

High student motivation, growing self knowledge, and encouragement of innovation are all features of the intern program Dr. Chasnoff describes. He also points out that a major factor in its success is its humanistic setting.

MBO and performance appraisal

by Robert E. Chasnoff



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The technologies for management by objectives (MBO) and performance appraisal in the intern program described herein are part of a system-wide, long-range organizational development (OD) program in the public schools of South Brunswick, New Jersey. With the National Training Laboratory (NTL) Institute supplying consultation and training services, the OD program was originated in 1967. The OD program was expanded a year later to include the student teaching intern program and other programs. The intern program involved South Brunswick supervisors and cooperating teachers as well as student teachers and faculty members from Newark State College, Union, New Jersey.

Fundamental to the intern program from the beginning was the concept that it was an innovative plan that would directly improve classroom instruction in South Brunswick schools.¹ Interns were viewed as staff members. They were paid a small stipend. Thus, on one hand, interns enjoyed the status and the income and, on the other hand, the organizational demands made on them were seen by them as clearly legitimate.

The program's original proposal provided for a humanistic approach to MBO and performance appraisal, and this has been carried out. This article describes (1) the attempt to create a humanistic work setting so that the MBO and performance appraisal approach could work, and (2) the specific technologies used to carry out the MBO-performance appraisal approach.

THE SETTING

In each of the summers of 1968 and 1969, the intern program included six weeks of preliminary work. Two weeks of human relations training and planning for work in four-week experimental schools were carried out, with consultation and training continuing during the actual running of the summer schools. The summer programs were followed by full semesters in which OD training and consultation sessions and team conferences were held. Included in these sessions and conferences was emphasis on organizational issues, management and consultation skill development, interpersonal relations, and the introduction of the MBO and performance appraisal approach.

Since the federal funding was terminated in 1970, the school system and the college have been continuing the collaborative program during the school year (without stipends for interns), building upon the organizational structures and technologies that had been introduced, the

developing management skills that had been acquired, and the supportive, innovative climate that had been growing in the South Brunswick schools as a result of this and certain other programs.

The intern program now involves a good deal of mutual collaboration, choice, and diagnosis within clearly specified guidelines to prepare the proper setting for each semester. Student teachers are invited to a meeting several months before their assignment begins. Their expectations and questions are shared with those of South Brunswick teachers and supervisors and the college staff. A South Brunswick administrator identifies the role of the intern program as an integral part of the total school program. Each intern is told that his or her end-of-semester college grades will be determined collaboratively with him or her by school and college personnel. The interns also hear that four four-hour workshops, attended by interns, teachers, South Brunswick supervisors, and the college staff, will be held after school during the semester. (These workshops are planned by *ad hoc* committees made up of system supervisors, teachers, interns, and college personnel. The South Brunswick Board of Education gives salary credit to teachers for their attendance at these workshop meetings and their work with interns.) Seminars for interns, but open to others, also are announced. Attendance at the seminars by interns is optional. Topics are to be determined by the interns.

The interns are instructed initially to visit as many classrooms as they wish, to stay in any place as long as they want, and to confer with anyone to determine where and with whom they might achieve what they feel they need to learn.

An important aspect of the setting is mutual choice of people with whom one works. During the first week of the semester, interns and teachers confer with each other and with South Brunswick supervisors and the college staff with respect to the kind of person with whom they wish to work. In these conferences, the broad goals the interns hope to achieve are reviewed and the broad goals teachers feel they have the capacity to help interns achieve are discussed. Teachers also assess and make known what they wish to get for themselves out of working in this program. Interns are urged to continue to visit as many classes as they wish and not get locked into a classroom that looks safe. Teachers are urged to be candid about their preferences.

By the first workshop, held early in the semester, initial agreements are made as to where and with whom interns will *begin* their more intensive classroom work. (We stress the *begin* because we want to make it easy to move later.) Many arrangements are used, depending upon interns' broad goals and teachers' assessments of themselves, their classrooms, etc. Thus, some teacher-intern teams decide that one intern and one teacher agree to work together for the first six weeks and assess at that time where the intern should work next. Other teachers and interns decide on other combinations, such as working in several classrooms from the beginning. Sometimes teams are composed of several interns as well as several teachers. In such cases, school supervisors become active members of the team.

Of more importance in the work setting of this program is the fact that, in general, South Brunswick schools are

places where innovation is encouraged, systematic problem solving is a norm, much teacher involvement in program development exists, and support for professional growth is system policy. Experience has shown that teachers and interns sense this humanistic work setting and, thus, can be trustful both of the leadership offered them and of the technologies employed. Teachers are not afraid to ask interns, other teachers, and supervisors for help. The teachers value the interns. They ask for personal feedback. Moreover, over the years, a high level of trust and directness has been developed between the South Brunswick and Newark State College staff members. In such a setting, the author believes, the technologies described below are possible for effective MBO-performance appraisal.

