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**ABSTRACT**

To help classify and map the field of administrative inservice, five generic administrative inservice models may be identified and their strengths and weaknesses determined based on what is known about effective inservice practices. The models are a traditional model, institutes, competency-based programs, the academy, and networking. A review of the research, however, finds that none of the five identified models has ever been researched, and most inservice research either focuses on classroom teachers or examines the experiences of practitioners without being research based. There seems to be a collection of a good deal of information of limited benefit to the improvement of schools, the role of administrators, or the condition of inservice education. Assuming that the ultimate goal of inservice is educational improvement, there is a need to develop a conceptual description of administrative inservice, more completely describe and test the five generic models described, and continuously review and modify the theoretical conceptualization of administrative inservice, all through theory-based research, so that school administrators may fulfill the leadership function ascribed to them in the school effectiveness literature. (Author/DCS)

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**INSERVICE FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS:**

**A STATUS REPORT**

by

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## **INSERVICE FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS:**

### **A STATUS REPORT**

#### **Introduction**

Despite an abundance of recent literature that has pointed toward the need for professional education to be more concerned with the inservice needs of teachers (Swenson, 1981) and administrators (Olivero, 1982), it is quite surprising how little has been done regarding administrative inservice and professional development (Daresh, 1984). It is clear that school administrators will require new knowledge, improved attitudes, and finer skills to bring about meaningful educational improvement. There is a need to examine ways used to provide administrators with opportunities to engage in learning experiences which have the potential for assisting them to carry out educational improvement (Daresh & LaPlant, 1983).

In this paper, we review literature in the area of administrator inservice and present an overview of five approaches to the delivery of continuing education experiences. For each approach, or inservice model, strengths and weaknesses are specified. Criteria for these assessments are drawn from what is known about effective inservice practices. An assumption we hold in this paper is that increased attention to

administrator inservice is needed because of the documented importance of the role of administrators in supporting educational improvement. We also examine recent studies of administrator inservice to determine the current status of the field and to suggest future research directions.

### Effective Inservice Practices

There has been much written in recent years about inservice education and staff development. Two generalizations might be made about this material. First, the majority deals with staff development and inservice for classroom teachers. Of more than 500 doctoral dissertations dealing with inservice completed between 1977 and 1983, fewer than 10 percent dealt with inservice for administrators. Second, literature on staff development other than doctoral dissertations is not research-based and tends to provide descriptions of the experiences of practitioners. Thus, we are faced with a situation described by Hutson (1981) as "deplorable;" where hard research is meager, and broad-based conceptualizations are lacking. Despite this situation, enough has been produced to enable a number of reviewers (Lawrence, 1974; Nicholson, et al., 1976; Paul, 1977; McLaughlin & Marsen, 1978; Hutson, 1981) to extract generalizable propositions regarding the planning and implementation of effective inservice education:

1. Effective inservice is directed toward local school needs.
2. Inservice participants need to be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs.
3. Effective inservice is based on participant needs.

4. Active learning processes, rather than passive techniques such as lectures, are viewed as desirable and effective inservice instructional modes.
5. Inservice that is part of a long-term systematic staff development plan is more effective than a "one-shot," short-term program.
6. Local school inservice must be backed up by commitment of resources from the central office.
7. Effective inservice provides evidence of quality control, and is delivered by competent presenters.
8. Programs which enable participants to share ideas and provide assistance to one another are viewed as successful.
9. Inservice programs are effective when they are designed so that individual participant needs, interests, and concerns are addressed.
10. Rewards and incentives, both intrinsic and extrinsic, must be evident to program participants.
11. Inservice activities should be provided during school time.
12. Effective inservice requires ongoing evaluation.

Beyond these generalizations, we have relatively little to guide us in classifying and mapping the field of administrator inservice. As a first step in attempting to put what we believe we know about inservice in relation to what is actually taking place in the field, we have identified five generic models of administrator inservice which may be examined according to these 12 propositions of effective inservice practice.

#### **Generic Administrator Inservice Models**

Enough has been written to allow us to note categories of professional development opportunities available to school administrators. We propose that these categories may be described as five generic models: a traditional model, institutes, competency-based programs, the academy, and

networking.

