

*The administrator and the curriculum worker  
can jointly inquire into and facilitate  
their only commodity: learning . . .*

## **Synergism: Administrative Involvement of the Curriculum Worker<sup>1</sup>**

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THE role of the curriculum worker is sometimes difficult to identify in an administrative hierarchy. This is evidenced by many professional groups within education which have become interested in having a larger voice in curriculum decision making. Curriculum and instruction are beginning to be the subjects of negotiation by groups which are becoming increasingly militant about participating in the curricular decisions which affect them.

Viewing the administrative organization of a school district as a hierarchical arrangement in which the superintendent, the assistants for curriculum, special services, building and grounds, or

<sup>1</sup> Synergism: "Cooperative action of discrete agencies such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the two effects taken independently" (Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*).

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finance, have compartmentalized duties and specific lines of communication may, in fact, play a large part in adding to the confusions about who makes what decisions about whom. The line-staff organization of education may need to give way to a fresh approach to school district personnel organization for other than mere housekeeping details.

Rather than a traditional line-staff organization, perhaps a matrix or flow chart is needed which identifies the points of involvement, the junctures, and the times at which appropriate school district personnel need to be involved for maximum commitment to any educational planning and decision making. Whether it be in constructing a new building, adopting new materials, or hiring personnel, those individuals who will be affected by the decisions made need to be involved at some effective point to assure the maximum success of any venture.

Traditional line-staff organizational charts usually place the children at the bottom and the superintendent at the

top. We need to revise our thinking to place as our *raison d'être* the enhancement of learning. All personnel should clearly see their role as revolving around this central purpose. All administrative and curriculum workers need to view themselves as facilitators of and auxiliary to the school's task: learning.

The curriculum worker often views himself as having certain administrative responsibilities, yet he shuns administrative detail. He invites those with administrative duties to become involved in curriculum development, yet he clearly views the field of curriculum and instruction as a highly complex discipline requiring specialized experience, education, and attitudes. Yet modern education necessitates *not* a separation of the roles, but a closer interaction among these roles than ever before.

A theory could be stated here around which much data could be generated: That there is a direct relationship between the extent of involvement of curriculum with administration and the degree to which school districts achieve success in programs of innovation and change. That is, the closer the ties the greater the interaction, and the more involvement there is among the processes of curriculum and administration, the greater are the chances for educational change, curriculum innovation, and instructional improvement.

This theory could be tested by finding evidences of a total staff commitment to change, and a search for greater understanding of the phenomenon of learning in schools where there is much and little involvement of the curriculum worker in administrative processes.

To dichotomize the realms of admin-

istration and curriculum development places both fields in an untenable position. Under such circumstances the curriculum worker who is not involved in administrative processes would find himself in a constant "selling" position, trying to convince "higher-ups" in the hierarchy that his ideas, commitments, and plans are worthy of their consideration. On the other hand, the administrator who is not involved in curriculum processes would find it difficult to justify priorities and programs to the board and the community in terms of the needs of learners. He could take only a myopic view of educational planning, and he would find decision making and evaluation increasingly burdensome.

As we examine the various processes which facilitate learning, we can identify many points of possible involvement of the curriculum worker in administrative processes.

### **Financial Support**

Currently we tend to compare education with industry, where research and development are keys to progress, where large portions of the budget are committed to experimentation, and where products and profits are end results. But whereas industries can write off their "think factories" and still profit in spite of projects which fizzle, school districts are not in a position to budget for brainstorming and to finance failures. Yet these are realistic components of experimentation and change.

Curriculum development cannot be left to chance. Rather, programs of *planned change* are more characteristic of modern curriculum progress. In education we see the need for research and

development as an integral part of the budget for any school district. This allows for purchasing adequate materials, hiring specialized consultant help, providing visitations, travel, and released time for the continuing education of teachers.

Curriculum workers, teachers, and administrators, then, must work closely together. One joint task is to plan and justify the financing of educational innovation which occurs through analyzing teacher actions, diagnosing student behaviors, interpreting data about learners, and prescribing teaching strategies in relation to learning objectives. Such experimentation becomes an integral part of the teaching act, and the learning which occurs daily is dependent upon its success. This means not only providing for innovation in the planning of the budget, but making sure that such provision stays in as the budget gets trimmed and cut. What gets deleted from budgets when the chips are down are usually those items for which there is neither unanimous priority nor united agreement. If we are committed to improvement of instruction, there must be provision for it in the budget.

### **Establishing Priorities**

The educational marketplace has become competitive, political, and bureaucratic. This may be discouraging to some curriculum workers, but it is nevertheless a fact in today's era of educational change.

Today's administrators are bombarded with decisions and pressures to install new and sometimes ostentatious programs, or to change curriculum by legislative mandate or militant community groups. It is obvious that the felt

needs and problems of the educator, the community, the board of education, and the legislator are not always met with equal enthusiasm by those involved in the solution of such problems. As a result the needs of learners and teachers are sometimes relegated to an inferior position in the hierarchy of priorities.

