early childhood has alienated the younger student. The developmentally younger student becomes 'behind' the normal student. Many parents have held their children out an extra year to ensure that their child would not fall behind. When the 'young' children are compared with their older classmates, they are nearly always less successful (Beattie, 1970; Carroll, 1963; Davis, Trimble & Vincent, 1980; King, 1955; Shepard & Smith, 1986). Shepard and Smith (1986) analyzed research data regarding youngness. They posit the following: 1) The achievement differences that are statistically significant are not necessarily large. They found that first graders who were in the youngest three months of their class scored on average at the 62nd percentile in reading compared to the oldest three month children who were at the 71st percentile; 2) Even the small disadvantage of youngness eventually disappears, usually by third grade. Halliwell and Stein (1964) found that achievement differentiation in older and younger classmates of 5th graders was minimal.

Meyers (1992) reviewed thirty three research studies regarding transition classes. She states the following: "twenty-one studies

have reported no difference or negative effects of transition programs. Eleven studies reviewed claimed positive effects of transition programs" (p. 45).

An empirical study conducted by Jones (1985) discussed the effects of a transition program on achievement in the first three grades. The study reports that children who had attended transition classes were compared with those children who were targeted for the program but were not placed in the program due to parent objection. The students were compared by measuring academic achievement in reading and math on the school district's basic skills test. The results are described as follows:

> The results of the study indicated that the promoted children had higher gain scores than transition children from the beginning to the end of first grade, but these gains were not statistically significant. At the end of second grade, transition children had higher math scores than promoted children; however, the differences were not statistically significant. The transition group advantages were diminishing. By the end of third grade there were no significant differences on any of the tests (Jones, 1985, p. 43).

Therefore, with the gift of time, there must be patience. Parents and students have been patient with school systems who try to push children into conforming to the curriculum. No matter what is done, retention, transitional programs or holding students out, there will always be 'young' students. Therefore, the problem rests within the schools. Two opposing schools of thought share the same concern: that children are educated in an appropriate manner. Uphoff (1990) posits that transition grades would not be necessary if curriculum in other grades were developmentally appropriate.

Therefore, to that author the transition programs are only quick fixes to a much larger problem of developmental inappropriateness.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

King and Kerber (1968) assert that research findings have caused educators to reevaluate traditional tenets of readiness, maturation, and the dangers of premature pressures upon the child to succeed academically. The push for early academics was evident in 1968 and is still evident today (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1992; Castle, 1992; Costa, 1988; and Kamii, 1990). Garbarino (1989) inquires the following without rhetoric:

> What does it mean to approach children developmentally?. It means that we recognize the child's changing capacities, and that we recognize that a child has the capacity for change (p. 30).

Dematteis (1993), provides the following working definition of developmentally appropriate practice:

> A teaching philosophy, a way of thinking, an approach which involves both the what and the how (curriculum and methodology) that is designed for the age group served and implemented with attention to the needs and differences of the individual children in the group (p. 2).

Castle (1992), describes developmentally appropriate programs as considering the following:

> . . . the levels at which individual children within the programs are functioning (socially, emotionally, cognitively, physically) based upon the most current knowledge of child development and the educated judgements of teachers (p. 1).

The knowledge of child development and the educated judgements described by Castle (1992), and the recognition of the changing

child (Garbarino, 1989), are based on specific assumptions. These assumptions are relevant to the educators who possess them. The meaning and definitions of such assumptions have caused some confusion and misunderstandings (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1992; Castle, 1992). To help deter from such confusion, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) suggest the following:

> Decisions about appropriate curriculum and assessment inevitably derive from a particular perspective or theoretical framework. These guidelines are based on specific assumptions about how children learn and develop and also on relevant theories of curriculum that guide decisions about what is important to learn and when. The purpose . . . is to make explicit the theoretical framework or belief systems that underlies (developmental appropriateness) the guidelines (p. 12).

The underlying assumptions regarding developmentally appropriate practices rely on the theoretical framework described and utilized by early childhood educators and theorists.

Early Childhood Education and Theory

Many early theorists and educational philosophies have provided the foundation for developmentally appropriate practice. Day (1983) provides a brief overview of the educational influence of the following theorists. Pestalozzi, a European educator, proposed that young children learn best through activity and sensory perception involvement. This position became known as the discovery approach and was influential for Froebel. Froebel, sometimes known as the father of kindergarten, posited the need for play in education. Play should be the main vehicle for learning through discovery and a curriculum reflective of the "interests, impulses, and capacities of

the specific children involved" (p. 2). The Montessori method, advocated by Maria Montessori, stresses a prepared environment that actively involves children in the learning process with multiage groups and self-correcting materials. John Dewey advocated some of the same principles associated with the other theorists along with the expression of pupil interest and acquiring skills necessary for daily living. Piaget added to the early childhood foundation with his recognition of developmental stages within children. Piagetian theory promotes knowledge and understanding of developmental levels in children. Such knowledge includes the understanding of three domains: cognitive-intellectual, psychosocial, and physical-motor. These three domains will be discussed further in the appropriate sections. Castle (1992) cites the works of Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg and Gesell, as providing a foundation for "understanding how children progress from one age/stage to another" (p. 1). This brief overview of theoretical background provides some basic assumptions, outlined by Day (1983), that clearly support these theorists and their philosophies and which provide the framework for early childhood education.

1. Children grow and develop at unique, individual rates that are often unrelated to chronological age.
2. Children's natural curiosity and eagerness to learn are enhanced if children are free to follow many of their natural interests.
3. Learning is what children do; it is not something that is done to them.
4. Play is the child's way of working and learning.
5. Children learn many things from each other, including respect for themselves and others, ways of learning how to learn, and a sense of responsibility and achievement.
6. A specially constructed, rich learning environment, filled with concrete and sensory learning materials, is essential in helping children to learn.

7. The integrated day, involving centers-oriented, simultaneously occurring activities within the learning environment, is one of the creative approaches to the development of basic skills.
8. In a learning atmosphere based on trust and structured freedom, children are encouraged to use their own initiative and to be self-reliant.
9. The uniqueness of the child, as reflected in his or her individuality and learning style, should be appreciated and valued (pp. 9-10).

The above guidelines reflect a broad perspective, but recent history has also been very influential in developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). Observations of interpretations and misinterpretations of such practices sparked a need for more well defined guidelines. Some of the interpretations (or misinterpretations) of developmentally appropriate practices present inappropriate curriculum expectations in the early years of schooling (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). "The basic problem is that in some ways current curriculum does not demand enough of children, and in other ways it demands too much of the wrong thing" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 11).

Developmentally Appropriate

Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) propose the publication of the NAEYC's position statements on developmentally appropriate practice was a result of specified needs. First, it was clear that the term "developmentally appropriate" needed a clearer definition that was more operational. Secondly, the trend toward more formal instruction (academic) for younger and younger children presented the need for more defined guidelines of appropriateness. Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines were then designed to address two

problems: "The 'early childhood error' (inadequate attention to the content of curriculum) and the 'elementary error' (overattention to curriculum objectives, with less attention to the individual child)" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 2). The 'errors' stated above may be a result of misinterpretation of meaning and implementation practices.

Myths and Misinterpretations

The publication of the NAEYC's Reaching potentials: Appropriate curriculum and assessment for young children, grew from a perceived need for "public awareness about good programs for young children and advocating for change, we also recognize that misunderstandings are common and myths about developmentally appropriate perpetuate" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 4). The following list of myths and misinterpretations regarding developmentally appropriate practice derive from two primary sources, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992), and Dematteis (1993). A brief discussion of each myth/misinterpretation will follow.

Myth 1: There is one right way to implement a developmentally appropriate program.

Developmentally appropriate practice is not a defined curriculum; it is not a rigid set of standards. It is a framework, a philosophy, or an approach to working with young children that mandates that "the adult pay attention to at least two important pieces of information--what we know about how children develop and learn and what we learn about the individual needs and interests of

each child in the group" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 4).

Myth 2: Developmentally appropriate practice requires teachers to abandon all their prior knowledge and experience.

Nothing they have learned or done in the past is acceptable in the new philosophy.

What developmentally appropriate practice does require is constant readjusting. A good program will adapt for individual diversity of all kinds; individual variation in growth, development, learning, special needs, and culture among all children.

Myth 3: Developmentally appropriate classrooms are unstructured classrooms where teachers don't teach and the children control the classroom.

Good programs are highly organized and structured environments carefully prepared by the teacher and in which the teacher is in control. "The difference is that children are also actively involved and assume some responsibility for their own learning" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 5).

Myth 4: Developmentally appropriate programs are suitable for only certain kinds of children. They don't work for children with special needs.

One of the biggest assets of developmentally appropriate practice, is the individual appropriateness for each student. "By definition, to be individually appropriate requires that programs attend to individual and cultural variation among children they serve" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 5), including the identified special needs of each child.

Myth 5: Developmentally appropriateness is just a fad, soon to be replaced by another, perhaps opposite trend.

Developmentally appropriate practice is a philosophical base founded on early childhood theory and research. It is a philosophy that has spanned many decades that addresses how we think about teaching, child development, and learning. Theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey expressed some of the same philosophical beliefs over fifty years ago.

Myth 6: All developmentally appropriate classrooms look the same.

Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) comment on the above myth in the following manner:

> Because developmentally appropriate classrooms are not only age appropriate but also individually appropriate, they cannot all look alike, nor will the children within those classrooms all have the same experience. Some children will need more structure and adult guidance than others. Some will enter school as quite able decision makers, while others will need teachers to help them learn to make choices. Any teaching approach that is applied to all of the children in the same way without any adjustment for individual differences will fail for at least some of the children (p. 4).

The myths and misinterpretations regarding developmentally appropriate practice, once again proclaim a need for communication, understanding and meaning for educators. Curriculum development in developmentally appropriate programs subsumes the following: child development, knowledge, individual characteristics, various disciplines, cultural value, parents' desires, and the knowledge that children need to competently function in society (Spodek, 1988). In order to understand

developmentally appropriate practice, it is imperative to have a working knowledge of child development and learning that is reflected within the curriculum.

Curriculum Guidelines

Curriculum, as defined in the NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in the Primary Grades Serving 5 Through 8 Year Olds, "derives from several sources: the child, the content, and the society" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 62). Defining the meanings and interrelations within an educational program is necessary in providing a complete program for children. The following is a summation by Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) of curricular definitions that should be understood by educators in order to provide adequate programs for children:

> Curriculum content (what children are to learn), learning processes (how children learn), instructional strategies (how to teach), environment (the learning context), and assessment strategies (how to know what learning has occurred and what curriculum adjustments are needed) (p. 19).

In 1987, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987) published a detailed list of "components of appropriate and inappropriate practice in the primary grades" (pp. 67-78). This descriptive list is provided for the reader to distinguish appropriateness from inappropriateness in reference to curriculum practices. Polarization of philosophies became prevalent after reviewing the components (Bredekamp, 1987), which resulted in discussions of right/wrong and my way/your way as well as misinterpretations and implementation problems. Therefore, in 1990,

guidelines for curriculum content were published to aid in decision making regarding development and/or selection of curriculum content (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1992). Those guidelines are listed as follows:

1. The curriculum has an articulated description of its theoretical base that is consistent with prevailing professional opinion and research on how children learn.

