

In-Service Education of the Superintendent

EARL E. MOSIER

The problem of improving the in-service education of school administrators is being approached in a variety of ways in the Midwest. Earl E. Mosier, associate director of research, Cooperative Program in Educational Administration, at the University of Chicago, describes some of the realistic attempts to bring about such improvement.

PRELIMINARY studies by the Midwest Cooperative Program in Educational Administration at the University of Chicago show that half of the superintendents in the twelve Midwest states¹ have been in their present positions three years or less. One in five of these superintendents was new to his job last fall. Only a third of the school boards made replacements by obtaining a superintendent from another school district within the state. Seventenths of the 5700 superintendents were in districts of less than twenty-one teachers.

Frequent shifts in positions and the continual exodus from administrative posts tax the superintendent to the utmost. Consider his multiple functions. The superintendent is called upon to exhibit expertness in the processes of planning objectives and programs, of allocating personnel and other resources, of stimulating staff participation and of coordinating the total program. To fulfill these various roles, the superintendent needs knowledge and techniques afforded by many different fields of learning. The complexity of his day-to-day operations calls

for skills and abilities which may not have been developed by his pre-service preparation. Thus, on-the-job education becomes indispensable to administrative leaders.

Cooperative Effort Needed

The problem is so extensive that it requires the cooperative efforts of universities, state departments of education, administrators' associations, and other groups to improve educational administration and therefore to strengthen the amount and quality of what is learned in the schools.

The particular approach to in-service education differs in the several centers which have been set up under grants by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in collaboration with the American Association of School Administrators and other organizations. However, the nature of the problems studied varies with the regions. At the University of Chicago, under the direction of Francis S. Chase, professor in the Department of Education, one of the primary purposes of the Center is: "To bring within reach of each administrator within the region effective programs of in-service education and to increase the availability and effectiveness of consultant services to administrators."

¹Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

It was seen that cooperative study and experimentation would be required to fulfill this purpose. Thus, at the outset, the Center attempted to relate itself to local educational agencies and institutions so that their programs might be strengthened. In order to do this, the Center found it necessary to become intimately acquainted with the resources of the region.

Midwest Center Swings into Action

The university staff of educational administration and the Center staff visited local school systems, colleges, universities, state departments of education and state teachers' associations. These conferences gave the staff opportunities to observe at firsthand the preparation, plans and proposals for improvement. Interviews also made it possible for the Center to see how these activities could be related directly to the larger problems of the Midwest. At the same time, helpful clues were obtained on how the Cooperative Program could facilitate local efforts.

The sheer number of school superintendents (the last count being 5717) presented the real question of how to develop direct working relationships with the individual administrator. The only practical answer seemed to be to work directly with the recognized leaders or administrators and the agencies assisting them. Hence, the spirit fostered by the Cooperative Program has been to support rather than to supplant local leadership.

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION FIRST AMONG PROBLEMS

School superintendents, college and university faculties, and staffs of state

departments of education seemed to catch the spirit of this working relationship, and responded openly by a free discussion of their most pressing problems. The sample of responses obtained in these discussions needed to be tested with respect to the whole region. Thus the first extensive in-service activity occurred when the director invited selected school superintendents to isolate and to evaluate their most pressing problems. Their responses were gratifying. The summary follows:

<i>Most pressing problem</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Obtaining improvements in instruction, curriculum revisions, and so forth.....	110
Improving public relations.....	89
Providing in-service training for teachers.....	40
Management of school plant, equipment, transportation, busses, and so forth.....	38
Obtaining improved financial provisions	33

Directors of instruction and curriculum builders will be particularly interested in the concern of the superintendents for the improvement of instruction. The educational administrators believe first, that methodology for improving curriculum and instruction is not clearly understood and that staff resources are inadequately used. Second, the administrator finds it difficult to define his relationship to his administrative staff and teachers in the area of curriculum and instruction. What matters of instruction should he retain within his immediate jurisdiction and what should he delegate to staff specialists and co-workers? Third, the superintendent is acutely conscious

of his unique role as the interpreter of the educational enterprise to the community.

Need for Program Interpretation

The second most pressing problem is the need to improve the interpretation of the educational program to the community. It is to be further noted that the housekeeping aspects of administration demand study. Problems of school plant, equipment, transportation and fiscal support were ranked in the respective order mentioned.

Professional anxiety about the proper use of the tax dollar is symbolic of a greater and more basic problem—the proper use of all resources. Effective utilization of university faculty, state department of education staff, and professional colleagues, should be carefully considered.

CENTER STUDIES CONSULTANT SERVICE

In accordance with an early commitment, the Center is joining, along with selected state departments of education and universities, in a study of consultant services furnished to local superintendents of schools. The enterprise seeks to test such hypotheses as: (a) The effectiveness of service is directly related to the nature and extent of purpose, planning, evaluation and follow-up. (b) A direct relationship exists between the value of the service to the school system and the conception held by both the superintendent and the consultant as to the role each assumes.

