

What's Wrong with In-Service Education? It's Topless!

William C. Miller

In today's staff development programs, everyone must work diligently to improve his/her skills. This means that administrators and supervisors, too, must work along with teachers to improve effectiveness.

Overall, the results of staff development have been disappointing. This is true for many reasons. One major factor is that in-service education, for the most part, has been directed at teachers—the training has been “topless”—“topless” in the sense that sufficient commitment and resources have not been utilized to help key leaders (those at the top) gain new understandings and skills.

Usually, it is those at the top who make decisions about who needs in-service experiences and what the nature and content of those experiences should be. Strangely, these leaders are quick to identify individuals and groups needing “updating,” but seldom identify that need in themselves.

In today's climate, *everyone* must improve his/her skills. Today's declining enrollments and shrinking resources call for the ultimate in effectiveness and efficiency. Mistakes were often overlooked when funds were available, but in a retrenchment situation, errors or ineffectiveness are highly visible.

Better and more effective staff development for leaders is needed for another reason: Few new staff members are being hired. Renewal and reeducation are necessary so that staff members can

meet new challenges and keep up with new developments. Turnover of administrators is among the lowest of any educational group. Thus, if we are to bring about the changes required, those in present leadership positions must be the ones to do it. To foster these skills in administrators will require effective educational as well as training experiences.

Training vs. Education

Most in-service experiences focus on imparting specific skills—that is, on training. Training is designed to promote conventional, conforming behavior and to help the trainee to face situations exactly like those for which the training has been designed. The aim is to prepare the trainee to respond in a set and predetermined way. Training seeks to make participants the same.

Education is a broader term. Education is designed to stimulate divergent thinking and to help those being educated to respond creatively and effectively to situations which, at present, cannot be envisioned. The aim of education is to impart concepts and principles.

Of course, in many situations, training is appropriate and necessary. But because teaching, learning, and educational administration are sophisticated processes, actions must be based on solid theory and philosophy. Actions must flow from a deep understanding of the nature of learning and of effective practice. In today's “pressure cooker” atmosphere, the temptation to use quick, expedient solutions is great. Only through an appreciation of the long term impact of any

approach can the best course of action be chosen by the teacher or administrator.

What Is Effective In-Service Education?

We know from research that learning is a process involving experiencing, doing, and reacting. The purposes of the learner must be taken into consideration, and the learning situation must be realistic to the learner. Learning occurs through a wide variety of experiences, using materials and activities appropriate to the learner. The most effective learning takes place when the learner can see the results and has good feedback about

"The most effective learning takes place when the learner can see the results and has good feedback about his or her progress."

his or her progress. These principles of learning are as appropriate to the in-service education of teachers and administrators as they are to youthful students.

Imparting broad and holistic principles related to the learner's purposes is the most functional kind of in-service education. Such learnings call for educative as well as training experiences.

Taking into account the preceding facts about learning, it becomes clear that in-service must be:

1. *Cooperatively planned* (involving those who are to be affected by the experience)
2. Based on carefully and cooperatively conducted *needs assessment*
3. Focused on high intensity needs that are as *central* as possible (real versus peripheral instructional improvement needs of the group)
4. *Continuous* (or at least having continuity) as opposed to "one shot" efforts
5. *Activity oriented* and/or provide hands-on experience
6. Sensitive to, and provide for *individual needs and differences*, where possible
7. *Evaluated* on the basis of the changes engendered in the individual's work situation

(school or classroom) and on the impact of these new behaviors on those with whom they work (faculty or students).¹

While principles of learning hold true for both children and adults, there are some characteristics of mature learners that are worth noting. Knowles advocates that:

The important implication for adult education practice of the fact that learning is an internal process is that those methods and techniques which involve the individual most deeply in self-directed inquiry will produce the greatest learning. This principle of ego-involvement lies at the heart of the adult educator's art. In fact, the main thrust of modern adult-educational technology is in the direction of inventing techniques for involving adults in ever-deeper processes of self-diagnosis of their own needs for continued learning, in formulating their own objectives for learning, in sharing responsibility for designing and carrying out their learning activities, and in evaluating their progress toward their objectives. The truly artistic teacher of adults perceives the locus of responsibility for learning to be in the learner; he conscientiously suppresses his own compulsion to teach what he knows his students ought to learn in favor of helping his students learn for themselves what they want to learn.²

Needed: Education for Leaders

Schools need to be improved. If this is to be done, our administrators must play a leadership role. Brickell points out:

New types of instructional programs are introduced by administrators. Rearrangements of the structural elements of the institution depend *almost exclusively* upon administrative initiative. Teachers are not change-agents for innovations of major scope. Even when free to guide their own activities, teachers seldom suggest distinctly new types of working patterns for themselves.

The administrator may promote—or prevent—innovation. He cannot stand aside, or be ignored. He is powerful not because he has a monopoly on imagination, creativity, or interest in change—the opposite is common—but simply because he has the authority to precipitate a decision. Authority is a critical element in innovation, because proposed changes generate

¹ Wayne County Intermediate School District. *In-service Education*. Staff position paper. Detroit: Wayne County Intermediate School District, 1974. p. 3.