### **Traditional Model**

The traditional model, the most frequently employed strategy for professional development, consists of administrators enrolling in university courses. The primary responsibility for determining the content and procedures in this approach is with the university. Administrators select this model based on a desire to pursue course work in an area of particular professional interest, to obtain an advanced graduate degree, or to renew or upgrade certification.

Among the advantages of this model is that it places heavy reliance on the university structure, a structure which more often than not assures some degree of quality control. Grades, course syllabi, and regular class schedules provide a framework where those enrolled in courses know essentially what they will get for their investment of time and money. Also, the content of courses is usually the product of advanced planning by a professional educator. Thus, university courses do not represent attempts to provide a "quick fix" to the complex problems of practitioners.

There are also some weaknesses. Perhaps the greatest is the university's attempt to provide relevant learning experiences to administrators. Regardless of the needs of practitioners, "the self interest of the university prevails in terms of the usual offerings of courses" (LaPlant, 1979). This must be coupled with the recognition that the quality of inservice is related to the

quality of the institution providing instruction. Another shortcoming is that the administrator enrolled in a university course is but a passive participant in the learning process. One-way communication from professor to student prevails, and there is no involvement of participants in the selection of course objectives and activities. Finally, the traditional model is limited because motivation to participate is generally external to the participant; the administrator is pressed to take a course by the mandate of a group such as the state education agency. In short, university courses are excellent ways for participants to earn degrees, satisfy scholarly curiosity, or meet state certification requirements, but as long-term solutions to the need for more effective administrator inservice, they are limited.

### **Institutes**

A second model of administrator inservice is the institute, or a short-term, topic-specific learning experience. The institute, or workshop and seminar as it is also frequently called, is distinct from the other models we review because it is of short duration and deals with such narrowly defined topics that it is more properly referred to as a training event and not an ongoing inservice program. Still, the pervasiveness of the institute is such that it cannot be ignored as a learning experience.

Institutes have a number of positive features. First, they enable a good deal of information concerning issues of immediate concern to be presented to practitioners. As examples, consider

the number of recent workshops on topics such as special education, microcomputers, and teacher evaluation. Related to this is the fact that institutes can be designed quickly to serve the needs of practitioners whenever issues might warrant specialized training. With laws, policies, and technologies changing rapidly, flexibility in training is a highly prized feature. Another strength is that institutes are convenient. Recalling the number of offers for workshops, seminars, and other similar training events that cover the desks of practitioners, it would be hard to imagine that anyone would have trouble in finding a training event of interest being offered.

Disadvantages are similar to some of the advantages of institutes. For example, the short duration of training events means that no great depth of treatment on topics can be expected. At best, seminar participants receive only limited treatment of important issues. Not much time can be given for reading, preparation, and assimilation during the few days, or hours, devoted to training. This is not a problem if the content of the training is such that it can be adequately understood in a relatively short period of time. However, when issues addressed are more complex, time limitations may force these issues to be made trivial. Another disadvantage is that most short-term training events lack opportunities for participants to become involved in the setting of training objectives, determining content, and selecting learning activities. Also, as with university courses, communication tends to be one-way, from institute staff to participants. Finally, quality control may be



a concern. While the majority of institutes sponsored by professional associations, state education agencies, and universities are good, caution is necessary in the case of some of the experiences advertised. Short-term training events, regardless of their claims, cannot be viewed as quick solutions to problems that require long-term commitment.

### **Competency-Based Training**

In its broadest sense, competency-based administrator training can provide a useful framework of knowledge, attitudes, and skills toward which an effective school leader may strive. It is in this sense that we suggest that there are currently some competency-based programs with great potential for use as administrator inservice strategies. One is the Assessment Center of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (Schmitt, 1980) which holds that persons possessing skills in problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, sensitivity, range of interests, personal motivation, stress tolerance, values clarification, and oral and written communication skills make the best candidates for administrative positions. Another effort is the set of administrator preparation guidelines set forth by the American Association of School Administrators (Hoyle, 1983). These guidelines suggest that administrators need to be skillful in improving school climate, understanding the politics of schooling, managing instructions, developing curriculum, designing inservice, planning for effective resource use, and conducting research.

