The impact of scheduling on cooperative program planning and teaching (CPPT) and information skills instruction

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The Impact of Scheduling on Cooperative Program Planning & Teaching (CPPT) & Information Skills Instruction

Introduction

Student achievement is enhanced when the school library program is based on collaboration between the classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian in the design, implementation and evaluation of resource-based learning; this collaboration may be characterized as a cooperative program planning and teaching (Haycock, 1990), involving the shared knowledge and expertise of the teacher (in curriculum, teaching, classroom program needs, and student interests and abilities) and the teacher-librarian (in curriculum, teaching, appropriate resources to support the classroom program, and those skills and strategies necessary for students to use the resources and information effectively to solve problems). This approach is predicated on the availability of both personnel and resources, when the need arises in the classroom through student interest or through teacher initiative.

The intellectual basis for this approach has been primarily research conducted in the United States and the expert opinion of leaders in the profession. Several researchers, for example, have reported a relationship between cooperative program planning and flexible scheduling (Callison, 1979/1980; Nolan, 1989/1990; Smith, 1978/1979) and between cooperative program planning and school culture (Bell, 1990/1991).

These and other studies (cited in Haycock, 1992; Haycock, 1994; Lance, K.C., Welborn, L., & Hamilton-Pennell, C., 1993) have found that cooperative program planning and teaching, flexible scheduling and a collaborative school culture increase curriculum involvement by the teacher-librarian, promote better integration of information problem-solving skills in subject content areas and improved student competence in handling and using information. Nevertheless, some elementary schools have fixed schedules, meaning that a group is scheduled into the library for instruction or use of the resources on a regular basis for a set length of time, frequently for the school year; this scheduling method hinders the integration of resources and information skills and strategies with the classroom program.

This study extends previous research (Tallman & van Deusen, 1994a, 1994b; van Deusen, 1991/1992, 1993, van Deusen & Tallman, 1994) to determine if US findings would be replicated in Canada. Specifically, van Deusen and Tallman found a relationship between curriculum involvement and type of schedule and improved consultation when team planning by two or more teachers and a qualified teacher-librarian occurred; this study then examined the impact of scheduling on cooperative program planning and teaching and information skills instruction in Canadian elementary schools.

Research Questions

The major research questions to be addressed in this study were:

- Do teacher-librarians in schools with flexible scheduling engage in more consultative tasks with teachers than those who work in schools with fixed schedules?
- Does the nature of the instructional planning culture in the school (team or individual planning) affect the frequency and length of planning sessions with teachers?
- Are more information skills lessons taught in connection with classroom units in schools with flexible scheduling?
- Do teacher-librarians participate in the assessment of student work more frequently in schools with flexible scheduling than in schools with fixed scheduling?

Methods and Procedures

This study used causal comparative ex-post facto methodology with a national sample of elementary schools, selected at random by Market Data Retrieval. The sample was stratified to ensure representation from both rural and urban areas and from each province and territory. Each school had to include at least three grades with at least one being grade three or four; this was to ensure that middle schools and exclusively early primary schools were not included. An invitation to participate was sent to each of 1500 schools, addressed to the teacher-librarian, with a return post card to signify interest; 189 accepted the invitation to participate with 100 (53%) completing the survey instrument in a usable fashion.
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instrument developed by van Deusen and Tallman (1994), modified for Canadian

The teacher-librarian is full-time or part-time

were either individual teachers or

spent in planning, and participants who

specific aspects of cooperative planning

(i.e., number of planning sessions, time

resulting in a comparable period

of six weeks of school time.

Data collection and analysis allowed

the researcher to determine what

relationship, if any, existed between

scheduling method (fixed or flexible) and

consultation and teaching activities and

specific aspects of cooperative planning

(e.g., the nature and degree of involvement by the teacher-

librarian), by teacher-librarian participation in team teaching and student

assessment, by principal expectations for team planning, by number and length

of planning sessions, by whether the teacher-librarian is full-time or part-time

(in one school or more than one school)

and by teacher-librarian training in cooperative program planning and

Teaching.

Participants were asked to use a
glossary included with the questionnaire

(see Appendix B). Two types of schedules

were defined: a fixed schedule, meaning

a group is scheduled into the library for

instruction or use of the resources on a

regular basis (often weekly) for a set

length of time, frequently for the school

year (this was used for coding only when

there were no exceptions; otherwise

the schedule was labelled "mixed"); a

flexible schedule, meaning the teacher-

librarian and classroom teacher plan

together for instruction or use of

resources based on student learning

needs in each curriculum unit and sched­

ule on that basis; the schedule is arranged

on an a.d hoc basis and varies constantly

(this was used for coding only when there

were no exceptions; otherwise the sched­

ule was labelled "mixed").

