

# Organizing for Growth in Service

*Care and insight  
go into creating  
effective in-service programs.*

"MY STAFF of twenty-four teachers has a total of 353 years in teaching experience, an average of 10.54 years. What do these teachers need to learn about teaching?" remarked a principal.

Few people today, in or out of education, would share this view that experience of itself assures high quality performance in a school or school system. Not many people would maintain that the preservice education for any profession, including teaching, is, or can be, so excellent that the practitioner can reach peak performance without additional education. Many people seem to realize that teaching requires a program of in-service education if it is to reach maturity as a service profession. But groping, hesitation, delay, doubt, and a host of negative attitudes enter the scene when there should be action for in-service education.

## Attitudes Toward Organization

Leaders in school systems sometimes set standards for in-service education organization that are so ideal that effective operation is impossible. Starting with the thesis that in-service education will im-

prove the quality of teaching only as it changes the behavior of the teacher, they say: "I am for any in-service education my teachers request, for unless they request it, they will get nothing from it. Participation must be voluntary." Suppose the whole school system operated on this basis. When would students arrive at school? How many teachers would be on the job each day? How many teachers would volunteer to sponsor school activities?

This attitude confuses the goal of in-service education with the means of achieving the goal. How often in life does the individual choose the experience which causes him to change his behavior? Psychologically, the individual has tensions which cause him to have needs, and he acts to satisfy his needs. Ideally every teacher should feel the need for improvement and act accordingly. Ideally every student should seek maximum development and efficiency. Since this does not happen, it becomes the job of the leader, whether super-

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**Frank M. Durkee is assistant superintendent, Instruction and Curriculum, Public Schools, Belleville, New Jersey.**

intendent or teacher, to create the environment in which the learner, whether teacher or student, will feel the need and take the action to learn and to apply his learning.

In every school or school system there are persons who have the insight, self-development, dedication, and vision to want to work with others for the improvement of education for children. These are the volunteers: they can be the corps for the development of an in-service organization that can move education forward in any school system; they cannot be, and should not be, the sole participants in in-service education. Regardless of the recognition received and the individual satisfaction gained, the small group of volunteers will eventually feel that they are carrying the load of in-service education. They will feel that they have taken a responsibility that should be shared among the whole school staff; they will become disgusted and retreat to the comfort of their own classrooms. In the long run, therefore, the school system that awaits an effective organization for in-service education based upon teacher request will continue to wait.

When leaders in school systems come to accept the fact that in-service education is concomitant with and necessary to better and better education, they will realize that all the people in school work need in-service education. They will cease to be so naive as to believe that they can settle for a program that includes only the volunteers.

Realization of the fact that an effective organization for in-service education must promote maximum participation of the entire staff requires no more insight than that required of the teacher. Any teacher worth his hire knows that not only the quantity but the quality of

the learning in his class is primarily dependent upon student participation. The degree and the quality of the participation will vary, of course, with individual differences.

Equally impossible is the building of an effective organization for in-service education by sudden decree of the board of education or the administration. Where this happens, the tensions created are not the kind that develop readiness for in-service education; they may develop readiness for a new board of education or a new administrator. On the other hand, there can be no effective organization for in-service education unless the leaders in a school system believe in it, want it, and take appropriate actions to have it.

### Group Dynamics

Sound educators now realize that it takes more than the one to one relationship to produce effective learning. Some things can be better learned alone, others with a teacher, and some only in an appropriate group.

In every group there are dynamics that can produce positive or negative results. In attacking a problem a group can produce more and higher quality results than the members can individually produce on the same problem.<sup>1</sup> When all the members of a group participate, collect and evaluate evidence, and make recommendations, they develop the insight needed by individuals to implement changes in curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

Some people are ready to write off the value of participation in a group, such

<sup>1</sup> Lester Coch and John R. P. French, Jr. "Overcoming Resistance to Change." *Human Relations* 1:512-32, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> George B. De Huszar. *Practical Applications of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945, p. 140.

as a workshop, except as they can denote specific changes produced in the behavior of individuals in improved operation as teachers. While an in-service education organization should have the objective of getting such results from its various groups, this again is idealistic, and it fails to recognize many other gains for education. If the purpose of a group is defined as re-education of each of the members, the members may decide that they do not want to be re-educated. If, on the other hand, a group forms to study a problem with only the principles of good education as guidelines, in the process of the study, in varying degrees, the members will share ideas, verify their own beliefs and experiences, and gain support and reinforcement. The individual will cease to feel that he is alone and beset with more than he can handle. He will gain the sense of well-being that comes to professionals when they join hands, minds, and spirits in the cause of better education for boys and girls.

### **Developing Organization**

In-service education can take place in courses, workshops, seminars, practicums, institutes, conferences, general staff meetings, departmental meetings, grade-level meetings, subject-area meetings, use of consultants, intervisitation, research projects, development of curriculum guides, development of resource units, and other ways. All school systems engage in some of these activities and have some in-service education. In certain individual schools in a system, good in-service education may be going forward. However, good as these activities may be *per se*, they do not constitute effective organization for an on-going program of in-service education. Just as total participation must be the goal

in in-service groups, so it must be the goal in the school system. If in-service education is a policy of a board of education and a school administration, it should be the policy for all of the schools in that system. All the children in all the schools need teachers who become increasingly effective each year.

