

Emergence of Technical Supervision

SUPERVISION, the oldest of the non-teaching specializations in American education, began as simple inspection of teaching. It was oriented toward stability and conformity. The approach was to inspect, to see whether teachers were doing what was expected of them or not, to promote conformity and to avoid deviations. The era of the progressive education movement in the United States thoroughly destroyed inspection as the basic image of supervision. The concept of inspection for conformity is no longer an acceptable one, and it has not been for many years. On the other hand, during the past years since World War II the supervisory profession has been developing new directions and new definitions of its function. A new professional image is beginning to emerge.

Supervision is developing as a distinctive function of the school operation. Supervisors are increasingly finding it possible to earn recognition for themselves as members of a sub-profession with specialized competencies, with unique responsibilities, and identifiable

programs. *Specialized competencies* are required for a sub-profession. Although they are not the unique property of supervisors, certain specialized competencies in supervision have been developed that are uniquely valuable in the school operation. *Unique responsibilities* of the supervisor are gradually beginning to be defined in such a way as to delineate the supervisor's work from that of the principal, the teacher, the superintendent and others. *Identifiable programs* of supervision are being developed so that the supervisor emerges as a person who gives direct leadership to distinctive programs replacing the more rigidly service-oriented operation of the supervisor of the past.

A Point of Focus

How does this new image of supervision come into focus as we move toward the development of supervisory programs? Let us start with the teacher and other instructional personnel as the central concern of supervision. Let us assume that conditions are appropriate for change in a particular direction. With focus upon one person, our purposes are es-

Ben M. Harris is Associate Professor and Supervision Program Director, University of Texas, Austin.

essentially those of the in-service education task. We are concerned about changes in behavior in people so that instruction might be improved and pupils might better learn.

We approach the question of the use of supervisory activities from the point of view of *strategies* for change and program development. This is somewhat different from the approaches which have sometimes been used, in that a strategic approach involves three basic considerations as follows:

1. *Diagnosing problems and factors that are involved in a problem area.* This process of diagnosis of problems is an important part of the procedures leading to a strategy to be selected in supervisory program planning.

2. *Designing a supervisory program.* Once the problem has been clearly diagnosed, a strategy can be selected which permits the designing of a program involving careful selection of purposes and appropriate activities.

3. *Implementing a supervisory program.* This involves strong leadership, technical competence, the development of appropriate resources and cooperative effort.

In a sense, we are referring to a problem-solving process; moving from the diagnosis of the problem, to designing approaches to that problem, to implementing and evaluating. Let us look separately at each of these three aspects of the supervision process.

Diagnosis in Supervision

Systematic classroom observation is essential to diagnosis of teaching. This is only one way to find out about the problems that exist at the classroom level. Yet without systematic, rigorous,

skilled observation, we have very little basis for dealing with teachers' problems.

Diagnostic use of standardized test data has also aided in the identification of teaching and program problems. Diagnostic and standardized test results have been used for a variety of purposes. All too often, such results have been ignored in the process of identifying teaching problems. There are some hazards, of course, in using test data in this way, but if these hazards are appropriately avoided, their use can be effective.

The exacting use of evaluative criteria focuses upon problems beyond the scope of tests or individual classroom situations. By this I mean the use of evaluative criteria for diagnostic purposes in contrast with more superficial uses sometimes made of these criteria for accreditation purposes. Several very useful evaluative criteria-type instruments have been developed that might well serve for the diagnosis of school-wide or system-wide problems, if the instruments are used with this intent.

The opinions, feelings and observations of pupils can provide very valuable clues to problem areas in the school. There is a natural reluctance to use information from pupils for evaluation purposes. Nonetheless, there is no one in our schools who knows what goes on in the classroom better than the learner himself. We must gradually learn, with due caution, of course, how to make use of these opinions, feelings and observations of pupils to understand better the problem areas in our instructional programs.

The behavior of our graduates and non-graduates alike as they live in a larger society, is most significant in discerning the fundamental problems in our program. Follow-up studies can help to provide genuine insight into the

strengths and weaknesses of our program as these characteristics are reflected in the kinds of lives our students live.

Finally, teachers themselves can be a source of diagnostic information to guide supervisory program planning. Teacher opinions about problems they face have been widely used and sometimes misused in supervisory planning. More systematic opinion and attitude studies could serve well. Formal testing programs might prove worth while if we had the courage to try these.

Designing a Program

As we diagnose teaching-learning problems, we identify large goals upon which supervision programs must concentrate. These large goals, if truly significant, are too large to deal with *in toto*. It is necessary for such goals to be specified in terms of more limited realizable purposes. Objectives for supervisory programs should be specified in behavioral terms. We need to be able to indicate clearly what behaviors should be promoted; what skills, understandings, knowledges and attitudes we want to develop as they relate to a diagnosed problem area.

Having specified our purposes, it is possible to select appropriate activities in terms of these purposes. The context of the larger problem should be maintained to enhance the transfer from the supervisory program to the operational situation. Organizational arrangements for implementing activities must be given careful consideration as they involve schedules, assignments, and sequences of events. There is, finally, a question of resources to consider, both in the implementing and in the planning stages. It is necessary that we seriously consider the time, the material, the staff resources,

the facilities and money that will be required to implement a supervisory program. One of the most serious mistakes we tend to make is to launch upon a program which is highly desirable but impractical in the sense that we cannot muster the necessary resources for implementing it.

Implementation

Many factors, of course, influence the successful implementation of the program. We must give serious consideration to the flow of events. A supervisory program needs coordination in its implementation phases. Distractions need to be avoided. Unpredictable events need to be considered as they arise and influence the planned program. Side effects need to be dissipated.

It is highly unrealistic to expect all things to function smoothly as planned when we are undertaking a supervisory program of significance that really has an impact on people. Side effects and reactions will be real and considerable. They must be anticipated. They must be dealt with in constructive ways.

Of course morale must be maintained throughout the implementation of the program. Supervision programs cannot be programmed for automation. This may be possible in the distant future, but to date, effective implementation involves constant attention to on-going activities. High-level leadership responsibilities must be exercised for stimulation, coordination, allocation of resources, and dealing with turbulences that arise.

A final point that needs to be considered is the relationship between interest, leadership and progress toward designated purposes as we move through the phases of a program. As we move into a

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ticing profession—the teachers, supervisors, and administrators in the field—is to err as seriously as do those who would exclude representatives of the academic disciplines from the policy decisions regarding teacher education. The effective education of today's teachers depends upon the integrated planning of preservice and continuing educational experiences. Representatives of the practicing profession must be involved in this process in a fundamental way. It is essential that they recognize the importance of their involvement and insist upon it before the opportunity slips away.

Yes, people *are* important to the quality of American teacher education—both as individuals and in organized groups. But their importance depends upon their awareness of the issues before them and their vigor in accepting and discharging their responsibilities.

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program in the early stages, participant interest is high, leadership is high, but progress is low. As participants run into problems, leadership may be withdrawn and interest may decline before progress can be attained. At this point there is serious danger of the whole program's collapsing. When problems emerge, if leadership personnel will invest renewed energy, the problems can be overcome, progress will result, and interest will remain high.

It is important to remember that a supervisory program is something that grows out of a careful set of diagnostic procedures which identify problem areas. A supervision program can be designed with careful attention to the kinds of supervisory activities required to accomplish specified purposes.

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