

Programing for In-Service Growth

FOR approximately half a century the professional literature in education has reflected a growing awareness of the relationship which exists between the continued development of staff in service and the improvement of instructional programs. A. J. Stoddard well summarized this awareness in 1939:

It should be emphasized that progress is made in bringing together theory and practice, or the science of knowledge and its application, only through a continuous program of growth in service.¹

During the ensuing 25 years, much has been learned about teacher education in service. However, as professionals, we still have a long way to go. Even now, in-service teacher education is seldom conceptualized in practice as the continuation of preservice preparation. Too frequently in-service educational practices are characterized by an aggregate of incidental activities, sporadic in occurrence, lacking in productive purpose, unorganized in structure and unsynchronized within the framework of a school district's total operation. Perhaps a staff does grow or improve

through such activities; however, the evidence seems to indicate that the bird of chance wings high on the winds of such uncertainty.

Programs—or practices—of in-service teacher education which appear to be producing results of a promising and lasting character are those in which conscious effort is made to reduce the element of chance in the development of staff. At the practical as well as the theoretical level, positive and directional growth is enhanced through a *program* of in-service teacher education which develops activities planned most carefully in terms of *directional purposes*, *organizational structure*, and *operational processes* which are synchronized and complementary. There are several principles or guidelines which operate to reduce chance in the development of staff in service. However, the three which follow appear to be those which most uniquely distinguish the *typical* from the *promising* current practices in programs of teacher education in service.

¹A. J. Stoddard. "The Growth of Teachers in Service." *Educational Record* 20: 501; October 1939.

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A Program for Growth

In-service teacher education purposes are identified from a matrix of instructional improvement activities and procedures.

Obviously, the ultimate goal of all teacher education is the improvement of instruction in classrooms. However, not all efforts to improve the quality of instruction are, or should be, concerned with teacher education in service. In general, schools and school districts seek to improve their instructional programs through one or more of the following ways:

1. The *purposes* of the school may be modified, thus shifting the emphasis in instruction toward a newly arranged set of *a priori* goals.

2. The *physical environment* may be altered by providing a new or remodeled school plant, classrooms and/or equipment more conducive to effective learning.

3. The *content* of the curriculum may be restructured, thus creating modifications in instruction.

4. The quantity and/or quality of *instructional materials* may be increased to provide more adequate tools for instruction.

5. The *organizational structure* of the instructional program may be modified to bring about a more effective framework within which instruction occurs.

6. The *behavior or performance of the professional staff* may be modified through in-service education to increase the staff's competencies in instruction.

The most promising practices in in-service teacher education conceptually delineate the modification of staff behavior from the other five approaches to instructional improvement. However, *operationally*, modifications in one or more

of these five are used as "vehicles" upon which learning opportunities for the staff can be developed.

The use of this concept requires a school to be engaged in a variety of activities calculated to result in improved instruction. The more actively involved staff members are, the greater the possibility of their consciously identifying purposes for programing for their own self-growth. For example, in one elementary school in-service teacher education received little attention until new pieces of science equipment were placed in the building. The staff members recognized a need to learn how to use this equipment effectively and identified the extension of their understandings of and skills in using this equipment as a primary purpose for their growth. Subsequently, they structured a carefully planned series of activities through which they might learn these skills and understandings. Thus, in effect, through the clarity of their purpose and the care with which they planned, they established an experience for themselves which in turn reduced the element of chance in this part of their program.

In-service teacher education develops and utilizes adequate leadership.

Adequate leadership characterizes those in-service programs which appear to be most promising in terms of reducing the element of chance in teacher education. This second principle implies that designated positions are assigned the function of in-service teacher education, and that this assignment is accompanied by the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibility. *Function*, however, should not be confused with *role*, for as here used, *function* denotes the specialized focus or perimeter of primary responsibility of a position, whereas *roles*

are those activities performed in fulfilling the function.

In this sense, function is a constant, while roles must necessarily vary in relation to situational factors and hence are frequently in a state of change. For example, suppose the function of in-service teacher education is assigned within a school district to the position of general supervisor. In performing this function, the supervisor would play roles ranging from conferring with an individual teacher to organizing a faculty study group.

Leadership for in-service teacher education, then, seems most effective when functions are assigned at three levels: (a) the local school level, usually involving the principal; (b) the central office level, comprising the superintendent, the supervisory staff and other central office personnel; and (c) the school district level, comprising the central office staff and the principals of local schools. The necessity for the first two levels is obvious; the third level becomes necessary to provide in-service educational programming for those in status leadership positions, thus to enhance the coordination of the district's total teacher education program.