What is intriguing about competency-based programs is that

they have been suggested as ways to represent a way to determine precise skills necessary for effective administration. It is assumed that when skills are identified, inservice can be directed toward the attainment of the skills. Competency-based programs offer administrators the chance to work toward professional development in a more focused way than the sporadic efforts found in institutes and university courses. Also, because of the heavy involvement of administrative professional associations, motivation to participate comes from colleagues and not external agencies.

There are also some drawbacks to competency-based programs. For one thing, competency frameworks have the tendency to create situations where "recipes for effectiveness" are suggested, i.e., if an administrator completes a series of prescribed tasks, he or she will be an "effective" school leader. Another limitation is the availability of appropriate training processes and expertise to deliver the targeted competencies. Who would lead administrators toward increasing their decisiveness, stress tolerance, sensitivity, or any other skill? Would trainers be professors? Consultants? Staff from professional associations? Questions such as these would need to be answered before competency-based approaches could achieve their full potential.

#### **The Academy**

A fourth approach is the academy, an arrangement wherein a school district or state education agency provides structured learning experiences to educators on an ongoing basis. The experiences are changed periodically, based on frequent needs

assessments. The academy is similar to the traditional model, with two important differences. First, it is an "in-house" effort sponsored by and for practitioners without reliance on another institution such as the university. Second, participation is generally based on an individual's personal motivation, not on certification or degree requirements.

Major advantages of the academy are found in its permanent structure established to address the continuing educational needs of practitioners; it offers stability that cannot be found in approaches reviewed earlier. Second, the academy is controlled largely by the participants—a feature not found in other models. Given the fact that it is most often established by an initial survey of needs conducted in the state or district where the academy is established, the curriculum of most academies is very relevant to local needs,

Disadvantages of the academy include the fact that most instruction is still based on one-way communication. Furthermore, the issue of who will lead the inservice is not always clear. Frequently, the instructors are external consultants who deal with substantive topics offered in the curriculum of the academy, but who also lack an understanding of the context of the organization sponsoring the academy. Consequently, the provider of inservice is someone who comes in with little or no knowledge of the events and conditions present in an organization which have led to the inservice. Thus, outsiders take control of the planning and implementation of programs; participants have little involvement in the process.

A final restriction to the academy is that the danger always exists that too much of its focus will be on the "here and now," and little emphasis will be given to long-term solutions. The concern is that the academy will be no more than a protracted institute.

### **Networking**

The fifth model of administrator inservice is networking, or the linking of individuals for the purpose of sharing concerns on an ongoing basis. There is a difference between this and the other models in that, with networking, the primary control of the learning experience rests with participants and not with professional associations, state education agencies, the school district, or a university. Networks are informal arrangements that emerge as the result of administrators seeking colleagues sharing similar concerns and potential solutions to problems.

In terms of strengths, the nature of networking holds that individuals who share common concerns are able to come together periodically to gain support from colleagues. The focus in networking is on multidirectional communication and much participant involvement. No one plays the role of "teacher" in networking. Topics come directly from the concerns of participants, not from a professor or external consultant who does not know who will be enrolled in a course or a workshop. Finally, networking encourages and is built on the premise that long-term relationships among participants are desirable. As a result, this approach is different from the isolated, "one-shot" learning that goes on in the institute, university class, or

academy.

Networking also has some disadvantages. For example, it is not unusual for the common interest groups that form networks ostensibly to deal with school-related concerns to lose their focus and become primarily social gatherings. Another problem is that, while the foundation of this arrangement is informality and concerns-based sharing, there can be a tendency for networks to become so loosely-knit that members drop in and out of the group; there is no long-term commitment to the network as an instrument of professional development. Finally, while an advantage of networking is that no one controls the group, there can be a problem when responsibility for directing the group is totally ignored. While participant involvement in planning and implementing inservice is important for effective programs, someone must still lead.

