

## Chapter I

### SUPERVISION IN THE MODERN SCHOOL

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The concept of what is involved in supervision in the school has changed radically within recent decades. Typically it is often assumed that this change is entirely a result of a change in attitude or point of view described by the term "democratic" supervision as contrasted with "autocratic" supervision. This is too simple an explanation of the changes which are taking place. Certainly there is a greater knowledge and sophistication today concerning group action and the means of securing cooperative work which certainly lends support to a type of supervisory program which calls upon people to work as a group rather than under the domination of one individual. However, these changes in general cannot be understood without examining briefly some of the general trends in organization of American public schools. In particular it is pertinent to make some observations concerning four developments which have affected supervisory organization. These may be briefly summarized as follows:

- (1) Changes resulting from the increasing complexity of our schools arising from the increase in the number of programs, services, and offerings now being made available.
- (2) Changes arising from the presence of more highly specialized and better prepared staff at both the operational and supervisory level.
- (3) Changes resulting from better understanding of the complexity of human relations as they affect supervision.
- (4) Changes evolving from new patterns of administrative and supervisory staff organization.

Certainly there is no need to catalog the fact that the schools of today are much more complicated in their operation than those of previous generations. At all levels the offerings and educational services available have increased. Related to the formal educational program there has been an increasing body of special services in the fields of health, guidance, and recreation which have become associated with the schools. Paralleling this increase in scope and complexity of program has been the development of many additional special services. Accompanying this also has been the availability of a widely increasing range of instructional and teaching materials. The period of depending upon a single textbook in a course of study or the period of assuming that a school is primarily only a series of classes has long since passed.

An increasing number of programs of adult education are being developed which are at least in some degree associated with public schools.

The growth in complexity has resulted in the growth of the need for specialized staff. Specialization extends not only into the particular subject fields of teaching but also into the many fields of special services which are now available in the schools. With specialization there has come a necessary change in the attitude of the administrative officials regarding the role that they fill. The role of the administrator today is much more that of providing coordination and communication between the various specialists who may form a part of the total school staff. No longer is it possible for the administrator to play the role of the specialist in all fields of the school.

The present day concept of the organization and the supervision is radically different from that which might have been considered appropriate in the past. The word "supervisor" has come into disrepute. Perhaps this grew out of a period which was more authoritarian in its general flavor than that which we have today. Perhaps in an earlier period when the education of the personnel employed in schools was much lower than it is today, it was possible and perhaps necessary for the supervisor or the administrator to play the role of the all-wise expert. However, the time when the school administrator or supervisor can act as the autocrat, no matter how kindly a one, or as the wise fount of all knowledge, is long since passed. The climate of opinion among school personnel simply today does not react to that type of professional leadership.

Therefore, we are now in a period where we are attempting to develop new concepts of organization. In such a period there is necessarily much uncertainty and a considerable fluidity in organization. In general one might characterize these changes as having a more equalitarian or democratic flavor but this does perhaps in a sense miss the operational end of such organization. The aim of any adequately organized and supervisory program should be to draw to the fullest upon the resources of all people who work in that program. Under this concept the role of the head supervisor, consultant or whatever term may be used (and certainly there have been some highly non-descriptive terms used in the effort to avoid the use of the word "supervisor"), will be much less that of direction or domination. Leadership, which is a term with a rather elusive meaning, is nevertheless probably as descriptive a term as we possess to describe the supervisory role. Nevertheless, there is a solid core of ideas--in that the supervisor, the consultant, and the coordinator has an obligation to draw upon all of the resources available in the staff personnel within the organization. While there may be in some of the descriptions of this type of operation a considerable degree of sentimentalism, fundamentally it is sound, not only because it is respectful of human beings but because,

organizationally, it is to the interest of all concerned to draw upon all the resources of intelligence and initiative available in any given group of people. In addition this type of operation is today much more feasible than might have been possible in a period when larger numbers of the school staff had very limited training. Today with our requirements, we cannot make the assumption that any of the people working in professional positions in schools are without at least a modest background in education and generally in experience. It should be emphasized that the responsibility of the supervisor does not disappear into the general context of a committee simply because of this type of operation. Actually this role of leadership is in many ways more difficult, more time consuming, and demands a higher order of understanding.

There is finally another developing responsibility which is extremely important and about which the director of school library service needs to be concerned. One of the problems of the larger and more complicated school organization is that of securing the coordinated study and development of the school curriculum and services. Increasingly school curriculum programs have been based upon the belief that these programs should grow out of the work and study of staff members in that school. Increasingly also curriculum study organization has included representation of different departments and services rather than assuming that such developments take place within departments or special fields. It is here that the director of school library services has a particular role to play. Not only should this individual have contributions to make in the design of general programs in the school but as a very practical matter much of the developments that are going on in school curriculums and school programs are dependent upon the kinds and types of materials that can be made available for such programs.

The person with the special knowledge of materials, and the word materials should include not only books but also other kinds of instructional materials, has a personal contribution to make, not only in servicing the group but in giving them ideas of programs that may be possible because of the kind of instructional materials that can be made available. In this sense then, the library becomes not only a service center to the school but in a real sense, the center of the school program contributing ideas in a positive way and taking an active part in the development of programs. There have been times when too much emphasis has been placed on purely the service aspect of the library in the school and not enough emphasis upon the resource people available with highly specialized knowledge and information who can actively assist in a program of school improvement.

The observations which have been made are obviously only suggestive and necessarily sketchy. It is appropriate to emphasize that with our expanding educational system and with the ever increasing body of available instructional materials, the possibilities for service and responsibilities of those who work in supervisory and developmental fields in this area have greatly increased. Certainly this should be both stimulating and challenging.