The Shaping of the Curriculum Research & Development Group and Its Laboratory School: A Response to Events of the 1960s

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The formation and continuing evolution of the Curriculum Research & Development Group (CRDG) and its University Laboratory School are part of Hubert Everly’s legacy as dean of the College of Education. Built from three laboratory schools—preschool, elementary, and secondary—founded variously from 1890 to 1948, the CRDG now exists in a form that emerged during the mid 1960s. The unit would not exist in its present form, or even exist at all, without Hu Everly’s vision, guidance, and political skill.

What happened, why, and how? And what did we learn during the Everly era? To answer these questions is my challenge in this article.

What Do the CRDG and Its Laboratory School Do?

Today the CRDG, with its laboratory school, is known as one of the nation’s major centers for curriculum research, development, and assistance to schools. From its roots in Hawai‘i, the unit’s influence has expanded across the nation and beyond, with more than 600,000 students being schooled in CRDG-developed programs. Several foreign countries have translated and adapted CRDG’s curricula for use in their own schools.

The CRDG improves educational practice by expanding the ideas and the number and quality of tools that teachers and students use. The CRDG has developed, evaluated, and disseminated over 600 educational tools in its thirty-four-year history. These tools comprise published books, multimedia materials, and educational practices intended to draw children and youths into reflection, inquiry, thinking, and solving problems. They also include materials and professional development activities that help teachers communicate the nature, potential, and strategies of the curricula, plus materials for parents and school administrators. At present, some twenty projects are either on the drawing board or under revision. Many tasks await the energy and the funds to complete them. Over the years, the CRDG has made excursions into new educational technologies, with new initiatives being explored and developed.

Forces for Change: The Educational Environment of the 1960s

The Curriculum Research & Development Group and the laboratory school of the University of Hawai‘i, in their current forms, emerged from conditions and events during the 1960s that stimulated a reshaping of educational institutions in Hawai‘i and in the nation at large. The time was ripe for a paradigm shift.

By the standards of the time, the nation was prospering. Veterans of World War II were emerging as leaders in their communities; their children were attending the nation’s schools. The United States was working out its role as a world leader. And President Johnson’s “Great Society” initiatives expressed a new national purpose embedded in a program of action. This program launched large and long-enduring enterprises in education, along with unprecedented funding for reform and research. Much of the money had been flowing into universities for developing curricula and instructional materials for elementary and secondary schools. Among examples of such programs were the School Mathematics Study Group (SMSG), the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS), and the Physical Science Study Committee (PSSC). The nation’s major scientific organizations, such as the National Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, were leading the advance. The Carnegie Corporation and the US Department of Education also participated. (Jerome Bruner’s important little book, The Process of Education [1960], is an insightful introduction to this exciting work.)

Hawai‘i too was demanding educational reform and new programs to upgrade schooling. The Democratic Party had assumed control of both the legislature and the governorship. Their message of creating quality schools as the avenue to social betterment and upward mobility was political magic, especially to military veterans and organized labor.

These sentiments were expressed powerfully by David Thompson in an article entitled “ILWU and Decision-Making in Education,” published in the December 1966 issue of Educational Perspectives. Thompson, the education director of Hawai‘i Local 142 of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union, reported a 1962 policy statement of the union, which represented 22,000 members in Hawai‘i’s
sugar, pineapple, longshore, hotel, and other industries on all islands (p 14). Thompson presented a clear view of the labor movement’s educational goals for its members and their children—a view held also by the Democratic Party of the time.

We live in a democracy. Every child must have an education, which gives him the power to share in policy making, and the wisdom to shape a good life. He must have the liberal academic education which is traditional for rulers: instruction in reading, writing, speech, literature, history, government, logic, mathematics, natural science and fine arts. (p 14)

Thompson remarked further that “a sound preparation in the academic disciplines is now the best preparation for work” (p 15).

Federal money to improve education and other social programs was coming into Hawai’i in phenomenal amounts. Through its control over appropriations, the Hawai’i legislature took direct action on education, debating many school issues and programs in the halls of ‘Iolani Palace.

Public education was on the move. The first elected school board was taking control of the state’s Department of Education. The statewide university system was emerging, and the Mānoa campus was taking shape as a major research university on the U.S. land grant model.