#### **Status of Research on Administrator Inservice**

The current state of knowledge regarding administrator inservice might best be described as a case of knowing more and more about less and less. We have been able to discern, from a review of descriptions of effective inservice programs, a handful of propositions related to what seem to be the essential ingredients of effective inservice education. We have also been able to identify a number of interesting programs directed toward the inservice needs and interests of school administrators, and these may be clustered into five generic models. What is not clear at present is the status of research conducted recently on administrator inservice. Without a clear

view of this present condition, charting a path for future investigations is nearly impossible, and our knowledge base concerning this important topic may be doomed to a pursuit of the same issues many times over.

For the past year we have been engaged in a systematic review of existing research on staff development in general, and administrator inservice in particular. The purpose of this review was to determine the current status of research relative to these questions:

1. How have issues in administrator inservice been studied?
2. What has been the predominant purpose of existing research?

These questions were explored as a way to help us understand what we currently know so that we will better be able to decide the ways in which we want to go in future studies.

Only research completed between 1977 and 1983 was included in the review to avoid potential overlaps with earlier efforts such as those conducted by Lawrence (1974) and Joyce (1978). Our goal was to increase the knowledge base of research on administrator inservice through the preparation of an integrative review, or a review of research "primarily interested in inferring generalizations about substantive issues from a set of studies directly bearing on those issues" (Jackson, 1980, p. 438). The need to engage in this type of review is viewed as important and necessary to the development of any field (Light & Smith, 1971) because administrator inservice, as is also true of many other issues in education, suffers from a lack of "systematic efforts to accumulate information from a set of

studies" (Jackson, 1980, p. 439).

We looked for reports of recent research in two sources. First, Dissertation Abstracts International (Humanities and Social Sciences) was reviewed from 1977 to 1983. In all, 507 dissertations dealing with staff development, inservice education, or other similar related topics were found. Thirty-seven of these dealt with inservice education for administrators. Second, 23 different journals in professional education (Appendix I) were reviewed for the same time frame. More than 400 articles were found concerning professional development for educators. Ten dealt with research on administrator inservice. In total, 47 studies served as the basis for this review.

**How have issues in administrator inservice been studied?**

Four kinds of information were sought in response to this question. First, predominant research designs were noted. Next, we identified the data collection procedures used. Third, whether each study was directed toward solving some education problem, or based on theory was determined. Finally, the educational roles which served as the foci of the studies were listed.

Research Design. The predominant research design for studies of administrator inservice was the descriptive survey. Twenty-eight of the 47 studies reviewed were of this type. The next largest group were either quasi-experimental (seven studies) or "action research" (seven studies). There were no historical or true experimental studies, and only three case studies, and two correlational studies were located. The studies

classified as "action research" were mostly descriptions of the development of local models of administrator inservice. This would be in harmony with Hopkins' (1983) view of this approach being classified more correctly as curriculum development and not research at all.

Data collection procedures. Most studies reviewed (37 of 47) made use of only one data collection technique, and the favored technique (utilized in 42 studies) was the questionnaire, typically an instrument designed for use in one specific study. Interviews were used in eight studies, and content analysis or observations were each utilized four times. In ten studies, more than one data-collection procedure was utilized; thus, there were more than 47 collection procedures noted in the review.

Problem solving v. theory base. Research may be directed toward the solving of some specific educational concerns or problems, or it can be theory-based. If it is the latter, it may be specifically designed to test the constructs or assumptions of some identified theory, or it may be proposed as a way to lay the groundwork for the development and building of new theory. We found that the majority of existing research on administrator inservice is atheoretical and directed toward problem solving. In fact, only three of the studies examined indicated any theory that served as their basis. Two were based on theories of organizational change, while the third stated that a primary purpose was to develop a theory of "inservice leadership," but it appeared instead to be merely a study of administrators' self-assessments of their effectiveness in leading inservice programs.



Roles studied. Studies reviewed looked at either educational administrators in general (i.e., central office administrators and building level administrators) or specific positions: Twenty-six studied multiple administrative roles while 21 examined particular roles. Of this latter group, 17 studies were focused on the principalship. The remaining role-specific studies were directed toward superintendents, business managers, and assistant principals.