2. Curriculum content is designed to achieve long range goals for children in all domains--social, emotional, cognitive, and physical--to prepare children to function as fully contributing members of a democratic society.

3. Curriculum addresses the development of knowledge and understanding, processes and skills, dispositions and attitudes.

4. Curriculum addresses a broad range of content that is relevant, engaging, and meaningful to children.

5. Curriculum goals are realistic and attainable for most children in the designated age range for which they were designated.

6. Curriculum content reflects and is generated by the needs and interests of individual children within the group. Curriculum incorporates a wide variety of learning experiences, materials and equipment, and instructional strategies, to accommodate a broad range of children's individual differences in prior experience, maturation rates, styles of learning, needs, and interests.

7. Curriculum respects and supports individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Curriculum supports and encourages positive relationships with children's families.

8. Curriculum builds upon what children already know and are able to do (activating prior knowledge) to consolidate their learning and to foster their acquisition of new concepts and skills.

9. The curriculum provides conceptual frameworks for children so that their mental constructions based on prior knowledge and experience become more complex over time.

10. Curriculum allows for focus on a particular topic or content while allowing for integration across traditional subject-matter divisions by; planning around themes and/or learning experiences that provide opportunities for rich conceptual development.

11. The curriculum content has intellectual integrity; content meets the recognized standards of the relevant subject-matter disciplines.

12. The content of the curriculum is worth knowing; curriculum respects children's intelligence and does not waste their time.

13. Curriculum engages children actively, not passively, in the learning process. Children have opportunities to make meaningful choices.

14. Curriculum values children's constructive errors and does not prematurely limit exploration and experimentation for the sake of ensuring "right" answers.

15. Curriculum emphasizes the development of children's thinking, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities.

16. Curriculum emphasizes the value of social interaction to learning in all domains and provides opportunities to learn from peers.

17. Curriculum is supportive of children's physiological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, hygiene, and nourishment/elimination.

18. Curriculum protects children's psychological safety, that is, children feel happy, relaxed, and comfortable rather than disengaged, frightened, worried, or stressed.

19. The curriculum strengthens children's sense of competence and enjoyment of learning by providing experiences for children to succeed from their point of view.

20. The curriculum is flexible so that teachers can adapt to individual children or groups (pp. 19-22).

There are many facets of curriculum development in providing a developmentally appropriate environment for students. Individual appropriateness has been thoroughly addressed; age appropriateness

is as equally important. The average age of children attending a regular first grade classroom is six years old. Therefore, the average age of students entering a developmental first grade program is also six years old.

Six Year-Old Children

Human beings at any age have specific needs. Six year-old children are no different. Adults responsible for providing a safe environment for these children must be knowledgeable and prepared to address these needs.

Dematteis (1993), posits that teachers of six year-olds should be flexible, resourceful, interested in their students, be willing to be a friend, offer limited choices, and be able to deemphasize being first in situations. Each of the points addressed by Dematteis is related to the child development of six year-olds.

Physical Development

A child's growth at the age of six is beginning to slow down in relation to the quick growth of the first five years of the child's life. Body control becomes possible with exhibitions of longer periods where children are able to sit still. However, "primary-grade children are more fatigued by long periods of sitting than by running, jumping, or bicycling. Physical action is essential for these children to refine their developing skills . . ." (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 63). Therefore, children should manipulate objects and have opportunities to learn through hands-on, concrete and direct

experiences. The manipulation of games provides opportunities for children to experience physical and cognitive growth.

Cognitive Growth

Physical activity is necessary for cognitive development as well. Six year-olds are beginning to move from the preoperational to the concrete operational stage of development (Piaget, 1952). They begin to acquire problem solving skills and do not always have to have concrete objects to understand concepts, but may need concrete objects to use as reference points. These children also begin to engage in interactive conversations that strengthen their communication skills.

> Therefore, a principle of practice for primary-age children is that the curriculum provide many developmentally appropriate materials for children to explore and think about and opportunities for interaction and communication with other children and adults. Similarly, the content of the curriculum must be relevant, engaging, and meaningful to the children themselves (Katz & Chard, p. 64).

Six year-olds enjoy collecting objects and engaging in games (Dematteis, 1993). Games and conversations allow children to interact with peers. This interaction effects their social-emotional and moral development.

Social-Emotional and Moral Development

Establishing positive peer relations at this age provides a foundation for social competence. Bredekamp (1987) advocates the importance of adult assistance in the development of "positive peer group relationships and provide opportunities and support for

cooperative small group projects that not only develop cognitive ability but promote peer interaction (p. 64). A struggle by children at this age is evident in developing a sense of industry or insecurity. At this age, most children begin to make judgements regarding true and false situations as well as begin to internalize moral rules of behavior and develop a conscience (Bredekamp, 1987). Six year-olds may display increased independence but they still need consistent supervision, patient encouragement and help with their responsibility. Projects involving cooperation are beneficial for six year olds.

Knowledge of child development is imperative for educators to address children's needs. An awareness and understanding of child development may be internalized in various ways by individuals. Communication and reflection help to keep educators on the developmentally appropriate track.

Hermeneutics

The National Association for the Education of Young Children found the need for a clearer definition of developmental appropriateness when varying interpretations were being expressed and implemented into programs (Bredekamp, 1987). Such variations and interpretations of curricular meanings brought about the formation of The Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought. Smith (1991) asserts that the Society was created to serve as a forum for interdisciplinary conversation. Within such conversation, it is necessary to realize that "so-called facts that

one discovers are already the product of many levels of interpretation" (p. 203). As seen with developmentally appropriate practices, many levels of interpretations were brought about by myths and misinterpretations regarding such practices. A need for understanding and an interpretation of meanings was prevalent regarding developmental appropriateness as with any curriculum issue. The study of interpretations and meanings is referred to as hermeneutic inquiry.

Hermeneutic inquiry is the search for the possible consensus of greater meaning and understanding through continuous dialogue and reflection regarding values, beliefs, assumptions and practices. In educational terms, hermeneutics challenges us to inquire into what we mean when we use words like curriculum or even developmental appropriateness (Smith, 1991). Macdonald (1988), associates hermeneutic inquiry with curriculum theory and posits the following:

> Curriculum theory as a search for understanding, a meditative thinking, is an attempt to deal with unity rather than bits and parts additively. It is a theory which is experienced as a participatory phenomena, where the person engages in dialogue with the theory, bringing each person's biography and values to the interpretation. The intention is not to explain (flatten out) for control purposes, but to reinterpret in order to provide greater grounding for understanding (p. 105).

The greatest human quest, as described by Macdonald (1988), "is the search for meaning and the basic human capacity for this search is experienced in the hermeneutic process, the process of interpretation" (p. 105).

Smith (1991), asserts that within the process of understanding, interpretation of meaning is always from within a frame "of our

common language and experience so that whatever I say about you is also a saying about myself" (p. 201). Linge (1976), describes understanding as a historical event which neither the interpreter or the subject can be thought of as autonomous parts. Linge (1976), asserts Gadamer's belief that, "understanding itself is not to be thought of so much as an action of subjectivity, but as the entering into an event of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated" (p. xvi). Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the historical impact on conversation, interpretation, and meaning.

> It is vitally important to recognize that the hermeneutical phenomenon encompasses both the alien that we strive to understand and the familiar world that we already understand. The familiar horizons of the interpreter's world, though perhaps more difficult to grasp thematically, are as integral a part of the event of understanding as are the explicit procedures by which he assimilates the alien object (Linge, 1976, p. xii).

Experience and understanding of the world, as described by Heidegger (Smith, 1991), "takes place within a horizon of past, present, and future" (p. 193). Understanding is founded on the past experiences that already exist within us.

> And 'understanding' here is itself not a fixable category but rather it stands for a deep sense that something has been profoundly heard in our present circumstances. Similarly, "hearing something in the present" does not just mean simply being aware of vibrations of the eardrums, but a registering of them within the deep web of sounds and voices that make up the structure of one's consciousness as language, memory, and hope.
>
> This means that hermeneutical consciousness is always and everywhere a historical consciousness, a way of thinking and acting that is acutely aware of the storied nature of human experience (Smith, 1991, p. 201).

Meaning, therefore, must be "recovered by a disciplined reconstruction of the historical situation or life-context in which it originated" (Linge, 1976, p. xiii). In order to reconstruct the situation in question or understand the social or cultural phenomena, dialogue should take place (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The language, which hermeneutics tries to uphold, is described by Smith (1991) as ambiguous and complex. All programs and practices must be "mediated linguistically", i.e., we must talk with each other, "to ensure that there is a genuine meeting of the different horizons of our understanding" (p. 196-197). Smith (1991), also asserts that language can not only promote but also constrain understanding. Present in all understanding is the process of the hermeneutic circle.

The hermeneutic circle is founded on three themes: "the inherent creativity of interpretation, the pivotal role of language in human understanding, and the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation" (Smith, 1991, p. 190). With the presence of the three themes, understanding and interpretation is reached through dialogue and consent of the subjects involved. Van Manen, as discussed by Macdonald (1988), posits the following:

> Language is the vehicle of expression, but the words let the life world shine through them. It is as an alternative to the silence that speech points toward. Pedagogical practice is the constant recovery of the pedagogical relationship through redemption, recall, and regaining or recapturing the meaning of pedagogical activity . . . The hermeneutical process is universal and basic for all interhuman experience, both of history and the present moment (p. 112).

Language as described by Gadamer (Smith, 1991) is effected by historical consciousness of the researcher and the subjects.

> Inevitably I speak within the language into which I was born, but my language already contains within itself in a sedimentary way the evidence of its own malleability and evolution, reflective of the political, economic and social changes in which my forebearers engaged through the course of their personal and collective lives (p. 193).

Hermeneutic inquiry is subsumed by the socio-political influence of the dominant culture.

Socio-Political Influences

According to Grundy (1987), "the curriculum of a society's schools is an integral part of the culture of that society" (p. 6). To understand the meaning of any set of curriculum practices, Grundy (1987) posits that they must be seen as arising out of historical circumstances and as being a reflection of a particular social milieu. In order to understand the meaning of practices, dialogue must take place. It is commonplace that dialogue regarding curriculum is in reference to an object or a "thing" as Grundy (1987) reports.

> Talking about curriculum is another way of talking about the educational practices of certain institutions. This means that it is not on the teacher's shelf that one looks for curriculum, but in the actions of the people engaged in education . . . That is, to think about curriculum is to think about how a group of people act and interact in certain situations. It is not to describe and analyze an element which exists apart from human interaction (p. 6).

Grundy (1987), asserts that curriculum and its meaning is socially constructive. To provide greater understanding of the assertion, Grundy, (1987), uses the analogy of curriculum being more like

football than like hydrogen. In order to understand hydrogen, it is only necessary to know about the nature of the element. It is not necessary to know about the balloon it is filling in order to understand the element itself. Yet with football, we need to know about the society in which it is being played to understand the game. Hydrogen is the same wherever it is found, but football is not. As with curriculum, there is no a priori existence.

