

Teachers Share in Administration

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Verbally we accept the role of the teacher as a cooperator in controlling and directing educational development. Whether such acceptance is merely on the verbal, or already at the action level, all educators will be interested in this analysis of the qualifications for the teacher as she plays her role in policymaking and action. The author is Dorothy C. Bahn, a classroom teacher in the St. Louis, Missouri public schools.

WILLING ACCEPTANCE of coercion as a technique of leadership is still so evident in society in general, and in schools in particular, that it becomes urgent for educators to discover the implications of democracy for educational administration if we hope to retain our democratic way of life. Faith in the great power of human intelligence as it evolves from shared experiences will have to be seen as basic to the learning and thinking necessary to furthering a democracy.

This faith in cooperation—belief that people working together to manage their own affairs is the best kind of control—has its roots in the social philosophy of democracy and is the essence of our American heritage. Yet, even though our society accepts this philosophy verbally, many of its institutions reveal that force and not the “will of all” is the guiding principle.

The concept of authoritarianism is apparent in the school when educational administration is such that power of position is the controlling factor and orders are always given “from above.” School boards control superintendents; superintendents order principals; and principals tell teachers what and when and how to do. In such a set-up, it is natural for teachers to compel, demand, and order the lives of children.

Authority Determines the Individual Role

Such authoritarian administration is based upon the belief that teachers as well as children learn by acquiring part by part certain fixed facts and habits of response; and that as they acquire this knowledge, they must be directed by someone who is considered superior to themselves, someone who knows just what is to be learned and how it is best learned.

This measuring of a teacher or a child by a supposedly superior person always encourages actions of compulsion. If purposes are set up in advance for teachers, they, in turn, will force the realization of these goals in the learnings of children. Such active compulsion results in a loss of creativeness, a lack of interest, and a submerging of the feelings of need—the most important requirements for learning in a democracy.

Educational administration, however, which has its faith in the intelligence of superintendents, principals, teachers, and children as they work *together* in managing their own affairs, helps to develop members whose roles are quite different from authoritarian ones. A teacher in this situation becomes interested in an individual's membership in groups. He is sensitive to the necessity

of including each one of the group as planning and action proceed. He guides in the selection of aims which are broad and flexible and always strives for a consensus in which minority ideas are not excluded. He shares in the work of attaining these aims and, at the same time, is willing to share in all responsibility for action. Thus, the teacher in his role learns, teaches, and administers without marked lines of division in the activities.

Group Membership Is the Rule

The teacher by the very nature of his profession is a member of many groups—the school faculty, the profession as a whole, the parent-teacher group, his classroom. The democratic process must be part and parcel of all these groups. Students, parents, community leaders, and principal, as well as teachers, assume leadership roles as the occasions call them forth and, thus, help to make policies affecting the school. If a teacher and his students are encouraged to work together in making specific suggestions for reporting their own school progress to parents and in evaluating the success of their procedures, and if they are urged to present their findings to those in the school who are interested, they will be having a definite part in the formulation of school policy on reports to parents.

The teacher becomes increasingly dependent upon other members of his groups because of his belief in the sharing of responsibility. To know and help others to know how to arrive at a working level, where there is a sharing of responsibility for the good of all, requires that the teacher under-

stand the process of individual development at all stages so that the greatest progress for the group will result. In short, the teacher shares the responsibility for the character and living of his fellowman, and for the total life of the school, the community, and all of society.

Teachers in Experimental Environments. . . .

The teacher through effective experiences needs to be aroused to a consciousness of the great evils of our civilization, to have his faith renewed in the democratic ideals of the schools, and to be stirred to participate in movements for the betterment of human living. Such a teacher brings to his work a highly cultivated mind accustomed to thinking for itself and an abiding faith in the cooperative ability of groups to further social progress. Therefore, he cannot help but take an important place in educational administration. The teacher has no choice but to participate in the management of the school as an experimental environment in which individuals will develop into socially competent members of society.

. . . Are Successful in Human Relations

The teacher in his role in educational administration deals almost exclusively with human needs and human relations, and must have, therefore, a well-adjusted personality. Teaching is a human affair; it is a matter of the interaction of personalities.

The quiet, calm, and poise of self-control gives a warm responsiveness to relationships. It is reflected in courtesy when it meets differing opinions. The

self-controlled teacher voices his opinions and ideas in conversation. His wide experience and wealth of information make him an excellent group participant. He does not impose his judgments on others, but working with them he helps to bring forth a joint opinion approved by the members of the group. This produces a feeling of self-reliance in the other group members since each shares in the idea. Such cooperative thinking encourages originality and initiative. A trust in others and a willingness to identify an individual's interests with those of the group make for his security as well as for that of the group.

... Have Rich Learning Experiences

Varied interests and rich experiences are necessary for a teacher's active participation in helping to improve group activity. For effective participation in educational administration, the teacher needs the richest experiences to assist him in attaining the best knowledge for himself so that he may better help the other members of his group to participate effectively. The teacher needs to be competent in presenting worthwhile ideas so that he will be able to command the attention of his group; he needs to criticize constructively, to think things through to their conclusions, and to be prepared to accept the consequences of his action. He has to work hard to make his ideas understandable and, therefore, needs an unlimited amount of knowledge.

