Report on an experiment in

Preparing Educational Supervisors

PROGRAMS of preparation for educational supervisors exist to help students acquire knowledge, understanding and skills for their work as instructional leaders.

Such programs are based on certain assumptions and subsequent operational decisions. These are the: (a) end-product image or purposes held for the program; (b) selection and admission of students; (c) content deemed necessary to produce the desired end-product; (d) institutional arrangements for courses and/or experiences facilitating the development of the end-product; (e) availability and utilization of materials and resources contributing to the learning of the desired content; and (f) the staff behavior in the teacher-learner relationship with students.

Changes in preparatory programs can be achieved through modifications in any one or all of these six aspects. This article provides a brief summary of an experiment aimed at assessing, clarifying and relating all of these variable aspects in an effort to develop more effective preparatory programs for supervisors.

A Cooperative Program

For four years, 1957-61, Berea College and the University of Kentucky engaged in a cooperative experimental program that was partially financed through the Fund for the Advancement of Education. This program had as its primary objective the development of improved processes and procedures for preparing educational supervisors. Within this basic aim were several operational objectives which served as guidelines throughout the project.

Foremost among these purposes was a desire to utilize recent research findings in the areas of learning and human behavior to develop individualized programs for each of the students. Such individualized programs would require the student with staff to obtain accurate and detailed information concerning his needs, perceptions and capabilities and to use this information to develop appro-

James R. Ogletree is Associate Professor and Fred Edmonds is Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Kentucky, Lexington. Pat W. Wear is Professor of Education, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky.

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appropriate learning experiences for his preparation as a supervisor.

A second purpose was aimed toward identifying the competencies normally demanded of a supervisor, and toward the examination and exploration of processes for helping each student acquire these.

A third purpose was to utilize both on-campus and on-the-job experiences to determine how these activities could be aligned, synchronized and utilized productively in the preparation of supervisors.

Another purpose, made even more necessary because of the developmental nature of the experimentation, concerned the constant and thorough evaluation of both the preparation program purposes and the implementary activities related to these purposes.

The experimentation was also committed to aiding the individual student: (a) to develop a sound theory of education; (b) to develop a concept of supervision consistent with that theory; (c) to acquire the skill and ability to apply supervisory functions (instructional improvement) to supervisory tasks; and (d) to develop personal attitudes, beliefs and values for: (1) continuing self-improvement, (2) increasing self-direction, (3) developing self-confidence in working things out for himself, (4) increasing ability to solve problems, (5) increasing ability to acquire and utilize knowledge relevant to the solution of supervisory problems, (6) increasing respect for the worth of others, (7) increasing ability to work for purposes which contribute to the improvement of society, and (8) increasing ability to work with others in the solution of educational problems.

During the four-year project, thirty persons completed two-year preparation programs. These participated as members of one of three groups, with six students in the first (1957-59), twelve in the second (1958-60) and twelve in the third (1959-61). Admission to the project was contingent upon: (a) eligibility for provisional licensing upon completion of the initial summer; (b) employment as a full-time supervisor in a local school district; and (c) recommendation by the superintendent of the employing school district.

While the two-year programs were extremely flexible in operation, each was organized in terms of four blocks of time. As the student entered the project, he participated in an all-day seminar with the other members of his group for eight weeks. During this phase, efforts were made to develop a climate in which the student felt accepted as a person of worth, capable of directing his own program of growth and development. The members of the group (supervisor interns) were encouraged to work on questions and issues important and relevant to them as supervisors.

The second phase of the program was the first-year internship, an academic year in which the supervisor functioned on the job with assistance from a staff member. This one-to-one relationship of staff to student provided opportunity for the student to assess his own level of development, recognize his own preparation needs, and develop processes for improving himself as a supervisor as he functioned in a specific setting. Concurrently, he participated in all-day, biweekly meetings with his group where his supervisory problems were shared and the help of the group was sought.

A third phase of the program was the student's second summer on the University campus. During this time he was engaged in college course work in areas
related to supervision and maintained continuing contact with the members of his group. He also worked closely with the staff of the Program of Experimentation in Preparing Educational Supervisors (PEPES) through periodic group meetings and individual conferences.

The final phase of the program was a second-year internship, another academic year in which the supervisor and his staff member were engaged in continuing the relationship begun during the first year. Here again an effort was made to use the task of developing a local supervisory program as a base for providing learning experiences for the student.

