

# Supervisors Gain Skills of ACTION RESEARCH

A graduate program of combined work and study enables supervisors to gain understanding and skill in the techniques of action research and in the use of research findings.

**T**HE GEORGIA Program for the Education of Supervisors provides opportunities for supervisors to acquire skills needed to do action research. Supervisors in this program recognize that assuming leadership in studying and in carrying on research is a major function of the supervisor. They are given careful guidance in identifying problems for study, in developing plans for studying these problems, in executing these plans, and in reporting findings.

## Basic Education Program

Helping supervisors to acquire and to strengthen these skills is not an isolated procedure but is a continuous process which starts when the prospective supervisor begins his training, continues throughout the basic training period, and extends throughout the period of service as a supervisor. An overview of the program is presented to show ways in which emphasis is given to action research.

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The basic education program for supervisors is a work-study program at the fifth-year level which extends over a period of four summers and the three intervening years. Each person's program is planned in terms of his needs but there is a suggested sequence of experiences that helps the prospective supervisor and his adviser in planning a program that is continuous and developmental. The suggested sequence of experiences is as follows:

### *First summer:*

- a. Participates in a workshop in educational planning and development
- b. Takes a course in supervision.

### *First year on the job:*

- a. Participates in a carefully supervised internship program
- b. Participates in a non-credit in-service program with other supervisors in the same section of the state.

### *Second summer:*

- a. Takes a course in methods of applied research in education
- b. Takes two non-education courses, selected in terms of the supervisor's needs.

### *Second year on the job:*

a. Engages in an action research project which was planned during the preceding summer

b. Participates in a non-credit in-service program with other supervisors in the same section of the state.

### *Third summer:*

a. Completes a report of the research project

b. Takes a course in supervision and two other courses selected in terms of the supervisor's needs.

### *Third year on the job:*

Participates in a non-credit in-service program with other supervisors in the same section of the state.

### *Fourth summer:*

Takes at least two courses, selected in terms of the supervisor's needs.

This sequence of experiences leads to a Master of Education degree (at the completion of eleven approved courses) and to a professional certificate in supervision (at the completion of three approved courses beyond the degree).

Persons who have completed a Master's degree in some other area may also participate in the experiences described above. A special program is planned for these people in terms of their needs and experiences. These people may receive a certificate from the College of Education of the University of Georgia indicating that they have completed an approved program at the sixth-year level.

Supervisors are encouraged to participate in non-credit in-service programs throughout the period of the

basic education program and to continue this study during their service as supervisors. They are also encouraged to continue to study on a credit basis and opportunities are provided by the university for such experiences.

### **Guidance During the Training Period**

The supervisors begin their program with a full summer of campus study at the University of Georgia. The first session is spent in a workshop and the second session consists of a course in supervision.

It is the function of the workshop to help the participants—administrators, supervisors, visiting teachers and classroom teachers—to develop understandings and competencies relating to their own position in the school and to learn the relationships of one position to another.

The supervisor's day in the workshop generally includes:

1. A two-hour block of time for looking at the job of the supervisor and for planning ways to acquire the competencies needed to do the job;
2. A two-hour block of time for working with other participants of the workshop to develop understandings and competencies that are common to other school personnel;
3. A third two-hour block of time for developing competencies which relate specifically to the work of the supervisor. There are occasional general sessions in which all participants meet together.

Various procedures are used in helping the supervisor to determine what his functions should be and to develop plans for carrying out these func-

tions. The procedures used generally include the following:

1. Reading and discussing the literature on the functions of supervision;
2. Identifying problems facing the schools and pointing up needs for leadership in dealing with the problems;
3. Looking at slides, filmstrips and movies that show supervisors at work;
4. Reading and/or hearing reports of research studies carried on by supervisors;
5. Visiting supervisors in on-the-job situations to see what they do and how they work;
6. Inviting supervisors, administrators, classroom teachers and other school personnel to meet with the group to present points of view about supervision.

The experiences in the workshop and in the course in supervision, which follows the workshop, help the supervisor to see his role in the process of improving the total learning environment for children, youth and adults. He recognizes that in order to carry out this role effectively he must be a good teacher, a professional leader, a democratic leader, a resource person and a research person.

Although the summer program usually helps the supervisor to recognize that he needs to develop competencies as a good research person, little emphasis or encouragement is given to him to begin immediately to do research. The major emphasis given to research at this time is that of helping him to know how to use research that has been done.

During the year following the first summer the supervisors participate in an internship program and work under

the guidance of advisers from the University of Georgia and the State Department of Education. The purpose of the internship is to give on-the-job help to the supervisor as he assumes a new role as educational leader.

An adviser visits each supervisor at least once each month, writes occasional letters to the supervisor, and meets the supervisors in a group for a three-day conference once each quarter. These contacts provide opportunities for helping the supervisor to know about and to make use of research that has been done in areas in which the supervisor and others in the school system are working.

