

DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS' WORKSHOPS IN
TWENTY NEBRASKA SCHOOLS

by

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In Twenty Nebraska Schools

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

This study has been undertaken for the purpose of determining practices which are being used in the conductance of pre-school workshops in the state of Nebraska and to ascertain their function as an instrument of the total school program.

During his own career in the field of education, the writer has been increasingly aware of practices which have been introduced and emphasized which focus attention upon measures which may be used to obtain greater educational effectiveness in classroom teaching. The writer has also recognized that the training of a teacher is not completed when a teacher has finished his or her formal education. Improvement of instruction has become an integral part of the work of school supervisors and administrators. Advocated practices for the improvement of instruction, to name a few, include such activities as supervision, in-service training, workshops and on-the-job training.

The American Council on Education made reference to this point when it was stated:

"The quality of teacher preparation is exceedingly important. But no matter how excellent, it cannot by itself determine what kind of job will be done by a given graduate, either at the

beginning of his professional career or as the career continues.

Moreover, our times demand a rethinking of the functions of school in our society and modification of school patterns to make them more effective in meeting contemporary personal-social needs. Such rethinking and modification call for a pooling of the powers of thought and action of all educational workers. It is not enough that university professors and school administrators should devote attention to these matters: the participation of classroom teachers is essential. These teachers, close to the children and engaged in the task of working directly with them, have access to insights and opportunities for experimental action that must be capitalized. Improvement of working situations is needful, therefore, not merely in order that teachers may better enjoy their work but even more that their capacities may be fully used in the process of creating better schools.¹

Schools have long found that training on the job can assist greatly in the task of doing better work in the classroom. More recently educators have recognized that groups of teachers working together can obtain a better understanding of the problems faced by school people. Training on the job that teachers receive is considered by some writers to be one of the more important tasks facing our educational system today. Lehman writes, "To keep all teachers of a corps growing in knowledge as well as efficiency, is one of the most urgent unsolved education problems in our country at this time and I trust that some practical scheme will be presented at an early date in which this

1. American Council on Education, "Improvement of Teaching Education," pp. 118-119.

subject will receive the treatment its importance demands."²

The question may be asked, why has it seemed necessary to provide on-the-job training for teachers? Teacher shortages have prevailed during the years the writer has served as an administrator of Nebraska schools. This has included the time from 1940 until 1955. War and the threat of war constituted the greatest single factor in this teacher shortage. Many available candidates served in the armed forces during this time. Others sought employment in industry which may or may not have assisted the national security effort. Employment in industry in many instances attracted more of the potential manpower, in preference to teaching, because of the higher wage offered in that type of employment. These reasons in addition to the small number enrolled in teacher training institutions has made teacher recruitment in our schools an acute problem during the past fifteen years.

An administrator faced with the task of procuring a complete staff for his school from 1940 until 1955 was confronted with a difficult task to meet classroom demands when he was confronted with the following problems:

- a. poorly trained teachers
- b. teachers with emergency certificates

2. G. W. Lehman, "The Development and Present Status of Professional Adjustment Service," School and Society, XXVIII, Sept. '53, pp. 360-65.

c. recruitment of older teachers who returned to teaching after raising their families.

d. lack of sufficient school finances

e. effects of war and defense upon available personnel.

f. teaching has lost prestige as a profession

It has not been within the province of this study to investigate all in-service practices followed by schools but rather to study thoroughly workshop practices as a means to better in-service training in our schools.

The need for training on the job has been briefly documented. The writer during his years as an administrator has attempted to meet some of the needs of in-service training and teacher improvement by means of pre-school workshops. The attention of this study has been focused in that direction.

The writer's problems of school administration have in all probability differed little from those of other superintendents during the past fifteen years. What could be done to help improve instruction when the problems just mentioned existed? What in-service practices have proved to be satisfactory in dealing with these situations when teacher procurement has been such a problem.

Among the many devices advocated to assist with in-service training, the procedures of the workshop greatly interested the writer. The teachers' workshop appeared to

this writer to be a learning situation that was based upon the same principles of learning as those utilized in the modern classroom today. The chief principles of the workshop are well described by John Downes when he stated, "The chief virtue of the workshop is its emphasis on learning by doing -- perhaps another way of saying that, twenty-five years after Dewey's ideas began to be applied to the education of children, someone realized that it might be valid for those persons who are practicing it on children."³

The workshops that have been conducted under the writer's supervision were planned to meet, in most instances, the immediate needs which teachers expressed as being problems with them. In addition to this, the workshops provided a time for the orientation of new teachers. Resource persons from the University of Nebraska usually formed the nucleus for workshop activities.

While it has been felt that these workshops have added materially to the work of the many teachers, the professional growth of teachers and an over-all betterment of classroom procedures, the extent to which the workshops have helped improve instruction, how our practices might compare with those in other schools in our state and how pre-school workshops may best serve our state remain unanswered.

