

Role of the General Secondary School Supervisor

Relatively new are the position and the role of the general secondary school supervisor.

EDUCATIONAL supervision continues to be an expanding and essential function within the public schools. As need has arisen, supervisory positions and personnel have been added. Further, the addition of each new type of supervisor usually has stimulated research concerning, among other aspects, the varieties of activities relating to the position.

Since approximately 1935, the emergence of another type of supervisor—the general secondary school supervisor—has occurred. Perhaps the relative newness of this supervisory position is responsible for the scarcity of specific information regarding his functions. To increase the amount of information about the role of the general secondary school supervisor was the major purpose of a study, conducted by the author under the guidance of Hugh D. Laughlin, professor of education at The Ohio State University, the results of which are reported in this article.

Questionnaire Study

To determine the role or duties, responsibilities, and competencies of these supervisors, a questionnaire study was

made. Responses were received from 158 currently effective general secondary school supervisors recommended by 42 state superintendents of public instruction and 26 presidents of state units of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and representing all geographic areas of the United States. These replies were analyzed in 1957-1958. The questionnaire consisted of three divisions: Division I, "Check List of Supervisory Activities," designed specifically to discover how important the respondents thought certain activities were to supervision and to evaluate their degree of accomplishment. Also bearing on the role of these supervisors were their responses to items about their organizational framework, and their reactions to selected problems and issues in supervision. These responses were contained in Division II, "Organization of Supervisory Services," and Division III, "Problems and Issues of Supervision," of the questionnaire.

Under Division I, "Check List of Supervisory Activities," 83 items representing supervisory duties, responsibilities and competencies were listed. These items were grouped into seven categories: administrative duties, methods,

materials and equipment, research, community relations, self-growth, and skill and knowledge. The supervisors were instructed to check each item with respect to its importance to supervision and their degree of accomplishment of each activity. The data were treated so as to reveal those activities which were found to be ranked as most important, according to the responses of effective general secondary school supervisors. Using the Spearman Rank Order Method of Correlation, the coefficient of correlation between the importance of the activity and the stated degree of accomplishment for each individual category was derived.

Supervisory Activities

Fourteen supervisory activities were found to be ranked as most important to supervision, according to the responses in Division I, "Check List of Supervisory Activities":

1. Prepare orientation programs for teachers new to the system.
2. Plan and direct local workshops, conferences and seminars for teachers.
3. Work with teachers individually and in groups concerning common classroom problems.
4. Procure resources for teacher use—audio-visual aids, library books, etc.
5. Visit classrooms.
6. Involve teachers in local school committees.
7. Act as resource person for local school committees.
8. Help select and evaluate textbooks for pupil use.
9. Obtain new curricular materials for teachers.
10. Keep abreast of developments in the field of education, particularly in the areas of supervision, curriculum development, and in-service education.
11. Evaluate your own effectiveness.

12. Attend meetings of local, state and national professional organizations.

13. Conduct in-service education programs for teachers.

14. Analyze and evaluate instructional programs and develop instructional materials and aids.

The coefficient of correlation for each category was:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Administrative Duties | + .96 |
| Methods | + .87 |
| Materials and Equipment | + .80 |
| Research | + .75 |
| Community Relations | + .97 |
| Self-Growth | + .82 |
| Skill and Knowledge | + .64 |

One of the most significant findings in Division II, "Organization of Supervisory Services," was that more than half the supervisors indicated that "There is little or no printed material describing staff relationships, duties, etc.—they have just evolved through discussion and verbal agreement."

Ranking the 15 stated problems in Division III, "Problems and Issues of Supervision," according to frequency of response showed that "duties which interfere with your supervision of teachers" and "too many teachers in the district to supervise adequately," were the two major problems faced by supervisors. "Services unacceptable to or resented by teachers" received the fewest responses.

The seven issues presented to these supervisors may be easily inferred from their responses. In each case, a significant majority of the supervisors favored the following alternatives:

1. General supervisors should visit the classroom of supervised teachers without waiting for an invitation and at any time.

NORMAN ZIFF is a teacher in California High School, Whittier Union High School District, Whittier, California.

2. General supervisors and others (department heads, principals, etc.) should cooperate in evaluating the competency of a teacher.

3. General supervisors should have *no* authority as such, but function merely through recommendations and suggestions to teachers and principals to accomplish goals.