Consultative tasks were identified as

the following: (see Appendix B)

Identify & Gather Resources

The teacher-librarian isolates materials

by theme or instructional unit based

on a teacher's request.

Identify Objectives

The teacher-librarian and classroom

teacher collaboratively plan the instruc­
tional objectives for a unit, including

the information skills objectives.

Plan Activities

The teacher-librarian and classroom

teacher collaboratively decide what

they and the students will actually do.

Collaborative Teaching

The teacher-librarian and the teacher

share responsibility for direct

instruction in the content and inform­

ation skills areas and for assisting and

monitoring students.

Teach Information Skills

The teacher-librarian inserts an isolated

information skills lesson or series of

lessons into the unit, but the teacher

has little or no responsibility for

instruction in information skills or

follow-up activities and the teacher-

librarian has little or no responsibility

for content instruction or follow-up

activities provided by the teacher.

Assess Student Work

The teacher-librarian participates in

evaluating the student's product and

process and providing feedback to the

student.

Evaluate The Unit

After the unit is completed, the

teacher-librarian and the teacher review

the unit and identify changes they

would make for the next time it will be

taught. (Note: this latter consultative task

was not included.)

Findings

These findings are based on a sample

of 100 teacher-librarians during the

period February 12 to March 29, 1996.

While the sample was too small to be

generalizable, the findings corroborate

the US findings suggesting their validity.

In response first to the research

questions:

I. Do teacher-librarians in schools with

flexible scheduling engage in more con­
sultative tasks than those who work in

schools with fixed schedules?

Only 18% of the sample were work­

ing in schools with fixed schedules; 49%

in schools with flexible schedules and

33% in schools with mixed schedules.

Programs in schools with mixed sched­

ules were closer to those with flexible

schedules than those with fixed sched­

ules. Those teacher-librarians on fixed

schedules implemented 87 units of study
during the six week time period, 20% of

which were collaboratively planned.

"Teacher-librarians in schools with

flexible or mixed schedules engaged in

more consultative tasks than those who

work in schools with fixed schedules."

Those teacher-librarians on flexible sched­

ules implemented 298 units of study, 56% of which were collaboratively

planned and those teacher-librarians on

mixed schedules implemented 267 units

of study, 47% of which were collabora­
tively planned.

Teacher-librarians in schools with

flexible or mixed schedules engaged in

more consultative tasks than those who

work in schools with fixed schedules. This

was statistically significant for identify­
ing objectives and cooperative program

planning and teaching, that is, planning

activities together, teaching collabora­
tively and participating in student

assessment. Although teacher-librarians in

schools with flexible and mixed sched­

ules gathered resources more for teach­
ers than those on fixed schedules it was

not statistically significant. Similarly, in

examining median scores, even those

teacher-librarians in schools with fixed

schedules still identified objectives with

teachers and planned activities together

once during the six week period, although
the information skills were not integrated.

2. Does the nature of the instructional planning culture in the school (team or individual planning) affect the frequency and length of planning sessions?

When the school principal expects team planning among teachers with the teacher-librarian, whether as grade level groups or subject area groups, team planning occurs more when than the principal does not expect this collaboration. Teacher-librarians plan more units with teachers, regardless of type of schedule, if the principal expects team planning; however, teacher-librarians in schools with flexible or mixed schedules develop significantly more units than those on fixed schedules by a ratio of 4:1. This was statistically significant for identifying objectives and cooperative program planning and teaching but not for gathering resources.

Beyond frequency and length of planning sessions, teacher-librarians who plan with teams of teachers rather than with individuals are more involved in identifying objectives, planning activities, collaborative teaching [and identifying isolated information skills] and student assessment; only the gathering of resources does not increase from individual to team planning.

