

Changing Concepts Affect Supervision

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The school, too, has its human relations problems. Some of these center about the fostering of leadership and the effective use of consultant services. Administrators as well as supervisors have an important part in arranging conditions that will assure success in these areas.

MISS DUTTON is a typical elementary school supervisor; that is to say, certain supervisors are more effective than she and others less effective, but in general the procedures she uses and the conditions under which she works may be called typical. Miss Dutton is well trained, she has had the required college courses for her position, she has had experience as a teacher and has worked as a supervisor for some years. Miss Dutton is a hard-working, conscientious person; she starts out early in the morning and frequently does not return home until well after dark. Her car is always loaded with materials. She has converted the trunk of her car into a filing cabinet so that her materials will be readily available when needed by teachers.

A usual day for Miss Dutton is something like this. Miss Dutton drives twenty miles to her school. She arrives at 8:30 in order to see the children get off the bus and enter their rooms. At 9:00 she enters the administrator's office. He is busy with the usual routine affairs. A mother is waiting in the office with a small boy.

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This parent has come to explain that the boy has been ill and should not engage in strenuous exercise for the next two days. Two other children are with their mothers; they are transferring to this school from another district. The cafeteria manager inquires regarding the time of delivery of new equipment. And so it goes while Miss Dutton waits.

About 9:20 the administrator has time to talk with Miss Dutton. He suggests that Miss Brown, the first grade teacher, needs help with grouping, that Miss Williams, the second grade teacher, has a discipline problem, and that Mr. Bowman, the sixth grade teacher, needs materials for his unit. He also mentions several other direct requests from teachers.

Miss Dutton starts down the hall to see the teachers. Her first stop is to see Miss Brown in the first grade. Miss Dutton sees the problem of grouping after several minutes of observation; but Miss Brown is teaching and Miss Dutton has no opportunity to talk with her. She next goes to Miss Williams' room to observe the boy who is giving trouble. She follows Miss Williams to the playground at recess but Miss Williams has her eyes on the playground and listens to Miss Dutton with

only partial attention. Miss Dutton continues her classroom visits and at noon goes to the teachers lunchroom to have lunch with the staff. The noise and clatter of the lunchroom interfere with any serious talking. Besides the teachers are concerned with personal affairs and are talking over their plans for the week end. Miss Brown and Mr. Bowman would like to confer with Miss Dutton but they have yard duty.

At the end of the day Miss Dutton again seeks the administrator. She suggests to him that many of the teachers have similar problems and that it might be advisable to direct several faculty meetings to their common concern. The administrator replies, "These teachers are allergic to meetings. After they have taught an entire day, they are not eager to put in time in the late afternoon on teachers meetings." So Miss Dutton brings a few materials from her car, talks briefly to one or two of the teachers, and starts down the highway feeling ineffective and frustrated. Why should she feel so ineffective? She works hard; she sees with clarity certain of the problems of the teachers but she cannot reach these teachers. In the few moments that she had with the teachers she felt that they did not understand her point of view or readily accept her suggestions. How then should she proceed?

Leadership Role Is Changing

In recent years the concept of the position of supervisor has changed. In the past a supervisor was a supervisor as the name implied. He was an inspector with legal authority to direct

an educational program. In recent years a change has taken place in the relationships of educational personnel. This change in personnel relationships has not been apparent in education alone but in industry and business as well. A nondirective and advisory role of those in leadership positions has been substituted for the old authoritarian direction. The change is the result of an enlightened understanding of democracy and increased knowledge of psychology and is apparent even in the titles of positions. Supervisors now are more frequently called consultants or coordinators than supervisors.

This change in the concept of the position of supervisor has created psychological insecurities in the supervisor himself and blocks in his relationships with teachers. The supervisor no longer directs but rather suggests changes, provides materials and is a resource to the teacher. Even in the face of these hazards the change is desirable as it gives the teacher a greater sense of responsibility for his program as well as greater scope for ingenuity. But unless this consultant role of the supervisor is properly supported by the administration it is ineffective and even threatening to teachers.

