

The Makings of a Supervisor

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"Suppose you had a young but fairly experienced teacher who could take a year to get a Master's Degree and prepare herself for a supervisory assignment. What would you want the experience content to be?" That's the question we asked Lelia Taggart Ormsby, instructor at Sacramento State College, and Fred T. Wilhelms, associate professor of education at San Francisco State College. And here's their answer.

DEAR JOYCE—I'm delighted that you plan to take a year to ready yourself for a supervisory role. Do it by all means. You are right for it.

Five—perhaps even two—years ago I couldn't have said that. Then, as now, I knew you were a brilliant teacher and a lovable person with deep strength of character. I knew you had the physical stamina to drive at exhausting jobs and the mental and moral stamina to go on believing that the jobs can be done. These are first essentials in a supervisor.

But there are milestones of maturing which a teacher must pass before she is ready to move on to helping other teachers. You had not passed them all then; I believe you have now. For I've seen you work with the rich and the poor; the bright and the dull; clean, well-dressed children and ragged, smelly urchins; Negro, Mexican, and White—with never a shade of anything less than complete acceptance of each for himself. I've seen you in conference with your colleagues—helping them generously, learning from them enthusiastically. There is no longer any doubt of your full belief in the democratic process of group action.

That is the greatest milestone, but you have passed others, too. You know that subject matter is only a means to an end—that the hardest thing of all is to keep perceiving those ends more clearly and devising better means to reach them, always evaluating what you have done. You've learned to look beyond the school into the whole of society; and, doing so, you have felt your way toward deep convictions regarding the social and economic

needs of people everywhere, and a steady vision of what is possible if we measure up.

Your growth is not complete, of course; ahead are green and lovely years of growing. But you are mentally and spiritually ready. Your big task this year is to acquire those special competencies your new work will demand. I hope the University gives you full opportunity to do it.

Most sincerely, Amy.

A year old now, the letter from her dear supervisor-friend had turned up as Joyce packed to go home, a shiny new Master's diploma propped up on the bureau. And, as one does at packing time, Joyce reread it and mused. *Had the University given her those "special competencies" Miss Amy spoke of? At first it had hardly seemed it was going to—when all the emphasis had been on "philosophy."*

Concepts and Self-Assignments

The University conceived of supervision as educational leadership and saw its chief purpose to be improving the learning situation. The main skill it wanted to build in Joyce was democratic leadership in a goal-centered program. To that end it developed certain key concepts such as man's common humanity, the nature of culture and cultural change, specialization and interdependence, the nature of democ-

racy, and the concept of progress.

And yet it had been a *doing* year. Educational literature held much more meaning for her. The first-hand experiences had necessitated more thorough research than she had ever done as an undergraduate. Yet much of her study had stemmed from self-assignments as each field experience sent her back to the curriculum laboratory or library for deeper understanding of what she had investigated or observed.

How fast the year had gone! The first semester had been devoted to course work with some opportunity for participation in actual situations. Seminars comprised the first of the second semester, involving considerable first-hand experiencing. But it was the nine-week internship that most closely approximated her new leadership responsibilities. This had been carried out jointly with the college supervisor and a county supervisor, followed almost daily by a late afternoon seminar in which all members concerned took part.

The Meaning of Supervision

She'd never forget those courses: social and educational philosophy, educational sociology, educational psychology, history of education, and elementary education. Seemed funny at first that no supervision course was included, but it became plain that the omission was wise. She'd soon learned that supervision has no meaning except as a means of achieving the curriculum, and the important foundations of a good curriculum are philosophical, psychological-biological, and social-economic. It became clear that education is a profession because it has these rootages plus a set of techniques for apply-

ing what is known. Yet too often the techniques are emphasized to the exclusion of the basic rootages.

The professors stressed that *modern education means the profession is constantly keeping in touch with results in the foundation fields. When some new concept in any one of these fields has been sufficiently tested to make sure it is sound, education modifies its ends and means so it is in harmony with those basic sciences.*

Rare Experiences Provided

Miss Amy had spoken of her interest in the democratic evaluation of the individual and the democratic process of group action. Certainly she'd had ample opportunity to explore and develop democratic behaviors and attitudes by working with a group which operated that way.

An entire county school staff, concerned with providing a more meaningful educational program, had sought the advice of Joyce's philosophy instructor. The county staff plus administrators from the larger schools in the county enrolled to develop a common philosophy upon which to build. Joyce had joined them and visited all the types of schools represented in the county. That had been a rare experience!

Still vivid in her memory, too, were the field trips as a part of a community survey carried on by the educational sociology class. Excursions to the airport and the radio broadcasting station particularly made dramatic to Joyce some of the implications of our life in the world community. She saw, too, that a study of world government would have to replace the nationalistic emphasis current in all too many schools.

Seeing Curriculums in Action

In her second semester Joyce studied the various curricular patterns in operation throughout the country. The small group seminar was led not by one professor but by a team representing a variety of strengths.

Their first step had been to delve into the literature and find the philosophical, psychological, and sociological rootages of each of the four major patterns. Among the points the group investigated relative to each pattern were, when it had come into prominence, the objectives claimed in comparison with the actual outcomes, the role of the child, the means of motivation employed, the role of the teacher, the view of discipline, the course of study, the strengths and weaknesses, and its main supporters.

After charting and weighing the strengths and weaknesses of the separate subject curriculum, the broad fields, the child centered, and the integrative core; the prospective supervisors had gone into school systems where each curricular pattern might be observed.

