George C. Kyte

Supervisory Visits Locate Teachers' Needs

Planned visits can pinpoint teachers' needs.

THE supervisory visit requires more time than does any other technique of supervision. This is a finding of many research studies regarding the various supervisory functions and the proportion of time devoted to each one. How this type of supervisory visit is conducted has been well treated in the educational literature. With few exceptions, however, the purposes in using the technique have been based primarily on problems reported by teachers and other personnel. Consequently, symptoms and causes have been intermingled so that the actual needs of teachers usually have not been determined. Only carefully planned and conducted supervisory visits permit the discovery, analysis and diagnosis of specific classroom problems and needs of teachers and pupils.

One of several research studies was designed to reveal detailed information regarding actual needs located through supervisory observations. Hence the data indicate conditions to be treated by supervisory officers through individual conferences, teachers' meetings, supervisory bulletins, and demonstration lessons planned to improve teaching and learning.

The investigation is based on (a) 30 pairs of tape-recorded classroom sessions by 30 teachers respectively, (b) the tape-recorded supervisory conference between each teacher and the supervisor, the observer of the first lesson in the pair, (c) the latter's own analysis of the help given the teacher, and (d) the critical comparisons of the two classroom sessions in each pair, made by at least ten other trained supervisors. The latter specialists made their evaluations independently of each other, using accurately reproduced transcripts of the two performances. These supervisors were not informed which lesson occurred first. The sets were stapled so that at least five supervisors read the first lesson first and at least five read the second lesson first, in order to control the effect of order of exposure.

In the records are evident excellent teaching, good but improvable teaching, and serious weaknesses. The present investigation is delimited primarily to the

George C. Kyte *is* ***Professor of Education Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley.***

various discerned weaknesses requiring supervisory attention. The items included here are not characteristic of all teachers but occur so commonly or so detrimentally that they are noteworthy.

Planning

Inadequate planning by some teachers affected adversely the classroom performances. Evidence of inadequate preplanning included hazy purposes not grasped by children, insufficient preparation of the physical environment, incomplete provision for all essential learning activities, and teacher's lack of fundamental knowledge needed in the teaching-learning activities. The other aspects of weaknesses in planning are presented under other headings because of the obviously direct reference to certain instructional defects.

Grouping

Undesirable conditions in the grouping of pupils occurred in arithmetic, reading, spelling, dramatic play, and social studies. The analyses of children's performances disclosed that individual abilities, needs and interests were not being met efficiently. The range in some groups was too extensive; bright children were wasting time and weaker ones were obtaining too little help. Some classes were divided into groups which were so much alike that they might have been combined in one group to economize effective instruction. Lack of needed flexibility in grouping also occurred. Sometimes the effect of grouping was seriously minimized by avoidable distractions caused by faulty seating arrangements and interruptions. Inadequate planning was evident in many weaknesses in grouping.

Audio-Visual Aids

Weaknesses involving audio-visual aids in areas of learning resulted from some teachers' insufficient preplanning or failure to utilize available aids. Opportunities were overlooked to strengthen learning by the use of the blackboard in teaching the Three R's especially. Reading and arithmetic charts were not obtained or prepared, were poorly designed or ineffectually used. Instructional aids included in textbooks or suggested in teachers' guides were either not used or misused. Illustrations of these weaknesses are: failure to use pictures in readers, omission of essential steps in teaching arithmetic meaningfully, and omission of the use of available maps, globes, and other concrete materials. These weaknesses handicapped pupils' clarification of concepts and relationships. Some visual aids were incorrectly prepared or poorly arranged in the classroom for effective instructional use.

Children's Learning Activities

Both teacher planning and teacher guidance included weaknesses that affected adversely the pupils' learning activities. One quite common omission was that of differentiated activities necessary to meet the specific needs of certain types of children. The most marked kind was the failure to provide for the abilities and interests of bright pupils. Another weakness was the unsatisfactory conduct of class or group discussions. They failed to arouse children's interest or were not pursued until they fixed the desired learning.

Two specific mistakes of some teachers were evident in the discussions. The correct answer given by one child was accepted as being the answer all or most

of the pupils would give. Conversely, the answer made by the group was accepted as the answer each child in it had given. These two weaknesses were especially noticeable in the teaching of reading, speech and arithmetic and occurred primarily with respect to items requiring individual mastery.

Integrative types of activities were overlooked or unskillfully used. Learning situations requiring dramatization or dramatic play were not included or were conducted ineffectually. Too commonly omitted were field trips which would have provided rich concrete experiences needed by children. Normal and natural units of work were not included or were only partially developed. For example, opportunities to correlate reading and social studies were overlooked, especially in the primary grades. The considerable reading materials and pictures on home and family in the readers were studied in relation to reading but without relating the content to social studies activities. Essential follow-up activities in the unit of work were not planned with the pupils or were inadequately planned.

