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ABSTRACT

An overview is presented of research studies that reflect the realities that exist in elementary and secondary public education. Explorations of school culture cite behavioral and programmatic regularities that make up the school culture and the importance of school principals' roles. Focusing on the teachers and the ways things actually get done in the course of a day, week, or year, some studies reveal dilemmas that teachers face when attempting to fit into accepted school routines. Studies are also cited on how school organization influences the life and activities of school personnel. Outlines are given of ethnographic school improvement studies dealing with: (1) implementing organizational innovations; (2) open education and the American school; (3) measuring the implementation of differentiated staffing; (4) the dynamics of educational change (involving four different studies); (5) implementing organizational changes in the elementary grades; (6) teachers vs. technocrats; (7) innovative organization; (8) federal programs supporting educational change; and (9) secondary schools and their effects on children. Findings from research studies concerning teachers and teaching, individual development, the role of the principal, and the process of school improvement are also synthesized. A summary of the research findings presents statements on necessary conditions for school improvement. (JD)

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A NEW LOOK AT SOME PIECES OF OLD PUZZLES

LEARNINGS FROM SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

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A New Look at Some Pieces of Old Puzzles

Learnings from Schools and Teachers

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For well over four decades people have been studying schools, their personnel, their effects on students, their historical role in maintaining the social order, their reflection on the social mores of the time and more. By now there are some identifiable themes (read, pieces) where we have a substantial amount of knowledge. These themes, when put together, begin to form a fresh look at the school and implications for its improvement.

Our view is rooted in the teacher's and principal's social reality; and this is what makes the look new. The themes illuminate the world of schools from the inside out and as such suggest complexities, dilemmas and tensions, rather than prescriptions and certitudes. But although we cannot deduce a set of neat prescriptions, we can build a realistic way of thinking about, understanding, and acting upon the various conditions found in the real world of public schools.

The Culture of the School

We begin with an exploration of what schools look like from the inside. There have been numerous studies that alert us to both the barriers and possibilities of school improvement. What these studies do is raise the kinds of issues we need to attend to and help us understand the full array of forces involved in school improvement (Miles, 1967; Bidwell, 1965; Meyer, Note 1).

Sarason's (1971) classic description of one school's attempt to implement modern math is illuminating. In his study of the culture of the

elementary school, he focuses on two factors. He speaks of one, the behavioral and programmatic regularities that make up the school culture, and, two, the importance of the role of the principal within that culture. Parsons (1959) essentially takes this view as well, though labeling his object of study a social system, rather than a culture.

The behavioral regularities refer to the way things get done. If we focus on the teachers, we find them involved in a series of dilemmas, as they go about their work. There are several issues for elementary teachers:

- more subjects to teach than time to teach it.
- the problem of coverage VS mastery.
- when to have large group, small group or individualized instruction (Kepler, 1980).
- when to stay with a subject or a routine and when to shift.
- how to keep the class momentum going.
- how to deal with the isolation from other adults.

These dilemmas constrain the way teachers organize the classroom and, hence, the way they develop programmatic regularities (i.e., three-group reading, the use of S.R.A. kits, quiet activities after lunch, etc.) These routines, this culture, developed over time by teachers through trial and error, becomes their way of coping with uncertainty in the face of their dilemmas (Lorite, 1975; Waller, 1967).

For the secondary teacher there are different dilemmas that shape their culture:

- Personal VS organizational constraints (conforming to bureaucratic structures VS their personal classroom concerns).
- Packaging and pacing instruction to fit into allocated time periods.

- Proportioning subject matter expertise and affective needs in some way.
- Figuring out how to deal with mixed loyalties to the faculty and to the adolescent culture (Miller & Lieberman, in press.)

What gets exposed is not only the classroom tensions of fitting material into small time segments, but the press of a cleavage between the adolescent society and the faculty. Departments, subject matter expertise and a bureaucratic mileau add to the complexity of the secondary school culture.

Several other studies flesh out our understanding of the school culture. Smith and Keith's (1971) description of the buiilding of an innovative school teaches us more about the interplay of teachers with one another, the daily problem of what to teach, how to teach it, how to deal with providing for all while providing for individuals in both curricular offerings and grouping of students. What gets exposed in this study is the cutlural realities of the role of the principal, the interpersonal relations among the staff, the indivdual personalities and the problem of newness. We come to understand that somehow the subject matter must be organized so it can be taught, that children must have opportunities to do work individually, but that group work is important too. Moreover, a school faculty which attempts to build a school from the ground up must deal with all the dilemmas aforementioned.

