

Educational Change Agents:

MANY universities are now involved in efforts to help school districts develop successful research and development and in-service education programs. This concern is evidenced by the continual increase in both the numbers and types of such programs. Two noteworthy examples have been the Cooperative Program in Educational Development (COPEDE) and the League of Cooperating Schools. Indications are, however, that most programs fail to (a) adequately meet the in-service interests and needs of educators; (b) bring about desired changes in professional practices and organizational behaviors; (c) effect the wisest uses of university resources; (d) achieve the highest returns for efforts and financial investments.

This article suggests a systematic approach to R & D and in-service program planning which might meet these needs. It calls for the creation of two new roles—those of training specialist and extension educational specialist—who, from their school district and university bases, respectively, would act as educational change agents.

Most school districts have only limited funds available for R & D and in-service education. This situation is likely to continue as long as districts are forced to rely solely on their own fiscal means. To date, the chief single source of funds for educational R & D has been the U.S. Office of Education. Even

so, the amount spent for R & D and for in-service education has been significantly less than that spent by governmental agencies in such other sectors as public health and forestry.¹

Private foundations have also heavily supported educational R & D efforts. On the whole, however, these efforts have been fragmented and limited in their concern for systematic educational change.² Once more, research findings have seldom been diffused and linked to the development of new policies or professional and organizational behaviors.

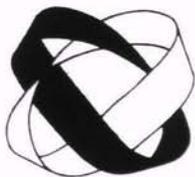
As far as in-service education is concerned, perhaps this is the most indefensible "of all the tradition-bound practices in American education."³ Although most school districts pay homage to professional advancement, the emphasis is often on the accumulation of credits rather than on specific learnings which will enhance professionalism and on-the-job performance. From the teacher's point of view, in-service education is often valued primarily as a means of salary advancement or for promotion to an administrative or supervisory position.

¹ Patricia Cayo Sexton. *The American School: A Sociological Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967. pp. 108-109.

² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³ Dwight W. Allen. "In-Service Teacher Training: A Modest Proposal." In: Louis J. Rubin, editor. *Improving In-Service Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971. p. 109.

An "Inside-Outside" Team



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In order to account for the relatively unsuccessful past and present accomplishments of educational R & D and in-service efforts, it is necessary to view educational change from both historical and institutional perspectives. The change agent is "a person who facilitates planned change or planned innovation."⁴ Traditionally, education has had no one to function in this role. This is in contrast to the role of, for example, the county extension agent who, as a "middleman" in the county-state-federal agricultural system, has been able to demonstrate and communicate new scientific and technological developments to individual farmers and to stimulate changes in farming practices.

In education, school district administrators typically have had control over R & D and in-service programs. Because most of their responsibilities have been of the management-maintenance types, however, these individuals have not been able to devote adequate attention to professional and organizational improvements. Two roles might be created to fill this void: (a) a *training specialist* role to design and initiate programs from within a particular school district and (b) an *extension educational specialist* role to stimulate programs from outside. These

two roles might be joined together into what Lippitt and Fox call an "inside-outside" team.⁵

Training Specialist

Regarding the training specialist role, Meade alludes to the characteristics and responsibilities of the incumbent:

To begin with, he must know learning and teaching. Beyond this, he must be an expert diagnostician, able to assist teachers to assess their strengths and weaknesses. As a specialist in performance assessment, he must have the capacity to assist teachers to find the kind of teaching responsibilities for which they are best suited.

The training specialist would be a bit of a heretic, at least to the extent that he would actively seek ways to unfetter in-service training from the traditions of the past. He would know, moreover, the expectations of students and parents and the pulse of the community in which he worked. And, above all, he would have the leadership to inspire those with whom he worked to teach somewhere near their optimal capacity.

⁵ Ronald Lippitt and Robert Fox. "Development and Maintenance of Effective Classroom Learning." In: Louis J. Rubin, editor. *Improving In-Service Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971. p. 146.

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⁴ Ronald G. Havelock. *The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation in Education*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, January 1973. p. 9.

Such a training specialist would have access to all the resources essential to effective retraining and would have a position of line authority. His chief function would be to insure an optimal "fit" between person and task, and to instill a sense of high aspiration and adequacy.⁶

Extension Educational Specialist

As far as the extension educational specialist role is concerned, the incumbent would function primarily as a process helper, working directly with and complementing the work of the training specialist. As suggested by Havelock, the extension educational specialist would do the following:

1. Help schools to recognize and define their R & D and in-service needs
2. Help schools diagnose their problems and set program objectives and priorities
3. Help schools to acquire and utilize relevant university academic resources
4. Help schools to select or create solutions from presented alternatives
5. Help schools to get solutions accepted, adapted, and installed
6. Help schools to evaluate solutions continually in order to determine if needs are being satisfied, and to assist in future planning.⁷

⁶ Edward J. Meade, Jr. "No Health in Us." In: Louis J. Rubin, editor. *Improving In-Service Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971. pp. 221-22.

⁷ Havelock, *op. cit.*

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The land grant university extension division would be one logical base for the "outside" change agent role. This division has as its major responsibility the identification and matching of community needs with appropriate campus resources. With its ties to the county Cooperative Extension network, the division is part of a ready-made delivery system which can easily be adapted and used to assist school districts. As well as working with training specialists, the extension educational specialist can work directly with designated county extension agents in identifying major educational systems throughout the state (such as university academic departments, state departments of education, school districts, and professional associations); developing and strengthening their own relationships with these systems; and designing strategies to link these systems with one another for the purposes of R & D and in-service planning.

Versatility is an important needed quality of the extension educational specialist. He must possess conceptual, technical, and human relations skills and be able to use these skills in a transactional manner—shifting his style to fit the situation.⁸ In order for both his productivity and creativity to be maximized, the specialist needs to be evaluated continually, but primarily on "visibility of consequences" rather than "activity."⁹

Last, but not least, the extension educational specialist must be able to exhibit a special commitment to his work. Along with the training specialist, he must view seriously the ultimate charge given him—to help improve the quality of education. □

⁸ Robert L. Katz. "Skills of an Effective Administrator." *Harvard Business Review* 33: 33-42; January-February 1955; Jacob W. Getzels, James M. Lipham, and Roald F. Campbell. *Educational Administration as a Social Process*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968. p. 148.

⁹ Martin M. Rosner. "Administrative Controls and Innovation." *Behavioral Science* 13: 36-39; 1968. Rosner's research suggests that innovation varies inversely with activity control ("the degree to which organizational members use procedures or resources specified by their superiors") and directly with visibility of consequences ("the ability and willingness to measure the consequences of organizational programs in terms of organizational goals").

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