

Problems and Progress Go Hand in Hand

It has been the purpose of this article to describe a "plan for planning" an instructional program. Difficulties and successes encountered have been described, but the writer does not feel that there is adequate evidence to support or reject the hypothesis involved. From time to time there are reactions which indicate that some individuals are finding in this program a real opportunity for planning together. There have been disappointments for persons planning meetings which seemed to have

no good results. There have been discouraging reports of the "pressures" which the program was planned to remove. There is real encouragement, however, in the fact that there is steadily increasing participation in preparation of committee reports, in planning of meetings, and in requests for help from research and practice on group problems. If our *doing together* is as effective as this factor indicates, there should be correspondingly less reliance on "supervision" and more on "group planning" as the road to educational progress.

Successful Leadership Must Be Constructive

PHIL LANGE AND AMO DeBERNARDIS

The supervisory program at the Naval Training Station, Norfolk, Va., described by Phil Lange, professor, New York State Teachers College, Fredonia; and Amo DeBernardis, supervisor, department of audio-visual education, Portland (Ore.) Public Schools, both of whom served at this station during the war, is illustrative of many excellent methods by which constructive supervision can be carried on in the field of civilian education with equal success.

THE INGREDIENTS for real success in educational supervisory programs are the same whether they be found in public schools, industry, or the armed forces. Skills, understandings, materials, ideas, and personalities—all are dependent for their effectiveness upon the rapport developed among all members of the learning-teaching situation. The supervisory program for Precommissioning Training at Naval Training Station, Norfolk is described here because (1) it gained this rapport by being generally helpful, and (2) its balance of co-

ordinated supervision and respect for individuals has implications for any program of general education. Supervision in this situation was boiled down to constructive human relationships.

How It's Organized

Precommissioning training is the final period of training for Navy men before they go aboard newly constructed naval ships. At NTS, Norfolk, approximately 10,000 to 20,000 men were in precommissioning training at any one time for destroyer-type ships. Instruc-

tors numbered 600 to 900. The training program was administered by the Training Officer, who delegated administrative responsibility for particular schools, housing facilities, scheduling, or afloat training to various department heads. The Improvement of Instruction and Audio-Visual Aids Section was one department established by the Training Officer¹ to effect liaison among the many departments and schools at Norfolk and to assist him in improving the general quality of instruction.

The staff of this section consisted of supervisory personnel with rich experience in teacher training, curriculum construction, vocational teaching, and instructional materials; production and maintenance specialists in instructional materials; and an adequate staff of clerks and storekeepers. Supervisory personnel, five in number, shared the common problem of improving instruction. Staff members were free to move from school to school or from subject to subject. In that way the members could combine their abilities and dovetail their activities and strengths. Such an arrangement prevented any supervisor from developing a vested interest in any one school or "freezing" into any one type of supervisory activity. It put a premium upon friendliness and compelled supervisors to keep well informed and respectful of problems of all instructional staff. Consequently, these supervisors were characterized by an attitude of service and breadth of vision.

The Way It Worked

As the size of the Navy mushroomed,

¹ The subsequent success of the department was largely a tribute to the foresight, sound educational philosophy and dynamic personality of the Training Officer, J. C. Connor, Captain, USN.

expediciencies and improvisations were the order of the day. The prewar apprentice-type training and quota of trained instructors were inadequate for the new mass educational activity. As a new training program needed instructors, an order went forth to find people who *knew* the skills and subject matter that formed the curriculum. Those so chosen were usually men with rich backgrounds in actual operation of equipment but with little or no teaching experience and only a limited knowledge of instructional methods and materials. Even such people did not stay long at teaching, for the Navy had great need for their operational skill. Since these instructors were selected on the basis that they "knew their stuff," it became the responsibility of the Improvement of Instruction Staff to help them "put their stuff across." To help instructors analyze learning difficulties, plan instruction, improve methods of presentation, utilization, and evaluation, was the task of the supervisors. Once the supervisor was convinced by observation and conference that aids or materials would improve instruction, the tasks of procurement and construction were assigned to the production and clerical staff. The supervisory staff, however, followed through to the solution of a problem, from classroom through procurement or production, and finally back into the classroom.

The specific activities undertaken by the staff to improve instruction were of seven major types.

Observations of Instruction. Supervisors spent half the school day observing the normal teaching and performance situations. In most cases, the observations were requested by the in-

structors after attending the five-hour Instructors' Course described below, or because they wanted help on definite instructional problems. Approximately eighty per cent of the instructors were visited in their teaching situations within any three-month period; the remaining twenty per cent included new instructors, known "old timers," and a few who had been overlooked.

In making observations, Improvement of Instruction personnel reported their presence and their purpose to the officer-in-charge of the school or training unit. The identity and purpose of the observer were made known to the instructor prior to observations, and every precaution was taken to avoid leaving an impression of "spying" or "informing."

Follow-up Conference with Instructors. Upon the conclusion of an observation, instructor and supervisor discussed the lesson and together worked out practical suggestions for improvement. In almost all cases, instructors were more receptive to new instructional devices and materials than to new ideas, techniques, or methods. This reflects the normal wish for "something to hang our hat on." There is an obvious implication here: teachers are more likely to accept new ideas and modify their procedures if *something tangible is left with them*—bulletins, outlines, or audio-visual aids.

