

FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE TEACHERS' AND PUPILS' OPINIONS AND
ATTITUDES TOWARD A SEMI-DEPARTMENTALIZED ORGANIZATION
IN MARLATT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MANHATTAN, KANSAS

by 632

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

For many years a difference of opinion has existed regarding the merits of a departmentalized organization in the intermediate grades. During the school year 1967-1968, Marlatt Elementary School, Manhattan, Kansas, set up a semi-departmentalized organization in grades five and six. The teachers at Marlatt felt the program was a great success and planned to continue it in the following school year. However, no concerted effort was made to record an evaluation of this organization from a teacher's and a student's point of view. Since many criticisms of the departmental system stem from its effects on teachers and students, it therefore appeared necessary to devise a basis for evaluating teacher and student attitudes and opinions toward the newly established organization at Marlatt School.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The objective of the study was to determine: What were the opinions and attitudes of Marlatt's fifth and sixth grade teachers and pupils concerning the semi-departmentalized organization in which they were involved?

Importance of the study. The issue of departmentalization in the intermediate grades is a highly debatable one. Therefore, each school should carefully evaluate any change in this direction in light of the advantages and disadvantages of a departmentalized organization. This study is an attempt to discover teachers' and students' views toward the newly established semi-departmentalized program at Marlatt. From this study, valuable information can be gained to help the teachers and administrators determine the success or failure of this departmentalized setup.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Ability grouping. Pupils are classified into homogeneous sections with reference to intelligence and/or aptitude for the purpose of instruction.

Departmentalization. Each instructor teaches only one or two subjects in which he is a specialist; either the teacher moves from room to room to teach the various classes or the pupils shift from room to room during the successive periods of the school day.

Elementary school. The elementary school includes grades one through six unless expressly stated to include grades seven and eight.

Intermediate grades. Grades four, five, and six are referred to as intermediate grades.

Self-contained classroom. Only one teacher is assigned to each grade or group and each pupil has, therefore, only one teacher.

Semi-departmentalization. A given grade is departmentalized in only some subject areas. The remaining subjects are taught in a self-contained classroom.

Specialist. A teacher has completed with distinction an undergraduate major or an undergraduate minor in a specific academic area.

Description of the setting. The fifth and sixth grade students at Marlatt are located in a new wing of the building. This wing is in the shape of a block with three rooms on either side of a centralized planter. The three fifth grade rooms are on the north side of the building, and the three sixth grade rooms are on the south side. For ease of explanation, only the fifth grade rooms will be described, as the sixth grade rooms are arranged in exactly the same pattern except for being on the opposite side of the new wing.

The middle room has movable walls on the east and west sides. The walls may be moved back, resulting in one large room made up of the three individual rooms. When the movable