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A SURVEY OF THE IN-SERVICE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN 155 SMALL (10 TO 40 TEACHERS) SECONDARY SCHOOLS WAS CONDUCTED IN NEBRASKA DURING THE 1966-67 SCHOOL YEAR. QUESTIONNAIRES WERE SENT TO ALL THE ADMINISTRATORS AND TO A RANDOM SAMPLE (6 PERCENT) OF THE TEACHER POPULATION OF THE SCHOOLS. THESE INSTRUMENTS ASKED FOR DESCRIPTIONS AND EVALUATIONS OF PRESENT PROGRAMS AND OPINIONS CONCERNING THE KINDS OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION EXPERIENCES NEEDED. TABLES ARE PRESENTED SHOWING (1) THE PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS CONDUCTING IN-SERVICE EDUCATION ACTIVITIES, (2) THE TYPES OF IN-SERVICE ACTIVITIES, (3) EVALUATION RESULTS OF IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS, AND (4) THE AREAS OF INSTRUCTION WHERE TEACHERS NEED ASSISTANCE AND WHERE THEY HAVE RECEIVED ASSISTANCE. THE WRITER CONCLUDES THAT MORE IN-SERVICE ACTIVITIES ARE NEEDED WHICH (1) INVOLVE TEACHERS IN THE LEADERSHIP OF ACTIVITIES, (2) ARE RELATED TO TEACHERS' IMMEDIATE DAY-TO-DAY INSTRUCTIONAL CONCERN, (3) ARE EVALUATED IN TERMS OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS, AND (4) INVOLVE TEACHERS IN THE PLANNING OF THE ACTIVITIES. (ES)

IN-SERVICE EDUCATION IN SMALL SCHOOLS

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It is generally accepted that in-service education experiences should be provided for teachers as an essential part of the process of the improvement of teaching performance. Today, such experiences for teachers are especially demanded because of the vast developments which are taking place in teaching technology, curriculum content, and the society as a whole.

Some kind of "change agency" is thus needed to serve as the vehicle through which teachers continue to upgrade and update their teaching skills and knowledge. The pattern in American education has been that the individual school district is expected to bear most of this responsibility for conducting in-service education activities. Assuming such a responsibility, however, is not an easy task for the local school which is in many cases already strained in terms of the resources it has available. Particularly, how well is the small school able to perform this service for its teachers?

Concerning this question a survey of small school in-service education practices was conducted during the school year of 1966-67. This study involved 155 Nebraska secondary schools with staffs of from ten to 40 teachers. Questionnaires were sent to the administrators of these schools and also to a randomly selected group of teachers in these schools (the number responding totaled over 6% of the teachers of these schools). These questionnaires asked for descriptions and evaluations of present programs and also opinions concerning the kinds of in-service education experiences needed. Information gathered in this manner raised serious questions about the adequacy of the inservice education programs provided by small schools.

Traditional In-Service Activities

Table I presents teacher and administrator responses relative to certain in-service activities generally thought to be most commonly found. This table presents the percentage of schools which conduct various in-service activities, teachers' evaluations of how much these activities have helped them improve their teaching, and the percentage of administrators and teachers who desire greater opportunity than they now have for participation in each activity.

The faculty meeting, certainly a mainstay of the small school in-service program is hardly a favorite of the teachers. Could it be that the in-service function of the faculty meeting is incompatible with its administrative function? Perhaps the very nature of the faculty-meeting -- administrator dominated, basically a one-shot affair, held on top of a regular day's work -- makes it an inappropriate vehicle for in-service education.

The relative infrequency of visitations by teachers to other teachers' classes and other schools, reported in Table I, was surprising. The comments of teachers on the questionnaires indicated that they particularly desired opportunities to share ideas with other teachers. Certainly the visitation is a technique which any school can utilize for this purpose. The findings of this study indicate that schools should attempt to develop procedures for greater use of visitations.