4. General supervisors should be active members in local teachers' professional organizations.

5. General supervisors should work with the building principal and the teachers.

6. General supervisors need to have the skills of an excellent teacher.

7. General supervisors should work cooperatively with teachers to discover problems and possible solutions.

Role of General Supervisor

The major significance of these findings is that a role is established for the general supervisor in the educational hierarchy. This role is unique, specific and limited in its required duties, responsibilities and competencies. While these duties do not exist in educational isolation, they are not to be functionally confused with those of administrators. The list of 14 supervisory activities found to be ranked as most important to supervision clearly excludes administrative tasks. Instead, the focus is on the improvement of instruction with primary emphasis on the classroom teaching-learning matrix. Consequently, if the position of general supervisor is to achieve a useful identity, it must be disengaged from the vortex of the administrative pattern. Actually, the maintenance of this necessary distinction is extremely difficult, according to the other findings.

Appraisal of the coefficients of correlation, which indicate the relationship between the importance of the supervisory activity and the stated degree of accom-

plishment, shows them to be relatively high for all categories. Administrative Duties and Community Relations, categories of activities customarily within the purview of administrators, have the highest coefficients. Participation in both sets of activities is indisputably essential to the continued existence and progress of public education. They are also time and energy consuming. Since general supervisors are apparently required to perform in these areas, they obviously cannot accomplish very much in those activities more closely associated with supervision. The lower level of achievement is reflected in the coefficients for Research and Skill and Knowledge. Taking time to improve Community Relations, and expending energy to discharge Administrative Duties may also explain the fact that "duties which interfere with your supervision of teachers" rates as one of the major problems of the general supervisor. To repeat, the role of the general supervisor demands supervisory, *not* administrative, activities. Further evidence supporting this statement exists in the responses of general supervisors to the issues of supervision.

The seven alternatives selected add a necessary dimension to the role of the general supervisor—the *modus operandi*. Apparently these supervisors prefer the staff to the line role, and their rejection of "authority as such" indicates a desire to be rid of the onus attached to the title of administrator, as perceived by teachers. In general, these alternatives reflect the modern cooperative approach to supervision with emphasis on "working with" rather than "working on" teachers.

Recommendations

To help release the time, energy and intelligence of the general secondary

(Continued on page 516)

Grades Seven and Eight. Cincinnati, Ohio: the Schools, 1958. 256 p.

Attractive in cover design and general format, this guide is outstanding in its presentation of materials and the understandings evidenced of the interests of children in national, state and local historical materials. In the introductory

section of the guide general statements are presented relative to the social, economic and political setting in which the citizen of today finds himself. Discussion of the "Nature and Needs of the Learner" is presented in terms of the 12, 13 and 14 year olds; the 15, 16, 17 and 18 year olds. (No price quoted.)

A Psychologist

(Continued from page 474)

nize that requests for help may come from desires related to personal maturity and professional growth, but that unfortunately these same requests can be related to some other real personality

problems of his staff. Finally, the supervisor should be extremely careful about his own motives in giving help so that he does not penalize, as a consequence of his own distortions, the effective and independently oriented professional teacher.

Who Does What?

(Continued from page 484)

the supervisory tasks that I am most able to perform?

3. Who (do not name individuals) within my jurisdiction most needs instructional or supervisory help and what kind?

4. In what ways and to what extent do I attempt to change the perception of individuals with whom I work in supervision?

5. To what extent in my supervisory work do I succeed or fail in my attempts to change individual perception and what are the reasons therefor?

6. In my view, what is the Superintendent's primary role or roles in instruc-

tional supervision and the improvement of instruction?

7. Likewise, what are the role or roles of the Director of Instruction and the Director of Elementary Education (or Secondary Education) in this context?

8. What of importance, if anything, is now being done in or by the central office to help me in my approach to my work and problems, and to make the performance of my instructional tasks more effective?

9. What could and should be done that is not being done by those in authority at the central office to make my work in instructional supervision more effective and more personally satisfying?

Secondary School Supervisor

(Continued from page 502)

school supervisor so that his role may be more effectively fulfilled, the following recommendations are made:

1. General supervisors should decide which duties are important to supervision and concentrate on their accomplishment; delegate other duties—permanently.

2. Research as a vital supervisory activity should be stressed by colleges and universities offering courses in supervision.

3. The problem of an adequate ratio of general supervisors to teachers should be investigated.

4. Finally, school districts should prepare written material delineating as specifically as possible the role they expect of their general supervisors.

Copyright © 1959 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.