LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Correspondents: Girard D. Hottleman
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Curriculum Through Negotiation? A Reply

Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Editor:

I am writing in reference to Wendell Hough, Jr.'s editorial, "A Better Curriculum Through Negotiation?" in the March 1969 journal of ASCD. Mr. Hough's hypothesis is that negotiations of curriculum and instruction are anathema to cooperative curriculum development. After attempting to build a case on this thesis, he then suggests that teachers should be involved in curriculum improvement through a variety of means.

May I suggest that Mr. Hough is erroneous on the first count and anachronistic on the second. First, curriculum negotiations may well be the first successful widespread method available for cooperative curriculum development. Teachers and administrators know full well the long history of frustrations that have been representative of dealing with lay school boards on a research level. For instance, what has been the effect in the past of acquainting most school boards with the need to meet the NCTE's recommendation of not more than 100 students per English teacher? May I suggest that the results of such illumination have not been widespread shifts in board attitudes. On the other hand, such a research recommendation in the hands of a capable negotiator becomes a powerful tool for the improvement of language instruction.

It also seems apparent to most people in the curriculum business that "cooperative development" requires a funded process for mutual deliberation and adequate funds for eventual implementation. Such processes require such things as: summer workshops, released time, sabbaticals, research money, consultant activities, and in-service training procedures. All of these processes can provide the means whereby administrators and teachers can work together to solve instructional problems, and they are the legitimate outcomes of negotiations procedures.

It is true that to "swap" Latin for kindergarten is ludicrous in most cases, but it is not ludicrous to swap administrative requests which end up in the "ho-hum" pile for negotiations muscle which can eventually lead to solution of many of the teachers' perennial needs.

On the second count, Professor Hough, in telling administrators that they should develop in-service programs to build dialogue, is taking the same route that teachers have consistently rejected for the past several years.

To advise administrators that they can...
structure relationships that are designed as control-oriented procedures as a means of hardening the existing hierarchy is not only devious in its approach, but also unpragmatic, given the need for real partnership that recent educational reality mandates. The purpose of “unifying the professional staff” is, as Dr. Hough states, “to make schools better,” but functional dialogue comes about not by administrative rigging, but through mutual structuring.

Professor Hough is running scared. What he is saying is that teachers should be brought into dialogue by administrators if curriculum is to improve and if it is to improve apart from the negotiations process. It seems much more appropriate to suggest that teachers are coming into the dialogue and that they are coming in under their own terms, and that administrators should learn how to deal with that problem, not with the problem of how to let them in only as far as the door can be held against them.

The fact is that the door is open and it is teachers who opened it. Administrative resistance will only serve to see the door torn off at the hinges. Anyone who suggests in the midst of a revolution that a few of us sit down and issue bulletins of procedure to the armies in the streets simply doesn’t know anything about the nature of radical social change.

GIRARD D. HOTTLEMAN
Director of Educational Services, Massachusetts Teachers Association

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The Principal Must Be Replaced: A Reply

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Editor:

It is not difficult to detect that forces are operating today which influence the role of school principals. Nor could it be seriously argued that the role of principals is not changing to varying degrees in various places. A certain amount of the indoor sport of “principalship” is therefore healthy and desirable. I, for one, am nevertheless dubious of the “solution” advanced by Robert S. Thurman in the May 1969 issue of Educational Leadership.¹

Professor Thurman’s solution is to reallocate the role expectations normally associated with the principalship to two new positions, a Coordinator of Learning and a Coordinator of Administrative Services. The Coordinator of Learning would be the formal leader in the area of instruction. He would discharge the duties now associated with the supervision and coordination of the instructional program. The Coordinator of Learning is viewed as a role closely related to the area of instruction and therefore one which a teacher could assume without extensive retraining.

The Coordinator of Administrative Services would coordinate the work of auxiliary personnel (custodians, clerks, etc.), administer supportive services, and handle fiscal matters. The fate of the several thousand persons now occupying principalships is not discussed in the article. I assume that they would either become Coordinators of Administrative Services, or shuffle off to swell the ranks of insurance agents and textbook salesmen.

I feel constrained to respond to Profes-

sor Thurman, who has performed a service by boldly delineating a plan which others have suggested but dimly defined. In doing so I shall question both the premises on which his plan rests and the plan itself, which fails to come to grips with some important organizational questions. My three arguments follow.

1. **Principals are more knowledgeable in the areas of curriculum and instruction than Thurman seems to imply.** While he does not directly assert that principals are largely ignorant of curriculum and instruction, he clearly considers their knowledge inadequate for working with teachers on instructional matters. This, in spite of the fact that principals' undergraduate training has been preparation for teaching and that at least some of their graduate training is directly related to instruction. Would a teacher who could move into the role of Coordinator of Learning "without extensive retraining" have more knowledge of instructional matters?

One might reasonably question Thurman's assertion, based on an examination of university catalogues, that preparation programs for principals include more courses oriented toward managerial concerns than those directed toward instructional matters. If this assertion is based on a casual perusal of catalogues, then it may be dismissed immediately. If the assertion is based on rigorous research, then we are entitled to know something about population and sample, method of data treatment, and other matters of research design.

The institution with which I am most intimately acquainted requires 24 quarter hours of educational administration and 21 hours of course work in curriculum, educational psychology, and social foundations for a master's degree in Elementary School Administration. The program for the Specialist Certificate requires 30 hours of educational administration, 15 hours in a collateral academic field, and 45 hours of course work directly related to instructional matters. These two programs do not indicate that instruction is being slighted in preparation programs for principals. True, the sample I am citing is small, but we know nothing at all of Thurman's sample.