THE SPECIFIC STEPS IN THE MBO AND PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Some of the specific steps in the MBO-performance appraisal are carried out in three-way conferences. Some are introduced in the seminars but more in the four workshops noted earlier. In the early years of the intern program, the workshops were generally led by NTL Institute consultants; now the sessions are planned and led by volunteer members of planning committees composed of interns, teachers, system supervisors, and college staff.

Organizational Diagnosis

Interns are introduced to the sharing of data by participating in organizational diagnosis in the workshops. Depending upon the size of the group and the number of South Brunswick teachers and supervisors new to the intern program, organizational diagnosis is accomplished in different ways in different semesters. For example:

- role groups draw pictures describing themselves in the program.
- small groups do a force field analysis (FFA)² and share their products.
- small groups brainstorm lists of possible problems, which are duplicated for future use by teacher-intern teams to assess how they are doing.
- writing down problems that role groups foresee followed by sharing of products.
- team of teachers and interns respond to a program of diagnostic questions prepared by the workshop planning committee.

Diagnosis of intern

The workshops, seminars, and conferences focus upon diagnosis of the individual intern and the work setting. Frequently the FFA is used. After completing the FFA, diagnosis is intensified by determining which forces are clearly seen, which require more data, which are strong, and which are weak. Often, at first, many of the forces deal with

relationships with pupils. After some probing, however, interns see the need of gaining more data from pupils before the forces are known to be clear or strong. Sometimes the name of a force is changed from "kids don't mind me" to "my anxiety."

Brainstorming

The next task is to brainstorm a wide variety of ways to reduce the effect of a restraining force identified in the FFA (To prepare for brainstorming, loosening-up, creativity-induced exercises are used, e.g., brainstorming ways to make a hole or brainstorming a wide variety of uses of an ordinary, red, building brick.)

Training in writing objectives

When a workshop includes brainstorming, teams are asked to take one of the ideas or a combination of ideas they brainstormed and think of an objective that would diminish the effect of a restraining force. The teams are instructed merely to make three copies of one objective; we provide them with carbon paper.

We ask the teams to place their statements in a pile on a table. We indicate that the teams' next task is to pick up several objectives written by other teams and to assign a mark on a scale from 1 to 10, using the following guides:

- specificity: concrete, described in terms of actual behavior (pupils' or interns')
- measurability: the criterion for determining whether the objective has been achieved is explicitly defined
- challenge: behavior that an intern currently probably is unable to do now and is worth doing
- realism: behavior that is attainable, given the field they are working in, the level skill an intern might have, and an appropriate objective for their kind of school
- time element: end of semester or other specific time clearly identified

In addition to the scoring from 1 to 10, the participants are instructed to write words or phrases that might be helpful to the writers of the objectives such as, "you left out the time element," "garbage," or "if you insert the word such-and-such it will be clearer." This task generally is accompanied by a good deal of hilarity over marking each other's work, recognition that different groups assign vastly different marks for the same statement, and discomfiture suffered by some teachers who thought they were quite skilled at writing behavioral objectives.

Sometimes we present participants with a list of objectives (see box) that had been prepared for another program.³ The participants are instructed to decide which statements are useful and which are not and what characteristics of style do or do not make them useful.

Defining performance objectives

The next task is that of beginning to agree upon a set of behavioral objectives for each intern that become the preliminary management objectives and appraisal criteria for

Sample Statements of Objectives

1. All pupils will be able to tie their shoes after 13 weeks.
2. Tying shoes is a skill we are really going to work on this year.
3. Principals support Follow-Through.
4. On a questionnaire administered to all parents on February 15, 75% of those parents responding will indicate they feel principals are in support of Follow-Through.
5. The PAC will work effectively this year.
6. The PAC will make 5 decisions this year.
7. By June 1, 70% of the pupils in the first grade will be able to say all the letters of the alphabet in sequence.
8. By June 1, the children will be able to recite the ABC's.
9. The children will love reading.
10. Given a chance to select books to take home, 70% of the pupils will decide to take home at least one book.
11. An observer in the classroom sees that, during a 20 minute work period, 3 pupils push others whereas a week earlier, 7 pupils were seen to push others.
12. There will be effective classroom discipline in all classrooms.
13. The children enjoy school.

the team composed of the intern, a teacher or teachers, school supervisor, and college staff member. The objectives are checked to determine if they satisfy the following criteria: the corporate needs of the situation in which the intern is working, appropriateness to the intern's present level of development as a prospective team teacher, and consistency with the college's general goals for student teachers.

Some fairly typical objectives agreed upon have been the following:

- By December 1, I will be able to describe ten science experiments designed to increase intermediate graders' creativity; the ten will be judged by three educators as likely to increase creativity
- By December 15, I will have introduced five science experiences that were rated on anonymous questionnaires by 75% of the pupils as interesting, and 2 out of 3 professional observers will give five bits of evidence each that the lessons induced creative thought among pupils.
- By the end of the semester, I will be able to lead my class through the halls to the playground without having to reprimand them more than three times.
- By November 1, I will ask for feedback in a conference and will reduce to zero the number of defenses or excuses I give for unsatisfying results.
- By October 15, I will have gotten Billy to answer me, when I speak to him, 3 out of 4 times.