Organizational Influences

But lest we think that the teacher culture alone creates the whole picture, we need also to look at how the school is organized (Baldridge & Deal, 1975). We more readily observe schools that look different physically but we are now coming to understand differences in social organization as well. A study (Reutter, Maugham, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979) of secondary schools in England over a three year period showed that modifiable factors

such as academic emphasis in class and availability of incentives and rewards for students and teachers who work together on a unified direction for the school made a difference in student attendance, behavior, and delinquency rates.

Recent studies (Weick, 1976; Meyer, Note 1; Deal & Celotti, Note 2) suggest that disjuncture between structure, goals, and activities (loose coupling) creates dilemmas for teachers. Loose coupling is described as a structure disconnected from activity (i.e., a building, a teacher group, goals and objectives with teachers going behind their respective doors, and implementing their own separate interpretations) and activity disconnected from effects (i.e., teachers teaching and merely hoping there will be effects on students, but with little or no conceptual linkage between their teaching activities and the effects of those on students.)

Meyer (Note 1) contends that in spite of loose coupling, schools work because informal norms and tacit understandings develop among the people involved. This is why the insider's view differs from the researcher's view and, in part, why the innovations and improvements imported from the outside often fail to be implemented. A further difficulty noted by Clark (1980) is that there is a certain naivete' about the dailiness of the school that defies our classical descriptions of it as an organization.

Studies of School Improvement

Numerous studies of school improvement efforts, elucidate the political and interpersonal systems of school culture and the problems they pose for improvement. House (Note 3) describes the changes in methods of studying school improvements and the different perspectives on innovative activities which these changes have produced. Research methods have changed from studies that measure the degree to which teachers implement innovations as

they were designed to surveys that document the mutual adaptation of innovations and the school cultures into which they are introduced. Not only are the studies shifting their focus, but the perspectives are also shifting. Focus on innovations themselves often assume that teachers are technicians and that one needs merely to learn the techniques of a given idea and it will be implemented. However, several studies show that implementation of innovations is critically dependent on the power relations in the schools, apart from the innovations per se (Daft & Becker, 1978; House, 1974; Sussman, 1977). House (1974) argues that we should look at innovative ideas within the context of the school culture.

In order to see how specific school cultures encourage or inhibit the implementation of innovations, investigators are increasingly using ethnographic methods. The following studies have taken this approach. They span the last decade, and as we consider their findings, the pieces of the puzzle begin to come together:

Ethnographic School Improvement Studies

1971 - Implementing Organizational Innovations

Gross, N., Giacquinta, J., and Bernstein, M.

Case study of an attempt to change the teacher role to one of catalyst or facilitator of the children's learning.

Learnings

1. Teacher must understand what the innovation is all about (clarity).
2. Teachers must be given help in how to implement the innovation (experience and training).

3. Commitment to the idea is necessary.
4. The school organization must be compatible with the idea.
5. Proper materials must be available.
6. Leadership must be supportive.

1972 - Open Education and the American School

Barth, R.

Case study of an attempt to implement open education in an urban elementary school.

Learnings

1. Values of the community must be considered and understood.
2. All groups must be educated in understanding innovations so that they can be both implemented and supported.
3. Ideology alone is not sufficient in implementing innovations.
4. Conflict over deeply held values of images of the teacher and what goes on in school may be inevitable.

1973 - Measuring the Implementation of Differentiated Staffing

Charters, W. W.

Study of an attempt to implement differentiated staffing.

Learnings

1. Teachers need autonomy and flexibility.
2. Implementation of innovation requires rationality, prediction, and clarity.

1973 - The Power to Change, Culver, C., & Hoban, G.

Culver, C., & Hoban, G.

1974 - Changing Schools: The Magic Feather Principle

Bentzen, M.

1974 - Effecting Organizational Renewal in Schools

Williams, R., Wall, C.C., Martin, W.M., & Berchi, A.

1975 - The Dynamics of Educational Change

Goodlad, J. I.

Five year study of a group of schools concerned with making and studying the process of school improvement.

Learnings

1. Efforts at school improvement involve new knowledge, but also continuous support.
2. A process known as Dialog, Decision-making and Action describes what goes on during improvement efforts.
3. Over time, teachers and principals can be convinced that much of the expertise for improvement is among the innovators within the schools.