> If we are to understand the meaning of the curriculum practices engaged in by people in a society, we need to know about the social context of the school. But we not only need to know about the composition and organization of the society; we also need to understand the fundamental premises upon which it is constructed . . .Educational practices, do not exist apart from beliefs about people and the way in which they do and ought to interact in the world. If we scratch the surface of educational practice, and that implies organizational as well as teaching and learning practices, we find, not universal natural laws, but beliefs and values (Grundy, 1987, pp. 6-7).

Ideas, beliefs, values, etc., that dominate a group or culture are associated with 'ideology' (Grundy, 1987). Domination, as described by Grundy (1987), "implies that the concept of ideology has political overtones, that is, that ideology involves the ideas having some power to determine the way in which the members of the group see the world" (p. 108). Ideology saturates the consciousness so that it is embedded in meanings and practices (Apple, 1979). Gramsci, as cited in Burrell and Morgan (1979), believed that power and domination rested not only in means of coercion but also within men's consciousness through ideological hegemony.

Hegemony is exercised when certain ideas or values "deeply saturate the consciousness of a society" (Apple, 1979, p. 5). Apple explains the essence of ideology through hegemony:

> . . . hegemony acts to 'saturate' our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic, and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world "tout court", the only world . . . it refers to an organized assemblage of meanings of practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are lived (Apple, 1979, p. 5).

Hegemony that has "successfully" become a part of society, operates in a dual role: "as a general conception of life for the masses, and as a scholastic program or set of principles which is advanced by a sector of the intellectuals" (Macdonald, 1987, p. 160).

Attempts to make a change within a society or within a scholastic program, as mentioned above, must be made through communication (Macdonald, 1987). Communicative action between people with shared norms initiates expectations regarding behavior, values and social interactions (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Communication free from domination, along with emancipation and individualism, are goals which free the linkage of the political macro-structure and the speech within a given society (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, educators' activities and expectations should be focused upon the ideas, values, and attitudes of the persons within the school "in the context of their concrete lived experiences; and our efforts should be toward changing consciousness in these settings toward more liberating and fulfilling outcomes" (Macdonald, 1987, p. 161). Macdonald et al. (1973), advocate that liberation should be the purpose of schooling. They suggest that human liberation can be achieved by encouraging communication and "the continuing development of each individual's potential (teacher and student) through both the liberating encounter with the totality

of history and culture and the ongoing process of choosing and directing one's own activity" (Macdonald et al., 1973, p. 6). Therefore, it is imperative that educators continually communicate to find the meaning behind our actions; that these meanings be raised to a consciousness level; and that through reflection and awareness of our actions we begin to see the avenues that can lead to human liberation and away from control, technological ideas and packaged programs to solve perceived problems.

Summary

Historically, transition classes have been implemented based on assumptions regarding children needing time to catch up to the curriculum. These assumptions were not based on research regarding early childhood theories of how children learn. Developmentally appropriate practices are founded on early childhood theories. Such theories provide information regarding developmental stages, curriculum and age and individual appropriate activities. In order to gain a clear understanding of what is meant by terms utilized within the field of education, continuous communication must be achieved. Grundy (1987) posits that "the curriculum of a society's schools is in integral part of the culture of that society" (p. 6). Therefore, curriculum and its perceived meaning is socially constructed.

The review of literature provides many opportunities for the reader to see that the numerous facets involved in education relate to socio-political issues that surround the community as well as

individuals. The hermeneutic process was chosen to find an understanding within the implementation process of the committee members regarding the issues at hand. Utilization of the hermeneutic process as the vehicle of inquiry allows the researcher and the reader to better understand the possible consensus of meaning surrounding the decision to implement a developmental first grade program in Edmond Public Schools. It is important to note that it is recognized that such a decsion is founded on multiple-realities of various individuals. Therefore, it is imperative that hermeneutic inquiry be utilized to find a possible consensus of meaning regarding developmental appropriateness and that dialogue take place to promote possible self-reflection in relation to the implementation of a developmental first grade program.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the research methodology. The chapter is divided into the following sections: nature of the study; hermeneutic inquiry; instrumentation; data gathering and procedures; data analysis; final analysis; and methodology summary.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because the researcher's intent was to find a greater understanding of the committee's reasons for implementing the developmental first grade program within the district. Qualitative research, or field research, is the "study of people acting the natural courses of their daily lives" (Emerson, 1983, p. 1). Guba and Lincoln (1989), describe such an "approach to evaluation that moves beyond mere science--just getting the facts--to include the myriad human, political, social, cultural, and contextual elements that are involved" (p. 8). These elements are sometimes unstated facets of a social reality existing within a culture. Barton and Walker (1978) describe the human as an active participant in creating social reality:

> . . . The nature of school knowledge, the organization of the school, ideologies of teachers, indeed any educational issue, all become relative--and the central task for the sociology of education becomes to reveal what constitutes reality for the participants in a given situation, to explain how those participants came to view reality in this way (p. 274).

In the search to find the meaning of issues within the social world, it is important to remember that the methods are social as well. Emerson (1983) posits that in "stressing the social character of fieldwork, we are in a position to see more clearly the variety of personal, interactional, moral, and political processes that lie at its core" (p. viii). The methodology involved in fieldwork is learned throughout the process, it involves a process that benefits from, "and perhaps requires, thought and reflection on what is going on" (Emerson, 1983, p. ix). Emerson stresses the need for self-conscious reflection by the researcher throughout the process.

> In urging self-conscious reflection, then, I am not urging that we forsake our demands for empirically rich and theoretically insightful substantive field studies, as obviously such products provide the ultimate justification for our efforts. Nor am I advocating self-consciousness as a license to parade before a reading audience any and all emotional ups and downs, moral agonizings, and 'intimacy trophies' . . . collected in the field. Rather, I think that self-consciousness about what we are doing and how we are doing it produces fieldwork that is stronger on both scientific and humanistic grounds (Emerson, 1983, ix).

Charmaz (1983) asserts that qualitative researchers make theoretical sense of the social world through a process. The inquiry process utilized is predetermined by the philosophical base and research intent of the researcher.

In studying the social world, it is necessary to understand the meanings that actions, events and dialogue have for those studied

(Emerson, 1983). In order to grasp understanding, appreciation of the subject's "world" is necessary. "Appreciation in this sense compels the fieldworker 'to comprehend and to illuminate the subject's view and to interpret the world as it appears to him" (Matza, 1969, p. 25). Interpretations of other's worlds recognizes the constructions within those worlds formed by the people. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that the constructions through which people make sense of their situations are shaped by the values of the constructors and these constructions are linked to the particular physical, physchological, social and cultural contexts within which they are formed and to which they refer. Shared constructions become a degree of reality for most. Shared constructions of some nature result in a form of consensus regarding a subject. "Consensus does not imply a greater degree of reality for whatever is agreed upon, however; it simply means that those in agreement have come to share a construction that has reality for them" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 9). A methodology that reflects such assumptions grounded in inquiry and search for meaning exists in what Guba and Lincoln (1989) call the hermeneutic paradigm.

Hermeneutic Inquiry

Guba and Lincoln (1989) stress the necessity in understanding that "realities are not objectively 'out there' but are constructed by people, often under the influence of a variety of social and cultural factors that lead to shared constructions" (p. 12). Defining and searching for understanding of these "constructions

must take place through dialogue. Continuing dialectic dialogue will lead to reconstructions of greater power, worth and understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 12).

The existence of misunderstandings and multiple realities perpetuates the need for greater dialogue. In understanding this phenomenon, Smith (1991) found that there was a need for greater dialogue and "language of understanding" that could decrease the "difference" in realities but also aid in being cognizant of the boundaries and limits of one's own understanding (p. 203).

In an attempt to find greater understanding through dialogue, hermeneutic inquiry was chosen. Hermeneutic inquiry is the search for a possible consensus of greater meaning and understanding through continuous dialogue and reflection regarding values, beliefs, assumptions and practices. Hermeneutics is able to "shake loose dogmatic notions of tradition which can be engaged from within the language of one's own space" (Smith, 1991, p. 195). It is imperative to note that hermeneutics as described by Smith (1991) is not "concerned to make a word mean one thing and one thing only, nor is only one preconceived way of doing things the only way" (p. 197).

Short (1991) states that within hermeneutic inquiry, "there are clear overlaps in method and purpose. The origin of the research data . . . is from within the subject, stated by the subject, and negotiated between the subject and the researcher" (p. 330). The following is a summary of requirements, as defined by Smith (1991), for researchers utilizing hermeneutic inquiry:

> The first is to develop a deep attentiveness to language itself, to notice how one uses it and how others use it. It is important to gain a sense of the etymological traces carried in words to see what they point to historically . . . such understanding is quite essential for the work of the imperative imagination, because in a deep sense our language contains the story of who we are as a people.
>
> The second requirement for hermeneutical explorations of the human life-world is a deepening of one's sense of the basic interpretability of life itself . . . the need is great for persons who can meaningfully deconstruct what is going on and propose alternative, more creative ways of thinking and acting.
>
> ...a third important aspect of hermeneutical research . . . is its interest which is in the question of human meaning and of how we might make sense of our lives in such a way that life can go on. Constantly engaged in the practice of interpretation, the hermeneutic imagination is not limited to its conceptual resource to the texts of the hermeneutic tradition itself but is liberated by them to bring to bear any conceptualities that can assist in deepening our understanding of what it is we are investigating. This means that the mark of good interpretative research is not in the degree to which it follows a specified methodological agenda, but in the degree to which it can show understanding of what it is that is being investigated. And 'understanding' here is itself not a fixable category but rather it stands for a deep sense that something has been profoundly heard in our present circumstances.
>
> The fourth aspect of hermeneutical inquiry implicit in all of the others suggested so far has to do with its inherent creativity. Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it (pp. 199-201).

Human interaction and communication are imperative in the utilization of a hermeneutic perspective in research.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument utilized in inquiry is the human (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); "other forms of instrumentation may be used in later phases of an inquiry, but the human is the initial and

continuing mainstay" (p. 236). The human researcher collects data to provide information relating to the inquiry.

> . . . Data are the product of a process of interpretation, and though there is some sense in which the materials for this process are 'given' it is only the product which has scientific status and function. In a word, data have meaning and the word 'meaning', like its cognates 'significance' and 'import', includes a reference to values (Kaplan, 1964, p. 385).

The researcher as the primary instrument collects and interprets data in various and continuous forms. As Kaplan (1964) posited, the meaning derived from the study will be associated with the values of the population within the study as well as the researcher. Therefore, a brief description of the researcher's background and beliefs are provided.

The researcher has functioned in the following capacities of education within three different school districts: Office Aide, Teacher Aide, English-As-A-Second Language Aide, Inventory Clerk, Receptionist, Indian Education Aide, First Grade Teacher, Second Grade Teacher, and Assistant Principal. This background allows for a broad world view regarding education. The researcher sees her past experiences as invaluable as they provided many examples of the many facets involved within education. Throughout the process of changing positions and roles within the educational process, the researcher came to believe and value specific issues as an educator. A following is an overview of specific beliefs held by the researcher.

