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# Supervisory Behavior

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THE improvement of supervisory programs and developments related to the role of the supervisor has received increased attention in the literature in recent years. A review of the literature resulted in a definition of educational supervision as a creative and dynamic role of organizational leadership with the purpose of improving the teaching-learning situation. This suggests that supervision is influenced by the nature of the organization of the school. Supervision is aided and constrained by the relationship of the formal and informal organization. Discussions of role theory further suggest the influence that the perception of role exerts on the functioning of the individual. Basic to understanding the perception of role is the realization that the individual filling a role will tend to temper his actions to fit his own personality needs while striving to function in line with expectations others hold for his performance.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis of a working concept of role indicates that the expectations of others as well as the expectations of the individual are vital to the effective fulfillment of the

position occupied. Role performance would be determined by the expectations for the role as perceived by the role occupant. There exists a need to clarify the role expectations for the leadership positions in education and specifically in the area of educational supervision.

The need for the study of leadership roles in education was described very emphatically by Westwood in 1965. He concluded in a two-series study of literature related to the role of the teacher that:

A great deal of organizational research reveals—what common sense suggests—that the role of the leaders in any organization will have a considerable influence upon its efficient working and the attainment of its goals. The amount of research in recent years into the roles of managers, administrators and supervisors of all kinds in industrial and other organizations is vast. As yet, the systematic investigation of leadership roles in the school, and in the educational system generally, is virtually non-existent.<sup>2</sup>

And in the 1965 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Babcock stated:

<sup>2</sup> T. J. Westwood. "The Role of the Teacher—II." *Educational Research* 10: 28-29; November 1967.

<sup>1</sup> Gardner Lindzey, editor. *Handbook of Social Psychology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1954. p. 255.

The need for defining the role of the curricular specialist, regardless of his title, in the functional organization of the school system is imperative. . . .

Defining role and position with exactness for all districts may not be either necessary or desirable. Probably structure, like the curriculum itself, must be indigenous to the community.

However, in spite of the complexity of the problem, it is essential that the channels for curriculum change be cleared and the supervisor's role be clarified. . . . We must examine critically the roles and functions, not only of the curriculum staff, but of the total administrative structure and the problems of interrelationships among the parts.<sup>3</sup>

These statements stressed the need for the study of leadership roles in education and more specifically in the area of supervision and curriculum work. Gross and Herriott<sup>4</sup> have reported on the studies of the leadership role of the school principal. Halpin<sup>5</sup> has reported on studies of the role of the school superintendent. These studies were briefly referred to by Westwood,<sup>6</sup> who classified them as a beginning in the study of leadership roles in education.

## Perceptions and Behavior

There have also been attempts to define the functions of supervision in terms of expected behaviors, skills, and competencies. Studies by Dull<sup>7</sup> and Neville<sup>8</sup> have emphasized the perceptions of teachers and have

revealed evidence which suggests that teachers do not perceive supervisors as performing effectively in certain dimensions of supervisory responsibility.

Cain,<sup>9</sup> Hallberg,<sup>10</sup> and Cox and Lott<sup>11</sup> studied the perceptions of administrators and supervisors as well as teachers as they attempted to determine role expectations for the supervisor. Studies by Cain and Hallberg identified differences in the ratings of items describing expectations for the elementary supervisory role. These differences were reported as trends and noted as potential sources of role conflict. Cox and Lott also identified differences in the perceptions of the supervisory role held by teachers, supervisors, and principals working both at the elementary and secondary levels. However, they concluded that the differences were minimized by an indicated overlapping of expectations in the area of human relations activities.

Stewart<sup>12</sup> conducted a study in Maryland to determine the relationships among the perceptions of supervisory behavior expressed by teachers, supervisors, and principals. The study involved personnel working at both the elementary and secondary school levels and provided a comparison of the perceptions of these groups.

Randomly selected groups of teachers, supervisors, and principals reacted to an instrument comprised of 80 items constructed by Neville.<sup>13</sup> The findings were as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Chester D. Babcock. "The Emerging Role of the Curriculum Leader." In: *Role of Supervisor and Curriculum Director in a Climate of Change*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1965. pp. 50, 64.

<sup>4</sup> Neal C. Gross and Robert E. Herriott. *Staff Leadership in Public Schools: A Sociological Inquiry*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew W. Halpin. *Theory and Research in Administration*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966. pp. 82-249.

<sup>6</sup> Westwood, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd W. Dull. "Criteria for Evaluating the Supervisory Programs in School Systems." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Richard F. Neville. "The Supervisor We Need." *Educational Leadership* 23 (8): 639; May 1966.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Gene Cain. "An Analysis of the Functions of General Elementary School Supervision in the Public Schools of Missouri." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1964.

<sup>10</sup> Hazel Irene Hallberg. "Analysis of Expected and Actual Behaviors of Supervisors in the Role Concept of Four Professional Groups." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, 1960.

<sup>11</sup> Johnnye V. Cox. "The Supervisor at Work." *Educational Leadership* 19 (2): 131-38; November 1961.

<sup>12</sup> Bob R. Stewart. "The Relationship of Teacher, Supervisor, and Principal Perceptions of Supervisory Behavior." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Richard F. Neville. "The Supervisory Function of the Elementary School Principal as Perceived by Teachers." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1963.

1. There was basic agreement among the response patterns of teachers, supervisors, and principals as they responded to the relative importance of items describing supervisory behavior.

2. Supervisors and principals consistently recorded perceived higher levels of actual use of supervisory practices than did teachers.

3. The relationship of teacher, supervisor, and principal responses to the desired behavior of supervisors could be viewed as a continuum, with principal responses in the middle.

4. There was basic agreement among the response patterns of persons working in elementary schools and persons working in secondary schools as they responded to the relative importance of items describing supervisory behavior.

5. When the teachers' responses were submitted to factor analysis, six factors of supervisory behavior were identified. The factors corresponded with the competence areas of supervision identified by Mann<sup>14</sup> and by Katz.<sup>15</sup> Factors relating to the areas of human relations, administration, and conceptualization were discernible, as were three factors relating to the different technical skills of leadership, curriculum development, and evaluation.

<sup>14</sup> Floyd C. Mann. "Toward an Understanding of the Leadership Role in Formal Organization." *Leadership and Productivity*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1965. pp. 68-102.

<sup>15</sup> Robert L. Katz. "Skills of an Effective Administrator." *Harvard Business Review* 33: 33-42; January-February 1955.

The finding of basic agreement among the perceptions of the relative importance of supervisory behavior recorded by teachers, supervisors, and principals indicated that there is congruence in the role expectations for supervisory behavior as perceived by these groups. It was further noted that the relationship was the same at both the elementary and secondary school levels. However, the finding that there was a difference in the level of use of supervisory behaviors supports the findings of Dull and of Neville that teachers do not perceive supervisors to be performing effectively in certain dimensions of supervisory responsibility.

If, as these findings suggest, the major difference in the perception of the supervisory role is in the *degree of effectiveness* in the performance of tasks rather than in the *types of activities performed*, it is evident that supervisors have the support of teachers and principals. Then, the real challenge is to help supervisors to execute the supervisory function according to a pattern that enables peers, subordinates, and superordinates to perceive them as being more effective in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

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