

Editorial

In the field of instructional supervision we may have arrived at a critical moment in history. Supervisors will either rise to the challenge of effective leadership or find that their functions have been taken over by other individuals or agencies. An imminent threat to local initiative is the upsurge of governmental regulations, assessments, mandates, and competency tests, that attempt to control the "quality" of instruction by means of forms required by state and federal offices.

The trend toward control over the schools by higher governmental agencies continues to accelerate in proportion to the hue and cry for improving standardized test scores and unfavorable publicity about the quality of instruction in the schools. Other pressures come from needed attention to equal rights and culturally diverse concerns, as well as self-interests of teacher organizations, and public apathy toward providing increased financing for schools. It is not news in educational circles that budget-related cutting of professional positions usually affects supervisory personnel first. Would this be true if these services were indispensable for improving the quality of instruction? Are supervisors providing leadership for joint planning and vigorous participation by all parties concerned in staff development and curriculum development programs? Can the field of supervision rise to meet the challenge of the critical issues and problems that are presently converging on the schools?

The recurring issue of what to teach has never been more demanding than it is now, but issues in subject matter are only a part of the complex world of the supervisor. Issues in supervision per se abound as well. In fact, some of the setbacks and bypasses of supervisory personnel can be credited to unresolved issues in supervision in the past. Sometimes, in seeking to be a pal of the classroom teacher, supervisors have been

timid in carrying out their roles and have exuded good will but have not provided effective educational leadership. In other cases, supervisors have lacked visibility in the schools and have seemed to be remote figures who had no realistic connection with the actual world of the classroom. Supervisors have been appointed to responsible positions although they lacked effective competencies for producing effective teacher growth with resultant student growth. Sometimes supervision has been viewed solely as teacher evaluation and supervisors have moved to an adversary role with teachers and thus have lost effectiveness in supervision.

Supervisors are unsure in some instances of how to work with present-day, mature, tenured faculties who are scornful of persons in supervisory positions. Job-secure teachers seem to view the most desirable role of the supervisor as someone who should hear complaints of the staff and then take responsibility for developing solutions. An area of supervisory problems peculiar to desegregating school systems is that of supervising a person of another race. If supervision is unsure of itself in the first place, add the ingredient of cultural pluralism, and the complexity of the matter increases.

These and other issues are not likely to go away in the near future. Supervision must address the realities in new ways. The worst resolution would be to accept these issues as a way of life and sidestep them as much as possible by retreating to one's office to fill out stacks of forms, send out memos and surveys to accumulate information, and generally cope with peripheral matters while appearing to be very, very busy.

Approach to Issues

The most productive approach to issues is to see them positively, recognizing that issues present highly challenging opportunities for

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leadership. In the face of difficulty, fundamental change can be realized that would not be possible in times of stability and satisfaction with the status quo. In a climate teeming with issues, problems, and dilemmas, attitudes for wholesome change are more easily generated. Every issue has in it the opportunities for effective leadership. Schools are looking for leadership, are ready for constructive action, and will support effective leadership through high quality supervision.

Greatness in supervision can stem from greatness in interpretation of the concepts of authority, responsibility, and accountability. However, a major problem in supervision today is the haziness that surrounds these concepts both from the view of the supervisor and from the view others have of the supervisor. If we persist in permitting a haze to surround these concepts, we will promote and perpetuate incompetence in supervision.

Supervisory Authority

Authority to do something about solving a problem is essential if supervisors are to be held responsible for developing a solution. However, authority is frequently misplaced, misused, or misinterpreted. Authority frequently connotes authoritarianism in the sense of expecting blind submission to authority. Therefore, many supervisors, probably the majority of them, avoid any trace of authoritarianism in their manner, because they have learned from experience that teachers will resist such an approach. Too frequently, supervisors go to the opposite extreme of *laissez-faire* behavior or deliberate abstention from direction or planning. The consequences of authoritarian behavior are serious: resistance and hostility of teachers, and loss of initiative and creativity with side effects of a flat, uninspired curriculum and mode of instruction. On the other hand, abstention from authority is also an abstention from responsibility for assessing the quality of instruction and maintaining high standards of teaching.

Supervisory authority, in the best sense of the term, is based on the premises of democratic supervision in which a vigorous and dynamic supervision program is pursued in the schools with full staff involvement in educational planning, with leadership as a shared responsibility with teachers, with use of supervisory techniques that stress warmth and friendliness and avoid threat, insecurity, and preaching and are primarily concerned with releasing the talents of each individual. The highest quality of supervisory authority comes from inner strength and full competence in supervisory skills. A considerable body of knowledge is presently available on professional competencies of supervisors. These include skills for developing curriculum, developing learning resources, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, utilizing supporting services, providing in-service education, and relating to the public. With a full repertoire of professional supervisory competencies in these areas, the inward strength that comes from capability will bring with it the subtle authority of expertise in a field that requires no mandate to invoke.