The College of Education was also responding to the demands of the times, adding new faculty, many with research credentials. Faculty members were creating and implementing a number of experimental programs of teacher education, such as the Ford Program and the Honolulu Project, and revamping existing ones. They were also becoming involved in some international contracts. On the research side, the College of Education, with support from the university administration and the state’s legislature, formed the Educational Research and Development Center (EDRAD).

The three laboratory schools and their staffs, with their limited resources (most staff were at the instructor level, fully occupied with their regular duties of teaching and teacher training), were also redirecting their efforts toward research. By 1965, the schools’ faculty had made nineteen contributions to research and program innovation, dealing with such topics as individualized instruction in high school English, independent study in the teaching of spelling, radio astronomy, behavior rating scales, the Montessori program, the Initial Teaching Alphabet program, creativity development, Japanese language, programmed learning, audiovisual aids, educational television lessons, and remedial reading. High school teachers/supervisors were experimenting with the new curricula in math and science developed by the major national curriculum projects noted above.

The vision of a new role for the college’s three laboratory schools was evolving in the early 1960s. Dean Everly, the former principal of the high school and a longtime student of lab schools, took the lead. He commissioned David Ryans, the director of EDRAD, to solicit the views of leading researchers on the potential of laboratory schools as centers for educational research.

The laboratory schools had become a subject of concern in American universities, including the University of Hawai’i. Many major universities were closing down their laboratory schools. Why?

In the early twentieth century, laboratory schools were considered an indispensable part of teachers colleges and of schools and colleges of education in universities. But conditions changed. The demand for teachers was outstripping the capacity of campus laboratory schools to accommodate them, so most clinical practice was accomplished in regular schools. The quality of American schools had improved substantially over the years, so that regular schools could supply mentor teachers and quality programs. Furthermore, as teacher education became more integrated into the growing universities, schools of education had to compete for funds with arts and sciences and other programs, and laboratory schools often lost in the competition.

But Everly was committed to preserving Hawai’i’s laboratory schools. He believed, along with many others, that changing the schools’ function from teacher training to research and development was a good strategy. A major study of the College of Education in 1966 produced a report titled “Preparation of Teachers and Other Educational Personnel in Hawaii,” later known informally as the Stiles Report, reflecting the role of the study’s director, Lindley Stiles, dean of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin. Stiles was the leader among a group of college deans from major universities who were lobbying Congress for funds to support educational research. The report carried a section with the title “Role and Function of the Laboratory Schools.” In it, Stiles offered an appealing combination of educational and economic reasons to justify reorganizing the laboratory schools as a curriculum research center.

The cost of operating the Laboratory Schools as facilities for research and school improvement should be looked upon by the University and the people of the State as a basic “seed corn” investment to attract outside support for education research and improvement operations. . . . Programs of research and innovation now being planned by the faculties of the Laboratory Schools are directly related to the objectives of a number of federal programs from which research grants may be forthcoming. All kinds of research, both basic and applied, have the potentiality of being supported. . . . It [federal money] would also support a proposal for a research and
development center. Discussions under way that may ultimately link the Laboratory Schools’ research facilities with the plans being made by the State Department of Education to provide a supplementary service center to the State might well make these schools eligible to utilize funds from Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (pp 66–68).

Stiles further argued that laboratory schools could be ideal facilities for “keeping teachers abreast of latest educational improvements.” He also noted that certain educational problems in Hawai’i are “unique to its own cultural traditions; hence, research is needed in the local setting if workable solutions are to be achieved” (p 69).

Stiles’s arguments helped convince legislators and university administrators, if they were not already convinced, that the lab schools should be transformed into facilities for research and development to improve schooling. The prospect that such an enterprise could attract money from the federal government, philanthropic foundations, business and industry, and state governments was especially seductive. “Thus, new opportunities and new sources of support for educational research are becoming open just when the Laboratory Schools are changing their role and function to take advantage of them” (p 69).

**My Participation**

My own participation in the CRDG story began in 1965. I was acquainted with education in Hawai’i, having taught at Punahou School from 1946 to 1949 while studying at the College of Education evenings and summers.

In 1965 I was an associate professor at the Claremont Graduate School in California, specializing in teacher education and curriculum studies. David Ryans, director of the new Educational Research and Development Center (EDRAD) at the College, invited me to return to Hawai’i to take a position in the center and on the faculty of the College. I had not been in Hawai’i long when Everly asked me to consider heading the lab schools. (Unbeknownst to me, a college committee and Dean Everly had considered me for the position before I arrived in the islands.) At first I declined the invitation.

