



# New Identities for New Tasks

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**A** FEW years ago I stated that the greatest promise for improved instruction existed not within organized national efforts to reconstruct or create curricula, but rather within the realm of imaginative teaching.<sup>1</sup> Today this statement can be altered to read that the greatest promise for curricula possessing potential to stimulate in students academic excitement and intellectual independence lies not within organized national efforts but in local educators assuming new identities, accepting new tasks.

Indeed, much of the new in education will be sterile unless educators at all levels redefine their roles within the educational system. Teachers no longer can be teachers in the narrow sense, principals no longer can be the "keepers of business minutiae," supervisors no longer can be individuals concerned with enforcing conformance, curriculum directors no longer can think primarily in terms of providing for improvement in instructional practice.

## Some New Tasks

At the present time, tasks for educators are being defined by persons outside of education. Parents are defining tasks when urg-

<sup>1</sup> Francis P. Hunkins. "A New Concept of the Teacher—Some of Its Demands." *Texas Journal of Secondary Education* 21: 17-20; Spring 1968.

ing accountability. Educational vouchers have the potential to affect educators' roles. Diverse governmental efforts are affecting and can continue to affect our identities. Already, many schools have a new identity in the person or persons charged with writing research proposals for federal consideration.

It seems that the public is forcing and will continue to force educators to assume new roles or to redefine present roles. Preferably educators should possess sufficient insight to initiate new identities within the system rather than responding to after-the-fact pressure. Educators need to do more crystal-balling and less defensive play.

Many new tasks appear under the functional headings of development, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation. However, a big difficulty is that we think within the present confines of our school systems. Often when thinking of development, we consider action originating from the director's office. We contemplate traditional line-staff organization. The curriculum director informs his elementary and secondary school curriculum coordinators and they speak to the respective principals who communicate to teachers.

If we are to make development really functional within the school context, perhaps we need to restructure what a teacher is and

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how the school system must function. No person teaching 30 pupils five hours a day is likely to get involved deeply in curriculum development. He may request involvement, but he really has neither time nor energy to become functional. Usually the principal is too busy managing the school to be greatly involved in curriculum development.

Differentiated staffing appears as one answer to role or identity needs. Here persons can assume responsibilities for instruction, for curriculum development and implementation, for evaluation, for counseling students, for cooperating with various pressure groups. However, for differentiated staffing to occur, we need to assess current staff attitudes, skills, and goals. We need to assess how the school schedule would need adjustment. We need to devise means to communicate to parents and other interested publics what modern education is.

### **New Roles and Identities for Teachers**

As presently conceived, the teacher's prime role is teaching. Often this role is interpreted as exposition. Even with the new curriculum projects, many teachers are still the prime performers in their classrooms. Yet the teacher can assume new roles: motivator, mediator, manager, experimenter, friend, counselor, diagnostician, evaluator, researcher, coordinator, supervisor, student, scholar. Assuming such roles would require changes, some drastic, in scheduling and altered concepts of school, of educator.

Teachers need to assume the role of analyst. They need to analyze their students; they also need to analyze their role in the total school system. A system refers to an organization containing functionally related parts. It does not describe islands of unrelated activity. Yet the latter seems most common in many schools. Some teachers do their own thing and resent interference from others.

Teachers can assume to varying degrees the following tasks: developing curriculum packages, managing various resource (media) centers and laboratories, instructing various pupil groups, assisting in providing guidance

to teacher interns, managing teacher aides, participating in peer diagnosis and evaluation, assisting in sequencing curriculum development activities, coordinating testing, and participating in designing in-service education. Of course, no one teacher would assume all these tasks.

However, from these tasks, one can see that the teacher would no longer "just teach"; he would assume curricular roles, management roles as well as special teaching roles. Of course, teachers who accepted roles with unique responsibilities would receive compensation commensurate with these responsibilities.

### **New Roles and Identities for Curriculum Directors**

If teacher roles drastically change, then the curriculum director cannot function as he did before such change. For example, teachers charged with developing and sequencing curriculum certainly have appropriated some of the previous responsibilities of the curriculum director. Curriculum directors, it would seem, should be more concerned with the macro-view of curriculum. They should coordinate activities of various members within the system, assuring that the school functions as a system. The prime task of the curriculum director is charting and overseeing the master plan. Thus, the curriculum director will need to assume some of the identity of the systems expert. He should be able to plot the myriad events and activities needed for quality education. He should be able to identify staff needed for new tasks.

The curriculum director also would acquire the identity of a communications expert. If he could not do this, he could assign someone this responsibility. Effective school operation requires communication. Often innovations fail because people to be affected by the innovation lack sufficient information. The curriculum director needs to organize communication networks involving educators within the system and people outside of the school system. If new identities are to materialize, the communication net-

works will require precise definition. Many of these new identities may necessitate changes in state laws. If so, communication will have to be maintained with state legislators.

