Cooperation in In-Service Education: A Case Study

When school system and teacher education institution are in close proximity the in-service program can be carefully tailored to the needs of the school personnel.

Cooperation in the in-service education of teachers seems especially appropriate to the mutual interests of teacher education institutions and school systems. And of cooperative arrangements for in-service education, those between a school system and a nearby teacher education institution appear most convenient and promising. Proximity of the university staff to the school personnel whose education is to be continued is a highly important factor in effective communication and cooperation.

A case in point—that of the Dade County Schools and the University of Miami—is herein described to indicate some possibilities of cooperative arrangements within specific geographic areas.

A Climate of Cooperation

The Miami area, home of the University of Miami, has been and is one of the fastest growing areas of the United States. Under the county unit plan, the Miami area schools—the Dade County Schools—now comprise one of the ten largest school systems of the United States. Since 1950, for example, the number of teachers in this system has increased from about 2000 to about 6200. Paralleling the growth of the area and the public schools, in just 30 years the University of Miami has come from a small and hazardous beginning to an institution currently enrolling over 13,000 students.

This fantastic growth has facilitated a high degree of cooperation between educators of the Miami area. Perhaps Miami's warm climate helped cooperation rather than separatism to develop! More likely the perennial problems of manning the schools of the area, because of population increase attributable to the physical climate, brought together the employers and the trainers of teachers.

In this effort of university and school administrators to work together, many creative, perhaps unique, instances of cooperation in teacher education appeared. In the early days of the University, when the County Schools moved to a four-year degree requirement for its teachers, this cooperation largely involved the offering of courses, both on campus and in public school buildings, designed to help teachers earn their bachelors' degrees. In the same period the Merrick Demonstration School was jointly established to provide a training center for undergraduate students of elementary education and for Saturday morning observation by teachers in service. Since the beginning of the Florida internship program (seniors preparing to teach spend 10 to 12 weeks in full-time
Making use of school facilities and equipment in in-service courses.

work in a school), the University of Miami students have done their internship in the Dade County Schools. In 1955 the West Laboratory School was opened as another cooperative venture, this one to provide a laboratory in teacher education and curriculum research.

Administrative Arrangements

The present cooperative program of in-service education had its beginnings in the 1940's. The teachers' institutes (see below) were inaugurated in 1944, the practicums in 1948, special workshops in the early forties, and beginnings of special certification courses in the late forties. In 1950 a special tuition arrangement was made for in-service courses organized by the school administration to meet in school centers. Repeatedly thereafter, as the program grew rapidly, further administrative arrangements were developed to make in-service education serve more fully the needs of the school system. These arrangements included the designation of representatives of the University and the County to serve jointly as coordinators of the program.¹

The scope of this program is indicated by the fact that in the three years, February 1955 through January 1958, some

¹ The County coordinator has been Wesley W. Matthews, assistant superintendent for general education; the University coordinator, the writer (until this month). Superintendent Joe Hall of the Dade County Schools and Dean John R. Beery of the University's School of Education have been very closely associated with the coordinators in the development of the program.
103 in-service courses of the varying types described later in this article, have been provided through the cooperative arrangements. A total of more than 2500 Dade County Schools personnel have been enrolled for credit in these courses, and it is estimated that at least an additional 2500 persons have participated on a non-credit basis. During the spring semester, 1956-57, alone, more than 1200 persons participated in the various activities. In the development of this program, the following administrative arrangements have become basic:

1. In-service courses are provided only by agreement of the coordinators. Usually the County coordinator conducts a survey to determine in-service projects desired for each semester. All course announcements are made by his office, and registrations for credit are made through school channels in advance of the first meeting of each course.

2. Most in-service courses are available to individual participants on either a credit or non-credit basis. The Dade County system underwrites most courses by a financial guarantee from which the tuition paid by credit registrants is deducted. In recent years the number of credit and non-credit registrants has tended to be about equal, and the Dade County system has paid substantial sums to meet the guarantees. Thus, the program is not dominated by credit-seeking considerations, but University credit is available for those who wish to earn it for certification and other purposes.

3. When an in-service project is organized for a particular group, such as the faculty of a school, all members of the group are expected to participate. Since in such cases the project is underwritten by the system as an improvement project, participation by those concerned is considered obligatory. Each course so organized and underwritten is planned by a committee representing the participating group, the County supervisory staff, and the University. These policies apply only to the school practicums and countywide seminars (see below).