Later, in the fall of 1965, with others in EDRAD, I did staff work for Lindley Stiles on the Stiles Report. This work convinced me of the schools’ potential as a curriculum development center. Although Stiles had presented a potent rationale for a new mission for the schools, no details of philosophy and approach had been worked out.

My work with a longtime associate, John (Jack) Brownell, was important in what was to come. Brownell and I had been fellow teachers at Punahou School in the late 1940s, had known each other as doctoral students at Stanford, and had been colleagues at Claremont Graduate School. In 1965 we were completing our curriculum book, *The Curriculum and the Disciplines of Knowledge: A Theory of Curriculum Practice* (Wiley 1966). Our work aimed to be a theory of practice, that is, a practical guide to designing and developing curriculum based on our theory. After reviewing the claims of social, occupational, religious, political, and intellectual domains on the curriculum, we concluded that the intellectual goal held the prime position for general education. In contemporary language, the general, liberal curriculum was to be discipline-based. The remainder of the book set out guidelines for developing curricula to fulfill the intellectual claims of the disciplines of knowledge, conceived as communities of people committed to working toward shared intellectual goals within their own domains. These communities would consist of practitioners of the disciplines, including academic scholars, teachers, educators, and finally students themselves, when their school courses would cast them in roles of community members, engaging with each other and their teachers in doing what members of such communities do—thinking, inquiring, learning their language, communicating, collaborating, using their methods of discovery, and so on.

My decision to accept the position of lab school director and to become engaged in converting the lab schools as envisioned in the Stiles Report was influenced by several factors: (1) my professional interest in curriculum design and development, as stimulated by the work with Brownell, (2) the emerging culture of educational change in the 1950s and 1960s, which made new approaches and developments possible, (3) the success of university academics in curriculum development—a hallmark of successful work in major curriculum projects in the 1950s and 1960s, and (4) the availability of fifty-five university-funded positions assigned to the lab schools—resources that to my knowledge were unavailable to any other curriculum design unit. With university scholars participating in curriculum practice, the revamped laboratory schools could become an organizing point for university faculty members and school people on our development teams.

**Internal Reorganization**

Converting the Laboratory Schools into a site for curriculum work entailed organizational changes—a continuing phenomenon in the unit’s life. In 1966 we merged the three independent lab schools into a single University Laboratory School (ULS), along with their budgets. One principal replaced three, and a single cafeteria, rather than three, now served the whole student body. Three school nurse positions were directed to other needs.

The size and composition of the student population
changed. To accommodate the conversion of full-time teachers to curriculum developers, we reduced the student body by attrition from over 900 to 365. To carry out the research mandate, we selected students to represent the state’s population in ethnicity, gender, level of school success, and families’ social standing. Because changes were made by attrition, no students were eliminated. There was some early criticism of adding students from the great variety of walks of life, but it vanished when the school proved successful, safe, and attractive.

Staff roles changed from classroom teachers and supervisors of clinical practice to teacher-researchers. Only a few of the school’s staff members accepted the opportunity offered to prepare for their new roles. Most chose to apply for other opportunities available, either in the Department of Education or in the College of Education. A number of those on the brink of retirement chose to leave. Thus we were left with a major job of staff building—recruiting educators and content scholars from Hawai‘i, the US mainland, and other countries.

**Developing Partners**

In building this applied research and development enterprise, we discovered step by step that we needed a large number of connections to individuals, groups, and institutions. Some of the connections were there from the start; others were cultivated later.

1. **The Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE).** The Department of Education has been an important partner and client through the years. Although interactions have varied in type and intensity with the times, and particularly with the views of the superintendent, the links have always been maintained.

   Partnership with the DOE was one of Hu Everly’s hallmarks for the prosperity of education in Hawai‘i, and it proved to be so for the new lab school and for the curriculum development unit that was to follow. It all started in an informal way.

   At a Phi Delta Kappa meeting, I had met William (Bill) Savard, then head of research in the DOE. We promptly began exchanging ideas on improving education. I talked about the lab school and the possibility of collaboration by members of the university faculty; Bill talked about DOE interests, including the research program under way at the DOE, and about the funds for educational innovation that had come to the state under Title III of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We came to an immediate and enthusiastic meeting of the minds on what could come of joining the efforts of the state’s two major educational establishments, both bringing substantial resources plus entree to the schools and the university.

   Dean Stiles’s report had noted the potential of joining in a partnership with the DOE-controlled Title III (Educational Innovations) program. This is just what happened.