Children are special and should be treated as such.

It is the educator's responsibility to insure success for all students to the best of his/her ability.

If a problem is perceived, then it must be viewed from

different perspectives, one of which should include looking at how the educator can change or help the situation.

Meeting children's needs is not an option, it is a necessity.

Developmentally appropriate practices can be implemented successfully within a classroom of heterogeneous students.

Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of the subject or issue studied.

Change is a process. In order for change to occur the human must first change from within.

Data Gathering/Procedures

In the search for greater meaning and understanding, the researcher used a variety of tools to enhance the inquiry process. Primary and secondary sources were used to investigate the many facets involved in individual assumptions. Primary sources are those sources that the researcher obtained personally while secondary sources are those sources obtained by utilizing information gained from other parties or materials.

Primary Sources

Data collected from primary sources include information gained from in-depth interviews and oral histories. Indepth interviews were conducted by the researcher at the convenience of the respondent. The setting of the interview was chosen by the respondent. The interview session began with a brief discussion regarding the researcher's background followed by an agreement between the researcher and the respondent for the researcher to take

notes and to tape record the interview. Each respondent seemed comfortable with the conditions of the interview. The formal interview sessions lasted from forty-five minutes to one hour. Data were recorded during the interviews by the researcher through notetaking and a taped recording. The researcher also transcribed the taped recording and utilized a reflective journal written by the researcher following each interview. Oral histories were documented within the interview process as the respondents recalled information and facts as they remembered them. A copy of the initial interview questions is located in the Appendix.

Secondary Sources

Many secondary sources were utilized by the researcher. Such sources include newspaper articles, census materials, original documents from committee members, board notes, personal notations by committee members, Edmond Public Schools District Profile (Roach, 1992) as well as books pertaining to the city and surrounding area.

Data Analysis

According to Charmaz (1983) data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. Emerson (1983) states that "analysis is not a separate, distinct stage of the research process; it occurs at all points of the study as data are collected, recorded, and coded into analytic categories" (p. 94). Lincoln and Guba (1985) make the following assertion regarding data analysis:

> What is important to recognize is that data analysis is not an inclusive phase that can be marked out as occurring

> at some singular time during the inquiry (for instance, following data collection and preceding report writing).
>
> Data analysis must begin with the very first data collection, in order to facilitate the emergent design, grounding of theory, and emergent structure of later data collection phases (pp. 241-242).

During the course of the study, the researcher developed categories from the data, categorized themes, developed interpretations, and changed themes and categories as further information was applied. Charmaz (1983) describes coding as an important phase which can help the researcher develop categories. Each in-depth interview manuscript was read many times by the researcher. Careful review of each research question was utilized as each response was searched for commonalities or similarities. Each response that was perceived by the researcher as pertinent was highlighted in a different color according to the research question to which it related. It is important to note that some responses were highlighted with various colors. After the color-coding process was complete, the researcher began to separate the coded material to find common themes and put aside information that was not relevant at the time. The researcher continued to review all information to assure that possible themes not be overlooked.

As common themes emerged, new categories were formed and recorded. Initially, the researcher developed a listing of categories for managerial purposes only. The listing allowed the researcher to quickly review the responses or phrases taken from the dialogue. The listing also helped to define and change categories as needed. The color-coding and listing were beneficial in helping

to interpret the data in a continuous and efficient way as well as to report the data.

Data Reporting

A narrative description of the committee members responses to the specific interview questions and to the research questions is included. The researcher used interview quotations and paraphrasing to report the data. The historical information presented is an accumulation of data gathered from the primary and secondary sources listed above.

Final Analysis

Chapter V will present the final analysis of the study. According to Smith (1991), "any study carried on in the name of hermeneutics should provide a report of the researcher's own transformations undergone in the process of inquiry" (p. 198). Simplistically, the researcher's interpretations and assumptions regarding the study will be discussed. Within the hermeneutic process, as posited by Smith (1991), "the purpose is not to translate my subjectivity out of the picture but to take it up with a new sense of responsibility--to make proposals about the world we share with the aim of deepening our collective understanding of it" (p. 201). The final analysis will provide the reader with the researcher's positions, interpretations, assumptions and proposals derived from the study.

Summary

The hermeneutic process supports the search for meaning and possible consensus within a framework of discussion and interpretation of assumptions and beliefs with the aid of continuous dialogue and reflection. The researcher, as the primary instrument, collects and interprets data in various and continuous forms. The processing of information can happen mentally as well as physically. Many sources were utilized to insure proper documentation and recording of historical as well as interview data. Chapter IV will discuss the data collected throughout the research process and present the assumptions and beliefs regarding the research questions gained from the respondents.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The major purpose of the study was to find the underlying beliefs and assumptions regarding the meanings associated with implementing a developmental first grade program. As previously stated, Grundy (1987) posits that

> the curriculum of a school is a reflection of the culture of the society; to understand the meaning of curriculum practices they must be seen as arising out of historical circumstances and dialogue must take place (p. 6).

To provide greater understanding for the researcher and the reader, several sections will be provided which address specific areas of inquiry. The first section will discuss the setting of the study. This section will provide information regarding the community. The next section will discuss the historical influences on the implementation process. The building of the township; educational influences upon the community regarding education and growth; implementation process of the developmental first grade program; criterion used for the developmental first grade program; and the curriculum goals will all be addressed in the first section.

The last section of this chapter will be the responses gained from the research questions regarding the study.

The Setting of the Study

The suburban community of Edmond, Oklahoma is 13 miles from the metropolitan area of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The 1990 population was 52,315 with 18,756 family households. Sitxy-Four point seven percent of the total households (12,141) are of married couple families. The median value of a home is $80,000 with almost one-third of the homes being valued between $100,000 to $149,000.

The 1990 census also listed the following race and hispanic origin of householders: Total occupied housing units, 18,756; White, 17,386; Black, 498 (2.7% of total); American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, 426, (2.3% of total); Asian or Pacific Islander, 352, (1.9% of total); Hispanic origin of any race, 249, (1.3% of total); and other races, 94. The two largest employers are the University of Central Oklahoma and Edmond Public Schools. These businesses employ 1,700 and 1,300 employees respectively. The next largest employer is the City of Edmond employing 495 people followed by the Fleming Company which employs 405 workers. Many of Edmond's citizens commute into the large metropolitan area for employment.

The size of Edmond has grown and is continuing to grow. But the small town atmosphere is still present as one drives into the downtown area. Two major highways intersect in the downtown business area which holds restored buildings from back to the 1800's. Small quaint shops, barber shops, antiques, a hardware store, a restaurant where community members congregate on Saturday morning are all present in the downtown area. Driving through this three block area, one is filled with a sense of being in a

quaint small town. But if you choose to head in any direction out of the three block area, one quickly realizes that Edmond is anything but a small town.

Historical Influences

The Building of a Township

The roots of Oklahomans as well as Edmondites are grounded in history. Many explorers recorded visits in an area that appears to be Oklahoma territory. White men entered the state to find the geographical region called the Cross Timbers. Edmond is located on the western edge of the Cross Timbers.

Hoig (1976) cites Washington Irving as touring the area around Edmond. He describes his travels with a party of United States Rangers from Fort Gibson, up the Cimarron River to the site of the present day Guthrie. They then turned south down Coffee Creek and across the Deep Fork and North Canadian River before returning back to Fort Gibson.

In March of 1887, railroad workers and crews hired to erect telegraph poles worked side by side building railroad tracks, telegraph poles, and water wells. Other crews constructed a pump house, a water tank, a telegrapher's shack, a two story coaling barn and an outside privy for train passengers.

This site was called 'Summit' as it was the highest point on the Santa Fe line between Kansas City and Galveston. Summit provided both fuel and water for the trains passing through the area. The Santa Fe headquarters named the location, Edmond.

On April 22, 1889, the land run into the unassigned lands, brought settlers into the Edmond area. Settlers came by train, horseback, wagons and by foot. Some settlers came 'sooner' than what was legal. Squabbles occurred over claiming land within the area. Once a compromise was made, the townspeople banned together to form a united community. The townspeople quickly organized a city government; dug public water wells and installed pumps; graded streets; built boardwalks; formed a library; hired a school teacher; formed a brass band; organized churches while homes and stores were being built around the center of Edmond.

Educational Influence

In 1889, the first school house in Oklahoma Territory was erected on the southwest corner of 2nd Street and Boulevard. The school was in session from September 16, 1889, through May 9, 1890. During the first year, 19 pupils attended school. Two years later, the enrollment had increased to 100 students.

The Edmondites expressed their value of education by constructing the first school house in Oklahoma Territory. Their continued endeavors succeeded in Edmond being awarded the State Normal School for teacher training. Citians' efforts to implement and construct the school aided in the Normal Schools' being the first of the territorial institutions of higher education to offer instruction. The first day of class began on November 9, 1891.

In 1900, the patrons passed a bond issue to build another school. The school was located between Main and Hurd streets.

Between 1901 and 1915 bonds were passed to build Lowell School. As the community increased in size, the need for more schools was evident. The citians united to pass bond issues several times to erect school buildings. In 1924, a High School was built. Clegern Elementary was established in 1931. Twelve years later, another elementary was constructed from the building built in 1900. This school was named Russell Dougherty Elementary. Ida Freeman Elementary began in 1950, followed by Clyde Howell School in 1954. On May 26, 1959 a monumental moment in the history of Edmond occurred. The first bond issue to ever fail happened on this date. A $400,000 bond to build another school failed with a 53% affirmative vote, short of the required 60%. It was claimed that the citians felt that the school site was too far out in the country. That school site is now in the center of Edmond. The citians changed their minds and a few months later, on September 29, 1959, passed a bond issue with an 84% yes vote. A High School was constructed. In 1961, Sunset Elementary began while construction for Orvis Risner Elementary was underway. Orvis Risner opened in 1962. 1964, 1965, and 1966, brought about three new buildings; Northern Hills Elementary, and Administration Building, and Memorial High School respectively. Will Rogers Elementary opened in 1970.

As the population continued to increase drastically, the ever present need from more school buildings remained a constant concern in Edmond. Desegregation mandates brought about a "white flight" into Edmond from the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. Figure 1 presents the population growth in Edmond between 1910 and 1990.