The unification of the resources of audio-visual aids along with the skill and ideational resources of experienced supervisors supplied the NTS supervisor with practical cornerstones upon which to build rapport. Once established, such rapport facilitated the supervisors' task of modifying methods,

procedures, and techniques. The instructor who began by getting help through needed audio-visual aids was soon receptive to suggestions and assistance in improving his instruction in other ways. Instructors were consistently friendly in welcoming the Improvement of Instruction staff in their classes and in most cases seemed to have acted upon suggestions. Many changes, especially in better planning, better presentation, better questioning, better use of instructional materials were the direct result of follow-up conferences with instructors.

To make supervision more detailed and at the same time more objective, an observational check list was developed by the staff and made available to all instructors. These check lists, along with summaries of significant interviews, conferences, and observations, were on file for use by the instructor himself and all persons concerned with improving his teaching.

Conferences with School Administrators and Department Heads. Most instructors welcomed any genuine offer of help, and once informed of the variety of help offered, only a few were uncooperative. No matter what the type of help—planning, curriculum revision, instructor training, or making signs, charts, aids, and schedules—it contributed to goodwill. No small part of the supervisor's importance to the administrators was liaison with the training officer. The better administrators requested supervisory observations and suggestions for all phases of their school program, participated in the observation themselves and in the follow-up conferences with instructors. Most appreciated was the help offered by the supervisory

staff in curriculum planning and editing, in assignment of instructional personnel, improving the instructional setting and materials, and working with the instructors on their respective problems. *Practical help* was the key to rapport with administrators.

Office Consultations. Instructors were encouraged to consult Improvement of Instruction staff for help on any instructional problems, and many availed themselves of this service. On many occasions groups of instructors from various schools requested workshop conferences with supervisors to work out their mutual problems. The extensive use of workshop rooms was evidence that instructors were largely uninhibited in admitting difficulties and asking for help. Office consultations proved especially helpful in defining the purposes of training at the various schools and in stating the objectives of instruction, formulating lesson plans and lesson outlines, developing instruction sheets, revising and constructing different types of tests, and thereby further strengthening the bonds between supervisors, instructors, and department heads.

Preparing and Editing Instructional Material. In a program as extensive as the one being described, the preparation of instructional material was always an important phase of the program. Photographing, duplicating, silk screening, photostating, printing, and model making, were available to produce practically every type and kind of instructional material needed. Each production job was the result of an actually felt need on the part of the instructor. With a supervisor he discussed its need and practicability, and worked out a plan for its best utilization.

In addition to obtaining aids, the supervisory staff acted as editing consultants on job analyses, lesson planning, developing instruction sheets, constructing test situations, and writing textbook and handbook materials.

Instructors' (5-hour) Training Course. This course was an integral part of the total program of helping instructors improve their instruction. Because of the wide variation of background and experience in teaching, the equally wide range of interests, and the fact that instructors had to carry the course in addition to their regular instructional loads, five hours (an hour daily) was considered an optimum period of time. Within these limitations, the course was designed:

To acquaint instructors with some general principles of teaching and learning, and methods and techniques of instruction.

To help instructors plan their instruction.

To strengthen the attitude of instructors toward their responsibilities and importance in a training program.

To develop cooperatively some recommendations for improving the training situation.

To encourage instructors to avail themselves of the aids, guidance, and facilities of the Improvement of Instruction Section.

All new instructors reporting to NTS, Norfolk, attended this introductory course, thereby getting an early introduction to the personnel and services of the supervisory staff. During the course an attempt was made to use a variety of methods and techniques in order that instructors would actually experience good teaching methods.

Instructors' 4-week (20 hour) Training Course. At the request of instructors a twenty-hour workshop-seminar was offered wherein instructors were given definite help in analyzing and breaking down their instructional jobs, developing instruction sheets, preparing evaluation devices, preparing material for students, and using instructional aids and effective methods and techniques for specific teaching situation. Instructors came with definite problems; they were to leave with practical solutions.

What It Means to Schools

The program of supervision of Pre-commissioning Training at NTS, Norfolk, can trace its success to certain definite factors:

- 1) *The active support of a training officer* (the administrator) endowed with vision to see that over and above the administrative details education has to do with people, their thoughts, their emotions, and behavior. His courage in insisting that education was what happens *inside* the individual, not what can be assembled for purposes of statistics, underscored the importance of the individual teacher and

defined the philosophy of the supervisory program.

- 2) *The development of a fine spirit of cooperation* and excellent rapport among supervisory and instructional personnel. This was partly the result of the administration's respect for the "human element," partly the personal success of the supervisors, and also a function of the organization, situation, and materials available.
- 3) *The organization of the supervisory staff* into general supervisors given "the run of the place," as in contrast to special supervisors with their defined areas, investments, and limitations.
- 4) *The concrete help*—in the form of audio-visual aids, editing, consultations, and production assistance—that supervisors could offer along with their less tangible suggestions.
- 5) *A constant drive* among all instructional personnel to effect improvement in methods and curriculum. This phenomenon of self-improvement is largely self-perpetuating and is very satisfying to supervisors. It suggests that adage—*Nothing succeeds like success.*

Without the presence of all these factors, success would have been limited; without the first two, impossible.



STORY FOR A SCHOOLMAN'S SPEECH: When a group of American officials arrived in Japan recently, they discovered that "supervision" as a word does not exist in the Japanese language. When the Americans used it in their conversations, the word was at first translated as "intruding or interfering with the work of others." The Orientals were baffled. After some groping, translators found that the Japanese word nearest in meaning to supervision is "encouragement." "When a superior visits his staff worker he may sit down with him at tea and 'encourage' him to do certain things, provided the conversation develops along appropriate lines," said one Japanese official.—*Educator's Dispatch*, November 28, 1946.

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