

# New Leadership and New Responsibilities for Human Involvement

**Ben M. Harris**

**T**HE "in" word nowadays in education is *new*. Everything has to be new, bright, different, innovative. A decade ago the "in" word was *leadership*. A whole series of leadership studies in government and industry caught our fancy, and teachers, counselors, principals, and supervisors all lost their identity to become "leaders." A decade earlier the "in" word was *involvement* as a result of the group dynamics movement. We sought many silly and superficial ways to get people involved, even though we were able to adopt some worthwhile ideas.

Properly enough, I plucked these three "in" words from the several titles suggested to me for this guest editorial. I wanted to try to revive the big ideas represented by these terms—*new*, *leadership*, and *human involvement*. The fourth word of my title is *responsibility*, and it has never been an "in" word in supervision circles. My main thesis is that it should be!

U.S. education is often described as being in the throes of a revolution. We have new curricula, new people, new money, new forces, new agencies, new hardware, new militancy, new challenges, and a new breed of student all thrust upon the educational scene. A closed, tradition oriented, locally dominated institution may be rapidly becoming open, change oriented, and federally dominated. If so, it is indeed a revolution in the making!

Revolutions come in many forms. Some are violent; others are peaceful. Some relate directly to the changing needs of a society; others are abortive. Some produce only short periods of chaos and uncertainty; others produce lingering wounds of hatred and insecurity which seem never to heal. What kind of revolution will this one in education come to be? Who is responsible? Who will lead? What will the new developments be? Will human needs be well served?

These questions are still clearly unanswered in USA 1969. ASCD'ers can (and I think should) help answer these questions in ways that assure a productive revolution with a minimum of undesirable side effects.

### **Responsibility for Leadership**

The word *leadership* refers to showing the way and guiding the organization in definitive directions. New leadership is needed in this sense of the word. Two kinds are required:

1. Those in status positions must lead out with new boldness and find better ways of influencing the schools toward rationally planned, timed change.

2. New leadership positions must be created, staffed, and coordinated to facilitate the enormously complex job of leading instructional change.

Where instructional change is concerned there is no substitute for supervisors who know children, instruction, and how to work with people. Nearly every instructional innovation that has experienced any success has had supervisors closely connected with its implementation.

This is not an argument for more of the same. It is an argument for an experienced core of instructional generalists in high status positions with courage, authority, responsibility, and freedom from concern for the daily operation of the school. No combination of school principals, resource teachers, assistant principals, department chairmen, college professors, or curriculum committees will satisfactorily take their place.

The need for new leadership positions in education has been growing increasingly obvious with every passing year since Sputnik. Stimulating, creating, initiating, facilitating, controlling, and assessing revolutionary changes on many instructional fronts is not a job for principal and supervisor alone.

Technical support of many kinds is needed. Gradually we are seeing media, research, psychiatric, and computer specialists on the staffs of our schools. A nationwide movement to create regional educational service centers with staffs of instructional specialists is well under way. The reorganization of state departments of education is beginning to provide supervisory support to schools in master planning, curriculum development, and program evaluation. Research and development centers and regional laboratories are coming to recognize that supervision is their business in a real sense.

The big question in all of this concerns *coordination*. As disparate individuals and groups pursue worthy but uncoordinated goals and objectives, they tend to produce confusion; potentially significant developments fail to bloom. The general supervisor, regardless of title, must provide the leadership for unification of efforts on the part of these many new leaders.

## **Responsibility for Newness**

We often doubt that anything is really new. But old or new, change has no intrinsic worth. Values and related criteria must be applied to every change to provide a basis for accepting, rejecting, or promoting it. Who shall provide the leadership for valuing proposed changes in instructional practice? We cannot continue to rely on trial and error approaches; the errors are too numerous.

We cannot leave the valuing process up to each individual teacher or school with neither guidance nor relief; the changes are too numerous and persistent. Surely we cannot allow responsibility for valuing changes to rest as it has in the past with proponents, pressure groups, and commercial interests!