1977 - Implementing Organizational Changes in the Elementary Grades

Sussman, L.

Case study of three elementary schools attempting to implement open education and individualizing instruction.

Learnings

1. Many innovations go on among teachers that are never made public.
2. Resources including such things as personnel, time and materials aid in implementation.
3. Organizational innovations often create conflict over teacher's traditional rewards (students) and further create conflicts with administrators.

1977 - Teachers VS Technocrats

Wolcott, H.

Study of the implementation of a Program Planning Budgeting System.

Learnings

1. Teachers need autonomy and flexibility.
2. Implementation of innovation requires rationality, prediction, and clarity.

1978 - The Innovative Organization

Daft, R., & Becker, S.

A multi-year study of many variables related to organizational innovativeness such as support staff, organizational complexity and teacher professionalism. Thirteen high school districts involved.

Learnings

1. There are great differences between administrative innovations and teacher innovations. The former are often technical in nature. The latter tend to be implemented more often
2. Teacher professionalism may be the strongest variable in organizational innovativeness.
3. Teachers who spark innovative ideas are named "idea champions" who need to be supported.

1978 - Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change

Berman, P., & McLaughlin, M.

An office of education study of federal programs designed to introduce and spread innovative practices. Surveys and case studies were both included.

Learnings

1. The study alerted the field to the critical importance of implementation - how the idea actually gets into classroom practice.
2. Effective strategies for implementation:
   a. concrete, teacher specific extended training.
   b. classroom assistance.
   c. teacher observation of similar projects.
   d. teacher participation in project decisions.
   e. local materials development.
   f. principal participation in training.

1979 - Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children

Reutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimer, P., & Ouston, J.

A three year study of twelve secondary schools in England. The focus was to study the different influences on students due to differences in the social organization of schools.

Learnings

1. Schools that have similar student populations and similar physical factors in their characteristics as social institutions.
2. Characteristics that differ:
   a. academic emphasis.
   b. availability of incentives and rewards for students.

c. teacher agreement on school directions as a group.

d. teacher actions in lessons.

e. students taking responsibility.

Teachers and Teaching

In addition to studies of school improvement efforts, studies of teachers and their work add more pieces to the puzzle. We now have a large group of studies of teachers as they live and work in schools. As early as 1932, Willard Waller wrote a tremendously insightful description of the social world of teachers (Waller, 1967). He documented what is perhaps the central contradiction all teachers face - how to teach something and at the same time how to keep an affective bond between teacher and student. Many variations of how this relationship comes about can be observed. But the central fact is that through trial and error, teachers develop highly personalized styles of teaching (Lieberman & Miller, 1979).

Isolation

As one learns to teach, one quickly comes to understand that the joy, the excitement and the feedback that gives the message that what is taught is being learned comes from a sole source - the students. The craft of teaching is most often learned alone in isolation from other adults. Indeed, the concepts for teachers to communicate with each other are often absent (Little, Note 4). This, the physical isolation from one another and the lack of language in which to communicate reinforce a defensiveness about one's own teaching. The openness and trust so necessary in order to share, reflect, and act upon problems of mutual concern simply are not fostered in isolation from colleagues.

Uncertainties and Contradictions

High expectations are held for teachers that are often unrelated to actual difficulties involved in teaching (Lortie, 1975). These difficulties stem from the attempt to implement a previously written lesson plan in the fluid classroom environment. Often the plans as written are not appropriate to the demands of the moment. At that point they must be adjusted or fully revised on the spot. How well this is done depends on the alertness and artistry of the teacher (Jackson, 1968).

The accent on the 3 R's and many new systems of cataloguing of objectives represent a new technology in education. But in spite of this, teachers are often left to their own devices to figure out what to teach and how to teach it. School-wide goals are vague and often in conflict. (Individualize instruction VS teach everyone in class.) Responses to vagueness on the one hand and too much specificity on the other, often lead to a focus on controlling the class as a primary objective rather than a means for the accomplishment of objectives.

Control a Necessity

How teachers come to establish themselves as leaders of the class and, thus, control the nature of the activities is at a fledgling state but, nonetheless, critical to our understanding (Janesick, Note 5). The way teachers get thwarted or resolve the problem of gaining a sense of direction and control of the class begins to help us see how the teacher organizes both the class, the material and the activities that make a class work and move forward. Teachers appear to move through a cycle of giving orders (establishing position), threatening when the orders are not followed, being tested by students (Do you really mean it?) and finally, resolving standards that become normative (Smith & Geoffrey, 1968).