   We now saw that we had to move quickly. The state had to organize to spend its annual federal allowance of some $400,000—big money in those days. ULS people were eager to get moving along the lines suggested by the Stiles Report, which had been well received by the legislature, the university, the DOE, and the Title III Advisory Council, a body of community members that included Dave Thompson of the ILWU, cited earlier.

   We proposed a jointly operated unit to be called the Hawai‘i Curriculum Center (HCC). It would have resources from both the DOE and the university and a commitment to work on projects of high priority to the schools—first, English language arts for the elementary school, science, and the arts.

   The original leadership group was drawn from both the DOE (Shiho Nunes, Joe Cherry, and Bill Savard) and the university (Gladys Koo, until then principal of the university’s elementary school and Jack Brownell, new from Claremont Graduate School and me). I assumed the role of director; Savard of co-director, both of us expecting that these roles would either change regularly or that new leaders would be found. In my case, it never happened, and I have remained in a position close to the one that I accepted in 1966.

   The combination of new and continuing staff was an energetic, creative, and hard-working lot: Leon Burton (arts); Jerry and Charlotte Dykstra, Richard and Ann Port, Florence Maney, Donald Sanborn, and Ted Rodgers (English); Ron Mitchell (social studies); Frank Potter, Don Young, Will Kyselka, Sister Edna Demanche, and Reed Brantley (science); Edith Kleinjans, Loretta Krause, Morris Lai and others too numerous to list here. They were an energetic, creative, and hard-working lot. When the work teams assembled, with faculty drawn from the DOE, from the University of Hawai‘i, from mainland institutions, and from New Zealand, we witnessed the synergy of teachers and scholars collaborating to meet common goals. No one really knew which team members were drawn from the DOE, the university, or elsewhere, and if they did know, it wasn’t important.

   Because of Hawai‘i’s unique single statewide school system, the resources from Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act supported much of the work. Where most states disbursed their ESEA funds among many small projects, Hawai‘i chose to concentrate its share in the Hawai‘i Curriculum Center. The policy offended some who would have preferred to put the funds into multiple pockets.

   The Hawai‘i Curriculum Center had a lively existence under that name from 1966 to 1969. Always a target of some controversy, the HCC’s work was reviewed each year by the Hawai‘i legislature under its budgeting authority. After an intensive review in 1969, almost all of the legislators came out
in support of the HCC. But one senior member, the chair of the House's powerful Budget and Finance Committee, held out for assigning full control of the HCC to the Department of Education, on the assumption that joint operations could not be well managed—hence the tension. So the unit was split into two. The university portion was renamed the Curriculum Research & Development Group; the DOE section was named the Curriculum Development and Technology Branch and assigned to the Office of Instructional Services. The two units continued to share quarters on the university campus, working together by contract or joint agreement and the professional good will of people on both sides. The DOE gradually dropped developmental work, though it kept up major support to its Hawaii English Project.

2. Leaders in the University. From presidents through vice-presidents, chancellors, and their staffs, university leaders also provided support, as did research officers and their staffs. Later, the Research Corporation of the University of Hawai'i (RCUH) also promoted the new activity. In the earliest days of the Hawai'i Curriculum Center, university administrative staff sought ways to expand the number of positions for the lab school. Unfortunately, their efforts were not successful.

3. The College of Education (COE). Hubert Everly, dean of the College, provided the initial impetus for the new mission of the lab school and maintained connections with the college and the university over the long haul. From the beginning to his retirement, he was the stable point, offering information and guidance, always delivered with good will and candor. Hu was committed to the success of the new laboratory school. He knew the university; he was a skilled lobbyist and a sensitive practitioner of local politics. He also knew his faculty and was committed to working closely with the DOE. He never discouraged an idea or an innovation, though he sometimes counseled me on timing.

College of Education faculty members had mixed responses to converting the laboratory schools to their new function. Some responses can be attributed to differences of educational philosophy, of views on teacher education, curriculum, and the wider set of issues in the conduct of schooling; to mixed opinions on teachers' roles in developing curricula, differing concepts of staff development, and even doubts about the very idea of large-scale, systemic development of curricula. Some responses reflected sympathy for teachers anxious about their changed role. Some staff members questioned severing the school’s traditional ties with the college’s teacher education programs.

But most college faculty accepted the new arrangements. Many staff members were welcomed by college faculty and worked with the college’s academic and teaching departments. Most eligible CRDG faculty have taken appointments to the graduate faculty.