Readily available out-of-school experiences for the children were not used or were misused. Common experiences in the home and community were not directly related to the vocabulary and concepts included in the children's learning activities. The failure to utilize extensively the pupils' meaningful experiences in arithmetic affected their learning. At times, also, the selection of arithmetical experiences involved inclusion of concepts and efforts at generalizations too advanced for the children's level of development. Analogous conditions were observed in the reading activities.

Teachers' ineffective questioning affected adversely children's learning. Questions improvised offhand were not thought-provoking or they served to evoke unnecessary recall of facts. Some teachers' questions interfered with the desired spontaneity of the pupils. One form of this weakness was questioning by the teacher which should have been done by the children. The natural flow of conversation was impeded or prevented.

Teachers' English Usage

The records of classroom performances disclosed some teachers' oral English requiring supervisory attention. Serious time-consuming and ineffectual speech habits were the most common ones. They included frequent repetitions or poor formulations of questions, directions and answers. Many teachers also overworked certain words, phrases or clauses so that the instructional value of these elements was minimized. Some teachers wasted considerable time by repeating habitually the pupils' answers, questions, and oral reading. These various weaknesses will be presented in detail in another article [1] and therefore are only mentioned in the present study.

A second research study includes a number of grammatical errors made by the teachers. Most common were incomplete sentence elements, repetition of words, incorrect omissions, lack of agreement between noun and verb or object, and the use of nouns and pronouns so that the intended reference was difficult to determine or was not discernible.

There are other detracting or poor usages in the English of some teachers requiring self-correction but often needing supervisory attention. The tape recordings disclosed prominently mispro-

[1] George C. Kyte. "Supervisory Visits to Classrooms Disclose Teachers' Incorrect Speech Habits." *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 25.

VOTE

Ballots for election of
ASCD Officers
due in Headquarters office
December 20, 1960

Mail Yours Today

nunciations such as "cause" for "because," "gonna," "wanna," "gotta," and "sorta." Similarly detected were misuses of certain modifiers, as in "awfully good," "pretty good," "terrific answer," "how come," "got time," and the not interpretive "sort of" and "or anything."

Slang terms were used by some teachers, the most commonly noted expressions being "uh huh," "huh?" and "O. K." One teacher, for example, frequently used "uh huh" in answering her pupils' questions or approving their answers: "John, 'They have white tails.' Teacher, 'Uh huh.' Jane, 'They are mostly brown.' Teacher, 'Uh huh. Tommy?' Tommy, 'Aren't they lighter brown underneath?' Teacher, 'Yes, uh huh.' . . . Mary, 'But some have big black spots.' Teacher, 'Uh huh. Yes, uh huh. Those are all right answers.'" It was not surprising to hear her pupils using "uh huh" later in the lesson. Another teacher used the extraneous "O. K." 20 times in a ten-minute period with the result that the children were also saying it frequently.

Some teachers formed the habit of interjecting "er," "ah" or "uh" very often in their questions, directions and answers. The interjection was poor classroom practice into which the teachers fell while thinking during a conversational period. Following are illustrations of this fault. "Er, why would that be a good subject?" "The knights had, er, armor made out of iron." "I want someone to, ah, take this strip of paper, ah, I've cut out." "I'll bring it over here, ah, so that you can show the class, ah, how it looks." "When you got to the, uh, store, you said, uh, uh, 'I haven't anything from the dairy.' How did that, uh, happen?" "You, uh, also should read to, er, find out what Dick said."

Class Control

In some cases of beginning teachers, inadequately trained teachers, or weak ones, the recordings uncovered causes and conditions of unsatisfactory class control and the nature of poor disciplinary measures used. The correction or elimination of various other observed conditions discussed here should contribute to improved class control. Some situations, however, were serious ones requiring specifically planned supervisory observations in order to determine the nature of assistance needed by the teacher. One teacher who used, "shush," frequently was an instance. Teachers who were ambivalent in discipline and class control were in serious difficulties. The teacher who resorted consciously or unconsciously to severe disciplining of individuals before the rest of the class needed helpful consultation in order to avoid this harmful practice.

Having determined through supervisory visits to the classroom the specific strengths and weaknesses of teachers, the supervisor is able to plan insightfully the kind of help to be given. Some needs can be met in teachers' meetings, others in individual conferences, and still others through the demonstration of better procedures. Related to any one technique may be carefully selected pertinent professional reading recommended to the teacher.

Copyright © 1960 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.