We need also to add some conceptions of teaching that come from observing the routine of teaching. Descriptions of the rhythms, rules, interactions, and feelings of the teacher make these conceptions of the teacher's work more salient (Lieberman & Miller, 1979).

Rhythms

Life in schools is marked by the rhythm of days, weeks, months and holidays that are regular from year to year. School begins early, certainly earlier than most professions but it ends before others too. For much of the day, teachers are in a regulated, exclusive, mostly indoor environment. They are time and space bound. Elementary teachers are with the same group of children all day while their counterparts in secondary school are in the same room with several different groups of students. Lunch and any free time is often spent in the building. In many schools, teachers need to get permission to leave the premises.

During the day energy levels vary, but the teaching task does not. Secondary teachers consider the first and last periods to be less effective than the others and they adjust their expectations accordingly. In contrast elementary teachers often pack the mornings with the "solid subjects" and lessen the intensity after lunch.

The rhythm of the days is embedded within the rhythm of the weeks. Mondays and Fridays are often difficult. The middle of thw week is the best time for teaching and learning. Monday is review day; Fridays are test days to measure the week's work.

A rhythm of months is also discernable, with great bursts of high energy teaching in the fall, plodding along in the winter, and gaining momentum in the early spring. The end of the school year comes in June with all the accompanying rituals of report cards and cumulative records. Summer vacation

brings it all to a grinding halt only to be created again in September. These rhythms shape the adaptations teachers make to their work life.

Rules

The many formal rules that govern most schools are well known, but less spoken of are the informal rules that govern teaching behavior. Being practical and being private are two informal rules that relate to our concerns.

Practicality. Teachers often say that ideas are "too theoretical." These are ideas that one usually associates with course work in college. Being practical on the other hand, is a state that considers the specific circumstances of a school and the immediacy of use. Practical solutions require little work, are concrete, and do not require any additional resources. Practical people are those who have been taught and understand the practicality ethic. Practicality places a value on learning to adjust expectations to present realities (Doyle & Ponder, 1977). Being self-sufficient is practical. Learning to make do is practical. Practicality is linked to an informal rule of being private.

Privacy. It is practical to be private about what you are doing. Being private means not sharing either the great successes nor the failures one has with students. Visitation to other classrooms is not standard practice even though teachers often state they learn best by observing peers.

Teacher Interactions

Teachers basically have three types of interactions during working hours. All these interactions help shape attitudes towards work.

Teacher to teacher. As indicated previously, teachers carry on very superficial relations with their colleagues. Conversations often revolve around "griping and jousting." There is a lot of kidding that helps break

the constancy of classroom demands. Teachers often use each other as the butt of jokes.

Griping is a tensional outlet that offers relief. Complaints about almost anything are legitimate grist. It aids in identifying with the group even though there may be no lasting effects or follow through.

Teacher to student. We have stated before the critical importance of this relationship. Whether the teacher feels the power of being a role model in high school or a catalyst for the incrediable energy of a junior high school student, or the facilitator for the many experiences of the elementary child - this relationship is the crux of the teacher's satisfaction. And if any improvement stands in the way of this relationship, it will have a difficult time succeeding.

Teacher to principal. Although only one puzzle piece, the relationship between principal and teachers is a critical one. And it is one that has effects in far more subtle ways than appear on the surface. The building leader has the power to make life pleasant or unpleasant by both his/her modes of working, trust of teachers, support of teachers and general attitude toward the culture of the people in the school. Maintenance of the status quo or encouragement of improvement strategies and programs are quickly perceived by staff members. What principals reward and encourage makes a difference in how teachers participate in their work (Lieberman, Note 6).

Feelings

Since teaching is such a private profession, it is often difficult to find out what teachers actually feel about their work.

About students. We have said before that the major source of satisfaction for the teacher is the students, but in a paradoxical way they are also a source of frustration and isolation. Few professions are

characterized by living totally with children all day in their world. The excitement of helping reveal the adult world to children is there, but so is the struggle to translate it, and the attendant isolation from the adult world.

