Research tells us adults learn best through concrete experiences where they apply what is being learned and in informal situations where social interaction takes place.

The 1980s will be the decade of staff development just as the 1960s and 1970s were the decades of curriculum development. We have an abundance of curriculum and instructional plans; we now need to put them into operation in our schools. The Rand Corporation report on federally supported programs for educational change points out that if schools are to install our improved plans, and perhaps even to survive, the 1980s must be the decade of staff development. In their study, the innovative projects that made a lasting difference in schools emphasized concrete, teacher-specified, extended inservice education.  

However, inservice teacher training, as it is now constituted, is the slum of American education. It is disadvantaged, poverty-stricken, neglected, and has little effect. Most staff development programs are irrelevant and ineffective, a waste of time and money. Disjointed workshops and courses focus on information dissemination rather than stressing the use of information or appropriate practice in the classroom. Seldom are these programs part of a comprehensive plan to achieve goals set by the school staff.

While at least 80 percent of most school district budgets is allocated to personnel, we earmark inadequate funds for inservice training and staff development activities. We would never let our equipment and buildings become obsolete and nonfunctional by

1 Paul Berman and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin, Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change VIII: Implementing and Sustaining Innovations (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, May 1978), pp. v-x.

failing to maintain them, but that is exactly what we do with our professional staff.

As Joyce points out, we have approximately 80,000 professors, supervisors, and consultants involved in inservice training today. This is a 1 to 25 ratio of personnel responsible for staff development to teachers. If we count principals, assistant principals, reading specialists, department chairpersons, and others who also have a role in staff growth, the number is 1 for every 8 teachers. With such a large investment in inservice personnel, it's difficult to understand the extent to which educators believe inservice training, as we know it, is a disaster.

**Why the Current Problem?**

There are several reasons for the current problems in staff development programs. The first is the negative attitudes held by educators toward inservice education. State and national studies conducted during the last five years consistently suggest that the majority of teachers, administrators, and college personnel are not satisfied with current inservice/staff development programs. The most common defects reported are poor planning and organization, activities that are impersonal and unrelated to the day-to-day problems of participants, lack of participant (teacher and administrator) involvement in the planning and implementation of their inservice, inadequate needs assessment, and unclear objectives. The lack of follow-up in the classroom or job setting after training takes place is almost universal. While educators are generally negative about current practice, nearly all teachers and administrators see inservice education as crucial to improved school programs and practice.

A second problem is the view of teachers held consciously or unconsciously by many administrators and reflected in the way that staff development is designed. In the main, those responsible for staff development seem to be what McGregor calls Theory X administrators. They view teachers, and in some cases principals, as (a) disliking inservice training and trying to avoid involvement in professional growth, (b) needing to be persuaded, rewarded, punished, controlled, and forced to get them to work toward the goals of the school and to participate in inservice education, and (c) preferring to be directed and wishing to avoid responsibility for their inservice education. This has created expectations and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

A third problem is that inservice education has had a districtwide focus, distant from the needs of teachers and administrators in their own schools. In fact, the need for local school staffs to plan or think together is usually not allowed to get in the way of districtwide goals and training plans when staff development time is provided. Yet, there is increasing evidence that shows the largest unit of successful change in education is the individual school, not the district.

Another weakness is that most inservice education has focused upon what James Coleman calls information assimilation. That is, someone presents ideas, principles, and/or skills for use back on the job (information presented); then the participants explore the full meaning of these ideas and discuss applications for the work setting; finally, the inservice ends, and the person goes back to his/her job to implement what was understood. This doesn't fit what we know about adults and adult learning. In fact, the major flaw in staff development appears to be that we have ignored what is known about the adult learner and adult learning, just as we have accused teachers of ignoring the individual child and how he or she learns.

Finally, we have not modeled the kinds of practices in inservice training we ask teachers to use in their classrooms and principals to support in their schools. For example, most inservice has not had clear objectives, been individualized, provided options and choices in learning activities, been related to the learner interests and needs, developed responsibility, and promoted trust and concern.

These are just a few of the problems, but, based on the best data we have now, they seem to be the major ones. While these situations do not exist in all of our schools, there is substantial evidence to indicate that these problems do persist in some degree in districts where inservice education is not effective.

**The Basis for Future Inservice**

Given these problems, educators need to turn their attention to redesigning staff development. For a start, educators should look at the nature of adult

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Learning, which has generally been ignored by those responsible for staff development even though they are the largest group of adult educators in this country. To plan and conduct effective inservice education, we need to be aware of a number of facts related to adult learning:

- Adults will commit to learning something when the goals and objectives of the inservice are considered realistic and important to the learner, that is, job related and perceived as being immediately useful.
- Adults will learn, retain, and use what they perceive is relevant to their personal and professional needs.
- Adult learners need to see the results of their efforts and have accurate feedback about progress toward their goals.
- Adult learning is ego-involved. Learning a new skill, technique, or concept may promote a positive or negative view of self. There is always fear of external judgment that we adults are less than adequate, which produces anxiety during new learning situations such as those presented in inservice training programs.
- Adults come to any learning experience (inservice) with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, skills, self-direction, interests, and competence. Individualization, therefore, is appropriate for adults as well as children.
- Adults want to be the origins of their own learning; that is, involved in selection of objectives, content, activities, and assessment in inservice education.
- Adults will resist learning situations which they believe are an attack on their competence, thus the resistance to imposed inservice topics and activities.
- Closely related, adults reject prescriptions by others for their learning, especially when what is prescribed is viewed as an attack on what they are presently doing. Doesn't that sound like current inservice practice? We typically use inservice training to eliminate weakness we see in our personnel.