2. **Thurman has inaccurately perceived the pattern of knowledge and skills required for instructional leadership.** Professor Thurman implies that the major desideratum for instructional leadership is knowledge of curriculum and instruction. How much of such knowledge is needed? Would the Coordinator of Learning be expected to know more about teaching introductory reading than the primary level teachers? More about math instruction than the sixth-grade teacher? More about physical education instruction than the physical education teacher for the intermediate grades? If so, the Coordinator of Learning, rather than requiring no extensive retraining, is in for a long period of preparation.

It seems that there is likely to be a threshold effect in the contribution that knowledge of curriculum and instruction can make to the effectiveness of an instructional leader. Clearly, a certain amount is needed. It is equally clear that, unless instructional leadership means showing teachers how to teach their respective specialties, there is a limit to how much knowledge of curriculum and instruction is necessary. Too much may even be dysfunctional.

I submit that an area of knowledge that is just as important as curriculum and instruction, if not more so, has to do with working with people in an organization. After all, a school leader has his impact on pupil learning through teachers. His real expertise lies in organizational leadership. Skill in group processes, knowledge of informal organizations, and an understanding of what makes formal organizations tick are some topics that come to mind.

3. **Thurman has either proposed nothing new or he has offered an administratively unsound staffing arrangement.** Which of these is the case depends upon whether his scheme includes one or two chief line officers in the school. Professor Thurman's intentions are unclear on this point. When he says that "the Coordinator of Learning will
be the final arbiter in the event a dispute arises concerning an instructional and managerial matter,” he is suggesting that this person has ultimate decision-making authority in the building, which makes him the single chief line officer. Now, whatever expectations have been associated with the principalship, the essence of the position has been that he is the administrative head of the building. Therefore, if the Coordinator of Learning has ultimate decision-making authority, what is he except a principal with an assistant whose responsibilities are concentrated in coordinating supportive services?

At another point, however, Thurman states that the Coordinator of Learning would report to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and the Coordinator of Administrative Services would report to the Assistant Superintendent for Business. This suggests that there is a chief line officer in each sphere, to wit, a two-headed monster. If this is the case, an administratively unsound arrangement has been proposed. It is unsound because, while one may be able to separate instructional and supporting services conceptually, doing so operationally is quite another thing. Matters that appear to be instructional issues have an inconvenient way of becoming fiscal concerns, as well. Consider class size, differentiated staffing in a teaching team, or released time for inservice training. The “all of a piece” quality of organizations in operation prohibits such neat separations. Any standard textbook in school administration documents the reasons for the demise of the dual superintendency. It would be unfortunate to repeat that lesson at the level of the individual school.

As American schools are now organized, there must be a line officer for each school, someone with responsibility for meshing the human and material resources of the school to accomplish the educative task. This person is an administrator, a term which does not refer to one who is concerned only with mechanical routine and supportive operations. Rather, his functions are the organizational tasks which Chester I. Barnard has suggested: to provide the system of communication; to promote the securing of essential efforts; and to formulate and define purpose. These are the appropriate functions for the formal leader of the individual school. Call that person what you will—instructional leader, Coordinator of Learning, or what not. Since we are all well acquainted with the term, I suggest that we continue to call him principal.

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The Teacher Aide: A Reply

Brooklyn, New York

Dear Editor:

In reading the article, “The Teacher Aide: A National Study of Confusion,” by Laurel N. Tanner and Daniel Tanner,¹ there seems to be confusion between instructional and non-instructional aides.

I am sorry that the survey was made only of state education departments, and did not include the large cities that have home rule. I am referring specifically to New York City. There is a guideline issued by New York State concerning the use of auxiliary personnel. Much of this information was gathered as a result of a conference held by

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the State Department of Education and Bank Street College of Education, which took place in December 1967. These guidelines were distributed at a conference held in New York City in February 1969 by the State Department of Education and City University.

New York City has attempted to distinguish between instructional and non-instructional paraprofessional personnel. The non-instructional personnel are mostly referred to as school aides. Instructional paraprofessionals are referred to by several titles, according to qualifications.

Every class must be taught by a licensed teacher. Therefore, a great deal of emphasis in training our instructional paraprofessional is placed upon a team approach. Hopefully, this new team of teacher and paraprofessional will greatly improve the instruction to the youngsters in the classroom.

To assure that the paraprofessional will understand his role in the classroom, we have devised a job description which differentiates between the instructional and non-instructional tasks.

**Instructional Tasks**

To participate in daily and long-range class planning
To assist the teacher with large group activities
To work with small groups or individual children
To read stories to small groups or individual children
To contribute to enrichment activities by utilizing special talents and abilities (art, music, interpreting foreign languages, etc.)
To assist the teacher in guiding children to work and play harmoniously
To alert the teacher to the special needs of individual children
To give special encouragement to the non-English speaking child
To be a source of affection and comfort to all children.

**Non-Instructional Tasks**

To assist the teacher in necessary clerical work and to perform related duties as required. Some examples are:

- Keeping attendance and health records
- Preparing instructional materials
- Arranging displays and bulletin boards
- Collecting monies and assisting with housekeeping chores
- Checking, storing, and taking inventory of supplies and materials
- Assisting children upon arrival and in preparation for dismissal
- Escorting children (bus, office, toilet, playground)
- Arranging for field trips
- Translating and interpreting foreign languages.

Through continued evaluation, it should become a reality that the titles and job descriptions will become as definitive as those of professionals employed in the schools.

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The Supervisor's Role in Negotiation

Edited by William F. Young

For the ASCD Commission on Problems of Supervisors and Curriculum Workers

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