3. Are more information skills lessons taught in connection with classroom units in schools with flexible scheduling?

Teacher-librarians in schools with flexible scheduling engage in more collaborative teaching, incorporating information skills, than those with other types of schedules. Teacher-librarians in schools with flexible scheduling also teach more isolated information skills lessons in the context of curriculum units than those in schools with fixed scheduling; however, teacher-librarians in schools with flexible scheduling developed more collaborative units, regardless of the time spent in planning. Typically, the teacher-librarian on a fixed schedule spent 0-5 minutes planning with the teacher, on a mixed schedule 6-29 minutes and on a flexible schedule more than 30 minutes. Similar to findings related to the number of planning sessions, the more time spent planning a unit with teacher(s), the more the teacher-librarian is involved in consultative activities generally, with the most noticeable changes in the identification of objectives, planning activities, collaborative teaching and assessment of student work; the range of involvement for these activities varied from 19-27% with no planning sessions to 44%-66% with one planning session to 75-89% with three or more planning sessions; in other words, the more planning that occurs with teachers the more the teacher-librarian will be involved as a partner in the identification of objectives, planning activities, collaborative teaching and assessment of student work. The only areas where there is no change in involvement as a result of the number of planning sessions are gathering resources for the teacher and teaching isolated information skills.

School Context & Qualifications

While this brief overview does not allow for exploration of other findings and many of the issues raised; nevertheless, a "snapshot" is possible: in 60% of the schools, the principal expected team planning among teachers with the teacher-librarian; 90% of teacher-librarians met with teachers individually while 22% met with teaching teams. In 60% of schools, the principal expected team planning among teachers with the teacher-librarian; 90% of teacher-librarians met with teachers individually while 22% met with teaching teams. In 60% of schools, the principal expected team planning among teachers with the teacher-librarian; 90% of teacher-librarians met with teachers individually while 22% met with teaching teams. In 60% of schools, the principal expected team planning among teachers with the teacher-librarian; 90% of teacher-librarians met with teachers individually while 22% met with teaching teams.
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expects it, negating improvement of student achievement); 89% of the teacher-librarians were half-time or more and 86% had two or more years of classroom teaching experience; 50% had completed university course work in cooperative program planning and teaching and 67% had participated in workshops; 42% held a certificate or diploma in teacher-librarianship and 20% held a master's degree.

The majority of collaborative units were developed in the language arts with approximately one-third involving social studies and one-third involving science (many of the units were interdisciplinary in nature resulting in more than one hundred percent). The percentage of units that were collaborative in nature differed among geographic parts of the country, from over 75% in each of two provinces to fewer than 50% in others; this warrants further investigation.

Teacher-librarians who had completed a certificate or diploma in teacher-librarianship engaged in more collaboration than those who had not; teacher-librarians who were full-time engaged in more collaboration, particularly identifying objectives, planning activities and assessing student work, than those who were not; teacher-librarians who were trained in cooperative program planning and teaching engaged in more collaborative activities than those who were not. However, these findings warrant further study as the sample was very small.

The “mixed” schedule phenomenon also warrants further study as it was not clear whether the classroom teacher was present with the class during student engagement in library-based activities or whether the teacher-librarian was providing preparation time for the classroom teacher. If the teacher was present this might account for the higher degree of involvement with the classroom teacher in mixed schedules and the increased isolated information skills teaching inserted in classroom units by the teacher-librarian.

Conclusions

Taken together, 82% of schools had flexible or mixed schedules. Flexible scheduling is accepted and closely tied to the profession’s view of cooperative program planning and teaching; follow-up discussions with non-participants suggested that this may explain in part the low response rate; in other words, if the teacher-librarian does not have flexible scheduling there may have been a belief that cooperative program planning and teaching cannot be occurring.

Where cooperative program planning and teaching tasks increased in different planning and scheduling patterns in the US (that is, identify and gather resources, identify objectives together, plan activities, collaboratively teach content and information skills and participate in student assessment), this was also true in Canada, with the sole and consistent exception of identifying and gathering resources; in other words, Canadian teacher-librarians tend to identify and gather resources for teachers regardless of schedule type, again suggesting a closer link with the classroom program than generally exists in the US. Similarly, in examining median scores, teacher-librarians in the US schools with fixed schedules did not engage in cooperative program planning and teaching tasks at all whereas in Canada even those teacher-librarians in schools with fixed schedules still identified objectives with teachers and planned activities together once during the six week period, although not engaging in other collaborative activities.

More collaborative units are developed where the principal expects planning between and among teachers and the teacher-librarian. Combining flexible scheduling with principal expectations for planning between teachers and teacher-librarian results in the greatest involvement in cooperative program planning and teaching. It is apparent that a collaborative school culture, in this case enhanced by a principal who expects team planning, has a significant influence on the performance of the teacher-librarian in collaborative instructional activities. It is clear that the school principal must be informed of the importance of school culture for effective programs and expect planning among teachers on his or her teaching staff if the teacher-librarian is to be as successful as possible. Flexible scheduling may thus be more indicative of leadership practices and collaborative activities in the school and the district than having a causal relationship with consultative tasks.

