

Reflections on Teacher Education In-Service

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C. Leslie Cushman, associate superintendent of schools in Philadelphia, brings to the subject of in-service education a broad background of experience gained in years of successful work in the public schools. He examines the reasons for the great expansion in in-service programs and outlines six basic principles which serve as guideposts in the organization of programs for the in-service growth of teachers, supervisors, and administrators.



ONLY RECENTLY—within the past fifteen or twenty years—has the term “in-service education” come into common usage. What are the reasons for this emphasis upon growth of school personnel on the job?

TEACHING, A PROFESSIONAL JOB

Two factors are chiefly responsible for what has happened. The first of these is the growing endeavor to make teaching at all school levels a profession. Repeatedly during the past quarter century it has been pointed out that good teaching in a democracy requires more

than a bag of tricks—good teaching requires insight and understanding in a degree comparable to that of the most exacting profession.



The introduction of salary schedules, the trend toward a single schedule for all teachers, the recognition of educational attainment in the fixing of salaries, and other similar developments have all been based upon the assumption that teaching should be made a profession.

During the early period of these developments teacher education was viewed as the responsibility of colleges and universities. Facilities for undergraduate and graduate education were greatly expanded. Summer school for teachers became a widely accepted practice. As time passed, however, it seemed that the education of teachers might well be related more directly to the teaching job.

Workshops sponsored by school systems, sometimes in cooperation with neighboring colleges, were developed. In-service courses related to a wide variety of school activities were put into effect. Child study programs were organized. There was a considerable expansion and improvement of professional study activities within individual schools.

CHANGING THE CURRICULUM MEANS CHANGING PEOPLE

The second factor responsible for increased attention to in-service education has been a growing recognition that significant change in educational practice comes only as rapidly as the teachers and principals involved change.

The 1925-35 decade was characterized by the production of a great number of courses of study—probably more than had been written during the previous hundred years; and many more than have been written since 1935. All this grew out of a laudable desire to bring American schools abreast of the needs of society. Many good things were written into those courses. Furthermore, the movement was characterized by a commendable tendency to involve considerable numbers of teachers in the process.

Some observers questioned, however, the extent to which changes in school practice were actually taking place. Objective studies indicated there was good reason for this questioning attitude. For example, in one city where three courses of study had been issued for a particular subject within ten years, it was found that a few teachers were using the latest course, more the

next to the last, a good many the earliest course, and some were still using their college notes as a guide. In other places it was repeatedly found that a textbook and not the course of study was determining what was taught.

Out of all this there came a thoroughly sound conclusion—if school practices were to be improved, in-service growth must be promoted continuously. In some cases the writing of courses of study was halted, at least temporarily, and the entire emphasis placed upon teacher education. A more wholesome tendency has been to coordinate the production and introduction of courses of study with in-service education activities. This tendency has also brought a different type of course of study, something much less prescriptive in nature than those of the earlier years. This was essential, if the in-service activities were to be of a cooperative nature.

EXPANDING IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS

The net result of the operation of these two factors: the professionalization of teaching, and the realization that changing the curriculum means changing people, has been a great expansion of activities that are designated as in-service education. In some school systems the scope of such activities and the time spent on them are comparable to the program of a large college of education. In no sense has all of this lessened the importance of the work of the colleges. Instead, it offers an opportunity for coordinated programs and cooperative activities between schools and colleges—an opportunity that has been utilized very inadequately.

The expansion of in-service education activities constitutes one of the most wholesome developments of the past half century. If school programs are to progress during the years ahead, there is great need for further developments in this area. It is extremely important, however, that such developments be based on a sound and defensible point of view. Therefore, it is well to consider principles of in-service education which should guide schools in this area. Six such principles are suggested here.

The work of the teacher in the classroom and in the related activities of the school and community should be the most important single source of problems which form the basis of in-service education programs.

I have recently seen the "recollections" of a woman who had taught school for more than forty years. Her "recollections" related to travel, to family, to friends, and to community activities. Her forty-odd years of teaching rated only three brief passing references. Surely teaching, as she had known it, had provided little challenge, and caused little, if any, in-service growth.

One can think of no more important single question to ask about any school program than this—What stimulus to learning does it provide for the teachers? And, we should add, for the principal and the superintendent?

Such stimulus to growth comes only from a curriculum that is characterized by a constant search on the part of both pupils and teachers for wise answers to such questions as:

- What is it important for us to learn?
- How should we organize to get the job done?
- Where should we go for information?
- How well have we accomplished what we set out to do?
- What should we do with what we have learned?

