

Emerging

Role of the Director of Instruction

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THE challenge of supervisory leadership in public education is the recognition that in a changing society continuous improvement is needed in both the public school curriculum and the instructional program. The pressure of reality continues to move the American society toward acceptance of the stated ideal of excellence in public education. The pursuit of excellence in curriculum and instructional improvement points to the need for renewed emphasis to be placed on educational leadership. Leaders in the field of public education seem to concur in the belief that the quality of the instructional program in the public schools depends, in a large measure, upon the quality of the educational leadership provided.

The director of instruction in a school system is a central figure in providing the needed leadership for curriculum and instructional improvement. He is responsible for the coordination of the total instructional program of the school system. In an attempt to study the role expectations of this important leadership position, several questions merit consideration and analysis. What background of experience and preparation does he bring to the position? What are his major activities and accomplishments? How well qualified is he in terms of academic preparation? What position does he hold in the hierarchical structure of the school system organization? What are the major techniques being used in providing instructional leadership?

To obtain the information needed to study the emerging role of the director of instruction, a questionnaire was designed and copies were sent to all full-time directors of instruction in Virginia school systems. Forty questionnaires were returned and used, representing a 77 percent return. Data pertaining to the following four categories were sought: (a) educational preparation and professional experience, (b) major activities and accomplishments, (c) position in the school system organization, and (d) organization and structure of the supervisory program.

Results of the study are reported as follows:

Educational Preparation and Experience

All but one of the respondents had earned a master's degree. The major fields of concentration at the master's degree level were reported as follows: (a) 68 percent of the respondents had earned the degree in the area of administration and supervision, and (b) 30 percent of the respondents had earned the degree in an academic subject area. Three of the directors of instruction had received a doctorate in educational administration during the past three years. Approximately

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50 percent of the respondents had pursued advanced graduate work beyond the master's degree level. The mean number of semester hours of graduate work completed was 13.

At the undergraduate level, the bachelor's degree programs completed by the respondents were distributed as follows: (a) 37.5 percent history and social studies, (b) 15 percent science, (c) 15 percent mathematics, (d) 12.5 percent English, (e) 12.5 percent vocational education, (f) 2.5 percent music, (g) 2.5 percent health and physical education, and (h) 2.5 percent business administration.

One hundred percent of the respondents had taught in either the secondary school, the elementary school, or both. Previous teaching experience ranged from one year to 25 years. The mean number of years of teaching experience was 8.5. Only one of the respondents had not previously served as a principal of either a secondary school, an elementary school, or a combination school. Previous principalship experience ranged from one year to 30 years. The mean number of years of experience as a principal was 8.5.

Results of the study revealed that only 12, or 30 percent of the respondents, had previous supervisory experience before becoming directors of instruction. An analysis of the supervisory experience reported by the respondents in the survey revealed the following: (a) four had previously served as special supervisors, (b) one had previously served as an elementary supervisor, (c) six had previously served as general supervisors, and (d) one had previously served as a high school supervisor.

Major Activities and Accomplishments

Most of the respondents indicated that they devoted a part of their time to administrative duties in the central office in the school system. Information from the survey revealed that the amount of time devoted to administrative duties ranged from zero to 75 percent. The mean amount of time devoted to administrative duties by the respondents

was 34 percent. Only one respondent indicated that he was not assigned administrative duties in the central office.

The administrative duties and responsibilities, ranked in terms of the amount of time devoted to the activity, were listed as follows: (a) federal aid programs, (b) preparation of administrative reports, (c) finance and business management, (d) transportation, and (e) repair and maintenance program.

The amount of time devoted to various supervisory activities ranged from 25 to 100 percent. The mean percent of time devoted to supervision or supervisory leadership by the respondents was 59.4 percent. The supervisory leadership activities, ranked in order of importance in terms of the amount of time devoted to the activity, were listed as follows: (a) organizing the program of supervision, (b) program planning, (c) program coordination, (d) in-service education, (e) the testing program and research, (f) classroom visitation, (g) organizing and directing curriculum committees and study groups, (h) teacher conferences, (i) preparation of curriculum guides and teaching materials, and (j) program evaluation.

Slightly more than half of the respondents reported that a percentage of their time was devoted to activities indirectly related to supervisory leadership. The mean amount of time devoted to related activities was 6.6 percent. The related activities, ranked in order of importance in terms of the time devoted to the activity, were listed as follows: (a) school public relations, (b) speaking engagements, (c) working with PTA, (d) serving on community planning committees, and (e) working with civic organizations.