After reviewing the methodologies used in existing research on administrator inservice, we are able to conclude the following concerning "how" this subject has been studied:

1. Although staff development and inservice have been thoroughly researched through doctoral dissertations in recent years, the issue of administrator inservice has received little attention.
2. Widely-disseminated professional education journals contain few reports of original research on administrator inservice.
3. The majority of recent studies of administrator inservice have been descriptive surveys using questionnaires.
4. The administrative role that has attracted the greatest amount of attention by researchers has been the principalship.
5. Research has not been conducted to date on any of the five generic models of administrator inservice that were identified.

What has been the predominant purpose of existing research?

Our review was also designed to answer the question, "Toward what objectives was the research directed?" We determined that completed research tended to fall into one or more of the following categories: Content of inservice, procedures utilized in the delivery of inservice, effects of some inservice programs

on teachers or administrators, or the development and evaluation of a particular model of administrator inservice. Predictably, this was not always a clean process because many studies could be classified as addressing more than one objective. Despite such occasions' distortions, however, it was possible to determine the general pattern of purpose for the studies reviewed.

Content of inservice. Twenty-one studies, or about 45 percent of the material reviewed, dealt either exclusively or in part with the content of inservice, a construct generally defined in the studies as the topics for training that were preferred by participants. A large number of studies were designed so that respondents were asked to rank order their individual preferences of most important inservice topics from a list provided by the researcher. Thus, it is next to impossible to determine any generalizable list of the most desired topics for administrator inservice. There are a few conclusions that may be derived from the findings we reviewed:

1. Administrator inservice appears to be viewed as more effective when content is based on the perceived needs of participants.
2. Desired inservice content is concerned with topics of immediate concern, generally of a technical nature. Less interest is expressed in issues related to human relations skills, and almost no interest is expressed in conceptual skill development.
3. There appears to be some relationship between a few background characteristics of administrators and desired inservice content. Among these is the age of the administrator. The younger the administrator, the more that the desired inservice topics appear to address immediate and momentary issues.

Procedures for the delivery of inservice. Sixteen studies examined the procedures used in administrator inservice. The

findings of these studies were for the most part quite similar to the generalized propositions related to effective inservice that we mentioned earlier, namely

1. Administrators expressed a desire to be involved in the planning of inservice activities.
2. Administrators preferred inservice which made use of active participant involvement rather than lectures, and demonstration teaching sessions rather than purely lecture/theory approaches.
3. Inservice training is more effective when is it part of training that continues over an extended period of time.
4. As participants in inservice activities, administrators should be the main participants in the evaluation, goal setting, and decision making related to inservice.

Effects on teachers and administrators. Eleven studies investigated the effects of inservice experiences for administrators on either teachers or administrators. Perhaps the only generalized finding that came from the review of these studies was that administrator inservice tended to have little or no discernible effect on the attitudes or observable behaviors of teachers or administrators. In fact, only one study reported that there was a significant impact on administrators after receiving inservice training, and that was a slight increase in knowledge related to PL 94-142 after participation in a training module.

Model development and evaluation. Fourteen studies were directed toward the development and/or evaluation of a particular local model of inservice for administrators. It is also difficult to generalize from the findings of these studies. In nearly every case, the researcher developed some type of training

module as a way to provide information to administrators about some specific issue. After receiving the training, the administrators were given some sort of posttest to determine if they actually acquired the information. If they did, the module was termed effective. If not, it was described as ineffective. Using this assessment procedure for verifying the effectiveness of training, all but one of the studies found that the model developed was effective.

### So, What Do We Know?

After reviewing the status of research on administrator inservice in some detail, we still must come to grips with the inevitable "bottom line" if we are to get to the point where we can propose some logical and legitimate directions for future research. Because our review looked at both the methodological ("how") questions of research as well as substantive ("what") issues, let us see if we can make a few summary statements in each of these two areas.

Methodologically, we find that the existing status of research is heavily based on descriptive surveys of the desired content and procedures for delivery of inservice, as described by administrators. We can also generalize that most research at present is atheoretical and makes use of only one data-collection technique, the questionnaire.

