

# Educational Clinics— a Supervisory Tool

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L. D. Haskew, professor of educational administration at the University of Texas, Austin, here defines briefly an educational clinic in terms of its evolving uses in leadership preparation.

THE WORD "CLINIC" is attached to many kinds of school enterprises. Reading clinics, child guidance clinics, materials clinics, practice teaching clinics, educational clinics—these are but a few of the titles one encounters in school talk. This article deals with the use of educational clinics, a type of enterprise somewhat different from those more commonly used. It seems wise, therefore, to picture clearly what we are talking about.

## Looking at an Educational Clinic

Five neighboring school systems had a common concern with the problem of utilizing properly the new state-adopted series of basal readers. One of the systems volunteered to put its current procedures up for the others to observe and discuss. Accordingly, twelve representatives from each of the other four school systems spent a day in carefully organized observation of procedures in the first system. They saw examples of use, some products of past projects. They heard objectives described, learned of difficulties encountered. Questions were asked of pupils, of teachers, of parents. Test results were examined.

After observation and information-gathering, host and visitors engaged in group discussions of the facts discovered. Implications were traced. Experi-

ences were exchanged. Suggestions were made. Finally, a summarizing panel attempted to draw together the major recommendations and possibilities.

Then each of the systems had a separate meeting of its representatives—the host, to clinch the help it had received from the contacts with visitors; the visitors, to pin down the things they wanted to take home.

## Putting the Idea Into Practice

An educational clinic is here defined as an enterprise in which a portion of an actual educational program is examined by persons interested in and familiar with the field under consideration, is then discussed evaluatively, and finally serves as the basis for planning improvements. The genius of the idea seems to reside in the apparent ability of a concrete example to promote more thought than an abstract problem. Chief outcomes seem to be "incidental"—they result from hints and implications picked up by individuals and translated into specific applications back home.<sup>1</sup>

To put the idea into effect, several phases of activity are necessary. For

<sup>1</sup> Space limitations prohibit more complete exposition of the educational clinic idea. An extensive discussion is provided in *The Educational Clinic*, issued by the Council on Cooperation in Teacher Education and published by the American Council on Education. Available January, 1949.

example, both host and visitor must cultivate objective attitudes in advance of the clinic session; both "showing off" and "finding fault" have to be avoided.

Very careful—and oftentimes inventive—preparations must be made for presenting pertinent elements of the program to be observed. Visitors must be well informed about what they are to do and see. The machinery of the enterprise has to be worked out in rather minute detail, and yet handled in such manner as to avoid an atmosphere of regimentation and authoritarianism. Follow-up plans must be laid. These, and many more, aspects of an educational clinic offer decided opportunities to supervisors-in-preparation.

#### Using Clinics for Leader Preparation

Educational clinics may be a *supervisory tool of high value*. The supervisor-in-preparation can, by guided participation, learn to employ this tool. A prospective supervisor who serves as an apprentice and assistant to the manager of an educational clinic should gain considerable command of the varied processes required. In spite of our contemporary emphasis upon the philosophy and beliefs of the supervisor, it is well to remember that supervision is a technical accomplishment of individuals, and those individuals need expertness in techniques.

#### Learning from Veteran Leaders

The educational clinic may also serve as an *excellent teaching device*. One college organized an educational clinic about an experienced supervisor's activities in planning with lay groups. Advance preparation made it possible for visitors to see various aspects of activi-

ties which, in the normal course of events, would have taken weeks to observe. Other experienced supervisors participated in the clinic, and by their questions, accounts of personal experiences, and identification of problems still further extended the coverage of the clinic. The students of supervision, who participated on an equal basis with all others, had opportunity to benefit greatly from this learning experience.

Use of educational clinics might conceivably offer a means for getting more out of field observations and participation, now considered such a vital part of the supervisor's preliminary preparation.<sup>2</sup> Economy in time, as well as in personnel and travel, may be effected through some employment of educational clinics as teaching devices.

#### Getting the Feel of Leadership

And the educational clinic may afford an *excellent practice laboratory for the apprentice supervisor* to develop generalized insights, techniques, and understandings that will carry over into many aspects of supervisory leadership. The apprentice will need guidance in such laboratory experiences, of course, but the educational clinic can provide some rich opportunities for self-education in the practical features of the job of being a supervisor.

More and more of the supervisor's time, according to a recent study, is being devoted to managing conference-type meetings lasting for one day or more. Programming and managing a successful conference is a fine art, much

<sup>2</sup> *Education of Georgia Supervisors* (Reprint from March, April, and June, 1948 issues of *School Life*.) Federal Security Agency, Office of Education, Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1948.

to be desired as part of the basic personal equipment of the supervisor. It is to be regretted that so much of this art is apparently unknown to those who plan and direct so many of our educational meetings. Working as an apprentice in arranging an educational clinic should afford a rich opportunity to the prospective supervisor, an opportunity to become expert in planning and conducting meetings.

Suppose you were a prospective supervisor and had been asked to help a group of teachers tell, in one hour, the important things about their lunch-room programs. In the process of planning that presentation you certainly would get keen insight into the educational possibilities in school lunch programs. In addition, you would have to grow in your power to communicate ideas to others effectively. Preparation for an educational clinic, then, should lend itself admirably to teaching supervisors-in-preparation some of the features of good school programs and some of the skills of communication.

Conversely, participation as a visiting observer in an educational clinic should make it easier to teach prospective supervisors what to look for, what questions to ask, or how to be tactful in the many similar situations they will face. The diagnostic functions of the supervisor have been somewhat de-emphasized of recent years—at least in the literature and in various national conferences—but they continue to be quite important on the firing-line level. With

proper guidance, prospective supervisors can learn much about diagnostic observation through participation in educational clinics.

#### And Emerge with Some Specifics

One final opportunity for employing educational clinics as learning laboratories will be cited. With high disdain, most current writers on supervisory training shun anything that resembles a "bag of tricks." Such shunning does not imply, it is to be hoped, that supervisors are not going to be equipped with a repertoire of specific knowledge about how educational objectives are sought. The most-lauded outcomes of educational clinics are "the concrete idea I got of how to . . ."

The prospective supervisor should find in educational clinics rich opportunities to learn specific "hows." These specifics may strengthen understanding of principles, put flesh on the skeleton framework of objectives, and give rise to inventiveness and adaptation.

#### Moving from Pre- to In-Service

What has been said so far has been oriented to the pre-service preparation of supervisors. It can be seen quite readily, however, that almost the same possibilities would be found in the educational clinic as a means for continuing the education of supervisors in service. The educational clinic, we repeat, is a supervisory tool of great promise and a large part of that promise lies in what it can do for supervisors themselves.

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