This principle also has important implications for school administration. If the teacher is also to be a learner, the demands upon the teacher's time must not be such that he has no time for thinking. Class size must be such as to encourage the individualization of instruction. The learning materials and resources must encourage creative rather than "canned" teaching.

Unless this first principle is observed, unless the classroom program is such as to promote continuous teacher growth, nothing else that is done to educate the teacher makes much difference.

The two basic elements essential to the in-service education of every teacher are an understanding of the nature of human growth and development, and an understanding of the nature of the social order.

It would be a wholesome thing for American education if frequently in the course of each year every teacher were to ask, "What am I learning about the way in which children grow and develop and about the kind of world we live in?" And we should not deprive the administrator or the curriculum director of the privilege of self-examination on this score. Some of us would find that we are attempting to get along on the recollections of an old college course, or some early readings and observations.

Both elements are essential for every teacher. There seems to be a tendency

in some quarters to ignore the society in which we live and to assume that attention to the development of personality is sufficient. Such a view ignores the extent to which personality is shaped by the taboos, demands, and challenges of the social order.

In-service education should be characterized by a conscious and direct relationship between thought and action.

We live in a time when schools have tremendous jobs to do. Some schools spend a considerable period in study before tackling a new job. Others get started almost immediately on the job to be done and study as they go.

Of the two procedures, the latter has many advantages. First of all, it guarantees that a beginning will be made, whereas a preliminary period of study often provides a chance for a group to talk itself out of taking action. Also, it gives direction and vitality to the educational activities in which its participants engage.

The motivation for effective in-service education should come from within the learner and his sense of need rather than from someone else's desire to change him.

There have been instances where administrators have forgotten that teachers, like pupils, differ both as to their needs and interests. Any attempt to develop in all teachers some standard list of "fine" attitudes and skills is certain to fail. Furthermore, it is an approach that ill-becomes education in a democracy.

The opposite approach is that of trusting teachers, as they go about their

work in the classroom and as they work cooperatively with their associates, to become interested in the things that really matter. There is evidence that in schools where important things are being done, teachers are proving themselves worthy of such trust.

The major motivating factor for in-service growth should be the desire to meet fully one's responsibilities as a teacher and as a person.

The hope for better schools—for schools that are adequate to the needs of our youth—lies, in the main, not in attracting to teaching more outstanding persons, desirable as that may be. *The hope for better schools rests principally upon the capacity of each of us to rise to the full stature of his responsibilities.*

There are, of course, those who hold that man is solely self-seeking. Such persons say that teachers will give service only in proportion to the material rewards they receive. Grant the importance of material rewards, they will never provide adequate motivation to improve constantly the quality of one's service. Such motivation comes only from a high resolve to make the years of teaching a *high adventure* in creative living.

The focus of one's sense of responsibility should be service in the world of our years.

"Sufficient unto the day are the responsibilities thereof"—such is the counsel of one of our number.

What these responsibilities of "the day" are has been excellently stated in two recent publications: *American Education and International Tensions*, a

bulletin of the Educational Policies Commission; and *Education in a Divided World*, by James B. Conant.

A JOB TO BE DONE

With this our reflections may well conclude. All who look to schools as an important aid in coping with the

problems of our times should be heartened by the present emphasis upon in-service education. Indeed, we should seek to expand greatly what is now being done—an expansion to provide means whereby all of us who serve in the schools may learn to do the best jobs of which we are capable.

Organizing for Curriculum Improvement

GILBERT S. WILLEY

Setting up a functional organization is basic to educational improvement, writes Gilbert S. Willey. In this article Mr. Willey, superintendent of the Lincoln, Nebraska, schools points out the responsibility of the school administrator in establishing a functional organization which will give the entire staff of a school system an opportunity to participate in planning programs and policies.

THE MAJOR PURPOSE of school administration is to facilitate teaching and to improve instruction. It is the responsibility of the superintendent's office to provide opportunities for the staff to develop common understanding of the purposes and goals for which a school system is established. This is not an easy task—it requires careful planning and months and years to achieve a noticeable degree of success.

Widespread Participation Is Essential

In the past, the school administrator has depended too largely upon his annual message at the opening teacher's meeting or upon frequent bulletins to develop attitudes and basic understand-

ings on the part of the members of the school staff. Or he has expected the school principal to carry out directives from the central office without informing teachers of reasons for many of the orders.

This approach is psychologically unsound. *Teachers will be stimulated to do a better job to the degree that they have a share in planning the programs for which they are responsible.*

Principals, too, frequently do not know just what is expected of them. They also must have a part in planning the work for which they are responsible. It is important, therefore, that an organization be developed whereby gradually the entire staff of a school

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