Curriculum directors need to ascertain that the school has a person or persons in charge of research and development. Many school systems have this. However, most of the research is on the effectiveness of new curricula upon children. Although this is most valuable; other types of research are needed. The curriculum director needs to coordinate or have a person who can coordinate research designed to study the process of education. Perhaps this is an entirely new role. Today educators spend so much time teaching and trying to measure the effectiveness of their teaching, that they fail to study the effectiveness of the system. How effective is process A in making decisions as compared to process B? How effective is the involving of certain persons in the curricular decision making? It seems crucial that we also study the process of education. By such study, we should gain precision in our workings and be able to anticipate when new identities are required to meet changing education needs.

### **New Tasks for Principals**

The principal has been defined as the facilitator of quality instruction. Usually he is a business manager bogged down with bus schedules, oil deliveries, and supply maintenance. Perhaps a new identity needed here is that of the educational business manager to coordinate activities relating to the business aspects of the school. Such a person would free the principal to work as instructional and curriculum facilitator. The prin-

icipal could guide planning, assist in strategy development, assist in planning teacher workshops, assist in supervising teachers, and coordinate curricula for teachers and parents to keep them informed of modern education. Perhaps each school needs a curriculum coordinator in addition to a newly conceptualized principal. One must remember that altering or creating new identities in one part of the system necessitates adjustments in personnel in other parts of the system. Change in education has a ripple effect. You cannot differentiate responsibility among teachers and not alter the rest of the structure.

The principal also might be freed to be a resource person to his staff. He could teach and coordinate aspects of the curriculum which are his specialities.

Where is the supervisor, the counselor, the pupil-personnel worker? Some of their responsibilities have been assumed by the changed identities of the educators previously mentioned. The teacher, in the expanded role of educator, may be a supervisor of interns, of fellow workers. The principal may be freed to supervise. The counselor role also may be assumed by the newly defined teacher.

However, this should not be interpreted as advocating the discontinuation of these persons. Yet these persons' roles also would have to be redefined to fit into the overall new system. Also, the limitations imposed by a brief article make coverage of all present personnel impossible.

### **Additional New Tasks-New Identities**

Previously I mentioned the need to be students of education, to analyze the effectiveness of our educational system. We need

#### **Future ASCD Annual Conferences**

<b>1973</b>	March 17-21	Minneapolis	<i>Minneapolis Auditorium</i>
<b>1974</b>	March 9-13	Anaheim	<i>Anaheim Convention Center</i>
<b>1975</b>	March 15-19	New Orleans	<i>Rivergate</i>
<b>1976</b>	March 14-17	Miami Beach	<i>Convention Center</i>

feedback on what we are doing. Often people involved in the doing lack sufficient time to analyze their functioning. Further, such reporting might lack objectiveness.

It would be beneficial to employ someone charged with analyzing or critiquing the various actions and decisions that educators make within their school system. This person could provide reports indicating how certain tasks were approached, by whom approached, and the final outcomes of the approaches taken. Such information could provide people with data suggesting continuance, adjustment, or termination of their manner of functioning. They could determine if their actions were consistent with their goals. Critics could provide meaningful information to educators to facilitate evaluation of particular master or micro plans to involve students in their learning.

Another new identity possessing potential to meet emerging needs in the school is that of an educational "troubleshooter." I already mentioned that educators need more crystal-balling. This identity could involve the teacher as an expert in educational systems and as such could anticipate and locate potential problems. He also might cooperate with a computer expert in developing models which, when simulated, could indicate how certain innovations would be received both by teachers and the public. This might give a new dimension to pilot testing.

The office of the "troubleshooter" also would have staff to meet with various community or state pressure groups before the "lid could blow" on certain issues. As more educational crises seem to spout from current unrest, such an individual within the educational system could be very valuable.

Nothing should prevent us from creating new roles and professional personnel. Today there are thousands of new jobs in industry that did not exist a quarter of a century ago. In education, however, few new jobs have appeared. We live in a media explosion, yet we have not created new positions to coordinate creatively our technological marvels. An educator returning from the grave would easily recognize the current school organization.

## Let's Consider New Identities Again

How do we make the transition from talking about new identities to actually creating them? We need to question our own attitudes, our willingness to change. We need to consider the elements of the new identities.

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for bringing into being new job positions and new roles within existing jobs? First, we need to possess knowledge of why we are doing or advocating what we are doing. This involves skills of self-analysis. This is where being the educational scholar comes in.

Second and related to this, we need increased professionalism. We need to refrain from considering ourselves as technicians. Being professional suggests a certain amount of creativity and willingness to experiment, a willingness to be involved in local and national organizations. Third, we need increased zeal. Fourth, we need confidence in the roles of the school. This confidence should be such that we are willing to experiment, to make mistakes. This confidence also should allow us to relate to people both within and outside the school system. This confidence should enable us to alter the defensive position we often maintain. Fifth, we need to possess a certain skepticism. Such an attitude will prevent us from being "jumpers on bandwagons." Yet such skepticism should not retard innovation and new roles. Rather it should cause us to probe rationales and supporting data for inaugurating new curricula and devising new identities.

New identities, new roles, new attitudes, new organizations, new problems confront us. Today's problems have some commonality with past problems, but they also possess many unique aspects. We are dealing with more sophisticated students.

We are dealing with problems that unless solved can lead to the termination of the world as we currently know it. The school cannot meet the present situations with the same division of labor that served us in the twenties. The challenge is ours. If we do not accept it, other forces will. □

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