

The "Guese" of Supervision

ONE would think that, with the practice man has had in communicating through the ages he would have perfected his systems by now. There continue to be breakdowns that threaten relations between individuals, groups of people, and nations. A marginal note on a government report not intended for transmittal has been known to strain relations between nations that have been on friendly terms for years.

Hall in *The Silent Language* says:

I am convinced that much of our difficulty with people in other countries stems from the fact that so little is known about cross-cultural communication.¹

He continues:

... this formal training in the language, history, government and customs of another nation is only the first step in a comprehensive program. Of equal importance is the introduction to the non-verbal language which exists in every country of the world and among the various groups within each country. Most Americans are only dimly aware of this silent language even though they use it every day. They are not conscious of the elaborate patterning of behavior which prescribed our handling of

time, our spatial relationships, our attitudes toward work, play and learning. In addition to what we say with our verbal language we are constantly communicating our feelings in our silent language—the language of behavior.²

From his background as a semanticist, Hayakawa pushes further the difficulties in communication both between and within groups:

Today, the public is aware, perhaps to an unprecedented degree of the role of verbal communication in human affairs. This awareness arises partly, of course, out of the urgency of the tensions everywhere existing between nation and nation, class and class, individual and individual, in a world that is changing with fantastic rapidity. It arises, too, out of the knowledge on the part even of the most reflective elements of the population that enormous powers for good or evil lie in the media of mass communication. Thoughtful people in all walks of life feel, therefore, the need of systematic help in the huge task that confronts all of us today, namely, that of interpreting and evaluating the verbally received communications that pour in on us from all sides.³

² *Ibid.*

³ S. I. Hayakawa. *Language in Thought and Action*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949. p. iii-iv.

¹ Edward T. Hall. *The Silent Language*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1959. p. 10.

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It appears as if man has put forth special efforts to keep language in certain slots—slots that belong to individuals, to groups, and to nations. Today we have the language of the banker, the jockey, the actor, the lumberjack, the surfer, and so on ad infinitum.

The banker uses such terms as amortization, bear market, callable, debenture, refinancing and many others.

The jockey talks about the totalizator, the mudder, odds, parimutuel, win, place and show.

The actor uses such terms as cues, loft, gels, wings, flats and sides.

The lumberjack talks about the whistle punk, sawyer, pond and edger.

The surfer⁴ engages in such surfing expressions as over the falls, wipe out, goofy foot, hang ten, hot dogger and many others.

Language patterns, expressions and idioms peculiar to practically every trade and profession could be described. Language is coined and used in many instances to build an exclusion wall around a trade or profession. Such a wall is intended to give status and cohesiveness to the group, to make communication easier within the group and to create a brotherhood or in-group of the profession.

Speakers and writers frequently refer to the language peculiar to a trade or profession as the "guese"; for example, the language of educators is referred to as "pedagogue." If the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker can afford the

⁴ A teen-ager who read the manuscript said, "I could give you a lot of teen-age talk but if you used it your article would be dated because next year the talk will all be different."

luxury of a "guese"—why cannot the educator have his pedagogue?

The blocks to communication and the threats to wholesome human relations in our society are not the "guese" but the failure of the in-group to interpret language to the out-group. One's social graces should dictate when a particular "guese" is proper and when it is improper. If a person has some money to invest with a banker or at the track he goes out of his way to learn the "guese" of the banker or of the racing expert. If individuals have an interest in education, they will go out of their way to find the meanings of the terms frequently used.

Many Voices—Many Languages

The writer has difficulty in recalling any glossary of educational terms prepared for public consumption which might improve communication between the school and the community. Those glossaries which have come out are directed to educators and most of them are attempts to lampoon terms used by fellow educators. It might pay dividends if every school district were to prepare a glossary which would be ready for each child to take home after his first day at school. The programs of parent organizations and other civic groups might be planned around the glossary, using a variety of techniques to enhance communication between the school and the community.

It is difficult to talk or write about the language of supervision apart from the many interrelated languages that affect educational programs—the language of the child, the language of the mother and father to say nothing of the languages of the other members of the family, the language of the teacher, the

principal, the superintendent, the school nurse, the psychologist, the school board—not to mention the languages of the power group and the various minority groups in the community.

True, democracy is made up of many voices and each voice has the right to be heard again and again. However, there are certain principles unique to the processes of democracy which make it possible to determine whether the voices ring true and whether the language expressed is in harmony with the principles of democratic living. Sometimes we hear the voices of the fakers riding on band-wagons who speak and write glibly about serving society and protecting the welfare of children. At other times we hear the dedicated educators who see the perpetuation and improvement of democracy as being realized through an education program custom-built for each individual so he will meet his needs and reach his highest potential.