Summary

Flexible scheduling results in increased involvement by the teacher-librarian in cooperative program planning and teaching tasks, namely, identify and gather resources, identify objectives, plan activities, teach collaboratively, teach information skills, assess student work, and evaluate the unit. The principal’s expectations are significant, particularly when the principal expects the teacher-librarian to meet with teachers as a team; indeed, this component of school culture is more significant for teacher-librarian involvement in cooperative program planning and teaching than schedule type, whether fixed, mixed or flexible.

In spite of these findings, however, teacher-librarians are still not involved in cooperative program planning and teaching with classroom colleagues as equal teaching partners to the extent that principals, teachers and teacher-librarians themselves believe that they should be (Kerr-1973/1976; Stanwich-1982). Teacher-librarians require extensive training in cooperative program planning and team teaching which builds on prior successful classroom teaching experience. Programs which educate teacher-librarians would do well to structure programs around cooperative program planning and teaching and the skills necessary to convince educators that teacher-librarians are vital partners in instruction (Royal-1981/1982).

REFERENCES


"Teacher-librarians who had completed a certificate or diploma in teacher-librarianship engaged in more collaboration than those who had not..."
Appendix A: Questionnaire

Part II

1. Does the principal expect team planning among teachers with the teacher-librarian?
   60% - Yes. 37% - No.

2. How do you usually meet with teachers to plan curriculum units?
   22% - as a grade-level group.
   11% - as a subject-area group.
   90% - individually.

3. Does the district’s contract require that your position be used to plan instruction for teachers?
   13% - Yes. 80% - No.

4. Does your principal require that your position be used to plan instruction for teachers?
   31% - Yes. 67% - No.

5. What is the student population of your school?
   19% - under 250. 41% - 251-399.
   25% - 400-599. 14% - 600-.

6. How are you contracted to work in the school as a teacher-librarian?
   30% - full-time. 49% - half-time or more. 19% - less than half-time.

7. Do you have two years of more of classroom teaching experience?
   85% - Yes. 14% - No.

8. What is your level of education/training in teacher-librarianship?
   Please check all that apply.
   68% - B.Ed. or equivalent.
   44% - Some courses.
   42% - Certificate/diploma.
   08% - M.S.L. 12% - M.Ed.
   03% - No training. 18% - Other.
   47% - Teacher certificate.
   43% - Classroom experience beyond student teaching.

9. Do you have specific education/training in collaborative planning and teaching?
   Please check all that apply.
   18% - None. 67% - Workshop(s).
   50% - Course(s).

10. What are the grade levels of your school(s)?
    [wide range]

Appendix B: Glossary

Fixed Schedule: A group is scheduled into the library resource centre for instruction or use of the resources on a regular basis (often weekly) for a set length of time, frequently for the school year. (Used when no exceptions.)

Flexible Schedule: The teacher-librarian and classroom teacher plan together for instruction or use of resources based on student learning needs in each curriculum unit and schedule on that basis. The schedule is arranged on an ad hoc basis and varies constantly. (Used when no exceptions.)

Collaborative Planning: The teacher-librarian and classroom teacher share responsibility for planning both content and process goals for the unit.

Cursory Planning: Informal and brief planning occurs between the teacher-librarian and teachers for library resource centre involvement.

Individual Planning: Classroom teachers plan their own curriculum and instructional units for their classrooms with little regular involvement from the teacher-librarian or the teacher-librarian.

Team Planning: Classroom teachers meet together to plan instructional units and curriculum collaboratively. Teams can be organized around grade level, multi-grade level, or content area. Team planning typically requires teams to meet on some regular basis, weekly, bi-weekly, or at least monthly.

NOTES

For a more detailed report contact the researcher: Dr. Ken Haycock, Professor, School of Library, Archival & Information Studies, The University of British Columbia. This study was supported in part by the 1995 Governor for Research at School Librarianship from the Canadian School Library Association. The author also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Doug Baigrie, graduate research assistant, at the time of this study for a companion of the IE and Canadian findings see Haycock, K. (1997) The Impact of Scheduling on Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching (CPPT) and Information Skills Instruction. A Comparison: Between Canadian and American Elementary Schools. In D. Adcock (Ed.), Research in Teacher Librarianship and Information Studies, Proceedings of the 41st Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship, July 1995.

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