Teachers do what they do because they believe their procedures are sound. They do the best they know. When a supervisor suggests a change in procedure, the teacher may not have the skill to accomplish what is recommended. He may feel that what he is doing is not acceptable or approved by the central office. Typical defensive reactions of teachers to supervision reveal this threat. "I have tried that," says Miss Williams. "It won't work." "We

couldn't do that in this community," says Miss Brown. "The parents won't let us." "Supervisors live in an ivory tower," says Mr. White. "They have been away from the classroom so long that they are not practical."

Are district or county supervisors needed or should administrators assume responsibility for supervision? Would the authoritative position of the administrator as supervisor solve these psychological problems? The growing complexity of education means that administrators, except in small schools, have full-time jobs of administration. Problems of finance, personnel, maintenance, materials, supplies, cafeteria, transportation and myriad others demand the continuous attention of administrators. Administrators must be well grounded in educational philosophy and curriculum procedures in order that the administration may support and facilitate the educational program. But administrators have not the time nor the skills to perform the demanding services required of adequate supervision. A supervisor must be a highly trained specialist who can devote full time to the intricate problems of human relationships and classroom management and instruction.

Conditions Affect Supervision

In order to assure the effectiveness of consultant services in the improvement of education certain conditions must exist. The arrangement of such conditions is the responsibility of administrators. Consultants are rendered ineffective unless these conditions are provided, and frequently community and teacher antagonisms toward super-

vision develop when these conditions are not met.

- It goes without saying that the supervisor or consultant should be well trained in elementary school procedures; however, the changing concept of the position of supervisor to that of consultant means that the training should also include a knowledge of how to work with adults. Enlarging the vision and improving the skills of teachers are the focal points of modern supervision. Changing the outlook of adults and improving their skills are delicate, psychological matters. The consultant must be an expert in human motivation and human relationships; otherwise his knowledge of school business and his experience in teaching are useless commodities.

- The supervisor must have the confidence and the support of the employing superintendent. The employing superintendent must not be reluctant to state that the supervisor is a well-qualified, competent person. A supervisor like any other individual dealing with many people will have persons who do not respond to his or her particular personality. Any individual who works with a large number of others is bound to receive criticism. The supervisor's personal habits—the way of wearing her hair, her clothes, the tone of her voice, her method of speech—may be unpleasant to a few. Her point of view may be unacceptable to some. If the supervisor must win acceptance entirely without the support of her superintendent, she is under a great handicap. The superintendent must take every opportunity to assure his clientele that the supervisor is well trained, that she has resources and tech-

niques for doing her job, that he is in general agreement with her point of view, and that any criticisms of her should be relevant to the total program of supervision.

- The employing superintendent must provide time for his staff to develop a common philosophy of education and to iron out personal disagreements. A general supervisor once suggested to a teacher that she seat her children in an informal arrangement. The health coordinator, on visiting the school the next week, was horrified because the light from the windows was not coming in at the right slant on each pupil's desk. The teacher's reaction was that the supervisors do not know their business.

A guidance coordinator at one time not only suggested but actually assisted a school in developing a remedial reading class. The general consultant in a week or two was seriously disturbed by this innovation because she believed that reading problems should be taken care of in the regular classroom. The result—lack of confidence in the central office and in the supervisors involved.

- All supervisors need in-service education. The supervisor is in the position of continually giving out suggestions. He is constantly pressed for new ideas. The well springs run dry unless some method of refreshment is provided. The supervisor needs inspiration for his work and new ideas, lest he become stale, repetitive and outdated. He needs to be on the frontier, on the growing edge of education. He must be familiar with new research, new thinking and the ever-increasing problems in education. Certain county

and city offices provide for this in-service education of their supervisory staffs. Experts in a variety of fields are brought in to discuss with the staff new findings in research and new methods of work. Other county and city offices continue year after year without a single instance of inspiration except as the supervisors themselves are able to squeeze into their busy schedules time for a meeting, a conference or a professional book.