4. All in-service courses are conducted in public school facilities, and full use is made of the County’s professional library, audio-visual, and staff resources. The University provides instruction (frequently with the instructor serving primarily as a consultant to the group) and credit, according to usual University regulations. The designation of an instructor for each course is cooperatively determined by the County and University representatives, and other County and University staff members are frequently used as resource persons.

Types of In-Service Projects

During these years of in-service cooperation in the Miami area, a number of terms have taken on specific meaning in differentiating the various types of in-service activities. Thus a “workshop” here has been a summer program of two or three weeks’ full-day schedule. A “seminar” is a course for persons in a particular specialized position (principal, for example). A “practicum” is a course for the faculty of a particular school. A “zone practicum” is a course for interested teachers from various elementary schools within a supervisory zone. Both practicums and seminars may be on either a one-semester (meeting weekly)

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or two-semester (meeting alternate weeks) basis. An "institute" is a daily, after-school lecture series for two weeks. A "special course" is a regular campus course offered on an in-service basis (in a school, for Dade County personnel only, reduced tuition) for the convenience of the Dade County Schools.

These terms refer more to the mechanics of the in-service courses than to their purposes. Although a given project sometimes serves more than one purpose, several purposes have been clearly basic in planning the many projects. These purposes and some illustrative related projects are described in the following paragraphs.

Leadership Training

In the rapidly expanding school system of Dade County, there has been great need both to train new leaders and to help those in leadership positions acquire new competencies required by bulging school enrollments. Consequently each semester, beginning in 1952-53, one or more leadership training seminars have been organized for school principals and county administrators and supervisors. With the multiplication of new schools and new principals, special seminars for new principals were introduced in 1955-56.

Most of the seminars for principals in service have dealt with the principal's role in instructional improvement. Until 1956-57 each of these seminars enrolled principals at all levels. In that year the growing number of principals led to the organization of separate seminars for elementary, junior high, and senior high principals. These seminars have usually resulted in investigations of problems and recommendations of solutions. Many of the recommendations as to new practices (for example, the present curriculum planning organization) have become matters of action in the school system.

Recently the training program for new principals has been meshed with the selection process. During the first semester, 1956-57, a group of candidates for principalships, previously screened to approximately twice the number of expected vacancies, studied the role of the principal in instructional improvement. During the second semester those who were appointed about February 1 to principalships for 1957-58 participated in an intensive study, including two weeks' workshop activity and six weeks' school visitation and administrative participation, of Dade County Schools administrative procedure. Twenty-nine (29) persons who assumed principalships in 1957-58 had experienced this training program. A similar training program is being provided in 1957-58 with such modifications as indicated by a follow-up of the 1956-57 trainees on the job.

Introducing New Programs

Several times an in-service project has been used by the Dade County Schools as a partial means of putting into effect some new program. Thus, in 1954-55 when a curriculum assistant was authorized for each school of over 1000 enrollment, a seminar for the new assistants and their principals was organized. This seminar developed a statement of the qualifications and duties of curriculum assistants, and one the following semester for curriculum assistants only concentrated on their ways of working. Since the number of curriculum assistants has about doubled in the ensuing years, a follow-up seminar on the work of the curriculum assistant is in process in 1957-58.

The Basic Education program (Basic
Education is the name given the double- and triple-period core in Dade County junior high schools) was initiated in 1950-51 with practicums for the faculties in the two schools in which the program first developed. Resource units and other materials for the program were developed in these and later practicums. Because of the nearness to Latin America and the large number of Spanish-speaking people in the Miami area, Spanish is now widely taught in the elementary schools of Dade County. To help teachers develop competencies in the language and instruction thereof, special classes in the teaching of Spanish in elementary schools have been provided each semester recently.

In 1957-58 two seminars were organized for rethinking and consolidating existing programs. The junior high school principals are at work on developing a set of criteria for establishing and evaluating junior high schools. These units in particular have multiplied very rapidly in Dade County. The special music teachers or consultants for elementary schools are restudying their role and relationships with classroom teachers.

School Improvement

Each of the school practicums has been concerned with either a particular phase of school improvement or with total school improvement. Each of the senior high schools, in compliance with accrediting standards, has periodically undertaken an evaluation study. The
practicum arrangement has facilitated the use of this requirement for thorough-going study and improvement of senior high school programs.

New elementary schools have been established so rapidly (their number almost tripling, 1950 to 1957) as to make desirable some type of unifying effort within the faculties. The device here has been a self-study practicum in cooperation with a university instructor and a county supervisor during the second year of each school's existence. In each of the twenty-six (26) elementary schools participating in this program in the past two years, the faculty has drawn up its own criteria of a good elementary school, applied them, and put improvement plans indicated into effect.

