A definition of responsibilities can help the curriculum director.

C. Glen Hass

Role of the Director of Instruction

MANY curriculum workers are less effective than they might be in achieving their objectives because they inadequately define their own roles and their role relationships with others. Outstanding among those persons in school systems whose roles and responsibilities often are not well defined are the curriculum workers usually known as directors of instruction, curriculum directors, or assistant superintendents in charge of instruction.

Recently a group of graduate students examined educational literature in an attempt to determine the generally accepted responsibilities for the director of instruction. After a remarkably fruitless search, the group decided that much of the confusion regarding this position occurs because its distinctive role expectancies in a democratic society have not been well defined. This article is an attempt, in the light of the writer's experience as a director of instruction, to define those roles and responsibilities of this position which are likely to be most conducive to the achievement of democratic goals in curriculum improvement.

Extensive recent research demonstrates that each leader's and each member's perception of his role governs his action in a group; each group member's perception of the roles of others determines his behavior toward them. The morale of a school system's staff is directly related to the clarity, interrelatedness and agreement as to the expectancies for various roles. This is particularly true of the director of instruction, whose actions are of concern to every other person employed by or interested in the schools.

Existing Perceptions

Many agree that the position of curriculum director is both administrative and supervisory. They agree also that the position involves responsibility for planning, directing and coordinating the total instructional program. In specific situations, usually some but not all of the following responsibilities of the position are accepted and recognized:

1. *Instructional program improvement.* Planning, developing, recommending, inter-

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preting and administering major policies and procedures for the over-all instructional program of the schools

2. *Instructional staff leadership.* Coordinating the activities of all groups of instructional workers and leaders so that a unified instructional program may be achieved

3. *In-service education.* Coordinating and planning for the in-service education of all staff members including teachers, principals, supervisors and members of the superintendent's staff

4. *Instructional and in-service education budget.* Coordinating the development of the budget for the instructional program and for the program of in-service education

5. *Action research studies.* Encouraging action research studies and the development and use of action research skills by the total school staff

6. *Group maintenance.* Stimulating friendship, respect, mutual trust and warmth among all persons concerned with the school program

7. *Professional and public understanding.* Providing leadership, with the superintendent, in developing understanding and appreciation by the school board, the professional staff, and the public concerning the most effective teaching objectives, methods and content in a democratic public school system.

While these responsibilities for staff leadership, curriculum improvement, action research, in-service education, preparation of budget, and development of professional and public understanding are theoretically often accepted as roles of the director of instruction, in practice they frequently are not functions of this position.

Many readers of this article will know of curriculum directors who are not permitted to work in all grades, kindergarten through twelve; who are not permitted to coordinate the activities of some instructional workers or leaders; who are not permitted to test promising instruction procedures; who are not permitted to suggest items for the instructional budget; who are not permitted to propose necessary budgetary items for the in-service growth of the staff; who are not permitted to participate in the selection of principals or supervisors who will help to implement a coordinated instructional policy. Or perhaps some readers will know of instruction directors who do not adequately define their own roles in these areas and who by default or lack of vision fail to perform these leadership tasks.

Situational Nature of Leadership

We frequently tend to excuse our failure adequately to define our roles and responsibilities by saying that leadership practices must be tailor-made and are different for each local situation. Current leadership theory partially supports this view but a too-great dependence on this theoretical premise results in a failure to recognize that concepts of leadership are also contingent upon the dominant values and needs of a society.

Currently, in our society, there is a pressing need for school staff members to pay more attention to the larger situation—the context of American democracy and its destiny in today's world.

Instructional Program Improvement

The context of democracy makes it necessary that the instruction director develop a structure which stimulates the involvement of all teachers and other staff members in instructional program improvement.

A council on instruction, with teachers elected as representatives from each school, often serves this purpose. This council provides a channel for identifying areas of instruction for study and im-

provement. New system-wide programs and policies are developed by appropriate ad hoc committees. The work of these committees is periodically reviewed by the council on instruction.

It is equally important for the director of instruction to be sure that adequate channels are provided for the instructional program changes that may be suggested by members of the local community, and by the needs of the state, nation or world. Structure must be provided to receive suggestions of parents, experts in various subject fields, sociologists, political scientists, and all other citizens. The local P.T.A.'s should be viewed as an appropriate channel for these suggestions. State and national groups interested in education should also be viewed as sources of possible proposals for change. Consultants obtained as part of the in-service education program should be seen as sources of help in appropriately taking account of national needs and trends.

Channels for determining how other school systems are dealing with problems should be established through the exchange or purchase of curriculum materials and through attendance at conferences.

The instruction director should be sure that means are provided for obtaining and utilizing the suggestions or criticisms of students. It is his role to insure that this is done.

Finally, the director of instruction should be constantly active in assisting the staff to reach agreement regarding goals and to appraise the progress which is made toward the goals. He should institutionalize the evaluation of the instructional program in the light of behavioral changes by the learners.