Members of the EDRAD staff offered valuable support in establishing the unit but directed their efforts to their own agendas and styles of research once it was under way. The university itself afforded access to experts in disciplinary fields to cooperate on curriculum projects. We estimate that over 600 faculty in all branches of the university have contributed their expertise to developing curricula in a variety of CRDG projects. Their assistance was especially important because of our commitment to the disciplines of knowledge as the foundation of a common, general, and intellectual curriculum.

4. Other Connections. Representative Patsy Mink was our link to Congress and our spokesperson with influential Washington heads, from the president down through the educational hierarchy, including administrators of the Title III program. University people and CRDG staff members often went to Washington to consult with national leaders on our behalf.

In later years, we forged effective working arrangements with many of the state’s independent schools, with international schools and schools in Micronesia, and with many schools on the US mainland. Over 7,000 schools in forty-four states now participate as partners in using CRDG-developed programs. In more recent years, we formed partnerships with sixteen mainland universities who serve as centers for disseminating and adapting CRDG programs in their service areas.

Analysis of the CRDG’s Longevity

The late 1950s and the 1960s were the high point of large-scale curriculum projects in the United States, Britain, Australia, and other countries. Few of the centers that mounted these projects still exist. Even national programs of support to curriculum development have either shut down or lost their financial backing.

Yet the CRDG has persisted, even gaining in the scope of its work and in the wider use of its programs in Hawai'i, on the US mainland, and in some other countries. Can we learn something from reviewing this longevity?

In concluding this article, I present ten conditions that I believe account for the CRDG’s success and its longevity. They issue from my years as the director of the CRDG, from dialogue with colleagues, and from my contacts with and observations of the curriculum development movement elsewhere.

Condition #1. The CRDG has received predictable, long-term support.

Most projects and multi-project centers that depended on short-term government grants have folded. Few have produced a stream of income from sale of materials and services to continue their work.
The CRDG has benefited from its allocation of permanent positions, enabling it to build a core staff of career professionals. Most projects have used personnel drawn from schools and universities on part-time appointments or as consultants for the duration of their grants. They rarely devote enough time to become career specialists in what I once referred to as “the world’s youngest profession.” CRDG’s key staff members have had the time to form insights into the curriculum development process and to become skilled in inventing curriculum-building strategies. The CRDG has also been able to build a corps of specialists—editors, artists, book designers, printers—to carry projects through to completion.

The CRDG has found direction in my theoretical work with Jack Brownell on The Curriculum and the Disciplines of Knowledge: A Theory of Curriculum Practice (Wiley 1966). This work meshed intellectual knowledge (the disciplines) with the practical work of the schools. It has been the base for continued theorizing and practical application over time, and is consistent with the current movement toward educational standards.

The CRDG began small, developing curriculum for the state’s schools. Many early curriculum projects were assigned nationwide responsibility from the start. But the CRDG, charged with responsibility just for a small state, found that compactness, with direct communication, eased the tasks of designing, developing, testing, and debugging curricula and adding staff development programs before expanding to the national and international arenas.

A typical CRDG project allows five to eight years for initial development, trial, and early revisions of a comprehensive program. The more successful programs are usually revised after five years or so by the initial and still-intact development team.

The CRDG has found its dedicated laboratory school vital to its mission. In the University Laboratory School, senior and junior developers work with students until they are satisfied with the results. Once ideas and materials pass initial levels of satisfaction, they are shared with cooperating schools. The laboratory school keeps the project models alive and serves as a base for evaluation, for visitation, for training, and for subsequent revisions.

The CRDG started its work in 1966, when many American projects were available as models. The CRDG staff studied these projects, analyzing their work, their resources, their gaps, and their successes. The CRDG brought to Hawai‘i a number of leaders of the still new but complete science programs to serve as members of advisory panels, and sometimes as writer/developers.

The CRDG has a number of independent projects. Because most project centers completed only one or a very few programs, they had limited opportunity to learn from others. But the CRDG has had concurrent projects in several areas of the curriculum, thereby permitting staff members to learn from each other, and, as a result, shortening the learning curve.

Circumstances favored the CRDG as it created and sustained a successful and relatively permanent center for curriculum research and development, professional improvement for teachers, and support to schools. Perhaps the lessons the CRDG has learned and the conditions that have sustained it can guide others who build experimental schools and project centers.

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