As indicated here, the project was in part integrated into the normal preparatory programs of the University. For example, each student was granted graduate credit for his efforts. He could earn six to nine semester hours of credit during the first summer, six semester hours during the first year internship, six to nine semester hours during the second summer, and six semester hours during the second year internship. However, with the exception of the second summer's related classwork, the experimentation was conducted within a unique framework developed by the PEPES staff.

Behavioral Efforts

The traditional teaching method in which the staff predetermined the content and scope for student study was replaced by six behavioral efforts in which the staff sought: (a) to behave in a manner that would focus upon the personal growth and development of the individual student; (b) to behave in a manner which would help the students draw an analogy between the way staff performed and the way supervisors might perform with teachers; (c) to create a climate conducive to optimum learning for both students and staff; (d) to replace the typical textbook-oriented classroom teaching situation with a learning situation in which the problems, concerns and needs of the students determined the content of the program; (e) to use these problems, needs and questions as vehicles to move more deeply into study areas which could help the students gain a broader understanding of human behavior as a base for effective supervision; and (f) constantly to involve themselves in appraising and assessing their own behavior and modifying it in terms of this assessment.

Evaluation

At the conclusion of the four-year period of experimentation, many changes could be identified as a total or partial consequence of PEPES. For example, while some students did not respond as adequately as others, most of the students did exhibit behavioral changes in keeping with the preparational purposes of the project. The program was most effective with those students with whom the staff was able to establish a warm, continuous relationship in which students and staff were able cooperatively to identify areas of need and to develop appropriate experiences to meet them.

Each student was a fully employed supervisor, with all the responsibilities and opportunities which such a condition produces. Therefore the staff member, in effect, became a partner-in-action with the supervisor, maintained frequent and purposeful contact with him, and provided assistance as he sought to increase his effectiveness on the job. However, the staff member at all times had to focus his
attention upon helping the supervisor mature toward the stated preparational purposes.

The internship also produced ample
evidence to support an assumption that
a local school district and its personnel
have an important function to perform
in the preparation of their own supervisory staff. It showed that preparation
programs, rather than being confined to
a college campus, should be developed
in terms of experiences provided both on
campus and on the job. The campus
experiences can be directed toward
bringing groups of supervisors-in-prepara-
tion together to utilize institutional
resources providing specifically needed
information, to share experiences, to de-
velop plans of action and to work on
common needs and problems. The local
setting provides a natural laboratory
which supplies real problems, real needs
and real learning opportunities for super-
visors in preparation.

Staff participation in this type of prepara-
tion program demanded knowledge,
understandings and behaviors quite dif-
ferent from those required in typical pro-
grams. Because of participation in all
phases of the program, and because of
the extended period of contact with each
student, the staff constantly had to eval-
uate its own levels of development, iden-
tify areas needing improvement, function
with students in a manner consistent with
the way they believed the students
should function as instructional leaders,
and develop experiences to provide the
competencies they themselves needed to
behave effectively as staff members.

PEPES demonstrated that two institu-
tions with uniquely different backgrounds
can cooperatively develop and implement
experimentation which results in impro-
ving the quality of preparation programs
for supervisors within a state. As a result
of the experimentation, preparation pro-
grams for all school leaders at the Univer-
sity have been quite drastically changed
to include certain aspects of the extended
internship concept. These programs also
have been modified to allow for different
role projections on the part of staff mem-
bers who help prepare school leaders,
and have been clarified in terms of pre-
parative purposes.

In brief, PEPES was a four-year exper-
imentation dedicated to the development
of more adequate procedures for prepa-
ing educational supervisors. As with all
preparative programs, it began with a
series of operational assumptions and
decisions. It had a set of preparatory pur-
poses, a series of assumptions about su-
 pervision, people and preparation, and
a tentative plan of operation. PEPES,
unlike most programs, held these as ten-
tative hypotheses to be tested through
their implementation.

As staff gained experience and as eval-
uative data became available, the opera-
tional plan and procedures were revised
and modified accordingly so that the
experimentation itself was developmental
in nature. This flexibility, this continuous
evaluation and modification of proce-
dures, was a significant characteristic of
PEPES, a characteristic which may have
vital meaning for future experimentation
aimed at developing more adequate in-
structional leadership programs.