Several facets of his role regarding staff leadership require continuing attention by the instruction director. He should encourage different schools and different school groups to do different planning at the same time and in different ways. Only in this way will teachers be encouraged to develop new ways to meet the particular needs of the children they serve. Only in this way can the insight of each staff member be utilized.

He should also use all possible means to develop communication among schools regarding curriculum work in progress in the individual schools in order to share worthwhile developments and aid in the devising of system-wide policies where needed. Face-to-face relationships, councils, committees, bulletins, printed resource units and guides, and conferences all may be used to achieve this goal of adequate communication and staff leadership.

The curriculum director should have authority to call meetings of and to stimulate cooperative group planning by the instructional supervisors of the school system. Consultants who work in elementary and secondary schools, in subject areas such as mathematics or art, in special areas such as the education of the physically handicapped or the slow learner should come together regularly to plan for the coordination and improvement of the instructional program. The director of instruction should similarly be able to call meetings of elementary or secondary principals on a regular basis for the consideration and improvement of the instructional program. Through his participation in all of these meetings he will help to provide communication and coordination.

All of these means of communication will also be needed so that ideas suggested by the concerns of the local, state,

(Continued on page 106)

(Continued from page 103)
national or world community will be adequately and appropriately considered by the staff.

In addition, the director of instruction, the superintendent, and other staff members should regard it as appropriate that the director of instruction make suggestions concerning the selection of teachers, principals and supervisors who will implement instructional purposes and policies. The instruction director should participate in defining the qualifications for and the responsibilities of other leaders whose main job is the improvement of instruction.

In-Service Education

The instruction director's role constantly is to attempt to raise the insight of all staff members, parents and other citizens concerning instruction. Some specific ways of doing this are described in the following section on planning the in-service budget.

One of the most important aspects of the director of instruction's responsibilities for in-service education is the development of group membership skills and leadership role competencies on the part of all staff members. He should give regular attention to the development of improved ways of working and the encouragement of emerging leaders. Development of these human relationship skills should be regular and continuing aspects of the in-service education program. Leadership and group membership skills should be among the regular focuses of attention in preparing for conferences, workshops or school faculty meetings.

It should not be forgotten that the director of instruction should accept responsibility for giving staff leadership to provisions for the orientation of new teachers to the school system. This is a particularly important aspect of the in-service education program.

Planning the In-Service Budget

A responsibility of the director of instruction that is frequently overlooked is the preparation of a budget for the professional growth of all staff members. Continuous in-service education is needed by all staff members to maintain familiarity with new subject matter, with recent developments in human growth and learning, and with continuing cultural and social changes which create need for curriculum change. While these needs are generally recognized, the necessity for funds to provide for staff growth is often overlooked through default by the director of instruction. It is his responsibility annually to alert the superintendent and the school board to the need for budget items to cover the following activities:

1. *Time for curriculum work.* This should include funds to cover the regular meetings of the system-wide "council on instruction" including elected representatives from each school. It should also include funds for the time of "ad hoc" and standing committees who have been assigned responsibility for work on curriculum problems.

2. *Intervisitation of teachers.* Observing good teaching often stimulates growth on the part of teachers. Several visiting days should be available to new teachers during their first year of teaching. All teachers should be able to make such observation visits upon request. Substitute teacher funds should be amply available for this purpose.

3. *Purchase of professional materials.* The professional library should include the newest materials in all subject matter areas as well as new materials on all other pertinent professional matters. Funds should be

available to provide a "curriculum laboratory" of materials from other school systems.

4. *Attendance at professional meetings.* It is the responsibility of the director of instruction to request that professional travel funds be made available for representative teachers as well as principals and supervisors. The school system should be represented by teachers at national conferences in each subject matter field as well as at state meetings. Failure to provide such funds sometimes results from the neglect on the part of the curriculum director to present the need and to point out the stimulation received by many staff members through being represented by one or more of their number.

5. *Local workshops and conferences.* Every school system needs the time and the stimulation provided by workshops organized to work for several days or weeks on problems carefully selected by staff members. Funds must be provided to make it possible to employ visiting consultants to staff these conferences.

6. *Publications.* Each school system should be able to publish, in attractive form, the resource units, teaching guides, and statements of instructional policy which are the work of the local staff. There is also need for "newsletters" to be sent regularly to members of the staff to keep them informed of the work of curriculum councils and committees, plans for workshops, and new professional materials.

7. *Employment of outside consultants.* This need is greatest in the small school system which lacks an adequate supervisory or consultant staff, yet it is an important need in *all* school systems. It should be possible to obtain the services of a visiting consultant for one school staff which is working on a problem, for all of the teachers of a particular subject meeting on a system-wide basis, or for members of a curriculum committee working on a problem with which they want expert help.

Directors of instruction sometimes are afraid to request what appear to them to be the large sums of money needed for these in-service growth activities. In most situations, however, all of these programs may be amply covered by a sum which amounts to one-half of one percent of the school system's annual operating budget. What a small amount to provide for continuous growth, constant challenge, and high morale!