About one's own confidence. There are feelings about confidence, too, that relate significantly to our understanding about schools. Teachers are often in conflict about their own value as teachers. The lack of a technical body of knowledge about teaching, and the lack of peer support and adult interaction makes teachers feel a sense of vulnerability about the quality of teaching. Judgements become highly personalized and, hence, highly individualzed, thus, insulating people all the more from one another.

About control. Keeping the class under control is one of the few visible indications that the teacher is doing a good job. Losing control means losing one's status among one's colleagues - however tenuous that status might be.

But outside the classroom, in the formal organization of the school, teachers seldom have much control. They leave the classroom where there is a mutual adaptation between students and themselves for a milieu where they are often powerless. This state of affairs has important implications for school improvement efforts, for the degree to which the faculty feel in control is directly related to their openness to improvement, their willingness to risk new methods.

But teachers are not all alike. They differ on a variety of dimensions and these differences are reflected in their levels of understanding about teaching and, consequently, what they are ready to learn.

Adult Development

Studies of teacher concerns and priorities show progression over time on these dimensions. Other investigations show that teacher growth can be fostered by appropriate staff development efforts. Both of these lines of inquiry underscore the importance of adult development in school improvement efforts.

Field (Note 7) conceptualizes teacher development as occurring in three identifiable stages. The stages are based on teachers' abilities to handle everyday activities like planning the day, keeping record, planning group activities, making transitions and the like. Stage one teachers manifest a predominant concern with survival. Strategies for planning and organizing are hit and miss. Teachers are unable to plan more than a day at a time. All the parts that make up the complexity of the classroom appear more as warring factions rather than as pieces to be manipulated by the teacher. The students, materials, the physical environment, subject matter and self are all experienced as discrete pieces. It is clearly akin to trying to patch endless holes in a dike.

Stage two is characterized by a growing sense of confidence based on some success with students. Teachers can plan for a few weeks rather than from day to day. Diagnosis and beginning capacities to find appropriate solutions to problems become part of the repertoire.

Stage three teachers see their work as an integrated whole. Everything is a potential resource for the classroom. The physical as well as the social environment are tools for the teacher. Flexibility, openness and experimentation become the norm rather than the exception. Stage three teachers are "in control."

Clearly these stages begin to describe identifiable differences among teachers and suggest strategies for different ways of working with teachers.

Another way of understanding teacher differences is to observe what teachers attend to, that is, what their priorities are as they teach. Such a scheme was created by Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel (1976) as they observed teachers' cognitive and personal/social priorities. They also conceptualized teachers falling into three groups. The first group appears to hold narrow priorities in both the cognitive and personal domain. Their major concerns are that students learn the 3 R's and behave. Mid-range teachers have concerns that students assume responsibility for their own learning and that they enjoy learning as well. Teachers who have comprehensive priorities value the fact that students know both what they are learning and why. Students' purposes and teachers' purposes are both important. And furthermore, teachers feel that students need to differentiate what they can and can't do and have realistic assessments of their strengths and weaknesses.

One begins to see differences in how teachers think about their work, what they plan, what is important and what the curriculum might be.

Teacher Development

If we begin to think about teacher differences as a guide for professional growth, we can become far more powerful in influencing movement of teachers toward higher stages of development. Such a study was undertaken by Oja to see if teachers would respond to an educational program that considered: a) building supportive interpersonal relations, b) learning skills of more facilitative teaching, and c) applying the learnings in real classroom settings (Oja & Sprinthall, 1978). Reflecting on such instructional experiences appears to be a significant and powerful mode of

facilitating teacher development. These findings suggest that teacher improvement, like pupil improvement, should attend to developmental concerns.

Stages of Concern

Building on Frances Fuller (1969) earlier work with beginning teachers, Hall and Loucks (1979) describe a developmental scheme of teachers' concerns as they deal with innovations in their classroom. The stages move from an initial lack of engagement to personal concern (Can I do it?), to management concerns (How does one organize the class?) to impact concerns (Is this better than what I did before?). This work advances and builds upon earlier studies that also attempted to take a complex view of the development of teachers, schools and the curriculum (Miel, 1946; Lawler, 1970). Within this complex the principal plays a crucial role.

The Principal

Our view differs from earlier descriptions of the principal in that we conceptualize the principal's role from actual practice. We see leadership within the daily context occurring "between the cracks" and, as part of a set of often conflicting roles (Miller & Lieberman, in press). To an outsider it is difficult to observe effective leadership amidst the daily chaos of competing events (Wolcott, 1977). Care must be taker, then, to unravel the roles and events so that the social function of principalship can emerge (Burlingame, 1979).