² Malcolm S. Knowles. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy*. New York: New York Association Press, 1970.

mixed reactions which can prevent consensus among peers and result in stagnation.³

Leader behavior is a powerful force in influencing teacher behavior. Administrators should behave toward teachers in the way they would like to see teachers relate to students in the classroom. Modeling is a powerful "in-service" tool. As Goldstein and Sorcher noted:

Greater modeling will occur when the model (the person to be imitated), in relation to the observer, (a) is of apparent high competence or expertness, (b) is of high status, (c) controls resources desired by the observer, (d) is of the same sex and race as the observer, (e) is apparently friendly and helpful, and of particular importance, (f) is rewarded for engaging in the depicted behaviors. That is, we are all more likely to model powerful but pleasant people who receive reinforcement for what they are doing, especially when the nature of such reinforcement is something that we too desire.⁴

It seems that the administrator is in an excellent position to influence teacher behavior, and that role modeling is an effective way to do so.

It has also been found that leader style can affect pupil achievement. In Stogdill's exhaustive survey of the theory and research concerning leadership, he says in summary: "When teachers and principals are described high in consideration and structure, their pupils tend to make higher scores on tests of school achievement."⁵

Research by Keeler and Andrews substantiates these findings. Their research found that:

All of the statistics give strong support to the hypothesis that leader behavior of the principal, as perceived by his staff, was significantly related to the productivity of the schools. . . . The weight of evidence supported the hypothesis that the morale of the staff of a school . . . was related to productivity.⁶

In the often-quoted *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming*, it is pointed out that:

The leader's philosophy in action affects the lives of all children in the school system. The way he feels about people, and the manner in which he operates, is felt by the lowliest and most elevated person on the staff and the weakest and strongest child in the system. The leader who is characterized by self-trust, openness and trust in others will, by his very behavior, help others to learn self-trust, openness, and trust in others. He will help them to acquire stature and integrity. He will solicit and weigh opinions and ideas, work cooperatively on school problems, hear all sides of difficult problems, take and show a genuine interest in fellow workers as persons as well as workers.⁷

The preceding is a beautiful statement about the importance of the role of the leader and about the qualities of good leadership. The hopeful thing is that leadership skills and qualities can be learned. Again, looking to Stogdill's extensive research, we find that:

The early research on training of group members in patterns of behavior characterizing successful leaders suggests that individuals profit from such training, becoming more active and effective leaders.⁸

Results of research suggest that direct training in techniques of leadership result in improved effectiveness as a leader. A relatively large body of research on

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sensitivity training indicates that such training results in increased leader sympathy with the human relations approach, greater awareness of self and others, and more receptivity to follower initiative and responsibility.⁹

What are the skills and qualities necessary for effective leadership? Unfortunately, there are

³ Henry M. Brickell. "State Organization for Educational Change: A Case Study and a Proposal." In: Matthew B. Miles, editor. *Innovation in Education*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964. p. 503.

⁴ Arnold P. Goldstein and Melvin Sorcher. *Changing Supervisor Behavior*. Elmsford, New York: Pergamon Press, Inc., 1974. p. 28.

⁵ Ralph M. Stogdill. *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research*. New York: The Free Press, 1974. p. 140.

⁶ B. T. Keeler and J. H. M. Andrews. "The Leader Behavior of Principals, Staff Morale, and Productivity." *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 9(3):179-91; September 1963.

⁷ Arthur W. Combs, editor. *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming: A New Focus for Education*. 1962 Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1962. pp. 216-17.

⁸ Stogdill, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 412.



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aspects which are not usually dealt with in administrator preservice education. Indeed, they are infrequently given attention in in-service education. These are areas such as needs assessment, conflict resolution, community and interpersonal relations, team and trust building, identifying and working with influence structures, and change strategies.

Based on this information, it seems obvious that more resources must be directed toward leadership development and toward "education" rather than "training." As Johnson found in his careful study of personality characteristics of superintendents and their willingness to accept innovation: "The high innovative superintendents are more outgoing, more assertive, more venturesome, more imaginative, more experimenting, and more relaxed than the low innovative superintendents."¹⁰

It is easy to see the importance to good education of effective leaders. Stogdill warns:

The survival of a group is dependent upon a type of leadership able to keep members and subgroups working together toward a common purpose, maintain productivity at a level sufficient to sustain the group or to justify its existence, and satisfy member expectations regarding leader and group. Competent leadership is especially needed in times of crisis to unite the efforts of members and strengthen group cohesiveness around a common purpose.¹¹

In our present situation, inservice cannot be satisfied focusing only on training, and it cannot afford to be topless! ¹²

¹⁰ Homer M. Johnson *et al.* "Personality Characteristics of School Superintendents in Relation to Their Willingness to Accept Innovation in Education." In: Henry Hausdorff, ed. A.E.R.A. Paper Abstracts. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 1968. p. 280.

¹¹ Stogdill, *op. cit.*, pp. 419-20.



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