Significance of Action Research

The encouragement and facilitation of action research, though it is not generally recognized as such, is one of the chief responsibilities of the director of instruction who wishes to be a dynamic, democratic leader for instructional improvement. A research program tied to a plan of action can help us to learn why a given program or practice is successful and why another is not. When we know why, we can then design procedures to improve successful decisions and to revise unsuccessful ones.

Unfortunately most teachers and many other leaders in schools believe that educational research requires understandings and skills that are far beyond their reach. These mal-perceptions have hindered and frightened the teacher who might like to try out hunches regarding better ways of teaching or of helping individual children. These impressions have tended to deter teachers from attempting what most of them could do and do well in defining problems for study, hypothesizing, developing research designs, procuring evidence, and generalizing within the limits of the evidence gained.

Action research emphasizes that the method of scientific inquiry belongs to all individuals who care to utilize their intelligence. Action research, like democracy, emphasizes respect for the right of the individual to exercise and formu-

late his own judgments. Teachers, administrators and supervisors can make better decisions and engage in more effective practices if they are able and willing to conduct action research as a basis for these practices and decisions.

The director of instruction, charged as he is with the in-service growth of all staff members and for instructional improvement, has particular responsibility, in a democratic setting, for helping all staff members to recognize that educational research is not an absolute. The research quality of an investigation is relative. Through his way of working, the director of instruction may encourage the cooperative recognition of responsibilities and problems, individual or group hypothesizing, group planning for controlled study, collection of data, and implementation of tentative conclusions. He is in a strategic position to give leadership to action research studies and to the development of the needed competencies by all staff members.

Group Maintenance

It is important that the instruction director's behavior reflects friendship, mutual trust, respect and warmth in the relationships between himself and his co-workers. It is an important aspect of the job of this assistant superintendent to keep interpersonal relations pleasant, provide encouragement, give minorities a chance to be heard, stimulate self-direction, and increase cooperative endeavor. He should evidence a feeling of permissiveness toward having problems and a willingness to give support to those who make mistakes while seeking solutions to their problems. No matter how large the group, he should seek to avoid being impersonal in his behavior. His example may do much to encourage similar group maintenance behavior on the part of others.

Professional and Public Understanding

The instruction director has a crucial role in the development of public understanding of the goals of the school, and of appropriate teaching content and methods. His chief responsibility in this respect is constantly to strive to secure consensus on the part of the staff and the public regarding what should be done. His is the responsibility for seeking out procedures so that all potential presenters of ideas may discuss their proposals with other persons interested in the schools, seek and secure data, and reach constructive agreement. There is no other way to get constant improvement in the schools of America than by getting broad participation in the planning.

Teachers and other staff members must have a sense of freedom, understanding and emotional security before they can share in planning with parents and other citizens. This condition cannot be attained unless teachers perceive the instruction director and other leaders as responsive to their ideas and as the source of security when hunches are tried or mistakes are made. The development of understanding and initiative must begin with the faculty and progress toward the involvement of the community. Study groups, advisory councils and citizens councils on instruction will be among the channels needed.

Clarification of Role

Statements such as the present article should assist in clarifying role perceptions regarding the work of the director

(Continued on page 136)

questions and to have their questions answered. Emphasis is placed upon the fact that children are different and that adults working with them need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

Generally, it seems that nursery school experiences prove to be a very good supplement to the home. However, it is pointed out that all children are not sent to a nursery school for the same reason. Some go because of lack of play space; some who are an only child go for companionship; others go for the opportunity to have a variety of materials and equipment; some because the mother is away from home; and others because there is an urgent need for the child to be under the direction of a trained, sensitive and understanding adult.

Attention is given to the difference in the needs of nursery school and kindergarten children. Time, growth and experiences have caused the five year old to be more aware of his peers, more of a conformist and readier for more complex situations than the four year old.

Parents are given major attention. Nursery school is a new experience for them, too. The spontaneous and unexpected behavior of the children creates real tension. The parents are anxious and afraid that their children will not be acceptable even though they are doing what any child of that age does under like circumstances. As the parents observed their children with the teachers they were gratified to see that the teachers were kind and consistent, that they respected the individual rights and differences of each child and, most important of all, demonstrated a genuine love for the children. Under these conditions the parents were willing to relax and to leave their children at school.

Because of a very realistic approach to child development and behavior, to suitable materials and activities for children, to involvement of personalities of children, teachers and parents, this book can be used very extensively. Teachers, parents and students can profit greatly from reading it.

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Director of Instruction

(Continued from page 108)

of instruction. In addition, utilizing such statements, each school system should regularly provide for group definition of roles and group discussion regarding the ways in which directors of instruction, principals and supervisors, as well as others, may be most helpful.

New teachers, particularly, should be informed and encouraged to discuss their role perceptions regarding these positions as a part of their orientation in the fall before school opens the year they are employed. Teachers handbooks for the school system should contain, in written form, regularly revised statements regarding the local perceptions concerning each of these roles. These perceptions should regularly be reviewed in the light of our larger setting, the values of a democratic society.

The clarification of role perceptions is important to morale and productivity in any group. Curriculum workers, particularly directors of instruction, can increase their effectiveness through improved definition of their responsibilities, role perceptions, and role relationships.

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