Many-Faceted Role

More than a staff realizes, the principal is much like an overseer. The principal must see the parts as well as the whole. This demands the capacity to see overgrown grass and a broker pipe, as well as the social organization of the school. What is lost in depth is gained in breadth.

But the very breadth brings with it many secrets that the principal cannot share. This can keep the principal empathic or even humble, but it can also be lonely and isolating.

As they try to take account of and care for the general state of things, principals are barraged by information, from the trivial to the momentous. This barrage makes it difficult to formulate, let alone maintain, one's priorities. It is easy to drown in a welter of information.

As we have noted before, schools are characterized by certain regularities - meetings, bells, lunch schedules. Though routines lend stability, in the absence of priorities they often become ends rather than means.

A large part of a principal's day is spent in buffering between individuals and groups (How to handle Mike who was expelled from Mr. R's class. Mr. R. always handles discipline problems this way. How to handle the P.E. department who favor Friday afternoon pep rallies and the English department who want uninterrupted instruction time).

A principal is a translator of policy. This demands skill in making realistic implementation plans for policies received from above. But it also means getting caught up in the paper work and records, often at the expense of organizing the people.

Being a plant manager and a manager of people are also key parts to the role. Enforcing discipline and keeping the grounds and cafeteria in order are equally important. They both reflect on the personality of the school and the principal. Because the principal is in charge of everything, she or he is also ultimately responsible when anything goes wrong. An increase in pupil tardiness is the fault of the principal as is the fire started in the garbage pail during lunch period. Parents' complaints about teachers or lack

of funds to buy football uniforms all reflect badly on the school leaders' competence.

How, then, does improvement take place? Where is the educational leadership written about so passionately in the journals and research reports?

Opportunities for leadership are ubiquitous. It happens by seizing the moment, by taking advantage of any situation, by being ready when and if an opportunity arises to facilitate greater teacher professionalism, more openness, more collegiality, more flexibility. Principals who take an active rather than passive stance, who question assumptions, who condone or condemn staff or student behaviors are making statements all the time about their values of justice, of curriculum, of people, and of their sense of what schools are about. Principals' leadership, then, occurs amidst all their conflicting roles.

Although the literature stresses the role of principal as leader, developer, innovator, the realities are such that they are also autocrats, maintenance keepers, and paper shufflers. Leadership comes about by seizing opportunities, garnering resources, offering help, listening, bringing in new catalysts. But it also happens when principals put people concerns over paper concerns, when teachers are complimented for well taught lessons, when the principal intervenes, rather than avoids a classroom in revolt, when curricular issues rather than procedural issues become the focus of meetings. All of these leadership acts come around the edges and between the cracks.

But the principal is not alone. The school shapes the principal and the principal shapes the school. Teachers and principal can influence one another.

The puzzle begins to take shape out of the many large and small pieces that fit together - sometimes jammed into place. Learnings emerge that we can identify about teachers, about schools and about the process of school improvement.

Learnings About Teachers

- Most teachers learn their role through experience. Their style is developed by their own struggle to deal with curriculum, students, and the expectations from their own schooling.
- Teachers are faced with major dilemmas in their work. For the elementary teacher one must deal with:
    a. more subjects than time to teach them.
    b. when to organize for large groups.
    c. enough control and discipline to keep the class moving.
    d. when to cover material VS when to master it.
- For secondary teachers:
    a. how to negotiate personal and organizational constraints.
    b. how to accommodate subjects to fifty minute segments.
    c. how to manage loyalties of students and peers.
- Teaching is a lonely and isolated activity.
- Teachers often feel vulnerable outside the classroom.
- Primary rewards come from students, not from adults.

Learnings About Schools as Organizations

- Schools have characteristics that make work in them fraught with ambiguity. These form the backdrop of both the principal's and teacher's work environment.
    a. goals are vague.
    b. school people are vulnerable to the external environment.

c. work of schools is translated in many different ways.

d. much of what goes on is not shared with the outside world.