Responsibility in supervision is essentially responsibility for practicing the best that is known about supervision. It must be recognized that supervisory persons have made great strides in recent years in meeting new and constantly changing problems, new populations, and new pressures. Supervisors generally are excellent troubleshooters and accept responsibility for coping with daily crises and dealing with details. However, it is possible for supervision to become bogged down in short-range problems. Then, with little time to spare for thinking big, supervisors may resort to methodologies in staff development and curriculum improvement that researchers have found to be generally unsuccessful in this modern age. Supervisors may find themselves becoming obsolete through lack of contact with knowledge-generating centers or inadequate in developing skills of planning, including responsibilities for shared leadership in establishing directions, goals, and priorities. To meet their

major job responsibilities for improving the quality of instruction and producing a constantly updated curriculum, supervisors must provide leadership in constant reformulation of curriculum and instruction as new information becomes available.

A Study of Staff Development Programs

An example of new information from a recent investigation is a series of studies of staff development organized by the Rand Corporation.¹ In an extensive inquiry into staff development programs in local school districts across the country including intensive field work in 30 districts, Rand discovered that there seemed to be no conceptual model underlying most staff development programs, but that there appeared to be a hodgepodge of miscellaneous workshops and courses. The study distinguished between successful and unsuccessful staff development programs. The unsuccessful programs relied on a deficit model; that is, an approach that assumed that teachers were not very competent and that the central office administration knew what teachers' deficits were and what would be best for them to do. The unsuccessful models relied on teacher-proof packages imported from various development centers, and on top-down regimented workshops with everyone required to attend. The format followed the lecturer-consultant mode with reliance on outside consultants in a guru role. Utilization of time outside of school hours was the general rule with some use of summer work in advance of the school year, but little or no released time during the school term.

The more successful models studied by Rand were developmental models in which the teachers participated in solving the problems. These models were a point of view rather than a program. Teachers were viewed as professionals. Learning by doing was the theme, with local leaders and local materials developed by the teachers followed by planning that started before implementation of the program and continued throughout with regular staff meetings for con-

stant revision based on changing needs and the growing experience of the staff. A large enough number of people was involved to provide stimulation and encouragement; however, there were few large group workshops. Usually small groups of four to eight people worked together close to the scene. Released time was provided as often as possible. Although there was not a standardized district program, there was general agreement throughout the district on the direction of instructional and curricular improvement.

Teacher centers proved to be a growing trend in the successful staff development programs, but not in the sense of complete dominance by teachers. Joint governance by both teachers and administrators was a key to successful staff development programs because different perspectives are needed on school problems. Indeed, the involvement and support of principals was considered to be a significant factor in successful programs of implementation. An implication of the Rand study is that responsibility in supervision is responsibility for learning and practicing the best that is known about supervision.

Another issue, closely allied with authority and responsibility, revolves around the matter of accountability. When applied to the teaching profession, accountability frequently becomes a fighting word, especially if expressed as a type of quality control. In other words, a question is raised whether schools are spending too much money on too little "production" in terms of student achievement and behavior.

Accountability as a broad societal concept is highly acceptable. The work of environmentalists, attention to population growth in relation to diminishing resources, investigations on behalf of consumer interests, and inquiries into questionable governmental operations all reflect concern for the accountability of individuals and institutions for

¹ P. Berman and M. McLaughlin. *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change: The Findings in Review*. Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, April 1975.

the consequences of their decisions and actions. In the realm of education, however, accountability has not been conceptualized as a collective effort. Supervisors, instead of meekly subscribing to a view of accountability that carries the hidden implication that the classroom teacher is the one person to be held accountable for student achievement, should take the lead in developing a broad public recognition of the accountability of home, community, and school for the behavior and achievement of students.

Characteristics of Leadership

It is easy to say that what is needed in instructional supervision today is leadership, but it is not easy to define the distinguishing traits that will guarantee success. Leadership is an elusive but recognizable quality. While it cannot be specifically defined or its elements listed satisfactorily for all conditions, it can be recognized when it exists.

Twice in two years, the management of *Time* magazine has studied the characteristics of leadership. It first interviewed, then two years later assembled in a conference session, two hundred persons of diverse backgrounds whom it had identified as leaders and explored in depth the mysterious qualities of leadership.² Some of the characteristics noted were knowing how to use the complex forces at work today by being able to work with others in setting goals and promoting action by motivating people to participate. Also included were exemplifying integrity and tolerance, being willing to keep enough of an open mind to admit errors, demonstrating pur-

poseful behavior, having self-discipline and good judgment, and being able to stimulate discussion and work toward a decision.

Other requisites of leadership seemed to include the capacity to work with adversity and frustration, the ability to see potential in others and help others seek their own potential, the ability to anticipate future events and make adequate preparation to avoid needless difficulties. Leadership implies facing the risk of criticism and misunderstanding while at the same time maintaining a sense of humaneness that can guide persons into a constructive future beyond immediate stress.

While leadership is a quality that seems to be somewhat intuitive yet complex in its attributes, nevertheless, it behooves the supervision profession to search for the knowledge that leads to acquisition of leadership competence, to develop insights and empathies that enrich the leadership function, and to develop the courage and backbone to practice educational leadership as the essential requisite of supervision. \square

²"Leaders or Leadership." *Time*. November 8, 1976. pp. 30-49.



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Future ASCD Annual Conferences

1978	March 4-8	San Francisco	Civic Center
1979	March 3-7	Detroit	Cobo Hall
1980	March 29-April 2	Atlanta	Georgia World Congress Center
1981	March 7-11	St. Louis	Congress Center

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