

Problems Connected With Administration and Supervision of Special Schools and Classes

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I shall begin by saying that the first and greatest problem is that created by combining the functions of the executive with those of the supervisor. Administration and supervision are not synonymous, nor do they imply a similarity of duties. To me the cleavage between the two is well defined.

Administration implies all of those activities which are concerned with organization and management, while supervision should be concerned only with the improvement of instruction. It may be that administration and supervision can be combined successfully in one of the narrow fields of atypical children, but certainly not where the two functions are all embracing.

In the larger fields supervision is a necessity if progress is to be made in instructional methods. However, there is divided opinion on that score. There are those who look upon supervision as a necessary evil, others who think of it as an unnecessary evil, while still others regard it as just plain evil. However, there are a few who see in supervision the basis of much good. The forward looking principal or teacher is not afraid of supervision. It is only the poorly prepared who resent it.

Let us consider nine atypical classifications:

- (1) Schools and classes for crippled children.
- (2) Schools and classes for truants and delinquents.
- (3) Schools and classes for the deaf and hard of hearing.
- (4) Open window rooms for anaemic children.
- (5) Ungraded divisions for retarded or backward children.
- (6) Corrective speech classes.
- (7) Classes for epileptics.
- (8) Classes in hospitals, homes, and camps.
- (9) Classes for the blind and partially sighted.

It is easy to understand that with such a wide variety of exceptional children grouped under those various headings the problems for the executive and the supervisor are many and complex. Out of some two hundred fifty listed problems I have selected ten for discussion.

(1) **State laws and State support.**—Most laws governing the education of atypical children are enabling only. However, in some

instances, they are mandatory. In Illinois the law providing for the education of crippled children in special schools or classes is enabling only, although it is mandatory that provision be made for the instruction of crippled children. For each crippled child the State allows the sum of three hundred dollars over and above the amount necessary for the education of a normal child.

All schools and classes established under the law are subject to the supervision of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Delinquent children also are cared for by a law which is enabling. The State provides for excess cost in the amount of \$190.00 a year. For the blind and deaf and dumb children the State provides, under a Board of Education, for blind and deaf and dumb, for a minimum of \$300.00 and a maximum of \$500.00 each a year.

A big problem in this connection is to secure the actual money from the State.

(2) **Boards of Education.**—Naturally the school executive derives his authority from his Board of Education and he is responsible to it. Cost is a matter of concern to all boards, and keeping the cost of educating the atypical child down is a prime concern of the executive. In other words he is faced with the problem of furnishing the best in education at the least possible cost. However, Boards of Education are sympathetic toward exceptional children which helps somewhat to ease the difficulties with which the executive is faced.

(3) **Administrative staff.**—In any large scale undertaking an adequate administrative staff is a necessity. If such staff is to function most effectively, provision must be made for research, study, and planning. Obviously the busy executive can not do these things well and at the same time carry on his administrative duties. The problem here is to secure the staff. The staff, once it becomes available, is not a problem, but a solution.

(4) **Supervisory staff.**—The distinction between administration and supervision has been discussed and it is so well understood that there is no need to dwell on it here. However, there is need to stress the necessity for educational supervision of the proper kind in every atypical child. This is a problem controlled by Boards of Education, and, it will not be solved until they understand the necessity for trained supervisors.

(5) **Teacher selection.**—Within each state there should be a fixed standard of requirements for teachers of exceptional children. This applies particularly to teachers for the blind and partly sighted, for the deaf and hard of hearing, and for the mentally retarded. Here the supervisor could render an invaluable service in the matter of teacher selection.

(6) **Budget.**—So far as local Boards of Education are concerned they are loath to provide more for the handicapped than they do for the normal children. They take the stand that it is the State's business

to provide for exceptional children. This increases the number of problems connected with administration and supervision.

Where funds for the education of atypical children are tied down by hard and fast budget rules it makes operation to the best advantage of the children themselves impossible.

(7) **Housing.**—The difficulties here are almost too obvious to require comment. We may include with housing all of those facilities which should go with it.

Special housing and special facilities mean extra money, and money is all too difficult to come by. In the meantime we improvise and make most of existing buildings inadequate though they may be.

(8) **Curriculum.**—In the preparation of curricular material for the different deviates the supervisor in his particular field can render a most valuable service. In fact, the supervisor should play such an important part in the education of the heterologous child that I keep stressing the need for the supervisor. Perhaps nothing is more difficult than providing the best possible curriculum for each kind of exceptional child, and certainly the expert should have a hand in its preparation. Simply modifying existing curricular material does not solve the problem.

(9) **Personnel.**—This involves teacher selection and supervision for which we have little provision at present. It means that the whole matter is dumped in the lap of the executive, and he may do the best he can with it. Obviously the arrangement could be improved, although from the standpoint of the executive the problem is not difficult.

(10) **Elementary and secondary education.**—Until we can shake off the shackles of what is considered normal elementary and secondary education we shall make little progress in educating the child who is different. The dominance by standard types of education in the atypical fields retards progress in the latter. This situation will not be improved until education for the exceptional child is divorced from that for the normal child and wholly new methods of and materials for instruction are provided.

I hope that I have given a sufficient sampling of the problems involved in the administration and supervision of special schools and classes to make clear the necessity for a differentiation of administrative and supervisory functions and to interest you in the education of the handicapped child.