They Look Beyond the School

Yes, the group had grown in understanding. They had concluded that schools are established by society as a means for better perpetuating the culture of which they are a part. They had gone several steps further after an exploration of educational, political, and economic history. They agreed that for the God-fearing people of early America, the old-line skills plus an understanding of the problems of people in the immediate area were enough. But in mid-twentieth century these were no longer sufficient. They had stated

that since scientists and technicians have extended the horizons of the community to such an extent that an incident in the most remote part of the world will affect the entire earth's surface, education for survival must provide for a mastery of not only the traditional skills but must go beyond this and provide for mastery and skills of even greater import.

They unanimously agreed that history and geography were not to be neglected but were to be used as guideposts to the solution of present and future problems because they record the successes and failures of men to overcome or adjust to environment while satisfying their basic needs. They looked beyond the school into the needs of all society, paused to evaluate their progress, and found it good.

Through observing classroom situations, reading, viewing films, and listening to radio programs and lectures embodying the various philosophies of education; Joyce had become convinced that the integrative core curricular pattern is the best proposal yet devised to *help children and youth develop understanding and behavior essential for survival and progress in our world community.* She felt that it included the good features of both the separate subject and the child centered curriculum organizations and unified these into a new conception of education.

Her enthusiasm for this dynamic experience led Joyce to believe that she might operate effectively as a member of such a far-seeing group of educational leaders. They would work cooperatively to guarantee that children may develop the understandings, atti-

tudes, and skills which make up citizenship in our time. For this is education's major objective: to prepare a generation aware of the cultural lag who will know that the creative effort of the next twenty-five to one hundred years must be placed on the improvement of our human arrangements and on a rededication to our value system.

Gaining New Appreciations

As part of her seminar in school administration, Joyce had acted as a liaison officer with various community groups. She explored the resources for communicating easily with the public and its several segments so that she could better interpret to the public the importance of the cultural lag and the need for lessening it through the one agency that belongs to all of society: the public school. She participated in lay group meetings and acquired some of the artistry in human relationships that is an essential part of good supervision. She gained a new appreciation of the contributions which lay persons can make to sensible school planning. These experiences had been only a venturing toward the horizon, but they provided basic understandings that would help her to carry teachers, parents, labor, management, and the leisured members of her community along in the cooperative development of better curricular patterns.

Where Do You Turn for Help?

As a classroom teacher Joyce had long been concerned with the welfare of individual children and had seen that many of the problems hardest for teachers to solve are rooted in personality or social problems. Her work, however,

had been with a comparatively small group of children in an average community. Now she had passed that stage and was ready to assume, indirectly, responsibility for a great many children in a variety of communities.

As part of her field work in the guidance seminar, Joyce went into such communities and worked directly with teachers and children. As she made case studies, held interviews, and conferred with local teachers or University consultants, she learned to differentiate between cases that can be handled through good educational procedures and those that must have expert help from specialists. With reference to the first group she learned how to help teachers adapt classroom procedures and use such techniques as sociometric studies. With a few special cases she labored to collect material. In these instances she made careful anecdotal records, test analyses, and recordings of interviews which she gave as background material to the expert called in as consultant. Thus she learned when and where to turn for help so that in the future she could help teachers find such help.

Application Is the Test

In the second semester Joyce had accompanied an experienced supervisor as she worked with teachers. As she observed this leader at work she realized that supervision is teaching, and it is the job of the leader to give teachers the kind of opportunities to grow and learn which they, in turn, are asked to give children.

As a teacher Joyce had recognized her problems, but she had known little about how to meet them except for *ad hoc*, trial-and-error solutions. Now she

realized that the courses in psychology, which she had considered so useless when she consulted the University catalog, had given her some insight into the needs of human beings. Although they had not gone far enough, they proved basic to her readiness for the internship period.

To apply her knowledge successfully, Joyce had to work directly with situations. She went to group meetings and worked with teachers to solve problems peculiar to their respective communities. As she helped plan worthwhile workshop experiences, she drew heavily upon her newly acquired knowledge of sociology as a guide for exploring the community with teacher groups.

During the internship Joyce had been invited to participate in consecutive faculty meetings in a public school. She came to the realization that the principal was using faculty meetings not only in changing ideas, but indirectly as a means of working toward a commonly understood philosophy. She learned that as an educational leader much of her time should be devoted to working with the principal, who is rightfully the key supervisor of instruction in his school.

The Field of Child Growth

Joyce also studied child growth and

development patterns. She had watched children on playgrounds, in their homes, and on the street. At times she had been active in the child group and on other occasions the children had not even noticed her presence. She had observed attitudes, behaviors, and developing physical, social, emotional, mechanical, and academic skills. Anecdotal records of these noted behaviors, interests, and needs guided her in further study of the work of authorities in the field of psychology.

These experiences, she felt, would make it easier for her to interpret to teachers and parents the need for a program based on developmental needs of children. Of course she had only begun to explore this important field, but the way was charted for her to understand more thoroughly the means of providing a richer variety of experiences for all the black, white, chocolate-colored, and yellow youngsters who are young America in the making.

Joyce reached over to the bureau for the new diploma. "Well, little Master's Degree, I don't suppose you include all those 'special competencies' Miss Amy was talking about. But whoever planned the combination of theory and experience that went into you certainly made this the growingest year of my life."

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