He acquires his knowledge through experiences in many fields. Ideas and judgments emerge as individuals participate in discussions and attend lectures

on current political, geographical, and economic problems. Appreciation of the arts, gained through attendance at symphonies, art lectures, or exhibits, gives an alertness to human personality and creates an aesthetically sensitive person. Wide reading, radio listening, and movie attendance are important means for increasing knowledge and understanding.

Teachers must "keep in tune" with modern living if they are to understand and help to improve it. Anything a teacher contributes to his group should show that he has a breadth of experience with its accompanying factual knowledge, an understanding of human behavior and growth at all maturity levels, and an ability to provide an environment for children in which they will have experience in directing their own activities.

Staff meetings worthy of the name can also do much to enrich experiences of teachers. Unity of purpose will exist in direct proportion to the extent to which teachers share fully in presenting and solving the problems of general education for society and particular education for their own school. Interaction is maintained as intellectual initiative on the part of all teachers is encouraged in discussion and decision making.

Unless decisions are acted upon, however, they are useless. The staff is obliged to see that decisions are carried out. As a member of the staff the teacher will be concerned with a philosophy of education, the curriculum, the evaluation policies, the guidance program, teacher requirements, the school budget, materials, buildings, and salary sched-

ules. When people do not take part in discussions or meet in committees where important decisions are made, the ability to assume these is decreased and will eventually be lost. Work of the staff cannot help but be efficient when teachers know about and take part in what is going on, and when they have shared in the formation of the guiding principles.

Teachers' city, state, and national professional organizations provide another medium for the expression of teacher opinion. Such organizations help to enlarge teachers' experiences as they discharge the profession's collective educational and social responsibilities. To see that intelligence is developed in such an organization is an important function of the teacher.

... Understand the Facts of Human Development

In order to improve living, the process of growing and learning must be thoroughly and sympathetically understood by the teacher. Teachers who are working toward improved living have the same responsibility of citizens as do other adults, but they have two added responsibilities—they *must teach children to recognize the differences in individuals*; and they *must help children to develop the democratic techniques which are needed when they work in groups with such differing individuals*. The most valid measure of a teacher's ability to assume these added responsibilities is his own understanding and use of democratic techniques. Helping to select group aims, participating in group activity to realize them, and then evaluating the achievement are

the necessary techniques of working in democratic groups.

... Live in the Community

The teacher, as the school's representative, works cooperatively with all other groups within the community to decide what is needed and how to get it. Thus, he expands the school's function of cooperative planning and action. His professional security and initiative should help all groups concerned to work together creatively. The process of "give and take" among community groups such as the school, home, church, and recreational agencies suggests that educational administration be willing to adapt its organization, policies, and procedures to local community life and, in so doing, create an atmosphere for improving living conditions.

... Participate in Self-Evaluation

Better group planning and better objectives for democratic participation are insured when teachers evaluate their past participating activities. For the teacher who has a share in administration, evaluation is the process of constructively criticizing his own qualifications and endeavoring to improve them. In such a concept of evaluation there is no room for the idea that progress and change can be brought about by supervisors or principals when they, rather than teachers, evaluate teacher contributions. Only self-evaluation results in increased personal direction and control. It is the only effective method of improvement in a democracy.

An important task of the teacher is to encourage this kind of evaluation in the classroom as well as in the staff

meeting, the professional organization, and the parent-teacher group. The children must become aware of the contribution their activities are making toward the realization of the goals.

For educational administration there must be a continuous evaluation of policies and practices to determine their effectiveness in realizing the purpose for which they were established.

Put It into Practice

Unless educational administration recognizes and uses the classroom

teacher as a cooperator in controlling and directing educational development, children and adults will not realize their optimum development. Actual experience in cooperative educational administration on the part of the teacher is necessary if democratic functioning is to replace the competitive, authoritarian activity still found in so many classrooms. Children under authoritarian control do not manage their own affairs; and the schools do not fulfill their purpose of promoting efficient social interaction.

Administrative Leadership in the High School

HAROLD ALBERTY

In his analysis of needs in program planning in our American high schools, Harold Alberty, professor of education at Ohio State University, Columbus, points to the curriculum lag in secondary education. He goes on to point out specific responsibilities of the high school administrator in providing for a curriculum that will keep pace with the needs and changes of the society in which it lives.

IT IS RECOGNIZED generally that the secondary school is one of our society's principal agencies for bringing about the progressive reconstruction and refinement of democratic living. It is expected, therefore, that it will keep pace with the profound changes in American life by organizing its curriculum in terms of the basic and persistent needs, problems, and interests of young people to the end that they understand and participate actively in the continuous reinterpretation of

the values and practices of our culture and find a satisfying place in it.

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM LAGS

A casual examination of the program indicates that the curriculum is sadly inadequate to meet the demands of the present day. Many subjects can only be defended in terms of outworn values. Critical problems that beset youth are almost completely ignored in favor of the dreary covering of ground in the textbook. And all this in spite of the

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