The educator needs someone to identify and defend the needs of learners and teachers in an arena where negotiation and compromise sometimes fail to use the enhancement of learning as a major criterion. The astute administrator in the modern school needs skill in running the maze of bureaucracy in pursuit of balanced programs of improved learning. He should be able to make public the criteria and rationale by which curriculum changes can be made and evaluated. Together the curriculum worker and the administrator can keep in focus their values of what is important for learners as decisions are made for expending time, financial and personnel resources.

### **Mobilization of Personnel**

The curriculum worker prides himself on his ability to work with others. He strives for maximizing communication and deals competently in problems where interpersonal relations may be strained. Yet evidence shows that teachers' behaviors reflect the values of the administrator more than those of the curriculum worker. When it comes down to the "nitty-gritty" of who evaluates teaching; who is the financially responsible and influential person in the school, and from whom does the teacher get day-to-day support, it is obvious that the administrator is in the instructional leadership role.

But by what criteria are evaluations made, which practices does the administrator support, and for what purposes are finances expended? These decisions and choices can only be made in the light of the best available information about the learning process. The curriculum worker can assist the administrator as these decisions are made, providing him with information, exploring alternative decisions and hypothesizing about the possible outcomes of curriculum and instructional strategies selected.

Probably the single most important contribution of the curriculum worker to administration is his knowledge of the change process by which individuals and groups become personally involved in examining their own behavior. The changing of instructional practice requires strategies and techniques of dissemination or in-service education for which the curriculum worker is particularly well skilled. Not only does he know something about the content of the curriculum to be changed, but he also knows the processes by which such changes become introduced, performed, and valued by the teacher. He knows that any innovation is valuable only to the degree that it lends insight and understanding to those involved in the teaching-learning act. He views innovation as a process by which teachers become increasingly aware of their own behavior in relation to their goals and objectives.

Suspicion and resistance often occur when the processes of change are not adequately understood. The curriculum worker's knowledge of the change process can make a valuable contribution to the administrator who has a commit-

ment to change, who is dissatisfied with the status quo, and who values educational progress. Conversely, the administrator can facilitate the task of the curriculum worker by demonstrating this value and recognizing in others their willingness to search for better teaching. Without this support the school can remain closed to outside resources and ideas.

### **From Goals to Instruction**

What makes an administrator an administrator and a curriculum worker a curriculum worker? Certainly training and experience play a part, yet is there a more basic difference? (Not a polar difference by any means.) Perhaps there is a different mode of thinking and behaving basic to the two fields of education. While the curriculum worker sometimes views the administrator as reality bound, the administrator may perceive the curriculum worker as visionary and utopian.

The curriculum worker is inclined to deal with abstractions and theoretical models. That is his job—to create intriguing hypotheses which are operational manifestations of beliefs, values, and goals. (This is currently being called "innovation.") But these dreams need to be translated into reality. In order for dreams to become programs they must be given form and substance. Ideal goals can only be realized when they are translated into strategies for accomplishment.

Administrative processes call for a mode of thinking which can deal with reality, sense inconsistencies, and diagnose reasons for failure. Any change causes the administrator to ask: What are the limitations of finances, space,

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materials, and personnel? What is a realistic time schedule and what are the precise steps to be taken to implement such a change?

Working as a team, the curriculum worker and the administrator can transcend their differences in thinking styles by probing for specificity, clarifying objectives, and examining the premises on which values and beliefs are based. By this process the hypotheses of the curriculum worker become translated into practice. Thus, working together, there is an interplay of rational thought which transforms ideal goals (which could otherwise be left truncated and useless) into reality goals.

### **Together We Move**

Educators who value this theory of maximum interaction between adminis-

trative and curriculum processes will plan for interdependence among the two roles in the search for improved conditions for learning. The total district staff must have a common and overarching commitment to the improvement of learning. Together they serve as a symbiotic feedback system—each contributing to and supporting the role of the other: Different in their views and styles—of course! Difference is the energy which runs the system. Yet each is dependent upon and protective of the role of the other.

While the administrator is dependent upon the curriculum worker to assist him in fulfilling educational objectives, he is protective of the curriculum worker's time so as to relieve him from bogging down in details which drain his energy. Likewise, the curriculum worker is dependent upon the administrator's perseverance and tenacity in pursuing innovative ideas through the maze which starts at "idea" and culminates in changed classroom practices. Furthermore, the curriculum worker protects the administrator from situations in which he might make decisions without adequate information about learning, an assessment of the needs of learners, and knowledge of current curriculum and instructional practices.

Together they search for consistency between classroom practices and the goals and objectives of the school. Thus we see neither disparate nor compartmentalized roles of the administrator and curriculum worker; but rather a close working relationship as highly interdependent members of a school district team intent upon inquiring into and facilitating their only commodity: learning. ☛

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