

## The Supervisor at Work

MOST studies of supervision describe this work *as it is perceived by an observer*. There is a trend, however, in recent studies for the supervisor himself to be one of the observers of the supervisor's behavior. Moreover, as supervisors research the role of the supervisor they are involving more and more people in the process of cooperative research. This research is directed toward action for clarifying and improving the services of the supervisor. Such trends are evident in the studies described here.

Implications of these studies for the supervisor are also evident. However, in each study reviewed some of these implications are made explicit.

### The Supervisor's Role

The role of the supervisor, as perceived by the supervisor and the principals and teachers with whom the supervisor works, was described and examined in a recent study by Cox and Lott (1). A Q-Sort of 100 behaviors of the supervisor was used to make the descriptions. An analysis was made of these descriptions in terms of the "most liked" and "least liked" behaviors of the ideal supervisor.

Each group of respondents ranked highest those behaviors which relate to

belief in people, acceptance of contributions of each child and teacher, and respect for individual differences of teachers. There was, however, a lack of agreement about some of the behaviors ranked high by the different groups. Supervisors indicated with a high rank that cooperative efforts of a group are more effective than efforts of individual members. Principals regarded this behavior as of much less importance, while elementary teachers ranked it even lower. Secondary teachers did not place this behavior among the "most liked" behaviors.

Principals and elementary and secondary teachers placed considerable significance upon the supervisor's "having the know-how and giving it to teachers." The supervisors placed this behavior very high in the "least liked" behaviors. Supervisors considered cooperative formulation of policies and plans as a very significant behavior and the other respondents gave it no place among the "most liked" behaviors.

The behaviors ranked lowest by each group of respondents were stated as follows: "Discusses freely teachers' problems with outsiders"; "Points out specific teacher's deficiencies to help another teacher"; "Feels that he is fully capable of doing a good job independently of help from others"; "Makes the decisions

and tells the staff what to do"; and "Questions the authority of the principal."

Supervisors placed "having know-how and giving it to teachers" and "saving time by telling the group the right answers" quite high in the "least liked" behaviors. Other respondents gave these behaviors no place among the "least liked" behaviors. Respondents ranked quite high in "least liked" behaviors the supervisor who always agrees and who feels that he is rejected by the group. The supervisors gave these behaviors no place in the "least liked" behaviors.

The areas of agreement in "most liked" and "least liked" behaviors indicate there is much common ground and much overlapping of basic human values among the groups. With these human values in common, other differences tend to be minimized. The differences in opinion revealed in this study were, for the most part, in terms of specific ways of working. An awareness of the areas of agreement and lack of agreement should be helpful to supervisors in all endeavors of curriculum planning, development, and research.

### Services Rendered by Supervisors

To make a study of the services rendered by supervisors to teachers, principals, and superintendents, Manley involved a representative number of persons from each of these four groups (2).

A two-part questionnaire was developed to secure information from the respondents. Part I consisted of 26 statements describing services performed by supervisors. Although not so designated in the questionnaire, the items were selected to represent four categories of supervisory services: (a) Improving teaching methods and techniques; (b) providing leadership services; (c) pro-

viding for in-service growth; and (d) fostering good human relationships.

Respondents indicated, on a three-point scale, the extent to which each service had been rendered by the supervisor. In another column the respondents indicated, also on a three-point scale, the benefit derived from the service.

Part II of the questionnaire consisted of two questions: "What services, not included in Part I of the questionnaire, do you think supervisors perform?" "What additional services would you like supervisors to perform?"

The services which supervisors rendered most often, as seen by teachers, principals, and superintendents, fell into two of the four categories of service included in the questionnaire—services which relate to providing for in-service growth and services which foster good human relationships. Each of the three groups gave highest rank to "attending meetings of professional organizations." Each group gave second, third, or fourth place to these items: "Demonstrating a personal interest in the welfare and happiness of all teachers"; "Recognizing progress, commending and encouraging teachers"; and "Working on committees in professional organizations."

The supervisors placed in the four highest positions items relating to their concern for and work with teachers. The items were: "Recognizing progress, commending and encouraging teachers"; "Demonstrating a personal interest in the welfare and happiness of all teachers"; "Listening to the comments, opinions and suggestions of all co-workers"; and "Working with teachers in evaluation and selection of instructional materials." Supervisors ranked sixth the service ranked first by teachers, principals, and superintendents.