Supervision in education has moved from the time when it meant demonstration and inspection. This function has become, in effect, a many-splendored thing set in a matrix of understandings, skills and values related to the growth of individuals as participating members of a democratic society. In earlier days supervision was a simple operation when it meant that someone from "downtown" or the "county seat" walked up and down the aisles of a classroom making notes in a little black book and then went back to the office to fill in a form, a copy of which was sent to the teacher, which answered, with *Yes* or *No*, such questions as:

Was the lesson socialized?

Did the children stand to recite?

Were the decorations in the room seasonal?

Franseth adds new dimensions to supervision in the statement:

Today supervision is generally seen as leadership that encourages a continuous involvement of all school personnel in a cooperative attempt to achieve the most effective school program.⁵

In a summary statement Franseth suggests four ways in which supervision is most effective in realizing these new dimensions:

(1) When it contributes significantly to the accomplishment of goals considered important by the teachers as well as by the supervisors; (2) When the teachers are meaningfully involved in making and carrying out plans that affect them, with a part in determining what the supervisory service should be; (3) When supervision provides an atmosphere of acceptance, support and understanding, and helps people experience feelings of worth; and (4) When supervision helps people make sound judgments and act on the basis of careful study of adequate and accurate information.⁶

The Supervisor's Language

As supervision moves to encompass new dimensions, the language of supervision talks about such things as:

The Goals of Education—The emphasis is on a statement of goals or a set of beliefs which is built school by school, district by district, with everyone affected by it participating in its preparation. The answers to the question of appropriate opportunities for children and youth will be found in a clearly defined statement in harmony with the principles of education in a democratic society. Such statements should provide the plat-

⁵ Jane Franseth. *Supervision as Leadership*. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson Company, 1961. p. 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

form upon which to build programs suited to the needs of our times.

A publication of the California State Department of Education suggests the following questions as the basis for evaluating statements of goals:

1. Is the statement of the objectives available to all interested persons?

2. Is the statement in accord with the broad purposes of democracy?

3. Have legal requirements as established by the Legislature and the State Board of Education been met?

4. Is the statement based on the requirements of the course of study as established by the governing board of the school district or the office of the county superintendent of schools?

5. Is the statement in harmony with well-substantiated research in child growth and development?

6. Is the statement in harmony with well-substantiated research in mental health?

7. Are school practices consistent with the established goals?

8. Does the school have an organized plan to evaluate progress toward the fulfillment of the goals?

9. Do school personnel and members of the community refer to the goals when making decisions?

10. Are the goals reviewed and revised from time to time as the situation changes?

Numerous statements of the purposes or goals of education in a democratic society have been prepared by committees of national repute. Accepting these statements for a particular school by a local committee or an administrator is one thing. Having them used for study purposes as a basis for working out statements that will fit their peculiar needs is

¹ Bernard J. Lonsdale and Afton D. Nance. *Evaluating the Elementary School*, Revised. Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol. XXX, No. 3, Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1961. p. 29.

quite another thing. The people whose nervous systems are most deeply affected by statements of goals or purposes are those who participated in their preparation.

Individual Differences in People—The stress is placed upon the differences—physical, social and intellectual—that characterize human beings. Each individual is recognized as a unique personality. Each has the right to develop to his fullest potential. Each is entitled to feel that he counts. Too often in our society some individuals feel that if everybody is somebody then nobody is anybody. The talk turns to “keeping certain people in their place.” The question asked in supervision is, “How can the differences that characterize an individual be turned into assets for the good of the whole group?”

The Basic Human Needs That Individuals Must Satisfy—Unless an individual has opportunity to satisfy his basic needs which come out of the structure of his organism, the social context in which he develops, and his personal growth, he may be frustrated and spend his life in fruitless searching which often ends in despair and personality damage. Stress in the language of supervision is placed upon the need to sense the extent to which the basic needs of individuals are being met and as one meets his own needs to help others to meet theirs. The help to others may be shown in a warm smile, an invitation to coffee, a willingness to listen.

The Need To Know Children and Youth—Emphasis is placed upon a knowledge of the characteristics of growth and development of children and youth. These characteristics also apply to adult development. Each one goes through the same pattern but each goes

through at a rate peculiar to himself. Each one comes through as a custom built job—some with more assets than others, some with more liabilities than others—but each with his own pocket full of stars. Stress in the language of supervision is placed upon the need for skill in the techniques of observing, studying and interpreting human behavior. Understanding that all behavior is caused and that the causes are many and interrelated is an important dimension in human relations. It may not be possible in many instances to know the cause, but to know that there is a cause contributes to better working relations.

