

# IN-SERVICE GROWTH— THE ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT<sup>1</sup>

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INHERENT in the whole notion of in-service education is the belief that all professional people can grow and develop; that once they become professional adults, they do not or at least should not stand still. This has always been important in American education because, traditionally, we have recognized that we have not yet reached full professional status.

Colleges and universities have not yet learned how to turn out the perfect professional practitioner, and I do not think they ever will. Even the perfect practitioner for 1966 would be grossly imperfect for 1976. Times change, the pupils change, curriculums change, situations change, and so we must have dynamic professional growth programs if we are going to have anything approximating excellence in education, now or in the future.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from an address before the staff and guests of the Educational Resources Center, Bank Street College of Education, New York City, December 1965.

## Need for Dynamic Change

The term *dynamic* is used to suggest changes which are quite different from much that we do in the name of in-service education. In many cases, we find ourselves settling for very small refinements in educational practice. In fact, a large portion of the activities carried on under the banner of in-service education are really *tractive* in their effects. This is to say they are efforts to defend existing practice against change, to orient new staff members to standardized operating procedures, or to make existing practice more uniform.

These are necessary supervisory operations at times, but they are not *dynamic* efforts directed at changes in practice which could make for significant improvements in instruction. Our tendency all too often is to dabble in small human change. We are more concerned with minor adjustments in the way we behave so that only minor improvements result. The need for *dy-*

*namic* change is, however, quite another matter. The demands of this society now and in the future are such that dramatic improvements in professional practice are imperative.

### Changing Basic Patterns

When professional staff members look at the possibility that *basic modes of operation* are getting in the way of improved instruction; when we contemplate changes in our basic approaches both in daily routines and crucial tasks, a big job looms ahead. Our basic modes of operation as professional practitioners are rooted in old habits, traditions, techniques, skills, values and interests. When we try to change these modes of operation, even in part, we are challenging the person as an integrated being, to change what he is and to become a substantially different person.

This is the kind of in-service education we must think about in this day and age. This is what must be done if American education is to attain and maintain real instructional excellence. We must move from where we are to something dramatically better, because our society demands something dramatically better, now and in the future. This means dramatic improvements in professional practice.

In considering our basic modes of operation as they relate to instructional practice, we note that each of us has a number of quite different, often rough-hewn, tendencies to behave in certain ways. But, as rough-hewn as they are, as varied as they are, they tend to band together and form a pattern of behavior for each of us, a *modus operandi*.

These behavior patterns are quite stable. These patterns offer us a way

of defending ourselves against the complexities of the world around us. By habituating our behavior, the need for frequent, sometimes painful, decisions is reduced.

Classroom teacher behavior is deeply rooted in tradition, habit, values and interests, and it does not change much with the type of class, the type of principal, the grade level, the subject matter, or the new curriculum guide. Obviously there are both situational and problem variations which influence behavior patterns significantly, but the stability of our basic behavior pattern as teachers, administrators or supervisors is something that is very real.

### Influences on Behavior

A variety of influences shape our patterns of behavior and tend to stabilize professional practice. In-service education for human change must be concerned with these influences.

One type of influence is the *pattern of incentives or rewards*. Incentives, past and present, encourage some types of behavior and discourage others. We should consider the incentives as being more than financial. Working conditions, class loads, rewards in terms of personal satisfactions are examples of some viable incentives.

*Fears, anxieties and personal needs* represent related, but somewhat different sets of influences. Fear of disapproval causes teachers to enforce rigid classroom behavior rules that may be detrimental to learnings. Lecturing is a control strategy commonly used in secondary schools based in large measure upon apprehensions about adolescent behavior.

We all have certain *personal needs*.

We have to get something out of a situation. We have need for security, for status, for involvement. It is important to each of us that we behave in ways which are personally satisfying. We tend to avoid changes in our behavior pattern that deprive us of satisfactions. A need for affection may dictate a teacher's choice of kindergarten or first grade teaching. A need for intellectual stimulation may make a teacher discontent with elementary grades or slow learning pupils.

Still another influencing factor is that of *known models*. We cannot readily behave in any fashion other than those ways which we have known. Except for techniques that we just happen to develop for ourselves, our behavior pattern is strongly influenced by what we have seen in others. We use the behaviors of others as models and borrow from them. Someone once said that "emulation in teaching is not only important, it is everything." I doubt that it is everything, but there is reason to believe that we tend to teach as we were taught.

If we are asking teachers to develop behavior patterns which are quite different from the models they have known, we are asking them to do something they may have great difficulty even considering, let alone doing. Unless alternative models of behavior can be provided, in-service activities are likely to be less than fully effective.

How people perceive *the reality of the organized structure* around them is a fourth element influencing behavior. One teacher will perceive the principal as an ogre, while the teacher down the hall will perceive the principal as a friend. But it is, in fact, the same prin-

icipal. The teachers simply have quite different perceptions of him, his role, and the way he operates. Their experiences with this same man may be very similar, or perhaps somewhat different. In any case, each person's perception of reality is quite relevant since all of us tend to respond in terms of these perceptions. Revising one's perceptions of reality structure can sometimes bring about rather substantial changes in behavior patterns.

### **In-service Planning**

If we have fairly stable behavior patterns among professional practitioners, and if we see the need for inducing change in those behaviors, we must do so in terms of the forces influencing the development and maintenance of those patterns. Suppose we are working with teacher A, or principal B, or supervisor C. It would be nice if we could assume that we know exactly what the new, better mode of behavior ought to be, but as a rule, no one knows this. All too often we assume that this person's performance could be improved by some specific behavior changes. Rarely do we know enough to make such assumptions.

There are systematic approaches to the analysis and improvement of individual behavior patterns that are worth considering. Space will not permit a detailed description of in-service planning based upon such systematic concern for individuals. In brief, however, the following approaches do permit in-service programming that is systematic, humane and efficient:

1. Problems, interests, needs and concerns of an individual or group can be carefully explored.

2. A problem area can be identified and selected to give general direction to in-service planning.

3. Specific objectives of professional growth can be selected by each individual.

4. A program of selected activities can be planned to achieve these specific objectives.

These four steps oversimplify, of course, a complex planning process, but they do suggest a sequence of essential steps by planning an effective kind of in-service program that has some likelihood of producing significant changes in professional practice. When such planning is undertaken cooperatively, with those persons to be affected by the in-service program systematically involved in all stages of the planning, it is possible for personal needs to be recognized while systematic procedures for change are employed.

In conclusion it is my belief that administrators, supervisors and teachers have a responsibility to change themselves and others in appropriate directions and that these directions will be different for different individuals. The changes which we set about to produce in staff members must not be haphazard or ill-defined. The rapidly changing character of our society demands dynamic supervision directed toward dra-

matic changes in instructional practice. Our thinking and action must have new direction, new drive and stimulation from instructional leadership personnel as well as from teachers themselves. This leadership, however, must also have focus. It cannot just be all things to all people. It cannot consist of a generalized desire to have things better. It must be systematic, humane and efficient.

Interest in in-service education has moved in recent years in the direction of developing strategies for human change. We can diagnose learning needs and then plan rather specifically to meet these for adult staff members, just as we can for children. This does not require authoritarian approaches. On the contrary, it is possible within a very democratic framework for supervision to do just this.

All of us as professional people have to look at ourselves as learners if we are going to remain professional. We have to have help from leadership personnel whose major job is stimulating, guiding, coordinating and facilitating professional growth. In human organizations such as the schools, professional growth is the central leadership task of supervision and an essential requirement of each individual. ☞

## ZIP

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