With such effective in-service education in mind, the superintendent of schools should seek to develop potential leadership personnel in each school. He should expect that certain kinds of in-service activity will take place only with reference to individual schools, such as study of student assembly programs, panel discussion before the PTA, the lunch program, use of school supplies, case studies of children, and the like. However, he should provide for interaction by being sure that the whole staff is kept aware of the individual school activities, and he should provide a school-system approach to problems that are equally relevant to all schools. Where the superintendent cannot carry out the specific details of a program of in-service education, he should have an assistant to do so.

### **An Effective Organization**

Over the past 13 years, the Belleville, New Jersey, school system has evolved an effective organization for in-service education. Though Belleville is a small city of 35,000 population, the organization used there may be adaptable to other school systems.

Over the years there had been isolated spots of in-service education activity in Belleville. In 1947, the general supervisor, working as an assistant to the superintendent, asked leaders in various schools to meet with him to discuss education. This small group became a steer-

ing committee for the promotion of workshops in various areas. In 1951 potential leaders in curriculum improvement worked with a consultant within their schools and at Teachers College, Columbia University. Perhaps the most notable work during this early period came from a school-system workshop on guidance. It worked successfully with teachers and parents in developing a developmental record, a manual on use of the record, a report on guidance practices, and new report cards.

In 1952, the hand-picked steering committee became a curriculum council of elected representatives from all schools. This council sponsored a variety of teacher-selected workshops and a staff publication to keep teachers informed. In the subsequent three years, 22 consultants worked with various workshop groups. These workshops fortunately stressed many integrating aspects of curriculum: development of a parent conference program, community resources and an annual visitation day to industries, music education, art education, guidance, audio-visual aids, and the like.

In 1955, under the leadership of the curriculum director, the curriculum council voted to establish a school-system workshop program with operative divisions in each elementary school in three divisions: primary, intermediate, upper grade (7-8), and high school divisions for homeroom teachers for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. A teacher survey indicated that a majority wanted to study the mathematics program as a step toward a K-12 curriculum guide. High school teachers decided to work on a program of homeroom guidance.

Now on the second Monday of each month primary, intermediate, and upper grade workshops meet in all schools. In the first part of their meeting the mem-

bers discuss immediate problems of their school, and in the second part, the long range system-wide topic. On the fourth Monday of each month primary and intermediate divisions continue the procedure of the first Monday, but in the departmentalized grades 7-12, teachers join in system-wide workshops in science, language arts, social studies, mathematics, and art in designated schools. High school departments also work on curriculum development. While Monday afternoons are set aside for this work, groups meet more often at their own convenience.

Now the membership of the curriculum council has evolved into the workshop leaders from all schools and members at large, including psychologist, directors of art, music, health and physical education, elementary supervisor, remedial reading teacher, speech teacher, and a principal representative. The council meets monthly with its own officers and the curriculum director. The council discusses problems presented by the members and subdivides into primary, intermediate, and upper grade sections to compare and discuss what has been done in the workshops in the various schools.

With 13 years of development, a climate has been established for continuing improvement in education. Now all teachers participate, according to their individual differences and needs, in some phase of the program, even though there are no material rewards or penalties. Aside from the educational growth of teachers, some of the tangible results of this school-system organization for in-service education are: the development of a K-8 mathematics curriculum guide as part of the K-12 objective, with all teachers having a part in the process;

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assumption that people should be forced to learn something because it will be "good" for them some day.

The industrial emphasis on the here and now of a situation does not mean that industry does not plan for the future of its personnel. Industry assumes that a foreman, if he has the ability and the desire, can become an executive. Industrial education recognizes that there are stages of growth and development and that such development is a slow process. They look upon education as a growth process rather than an "outpouring" of facts to the students by the teachers.

It may be unfortunate that teachers in schools and colleges do not consider more seriously the significance of different levels and kinds of learning. Clearer appreciation of student growth toward maturity might improve our teaching. Too frequently in our classes we emphasize only the area of abstract thinking. We apparently fail to realize what must precede this kind of learning. We seem to lack an understanding of the real and significant differences in interest and ability as a major characteristic of our students. We have made a fetish of "individual differences" in our discussions, but we tend to cling to the old concept

that everyone needs to have the same experiences and needs to know the same facts if he is to be considered an educated person.

*Summary:* 1. The industrial educator is interested in both the retention and use of knowledge learned, with emphasis on usefulness. Industrial people stress the point that when new facts, attitudes and values are needed to be understood, they are best learned when they are approached through personal involvement.

2. The inductive approach to teaching is used by many industrial educators. They assume that each person must organize the material presented into individually meaningful patterns if he is to understand and retain the concepts.

3. Industry and business teachers encourage honest differences of opinion in the search for new and better ways to do a job. This is especially true in executive development programs.

4. By using the inductive approach to teaching and learning, persons in industry show their appreciation of the significance of individual differences in both ability and interests. Their educational philosophy is that each person should be considered as a worthwhile individual with his own peculiar levels of interest and native ability.

#### Organizing for Growth

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development of K-6 science curriculum guides, with 7-9 and 10-12 in process; and this year, a study of language arts K-12 is under way.

This organization has made possible the coordination of in-service education at all levels, yet it possesses a flexibility that includes a kindergarten education workshop and a unit of the International Reading Association. It helps to meet the

needs of individuals, individual schools, and a school system.

In summary, effective organization for in-service education must be evolved in each school system. What Belleville and other districts have done may be adaptable, but it should not be considered adoptable. Creation of an effective organization requires much time; yet not too much for the school system that hopes to realize continuous benefits for education.

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