

# The Director of Curriculum and Instruction

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**A**MONG the urgent problems facing school districts today is that of providing effective leadership in the increasingly complicated areas of curriculum development and instructional improvement. A corollary of this problem is the determination of the role or functions appropriate to such leadership. A study recently completed at Temple University sought to develop insights into the latter problem.<sup>1</sup>

An unfortunate fact of life in the curricular world is the loose use of such words as function, role, tasks, and duties. Primitive terms are almost unknown. Consequently, for present purposes it was determined (with the aid of several good dictionaries) that the terms *function* and *role* relate to the larger actions consistent with a position and may be used interchangeably. *Task* and *duty* refer to the specific actions imposed by the function or role. They, too, are interchangeable.

Both the survey of the literature, especially the work by Kirk,<sup>2</sup> and the present study revealed that job titles yield relatively few

clues as to the nature of the protagonist's duties (about half are known as assistant superintendents, the remainder by a sort of grab bag of titles<sup>3</sup>). Other differences between the present and previous studies must be noted. Previously, attempts were made to select random samples or to include entire populations, and the mailed questionnaire was the standard instrument. It seemed of little value to replicate such studies; hence, it was decided to focus upon a carefully selected group of school districts and instructional leaders.

Further, following Kirk's comment that his "most useful and revealing data came from personal visitation and exclusive interviews,"<sup>4</sup> as contrasted with his questionnaire data, 13 interviews varying from two to four hours in length were conducted by the interview team. The scope of the responsibility of the interviewees included K-12, K-6, and 7-12, but each reported directly to the superin-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>1</sup> John M. Mickelson, Marilyn B. Appel, and Kenneth W. Prusso. "An Analysis of the Functions of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction." Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: College of Education, Temple University, 1968. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>2</sup> Dwight L. Kirk. *The Role of the Curriculum Director in the Administration of American Public School Systems*. Austin: Southwestern Cooperative Program in Educational Administration, The University of Texas, 1953.

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tendent. For present purposes it was decided to call the protagonist the "director of curriculum and instruction," a title somewhat more descriptive than assistant superintendent or coordinator. In the interests of brevity, the "star" of this brief report is referred to as the "DCI."

### Functions of the "DCI"

As will be noted in Table 1, three distinct areas of action define the functions of the "DCI." These are: (a) curriculum development, (b) improvement of instruction, and (c) administration—the latter limited to that which is essential to the implementation of (a) and (b). The relationship among the three is obviously close and the lines between blurred. It is also important to note that these three areas also define the *outer limits*. The following account illustrates the complexity of the functions and duties performed by the "DCI."

### Tasks of the "DCI"

One of the "DCI's" remarked, in the course of his interview, "You tell me my functions, and I will tell you my duties." Although his statement may be an oversimplification, he was nevertheless correct. If one understands thoroughly his function or functions, the duties become more or less self-evident. Still, there is value in examining the manner in which the "DCI's" interviewed had defined their tasks. For convenience, each of the six major tasks shown in Table 1 is reviewed separately with examples of the lower level tasks associated with each. The lists of sub-tasks are by no means definitive.

#### Major Task No. 1

The "DCI" designs and/or modifies and directs an operational framework for curriculum change and instructional improvement.

1. Designs a structure for curriculum change and instructional improvement.

Major Tasks *	FUNCTIONS			
	Curriculum Development	Improvement of Instruction	Administration	
1. Designs and/or modifies and directs an operational framework for:	1. Curriculum change	1. Improvement of instruction	} Personnel administration Budget Publications Public relations School plant design	
2. Plans, organizes, directs, and implements specific activities related to:	2. Curriculum change	2. Improvement of instruction		
3. Provides for the evaluation of both existing and new:	3. Curriculum patterns and practices	3. Instructional procedures and practices		
4. Conducts research on:	4. Problems in curriculum development	4. Problems in improvement of instruction		
5. Designs, develops, and/or coordinates proposals for funded projects related to:	5. Curriculum improvement	5. Improvement of instruction		
6. Serves as assistant to the superintendent and the consultant to the board of education in matters affecting:	6. Curriculum	6. Instruction		
* Many of the specific tasks and/or duties were delegated to subordinates.				

Table 1. Summary of Functions and Tasks of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction

2. Provides for necessary leadership.
3. Provides for clear channels of communication.
4. Determines and makes recommendations for needed services; e.g., subject specialists, remedial specialists, etc.

#### Major Task No. 2

The "DCI" plans, organizes, directs, and implements specific activities related to curriculum change and instructional improvement.