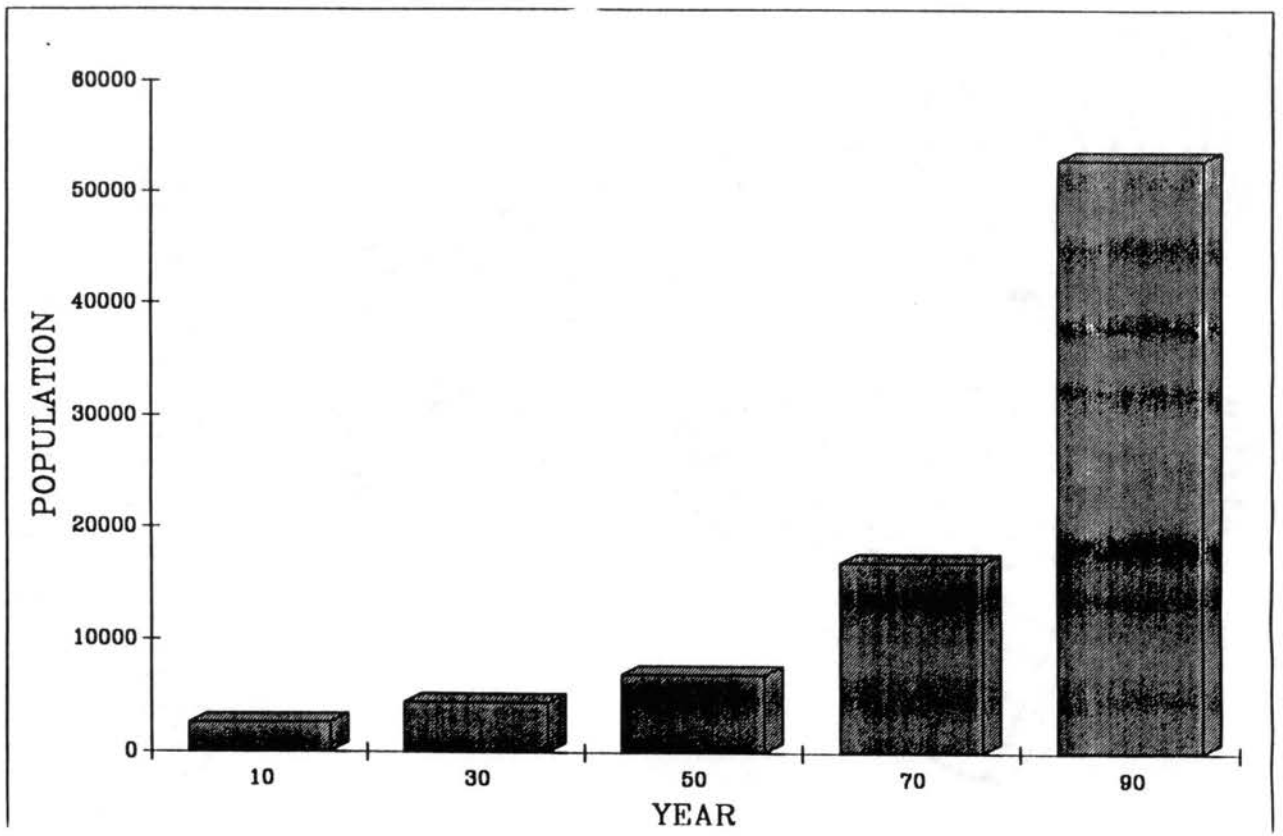

Figure 1. Population Growth

Figure 2 depicts the student membership of Edmond Public Schools from 1965 to 1990. The graphs clearly represent a dramatic increase in the population of the community. The move out into the now suburban area of Edmond, brought professional, well educated citizens into the town. With these citizens, came an increase in student enrollment.

In 1976, the present day North Mid High was erected under the name Sequoyah. 1977 saw another opening of an elementary school. Chisholm opened in 1977 followed by Cimarron Middle School in 1980. John Ross Elementary began classes in the fall of 1982, followed by Charles Haskell Elementary in 1983 and a new Sequoyah Middle School in 1984. The city was allowed to take a rest from building schools until 1989 when Summit Middle School opened. Two years later, in 1991, two elementary schools were opened: Washington Irving Elementary and Cross Timbers Elementary. The following year, 1992, Russell Dougherty Elementary was reopened after of a year of restoration. Russell Dougherty Elementary is a choice school for which children apply and parents transport. The 1992-93 school year also brought about the construction, additions, and restorations of buildings to provide three high schools for the Edmond citizens. A survey and research conducted by members of the school district and the community found that three high schools would decrease the risk of "splitting the community".

Therefore, three high schools will be in operation in 1993. The existing Edmond Memorial High School will remain, the current North Mid-High will have additions to become Edmond North High

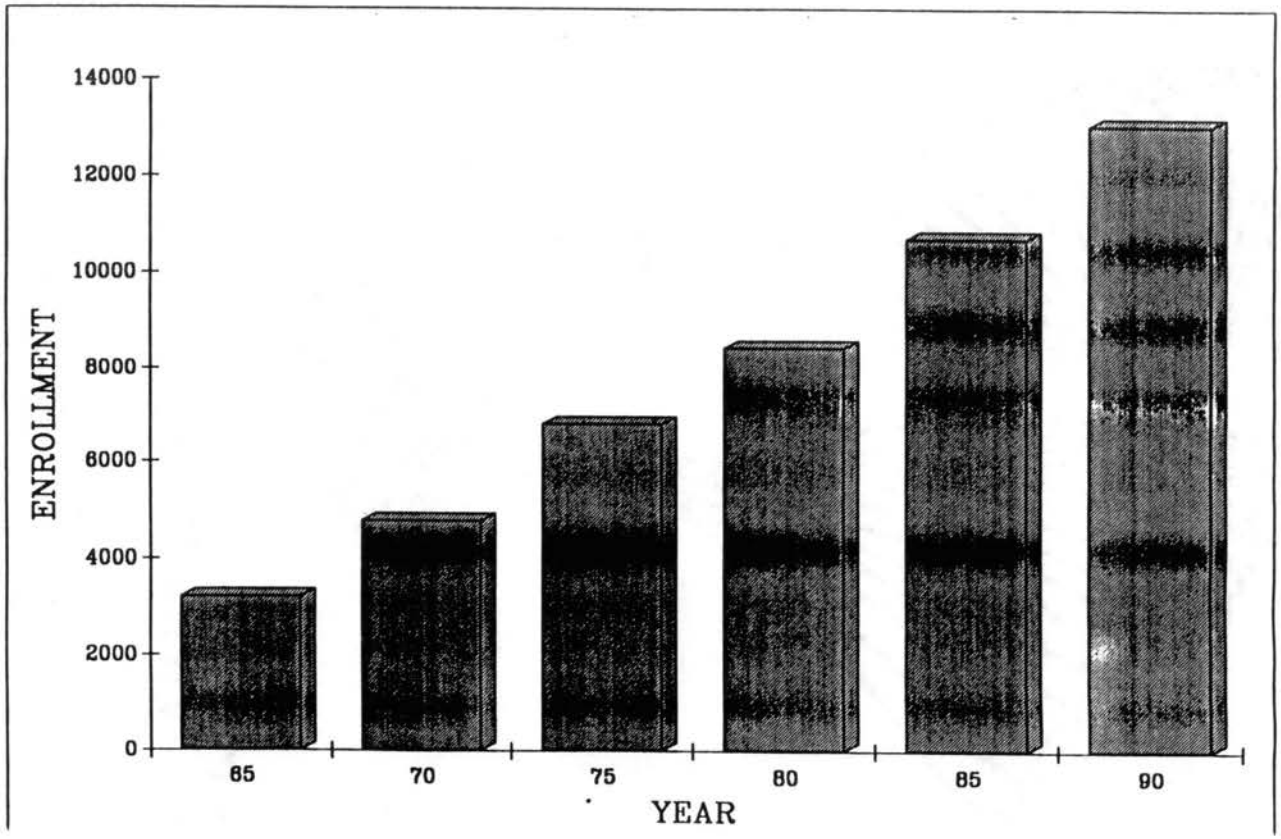

Figure 2. Edmond Public School Enrollment

School and a new building will be constructed in the Southwest part of Edmond which will be Santa Fe High School. The existing Central Mid-High will become Central Middle School. The 1994 school will bring about the addition of another elementary school at the intersection of May avenue and 33rd street. In 1994, Edmond Public Schools will consist of 13 elementary schools, 4 middle schools and 3 high schools.

Implementing Developmental First

The extreme population increase, primarily in the 1970's and in the present, has produced a need for school buildings. The various backgrounds of community members moving into the city, combined with those of the original town members of Edmond resulted in a well educated community. The community continued support of education through the passage of bond issues and support of innovative programs for their youth.

In 1985, a group of parents addressed the Edmond Public Schools Board of Education asking for a transitional first grade program to be implemented in the system for the following year. The parents had polled teachers, administrators, and other parents before addressing the Board of Education. The poll was prompted by various teacher comments regarding the "youngness" of children and parents moving into the community who had been associated with such programs in their previous schools. The reaction of the poll provided appropriate feedback to request such a program in Edmond. Research from the Gesell Institute and information from other school

districts reinforced the parents' plea. On May 6, 1985, the Edmond Public Schools Board of Education voted to study the possibility of a transition program. The Board members were being cautious. A transition program had been implemented in one of the schools in Edmond previous to the request. The program had not been successful and was dissolved after one year due to poor implementation and improper placement of students. Therefore, the Board members wanted to take the time to study the issue, proposals and research regarding such a program before funding and implementing a transition class in Edmond.

The proposal was delayed by the board members. On February 3, 1986, a discussion regarding a developmental first grade program was on the board agenda. The following month, on March 3, 1986, the Edmond Public Schools Board of Education voted to study the proposed program needs.

A committee was developed through volunteerism consisting of teachers, administrators, counselors, psychometrists and parents to study transition programs. The committee divided into three subcommittees: curriculum, criteria, and teacher selection. Each committee met throughout the following year to study and discuss current research findings and pertinent information. Committee members were given release time to visit different school districts that had implemented a transition program. The following schools were contacted and/or visited by some of the committee members: Tulsa, Bartlesville, Norman, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Fairview, El Reno, Yukon, Watonga, Idabel, Piedmont, and Enid. Committee members

asked for student selection criteria, curriculum information, funding costs, and any other information available. The committee's stated goal was to bring back the best information. Edmond's students would have the best of the best. The failure of one transition program in the district left the committee with a motivation to implement a successful program. Many hours of studying current research and committee discussions were a part of the process. The committee's hard work resulted in the implementation of developmental first grades in several elementary schools in the 1987-88 school year.

Criteria

Information gathered from other districts and research findings served as a foundation for the developmental first grade characteristics. The purpose of the program was to meet students' needs who were described as being developmentally young. Developmental youngness is not related to a child's intelligence. Lags in maturation were defined and a compilation of developmental first grade characteristics were presented. Some of the characteristics are as follows:

Sitting still is difficult

Short attention span

Lacks responsibility

Summer birthday

Physically small

Needs one-to-one supervision

Constantly seeks approval

Exhibits immature behavior

Exhibits extreme emotional reactions

Sucks thumb

May be very verbal

May be very quiet

Dominance has not been established

The characteristics described are developmental in nature. The program was not intended for students with behavior problems or with dysfunctional family situations.

Curriculum

The object of a developmental first grade program was to provide developmental activities and materials for students to experience the curriculum. Students would be exposed to activities to develop gross motor, fine motor, personal and social development skills. Reading, language, mathematics, social studies and science would be taught through concrete experiences as well. Following is a listing of the most common phrases or descriptions of curriculum that would be needed or utilized within the program:

Math Their Way

Age Appropriate

Hands-on/Manipulatives

Time to develop

Movement

Formulate curriculum to the student

Not kindergarten or first grade curriculum

Writing and use of journals

Meeting individual needs

Large and small group interaction

Addison Wesley materials

Big books/literature

Centers

Development of fine motor skills

Integrated curriculum

Curriculum brings in child's background

Provides concrete experiences

Provides auditory language skills

Less academic

The above list is a compilation of curriculum needs as defined by the committee after researching articles and other school districts in an effort to look for "the best".

