

Supervision Of Education : Emerging Concepts

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AUTHORS of literature on supervision tried to draw a line of distinction between the job of administering and the job of supervising without a complete unanimity.

Three different approaches have been mentioned by Spears :

1. Setting versus carrying out. This point of view gives administration the job of setting up the material facilities, personnel and other conditions for instruction and supervision, the assignment of seeing that instruction is carried out in an effective manner.

2. Authority versus service. Another approach in drawing the distinction between the two has been to emphasize authority in the case of administration, and service in the case of supervision, a reflection in the line and staff distinction of positions.

3. The whole versus part. The idea that administration represents the whole enterprise of school management and that supervision represents a portion of it that is delegated to others by the top administrators. The distinctive feature of this idea is that the delegation of a portion of the whole operation takes place not because of a distinctive function, but rather for the simple reason that there is too much for the original administrative personnel to manage.

According to Burton and others, administration and supervision cannot be separated from each other. "The two are coordinate, correlative, complementary, mutually shared functions in the operation of education systems. The provision of any and all conditions favourable to learning is the common purpose of both".

Based on the assumptions underlying them, two concepts of supervision may be identified viz., the authoritarian and emerging concepts.

Authoritarian Supervision : The assumptions underlying the authoritarian supervision are that out of all the knowledge available there is a certain well defined body which it is desirable for all pupils to learn, and that it is possible and desirable to establish an annual time table applicable practically to all children of the nation. There are known best methods of teaching this prescribed curricula and syllabi, and that the authorities in the person of supervisors and inspectors know what these best methods are.

The purpose of supervision under the authoritarian concepts is to determine whether or not the teachers are doing what they are supposed to do. In the cases where they are not doing what they are supposed to do, they are penalized for non-compliance. The supervision tends to be characterised by formal visit of classroom for an observation period followed by a conference between the teacher and

the supervisor in which the teacher is commended for those aspects in which their lessons coincide with what the supervisor knows is good and then points out to him the errors of omission and commission. Follow-up visits are made to check up whether the teachers have modified their teaching in conformity with the directives of the supervisors.

The assumptions that underline the above noted approach is fallacious. This concept ignores the precarious, uncertain, variable and experimental nature of life, of the learning process and of education. It is ridiculous to entertain the idea that some authority should be able to decide those things which children whom they do not know should learn. The idea that there is any one best way of teaching is also now being rejected.

There is overwhelming evidence that imposition is ineffective in achieving anything but superficial observance of the dictated behaviour. It does not respect the personality of the individuals whom it affects and fails to include them (the teachers) in the making of decisions vital to their work in the classroom. Moreover, this type of supervision violates the principles of good mental hygiene. It produces feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, frustration, fears and repressed antagonism. It is destructive of good human relationship. It causes the teachers to hide those weaknesses in which they need help most.

Emerging Supervision : Recent contributions of psychological research to the knowledge of learning process, importance of good human

relationships and a developing understanding of the dynamics and processes of group work have contributed to the formulation of a philosophy of supervision which is now emerging.

The emerging concept of supervision is the belief that current practices should always be questioned, examined, evaluated and placed under the searching light of critical analysis, and that such analysis should be applied to supervisory practice itself. The advocate of this point of view also takes the position that once such an analysis has been made, something should be done about it. Any aspect of the learning situation found to be ineffective or detrimental to the achievement of the better situation is dropped or modified accordingly. Thus the supervisor instead of enforcing or attempting to bring about a predetermined pattern of educational practice, leads the staff in the constant search for better and more effective ways of doing their job, believing always that no best way has yet been discovered.

The salient features of the emerging supervision are discussed below :

Supervision has gradually moved from the improvement of instruction to the improvement of learning. The similar point of view comes from the Oklahoma State Department of Education :

Supervision includes the improvement of every phase of the educational programme such as, the organization of the programmes of studies, the revision of curricula, the instructional procedures, the pupil activity programmes, and the non-instructional

activities of staff members.

The above list includes items of staff help and leadership for teachers in (1) classroom supervision, (2) curriculum development, (3) testing and evaluation, (4) the psychological study of children, (5) audiovisual materials, (6) personnel orientation and (7) public relations.

Emerging Supervision is Cooperative. The cooperative nature of the supervision will be evident from the list of activities of the supervisors revealed from many current studies.

1. Group attack upon self defined problems and group study of self selected topics or areas. This in return means that group process with its participatory cooperative procedure is supplanting the older techniques of imposition or direction. Group spirit and morale are created. 2. Leadership is increasingly exercised in place of authority and opportunities for leadership to emerge within the group are fostered. 3. Recognition of the individual school as the unit of supervision and the principal as the natural status leader is multiplying. 4. The use of consultant is increasing with even better definition of the function of a consultant. 5. Counselling with teachers, individually and in group, is increasing, replacing in part wasteful individual conferences though these are valuable when appropriate. This is also indicated in the current studies that counselling may deal with personal problems and tensions as well as with professional matters. 6. Self appraisal and self-direction are receiving more attention than external evaluation for some time.