1. Appoints supervisory personnel with the approval of superintendent and/or performs supervisory activities himself.
2. Appoints and/or provides for the selection of committees and committee chairmen.
3. Participates in committee work.
4. Gives or obtains approval for curriculum change.
5. Supervises selection of packaged programs; e.g., PSSC Physics, SMSG Mathematics, BSCS Biology.
6. Supervises writing, editing, and publishing of locally produced courses of study, curriculum bulletins, etc.
7. Directs in-service training.

#### Major Task No. 3

The "DCI" provides for the evaluation of both existing and new curriculum patterns and practices and existing and new instructional procedures and practices.

1. Directs or coordinates testing programs.
2. Establishes procedures for regularly evaluating *existing* programs and practices.
3. Establishes procedures for evaluating *changes* in curriculum and instructional practice.

#### Major Task No. 4

The "DCI" conducts research relating to problems in curriculum development and instructional improvement.

1. Conducts research relative to local problems.
2. Cooperates with national, state, regional, and other groups in developing and assessing new curriculums, programs, etc.
3. Cooperates with national, state, regional, and other groups in research involving curriculum development, instructional practice, personnel selection, in-service training, etc.

#### Major Task No. 5

The "DCI" designs, develops, and/or coordinates proposals for funded projects relating to curriculum development and instructional improvement.

1. Keeps abreast of sources of funds for projects and changing emphases in governmental and institutional programs.
2. Encourages local personnel to exercise initiative in developing projects; develops proposals himself.
3. Assumes direction and/or supervision of projects granted the district.

#### Major Task No. 6

The "DCI" serves as assistant to the superintendent and consultant to the board of education in all matters affecting curriculum and instruction.

1. Keeps superintendent and board informed of trends in curriculum development and instructional practice.
2. Makes recommendations to the superintendent, and through the superintendent to the board, concerning major changes in programs or policies affecting curriculum and instruction.
3. Responds to specific requests from the superintendent and board on matters affecting the instructional programs of the school.
4. Advises on personnel needs, recruits teaching and administrative staff, and recommends appointments.
5. Administers and/or coordinates pupil-personnel services, supervisory services, and instructional materials services.
6. Serves as consultant on all matters relating to school plant design.
7. Prepares that part of the annual budget relating to instructional supplies and equipment, instructional materials (including textbooks, library books, learning center materials), curriculum development, in-service training, and pupil personnel services.
8. Assists in developing and administering the district public relations program.

#### "DCI" a Line Position

Of major interest was the revelation that, regardless of official title, each "DCI"

interviewed occupied a line position. True, some seemed embarrassed to admit it, hastening to add that they attempted to function as staff people, but the fact was inescapable. The curriculum leaders in districts recognized by other professionals as having good programs occupied line positions. This finding plus other signs suggest that it is time to review the notion, accepted so uncritically for so long, that the curriculum worker is a staff person.

### **Time Allocated**

The actual time allocated to a particular function or series of tasks depended upon the needs of the local school district, and there appears to be little value in trying to determine average amounts of total time devoted to particular tasks. For instance, one "DCI," because of a new secondary school opening and the opportunity this provided to reduce class size, needed better than 100 new teachers in his district (K-12), when the ordinary need was less than half that figure. This obviously required a disproportionate amount of time.

### **Relationship Between the "DCI" and the Principal**

Each of the interviewees was a line person reporting directly to the superintendent. Thus, each occupied a position between the building principal and the superintendent in the administrative hierarchy in terms of the

assigned functions of the "DCI." Nevertheless, each "DCI" indicated he worked most circum- spectly with the principals and believed this relationship to be an omnipresent source of difficulty. It seems clear that the role of the principal, particularly as it relates to curriculum development and instructional improvement, needs to be examined in the light of changing times.

### **Applicability of the Findings**

Although the data summarized here were largely obtained from suburban Philadelphia, other data available from other elements in the study suggest no geographical limitations to the relevance of the findings as far as the United States is concerned. Further, there is much to suggest that the same three basic functions prevail in any position of instructional leadership, except that as one moves from the top to the bottom of the staff the administrative function decreases proportionately.

Badly needed are thoughtful studies of all kinds which focus upon the functions of leadership in relation to curriculum development and instructional improvement. What about the line vs. staff issue? Have we, perhaps, been paying homage to a myth by emphasizing a staff approach? The six major tasks can easily yield additional questions for research and study. Perhaps Table 1 might even turn out to be the first step toward developing a paradigm to guide research into the functions of curriculum leaders. □

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