Many other schools have used practicums to study particular school problems. Among those around which faculties have worked are the following:

- Using unit plans of teaching
- Mental health in the classroom
- Using varied instructional materials
- Program of a demonstration school
- Reorganizing a junior high school curriculum
- Teaching Latin-American children
- Using the library in an elementary school.

**Refresher Training**

Although refresher training is probably a subordinate purpose of most in-service courses, this has predominated in certain of the Dade County projects. The institutes have usually taken the form of a series of lectures by some well-known specialist in such fields, for example, as child development, science education, and children's literature. At least one institute, and usually more, is offered each year. The zone practicums for interested elementary teachers have dealt with teaching the various elementary school subjects.

The workshops, too, have been planned to give teachers the advantage of gaining new ideas and techniques by association with the workshop consultants and other teachers. Three-weeks workshops were held during the summers of 1951, 1954, and 1956.

A new workshop program has been planned to begin the summer of 1958. Each teacher new to the Dade County schools in 1957-58 and thereafter is expected to participate in one two-weeks workshop program (August) during the first three years of employment. The workshop schedule will enable the teacher to have two periods per day of instruction in curriculum areas, with an experienced Dade County teacher as instructor for these periods, and a third period of instruction in child or adolescent growth and development, with an instructor for this period provided by the University. With some 1000 teachers being added annually, these workshops will be major enterprises in cooperation.

**Comments and Implications**

The cooperative program herein described has a number of aspects which the writer has not encountered, at least in as great degree, elsewhere. The Dade County Schools supervisors, for example, see these projects as opportunities to extend their own leadership rather than as University courses for which they have no responsibilities. The in-service course is a phase of, rather than in competition with, the supervisory program. Likewise, the University instructors, serving as they really do as adjuncts to the County supervisory staff, feel their role is important to their own growth and give most freely of time and energies to the program. These instructors regard in-service courses as more time-consuming and difficult but also more challeng-
ing than regular campus courses. They must become closely acquainted with the schools' programs with which they work. Furthermore, both the University and Dade County Schools administrators have found it both necessary and possible to waive usual administrative procedures and routines to make possible the rather unusual arrangements under which the in-service program operates.

The foregoing statements point to the chief implications I see for other school systems and teacher education institutions in their areas, interested in similar programs. These implications are:

1. Universities can provide adequate continuing education for teachers best by cooperation with the systems in which these teachers work. Extension and other courses offered only in the hope that individual teachers will enroll and profit are opportunistic and may be completely unrelated to the needs both of the schools and the individual teachers. Effective in-service courses are tailor-made for particular situations.

2. Compulsory participation in any project creates resistance. On the other hand, voluntary participation limits greatly the possibility of program development and other action. The implication seems to be that any project for a group all of whose members must participate, should be organized only at the request, and in accordance with plans of the group. So organized and wisely handled, these group enterprises offer effective means of group study and action.

3. University and school leaders need to work on a cooperative, shared leadership basis in programs such as described. Members of both groups may find the cooperative in-service project more time-consuming and problem-dominated than the typical campus course or supervisory conference. At the same time, as cooperation truly develops, the rewards are much greater in terms of program improvement and the growth of participants. A possible guide for instructors in such projects follows.

**Should the instructor (or consultant):**

1. Contribute from his experience and preparation to each session by such means as: introducing the topic, responding to questions, reacting to materials, reviewing pertinent research and literature, summarizing issues and progress?

2. Prepare in advance materials needed by the group to get started?

3. Plan with the appropriate individuals or committee for each meeting?

4. Adapt his own plans to the expectations and problems of the group?

5. Help the chairman of each meeting to keep the meeting moving?

6. See that the agenda for each session is duplicated, posted, or announced, in advance, and that discussion of at least a skeleton plan for the following session is included in the agenda?

7. Arrange with the group's leader for proper checking of attendance, recording of minutes, maintenance of extra copies, etc.?

8. Arrange with the group's leader for any interim small group work, suggesting materials and other resources that may be useful?

9. Arrange with the group's leader for procurement of all materials needed in each session?

10. Arrange for frequent evaluations (perhaps through post-meeting reaction forms) and help to make modifications indicated thereby?

11. Keep any suggestions as to school and system policies on a constructive level, giving leadership in the revision of policies when planned by the group?

12. Try to bring about a feeling of accomplishment in each meeting and summarize accomplishments frequently?