

Curriculum Research

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Sample Studies in Supervision

IN KEEPING with the theme of this issue, we are reporting in summary fashion some of the highlights from three studies in supervision. These are representative of other such investigations being carried on across the country toward re-thinking the kind of education needed in the preparation of supervisors and the further definition of supervisory roles.

A Kentucky Study

The first study is reported from the Program of Experimentation in Preparing Educational Supervisors undertaken by The University of Kentucky and Berea College and financed by the Fund for the Advancement of Education.

Experimentation under this program, as described in a staff statement supplied by Blenda Proudfoot, may be characterized as an effort to formulate a program for the preparation of supervisors which allows for the uniqueness of the individual supervisor and the dynamic nature of the situation in which he works.

It is assumed in the Kentucky program that the improvement of instruction in the public schools is dependent upon the development of more adequate responses to problem situations by all personnel involved in the education of children and youth. The solution to present problems and the making of rational decisions

seem to be related more closely to the contrivance of new answers to present problems than to the memorization of old answers to past problems.

Experiments in perception indicate that a person behaves in terms of what he perceives to be true regardless of what passes for objective truth. The self-concept, i.e., the totality of one's self-perceptions at a given instant, is a most important element in the determination of behavior. Learning accompanied by improved behavior in terms of problem solution requires changes in perceptions. There is evidence that perceptual changes occur more readily in a climate which minimizes threat to the individual's self-concept.

From such considerations as the foregoing, the staff conducting the experimentation has purposed to strive for relationships with the students which encourage:

1. A lifelong interest in self-development
2. Increased self-direction
3. Confidence in ability to work things out for oneself
4. Greater ability to solve problems
5. Acquisition of knowledge relevant to the solution of problems
6. Respect for the worth of other people
7. Greater ability to work for the realization of purposes which contribute to the improvement of society as the milieu for individual development

8. Cooperation with other people in the solution of problems.

Persons admitted to the program as interns have been engaged as supervisors by Boards of Education; recommended by their superintendents for participation; and have previously completed a minimum of six semester hours of graduate study. The sequence of experiences in the program has thus far begun with a summer session, during which time the participants earn nine semester hours of credit, which in addition to the six hours previously earned, permits certification by the State Department of Education. Classes in the first session meet daily in four-hour blocks-of-time.

During the two semesters of the ensuing academic year, the interns are at work in their own school systems and are registered at the University for "internship," which carries three semester hours of credit per semester. Bi-weekly, all day meetings (6 hours) are held on campus during the semesters of internship.

During the second summer session, the students accrue six hours of credit outside the field of education and three hours in education. The program is completed by the interns through a second academic year of internship on the job with accompanying seminar on campus, accounting for six semester hours of credit. By completing the program, students may possibly qualify for the Master's degree in Education or, if they already hold the Master's degree, may apply the work toward a higher degree if they are qualified for candidacy.

Beyond the organizational pattern in terms of certification and degree requirements as described, the staff attempts to implement a climate conducive to the achievement of the purposes previously identified. In classroom sessions, staff members make an effort to "clear the

air" for students to examine their own purposes, values, behaviors and capacities so as to attain an increased degree of self-realization. Students are encouraged to define supervision in meaningful behavioral terms and to share these with the group for clarification.

Field contacts between staff consultants and supervisors throughout the internship period are geared to the supervisors' efforts to implement programs for the improvement of instruction in their own school systems. No preconceived programs are suggested by University staff members. Instead of creating programs, the consultants seek to help the supervisors evaluate their situations, isolate problems, investigate alternative possibilities of solution, and design implementation and evaluate outcomes, thereby creating programs tailor-made to the employing school systems.

Supervision in California

In California, a highly comprehensive survey of many aspects of supervision and curriculum development has been made through evaluation of points of view and present activities by 400 educational leaders. Fifty representatives were included from each of these eight groups: county school superintendents, major city school superintendents, assistant superintendents in charge of instruction, directors of curriculum, secondary school principals, elementary school principals, secondary school supervisors, and elementary school supervisors.

As reported by Clarence Fielstra, the study reveals high agreement about objectives of supervision and yields many suggestions for needed improvement in the field.¹

¹ The full account of this study is contained in a series of three articles appearing in the *California Journal for Instructional Improvement*, beginning in October 1958.