In practice, the assignment of leadership functions to specific leadership positions helps insure that adequate roles can be identified for such leadership personnel. In promising programs, for example, the superintendent performs such delineated roles as: providing for adequate budgetary support; seeing that schedule and calendar arrangements are sufficient; employing personnel with competencies supportive of the program; serving as liaison with the state department of education, cooperating colleges and other agencies; making proper delegation of authority to implement the pro-

gram; and, above all, creating a climate which clearly communicates the importance of the program.

The supervisory staff is responsible in turn for providing leadership for programming at three levels: (a) for the central office staff, (b) for district-wide activities, and (c) for the local school activities. Whether this is a staff of one or of many, the type of leadership provided by the person assigned this function is crucial to the success of such programming. His is the responsibility of serving as an *initiator*! The nature of this responsibility, coupled with our present knowledge of helping people learn, requires that this function of initiating be fulfilled in cooperation with all members of the leadership structure as well as with teachers involved in such a program. His responsibility is that of a "staff educator"—a teacher of teachers—with the primary focus of his efforts upon instructional improvement as a consequence of teacher education.

The building principal, however, has the ultimate responsibility for the quality of such in-service programs. The individual school is the seedbed for the germination of such projects. It is at this level that professional competencies are displayed with children; it is here that professional performance can be analyzed in terms of instructional goals; and it is from the reality of the local instructional program that effective experiences can best be developed for staff growth.

In this sense, the principal's function becomes twofold. First, he is the initiator of activities designed to improve the instructional program within his school. His is the responsibility of maintaining a constant, though systematic, maelstrom of activity in terms of clarifying purposes of the school, improving the physical environment, revising the content of the

curriculum, providing instructional materials and developing an optimum organizational structure for the instructional program. Second, as he and his staff engage in such activities, it is his responsibility to insure that his staff members analyze their performance in relation to these activities and then to structure an in-service program to help increase competencies relative to the goals set for the instructional program.

Thus with the adequate assignment and fulfillment of leadership functions relative to in-service teacher education, the element of chance, while not removed is reduced.

In-service teacher education has a curriculum.

Probably the most significant operational principle which differentiates the promising from the typical in-service practices is that of conceptualizing and treating in-service teacher education as an instructional program itself. In this sense, promising practices (programs) are those in which professional performance has been clearly identified as an essential requisite for instructional improvement, staff development purposes have been identified and communicated, an organizational structure has been created to facilitate the achievement of these purposes, and operational processes have been employed in keeping with sound principles of learning. These are essential elements of any curriculum and their application to in-service teacher education implies that the reduction of chance in programing for staff development must be systematized and planned just as we plan and structure a curriculum for students.

Any curriculum must have purposes, and a curriculum for teacher education in service is no exception. While such purposes for the in-service phase of

teacher education may not differ materially from those held for preservice preparation, the processes used for their identification are quite different. The environment in which teachers function provides an operational reality for the identification of needs as well as an excellent medium for purposeful programing to meet these needs.

A curriculum also has an internal structure which enables teachers to perform within a framework which offers security based upon promises of success in terms of identified purposes. Such a structure recognizes and delimits the time factor so that a priority of emphasis can be employed. This prevents an activity from dragging on interminably, and facilitates the assignment and fulfillment of role expectations of all.

A curriculum also implies that *learning* is the goal of the endeavor. Consequently, the same principles deemed necessary in a classroom are equally applicable in a curriculum for the education of teachers in service. Adults are also affected in their learning process by the stimulation of their environment, by a recognition of expectations held for them by the organization, by personal goals which transcend the organization's goals, by their recognition of personal needs, by their perceptual panorama of themselves and others, and by the behavior of their peers. A curriculum for teachers in service capitalizes upon such principles of learning.

Such a curriculum also has access to and makes use of pertinent materials and resources. Deemed inadequate are resources limited to those provided by the participants themselves in a process called "sharing" or those provided by "outside" consultants. A wide range of materials and resources becomes a

(Continued on page 340)

potent tool for facilitating learning in teacher education in service.

Finally, a curriculum must be geared to facilitating the growth of the individual teacher. The range of variability among teachers in terms of needs, interests, capabilities and attitudes is as infinite as are these same characteristics among children. While grouping teachers for a special reason is a valuable technique, it should not be forgotten that only individuals are capable of learning. Perhaps individualization of instruction is as perplexing in reducing the "chance learning" factor in teacher education as it is with children in a classroom.

We should not expect to operate always at the apex of perfection. Possibly the most significant of all promising practices related to the reduction of chance from in-service education is that the

leadership staff itself is *striving to learn to function more effectively!* It is most important that they too learn how to take full advantage of their present knowledge and skill in developing programs for their own further education.

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