- The school "ethos" (history, biography, social relations and ideologies) differs among schools. These differences provide the hidden targets for school improvement.
- Local conditions have a great deal to do with how and if schools can improve. Local conditions include:
  a. type of leadership (dynamic, oppressive, coping)
  b. community support (conflicted, supportive)
  c. resources
  d. instructional ideology (one dimensional or multi-dimensional)
  e. district ethos (unchanging, sensitive, supporting)
- Principals have effects on the climate of the school and what gets rewarded.
- Schools are separate cultures of their own. One must understand the norms and values from the inside.
- School effectiveness studies give us some conceptual descriptions of how to think about urban schools. These descriptions include:
  a. strong leadership
  b. more teacher time spent "on task"
  c. good faculty communication on collective school goals
  d. high pupil expectations
  e. frequent student evaluations

Learnings About the Process of School Improvement

- School improvement requires attending to all parts of the organization.
  a. the norms
  b. the rewards

c. the continuous support

d. the structures needed

e. the human and material resources

- There appears to be stages that one can describe in the improvement process. The include:

  a. initiation (engagement, awareness)

  b. implementation (managing or incorporation)

  c. institutionalization

  These stages, loosely defined can aid in planning activities for improvement purposes.

- Stages of change do not happen automatically. Needs, conflicts, rewards and motivations change during the process. What is rewarding at one time, may be inappropriate at another (Sieber, Note 6).

- Because of the lack of a precise technical culture and because ideas often come to a school sponsored by a particular person or group, school improvements are often seen as politically rather than educationally inspired (Gold & Miles, 1981).

- Although there is some disagreement as to the appropriate time teachers should participate (as initiators, primary decision-makers, collaborators, etc.). There can be no question that participation is a critical component of school improvement efforts.

- The source of the imporvement idea or plan is not as important as how people are organized, whether the leadership is sensitive to the social realities of the school and whether commitments and rewards can be sustained long enough for integration of improvements to take place.

If we integrate these learnings and attempt to piece them together, several implications emerge for school improvement.

Necessary Conditions for School Improvement

Interactive

Somehow planners or those responsible for improvement efforts must involve teachers in such a way that they must see relevance and possibilities for improving and enhancing their craft. Sensitivity to how and when teachers participate is critical.

Personal

But just being involved is not enough. Personalized help and involvement of teachers on a personal basis eventually connects people to ideas and helps build commitment. Attending to teacher's personal concerns, their doubts as well as their ambivalences, becomes part of both the problem and the possibility for growth.

Practical

Ideas that cannot be translated into daily activities will not be used. Teachers must see practical uses - ways of utilizing resources on hand that are not to complicated because in the final analysis - they must use what they have and it must fit what they are already doing.

Tailor-made

Innovations must fit or be adapted to fit particular contexts. When new ideas get implemented, they are shaped and re-shaped to fit each unique place, its teachers and its students.

Informal/Formal

Innovations are often introduced in environments that are informal in nature, but a tension exists between formal expectations and an informal, supportive environment within which the new ideas are learned, practiced and eventually implemented.

Concern for Dignity

There has and continues to be an enormous lack of understanding about the complexity of the teachers' work. Without an empathic concern for the dignity of the work, there is little chance that teachers will be open to innovation - with it, there are many possibilities.

Support

We have ample evidence and experience to know that continuous support in the forms of praise, time, taking new roles, new learnings and the building of group camaraderie is a number one priority.

Adult Developmental Concerns

Planning for and paying attention to different stages in a project and differences in what teachers are ready for is an important part of any improvement strategy. Adult development sensitizes us to looking at individual, as well as group characteristics of teachers.

Technical and Human Resources

Materials and techniques are often necessary in implementing innovative practices -- necessary but not sufficient. Human resources and attending to the processes that people go through may be more important than the technical materials. Focus is often misplaced on the techniques or materials rather than on how people can use them or integrate them into their own repertoire and how they can be nurtured in the process.

Leadership

Someone or a group of people must be responsible for facilitating how the people, the structures, the materials and the processes of improvement continue long enough for teachers to implement improvements. Time, sensitivity to changes, and continuous efforts to be open, to share and to learn from mistakes must underlie the multiplicity of roles leaders play.

Systemwide Support

Teachers and individual schools gain much support from knowing that their individual and collective efforts are being supported at levels above them. This can aid in the feeling that what one is doing - the time and energy it is taking - is worth doing.

Integrating thought with action has plagued researchers, project workers, philosophers and school people alike. How to act with some concept underlying the action or how to study and make inferences from such action - both of these have been used as pieces of our puzzle. There are still some missing pieces, but the perspective of those who work in schools must surely be a part of our understanding.

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