

SUPERVISOR: Coordinator of Multiple Consultations

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A SUPERVISORY function of growing importance is that of coordinating the contributions of the many and varied consultants who are now available to assist the school in improving its staff and program. Such consultants may include leaders in the system, teachers with special skills and

competencies, college personnel, state department representatives, members of professional groups and organizations, representatives of state or federal governments, lay citizens with special skills and knowledges, textbook company consultants, reading specialists, psychological service specialists, guidance counselors, speech therapists, librarians, music and art specialists, physical education specialists, school nurses and the like.

The bringing of on-the-job assistance to teachers is rapidly becoming recognized as a central function of local supervisory personnel. The utilization of multiple consultative services will, without doubt, become more prevalent in the years ahead because our rapidly changing society demands almost unlimited resources to help solve constantly emerging educational programs in the local school situation.

The development of a more complex society, the explosion of knowledge, the increasing school enrollments of more diverse students in the schools, the development of a technical approach to learning, and the development of school faculties that include well-prepared teachers from varied backgrounds of training and experience demand an in-service program that is aimed directly at the practicing staff extending its own professional knowledge, refining its old or developing new professional skills and focusing on the modifications of its own professional behavior. In-service education depends on the nature and quality of the changes that are produced. The intelligent use of consultative service that includes not just one or two consultants but many individuals who contribute, share and in-

teract cooperatively with school staff through careful and artistic coordination by the supervisor will be an imperative change-factor of the future.

The supervisor's effectiveness as a coordinator of multiple consultation is based on an understanding of and an ability to function within a number of socially complex situations which exist in a school or school system. A description of some of the more important conditions follows.

Supervisory Coordination

The supervisor must possess a basic understanding of the school as a social institution within a community that varies in its structure and that holds different role expectancies for consultants who may be used with the staff. The role expected by the faculty for the consultant must be lived up to, initially, or the resulting threat will make impossible the acceptance of the consultant and his contribution, or certainly will markedly reduce such acceptance.

The supervisor must possess a broad comprehension of the total school program and of the role each individual staff member has in the school's functioning, evaluation and further development. The absence of such understanding limits the clarity of the purposes held for the establishment of consultative acts that will contribute meaningfully to both the development of the overall program and the individuals involved.

The supervisor through well-planned evaluative efforts must have arrived at a point that he feels he has identified growth behaviors needed within the staff in order to move the program

ahead in a positive and progressive manner. These judgments must be arrived at by cooperative assessments made in the day-to-day relationships with staff over an extended period of time and must, in reality, stem from the mutual concerns, interests and needs expressed by staff. The outcomes emerging from and within the coordinated consultative acts would also be assessed for directional cues for future action and activities within the staff.

There must be developed an institutional climate in which the individual growth of the staff member is as important as that of the individual student in the classroom of the school. Such an environment for growth is vital to the full development and utilization of the creative potential of each individual on the faculty. The supervisor has a key place in the development of this type of working environment by the way he behaves as he seeks to work with the staff in the improvement of the teaching-learning situation. The modern supervisor must be keenly alert to the process of change as well as the end product sought through the process. The awareness by faculty members of the process in which they are engaged, in many instances, is as important as reaching the desired goal. Constant analysis and interpretation of the consultative act in process often determine its final effectiveness.

The accurate identification and clarification of problems or situations in the school that are vital to staff members and for which there is a need for experience that cannot be provided from within the immediate group, dictate a setting in which a consultant or many consultants may be needed. The sug-

gestion that consultative help may be used at this point does not preclude the use of consultants in aiding faculty in understanding the school as an institution in the community, the development of new understandings and insights regarding school programs, the development of appropriate working climates, and the like.