Effective Teaching Methods—The language of supervision has stopped saying, through the use of directives, "This is the way to do it." Good supervisors realize that any change that might come from a directive can only be of the narrow routine type. The big changes, the really important ones, are those that come out of the teacher's changed behavior. Extensive research pertaining to effective methods of teaching has been done. Many of these research studies have set boundaries as to the most and the least effective ways of working. There is need for studies which will extend the boundaries set by this research. There is further need for research done by teachers who will be identified with the findings and who will put them into practice.

What evidence is there that certain methods of instruction are more effective than others? Could a particular method yield more learnings than another? Why does a child fail in one situation and succeed in another? How does one way of learning interrelate and support another? These questions are merely illustrative of the myriad questions teachers ask every day. The language of supervision sug-

gests that teachers carry on research of significance to themselves. After they have defined a problem, they can state a hypothesis that will indicate the procedure to be followed and the outcomes to be expected. With this as a basis for starting, they have a laboratory in the classroom in which to collect data, evaluate it, and test the hypothesis. The emphasis in the language of supervision should be of the kind that will help teachers to create the design for the research, develop instruments needed for securing the necessary data, and interpret the records.

Use of Instructional Materials—Emphasis is placed upon the use of a variety of materials of instruction. As new insights are gained regarding the learning process, it becomes obvious that materials that have appeal to all the senses should be made available in classrooms. Each day, it seems, new materials come on the market which have learning value or which facilitate learning. Teachers are encouraged to experiment with these new materials and to use them in their research patterns. Too often new materials are condemned and passed over before they are even tried. Community resources are of immeasurable value as materials of instruction. People, places and things outside the classroom can contribute significantly to learning situations. †

Creativity—A high premium is placed on the potential for creativity which is innate in each individual. The time has passed when creativity was thought to belong only to a chosen few. Kelley and Rasey say:

Whenever an individual takes a set of known answers and contrives a new response, concept, or artifact he is creative. It is the process of taking the things we

now have or now know and putting these together in such a way that something new emerges.⁸

This concept of creativity is furthered by Russell when he says:

In one sense, all a child's learning is creative in that he arrives at what is, for him, new solutions. Some writers prefer to limit the more routine school and community learnings to the process of discovery and to describe by the term *creative thinking* only those processes which result in some product or solution of an original sort. Children's learnings may be described on a scale ranging from routine associative learnings through rather stereotyped problem-solving processes to highly original creative thinking resulting in new solutions for the individual and his subculture.⁹

The language of supervision urges an atmosphere in which teachers are encouraged to express themselves creatively. As teachers are motivated to develop their own creative abilities they in turn provide creative opportunities for children.

The creative personality does not develop under an autocratic regime. The language of supervision places a heavy stress upon the democratic processes because they hold most promise for freeing individuals to make their fullest contribution to the welfare of the individual and the group.

In part of the response to the question, "Is America Neglecting Her Creative Minority?" Toynbee¹⁰ says:

Potential creative ability can be stifled, stunted, and stultified by the prevalence in

⁸ E. C. Kelley and M. I. Rasey. *Education and the Nature of Man*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962. p. 116.

⁹ David H. Russell. *Children's Thinking*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1959. p. 326-27.

¹⁰ Arnold Toynbee. "Is America Neglecting Her Creative Minority?" *Mills Quarterly* 44:5-6, May 1962.

society of adverse attitudes of mind and habits of behavior. . . . When creative ability is thwarted, it will not be extinguished; it is more likely to be given an antisocial turn.

The challenge today in education is for everyone to think creatively. No one group of individuals in our society has an option on creative living. The satisfactions which are the by-products of creativity are available to all.

All of this supervision talk implies the need for continuous education, not only for teachers but for everyone responsible for planning educational programs. The language of supervision has a chance to be heard and understood by the types of in-service education programs developed cooperatively with the people who will profit from them.

The language of supervision will continue to talk about the goals of education, individual differences in people, the basic human needs that individuals must satisfy, the need to know children and youth, effective teaching methods, the use of instructional materials, and creativity.

It is evident that supervision means different things to different people. Many of the concepts held by the different individuals are inadequate as guides to the improvement of instruction. As a result, the language of supervision becomes a voice crying in the wilderness.

Supervision will never go back to inspection and demonstration. Through the thinking, action, and language, both spoken and silent, of dedicated educators its new role has emerged. Supervision will continue to improve instruction. The future greatness of our country will be built through the quality of education made available to every individual who is a part of this nation.

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