

Issues in Professionalization

**Certification Requirements
for General Supervisors and/or Curriculum Workers
Today—Tomorrow**

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RECENT articles in this journal have explored the meaning of professionalization as it relates specifically to supervisors and curriculum workers. Harold T. Shafer's article in December looked backward to the Flexner Report on education in the medical profession to gain a better perspective of preparation in our own field. In Rowannetta S. Allen's article in January it was apparent to the reader that the unique role of the supervisor needs clarifying. The approach of defining the supervisor's role by functions seems to offer promise. Maurice J. Eash in the February issue presented critical issues found in the preparatory programs for supervisors. Robert S. Thurman's article in April highlighted the need for identifying and selecting potential supervisors and curriculum workers.

Another necessary criterion for a profession is the establishment of quasi-legal policies and regulations which establish minimum requirements for the certification of individuals. These certification requirements affirm the individual's competency and serve to regulate the quantity as well as the quality. A profession must also have the means for enforcing the professional ethics and standards through provisions for revoking certification for cause.

Certification requirements for general supervisors and/or curriculum workers must be strengthened if professionalization of this category of educators is to be attained. A study of the certification requirements for supervisors and/or curriculum workers completed in 1964 revealed wide discrepancies in these standards among the 50 states. There was a total of 71 certificates for supervisors and/or curriculum workers available in 36 of the 50 states. Some certificates entitled the holder to supervise at either the elementary or secondary level, or both, with a few certificates undesignated. Twelve of these 71 certificates were for supervision

of special subject matter areas and two entitled the holder to supervise both general and special subject areas.

Suggested Principles

If stronger certification requirements are the hallmark of a profession, then certain principles should be developed. The following are suggested:

1. *Certification requirements should give recognition to the unique role of the general supervisor and/or curriculum worker needed for today's schools.*

At present supervisors are certified under the administrator's certificate in eight states, while in one state the teacher's certificate was the basis under which the supervisor worked. In another state, which had a certificate for supervisors, a supervisor could actually work under any certificate—teacher's, principal's, or superintendent's.

2. *Certification should be based on the development of a planned program by the training institution, approved by the licensing agent, the State Department of Education.*

This planned program should provide for a balance among theory, observation, field work, and practice in research skills.

At present the supervisory programs of the education institutions were approved in 13 states. However, it was not clear, from the stated requirements, what the approving agency was. In one state an internship was required while another state had a permissive program for internship.

In only one certificate was the phrase "planned program" found.

3. *Certification should be granted automatically upon recommendation of the training institution when the planned graduate program has been successfully completed.*

At present, certification is generally based on completion of course work and specified experience. However, 16 of the 71 certificates issued in 1964 had no major courses required. Fifty-one certificates required courses in supervision, 32 certificates required curriculum courses, and 24 certificates required courses in administration.

Eleven of the 71 certificates had no experience requirements listed.

Over half of the 71 certificates required teaching experience ranging from 2 to 5 years, 7 certificates required supervisory experience, and 3 called for teaching or supervisory experience. The remaining certificates called for various types of administrative experience.

4. *The number of training institutions should be limited in order to bring a balance between supply and demand to assure an adequate program.*

Two states have as many as 27 institutions offering classes needed to meet certification requirements for supervisors' certification. In another state (Kentucky) in which there are 8 institutions offering course work for supervisory certification, the supply is far in excess of the state's needs.

5. Certification requirements should provide for continuing professional growth and be issued for specified lengths of time.

Life certificates are not recommended unless there is some provision to assure continuing professional growth, use of certificate, and revocation.

Forty-four of the 71 certificates had no requirements stated for renewal of the certificate. There were 8 certificates granted for life, while 15 certificates were issued for specified lengths of time, the range being 3 to 10 years. Of the remaining 4 certificates, each had a different requirement for renewal. Some certificates were renewable if a certain specified number of class hours had been earned. A few certificates were renewable on evidence of professional service and growth. (Several states had a requirement of supervisory services within a specified length of time to keep the certificate valid.) Only one state indicated that the certificate could be revoked.

6. It is desirable to have both provisional and professional or standard certificates.

The provisional certificate should be for the beginning supervisor, have less stringent requirements, and be valid for a limited period of time.

A professional or standard certificate should represent continued professional growth, contributions to the profession, and effective and efficient performance and be valid for a longer period of time. Provision should be made for renewal of the latter certificate as long as the holder meets the requirements for it. Means for revocation of either type of certificate on moral, ethical, or professional grounds should be clearly stated.

Among the 36 states issuing certificates for supervisors, 12 have two types of certification for general supervisors.

7. In a society characterized by a high rate of mobility, it would be desirable to have reciprocity for the supervisors' certificates among the states.

This principle calls for appraisal of the programs of the preparing institutions by a national accreditation organization.

The 1964 study gives no indication that there is any degree of reciprocity of this kind among the states.

The incongruence between the principles as stated and the findings in the 1964 study of certification requirements for supervisors and/or curriculum workers dramatizes the great need for a concerted attack upon the matter of the certification requirements in the 50 states.

We suggest the following questions for study and action:

1. To what degree do the certification requirements for general supervisors in your state meet the principles as stated above?

2. After pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses in the certification requirements for general supervisors, what plan of action would you devise?

3. What organization and/or persons could be enlisted to strengthen the certification requirements for general supervisors in your state? 

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