Interviews with Committee Members

The primary purpose of this study was to examine and interpret the underlying beliefs and assumptions regarding the implementation of the developmental first grade program in Edmond. Each individual's reactions and meanings of various issues within the implementation process are addressed. Various questions were asked of the committee members to probe and find each individual's belief, meaning, and/or underlying assumptions regarding the issue at hand. The examination of these beliefs and meanings was based on data

collected through the use of the following interview questions: (1) What do you see as the primary reason for the development of the committee? (2) What does the term "developmentally appropriate" mean to you? (3) Are D-1 classes "developmentally appropriate"? (4) Describe the curriculum of the D-1 class in 1987. A complete list of the interviews questions is located in the Appendix. The broad open-ended questions were used to create a dialogue between the respondents and the researcher.

The information gained from the interviews is organized to correlate with the following research questions: (1) What were the underlying beliefs and assumptions on which this school district's developmental first grade program was implemented?; (2) What are the historical influences that affected the decision to implement a developmental first grade program?; (3) What determinants of social and political beliefs existed in the decision to implement a developmental first grade program?; (4) What did the committee members mean when they discussed the implementation of a developmental first grade program in relation to a developmentally appropriate program? (5) What determinants did the committee use to choose the curriculum and materials implemented in the program? The researcher's interpretations of the dialogue between the committee member and the researcher present the possibility for the reader to engage in reflection and individual interpretation.

Perceived Needs of the Program

and/or Committee

The implementation of the developmental first grade program was initiated by the inception of a committee to study the necessity, guidelines, curriculum, and successful traits of such a program. Prior to the committees' conception, a perceived need was expressed. The respondents were asked "What do you see as the primary reason for the development of the committee?". Some of the teacher responses are listed below:

> We were seeing the need as far as there were kids that weren't quite ready for first (grade) but were a little farther along than kindergarteners. I rarely retained a child, then there got to be a curriculum change or something because we started hearing that they (the students) weren't ready. I've been around long enough to see the pendulum swing.
>
> Edmond parents. The parents expressed their need to the administration for such a program. But the program did not actually start until a year later. The administration wanted to develop the program indepth. There had been a program prior to that and it was dissolved due to poor planning and implementation.
>
> We had children in first grade who were not ready for formal reading until almost the last nine weeks of school. The children were real bright, but because they were not ready for those activities and because they were not conserving or immaturity, they weren't ready. There was nothing wrong with these children, they needed more time.
>
> We were identifying students that were not ready for first grade that needed an additional year after kindergarten. Well, maturity, developmental traits that needed more time.
>
> I think probably the school system saw a need for the children that weren't quite ready for first grade, and all we could do for them was to give them another year of kindergarten. Some of them were ready for an all day program. Children needed more hands on without a lot of paper/pencil work. D-1 could do that without leaving it all for the one's that were ready for it.

Some of the administrators' comments are as follows:

> To find success for students who weren't meeting it (success) in kindergarten and first grade. There was a high retention rate that we really had to look at a program. Instead of retaining children, we were wanting to meet their needs in other ways.
>
> My perception at that time was that the primary reason for it was a push from parents. There were some elementary principals who were also interested in it. The push from parents came from personal experiences of their children that were not ready to go into first grade and wanted an alternative.
>
> Do you want me to be honest? They had a couple of parents that wouldn't shut-up. Their child was beyond D-1 age. They went before the school board.
>
> It was to review or examine all of the possibilities of such a program. That came about because of tremendous pressure from patrons. As I recall, there was a lengthy period of time--months--that this issue came before the school board as a discussion item before it ever came up for an action item. There were some heated discussions from patrons who felt their children had missed out because such a program didn't exist. Many of those people had gone to other communities to observe. They formed a kind of adhoc, self-appointed, committee of parents that did almost exhaustive research, of course it was meeting their own agenda, to find enough support to cause the board to make such a decision to develop a program.

Comments regarding the implementation of the committee from the psychometrist and counselor are as follows:

> The first grade and kindergarten teachers were concerned that children were not ready for first grade.
>
> There was a need for developmentally appropriate placement. A lot of children weren't ready for first grade. They were capable, but they needed things on their level. There was some parental involvement. We had a lot of transient professional people moving in (into Edmond) whose children had been in a D-1 class and wanted them to remain in one here, or wanted their other children to have that option too.

The parent response is stated below:

> I wrote the proposal, I don't know that I did all of it, but I was the one that started wanting it in March of 1985. I also had a kindergartener at the time who I knew would need it.

Synthesis of perceived needs of the program. The most general view of the perceived need for a developmental first grade program was based on the assumption that children were not ready for the curriculum presented within the first grade classrooms. Various assumptions were presented as to who originated the idea for such a program. One issue was definitely present, the push for academics in early childhood programs and the failure of some students because of this push. No one wants any child to fail, especially in a town that values education. So the easiest solution, after much time, research and pressure, was to implement a developmental first grade program within the system.

Developmentally Appropriate

The initial question regarding developmentally appropriate practices that was asked of the committee members was stated as follows: "What does the term 'developmentally appropriate' mean to you?" The question was intentionally stated in this manner. The purpose of both the question and the research project was to find individual meaning of issues and terms. Defining the term 'developmentally appropriate' is necessary for not only the researcher, but also for the committee member so that they might reflect on their personal beliefs and practices.

The most common response to the question was to "meet the needs of the children and taking the children where they are and going from there." Additionally, some respondents mentioned free play, movement, center activities, age appropriate activities, and activities which address emotional, physical, cognitive and social needs of children.

The following comments were selected from the teacher respondents regarding their understanding of developmentally appropriate practices:

> Working on the child's level. Everything you do is on the level of a 5 and 6 year old. We went through a phase where parents were holding their children out. 7 year-olds in kindergarten. I had to constantly remind myself of what was appropriate. Free play, movement, centers.
>
> Meeting the kids needs where they are, kid watching, take the child where they are and create a successful environment; what he can do and build on it.
>
> I think it means the activities and curriculum should be appropriate to age and should address emotional, physical, cognitive, physical, social, all needs and areas. It should take into consideration each person's time clock, time frame, take into consideration each persons learning styles, hands-on experiences, multi-sensory approaches to learning.
>
> The child can touch, feel, smell, taste, whatever it needs to understand any concept of a lesson. Developmentally appropriate, they can go and get those shapes and feel it, etc. That is the number one objective in this room. Feel and touch activities, to understand the concept. These students need those kinds of experiences. Even in math, in our centers. We experience in our centers.

Following are some comments made by building level and central office administrators:

> Apprize oneself of the developmental patterns of children and instructional materials for that age group. Step back

from that and on a very regular basis examine where children are, matching materials to the child.

Ask children to do or learn things that is appropriate to them as individuals. Sixteen to twenty students not doing things at the same level. Child does not have to meet the curriculum.

As much as we talk about it, we don't verbalize it much. Student centered, age appropriate, developmental to me, really is individual to each student, idealistically in comparison to all children do not develop at the same pace, rate, same ways, different learning channels, styles. Some are ready for activities, brings in child's past, some have not had the experiences. A very important aspect is time orientation, that children are not required to attend to a particular type of task longer than their age allows.

Discovery learning, natural progressiveness-not so much teacher directed. I believe that children at that age are willing to learn and are hungry for it as long as they don't feel threatened.

It means we look at the physical and behavioral characteristics of a specific age of a child and use the research based instruction to teach the children at that different age level. It also means that we instruct to t he total child, the whole child; cognitive, physical, social, emotional, not just focus on the academic alone.

The following are psychometrists and counselors responses regarding the meaning of developmentally appropriate:

The educational program is designed for each child to meet developmental maturity levels. Take the child where he is: sequential development.

It is a sequential process meeting needs of the child. The child is able to do it at their stage of development; learn with little frustration.

The parent respondent stated the following meaning:

Not going by age, going by the fine and gross motor patterns, the abstractness of the understanding of language and their expressing it. Conservation is a real good test to see where kids are at. Not just going by age, but going by individual growth. It has nothing to do with how smart you are. It varies by

> quite a bit in those little kids. There are success stories which are probably 100%.

Synthesis of developmentally appropriate meaning. The focus by the teachers regarding the definition of developmentally appropriate, seemed to be centered around manipulative activities and other curriculum options. It is interesting to note that the administrator respondents were the few who did mention individual appropriateness which is a primary concern within developmentally appropriate practices.

Developmental Appropriateness of Developmental First Grade

The respondents were asked if "D-1 classes are developmentally appropriate?". The initial responses varied between two different interpretations of the question. One interpretation was to answer the question in relation to the curriculum within the classroom and the appropriateness of the curriculum. Another interpretation was based on the assumption that the existence of such a program may or may not be developmentally appropriate for children. The researcher restated the question after each initial response in order to gain an understanding of each respondent's personal beliefs regarding each interpretation. The responses will be presented as two separate issues: curriculum appropriateness and program appropriateness.

Curriculum Appropriateness. There seemed to be a consensus regarding the appropriateness of the curriculum within the

developmental first grade classrooms. The following is a response given by a teacher regarding the curriculum appropriateness:

> Yes, because they address the emotional, physical, cognitive, and social needs of children. They have multi-sensory approaches to learning. The curriculum moves at childrens' pace. But most important, if a child does not master, they still have that years time, they still have one year to grow. If you have a lopsided kid, they just need time to develop.

One administrator stated:

> I guess I'm going to say that if you are going to have a separate D-1 program, then I thought it was appropriate. The teacher was very much in tune with the students at that age. She was not trying to get kids to read and was staying away from the other curriculum of kindergarten and first.

Another stated:

> No. We have not figured out how to deal with dysfunctional families. We are still placing children who have been denied experiences. We tend to treat them like there is something wrong with the child. Some teachers see it as a first grade skills oriented program: "Got to cover (a certain amount before moving on)" D-1 teachers do not have the same purpose.

Another administrator did not want to expand on the following response:

> They were designed to be developmentally appropriate.

A response from a counselor is as follows:

> Yes. The children are ready to learn. But their options are to go to D-1, stay out (before coming to kindergarten), repeat kindergarten, or frustration in first grade. A first grade classroom is full of 15-25 students with wide variety of development that might be too much to handle.

The parent response is as stated below:

> Yes, because the teachers are very skilled in looking at the children; more so the teachers, than any test. We

> have to picture them sitting at a desk and doing work all year.

The responses varied from discussions of proper placement to ascertains that the program was developmentally appropriate because it was better than what else was offered. The majority of the respondents felt comfortable with the curriculum materials being offered to the students within the programs. The program itself brought about mixed emotions.