Initial findings show that university field services have become an important contributor to on-the-job development of the superintendent of schools. These services are intended to assist

him specifically upon the problem real to his administration within his educational setting. The superintendent's professional responsibility extends beyond the effective utilization of these resources. His obligation to the state department of education and to the university is to make known the unmet needs in such a way that the services of these educational agencies can be improved accordingly. Since consultant service must be furnished on an individual basis, it is characterized by marked limitations. Additional techniques for in-service education are therefore demanded. Group activity and services have an important function to fulfill. It is for this reason that the Cooperative Program is assisting in an experimental study of the administrative clinic idea.

Clinic Combines Theory and Practice

The clinic on local administration is an application of in-service education to a group situation. The idea of the Clinic took form during an exploratory visit of the staff to Kansas when the Council on Improvement of Education Administration was organized. The Council committed itself to the extension of in-service education to superintendents of schools. Teams of administrators will examine, observe, review and weigh theory and practice of educational administration within selected Kansas school systems. Other group activities are being projected by the Council beyond the life of this initial Clinic.

How Useful Are Workshops?

The Cooperative Program has been concerned with the evaluations of the

workshop as a means for improving educational administration. A careful study is being undertaken by Robert Van Duyn, associate educational director of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, to determine the effectiveness of workshops for administrators within a particular state school system. Even though the findings of this study have not yet been released, the investigation itself has had an effect in improving the quality of workshop programming.

Another project which is being contemplated by the Center is a "workshop" for directors of local workshops. Its aim will be to give superintendents of schools and college faculty members an opportunity to deal with problems of psychology and methodology of workshopping. Demonstration, designed to test both theory and practice, will be an important method for attempting to increase the effectiveness of the workshop as a medium for the exchange of ideas. The Center considers this project to be one of its significant services to superintendents in the Midwest.

Recognizing that the professional association can be a most effective medium for transmitting ideas, the Center initiated a cooperative program with the Midwest State Associations of School Administrators. Together, these associations expressed appreciation of the value of an exchange of ideas, and they visualized the dissemination of information beyond the borders of their individual states, through the cooperative effort of the Midwest Center. Information to what end? Their consensus with respect to this question was expressed in the following words: "The most important problem in educational

administration is the problem of improving the amount and quality of what is learned in the schools."

LIMITATIONS MUST BE OVERCOME

Realization of this goal is hampered by certain serious limitations. In fact, success of any of the projects described depends upon the spirit in which new learning is sought, professional support is enhanced, the administrator's role is reconstructed, and social engineering is recognized to be a problem worthy of study.

- *The need for new learning.* Social change and invention have come so rapidly that the theory and practice of education have failed to keep pace with social demands. The key to in-service education, therefore, is the stimulation of a fresh mental outlook on the part of administrators which will cause them to seek new ways of learning.

- *The need for social support.* Recent episodes throughout the country, in which negative public sentiment was manifest, have made courageous leadership difficult. Public education needs courageous leaders, and one of the ways to develop a sense of security in the educational leader is to afford him assurance of support. The administrator, once he has established his competence, must have the support of teachers and citizens if he is to serve the community to the best of his ability.

- *The need for the reconstruction of the administrator's role both by the profession and the community.* The role expected of the administrator can be more adequately defined by an organized and deliberate study of his

relationship to the total community. It is by such a study that the proper role of the school administrator can be clarified to the staff and the community; misconceptions of his role can thus be removed, releasing him for the fuller realization of his true function as leader. It is surprising how differently the educational administrator discharges his leadership duties when the teachers and the community alike expect him to become the leader of community education.

• *The need for social engineering.* Educational practice has been too frequently the result of mere whim and chance. Deliberate planning for change has been lacking. If the social effects of public education are to be of more consequence than they are at the present time, the design of education must be patterned upon more clearly defined objectives. This design should provide for change, and the process by which change is effected should be characterized by democratic values. Whenever social engineering has been allowed to operate, its practicability has been clearly evident.

BETTER CREATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

As this statement has indicated, the problem of improving the in-service education of school administrators is being approached in a variety of ways: a study is being made of the availabil-

ity and accessibility of consultant services; an experiment is being launched in the area of group endeavor as evidenced by the Kansas administrative clinic; an investigation has been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of workshops as instruments of in-service training of administrators; and a movement has been initiated to elicit the cooperation of the various state professional organizations of administrators in disseminating new ideas to local superintendents of schools and in pointing their association programs more directly to the needs of association members.

These activities are full of promise. They are well designed and could be easily implemented. But they will fail unless their significance is fully understood by people who have a realistic insight into the true meaning of cooperation. That is why the project for the improvement of educational administration has been called the "Cooperative Program." Its basic assumption is that educators must learn to work together in order to tap the resources, both human and material, of their respective regions in the solution of the pressing problems which face public education. It is only through creative human relationships that such a goal can be achieved. The attainment of such creative relationships is our most important problem.

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