

THE SUPERVISOR WE NEED

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WE NEED a supervisor who makes a difference; one who acts directly and effectively to improve the instructional program. Most of us would agree with such an assertion and recognize it as being consistent with contemporary theory in educational supervision. Such theory holds to the primacy of the supervisor in working to improve teaching.

In activating this perspective, the supervisor functions as an analyst of the teaching process, creating the conditions whereby teachers can study their instructional behavior. He is responsible for identifying instructional problems and for providing leadership in their resolution. He is an authority on teaching, a resource person, an expert in group dynamics, and more recently is conceived of as a catalyst or an agent of change. This constitutes a general statement of the supervisor we need.

Supervisory Theory

In attempting to achieve this state of supervision we have tended to espouse practices based upon the principles of

sound human relationships. Drawing upon social psychology, group dynamics, and sociological research, supervisory leaders constructed an interpretation of supervision. If practices stood as reliable exponents of effective human relationships, hewn from the behavioral and social sciences, instructional growth was thought to be assured.

Here the sanctity and respect of each staff member was crucial. The ideas of the individual, his strengths as a teacher and partner in the consideration of professional concerns were accented. The consistency of this motif with our creed as a nation made such a theme suitable—even rational. Its supporters grew and diminished as the fortunes of American education were buffeted by the mainstream of social-cultural change.

The human relations theory of supervision has never been presented as the easy, all's well, interpretation of supervision. Marshaling the resources of variant individuals while providing for their growth and consequently the growth of the instructional program is recognized as a complex undertaking.

Where this approach has been applied with understanding, based upon careful analysis and the construction of a conceptual framework to guide it, the results have been most exciting and beneficial.

In too many instances, however, the conceptual framework has not accompanied the development of supervisory programs. That is, a vaguely conceived format of process, roles and responsibilities can be easily dismissed and replaced by little more than good intentions. Often disillusionment and frustration appear as the power of a lost idea or the momentum for change passes. Old patterns become extremely attractive in such circumstances. Thus an ideal of productivity, growth and change, through the application of sound human relationships is subsumed by the need to maintain the system. The symbols: the phrases, the committees, and communication system are retained—more as an expression of hope than reality.

This description of the course of supervisory theory as applied in action programs is not meant to deny the importance of the human relations emphasis in supervision. It is not a comprehensive explanation of supervisory developments. Its purpose is to emphasize that the full power of supervisory programs, utilizing the principles of human relations and the school as a social system has seldom materialized.

In the judgment of the writer, teachers see this interpretation of supervision as relatively nonexistent, yet one which they desire; also that the major reasons for this discrepancy are the lack of skills attendant to this conception of supervision, and the absence of any real

struggle to define the "root" meanings of the theory upon which it is based. In the latter case we have been too ready to accept the generalizations—and acceptance which is devoid of thoughtful study is apt to produce the dissemination of a definition in contrast to an operational design extracted from tenets which have been carefully weighed and measured.

What is needed are supervisors who can transform principles of human relations into substantive programs of action. Making people feel comfortable, creating lines of communication, fostering security, all such concerns are basic but valid only as they contribute to the study of teaching. At a given time disequilibrium may be the appropriate condition for instructional growth. To make operational decisions in these areas supervisors must study formal organization, role theory, communication, decision making, personality theory, the change process and other areas significant to the human relations perspective of supervision. Offering pronouncements about the power of the group and "working together" does not represent a supervisory program.

If we can give pause to the incantation and realistically assess our approach to improved instruction, needed changes in supervisory behavior may be identified. In particular, the relationship of theory and practice must be reviewed. Where supervision is effective it stands the test of internal consistency; a theory, operational principles and supervisory procedures hold together. Simultaneously the analysis and research of supervision along with the interpretation of curriculum it

breeds must exist. Together, the theory, the operational design, and the constant redefinition as new data are added, constitutes dynamic supervision.

Analyst of the Teaching Process

The supervisor we need is a skillful diagnostician of the "matter" of his position. The matter in mind here is the teaching act. It is generally assumed that the supervisor, among other things, is a master teacher. He is capable of viewing the teaching process from a variety of dimensions. He is perceptive to the interaction of variables as they operate within a given class or school. As the process is viewed by the supervisor he sees the teacher as a pivotal factor; his strengths and abilities are being applied to the presentation of ideas; the students are engaged in building their conceptual power and hopefully testing and constructing value patterns which have meaning for them.