The four responding groups were in



agreement that the most beneficial services rendered by the supervisors were in the area of human relations. They identified these most beneficial services as "Recognizing progress, commending and encouraging teachers"; and "Demonstrating a personal interest in the welfare and happiness of all teachers." It is significant that although teachers, principals, and superintendents "saw" the supervisor most frequently as attending professional meetings they did not rank this service as very beneficial.

Responses to Part II of the questionnaire supported the services listed in Part I. The respondents wanted more supervisors with more time to do more of the services which they already do. There are implications for the supervisor in that two major categories of supervisory service were not included in services rendered most often and that services in only one area were described as

highly beneficial to teachers, principals, and superintendents.

### Major Problems of Supervisors

To determine major problems of supervisors and the causes of these problems, Turpin (3) asked 96 supervisors to respond to the following two-part directive: Part I: "List as rapidly as they occur to you *all* the things that bother you about doing your job as a supervisor. Do not evaluate these items, do not try to determine if they are 'acceptable' things to list. Just list them as they come."

Part II: "Set aside a time in which to examine the problems that you have listed. Try to reason out why these problems or situations bother you. Write out your reasons or hunches about each problem."

Turpin classified the problems stated in Part I into 21 categories. For purposes

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of this report some of the categories are combined. This regrouping indicates that supervisors' problems may be classified as follows (the number in parentheses refers to frequency of response expressed in percent):

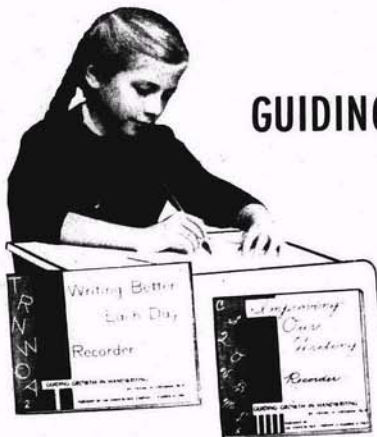
Insufficient time to render all supervisory services in a satisfactory manner (20%); unfavorable attitudes of teachers and principals toward change (16%); insufficient money for travel, study and materials (15%); insecurity due to lack of role clarification and scope of the job (14%); inability of the supervisor to organize himself and others for most effective work (9%); inadequate clerical assistance and work space in office (9%); communication difficulties with general public, the State University, State Department of Education and the local board of education (8%); miscellaneous (9%).

It might appear from the statement in Part I of Turpin's directive that respondents would include problems of little

significance in their lists. However, the responses of Part II of the directive did not support this hunch. In general the supervisors were very deliberate in their own hunches about the problems.

Supervisors state that the causes of their problems are interrelated. The supervisor's role is not clear to himself or to those with whom he works. The scope of the job is large, the responsibilities are numerous, and there is insufficient time to accomplish all tasks involved in the job. Funds for clerical assistance are limited and supervisors must take time from professional tasks to perform clerical tasks. Frustration and feelings of guilt occur when supervisors are unable to provide as much help to individual teachers or school faculties as they desire. These conditions present a picture which is a vicious circle and demands the attention and study of administrators and others in local and

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### Self-Evaluation of the Supervisor

The procedures and activities which a beginning supervisor used to record and evaluate her own experiences have been adapted and developed into an instrument for the use of beginning supervisors (4).

During her first year as a supervisor, Brannen kept a diary of each day's activities. She recorded the activities engaged in, described her feelings about these activities, and summarized and evaluated these activities by recording the time spent in each major supervisory function. She used a report form entitled, "How I Spend My Time," for the daily summary. She attached to the diary copies of all communications to principals, consultants and others which related to her work as supervisor. She kept communications and proceedings of committee meetings, grade meetings and local, district and state conferences.

Once each quarter she prepared descriptive and evaluative materials for study at a conference with other beginning supervisors. At the end of the year she made a self-evaluation of her competencies in supervision. As a basis for this evaluation she used an instrument entitled, "Guide for Determining Status of the Supervisor."

A final evaluative activity was the preparation of a summary of the year's activities. The summary was made available to all teachers, principals and other school personnel. Accompanying the report was a questionnaire for evaluating the work of the supervisor.

The "Instrument for the Use of the Beginning Supervisor" is actually a guidebook. It includes excerpts from the

diary, descriptions of the many activities in which the supervisor engaged, and a comprehensive evaluation of the supervisory procedures. The instrument or guidebook could be used as resource material by any supervisor or curriculum worker for descriptions of supervisory procedures that have been tested and found to be effective.

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  3. Ohio ASCD and State Department of Education, Columbus. "The Supervisor at Work."
  4. Norman Ziff. "Role of the General Secondary School Consultant." *Educational Leadership*, May 1959.
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