- The supervisor must have the confidence and support of the recipient administrator. This administrator must prepare his teachers to understand the need for supervision and to accept the supervisor as a person. He must help his teachers to overlook any personal idiosyncrasies of the supervisor and to look instead for the contributions and the resources that the supervisor may provide. If personal criticisms run rife in a school a supervisor can be rendered completely ineffective.

- The recipient administrator must plan with his teachers and the supervisor for a long-term program of supervision. No supervisor should be subjected to the incidental demands that Miss Dutton had to contend with. On-the-job training is accepted in every modern industry and profession. Research in all fields is being accumulated each year. New methods and new ideas are the essentials of progress.

No matter how well trained a teacher may be, it is impossible for him to keep up with new methods and new ideas unless he is helped to do so and not all teachers are well trained. Many are inexperienced and new to the job, many are on emergency credentials,

many have been on the job for years and need refreshment and inspiration. A few days of orientation before school starts is not sufficient. In-service education must be planned to go on continuously through each school year.

The careful planning of in-service teacher education is a requisite of effective supervision. Teachers' expressions of need and interest must be considered as must be the problems of the community and of the administration as well as the resources of the supervisor himself and the resources of the central office. Only if this planning is done can supervisors move ahead with a vision of the task to be accomplished. Miss Dutton would know the direction of each day's work, and the teachers would have been ready for her help had they previously agreed on the path she was to take.

- Observation of classrooms is a necessary base for the supervisor's work. Individual supervisory conferences with teachers must always be available; however, most of the in-service work with teachers must be done with groups. Group work is desirable for many reasons. In the first place, not enough supervisory personnel is available to make personal contacts effective. Teachers can be seen only too infrequently. Group work is time-saving. Then, too, a group of thirty teachers can learn a technique or understand a principle as a whole and the teaching need not be repeated thirty times. It is well known that teachers working in groups add to each other's point of view from their experience. Also, group work is often more effective because of its greater objectivity. Many times a suggestion can be made to a

group that might not be accepted in a conference with an individual teacher. Suggestions can be made, for example, regarding room arrangement that might be considered a personal criticism if they were given to individual teachers.

- Most important of all is the fact that time must be provided for the in-service education of teachers. A supervisor cannot be effective by utilizing the odd corners of time that a teacher may have. Most supervisors, like Miss Dutton, realize that a conference cannot be held with a teacher while she is on yard duty or while she is teaching. Teachers meetings after school for the purpose of in-service education are often resented because teachers are tired at the end of the school day. Teachers do not respond well to supervisors who work in this manner. They are sometimes justifiably irritated by demands to stay after-school hours or by interference with their schoolwork during the day.

Educators could well take a clue from industry and from other professions and provide released time for on-the-job training. One day a month seems hardly too much to devote to the improvement of professional competency of teachers. The mechanics of such arrangements are simple but such arrangements must be carried through not by the supervisors themselves but by superintendents and boards of education. If one day a month were available to teachers for their professional growth, supervisory programs could be planned which would allow all the facilities and resources of the central office to be utilized. Films and recordings could be previewed; materials of instruction could be inspected, guid-

ance procedures could be demonstrated; materials for arts and crafts could be seen and experimented with; new research could be discussed; and the teachers would feel a responsibility because of the released time to learn and to profit from this experience, which they might not feel in after-school hours.

The conditions essential to an effective supervisory program demand that administrators take certain initiative and assume responsibility for super-

vision. Only as the employing and receiving superintendents understand the value of supervision and the changes that have taken place in recent years as to its role in the educational program will they be able to provide the proper avenues for its effective use. No matter how well trained the consultant, he cannot do the job alone; he cannot sell himself nor plan a program that will improve the competency of teachers without the support of the administrators on the job.

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