



CHANGING SUPERVISION

in a

CHANGING ERA

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SUPERVISION is not like it used to be. Experienced supervisors are well aware that changes in their schools and districts have been so varied and so rapid that their roles and responsibilities are less clear today than a decade ago. Equally true is the recognition by supervisors of the reality that the pressures and demands made upon them require knowledges and skills for which many are not prepared by either formal preparatory programs or experience. In brief, practicing supervisors recognize that the expectancies held for them are changing just as rapidly as are their organizations' attempts to respond to the demands and pressures placed upon them by society and by an increasingly professional (at least militant) staff.

Today's Pressures

Today's supervisor is spending less and less time with individual teachers. Not only has the number of teachers frequently increased so drastically as to make this impractical, but also, in many cases, teachers' knowledge of and skill in a particular curriculum area or teaching strategy surpass those of the supervisor whose training and/or experience have been directed elsewhere.

Team teaching is a case in point. Few of today's supervisors were exposed to the concept of team teaching in their preparatory programs, and few have actually engaged in team teaching itself. So how does a supervisor provide assistance (maintenance or improvement service) to teachers so engaged? Often, then, supervisors are no longer the experienced persons, capable of calling upon their own preparations and/or experiences to assist others. Consequently, this traditional role for supervisors is becoming increasingly less functional in many schools and school districts.

A second phenomenon that seems to be affecting the role and function of some supervisors relates to the increased emphasis on "innovation." Much of the leadership responsibility for innovative programs now seems to be assigned to or accepted by principals who are to develop such programs within their own schools. This may be illustrated in two ways.

First, the principal has long been recognized as having responsibility for the quality of instruction and programming within his school. Quite frequently, many principals have been satisfied to ignore this

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responsibility or to delegate it to supervisors so that their time could be devoted primarily to management activities. Recent events, however, have caused many principals to recognize and to value leadership opportunities available through developing unique innovative programs. Consequently, principals increasingly have reaccepted or been forced to reaccept their leadership responsibilities and, thus, to look to supervisors for different kinds of assistance or to ignore them altogether.

A second illustration of this phenomenon is the trend toward altering the name of the principal to such titles as that of "Learning Coordinator" or "Learning Facilitator" and employing an assistant principal or principals to care for management functions. In other instances, assistant principals are being employed and assigned specific responsibilities for curriculum and instruction. Regardless of the specific dimensions in local situations, supervisors in general are finding their roles and relationships with principals undergoing subtle if not radical changes.

A third factor affecting today's supervisors is that as the school organization becomes larger and more complex, sufficient attention has not been given to clarification of job assignments and responsibilities. For example, the advent of P. L. 89-10, Title I, in some districts has resulted in the expansion of the existing organization to include a Title I director, teachers, and other personnel including even a Title I staff of supervisors. In such cases, many schools are operating a regular instructional program upon which is "piggy-backed" one or more Title I programs. Staffed differently, responsible to different persons and for different outcomes, such programs have typically increased the confusion surrounding roles and role relationships.

Equally confusing is the situation in rapidly expanding school districts in which personnel are employed but little attention is given to clarification of roles and responsibilities. In such cases, personnel are so busy coping with operational survival that little attention is devoted to organization structure or to instructional improvement. In such

cases, supervisors, of necessity, find themselves doing any and everything—much of which may not be related to instruction or instructional improvement. Such situations seem to illustrate the fact that the increasing size and complexity of organizations have in some instances resulted in added confusion for the role and function of the supervisor.

A fourth and final factor, selected for inclusion in this article, which is affecting the role and function of supervisors is that of teacher professionalism and its resultant militancy. In increasing numbers, states and/or local boards of education are granting professional organizations the right to negotiate not only salaries but also working conditions and, in some instances, control over curriculum and instruction. The merits or demerits of professional negotiation are not here argued. Rather, the point is that this phenomenon adds considerably to the confusion surrounding the supervisor.

Is the supervisor classified as a teacher or as a member of the management team? Regardless of his classification, his role and function will of necessity be altered. If he is considered a member of the teacher group, to whom is he responsible for what? On the other hand, if he remains with the management team, can he continue to relate and work with teachers in the same way? Will his responsibilities to the organization change?

To illustrate the latter point, most supervisors have always resisted being involved in teacher evaluation on the premise that this would interfere with an open and confiding relationship with their clients—the teachers. However, as a result of negotiation, the management team will probably be assigned responsibility (which it now has, but unfortunately seldom exercises) for ensuring to the board of education that each teacher is adequately fulfilling his negotiated contractual responsibilities. In some instances, this responsibility has already been assigned to supervisors. Thus, in districts where teachers negotiate contracts with boards of education, supervisors tend to find their roles and functions increasingly ambiguous and unclear.