To improve teaching, the supervisor must have an intrinsic grasp of the dynamics of teaching and a number of methods for analyzing the process. Does effective teaching behavior have certain logical qualities? (Meux and Smith [6]); is teaching best studied as problem solving or coping behavior? (Turner [9]; how do teachers having particular characteristics, properties or behaviors, affect the behavior of pupils? (Ryans [8]); can teaching be conceived of as interaction? (Flanders [4]).

Research on teaching as identified above can provide the supervisor with a number of alternatives in analyzing the work of teachers. In no sense are the findings of these researchers intended to "wrap up" the problem. They represent, however, systematic, sophis-

ticated approaches to the analysis of teaching and as such they point to valid concerns for the supervisory program.

The supervisor extends his perceptivity of teaching by studying the implications of such research. It aids the multi-dimensional interpretation and should enable the supervisor to refine his conceptualization of the process. This is an imperative. It does not imply that the supervisor's view will become the singular good but rather that it will support the development of supervisory practices and procedures that make *teaching* the core concern. It also promotes depth thinking about the teaching process.

As such thinking prevails, problems and issues begin to assume a priority relationship—even to the point of suggesting that the dress of the teacher, and the neatness of the room are relatively subordinate concerns for professionals centering on learning and its illusive facets. The supervisor we need is a student of the teaching process who functions to transpose a presentation into a transaction of significance for both teacher and students.

How Do Teachers View Supervision?

Where the intent of my actions are clear to me but held suspect by others the results of our professional relationship will be limited. If I am aware of the disparity between my intentions and the "reality" with which they are perceived, it may be possible to take steps to mediate the difference and slowly build the trust and mutual respect so necessary for instructional improvement. Since teachers are either the recipients of or partners in the su-

pervisory process, what they perceive supervision to be is important data in building a sound program.

In 1961 Carolyn Guss (5) reported on the Indiana ASCD supervision study. She summarized the reactions of teachers concerning supervision as follows:

They tended to want to avoid being the object of supervision. Some of them considered supervision an attack upon them personally. Others thought of supervision as a program dealing with materials, ideas and schedules rather than with the teaching-learning situation as it affects personal relationships.

Subsequent studies and numerous prior investigations support the meaning of this reaction. In essence all of these combined attempts to analyze the condition and nature of supervision point directly to the following:

1. Teachers *do not* see supervision as focusing on the improvement of instruction.
2. Teachers *do not* see supervision as having a strong "human relations" base.
3. Teachers *do not* see supervisors as being prepared to help them in the study of teaching.
4. Teachers *want* supervision that will help them attack instructional problems.

It is possible to substantiate these generalizations with numerous research findings that go back to the 1920's. The trend continues to the present day. As the change in supervisory philosophy was made, it was evidently conceived as a statement of intent, while supervision in fact showed a contradictory posture within the school organization.

Teachers continue to recognize a contradiction and express strong ambivalence about the place and function of supervisory services. Keep in mind—

they may be wrong! Supervisors, in fact, may be instruction centered; they may be human-relations oriented; they may have the skills to help teachers study the process of teaching—but if so we have not measurably communicated these facts to those who stand to profit from our services.

What Do Teachers Want in Supervision?

In 1960 Lloyd Dull (3)¹ developed at Ohio State University a comprehensive set of criteria for the evaluation of supervisory programs. In many ways this study constituted a breakthrough. Most instruments of this type prior to Dull's study were "home-grown" lists drawn from the experience of local supervisors and teachers. In this case, one-hundred and twenty national leaders in educational supervision lent their talents to the verification of Dull's criteria. To some extent the concern of validity of the criteria was accommodated. Dull subsequently showed that he could apply the criteria to determine effective programs of supervision. Neville (7) (1963)² applied a modified form of Dull's criteria to ascer-

¹ This study is a most comprehensive statement of criteria for supervisory programs in education. It would serve as a good beginning point for school systems interested in studying their programs of supervision. Individual items are not overpowering in meaning but the total instrument provides a means of delineating the present state and needs in supervision. Again, it is a starting point. As mentioned in this article our problem is to make these ideas operational, not simply to recognize their present level of use. Dull's criteria are consistent with an operational definition of human relations approach to supervision.

² The 1963 study was conducted in Connecticut. Recently another study has been completed in Maryland.

tain the views of teachers regarding supervision.

Based upon this study, and recognizing the limitations imposed by geography and criteria selection, the following practices, procedures and conditions are specified as being very important, as perceived by teachers, in the development of supervisory programs which will make a difference in the quality of instruction:

The supervisory program provides for cooperative development of both immediate and long range curriculum plans.