How is it possible to reconcile the responses of the administrators and the teachers surveyed relative to supervision (defined in this study so as to include both observation of a teacher's performance and a follow-up formal or informal conference concerning this observation)? The disparity between the teachers' and administrators' statements concerning

availability of this program becomes even greater than presented in Table I if other data from the questionnaires are used. Of the teachers, 62% indicated they had not experienced any supervision during the past school year. Ninety-one per cent of the administrators, however, stated that they supervised all of their teachers each year. Furthermore, almost 40% of the administrators noted that they supervised each teacher more than two times a year; only 7% of the teachers said they had been so supervised.

Is it possible that one of the groups in responding to the questionnaire disregarded the definition of supervision presented and thus answered on a different basis from the other? Are administrators saying what they ought to do or plan to do rather than what they actually do? Or are teachers displaying some of the negative feelings they have about supervision (such feelings were amply expressed in comments on the questionnaires) by indicating they have not been supervised when they have? Whatever the answer, the present status of supervision is hardly good. This is particularly unfortunate because of the suitability of this means for the small school in-service program. Here is a way that a small school having a few outstanding teachers can use these teachers to help the lesser skilled members of the faculty. Teachers' comments lead to the suggestion that what is needed most may well be additional training of the supervisor for that function.

That the local workshop or seminar conducted during the school year is so highly thought of was not surprising. This approach certainly has the potential for getting at the heart of in-service education -- providing the teacher help that is directly and immediately related to his day-to-day instructional problems.

Although some of the workshops during the school year are conducted by agencies other than the local school (e.g., by county education offices or by teachers' associations), almost all pre-school workshops are carried on by the local school. The unpopularity of these programs compared to the other workshops is perhaps because these workshops are frequently more administrative in nature than in-service and also because it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to relate the content of pre-school meetings to the immediate instructional problems that teachers face.

As indicated on Table I, teachers who have attended professional conferences in their subject fields reacted favorably toward them. Unfortunately, however, attendance at such conferences is not particularly common. Only 55% of the teachers surveyed indicated they had participated in a professional conference in their teaching fields. Not quite 20% of the administrators surveyed reported that the majority of the teachers in their schools attended such meetings more often than once in two years.

Other In-service Activities

There are at least three other activities which frequently play a role in in-service education, although these activities may have other functions as well. These activities are participation in projects, development and use of materials centers, and the taking of additional college work.

Teacher participation in projects (e.g., curriculum development projects, research projects, school evaluation projects) related to improvement of instruction is an activity which almost all small schools could develop and which was available in 60% of the sample schools. Of those teachers who had participated in such projects, 59% indicated this had helped them improve their teaching.

The development of a strong school-wide materials center may play a significant role in upgrading the performance of the teachers of a school. Such a center would be of particular value to a school which has a high faculty turnover rate. It is encouraging to note that almost three-fourths of these 155 small schools are now in the process of developing materials centers. Over 60% of the teachers who had worked with such a center stated that it gave them much help in improving their teaching.

In some schools about the only in-service education available to teachers is through taking additional college work. Of those teachers surveyed who had taken college graduate level courses since they began teaching (70% of the sample group), over 40% felt that these courses had helped them very much to improve their teaching. Another 50% stated that they had received some help in this manner.

The Conduct of Existing Programs

It would seem reasonable to assume that the beginning teacher has the greatest need for help in improving his instructional performance. Eighty-eight per cent of the administrators surveyed stated that their schools made special provisions for in-service assistance for beginning teachers. Over two-thirds of these administrators indicated they are providing extra supervision for these teachers. This finding must be somewhat suspect, however, when one considers the previous information presented relative to supervision. Over 60% of these schools conduct orientation meetings for beginning teachers. It is probable, however, that much of this orientation involves administrative procedures rather than help with instructional problems and also that it occurs at the beginning of the year, before the new teacher really knows with what he needs help. A

few schools noted that they have a system whereby experienced teachers provide help for beginners. Basically, however, beginning teachers probably do not receive much special help with their instructional problems unless it is via unofficial or informal means.