The discussion to this point could be interpreted as implying that supervision is no longer needed or viable. Such was not the intent, for the changes cited only illustrate that old roles, along with old competencies and old mind sets, are increasingly inadequate. As stated in the opening sentence, "Supervision is not like it used to be," but what was not added was the phrase, "—and that may be good!" It may be good in that most of the current pressures and demands experienced by public schools are in reality directly focused on securing improvements in instruction and in programs.

For years, one of the primary concerns of supervisors has been that of overcoming institutional lethargy and generating support for and assistance with instructional improvement. Now the question is increasingly shifting from, "How do I get them to want to change?" to "How can I influence the direction of instructional change?" To this point several new roles appear not only possible, feasible, and practical, but also expeditious for supervisors. Among these possible new roles are those discussed below.

New Roles for Supervisors

It would seem that the supervisor might well become the person responsible for long-range instructional planning. As schools respond to current demands for "accountability," long-range planning becomes a necessity. Who is better equipped than the supervisor/curriculum worker to accept this task? To be sure, this change in role will require certain new knowledge and skills, but such would be the case for anyone in the organization. Consequently, it would seem logical for supervisors to seek this responsibility and to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills and to seek responsibility as instructional planners. Thus they would be in position to exercise considerable influence over the direction in which instructional programs move.

It would also appear that supervisors could play significant roles in monitoring planned changes in programs. Here again, in response to demands for increased ac-

countability, and as an integral part of a planned change, the organization must assign the responsibility for monitoring the change. Supervisors could well seek this role and acquire requisite knowledge and skills for its execution and, thus, influence instructional change from a management position.

A third avenue open to supervisors is that of becoming program evaluators. Closely allied with planning and with monitoring, evaluation will become increasingly significant in instructional improvement and program development. Here again, supervisors in most districts are already as expert in this area as anyone. Where they are not, they could acquire the requisite knowledge and skills and thus be increasingly influential in effecting educational change.

One last area illustrating new opportunities for supervisors is that of experimentation. As schools respond to pressures, many will find it advantageous to "test" a planned change by introducing it as a developmental experimentation in a school unit. Here the supervisor has an opportunity to function not only as a planner, monitor, or evaluator, but also as a director (or co-director with the principal) for the experimentation itself. Particularly will this be true with those proposed changes which have built-in requirements for staff development—in-service teacher education. It is particularly opportune for the supervisor to head such a teacher education component in those projects which require teachers to acquire new knowledges and skills. Obviously, such opportunities—via experimentation—provide unique means for supervisors to influence instructional improvement.

In summary, it seems that as schools respond to increasing pressures, supervision is changing. Of necessity, schools are becoming more formal organizations and are, or will be, resorting to more systematic management systems. Supervisors will need to become more closely identified and integrated with these newer systems. Consequently, they will in many cases become more organizationally oriented and responsible. In such cases, supervisors must seek and obtain man-

agement or quasi-management positions as planners, monitors, evaluators, experimenters, and/or teacher educators. Such radical departures from the roles previously played by many supervisors will require considerable modification in perspectives, in knowledges, and in skills. Yet, since supervision's end goal is the improvement of instruction, present conditions require such changes.

To be sure, supervision is not what it

used to be. What it will become in the future is anyone's guess. Yet one thing is certain, it will become that which supervisors do in terms of the roles they seek and the services they deliver in their school organizations as these respond to present demands.

Supervisors and supervision will change during this era of change, and it seems that such changes will be more productive if they are initiated by supervisors themselves. □

Announcement

The Curriculum Bulletin

to be published by the

Oregon ASCD

Effective January 1972, the Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, a unit of national ASCD, has assumed publication of *The Curriculum Bulletin*, a monograph which has been published for the past 30 years by the University of Oregon. Hugh B. Wood, Professor of Education at the University of Oregon, will edit the bulletin with the assistance of a publications committee.

Suitable manuscripts of 5,000 to 25,000 words are solicited.

The monographs have dealt with timely discussions of curriculum research, practice, and theory of interest to teachers, supervisors, administrators, and librarians. The format will remain the same: each issue will be devoted to a single topic, usually with a single author. The first issue of 1972, now available, provides a fresh approach to remedial reading, a perennial problem.

Publication dates will be irregular. Four issues each year are anticipated, with each monograph priced according to length. *The Oregon ASCD Curriculum Bulletin* may be purchased on a subscription basis for \$5, the subscription to be in effect until bulletins of a value of \$6 or more have been sent to the subscriber. Single copies will be sold separately at the list price.

A limited supply of the issues published in 1967-69 is still available. For a list of these titles or for further information about *The Oregon ASCD Curriculum Bulletin*, contact:

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