

Leaders To Match Today's Needs

INSTRUCTIONAL leaders have revealed remarkable changes in their activities during the short history of their service within the education profession. From their beginnings as inspectors and demonstrators of good practices they moved to become curriculum reorganizers and course of study developers, roles in which the focus was largely on a broadening of the objectives of the educational enterprise and of the range of students served. Later, with a maturing of both instructional programs in schools and professional programs of preparation for teachers, instructional leaders took on new functions as group work specialists, as agents of change among instructional personnel, and as improvers of working situations for teachers. This consideration of working conditions included extensive attention to the participation of parents and other citizens particularly at the local school level.

Again the winds of change are moving instructional leaders in new directions. Changes are evident in almost every area of living, and the school is no exception. In fact the school is one area in which society is seeking to work out many of its major problems. The overwhelming drive for supremacy in the international contest is in a substantial measure being focused on the schools. The need for excellence and for infinitely higher prepa-

ration of our manpower in specialized occupational skills necessary to maintain productivity and a rising standard of living are seen as problems for the school.

Many of our internal social questions such as integration and the rehabilitation of disadvantaged segments of our population inhabiting the core of our large cities are being worked out through the schools. The extremes in population being encountered in the schools, and the mental outlooks which they bring, are providing new challenges. Not of least importance as a by-product of the broad social changes are the shifts in values and standards which have well known consequences for social stability. Men are coming to value and to accept change in many areas as being both essential and desirable.

Yet change is not limited to the broad social sphere and to the minds of men. It is affecting the very heart of education. The rapid growth of knowledge in almost every area, but especially in mathematics and the sciences, is creating major problems for education. Not only are the factors of change and of outdated knowledge a threat to our usual concept of education but also the sheer quantity of knowledge is making the task of education more difficult in many ways.

Specialization is seen as one solution but only a partial answer because of the

vast range of general knowledge needed by the average citizen as well as by many who seek to coordinate the efforts of specialists. Further, advancing technology has come into the classroom through such means as television, and programmed instruction. In the larger society, technology has so affected the demands for brains and ability that the education profession is encountering continuously stronger competition for able teachers.

A New View of the Curriculum Change Problem

Leaders in instruction face a new world. They are up against new conditions which their predecessors had not encountered. Can they by taking thought assess the demands upon them, secure the necessary resources to meet these demands, and prepare themselves to cope with the problems at hand? I believe leaders can do so, provided they are able to identify clearly the points at which strengths are needed and if they can clearly conceptualize the character of the task they face.

Charting the implications of new conditions for instructional leaders will demand the best efforts of many, both as individuals and as groups. Such a charting is a continuing task which under present dynamic conditions will necessitate frequent reformulation. However, there appear to be several directions in which one might move to seek clearer answers to the demands on leadership.

1. The sources of power and influence for curriculum change have greatly increased. This results as education has come to be more widely viewed as having a crucial place in personal as well as in national and international

welfare. This means, of course, that the circle of participants in curriculum change has immeasurably widened and that the character of the resources and skills brought to bear upon the process of change have become vastly more varied.

Citizens in many walks of life, board of education members, government officials, academicians, members of the national legislative and judicial branches of government, foundations, American business and industry, and others are in on the process of curriculum change. The task of providing instructional leadership in the presence of these new forces is both different and more complicated than it was a number of years ago. The way in which the instructional leader can utilize research, policy formation, and a variety of new approaches in dealing with this whole complex of participants is much in need of analysis.

2. Participants in the curriculum change process are influential in accord with their success in the advocacy of specific curricular conditions, and in accord with their possession of certain resources such as legal authority, supporting policy or precedent, money or goods, prestige, or unique and useful skills. Certainly the instructional leader needs to analyze his own access to these sources of influence and power. Also, he needs to determine how he can work best with the array of power and influence possessed by other participants in the curriculum change process who may support or oppose his efforts.

3. There are many practices through which instructional leaders have tended to discharge their responsibilities. These include the variety of group and individual activities which make up the programs of curriculum improvement in various school systems. These practices

can be thought of as the style or pattern used by a particular system. These practices also need careful study to assess their productivity and it is reasonable to assume that some new practices in areas such as research, policy formation, and systematic reporting on the product of the educational enterprise will become more common.

