

Executive Overview:
National Education
Operational Review



**Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada**

**Affaires indiennes
et du Nord Canada**

**Evaluation Branch
Corporate Policy**

**Direction de l'évaluation
Orientations générales**

E96.65
.S37
E94
C.3

Canada

Executive Overview:
National Education
Operational Review

Evaluation Branch
Corporate Policy
May, 1982

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

National Education Operational Review

A. BACKGROUND

As an initial step to undertaking evaluations of the various components of the Department's Education Activity, operational reviews were carried out in two regions - Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The Saskatchewan review was carried out during the fall of 1979 with the report being finalized in March of 1980. In Manitoba, the review period was late 1980 with the final report completed in April of this year.

Both reviews were commissioned by the Evaluation Branch, Corporate Policy, and were undertaken with the full support of departmental managers at headquarters and in the two regions. They were conducted under the aegis of the overall evaluation objective of the national review, which is:

"To identify courses of action which will contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Education Activity and facilitate its evaluation."

The Saskatchewan study was originally planned to be a pilot for the later conduct of similar studies in all regions. Upon completion, the Saskatchewan report was assessed by education managers and staff in each of the other regions and feedback was provided to the evaluation team on the applicability of the study findings to the particular region.

The feedback indicated that the main findings of the Saskatchewan review reflected the situation in most other regions, although there were variations in the severity of the problems being experienced. As a result, it was decided that a full review in every region would neither be necessary nor cost-effective. Measures to improve education program operations were to be developed by each region using the Saskatchewan review framework. Its findings and recommendations were to serve as starting points for undertaking an internal assessment of the particular region's situation.

The decision to have the study team assist Manitoba education staff in this process by conducting a review in that region arose out of recognition of the region's different organization structure and the role of the Manitoba Indian Education Board.

B. THE TWO STUDIES: ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

The Saskatchewan review was conducted by a five-person audit team consisting of two consultants from Audit Services Bureau (S.S.C.) and three Indian consultants. The team received advice and assistance from an Advisory Committee made up of Departmental and Indian representatives. The study was relatively broad in both the operational areas examined and in the number and geographic spread of the field visits undertaken. All aspects of the management process were examined with particular emphasis on Indian control, quality of education, and accountability.

In Manitoba, the review was conducted by two Audit Service Bureau consultants. An Advisory Committee in the formal sense was not set up in this instance; rather, direction and assistance were provided by Evaluation Branch and regional education program staff. The Manitoba review focussed mainly on the management of the Education Activity by DIAND staff, particularly on how various aspects of this management influence Bands in their efforts to control or assume control of their education programs. Field work involving contact with Indians and visits to Indian communities and schools was very much limited in this review.

While the original plan to conduct a national review of education operations in which all regions would be studied in depth was modified, it can be affirmed that the end-product of the exercise is in many respects a review of national scope. The formal reviews in the two regions produced very similar findings on the broader issues, and feedback to date from the remaining regions attests that many of the problems identified are widely shared.

C. KEY ISSUES

The reports from the two individual reviews present specific findings (the authors use the term "observations") and corresponding recommendations in some detail. They will not be reproduced in this overview. Rather, the more fundamental issues which have significant implications for the future direction of the Education Activity will be highlighted.

1. Education Objectives

The major objectives of the Education Activity may be stated as follows:

- to assist the Indian people in acquiring an acceptable level of education;
- to transfer control of education programs to the Indian people.

As noted earlier, the education review addressed operational matters and was not an effectiveness evaluation. Therefore, it did not assess the degree to which these two major program objectives have been achieved. The overall theme arising from the review, however, is that there are major operational and management problems that, unless corrected, would prohibit (and probably till now have) the attainment of these objectives.

2. Commitment to Responsibility

The main finding of the Saskatchewan review is the lack of evidence of a clear commitment on the part of the Government of Canada towards fulfilling its responsibility for the education of Indian people, and that this is the root cause of the problems identified in the review. Accordingly, the first and most fundamental recommendation for change is the establishment of a clear commitment by the Department to the fact of this obligation and of the two major objectives. The Manitoba report calls for the development of "completely fresh initiatives" in order that program objectives may be realized.

3. Quality of Education

Efforts directed towards the quality of education per se, and towards quality as defined by the Indian people themselves, are judged to be seriously inadequate. To a large degree, the various shortcomings delineated in this area are the result of the preoccupation of the professional educators (whose business quality is) with the demands of the administrative and financial accounting systems of the Department. Even if these demands on educators were to be diminished, there is evidence that human resources for the Education Activity are inadequate in relation to its mandate and to the proportion of the Department's financial resources allocated to it.

