REFLECTIONS about my personal and professional experiences have led me to believe that instructional leadership is just a special kind of teaching. Therefore, in this article I shall try to convey to you some notions I have about the kinds of desire and discipline that I think help a person become an effective, happy teacher; in particular, that type of teacher called an instructional leader.

The Desire

I feel quite sure that from infancy in my home I received love and attention which led me to feel that I was a lovable and worthy person. As I grew older, I became increasingly aware of and responsive to this affection shown by my parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, neighbors, relatives, playmates, friends, and colleagues. I would guess that similar experiences perhaps over different schedules, some deferred and some interrupted, were essential inputs in the emotional development of all who teach with joy and effectiveness.

Building upon and reinforcing that initial feeling of self-acceptance in my life was a steady flow of predominantly enjoyable personal relationships from intimate to casual, from enduring to fleeting, with persons of both sexes, many ages, varied occupations, and different racial and cultural backgrounds.

Finally, those interpersonal experiences were topped off by the whipped cream of accomplishments and recognition from an endless adventure in academic learning, literature, art, music, athletics, manual work, skilled labor, free enterprise, religion, community services, and a professional career.

It would be my guess that out of personal experiences such as those described above is born the insatiable desire to teach.

The perceptions that mediate between desire and discipline. Most of us are now agreed that our basic perceptions of ourselves and our world are generated by the unique mix of emotions we have acquired over the years since birth, somewhat as illustrated here. These basic perceptions both focus our attention and restrict our perusing. Consequently, our deepest desires are the foci around which we organize our usual style of behavior. At the same time, the frontiers of our actual experience establish the outer edges of our curiosity beyond which we will not go in our search for alternative behaviors.

It appears to me that there are four elements to be found in good measure in the perceptions of the effective instructional leader.

First, I suspect you would find percept-
tions of self-acceptance and self-insight like those of the adaptive-type, self-actualizing personalities hypothesized by Maslow and others. These perceptions provide the instructional leader with the internal fortitude and purpose necessary to survive, with some relish, the constant buffeting of the stormy interactive experiences that make up the daily diet of the change agent. To the degree that he possesses these affective reservoirs and cognitive insights, he is blessed with more maturity and integrity than the majority of his fellows.

Second, it is my hunch that you would find the instructional leader slightly more sensitive than others to signals of potential in human beings and more positively oriented to auspicious occasions for upgrading the human condition. Such perceptions give him a greater built-in readiness to act and a greater kit of usable options.

Third, I would strongly hypothesize that the instructional leader has open, positive preconceptions of other people in general which allow him to relate deftly and comfortably with persons of varying talents, tendencies, and temperaments. Such perceptions permit him to engage and disengage with equal alacrity as the need for such varying relationships comes and goes.

Finally, I would suggest that the instructional leader possesses a broad and deep perspective of the unifying ideas and universal processes that make man and his environment appear as one whole continuous, dynamic phenomenon. To the degree that he has such a grand view of life, he enjoys a more commanding vision than the majority of his colleagues.

The modest inference, then, is that the ideal and most successful instructional leader combines the personal integrity of the psychotherapist, the sensitivity of the superior teacher, the people-oriented and task-oriented creativity of the best administrator, and the unifying perspective of the philosopher.

Given these perceptions, he can grasp the essential problem to be solved, perceive the most viable alternative solutions, help appropriate persons formulate the long-term as well as the immediate goals to seek, and maintain the personal strength and self-direction to see the process through to a solution momentarily satisfying to a majority of all persons involved.

The Discipline

What, then, are the concepts, skills, and attitudes that the instructional leader must acquire and use proficiently if he has the desire to become a disciplined, catalytic agent for instructional improvement in his district?

I would like to respond to this question by listing two sets of requirements that seem important to me at this particular time. One set pertains to capabilities and traits of a personal nature. The other set might be called professional attributes.

It seems to me that in terms of personal traits, the effective instructional leader should be:

1. An adventurer in search of self-actualization
2. A friendly reinforcer of individual personal growth and professional development in other persons
3. A liberally educated, well informed scholar
4. An organizer of productive social systems
5. A cooperative colleague in professional endeavors
6. An enthusiastic liaison person between school and community services.

There are four general "descriptors" which I would list as necessary professional attributes of the instructional leader. To the greatest degree possible, he should be:

1. A diagnostician, advisor, and evaluator of effective working (learning) styles
2. An analyzer and inventor of learning environments, including attention to staffing, facilities, equipment, materials, and activities
3. A coordinator of supporting services within the school district, the local community, and more remote areas
4. An astute and adept manager of multi-
ple calendars, those related to functional cycles as well as those related to the natural chronology of hours, days, weeks, months, and years.

A listing of such requisite traits and capabilities for the instructional leader invites the question of how each might be acquired.

My brief, simplistic response would be that the personal traits come by way of a personal, lifelong commitment to their pursuit. Formal schooling obviously can help at some points along this quest. It should be equally obvious, however, that zestful participation in all arenas of love, work, play, and worship is needed for a full complement of these traits to be realized.

In a like manner, surprisingly, the professional capabilities can be derived only partially from formal education and teaching experience. For, in many instances, it will be found that study and experience in related as well as completely unrelated occupations will supply the unique concept or hone the precise skill needed by the professional instructional leader.

In conclusion, then, I believe we become teachers and instructional leaders through desire and discipline. To a great extent, the desire to teach comes from the nature and nurture of our emotional-social beings. The discipline to teach or to provide instructional leadership accrues to us out of a lifelong participation in scholastic, recreational, occupational, and ethical pursuits.

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