- Adult motivation for learning and doing one's job has two levels. One is to participate and do an adequate job. The second level is to become deeply involved, going beyond the minimum or norm. The first level of motivation comes as the result of good salary, fringe benefits, and fair treatment. The second builds on the first, but comes from recognition, achievement, and increased responsibility—the result of our behavior and not more dollars.7
- Motivation is produced by the learner; all one can do is encourage and create conditions which will nurture what already exists in the adult.
- Adult learning is enhanced by behaviors and inservice that demonstrate respect, trust, and concern for the learner.8

Probably the two most significant new pieces of information on adult learning uncovered during the last decade have direct and important implications for those responsible for inservice. First, it appears that a higher proportion of adults than formerly thought may be operating at what Piaget calls the concrete operational stage rather than formal operations stage of intellectual development.9 This suggests that direct and concrete experiences where the learner applies what is being learned are an essential ingredient for inservice education. Abstract, word-oriented talk sessions are not adequate to change behaviors.

This lends considerable support to the work of Wood and Neill10 and Keeton,11 recent advocates of

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8 Most of this information about the adult learner was taken from an unpublished paper by John Withall, The Pennsylvania State University, on the psychological basis for clinical staff development and an article, John Withall and Fred H. Wood, "Taking the Threat Out of Classroom Observation and Feedback," Journal of Teacher Education 30 (January-February 1979): 55-58.
experiential learning, which originated with John Dewey. Experiential learning—learning by doing—includes: (a) an initial limited orientation followed by participation activities in a real setting to experience and implement what is to be learned—the skill, concept, strategy; (b) an examination and analysis of the experience in which learners identify the effects of their actions; (c) an opportunity to generalize and summarize when the learners develop their own principles and identify applications of those principles; and (d) an opportunity to return to try out their principles in the work setting and develop confidence in using what is learned.

The second key finding comes from research by the Rapports\textsuperscript{12} in England and Allen Tough\textsuperscript{13} in Canada. Their work suggests that adults prefer to learn in informal learning situations where social interaction can take place among the learners. This implies the need to plan inservice that occurs in the normal work setting.

Proposed Guidelines for Effective Staff Development

In summary, what educators say about staff development and what we know about adult learners suggest that inservice educators should:

1. Include more participant control over the "what" and "how" of learning;
2. Focus on job related tasks that the participants consider real and important;
3. Provide choices and alternatives that accommodate the differences among participants;
4. Include opportunities for participants in inservice training to practice what they are to learn in simulated and real work settings as part of their training;
5. Encourage the learners to work in small groups and to learn from each other; and
6. Reduce the use and threat of external judgments from one's superior by allowing peer-participants to give each other feedback concerning performance and areas of needed improvement.

James Coleman points out several advantages of experientially-based training. First, the understandings developed are tied not to abstract ideas but rather to concrete experiences that can be drawn upon when the teacher or administrator faces similar situations on the job. Another strength of this approach to inservice education is that the principles and skills developed through experiential learning are remembered more easily because they are tied to a sequence of personal actions and consequences. Finally, and probably most important to those responsible for staff development, learning by doing is more likely to be applied in the job setting.\textsuperscript{14}

A Model Program

There are a number of successful programs that can serve as models for planning experiential inservice programs. One is used by the Professional Development and Program Improvement Center of the Long Beach Unified School District in California.

The Long Beach Center was organized in 1969 as part of a statewide network of professional development centers in California. These centers were intended to strengthen instructional techniques in reading and mathematics. In the Long Beach center, this has been accomplished through a staff development program with four major components: (a) teaching reading and/or mathematics objectives; (b) diagnostic and prescriptive instructional skills; (c) clinical supervision; and (d) follow-up, maintenance, and refinement. Training in each component closely follows the steps of experiential learning.

Participants begin by receiving an overview of the entire training sequence in all components. The first skill in component one is then introduced and modeled by the workshop facilitators. After a short


\textsuperscript{13} Allen Tough has four books that were published by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto related to informal learning, Learning Without a Teacher, 1967; Why Adults Learn, 1968; A Study of the Major Reasons for Beginning and Continuing a Learning Project, 1968; The Adults' Learning Projects, 1971.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, pp. 114-15.
time for preparation, the participants practice the skill with small groups of five to ten students in local school classrooms. Each participant is observed by one or more of the other participants while teaching the practice lesson. After the practice sessions, each instructor and observer group meet to analyze the lesson. This cycle of overview, model, practice, and analysis is repeated for all of the skills in each training component. The entire inservice training process lasts three to six weeks.

During the workshop, participants are released from classroom responsibilities by a team of master substitutes who have already been trained in the skills considered in the workshop. Participants work in small groups to promote learning from each other. The team members provide one another with feedback about their performance as they attempt to practice the behaviors set in the objectives and criteria of this experience-based inservice program. Participants also have access to demonstration classrooms where the skills being learned can be observed and to print and audiovisual materials to supplement their training and provide alternative learning experiences. The entire workshop is conducted within a local school.

After training nearly 1,000 people in eight years, there is evidence that confirms the effectiveness of the Long Beach approach to staff development. Other centers in the California network with similar programs report comparable success. Two of the most convincing facts supporting the successes of the experiential approaches at Long Beach are their longevity and ability to demonstrate impact on student achievement. After eight years of activity, this experiential training program continues to enjoy state support and to be replicated increasingly by other school systems.

There is little doubt that effective staff development in schools is a critical need; many of our past practices have been ineffective. One promising alternative for improving inservice education is experiential learning as it is practiced in the Long Beach schools. Evaluation of this and other experiential or clinical staff development programs supports the effectiveness of experienced-based inservice training. Experiential learning accommodates the special learning styles of adults, and it maximizes the transfer of learning from training setting to application on the job. It has the potential to change and improve the quality of instructional and administrative practice in our schools.

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16 Fred H. Wood and John T. Neill, ibid., pp. 120-22.