Opportunity is provided for teachers to study in groups on problems of concern to them.

There is continuous evaluation of the instructional program.

Teachers are encouraged to assume leadership positions.

Job expectations and relationships are understood by professional staff.

Organization of staff for instructional improvement is democratically arranged.

Committees of teachers are organized for the improvement of teaching resources (community, school equipment, personnel and instructional materials).

There exists a coordinated attack upon pupil personnel problems and the diagnosis of learning difficulties.

The organization of the supervisory function is changed as the needs of the situation are modified.

Facilities and resources to strengthen the development of the curriculum are given priority consideration.

Supervisors are "master teachers."

The plan for evaluation of teachers is cooperatively evolved.

The evaluation system reflects the spirit

of in-service development and not that of inspection.

The evaluation plan is a guidance procedure, directed at helping the teacher help himself teach more effectively.

The focus for curriculum development is the needs of the individual school.

Teachers are involved in curriculum development on the basis of their interests, and needs of the school.

A curriculum materials center is maintained in the building (or school system).

An adequate library of professional materials is available to teachers.

Records are kept of the work and meetings of the staff as they consider their instructional problems.

Meetings are convened and adjourned promptly at the time set.

Agenda are sent to the staff well in advance of the meeting.

Teachers participate in the planning and organization of their meetings.

A major portion of staff meetings is reserved for dealing with the improvement of instruction.

The principal is with teachers and pupils often enough to be accepted as a peer on the instructional teams.

Demonstration teaching is arranged to show methods, procedures, and instructional devices.

Demonstrations are followed by constructive group discussions.

Arrangements for intervisitation of teachers are available to all.

Granted that we have long been aware of the need for such conditions, and that, as discrete items, these criteria do not dramatically add new dimensions to supervision. By applying them, however, it has been possible to accept

tentatively the hypothesis that teachers do not see supervision as being "co-operative action on instructional issues." It is not enough to describe the present status of supervision, as important as this may be.

More important is the development of supervisory programs which are relevant to the study and planned improvement of teaching. Programs which activate the intent of the above criteria would be recognized by supervisory leaders as contributing to instruction based supervision; teachers confirm their importance while reporting their notable absence in any concerted fashion in supervisory programs.

Building a Program

In conclusion, building a supervisory program which will release the power of teachers in the advancement of education is not a matter of applying criteria. Developing criteria and applying them is only a point of departure. As we continue to study the teaching process, and the organizational and social systems within which we operate a more rigorous guide to supervisory behavior may result.

There is ample evidence that we have lacked either the understanding or the skills necessary for supervision that improves instruction. Clearly this is no easy task and one which can not be formularized. It requires imagination, leadership and a conceptual framework for the teaching process and human relations. If humanizing instruction, that is the release of human potential, is a universal goal of our educational system, then its existence is as much a concern for the supervisor

who nurtures instruction as it is for the teacher.

There are many supervisors and school systems who have made a commitment, stated and operational, to instruction centered supervision. Their effectiveness and the vitality of the programs which result are testimony to the significance of the undertaking. The expenditure of energy and resources required are patently justified. If education for social invention (1), or for the open society, is to develop, there is great need for teachers who are sensitive to their power to cause the release of insight and rationality in others, and to recognize how to use it. This is the kind of supervision we need; that which causes teachers to go beyond routinized, ritualistic instruction, as an expression of their own personal struggle for fulfillment.

Lawrence Cremin (2) states the challenge:

Now, there is no denying that teachers must be technically competent, and the reformers have not only the right but the obligation to produce careful and detailed strategies for the use of their materials. (N. L. Gage has even put forth the intriguing suggestion that we develop a standard "choreography" for noting pedagogical prescriptions.) But education is too significant and dynamic an enterprise to be left to mere technicians; and we might as well begin now the prodigious task of preparing men and women who understand not only the substance of what they are teaching but also the theories behind the particular strategies they employ to convey that substance. A society committed to the continuing intellectual, aesthetic, and moral growth of all its members can ill afford less on the part of those who undertake to teach.

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The Forgotten Soul

*As I go to my school in early morn
Things pile up and I feel forlorn
Who helps me remove a painful thorn?
Nobody.*

*And as I go on through the day
Seeking a light to guide the way
Who lifts my ego a little way?
Nobody.*

*The weeks go by—the semester's done
Where's the supervisor, principal—anyone?
They are all busy working on Title I
and I see
Nobody.*

—DORIS G. PHIPPS

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