Organization and Structure

Thirty-six of the 40 directors of instruction responding indicated they were reporting directly to the superintendent of schools. Four indicated they were reporting directly to the assistant superintendent of schools. The orientation of the position appeared to be different in those school systems in which assistant superintendents of schools were em-



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ployed. For example, the director of instruction appeared to be devoting more time to supervisory leadership, particularly to in-service education and classroom observation, than was the case where the assistant superintendent was not employed.

Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated they were responsible for the total instructional program within their respective school systems. Twenty-three percent indicated they were responsible for only the secondary school instructional program. Less than two percent of the respondents reported that they were responsible for specific subject areas in either the high school or the elementary school programs.

In assuming leadership responsibility for the total instructional program, the respondents reported that the following categories of supervisory personnel in the school systems were reporting directly to them in the discharge of their duties: (a) general supervisors, (b) high school supervisors, (c) visiting teachers, (d) special subject supervisors,

(e) elementary supervisors, and (f) guidance coordinators. Only six respondents did not have other supervisory personnel reporting to them. In most cases, they were located in small school systems which did not employ other supervisory personnel.

The data from the survey revealed that 70 percent of the respondents were assigned responsibilities in the area of personnel administration. The duties and responsibilities assigned to the respondents in this area were listed as follows: (a) interviewing prospective candidates for teaching positions, (b) recommending professional personnel to the superintendent of schools for employment, (c) making recommendations for change of status or promotion of teaching personnel, and (d) making evaluations and recommendations for dismissal of teaching personnel.

On the basis of the information secured from the questionnaires, it appeared that the respondents enjoyed a close working relationship with the principals organizations. This fact was substantiated by the following:

(a) 77.7 percent of the respondents attended the meetings of the regional principals organizations as co-workers, (b) 22.3 percent of the respondents attended the meetings of the regional principals organizations as consultants and advisors, and (c) 30 percent of the respondents held official membership in the regional principals organizations.

The total number of directors of instruction responding indicated that they submitted reports to the appropriate division of the State Department of Education. The two basic reports that were being submitted were the preliminary supervisors report and the final supervisors report. Special reports were submitted from time to time as requested by the State Department of Education. Most of the respondents reported that they submitted quarterly reports to their local school boards.

Membership in professional organizations was common among directors of instruction in Virginia. More than two-thirds of the respondents held membership in each of the following organizations: (a) NEA, (b) VEA, and (c) ASCD. Most of the respondents affiliated with, and attended the meetings of, the regional and state organizations of supervisors.

In summary, the director of instruction is a generalist, assigned the responsibility of providing leadership for the improvement of the total instructional program within the school system. In most Virginia school systems he ranks second to the superintendent of schools in the hierarchy of staff relationships. He is professionally a well trained individual, having earned a master's degree and having pursued advanced graduate work or completed graduate courses beyond the master's degree level.

He comes to the position of director of instruction after having served several years both as a classroom teacher and as a principal. In fact, the route to this position appears to be through the principalship. The stability and tenure of those who hold the position appear to be excellent. Evidence exists to indicate that from the position of director of instruction, many are promoted to the superintendency.

It appears that many directors of instruction are devoting roughly one-third of their time to administrative duties in the school systems. Perhaps this fact lends credence to the often stated need for additional administrative assistance for the superintendent of schools. In the final analysis, it appears that the amount of time devoted to administrative duties would mean that less time would be available for leadership in improving the instructional program.

As the educational establishment becomes more complex, and as society comes to demand excellence in public education, instructional leadership of the highest order is a must. Thus the emerging role of the director of instruction becomes one of providing leadership for a major function of school operation—the area of curriculum and instruction. This means in essence that he must be a highly trained individual, experienced as a teacher and as an administrator, and aware of the many resources, both human and material, that can be focused to provide a high quality of education in the public schools.

The emerging role of the director of instruction will unquestionably encompass a degree of sophistication which has not previously been known. The thrust of the role will be one of leadership in the sense of continuously working with professional staff members to achieve the following:

- Helping professional staff members to discover, to define, and to understand their tasks, their goals, and their purposes as they strive to implement curriculum change and to improve the instructional program
- Helping professional staff members to achieve their tasks, their goals, and their purposes as they go about the daily tasks of providing opportunities for meaningful learning experiences for pupils
- Helping the professional group to maintain itself and to improve its performance.

The director of instruction as such may be characterized as a decision maker, a group leader, and a human relations engineer. □

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