

SUPERVISION AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING

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TO
PROFESSOR THOMAS H. GENTLE

A TRUE TEACHER, WHOSE LIFE
AND WORK HAVE BEEN AN IN-
SPIRATION TO HUNDREDS OF
STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

PREFACE

This book is an attempt to discuss concretely the problems and procedures of the elementary-school supervisor. The problems have been organized into related groups, the underlying principles briefly summarized, and a supervisory procedure outlined. Every effort has been made to keep the discussion concrete and specific, though in some places a generalization was all that could be advanced.

The theory and practice of supervision outlined are based upon several years of experience as teacher and supervisor. All the outlines and score cards were evolved and used under practical conditions in regular graded schools. Exact, experimentally determined evidence has been used to support statements wherever it was available. Failing such evidence, recourse has been had to expert opinion. The manuscript was read by a number of men prominent in education and many of the suggestions they kindly made have been incorporated in the discussion. The reports on some things, however, were quite bewildering, because the suggestions from different men were so flatly contradictory. Hence material criticised by some reviewers has been retained because the nature of the reports led me to believe that the points were not so much incorrect as controversial. On the other hand, I am keenly aware that later critics may find a number of real errors which have escaped my notice. Nothing that is said is meant to be dogmatic, nor is it to be regarded as final. The discussion is designed, rather, to stimulate supervisors to study their problems and to improve their technique. No apology is made for the several generalizations given. As much concrete material as pos-

sible has been included, but a complete detailed treatment would necessitate a library rather than a volume.

A few reviewers suggested that a better organization would be to outline a definite plan of supervision for a year or half year, and then deduce the principles and procedures by means of a discussion of that plan. This would be undoubtedly an excellent scheme, but I do not feel that the scheme adopted is any less logical, namely, to attempt a definition of the field of supervision, to collect the information bearing upon it, and to point out that the supervisor should organize his own plans within the limits set up. A definite plan of supervision is an absolute essential, but it must be organized in terms of the situation involved and should be organized anew rather frequently. Such plans are discussed several times in the later chapters.

It may be felt that the treatment of teaching method given in Chapters V to XI is out of place in a text in supervision. Strictly speaking, this criticism is justifiable. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly true that the supervisors who are thoroughly expert in modern teaching method are in the minority. Hence this body of material, which can be omitted by the few supervisory experts, should be valuable to a large number of untrained and partly trained supervisors. Furthermore, one of the principal purposes of this book is to try to bring teachers and supervisors more into accord and to break down, if possible, the antagonism that is quite marked in many situations. Accordingly the teachers' method, problems, and viewpoint are given considerable space and attention. On the other hand, supervision is presented as much for the teacher's reading as it is for the supervisor's. Something may have been sacrificed of theoretically correct organization for the sake of practical benefit to a larger number of readers. Because of actual experience, and because of opinions expressed by many teachers and supervisors in

my classes, I am convinced that this treatment of both sides of the question will prove more useful than a somewhat more scientific organization confined strictly to supervision. My point of view is summarized in the report of one reviewer: "This book is written for supervisors as they are, not as they should be."

The book is designed, first, for superintendents, building principals, and grade supervisors. Ideally, the building principal should be the chief supervisory officer, but his efforts must necessarily be supplemented by those of regular grade supervisors. This group will find their chief benefit in study and use of the supervisory outlines at the close of the chapters on method and in the remaining chapters dealing with the other functions of supervision. The body of the chapters on method will probably be familiar to the better trained of the group and can be used as reference material for their teachers. The question outlines in terms of teacher and pupil activity can be used in observing or discussing teaching. It should be noted in passing that the supervisor should supplement this **summary of general method by constant use of the many excellent texts on special method.** Rural supervisors and special supervisors, particularly the former, will find considerable material that will prove useful though the discussion was not planned with their specific problems in mind.

Second, the book is so written that teachers may receive two benefits from its study. Beginning and inadequately trained teachers can profit from a study of the principles of method, the principles of learning, and the discussion of subject matter. All teachers can gain an insight into the supervisory problem and point of view. This latter is the more valuable, because, as stated above, supervision should be a coöperative procedure, and antagonism between the two groups involved should disappear.

Third, the book should appeal to students of supervision and teaching method. College and normal-school classes in either supervision or general method will, it is believed, find it an interesting and helpful textbook.

Attention is called to the annotated bibliography at the end of each chapter. Each title listed has been carefully examined, and its nature is indicated in the note. Supplementary material on any point can be quickly found, and because of this fact several chapters have been purposely abbreviated. Chapters III and IV contain only brief summaries of the salient points in the fields treated. Such summaries will recall the supervisor's knowledge and focus his attention, but students using the book should do considerably more reading than is there outlined. Chapter XII does not contain any examples of specific tests or scales. Despite criticism by some reviewers, such material is deliberately omitted, because it is easily obtainable elsewhere, and because its inclusion in the chapter would unduly lengthen the book.

I am forever indebted to Professor Thomas H. Gentle, sometime student at Jena, Germany, later director of various normal training schools in this country. Not only did my first and best explanation of the aim of education and of pedagogical principles come from Professor Gentle, but his friendship and kindly counsel have been for many years sources of pleasure and inspiration.

A second important influence came through contact with Professor S. C. Parker of the University of Chicago. I gained much in scientific attitude and in enthusiasm for teaching through my classes and individual work with him. His kind permission has made possible much direct quotation from his textbooks.

Dr. Franklin Bobbitt, University of Chicago, and my colleagues, Dr. Cliff W. Stone, Washington State College, and Professor W. A. Owens, Winona State Teachers Col-

lege, kindly read part or all of the manuscript and suggested a number of improvements. My wife, Virginia N. Burton, a teacher with considerable experience under different systems of supervision, supplied many valuable concrete illustrations. Thanks are due Superintendent George W. Hug of Salem, Oregon, for the free hand given me in experimenting with supervisory devices in the schools of McMinnville, Oregon, while they were under Mr. Hug's direction. Finally, much credit is due the advanced students and graduates of the School of Education of Washington State College for aid in making and correcting through trial in real situations many of the theories and procedures advocated.

W. H. B.

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PART I

**THE NATURE AND PROBLEMS
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