Of major interest is the discovery of significant rank differences between types of activities intended to improve instruction when considered in terms of both extent of use and effectiveness of use. For example, faculty meetings were ranked first by the group in extent of use and seventh in effectiveness. Classroom visitation, ranked second in use, was judged fourth in effectiveness. Grade-level and department meetings ranked high in both rankings, third in use and second in effectiveness. Teacher workshop activities in the local district, receiving fourth place in use, were first in effectiveness.

Other differences in ranking of the top 10 most widely used activities were as follows: committee and study-group activities—fifth in use, third in effectiveness; college or university courses for advanced degrees and credentials—sixth in use, ninth in effectiveness; institute programs—seventh and fourteenth; demonstrations and observations—eighth and fifth; curriculum library and laboratory use—ninth and tenth; and college or university summer session workshops on college campus—tenth and eighth.

A study of these results led Fielstra to the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Faculty meetings, as generally conducted, are of less value as means of instructional improvement than the extent of their use for that purpose would indicate. Of the eight groups of educational leaders questioned, only the group of secondary school principals considered these meetings very "effective" in achieving instructional-improvement goals.

2. Institute programs of the traditional variety are of less value as means of instructional improvement than the extent of their use for that purpose would indicate. Only secondary school principals considered the "extensiveness" of the use of

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these programs justified by their "effectiveness."

3. College or university courses for advanced degrees or credentials are of less value as means of instructional improvement than the extent of their use for that purpose would indicate. Only secondary school principals considered such course work to be highly "effective."

4. Considerably greater use should be made of teacher workshop activities on the local district level. All groups of educational leaders except elementary and secondary school principals considered such activities to be among the most effective of all means of instructional improvement.

5. More use should be made of teacher committee and study-group activities for instructional improvement. There was rather general agreement that the "effectiveness" of these activities is greater than current "extent" of use would indicate.

6. More use should be made of demonstrations and observations for instructional improvement. There was rather general

agreement that the "effectiveness" of these means is greater than present "extent" of use would indicate.

7. Grade level and department meetings should be continued as extensively as at present, if not to an even greater extent. All groups of educational leaders ranked these meetings high in effectiveness, and both elementary and secondary school principals ranked them in first place.

8. Both child study activities and action research are insufficiently used as means of instructional improvement. Although relatively little used, these means were already considered more "effective" than traditional institute programs. With greater use, they may become recognized as among the most effective of all means of instructional improvement.

An Indiana Survey

A third study comes from Indiana. Here, the research committee of the state ASCD, with Daisy M. Jones as chairman, has been collecting information about the problems of supervision on which help is needed.

From an evaluation of the types of activities included in a supervisory program, the following findings seemed to emerge from this study of present conditions in Indiana:

1. Some time is spent in an in-service education program. The tendency is to recommend more time for this purpose.

2. The task of providing coordination between departments, between buildings, and between levels is considered important. The most common reply was that some time is spent in this manner and more is recommended.

3. Most replies indicated that supervisors spend some time in curriculum building and could profitably spend more doing research, working with local committees, and evaluating recent publications.

4. All those responding indicated the need for more time spent in the evaluation

of materials, activities, and results of instruction. Most indicated they spend half or less of their time in this capacity.

5. More than half of those responding indicated they spend some time in research and could profitably spend more. This includes both the analysis of statistical data and a study of local records.

6. In the area of administrative detail most of those answering indicated they spend some time this way. When it comes to budget making and the ordering of materials and supplies, they preferred to spend less time. When it comes to the selection and placement of staff members, they preferred to spend more time.

7. Clerical details consume little or none of the time for the majority of those responding. In most cases, this is considered satisfactory.

From these and other findings, recommendations for study have been drawn up, with the suggestion that the survey be repeated at two- or three-year intervals in order to provide continued guidance on needs for self-improvement.

—BLENDA PROUDFOOT, *area coordinator, College of Education, University of Kentucky, Lexington*; CLARENCE FIELSTRA, *assistant dean, School of Education, University of California, Los Angeles*; and DAISY M. JONES, *director of elementary education, Richmond Public Schools, Richmond, Indiana*.

Self Improvement

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12. C. R. PACE and GEORGE G. STERN. "An Approach to the Measurement of Psychological Characteristics of College Environments." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 49:269-77, 1958.

13. ROSS L. MOONEY. "The Researcher Himself." *Research for Curriculum Improvement*, 1957 Yearbook. Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1957, p. 154, 155, 185.

14. DONALD SNYGG and A. W. COMBS. *Individual Behavior*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949, p. 101-104.

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