

# Putting the "S" Back in ASCD

ROBERT J. KRAJEWSKI\*

*Dynamic input from the membership is needed if supervisory leadership is to be rejuvenated and if a balance is to be restored between the curricular and the supervisory emphases of the Association.*

**T**HE 1943 merger of the Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction and the Society for Curriculum Study produced ASCD (officially titled in 1946), an organization which facilitates educational improvement through better instruction and supervision. The fact that ASCD is indeed the major organization for supervisors and curriculum personnel is readily accepted. That ASCD provides the necessary leadership for supervisors has, in recent years, been subject to debate. Admittedly not many voices have been raised; nevertheless some facts exist which give credence to the concerns of those few willing to be heard.

A 1969 survey by Muriel Crosby<sup>1</sup> revealed that of the articles published in *Educational Leadership*, 1960-68, sixty were

<sup>1</sup> Muriel Crosby. "The New Supervisor: Caring, Coping, Becoming." *Changing Supervision for Changing Times*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1969. p. 51.

related to supervision, an average of less than 7 per year. She concluded that few, if any, articles used either research or practical bases. Moreover, most had little or no utilitarian value to the actual supervisor in the field.

In 1970 Robert R. Leeper reported that in the period 1943 to 1971 ASCD publications favored curriculum, instruction, and media over supervision and professionalization. A comparison of these categories is shown in Table 1.

	Curriculum, Instruction, and Media	Supervision and Professionalization
Number of ASCD yearbooks and booklets	56	24
Number of monthly and yearly themes of <i>Educational Leadership</i>	93	65

Table 1. Analysis of ASCD Yearbook, Booklet, and Journal Themes, 1943-1971.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Robert R. Leeper. "To Use an Option." *Educational Leadership* 28 (1): 4, October 1970.

\*Robert J. Krajewski, Associate Professor of Education, Texas Tech University, Lubbock



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In a more recent study of publications, Ronald Comfort, Larry Bowen, and Bruce Gansneder noted that in the 1972-73 issues of *Educational Leadership*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Today's Education*, *NASSP Bulletin*, and *Harvard Educational Review* (1971-73), the curriculum/supervision article ratio was approximately 7:1. More specifically, 14 percent of the articles dealt with curriculum, while only 2 percent dealt with supervision.<sup>3</sup> The authors asked, "What kind of impact can these journals have on educators if few of the articles are related to educational practices or to curriculum, and almost none of them deal with supervision, human development, or learning?"<sup>4</sup>

**"Clinical supervision is the support mechanism which if effected properly should eventually leave the teacher more self-sufficient in implementing curricular changes and better able analytically to improve his or her own teaching behavior."**<sup>5</sup>

Increased concern with the above findings encouraged this author to conduct a quantitative examination of the 1971-75 ASCD annual conference guides to study priority emphases on the following items: (a) annual conference themes, (b) action labs, (c) special sessions, (d) team action labs (1971), (e) thematic sessions and team workshops (1972), and (f) seminars (1973). Major topic priorities were categorized as listed and defined in the Comfort, Bowen, and Gansneder article (see Table 2).

The above conference priority items were then placed into one of the 8 respective categories: research, foundations, human development and learning, curriculum, instruction, supervision, administration-management-organization, and community

<sup>3</sup> Ronald E. Comfort, Larry S. Bowen, and Bruce M. Gansneder. "Who's Writing About What in Education's Major Journals?" *Educational Leadership* 31 (8): 666; May 1974.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 667.

and education. Coding was first independently effected by each of 4 coders<sup>5</sup> then re-evaluated by consensus. Consensus percentages were then computed on each category for each priority, 1971-75.

The themes for each year were:

- 1971—Dare To Care/Dare To Act
- 1972—From the Kerner Report to the Year 2000: Action for the 70's
- 1973—Curriculum for Individuality
- 1974—Creating Curricula for Human Futures
- 1975—Curriculum Action for a Crisis Society

A cursory glance at each conference program indicates more focus on curriculum than supervision; a closer examination clearly confirms this fact. Table 3 provides a comprehensive analysis of the conference activities for the past 5 years. For example, a comparison of action lab priorities, curriculum vs. supervision reveals:

<sup>5</sup> The author wishes to express thanks to coders: Gene Beatey, program specialist, and Claude Bridges, resource teacher, Chattanooga, Tennessee, City Schools, and Sonny Chambley, high school band director, Cleveland, Tennessee.