Constants in Curriculum Work Have New Emphases

Work with the curriculum is of course relevant to three important areas in which the instructional leader will need to be well grounded if he is to operate at a high level of professional competence. In each of these areas there are new developments which call for a re-examination of the adequacy of existing insights and skills.

1. The facts of human growth, development and learning always pose important curriculum considerations. However, illustrative and significant current concerns can be cited.

One relates to the abilities of students at various maturity levels and to the relative consequences of providing several possible kinds of instruction at the different educational levels. Another focuses on the perceptions which learners have of themselves and of the school task. These are seen as particularly crucial, not only as outcomes of the educational program, but as conditioning influences which learners bring to school with them. A third object of attention is theories of learning, such as reinforcement theory, as they relate to both the learning process and to various kinds of learning outcomes. New developments in programmed instruction have helped to sharpen this focus. Fourth, the impact of changed conditions of liv-

ing on the out of school experiences of children and hence the course of their development and learning represents another force for modification of programs. These are but samples of the current concerns in this area.

2. The general social context within which we are living, the current concepts as to the purposes of the educational program, and the forces and influences operating to condition the school and its conduct become a second significant reference point. Yet here again there are new or current emphases. For example, there is an increased demand today that our schools contribute to the effectiveness of our society in meeting problems on both the home front and internationally. The psychology of fear which often accompanies this demand has had its impact as well. Second, the number of agencies and the extent of the resources directed toward the school curriculum, as already suggested, present an unprecedented situation.

3. The curriculum is rather widely recognized as having many determiners: the nature of the specific pupils or learners; the values, understandings and skills of teachers; subject matter; methods; materials; facilities; evaluation procedures; time allocations; and organization employed. It is only through the manipulation of one or more of these nine determiners that the curriculum can be changed. Yet we know little about the value of placing more rather than less emphasis on one or more of the nine determiners. Certainly the leader will be able to contribute to the degree that he can work thoroughly and understandingly with all of these nine determiners.

At the present time, developments within the various disciplines and the

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need for increased competency and specialization appear to lend particular urgency to a reconsideration of the subject matter of the school. The promise in approaches to instruction which give attention to both the methods and the key ideas of the various disciplines through which much of the school program goes forward suggests this as a primary object of concern by those who would provide leadership. Only as the leader grasps the relative contribution and the role of each of the disciplines in the advancement of knowledge will he be in an effective position to work with the various subjects individually and as parts of a total program.

A second current emphasis relating to the determiners of the curriculum, centers in technology and its use in the classroom. Educational television and automated instruction in many forms are illustrative of the devices pressing for attention and study. As yet, our understanding of these new inventions and of their potential contributions appears to be most limited.

A third focus among the determiners of the curriculum which is receiving much current study centers in organization. Plans for team teaching, departmentalization in the elementary school, ungraded schools and other modifications in organization are being attempted. The developments in this area are so large and significant that implications for the curriculum and for in-service education would seem to be deserving of vastly more attention and study than they appear now to be receiving.

In conclusion, the situations and conditions just related appear to be among the most important with which instructional leaders will be faced in the im-

mediate future. Will these leaders be able to move forward in the best interests of sound education? Will they lose control of the instructional program to the extent that educational programs will become a reflection of powerful but limited pressure groups? Will they be able to help maintain an educational program in harmony with democratic ideals and with the best thinking of the American people and their teachers?

The new demands, and the rapidity with which these are appearing, may seem overwhelming. They should not be so, provided instructional leaders unite in giving substantial thought and effort to the task ahead.

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Selected

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and develops a list of competencies and qualifications needed (c) suggests sources as well as specific names of candidates; (d) reviews a semi-final slate and helps reduce it to about six to ten preferred candidates; and (e) helps to interview candidates. The suggested procedure would leave to the administrator and the clerical staff many of the more routine aspects of the selection process.

In conclusion, the specific policies governing the selection of persons for leadership positions should be appropriate for the specific school system, agency or institution. If plans are carefully formulated in light of what we already know about staff selection, and if the selection is carried on by persons who are reasonably objective, considerable progress can be expected in securing more competent persons for positions of educational leadership.

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