The role of the supervisor, once there has been a recognition that the knowledge, skill or competency needed is not available, becomes one of the selecting, out of the breadth of his own experiential contacts, the consultant or consultants who may be matched to the needs of the situation. This suggestion implies the need by the supervisor to have almost unlimited contacts with individuals and groups who may be called on either to furnish the needed person and service or who may be a resource to seek out the needed personnel. Once the person or persons have been identified, a relationship of some depth must be developed between the supervisor and the consultant. This relationship is one of the more important aspects of being able to appropriately coordinate consultations that will have full meaning for all those involved.

The supervisor must work within a leadership complex that includes the school superintendent, principals, subject supervisors, group leaders and many others. There must be an orientation period in which the gradual involvement of the consultant in the school situation takes place. The consultant must be aware of the purposes of the group. The role expectancy must be defined for the consultant as accurately as possible. If there is more than one consultant, then there must be de-

veloped the kinds of relationships that will permit this group to function and interrelate as a team.

There might be a few situations in which a consultant may be brought in to provide a special ingredient without the long period of orientation and involvement suggested here. However, to bring about important changes in behavior within a school staff, an intimate and continuous effort over an extended period of time is demanded.

A word of caution is needed in regard to the selection of outside consultants. There are many cases in which the consultant needed is actually a member of the local staff. Called for here is a refocusing on the resources that lie within a staff as well as those that may be brought in from outside. The supervisor as a coordinator of multiple consultations is as vitally needed, if not more so, in the identification and use of in-staff consultants as in the case of out-of-staff personnel.

The competency of the supervisor to coordinate multiple consultations is obviously based on a number of vital personal relationships. These relationships are with the school as an institution within a community, the individuals who implement the program, the specific group involved in problem identification and clarification, and the consultant. The supervisor must also provide for the development of appropriate relationships and understandings between and among the consultants, and the consultants and the group to be worked with. Appropriate relationships must also be maintained between the consultants and the administrative leadership of the school.

The choice and assignment of consul-

tants are as vital as the assignment of the teacher to the appropriate classroom. The supervisor must be open to and respond to feedback emanating from administration, teaching staff, consultants, and ultimately to the reaction of the student to a changed program or curricular experiences. The supervisor must recognize that the constant examination of his own behavior in these social-education complexes is a vital necessity. The improvement of his own skills and competence as a person who seeks to act as a coordinating agent between a group with expressed needs and the provision of experiences that fulfill such needs is dependent on accurate self-perceptions. The consultants' consultations may be as valuable to the growth of the supervisor as to the group involved.

The supervisor's changing role includes not alone an understanding of the technical aspects of institutional improvement or curriculum building. This role also includes the ability to participate effectively in action research, where appropriate human relationships have been formed. The job of curriculum improvement has become one of more than making adjustments in organizational structure, modifying instructional materials, remodeling school facilities and building courses of study. There is an increasing awareness that instruction cannot be fundamentally changed unless the staff itself changes its own understandings, attitudes, concepts and ideas through having experiences that are provided at the right time and when there is a state of readiness for such activity.

Preparation for Coordinating Multiple Consultations

A supervisor may be better equipped to carry out the coordination of multiple consultations, as described, if he has had preparatory experiences similar to those in internship programs. This type of program provides actual contact with a school staff and the intern is faced daily with the actual need to work in consultative situations. The guidance offered by both local school district and college personnel may be invaluable in such on-the-job situations.

The preparatory experiences should consist of opportunities for the supervisor-intern to gain: knowledge and understanding of the school as a social institution and its role in present day society; knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, of its development and of current curriculum research; knowledge and understanding of human growth and learning; knowledge and understanding of teaching and leadership methods and techniques which include the function of the staff on the job; knowledge and understanding of instructional materials and resources and their utilization in the teaching-learning process; skill in communicating effectively with individuals and groups through written, oral and overall behavior; skills in helping others identify, clarify and develop procedures for arriving at solutions, problems and concerns; skills in problem solving using the methods of intelligence, and skill in group processes related to working with people to more appropriately utilize resources and develop solutions to problems and meet needs adequately. ☞

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