	Curriculum (%)	Supervision (%)
1971	44	6
1972	30	19
1973	31	14
1974	33	14
1975	43	7

Similarly, a comparison of special sessions priorities shows:

	Curriculum (%)	Supervision (%)
1971	39	6
1972	41	12
1973	35	15
1974	45	11
1975	25	7

Team action labs in 1971 were 27% curriculum, 0% supervision; in 1972 thematic sessions were 15% curriculum, 10% supervision and team workshops were 30% curriculum, 10% supervision; and seminars in 1973 were 20% curriculum, 13% supervision. All indicate similar patterns to those of action labs and special sessions.

Year	1971			1972				1973			1974		1975	
	SS	AL	TAL	SS	AL	TS	TW	SS	AL	S	SS	AL	SS	AL
Types of Sessions														
Number of Sessions	145	32	11	100	33	20	10	100	33	30	145	47	176	46
Percentage of: Research	8	0	0	1	3	0	0	6	6	0	4	2	6	9
Foundations	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
Community and Education	6	0	10	3	10	5	10	9	9	13	4	8	4	2
Human Development	13	12	27	11	6	15	10	4	12	3	5	4	11	13
Supervision	6	6	0	12	19	10	10	15	14	13	11	14	7	7
Administration	3	16	18	6	10	30	40	9	16	40	10	14	19	7
Instruction	24	22	18	20	22	25	0	22	12	10	20	24	28	20
Curriculum	39	44	27	41	30	15	30	35	31	20	45	33	25	43

Legend:

SS = Special Session  
AL = Action Lab  
TAL = Team Action Lab

TS = Thematic Session  
TW = Team Workshop  
S = Seminars

Table 3. An Analysis of ASCD Conference Activities 1971-1975

## Implications

To those administrators, teachers, students, and supervisors concerned with supervision/clinical supervision, the results of this analysis are painfully clear. From conference themes through special sessions, curriculum has taken priority over supervision consistently. Perhaps a warning shot should be fired now as there is imminent danger to all if this trend continues. Morris Cogan showed foresight in 1973 when he noted that the millions of dollars expended on new curricular and instructional materials were to little or no avail, for teachers can call on practically no one for clinical supervision to help rid them of old, inappropriate teaching methods.<sup>6</sup>

Clinical supervision is the support mechanism which if effected properly, should eventually leave the teacher more self-sufficient in implementing curricular changes and better able analytically to improve his or her own teaching behavior.

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Research: The attitudes, skills, techniques, or processes that relate to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of research.

Foundations: The analysis of educationally related phenomena from historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, or comparative educational perspectives.

Human Development and Learning: The knowledge and implications of knowledge about learning; and the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of human beings.

Curriculum: Curriculum development projects, processes, procedures, and products; and the role of curriculum in schooling.

Instruction: Instructional projects, products, processes, or procedures; and the role and preparation of teachers.

Supervision: Techniques or processes of supervision and the role and preparation of supervisors.

Administration—Management—Organization: Processes or techniques of managing schools, the problems that face schools as units, and the problems and decisions that relate to the organization of the school for instruction.

Community and Education: The role and influence of communities and community groups on schools and the role of government agencies in schooling.

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Table 2. Definitions

<sup>6</sup> Morris Cogan. *Clinical Supervision*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973. See Preface.

Teachers need support in implementing new curricular changes. To acquaint teachers with new curricula or to provide them with the curricular materials is necessary but certainly not sufficient. ASCD has given needed attention to curriculum, as shown by the studies enumerated. At the same time, however, it has not provided the necessary leadership in developing supervisory programs which complement those developed for curricula.

At this point we can now relate to the previously mentioned imminent danger, that is, unless ASCD is willing to provide the necessary leadership by offering those services which will allow supervisory leadership to surface, the over-emphasis on curriculum will eventually lead to the demise of innovative changes in both curriculum and clinical supervision.

## Recommendations

Administrators, supervisors, teachers, university professors, and others engaged in supervisory endeavors need supervisory leadership from ASCD. In future conferences and publications, ASCD needs both to recognize the need of and allow for the concomitant development of supervision and curricular programs. What is suggested is not the swing of the pendulum from ASCD to ASCD but rather to ASCD. It is not to be supposed that this can or should be accomplished solely by the staff of ASCD.

To suggest that the ASCD staff be responsible for such a directional or priority move would be an organizational cop-out. Rather, what is needed is dynamic input from the membership. An indication of such dynamism has appeared. Ben Harris called an informal meeting of professors of instructional supervision from around the country at the 1975 ASCD Annual Conference in New Orleans. At this meeting, problems were laid on the line, needs and desires were voiced, and enthusiasm partially rekindled. There is no time to falter now; present indicators look promising for putting the S back into ASCD. □

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