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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.¹ 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-

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¹ For a full report of this project see "Program of Experimentation in Preparing Educational Supervisors," *Bulletin of the Bureau of School Service*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, June 1962, College of Education, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

priate 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, bi-weekly 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-preparation together to utilize institutional resources providing specifically needed information, to share experiences, to develop 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 supervisors in preparation.

Staff participation in this type of preparation program demanded knowledge, understandings and behaviors quite different from those required in typical programs. 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 evaluate its own levels of development, identify 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 institutions with uniquely different backgrounds can cooperatively develop and implement experimentation which results in improving the quality of preparation programs for supervisors within a state. As a result

of the experimentation, preparation programs for all school leaders at the University 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 members who help prepare school leaders, and have been clarified in terms of preparative purposes.

In brief, PEPES was a four-year experimentation dedicated to the development of more adequate procedures for preparing educational supervisors. As with all preparative programs, it began with a series of operational assumptions and decisions. It had a set of preparatory purposes, a series of assumptions about supervision, people and preparation, and a tentative plan of operation. PEPES, unlike most programs, held these as tentative hypotheses to be tested through their implementation.

As staff gained experience and as evaluative data became available, the operational 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 procedures, was a significant characteristic of PEPES, a characteristic which may have vital meaning for future experimentation aimed at developing more adequate instructional leadership programs.

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