

Professionalization of Supervision and Curriculum Development

AS a result of a resolution passed at the 1959 ASCD national meeting, the Executive Committee appointed a Commission on Instructional Leadership. This Commission held its first meeting in March 1960. The Commission has been preparing materials and has launched a program of discussion and exploration which we hope will help increase the effectiveness of instructional workers in schools throughout the nation.

The Commission has started its work with three basic reference points in mind. First, there is a widespread ferment in education characterized by unusual lay and professional efforts to reform and improve the quality of schooling at all levels. Supervisory and other instructional workers will naturally be expected and will want to contribute effectively to the changes under way.

Second, there are many indications that segments of the education profession are coming alive and accepting as they have not at any previous time a responsibility for their own self-discipline. The National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, of the National Education Association, and the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration of the AASA are but examples of this movement. Both of

these groups^{1, 2} have gone far in showing how a profession can contribute to the quality of its own members by taking responsibility for selective admission, standards of preparation, requirements for licensing, and methods for insuring quality performance. Up to the present, non-educational groups have possibly been more influential than organized educators in determining standards for their professional preparation and practice.

Third, as an organization, ASCD has been more concerned with the functions of instructional leadership than with the qualifications of those charged with specific responsibilities in this area. Possibly this is an error of omission.

The Commission on Instructional Leadership is exploring fully the possible gains through greater attention to selection, preparation and licensing of instruc-

¹ National Education Association, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards. *New Horizons in Teacher Education and Professional Standards*. A Preliminary Report, Major Recommendations and Proposals for Action. Washington, D. C.: the Association, 1960. p. 34.

² American Association of School Administrators. *Something to Steer By*. 35 Proposals for Better Preparation of School Administrators. Washington, D. C.: Committee for the Advancement of School Administration, January 1958.

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tional leaders. To that end the whole area of professionalization will be carefully studied and recommendations made for discussion and ultimately for action by ASCD where this appears warranted. Various subgroups are at work on the problem and will release statements from time to time.

Functions of Instructional Leaders

Before standards for selection, preparation and practice can be developed, it appears important to define clearly the functions which are appropriate for persons who hold various instructional leadership positions. At this stage a preliminary statement is presented for discussion as a first step in developing a more refined analysis.

Supervisors, curriculum workers and other instructional leaders usually are expected to expend efforts in two direc-

tions. One is the maintenance and effective operation of a strong instructional program. Another is the introduction of changes and modifications in the instructional program as these are found to be necessary. These two directions of effort imply the necessity for the supervisor or curriculum worker being thoroughly conversant with the dynamics and operation of the school and with the means and methods for maintaining and improving instructional programs. Typically, supervisors and curriculum workers carry on at least the following seven major groups of activities:

Clarification of goals. First, they have a primary responsibility for helping to keep attention focused on the goals of the educational program. This is done through examinations of goals in relation to emerging demands and assessments of programs in terms of the desired products.

Development of work structure. Second, the development of a work structure or an organization through which a staff can attend to the maintenance of a strong program becomes essential. This may take the form of curriculum councils, workshops, study groups, research projects and a variety of other group endeavors. These activities may serve to introduce fresh points of view, special information or challenges to new activities. Also they may serve special groups such as new staff members seeking orientation, may provide for policy formation and clarification, or may afford learning opportunities for the participants. These organizational and group efforts may focus on maintenance of a strong on-going program or upon curriculum change and improvement depending on how they are developed and used.

Assistance to individuals. As not all

efforts will proceed through group endeavors, a third kind of activity is found to be necessary by supervisors and curriculum workers. They may engage in a variety of contacts with individual staff members including visitations, personal assistance and counseling. These are necessary in order that individual staff needs and concerns not identified or cared for through group activities may be successfully serviced.

Providing resources. Because vital instructional programs require the use of a wide variety of material and human resources, supervisors and curriculum workers engage in a fourth series of activities relating to this area. Materials for use by the instructional staff become one focus of attention. These may take the form of professional books, research findings, or curriculum materials to be purchased, written, edited, administered and circulated. Another aspect of the re-



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sources problem centers in student learning materials which range from textbooks and pamphlets to films, recordings, teaching machines and television programs. The selection, utilization and occasional production of these items require special abilities and competencies as well as special facilitating activities. A third dimension of the resources problem relates to community resources for staff or students. This may involve the identification and participation of people, public and private agencies, as well as business and industries which may further the educational program.

Communication among staff. Fifth, a communication system is required for smooth operation of the educational program, and the development of a feeling of identification with program goals and of personal belonging to the total enterprise. This may take numerous forms and employ diverse media.

Coordination of effort. Sixth, the direction of the instructional program makes necessary a wide range of activities through which supervisors and curriculum workers assist in the development of instructional policies and the coordination of the efforts of a wide range of special and general instructional and guidance staff members. These may relate to various special school services or to the general staff personnel policies. A certain measure of reporting and of record keeping is, of course, an essential part of this activity.

Work with lay citizens. Seventh, increased interest and involvement of citizens in the educational program have placed new responsibilities on supervisors and curriculum workers. Increasingly these school people are called upon to meet with lay groups as reporters or interpreters of the educational program.



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They often guide the participation of citizens as they relate to various phases of the school program, or listen to problems and concerns which parents may express. Supervisors and curriculum workers may also help to coordinate the school programs with those of other community educational agencies.

One difficulty in describing precisely the leadership role of supervisors and curriculum workers results from the great variety of ways in which these positions are described and identified in relation to the hierarchical structure of the school system. The numerous titles used to identify these positions are symptomatic of this situation. General supervisor, consultant, visiting teacher, supervisor of art, instructional coordinator, director of curriculum, and assistant superintendent in charge of instruction are examples of titles which suggest a range of responsibilities as well as of authority among school personnel. Obviously some distinction is needed between those who work at the building level as contrasted with the system-wide level, between those who serve in a line rather than in a staff capacity, and between those who administer programs of supervision and curriculum development as compared with those who are members of a staff team in this area without responsibility for administering the supervisory or curriculum development program.³

Instructional leadership, a shared responsibility. Obviously the tasks of instructional leadership here enumerated do not fall to supervisors and curriculum workers alone. Principals, superintendents and various specialized personnel, such as guidance workers and counselors,

³ For a recent related statement, see C. Glen Hass, "Role of the Director of Instruction," *Educational Leadership* 18: 101-103, 106-108, 136; November 1960.

often share in these responsibilities. The size of the school system, the local pattern of assignment of responsibility, and the degree of staff specialization, are some of the influences which determine the positions to which instructional leadership responsibility is allocated. Regardless of these differences, positions which are often regarded as being primarily of an administrative nature such as the principalship and the superintendency are frequently charged with instructional leadership. This tends to be true even when there are staff members designated as supervisors or curriculum workers.

In fact, there are no tasks performed by supervisors or curriculum workers in some school systems which may not, under certain conditions, be discharged by principals or superintendents in other systems. As schools increase in size or as they desire special attention to instruction, individuals are frequently added to the staff who have time and the unique qualifications for contributing to the instructional program. Thus, supervisors and curriculum workers have no functions which only they can perform, in that all good school systems attempt to work with and maintain and improve the instructional program. However, supervisors and curriculum workers who have time to devote to the instructional program and who have special competencies in performing the functions already described are in position to make contributions to instruction which cannot be made by those who may be preoccupied with other tasks or responsibilities or who lack understandings and skills needed for effective operation in this area.

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