Teachers and administrators were asked who plans and conducts the in-service activities in their schools. The responses indicated that basically these activities are carried out by administrators. (See Table II). The larger the school within this sample, however, the greater likelihood there was that there were teachers playing an active role in establishing and conducting the program. Many teacher comments suggested they would like to play a greater role in the planning and conduct of the in-service program. It would seem desirable for a number of reasons that teachers be allowed and encouraged to do so.

Administrators were asked to what degree participation in the in-service programs of their schools was required. Overall findings were: participation is voluntary, 15%; required, 33%; some voluntary and some required, 52%. A tendency existed for larger schools in the sample to require participation more frequently than smaller schools.

There was evidence of misunderstanding between teachers and administrators on policies related to in-service education. For example, although 92% of the administrators polled stated that teachers could get released time from school assignments to attend professional conferences, teachers' responses revealed that this was not their understanding. Teachers responded in the following manner: I am not certain of the policy, 14%; teachers cannot be released, 18%; occasionally they can be released, 34%; yes, teachers are encouraged to attend, 32%. Over one-fifth of the teachers said they did not know what the school policy was concerning reimbursement for the cost

of participating in in-service activities, such as professional conferences, although almost all administrators noted that their schools had a definite policy. Administrators also described greater opportunities for teachers to participate in curriculum development and research projects than teachers were aware of.

The administrators in the survey were questioned about how the effect of in-service activities in their school is evaluated. Responses to this question were: Through informal discussions with teachers, 49%; through questionnaires or surveys given to teachers, 5%; through research studies, 1%; no specific evaluation measures are undertaken, 45%. Obviously, only minor attention is paid to evaluation. This certainly must restrict the basis on which planning of in-service programs is done.

How Good are the Existing Programs?

No external attempt was made in this study to examine the in-service programs of these 155 schools in order to assess their quality. The administrators and teachers surveyed, however, were asked for their evaluations. Their responses indicated a great deal of dissatisfaction with the existing programs and a desire for more effective in-service assistance. For example, when asked to describe an in-service activity held in their schools during the past three years that had been effective, 40% of the 155 administrators contacted indicated that no such activity had taken place. Table III presents teachers' evaluations of the programs they are experiencing.

The 181 teachers were also asked in what areas they had received valuable help through in-service education activities and in what areas they would like to receive assistance or more assistance. Table IV includes those areas in which the greatest number of teachers expressed a desire

for help. Of those areas listed on this table, there appears to be some tendency for teachers to have received more help in more mechanical areas than in areas of more sophisticated teaching behavior.

It was encouraging to note in the responses of the teachers that only a very small percentage (less than 2½%) of those surveyed expressed disinterest in and/or hostility to the idea of in-service education. Perhaps the most disturbing finding of this study came out of a comparison of inexperienced (less than 4 years teaching experience) and experienced teachers. It has been assumed that their responses to the survey would be different but this was not found to be the case. Some differences were found in expected places (e.g., inexperienced teachers wanted more help on discipline and were more willing to go along with supervision and faculty meetings as means of in-service education), but generally both groups wanted help with the same kinds of problems and help through the same kinds of activities. When experienced teachers indicate they are having the same problems as inexperienced teachers and when both groups indicate they have received very little help from in-service programs, a possible conclusion must be that effective teacher growth depends on in-service help for the teacher aimed specifically at his day-to-day instructional problems. The teacher grows some on his own by his own efforts and as a result of trial and error experience. This in itself is not enough in most cases, however, to bring about significant upgrading of teaching skills.