Program Appropriateness. There appeared to be less of a consensus among the respondents regarding the appropriateness of such a program. In some instances, the respondents chose not to comment. The following responses are from the teachers regarding the appropriateness of such a program:

> If it isn't developmentally appropriate, you would have to make a lot of changes. I don't know where you would start, but we as kindergarten teachers should take them right where they are, first grade should take them where they are. There are always going to be levels. When I first started teaching, we didn't see that they weren't ready and then all of a sudden, they weren't ready. I can see where it isn't necessary. I see that there will always be some kids that could benefit from it.
>
> Yes, only if the children are appropriately placed. The reason why D-1 came is because first grade wasn't developmentally appropriate. But that varied from school to school.
>
> Yes. I have children in first grade who are not ready for first grade. I have these students to see if we could use the activities on young first graders. We forget about time. We need to change the curriculum in first grade.
>
> One problem, how are you going to meet the need of that child without having two or three classrooms within a classroom? You could do that, but not for everything you do. For one thing, you wouldn't have time. The best answer in my opinion is to give this year before they ever

> start kindergarten. If we start the four-year-old program in school, perhaps that will take care of it.

Building level and central office administrators had the following comments regarding the appropriateness of such a program:

> Yes, because you are focusing on specific behaviors and characteristics of the individual child and you are looking at all those four categories (cognitive, physical, social, and emotional).

> I don't think so. I think if both of those classes (kindergarten and first grade) really are appropriate, that those children's needs can be met as well under the present structure. Any time we place children by age we have built in difficulties. I think that as Edmond began to talk about developmentally appropriate practices, even the teachers began to say, will this begin to take away the need for D-1?

> No comment.

The psychometrist and the counselor did not commit to an answer to the question regarding the appropriateness of the program. The parent responded in the following manner:

> Yes. They may be tested developmentally ready; screenings are not going to catch everything. Going by parents' placement decision, there is no way every kindergarten is going to be developmentally ready for those kids. It is just impossible.

Synthesis of developmental appropriateness of developmental first grade. This question caused most of the respondents to stop and think for a longer period of time before commenting. Some chose not to comment, some chose to allude to the fact that first grade programs may not be developmentally appropriate, while others had no problem stating that the first grade programs were not developmentally appropriate or the perceived need of the program would not have existed. There were a few, however, who did support

the existence and the importance of such a program. One issue was clear, what was happening within the walls of the developmental first grade classrooms was making an impact.

Curriculum of the Developmental First Grade Program

The respondents were asked to describe the curriculum implemented within the developmental first grade classrooms during the initial year. The descriptions were necessary to examine the actual implementation of what was perceived as developmentally appropriate for these 'young' children. The following comments demonstrate the wide variety of thoughts regarding the curriculum within the developmental first grade classrooms in 1987:

> Hands on, more than kindergarten but not first grade. We had a problem in deciding whether they should have reading. But some kids could read so they thought they could work that out.

> Hands on materials, Addison Wesley series, Super Kids (phonics program), Language, Language Experience aspect, and Math Their Way.

> Math Their Way, Big books, little books galore. Wright group, Rigby, lots of hands on manipulatives, building materials, fine motor activities, clay, centers, integrated the curriculum, songs, poetry, journals, invented spelling, children wrote own books and published them.

Another teacher stated:

> There was a lot of manipulatives, hands on, as much money as possible was set aside for all the hands on materials that could be afforded. There were not a whole lot of workbooks. We tried to stay away from workbooks so there wouldn't be repetition in first grade.

The descriptions of the curriculum in 1987 were presented by building principals and central office administrators in the following manner:

> Math Their Way. What I remember as the main concern is that number one, it be age appropriate; hands on. Students should have activities that involve movements, and verbal activities. There was a concern that it not be repetitive of kindergarten curriculum or first grade, it should indeed be a transition between the two.
>
> It was differentiated from the kindergarten and first grade programs. It was Addison Wesley. They are now using a more literature-based approach. Math Their Way is now used in kindergarten and in first grade. And I'm not sure how it is differentiated from kindergarten and first grade.
>
> There were many manipulatives and auditory language experiences. There were less specific academics to give more time to mature. The intent was not to read.

Responses given by counselors and psychometrists are as follows:

> It was a developmental curriculum. It is the same as now. Kindergarten teachers are already using the developmental approach with stations and centers that meet the individual needs. They expanded on that.
>
> We looked at other programs. We didn't need to reinvent the wheel, we were looking for the best in the state. We took the best and used that: hands on, kinesthetic, working at own pace, etc.

The response by the parent respondent regarding the developmental first grade curriculum is stated below:

> They were trying to make it a lot different from either one (kindergarten or first grade). It was meant to be a very enriched year with lots of hands on. Enriched reading program.
>
> It wasn't meant to catch the mentally handicapped or learning disabled. It has caught some of them and more power to them, they have gotten another year. It was really meant for the smart kid that wasn't ready developmentally. Anyone that is placed in that class is

> not going to hurt from it. There is a high percentage of children in kindergarten that develop at different rates. Later on, you don't have all these gaps.

Synthesis of the curriculum of the developmental first grade program. The importance of the curriculum implemented within the program was prevalent for several reasons. First, it was necessary for the program to work due to the Board of Education's concern over implementation in the beginning. Secondly, the curriculum needed to meet the needs of the children since it was believed that the curriculum within the first grade program would not. The curriculum was also important, because it would be the basis of evaluation if the program failed. It is the researcher's intent to use the term program in reference to the developmental first grade classrooms and not as a specific, sequential product.

Summary

In summary, the process of implementing a developmental first grade program within Edmond Public Schools and the developmental appropriateness of such programs has provided the data for this study. The description of the historical developments and/or socio-political issues surrounding the implementation has been presented as well as data from the indepth interviews. The presentation of the data was provided in reference to three major issues. The issues are: (1) the historical issues or precedents relating to the implementation of the committee and/or program, (2) the socio-political factors surrounding the implementation of the committee

and/or program, and (3) the meanings and underlying beliefs and assumptions regarding developmental appropriateness and curriculum.

These issues will be discussed in Chapter V. The researcher's interpretations of the findings will be included in Chapter V as well as recommendations for further study and the researcher's final comments.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH INTERPRETATIONS

Introduction

The focus of the study was on the implementation of a developmental first grade program in the Edmond Public School System. Hermeneutic inquiry was utilized to look for consensus of meanings and beliefs regarding the implementation of the program. Data were collected through interviews, oral histories, documents, primary and secondary sources. Hermeneutic inquiry stresses the need to find an understanding of others' beliefs and the prominent way to achieve this is through dialogue. The dialogue within the interviews suggest that people have understandings that are based upon their past and present experiences as well as philosophical beliefs and values.

This chapter will contain the researcher's interpretations of the data pertaining to the research questions; recommendations for further study and a final commentary by the researcher.

Historical and Socio-Political Influences

The data regarding historical and socio-political influences of the implementation of the developmental first grade program in the Edmond Public School system were contained in the first section of Chapter IV and addressed within the interview question, What do

you see as the primary reason for the development of the committee? The data were gathered in an attempt to answer the following research questions: What are the historical influences that affected the decision to implement a developmental first grade program?; and (2) What determinants of social and political beliefs existed in the decision to implement a developmental first grade program? The historical precedent within the community and the socio-political issues emerged throughout the data and will be interpreted by the researcher. The data regarding the two research questions overlapped, therefore, the researcher will address both questions simultaneously.

Historical Influences

The history of Edmond from its induction as a township portrays the importance of education. Within days of the settlement in the community a teacher was hired. The first Normal school in the state was constructed in Edmond. As the city began to grow and prosper, so did the educational community. It is very unusual that only one bond issue in the history of the city failed. Much of the growth within the community began during the time of desegregation and the white flight came to the suburban cities. The city and the school district sustained tremendous growth over a period of approximately eighty years, with the greatest influx between 1970 and 1990. The already present value of education within the community brought well educated, professional citizens into the community. They too, wanted to pursue excellence in education for their children. The

predominantly upper middle class population maintained the pursuit of quality education and it continues today. This pursuit of quality education brings socio-political forces to the forefront.

Socio-political Influences

The history of the city and the district also indicates not only a value for education but a value for the type of education that was known by its citizens: traditional and academic. The pursuit of quality education is perceived as strong academic settings with high test scores and good grades. Edmond continues to strive for such goals, but as the times and students have changed, these goals are having to be met in various ways. Traditional education works for some, but as the district found with the push for the developmental first grade program, some students' needs were not being met.

The push for the implementation of a developmental first grade program in Edmond as described by the administrators and the parent on the committee came from teacher discussions of children not being ready for the curriculum in first grade and parents demanding more for their children. The administrators recognized the push from the parents and watched cautiously as the program was researched. The teachers were pleased with the progress of the committee since it relieved them of the pressure to meet the needs of the 'younger' children within their classrooms. The previous statement in no way implies that the teachers are being lazy or do not want to address the children's needs. But getting rid of a problem is much easier

than finding new, more, better or even a variety of methods to meet the needs of many individuals.

The parent cited as being the person who wrote the proposal was very intent on getting help for not only her child, but other children as well. As the process evolved, the parent realized that her child would not benefit from the program, but that others might. As stated by one administrator, research was conducted which met the parents' agenda for implementing a program. The intent was not to get their way, but to address the needs of children. As seen throughout the history of Edmond, the city and the school system did what was necessary to uphold the tradition of quality education within the system. If needs were not being met, then something was to be done. In this case, a developmental first grade program came to fruition.

Synthesis of Historical and Socio-political Issues

The history of Edmond, brings a value for education. The socio-political influences from the middle to upper-class citizens maintained that value if not increased the pursuit.

Grundy (1987) asserts that

> the curriculum of a school is a reflection of the culture of the society; to understand the meaning of curriculum practices they must be seen as arising out of historical circumstances and dialogue must take place (p. 6).

The dialogue conducted during the interviews did create an awareness for the researcher that the values of the society within the city of

Edmond were prominent issues within the educational community.

Determinants of Curriculum

The data distinctly revealed the value of education within the community. The value supplanted the push for a program to meet student needs that were viewed as being unready for first grade. The curriculum implemented into the program would have to meet those students' needs. The following research question was utilized to study the meaning behind the curriculum chosen: "What determinants did the committee use to choose the curriculum and materials implemented in the program?" Most of the data regarding this research question was gained from the following interview questions and secondary sources: (1) What do you see as the primary reason for the development of the committee; (2) What process did the committee use to develop placement guidelines for the developmental first grade class?; and (3) Describe the curriculum of the D-1 class in 1987.

The priority of the committee members was to find the best materials available. The committee visited other school districts and brought back information regarding "the best of the best" curriculum ideas and materials. A listing of these ideas and materials is located in Chapter IV. The teacher respondents seemed to think that unlimited funds were available to equip the classrooms. Even if the funds were not unlimited, the classrooms were equipped with the listing of materials suggested by the committee. Materials were purchased that were available and

training was provided in "Math Their Way" for the classroom teachers. It was important for the committee to find materials that would work to insure success of the program.

Child development theories were considered and discussed. An attempt was made to provide developmentally appropriate activities for the students within the developmental first grade classrooms. The question must be raised, "What about the other students, don't they deserve developmentally appropriate practices within their classrooms?" The meanings and beliefs regarding developmentally appropriate practices are addressed below.