4. Indian Control and the Devolution Process

The Department's efforts toward transferring control of education programs to the Indian peoples are shown to be deficient in several basic respects, an issue which was emphasized strongly in the feedback from the other regions. There is, first of all, no clear and accepted definition of Indian control. Bands which have assumed control of their education programs are carrying out an administrative role rather than a management one. Under transfer agreements Band Councils become, in essence, extensions of the federal bureaucracy, and lack the mandate to make management decisions such as the setting of objectives.

The transfer process is seriously impeded by the absence of clear policies and procedures for takeover. As well, the limited funds available in the program mean that insufficient developmental monies are allocated to meet the short-term additional assistance required by Bands during the planning and initial stages of assumption of control.

5. Accountability

The Saskatchewan review brings to the fore an issue concerning the very basis of responsible management practice: accountability for Indian education remains an unresolved question in terms of who is answerable to whom, for what, on what assessment criteria, and through what mechanism. For effective management of the Education Activity it is essential that the accountability question be resolved. Its resolution will require a restructuring of the legal framework within which the Department/Indian relationships operate. It will also require that accountability relationships be clearly established between:

- DIAND to the Indian Bands and to Indian Band Governments
- Indian Band Governments to DIAND
- Indian Band Governments to their communities
- DIAND to the Government of Canada
- Provincial schools to the Indian Bands,

all in the context of Indian control of Indian education.

6. The Education Activity in the Broader Context

The review points to the need for greater co-ordination between education programs and services and the various other forms of socio-economic assistance provided to Indians, in recognition of the powerful effects of socio-economic factors on a child's educational achievement. Failure to confront and attempt to come to grips with this need will only serve to perpetuate a costly education program the benefits of which fall short of both desired levels and what might be reasonably expected.

D. IMPLEMENTATION

1. Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan report received wide distribution shortly after its completion in the spring of 1980: to DIAND regions (as noted earlier), to senior managers and others at Headquarters, and to a wide range of Indian leaders in Saskatchewan and throughout the country.

In October 1980, Saskatchewan region presented, in response to the review, a detailed Interim Action Plan which addressed the bulk of the numerous recommendations of the study team. A number of the recommendations were referred to headquarters Education Branch because of their national scope and, in some cases, legislative implications. A recent status report from the region indicates that progress has been made in implementing most of the recommendations held to be within regional jurisdiction.

2. Manitoba

The Manitoba report has had only very limited distribution to date pending clearance for wider circulation. Although a formal action plan has not been prepared in response to the report, significant efforts have already been taken by regional staff to correct the problems that are within regional responsibilities.

3. Other Regions

Efforts made late in 1980 to foster internal reviews in the other regions by using the Saskatchewan report as a starting point did not spark the organized and sustained activity desired and needed.

4. Headquarters

The Education Branch at headquarters undertook, in the fall of 1981, a comprehensive education policy review which addresses the majority of the issues and problems of national scope identified in the two operational reviews. The policy review report encompasses problems in four general areas: management of education in the Department, quality of Indian education, local control, and funding of education programs and services. This report was endorsed by DMC in March 1982 and direction was given to proceed with the second phase in which concerted efforts will be made this fiscal year to resolve the problems.

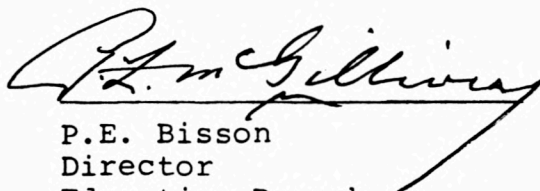
E. FUTURE ACTION

Unquestionably, there are fundamental and complex issues to be resolved within the Education Activity of a policy, legislative, and operational nature.

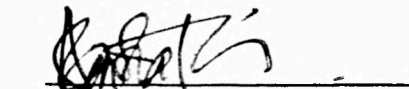
The National Education Operational Review represents a significant effort at defining these issues within a single framework, recommending courses of action, and addressing the implications if the issues are not dealt with. The Audit Branch of the Department has recently completed a review of the Education Activity which will provide more information on how education responsibilities are being carried out. The policy review undertaken by the Education Branch last fall, further identifies the problems and their urgency.

The basis for corrective action has been provided. This action will require sustained and coordinated efforts on the part of educators in the Department, a tremendous task in the light of the range and complexity of the issues, the fact of a highly decentralized organization, and the already heavy demands on the relatively small complement of education managers.

The Education Activity accounts for nearly 40% of the Indian Program budget. The value being returned on this expenditure, both current and potential, has been brought into question, not only by this review and other studies, but also by the Indian people and many of the Department's education staff over the years. The support of Senior Management must be provided to the educators in their efforts to take corrective action. This support must include the assignment of a much higher priority to the Education Activity than in the past.



P.E. Bisson
Director
Education Branch
Indian & Inuit Affairs Program



Alan Gratias
Director
Evaluation Branch
Corporate Policy

April 1982