Substantively, we are able to conclude that the skills sought most frequently by administrators, as determined through the descriptive surveys completed, are knowledge-level skills. More often than not, the knowledge-level skills that are

addressed through inservice experiences are related to issues of immediate concern to practitioners. Thus, for a few years administrator inservice training sessions were focused on issues related to PL 94-142. Now, there is an obvious slant toward microcomputer applications in schools. If this cycle continues, we can expect to see administrator inservice directed toward coping with national reform reports and, perhaps, implementing prayer sessions in public schools.

The current picture of the status of administrator inservice research is not a bright one. We seem to be busily collecting a good deal of information of limited benefit to the improvement of schools, the role of the administrator, or the condition of inservice education. Fortunately, however, the current status of research on administrator inservice is such that we have several good leads as to where we should go next.

#### Where Do We Go Now?

The task of proposing an agenda that has potential to increase our understanding of administrator inservice education and also to improve administrative practice is fraught with dangers of oversimplifying a very complex problem. In practical terms, it is difficult for leaders of organizations to admit that they do not already possess all the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for their position--after all, they were selected and "anointed" because of their attributes. However, our proposed agenda starts with the assumption that the leader of an educational organization, e.g., a principal of a school, a superintendent in the central office, or even a dean of a

college, adopt the position of modeling the learning process expected of the clients or students. In other words, the nature of the school, its operations, and the concept of inservice education might be drastically different if one starts with an assumption of accepting responsibility for improvement of self and of one's performance of a role.

That assumption may serve as a useful background for the three following agendas proposed to make sense of administrator inservice. The first agenda suggests that efforts be made to develop a conceptual description of administrator inservice utilizing much of what we think we already know from generic inservice education, models, principles of adult learning, leadership development, organizational effectiveness and a clarification of basic assumptions underlying the definition of administrator inservice.

Second, given this conceptualization in which existing theories are applied to administrator inservice, the next step would be to create more complete descriptions of the five generic models of administrator inservice we identified earlier in this paper, and then to test those models against the theoretical conceptualization. Charters (1974) provided a useful model for the evaluation of an education program which can be modified to examine administrator inservice programs. The analysis of the inservice program should describe the program on four levels: (1) the institutional commitment, (2) the structural context within which the program is implemented, (3) the actual program itself, and (4) the actual behaviors of the administrators in the

inservice program. The extraneous determinants which affect the four levels of the program, and the unintended consequences at each level affect intended outcomes of the administrator inservice program. Thoughtful descriptions of the five models of administrator inservice require extensive and multi-faceted descriptive methodologies in which the strengths and shortcomings of each approach are verified and validated.

Third, continuous review and modification of the theoretical conceptualization of administrator inservice needs to be carried out. As theories of motivation, adult learning, organizational effectiveness, and leadership development are found to possess utility in understanding and evaluating administrator inservice, they need to be given more prominent explanatory functions, until the limits of their rationality are defined or more useful explanatory concepts are discovered. This phase could be called the meta analysis and refinement phase that permits the process to continue.

There is one additional consideration that needs to be emphasized as any model of administrator inservice is designed, implemented, and evaluated. The core of any administrator inservice model requires a clear definition of the ultimate goal of any training and learning experience, namely a determination of what makes an administrator effective. Inservice occurs when there is a desired state toward which the participants are being encouraged to move. We recognize this opens up another discussion, but we suspect that we know more than we are using about effective administrative behavior and inservice programs at

present.

In summary, we started with the assumption that the ultimate goal of inservice is educational improvement. It is our thesis that if school administrators are going to fulfill the leadership function ascribed to them in the school effectiveness literature, it is imperative that order and direction of administrator inservice be established through theory-based research.



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**Appendix I**

**Professional Education Journals Reviewed for  
Research Articles on Inservice Education**

**Action in Teacher Education**

**Administrator's Notebook**

**Adult Education**

**American Educational Research Journal**

**Clearing House**

**Contemporary Education**

**Educational Administration Quarterly**

**Educational Forum**

**Educational Leadership**

**Educational Researcher**

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