How good is in-service education in small schools? A few examples of dynamic, creative programs were identified. Most of these appeared to be the result of the leadership of an individual administrator. As a part of this study, appropriate officials in the state departments of

education in eleven other midwestern states were contacted. Their assessments of the status of in-service education programs in small schools in their states agree with that found to exist in Nebraska through this study. Basically then, most programs are weak, but a few schools are doing a good job showing that effective in-service programs are possible in small schools. Overall, the administrators and even more so the teachers had few favorable comments to make about the existing programs. Differences in opinion concerning both the desired and prevailing conduct and nature of in-service education existed between administrators and teachers, revealing a need for the two groups to work more closely together on matters relating to in-service growth.

Perhaps statements from two of the teachers responding to the survey make the point. A teacher with 16 years teaching experience: "I can't honestly say that I have ever had an in-service experience that has helped me become a better teacher. I do not think I have changed my methods very much from my practice teaching days " A teacher with 12 years experience: "The greater part of my in-service training has been self-encouraged and self-conducted."

Some Conclusions

More in-service education activities are greatly needed which (1) actively involve teachers in the planning of the activities, (2) actively involve teachers in the conduct of the activities (i.e., they are not just talked at), (3) are related to teachers' immediate day-to-day instructional concerns, and (4) are evaluated in terms of their effectiveness.

One cannot look at in-service education without becoming discouraged over the small amounts of time and money being spent by local schools on

professional development of their staffs. Certainly, the recommendation must be made that every school, regardless of size, establish a professional development fund which will at least support some in-service education programs and which will assist teachers in maintaining beneficial professional contacts.

While there are many activities in which the small school faculty can engage which will help teachers upgrade their skills and retain their enthusiasm for teaching, the small school probably needs some help from outside resources to adequately provide for its teachers' needs and thus the needs of its student body. One way of expanding the small school's resources is through a number of small schools banding together for in-service functions. A second way is through greater university and college involvement in providing in-service assistance for these schools. Certainly, an encouraging note is the number of colleges which are developing courses, workshops, etc., specifically designed for helping the teacher with his teaching problems. Projects such as the Western States Small Schools Project and the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project hold promise of developing procedures for more effective in-service education.

Without in-service programs that make a difference in the way the teacher behaves, it seems doubtful that any efforts in research, materials design, or curriculum development will ever bear fruit in improved learning-- experiences for students. Findings of the study reported here raise doubts that sufficient emphasis is being placed on the development of in-service education to produce such programs.

TABLE I

TRADITIONAL IN-SERVICE EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Type of In-service Activity	Activity Available		Teacher Evaluation*		Desire More of This Activity	
	Adminrs	Tchrs	Little/no help	Helped	Adminrs	Tchrs
Faculty meeting	70%	--	62%	38%	28%	15%
Visitation	27	25	31	69	34	39
Supervision	91	55	60	40	22	18
Pre-school workshop	75	66	62	38	--	15
Workshop during school year	51	54	32	68	39	51
Professional conference	--	73	34	66	22	27

*Evaluation by those to whom the activity was available

TABLE II

Who Plans and Conducts the In-Service Education Activities in Your School?

	Administrators	Teachers
Activities Planned and Conducted By:		
Administrators	63	60%*
Administrators and Teachers	35	34
Teachers	2	6

*In about one-fourth of these cases teachers felt they were consulted by the administration before the activity took place.

TABLE III

Teachers' Evaluations of In-service Programs

	Effect of Program for your professional needs	Effect of Program for total school staff
Extremely inadequate	26%	20%
Inadequate	49	46
For some satisfactory; for others inadequate	--	23
Satisfactory	22	9
Very Good	1	1
Outstanding	2	1

TABLE IV

Assistance Desired and Experienced By Teachers

	Would like help or more help	Have received help
Motivating students	61%	18%
New approaches and innovations	55	21
Providing for individual differences	55	12
Obtaining and using suitable materials	47	30
Use of audio-visual aids	45	47
Developing skills and processes such as critical thinking	43	8
Evaluating student progress	43	13
Organizing and structuring course content and activities	41	17
Constructing tests	39	10
Grading procedures and reporting to parents	34	29
Helping students with social adjustment	34	12
Involving students actively in class activities	33	10