Making individual plans

In follow-up team conference, also agreed upon are: things to do in the classroom; visits to make to other classrooms; topics to bring up in interns' seminar (discipline is always brought up); things to read; data to be gained from observations made by school staff members, college personnel, or other interns; data to be gained from pupils by means of interviews, questionnaires, and observations; and data gained from studying video tape of lessons. These teams check to see if the objectives contain clear criteria for data needed to determine the college marks that are required at the end of the semester (pass-fail for eight credits in student teaching and combinations of nine credits of A* B* C* etc., for assigned courses for which students are registered.)

As the semester progresses, objectives are checked to determine which have been achieved, what new objectives need to be added, and where and with whom these objectives might best be achieved. At the end of the semester, the total list of objectives are the criteria for the final evaluation and final college marks. All people who work with the intern in the course of the semester participate in the final evaluation conference. In most cases, final marks are agreed upon easily because many data are available. However, there sometimes have been conferences in which bargaining has taken place, where either the intern or others have pushed for higher or lower grades.

DISCUSSION

Our experience with the humanistic approach to MBO and performance appraisal has been most positive. Independent learners among the interns do better than dependent learners. At first, the interns are wary, seeing the objectives as a kind of stern assignment in humanistic clothing. As the semester progresses, the interns take greater charge over their learning. They become more open about their weaknesses and where they need help. They are, at first, amazed, then pleased that teachers ask them for advice on how the teachers should function in their classes. They are encouraged to experiment and become less defensive about mistakes. They learn to trust the college staff and ask for help. They fit into the school system's climate which generally permits personal conflicts to be aired rather than be covered up. Interns report a sense of control over their own learning by having clear objectives on which to work. They report that by writing clear objectives for themselves, they are better able to clarify objectives for pupils to gain. They demonstrate a change over the course of the semester from initially being concerned about "maintaining control" to "trying to do with the kids what we are doing," that is, diagnosing and setting objectives collaboratively. The interns report that what they are doing for their own development really works with their pupils. There have been amazing turn-arounds when interns who previously received only passing grades suddenly, upon their return to campus, won honors and felt motivated and goal-directed for the first time. Many interns continue their contacts with people they knew in the intern program.

The main evidence of success of the program is that administrators, supervisors, teachers, interns, pupils, pupils' parents, and college staff describe many specific ways in which the interns help the schools do a better job. In South Brunswick, much emphasis is placed upon individualization of pupil diagnosis and instruction. Teachers report that they could not now do the job of individualizing instruction and working with small groups without the interns. Teachers point to pupils and groups whom the interns "reach" which the teachers could not. Teachers report on new ideas brought in by interns and helpful feedback interns have given them on their work with pupils and about themselves. Supervisors are delighted with the ready reserve of effective substitutes the interns represent.

At this time in New Jersey, when fewer than fifty percent of elementary education graduates are hired to teach, all the South Brunswick interns who want teaching positions get them. South Brunswick administrators cite the interns as their best source of supply for new teachers, considering them "experienced" and creative.

Doing something worthwhile that is recognized by others provides profound motivation for the interns. They feel they truly are part of the staff. The innovative, open, supportive climate that has been created, maintained, and even fought for by the Superintendent of Schools, permits the program to operate as effectively as it does.⁴

The humanistic approach to MBO and performance appraisal described in this paper has been, the author feels, a valuable technology; but we also feel it has worked well because of the kind of system in which it has been used. The technologies used in this program did not create the system. The system permitted the technology to operate. The author would not recommend this approach to be "tacked on" to a system that does not contain the humanistic conditions briefly described here.

FOOTNOTES

1. The OD program was funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title III, an act specifically designed to implement innovative classroom practices in elementary and secondary schools.

2. David H. Jenkins, "Social Engineering in Educational Change: An Outline of Method," *Progressive Education*, vol. 9 (1949), pp. 193-197.

3. Robert Chasnoff, "Evaluating Progress," in *Organizational Improvement in Follow-Through Projects*, U.S. Office of Education Grant No. OEG-O-70-4941 (266) (Washington, D.C.: NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1972), p. 23.

4. I would like to be able to list the names of all the people who have helped create and maintain the climate for our work but I know the editors will have to say no. A few, however, must be noted as central figures who provided much needed support, ideas, and skill: Dr. James A. Kimple, Superintendent of Schools; Ruth Small, Jobyna Smith, and Patrick Garzillo, South Brunswick administrator-supervisors; Teachers Alice Baionno, Jane Clute, Margaret MacMurray, and Eileen McManus; Marie Sainz of Newark State College; and Dorothy Mial and Peter Muniz of NTL Institute. Over a hundred interns have inspired all of us so that we learned along with them.