The intern supervisors also receive help and stimulation from other supervisors. Supervisors working in the same geographical area meet frequently to share experiences and to study common problems. These meetings provide opportunities for the intern supervisor to learn of research that supervisors are doing as well as research that they have completed.

Throughout the period of the internship a three-fold emphasis is given to research—learning of research that has been done, using research that has been done, and identifying problems for research study.

When the supervisor returns to the campus for the second summer he usually takes a course in methods of applied research. The experiences of the preceding summer and of the internship have helped the supervisor to have some readiness for this course. He has recognized that he needs to develop competencies as a research person. He has become acquainted with action research studies done by

supervisors and other school personnel. He has used results of research in working on school problems. He has probably identified a problem or problem area on which he wishes to do some research. He may have a commitment from the teachers in a school, the teachers in a subject-matter area, or the principals of the school system to assist in a research project.

Participants in this course include administrators, supervisors, counselors, visiting teachers and classroom teachers. These people work toward developing skills, insights and understandings needed to function as intelligent consumers and producers of educational research. Through lectures, class discussions, committee activities, and individual study and reports they develop effective use of library tools, appraise current research literature, and make a broad overview of research procedures and techniques.

Among other activities in which he engages each participant prepares and presents to the class a report concerning an action research project which he proposes to do during the following year. The report includes: (a) a statement of the problem, (b) the objectives of the problem, (c) procedures to be employed in attempting to solve the problem, and (d) procedures to be used in evaluating the success of the project.

During the initial preparation of the report of a proposed project and during the revision which he may make after the report is presented to the class, the student may receive individual assistance from the instructor of the class and from his major professor who probably will be his adviser for the

research project. The report which is presented to the class is generally a brief but comprehensive one. However, before the student begins his project he develops a detailed step-by-step plan which must have the approval of his project adviser and the chairman of the Division of Graduate Studies.

The supervisor is now ready to begin the research project. He goes back to his job with increased knowledges and skills relating to research procedures and with a well-organized proposed plan of work.

During the second year on the job the research project is the major phase of the supervisor's work-study program. The supervisor has the careful guidance of an adviser or of his major professor who assisted in planning the details of the study. The adviser makes occasional visits to the supervisor to assist in the development of the project. The supervisor informs the adviser, through visits, letters and reports, concerning the progress he is making with the project.

The supervisor and others working with him determine the kinds of data needed, collect and analyze the data, and keep accurate records of the activities related to the project. The supervisor may call on the adviser for help in developing knowledges and skills relating to collecting and analyzing the data.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to write up the project in a well-organized manner. Some of the writing is done during the year in which the project is conducted, but most of the final writing is done when the supervisor returns to the campus for the third

summer. The adviser assists in planning the organization for the report, in reading the report in its tentative form, and in suggesting ways of strengthening the report.

The kinds of problems investigated by supervisors range in scope from general problems involving all teachers in a system to specific problems involving a small number of teachers in one school. Research projects completed recently have been concerned with (a) meeting the personal and professional needs of teachers new to the school system, (b) evaluating in-service experiences provided for beginning teachers, (c) meeting the social and emotional needs of pupils entering high school, (d) meeting the needs for achievement of pupils in one school, (e) developing an individualized arithmetic program for the elementary grades of one school, and (f) improving the science program in a school through an in-service program for teachers.

Supervisors have many opportunities to share the findings of their studies. They discuss their projects with staff members, with supervisors and with other interested persons in college classes, workshops and seminars. These experiences enable the supervisor to relate the results of his study to other school problems and to develop other research interests.

### Guidance Following Training

Supervisors are encouraged to pursue research interests that have grown out of the carefully supervised projects or those interests that may have de-

veloped in some other way. The University, through its field service program, provides consultants on a non-credit basis to individual schools and school systems interested in making a study of their problems. Supervisors frequently make use of this service and do research on such problems as those named in the preceding section.

The university also provides additional assistance in research projects to students at an advanced graduate level. A person may enroll in a research course and work independently on a project. This study may be done on the job or in residence at the university but is done under supervision and guidance of an instructor who assists in the development of research procedures and in the evaluation of the project.

A seminar in supervision provides still other research possibilities for supervisors at the sixth-year and doctoral level. The seminar meets weekly and its purpose is to help supervisors on the job improve their supervisory procedures. An action research approach is generally used in carrying out this objective. Supervisors investigate such problems as improving conferences with individual teachers, evaluating one or more supervisory procedures, and improving understanding and skill in group leadership.

It may be said that the University of Georgia (a) recognizes that supervisors need skills as research persons, (b) believes that the university has a responsibility for helping supervisors to develop and strengthen these skills and (c) provides opportunities for supervisors to acquire the skills needed.



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