Developmentally Appropriate

Smith (1987) purports that dialogue must take place to ensure a genuine meeting of different aspects of understanding. Much of the dialogue during the interview sessions centered around the concept of developmental appropriateness. It was necessary to find a consensus or a commonality of the term to find an understanding and intent of the committee in order to answer the following research question: What did the committee members mean when they discussed the implementation of a developmental first grade program in relation to a developmentally appropriate program?. The following interview questions were utilized to attempt to find a common meaning: (1) What does the term developmentally appropriate mean to you? (2) Are D-1 classes developmentally appropriate? and (3) Describe the curriculum of the D-1 class in 1987.

In a very general and broad sense, the committee members did describe aspects of developmentally appropriate practices. Virtually all of the respondents alluded to meeting the needs of children in some way. However, how the respondents chose to meet the needs were varied. In most instances, the descriptions of curricular activities within the developmental first grade program could be defined as being developmentally appropriate activities. The important aspect missing in many of the commentaries was that of individual appropriateness. What may be appropriate for one child, may not be appropriate for any other child within an individual classroom. The biggest concern expressed by the committee regarding the curriculum was not duplicating what was happening in kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The researcher's understanding of developmentally appropriate practices leads to no classroom being the same due to the individual student needs within those classrooms.

Therefore, once broad general goals are established for guidelines, there should not be "duplication of specific curriculum" if the students are different.

The curriculum provided within the developmental first grade program was described by all respondents as being appropriate. Only one administrator disagreed. Yet, the concern seemed to be regarding the placement of the students and not the curriculum within the classroom. The appropriateness of having such a program brought about a variety of responses.

Many of the responses were non-commital, while some respondents began to change their mind in the middle of their response. The respondents were less certain about their convictions regarding the program when confronted with the issue of appropriateness. Several of the respondents found the kindergarten and first grades as being the target for inappropriateness. The need for changing the expectations and the curriculum within those grades was addressed. Yet, it was almost as if they were being disloyal by stating such concerns; disloyal to their friends and colleagues; disloyal to their school system and even disloyal to a program that they helped to implement. The researcher saw this concern and some polarized responses as the beginning of reflection by the respondents.

Synthesis

As the researcher has reflected on the implementation process, it has become evident that the polarization of beliefs, responses, etc., stems from the search for a "program" to solve the district's problem. There is not a packaged program to purchase that will solve curricular problems. Some programs may be implemented to better meet the needs of some children, but to assume that all children will benefit is an inappropriate assumption. The researcher did see indications of reflection on the part of the respondents. It is hoped that this reflective process will allow the respondents to see what is happening inside, not what there is that can help from the outside. We must first look within, before searching for an answer on the outside.

Hermeneutic inquiry provides the opportunity for dialogue, reflection and greater understanding. An understanding of the implementation of the developmental first grade program in Edmond has evolved. The dialogue prompted an obvious reflection regarding the appropriateness of such a program. There is an infinite possibility of the variety of reflection issues that were prompted by the study and interviews.

Underlying Beliefs and Assumptions

During the process of gathering, examining, and interpreting the data, the researcher found that the common thread throughout the study was the constant presence of the underlying beliefs and assumptions regarding curricular issues. The research question, What were the underlying beliefs and assumptions on which this school district's developmental first grade program was implemented?, was addressed in all aspects of the study. The following comments regarding the research question, may seem repetitious, yet the importance of the beliefs and assumptions warrant an overview.

Education was valued during the first few days of the city's induction as a township. The value of education continued throughout the history of the city and is still very prevalent today. The extreme population increase during the 1970's brought well-educated community members to the city. The value of education lured them to Edmond, and it is the citians' intent for that value to remain. The city continues to grow and prosper, as does the

educational community. The city has promoted a school district that has become "elitist", in the sense that high test scores and academic standards are a constant. The nurturing of that "elitist" reputation is expected by the community.

Polarization of the committee members' beliefs regarding the appropriateness of the developmental first grade program became evident within the study. The push by the community to meet the needs of students, presents another polarizing issue. What is most important to the community; to provide a developmentally appropriate program for all children or to maintain the elite status of producing high test scores? Can they do both?

It is important to note that the push to implement the developmental first grade program was not initiated for the sake of change, but was the result of many hours of discussions of child growth and development, philosophies of education, student and community needs, and resources of the school district. The discussions occurred at various levels of intensity, yet seemed to center around finding tangible items or programs to fix the perceived problem. The committee's recommendation to implement the developmental first grade program was based on the members' belief that such a program could make a difference in the success rate for some students. It would also make many community members and teachers happy. Public relations makes a difference!

Recommendations for Further Study

The interviews conducted within this study were confined to the curriculum, criteria and teacher selection committees. The committee members were utilized to gain information regarding the underlying beliefs and assumptions surrounding the initial implementation of a developmental first grade program within Edmond Public Schools. The purpose of the study was not to bring about the demise of the program, but to gain understanding regarding the purpose of implementing a program in relation to developmentally appropriate practices. The concept of developmentally appropriate practices and its meaning to individuals is as varied as the individuals. It seems natural to follow this study with one that interviews current developmental first grade teachers and/or kindergarten and first grade teachers to find a common meaning of developmentally appropriate practices and the perceived necessity of such a program. Since the program has now been in operation for six years, interviews with actual students that have participated in the program to gain information regarding their thoughts and feelings of being placed in such a program could provide an even deeper insight to the question of program appropriateness.

Comparing a developmental first grade class and a first grade class in relation to developmental appropriateness would be beneficial to denote the differences and similarities. If the similarities are pronounced, the necessity of a developmental first grade program may be viewed as unnecessary. It would also be beneficial to observe two different developmental first grade

classes to view the curriculum within each classroom. A discussion of the classrooms would be helpful to those trying to understand that classrooms can be developmentally appropriate and not look or be managed in the same way.

Researcher's Final Commentary

The study has attempted to promote a deeper understanding of the underlying beliefs and assumptions relating to the implementation of a developmental first grade program. The study addressed historical, socio-political and curricular issues relevant to the issue at hand. Interviews were conducted to provide an opportunity for dialogue, interpretation and reflection. Curriculum theorists reflect on three questions: What is real?; What is true?; and What is Good? The final commentary will attempt to answer these questions.

The answers to the above questions exist as personal thoughts and meaning of the researcher. What is real to the researcher, is the existence of historical and socio-political influences that impacted the decision to implement a developmental first grade program with the district. Parent concern, along with teacher discussions of children not being ready for the curriculum in first grade, initiated the implementation process for the development of a program. The social values and beliefs within the Edmond community provide a common view of the necessity of quality educational programs. Grundy (1987), posits the following: ". . . a cultural view of 'curriculum' is concerned with the experiences people have

as a consequence of the existence of the curriculum, rather than with the various aspects which make it up (p. 6). Therefore, the socio-political influences upon the educational system are concerned with students making 'good grades', high test scores, etc. In actuality, the concern should be "What is the curriculum?" At present, the concern and the values within the community promote the continual urgency to find "the best" or to find better ways to teach children knowledge. It is important to ask, can one teach someone else knowledge? Information can be transmitted, which, may or may not be understood by the learner. Each individual learner possesses knowledge that, in this researcher's opinion, may never be truly assessed. This is truth as viewed by the researcher.

It is this researcher's opinion that finding a fixed, packaged program to assess student achievement, knowledge, etc., is not the answer. These programs can be utilized to help students, but they should not be utilized as the single answer to a problem. As stated previously, educational issues are deeply influenced by historical and socio-political issues. Truth is also found in people's understandings that based upon their past and present experiences. The teachers in the system were acting out of concern. A concern that students were not meeting the standards that had been set in the past. The push to implement a program resulted from assumptions that a problem existed; that the problem was with the students' who were not meeting success or the expectations of the first grade teachers. Truth is found in getting rid of the problem. It is easier, than searching for ways to meet a wide variety of needs.

It is important to note that the implementation process revolved around past experiences and socio-political influences. The past experiences of educators was to teach in an academic and traditional setting. Therefore, these students that were perceived as being unready did not fit into the traditional setting. An understanding of developmentally appropriate practices and help in the implementation of such practices could have helped these educators. Such help was given to the teachers for the developmental first grade program, could it not have been given to the first grade teachers instead?

Goodness was found within the study. A deeper understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate practices was gained by the members of the committee. The training for programs such as Math Their Way, has been offered to primary teachers within the D-1 program. One of the most exciting forms of goodness was found in the opportunity for reflection. Many of the committee members pondered and reflected with regard the appropriateness of such programs. Their responses and choices to not comment, were signs of reflection as viewed by the researcher. Reflection can bring about a change in beliefs and values. The values within the community studied, brings to bear the need to "stay on top" to insure quality education for the students. The concerns are valid and the community should be commended for the interest in children and education. Yet, the concerns center around finding new ways to get better. The first place to look for change should be from

within. This can be done with a change of consciousness.

> Changing consciousness . . . can be effected by focusing upon school persons' ideas and perspectives, personal growth, subject matter . . . with the intent of bringing to bear our analysis upon the quality of the living relationships that exist in our schools (Macdonald, 1988, p. 173).

Hermeneutic inquiry provides an avenue to focus on ideas, perspectives, and/or personal growth through dialogue. It is important to note that there are no right answers nor will there be final closure on subjects, but the purpose is to engage in continual dialogue and continual reflection to insure that educators are doing what is best for our children.

> And somehow it seems to me that the hermeneutic imagination has an important contribution to make to that task, not to settle everything once and for all by assigning people and things to their (so it might be thought) 'essential' places, but for the profound pedagogical purpose of affirming the way in which present arrangements always border on and open onto the space of an Other whose existence contains part of the story of our shared future (Smith, 1991, p. 203).

Our shared future is dependent on many facets of life. It is often said that children are our future. Let us not forget, then, that we are their future as well. May we continue to communicate, interpret and reflect to insure that all futures are full of continual growth.

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APPENDIX

INDEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are your certifications?

2. What is your association with Edmond Public Schools at this time?

3. What was your association with Edmond Public Schools in 1987?

4. How were you chosen for the committee?

5. What do you see as the primary reason for the development of the committee?

6. What process did the committee use to develop placement guidelines for the developmental first grade class?

7. How have those guidelines changed?

8. What was the reaction of Edmond teachers regarding the implementation of a D-1 class?

9. What was the reaction of Edmond administrators regarding the implementation of a D-1 class?

10. What was the reaction of Edmond parents/community regarding the implementation of a D-1 class?

11. What was the reaction of the Board of Education members regarding the implementation of a -1 class?

12. Describe the curriculum of the D-1 class in 1987.

13. Describe the curriculum of the D-1 class as it exists today.

14. What does the term "developmentally appropriate" mean to you?

15. Are D-1 classes developmentally appropriate? Why or why not.

16. What do you see as the greatest strength of the D-1 program?

17. What do you see as the future of the D-1 program in Edmond?

VITA 2

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Thesis: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL FIRST GRADE PROGRAM: A HERMENEUTIC INQUIRY

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