The generalist in instruction must assume responsibilities for initiating, guiding, and coordinating rigorous evaluation procedures. This is not to suggest that supervisors' values must prevail. Quite to the contrary, the challenge to supervisors is to accept responsibility for seeing to it that every point of view is represented, that children's interests remain central, that critical questions are asked, that data are not only gathered but analyzed and interpreted.

Every new development which has a theoretically plausible base needs to be guaranteed ample opportunity for development and testing. Yet each must be subjected to critical analysis and the tests of consistency of values must be applied. *Only* those in key leadership positions with interests vested in quality instruction and in possession of broad-gauge supervisory competencies can assume such responsibilities.

## Responsibility for Involvement

Like newness, *involvement* is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. As opportunities for improving education present themselves in increasingly complex forms, the problem of implementation looms large. Simple changes require little of those affected. When the textbook is revised or a new one is published, it matters little who is involved in the selection process. Good teachers rarely rely on textbooks, poor teachers memorize them, and it won't help or hurt the kids much either way. About the same thing can be said for many changes of the recent past.

Increasingly, however, we are flirting with changes in instruction which would profoundly affect teacher, child, parent, and society. When we contemplate the individualizing of instruction in any genuine sense, or providing for discovery learning, or confronting pupils with the real social issues, or cultivating autonomous, emotionally congruent persons, a new set of requirements for involvement emerges. When large, complex instructional changes are introduced, teacher behavior, pupil behavior, and parent behavior are all affected. These changes in behavior produce counter-currents which challenge and disrupt. Who is responsible for the involvement of all those likely to be affected by dramatic instructional change?

The kinds of changes mentioned here will, if well implemented, produce reverberations of great magnitude throughout the system. How naive we will be if we assume that revolutionary changes are greeted with open arms when they are "good for kids"! We are human beings and creatures of habit. Changes in the system create new problems, deny old satisfactions, demand new skills, and introduce uncertainties.

Involvement in many aspects of the change process can dampen such resistance. Involvement needs to be functional, however, not just an intellectual exercise or a form of tokenism. Involvement must cut across the subsystems to teachers, students, parents, and other people who are likely to be affected.

Who can assume responsible leadership for producing this more elaborate kind of involvement? Can the general supervisor, who specializes in working with people, who knows the larger complex of the system, who

understands instruction and the behavioral consequences of major changes in program, provide such leadership?

Leadership has meaning only when it leads to desirable goals. Goal-seeking behavior implies change, seeking that which is different from what is. In education, and especially in instruction, goals are human and means are human. Hence, involvement of people as we lead is inescapable.

New leaders emerge to take up old and new challenges. Supervisors have their golden opportunities for productivity as the group with a long tradition of concern for instruction, change, and people. *Let no one suggest that the day of the generalist is past!*

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### ***The Education of Intellect***

WHILE he was still working with NASSP and before he came to our Association, Fred Wilhelms became intrigued by the possibility that "intelligence" can be taught. He and Patricia Waller, a psychologist from the University of North Carolina, were commissioned to pull together the scattered pieces of evidence and write an evaluative report.

Under the title, "The Education of Intellect," the result of that study is now available as the April 1969 *Bulletin* of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. While the extra copies last, they can be had from NASSP at \$2.00 per copy.

The report is optimistic. As they looked both at the scientific evidence from psychology and the rough data from educational practice itself, the authors became convinced that a great deal can be done to improve a child's ability to learn; that, to put it in blunt terms, the IQ can be raised, and raised substantially.

It is a message of hope, especially (though not exclusively) for all concerned with the children of the slums and of the down-trodden minority groups and of all who have not had a full chance to develop. Though the task is not to be taken lightly, the techniques to be used are not especially difficult or esoteric. If the message is valid it is overwhelmingly important, and deserves far more attention than it has had till now.

In a recent article on *future planning*, Harold Shane assumes that at some future date we shall be working with a student body whose average IQ is 125. As the *Bulletin* sizes up the evidence, this is achievable, but it will take concerted effort, guided by research.

—R.R.L.

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