

● From the Executive Secretary

EDUCATIONAL NO-MAN'S-LAND

AN EDUCATIONAL conflict, caused in part by increasing specialization, results in the question, "Who shall make the decisions?" More and more decisions are complex and require special background and education in order to bring the most relevant issues and knowledge to bear upon the question. Special equipment and recourse to particularized data are often necessary. The specialist believes that no one else is in command of the information and the alternatives. The generalist believes each decision requires knowledge of the larger arena, of other elements in the system that must be considered.

Between the positions is an information and action void resulting from different perceptions, different knowledge, and different consequences as the major consideration to affect the decision. Thus, the well-prepared teacher may suggest that the supervisor take care of his business and the teacher will take care of his own, the instructional materials specialist believes that he should manage the allocation of appropriate resources, the data programmer becomes impatient with administrative concerns or the unwillingness of persons to indicate a "yes, no" matrix for action.

What then is the responsibility of each professional to move out from his own secure position into the related but less known areas of expertise, experience, resources, and policy? What is the responsibility of the researcher for a general understanding of the findings and the implementation of them in a consequential setting? What is the responsibility of the media expert to help others understand the limitations and the possibilities of the means he possesses? How far must the administrator go in acquainting these persons and teachers with overall policy problems and with the organizational needs with which he must contend? What shall determine the degree of responsibility that each professional has in the total configuration of decisions necessary for the optimum operation of the school as a system?

To Venture into the Shadows

It is a mistake to assume that these questions can be answered in a general or global way. Each issue must be defined more precisely with the related responsi-

bilities and commitments of each delineated more adequately. For example, it is necessary that we indicate that decision making is not a single entity, that it has levels of consequence, that it has degrees of complexity, that it has policy and cost and public considerations, and finally, that it is necessary to reconcile this complexity in an understandable and professional manner.

Leadership also is not a single element; some teachers need help in organizing and instituting material or organizational procedures, some are eager and prepared for innovative and creative opportunities, different degrees of dependence and independence must be recognized and accommodated. Specialization and division of labor require mutually acceptable dependency and cooperative effort to join resources and ideas at critical points. Discussion and agreement must be developed as to the specifics and the procedure by which these issues can best be resolved.

If the no-man's-land between the experts is not to become a battleground, each professional must assume some responsibility to know about and to venture into the shadows beyond his own competence or specialty. It is the responsibility of leadership to identify these areas and to enter them through research and joint action. New roles, new knowledge, new perceptions, and new configurations of responsibilities will be the likely outcomes.

—LESLEE J. BISHOP, *Executive Secretary, ASCD.*

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