During the writer's experience as an administrator,

3. John Downes, "Evaluation of Workshops," Elementary School Journal, Vol. 47, Ap. '47, p. 440.

teacher shortage has been a consistent problem. To find qualified personnel for some teaching positions has been in many cases an impossibility. It has meant that inadequately trained teachers and former teachers recruited into further service has filled many teaching assignments. The question arose many times, what could be done to better prepare these teachers for the teaching assignments they had been given? In-service training clinics, added supervision, workshops, off-campus classes, adult education programs and the help of consultants have been used to an advantage in coping with this problem.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' workshop practices carried on in selected schools in Nebraska. In achieving this end, the study sought to do the following:

- a. present from the literature criteria for the evaluation of workshop activities in order to determine satisfactory practices.
- b. present a comprehensive picture of workshop practices carried on in selected schools outside of Nebraska.
- c. determine from administrators of Nebraska schools what workshop activities were carried on in their schools.

d. determine from teachers in the same schools how they assisted in workshop activities in their school.

e. present information from school administrators as to the nature of their workshop and what they expected the workshop to accomplish for their school.

f. present conclusions from teachers in these schools which would give the teachers' opinion or evaluation of the workshop and the contribution it has made to their school.

g. present recommendations for providing teacher workshop practices not now available in schools of Nebraska, but indicated as desirable by this study.

h. present an evaluation of effective workshop practices.

DELIMITATIONS

a. this study is concerned with public schools only.

b. this study is limited to Nebraska schools which had workshops during the past two school years, 1954-1955 and 1955-1956.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

a. Analyze the literature in the field to trace the progress that has been made with the workshop technique. Attention has been given to those practices that

were used in the early history of workshops. The progress that has been made with this means of in-service training has been noted. The needs which were being met by the group processes of workshop activities was observed. The literature was also analyzed to determine those described as successful.

b. Attention has been given to practices which have been successful outside of the state of Nebraska. A list of desirable workshop practices has been prepared.

c. By means of personal interview with school administrators, data were obtained concerning the workshop practices in their school. Administrators were asked pertinent questions regarding the techniques followed in making such plans for the workshop as: (1) school policy for workshops, (2) financing the workshop, (3) administrative problems of the workshop, (4) planning the workshop, (5) use of resources, and (6) evaluation of the workshop in their school.*

d. Information from teachers in these Nebraska schools was obtained by questionnaire. Permission to leave the questionnaires for the teachers was obtained at the time of the personal interview. Teachers had

*All information from administrators was obtained by personal interview. Letters requesting cooperation in this study were sent to the administrators prior to the interview. Administrators were asked to recommend the teachers that were to fill out the questionnaire.

the opportunity of indicating how the workshop assisted or failed to help them as instructors in their school. They were also asked to write a single statement of their impression of the value of the workshop as a means of in-service training.

e. Summarize and interpret the data secured from the personal interviews with both administrators and teachers.

PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION

a. Develop a comprehensive picture of the teacher workshop activities that were desirable.

b. Develop a comprehensive picture of the workshop activities as carried on by the schools in this study.

c. Make recommendations as to how Nebraska schools could improve teachers' workshops to provide those experiences indicated as being desirable by this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kimball Wiles recently stated, "the workshop has proved so effective as an in-service training procedure at teacher training institutions and for national and regional educational projects that local school systems have adapted it to their uses in program development."⁴

What were the early concepts of workshop practices? The educational workshop had its origin, at least under that name, in 1936 in conjunction with the Progressive Education's Eight Year Study. Kimball Wiles further states, "during the 1930's the Progressive Education Association developed the 'workshop' idea. Under their plan, fifty to eighty teachers from schools participating in the Eight-Year Study were brought together for a period of five to six weeks to exchange ideas, to work on the problems facing them in their schools, and to confer with resource people to obtain new ideas."⁵

"The first organized professional education activity under the name of a workshop was conducted at Ohio State University in 1936. Since that date workshops of many

4. Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools, Prentice-Hall Book Co., New York, 1950, p. 165.

5. Kimball Wiles, op. cit., p. 165.

kinds, on a wide variety of subjects, and in a wide variety of ways have been held throughout the country."⁶ Many are sponsored by colleges and universities, by public schools, by professional agencies and organizations, or voluntarily by small groups of teachers and other educational workers.

How the Workshop Has Been Used for In-service Training

A number of conceptions are associated with the term "Workshop". The workshop is also used in many ways in both educational and in other training carried on in the business world. Reference shall be made throughout this dissertation to this subject. In order that there may be no mis-understanding, definitions are given here which will make definite their meaning. To define a term adequately is to learn much about the workshop movement. For the purpose of this study it will be necessary not only to evolve a general definition of the term which will embody as many as possible of its connotations but also to develop a definition that is most widely used. The writer has therefore examined the educational literature for definitions, characteristics and classifications of various workshops to gain a more complete and accurate picture of the usage of the term.

The original characteristics of the early workshop were

6. North Central Association Quarterly, April, '54, Vol. XXVIII. (The Workshop As An In-Service Education Procedure).

first described as such by the Progressive Education's Eight Year Study as reported by the American Council on Education during the mid 30's. Prior to and since that date, workshops and other meetings which closely resemble the workshops, such as conferences and institutes, have been held in this country. Many of these conferences where educational workers meet to discuss and try to solve problems of mutual interest have become known in recent years as workshops. Earl Kelley reports, "If there is anything revolutionary about a workshop, it is simply that here at last we are making use of fundamental principles of learning which, even though recognized and well known, have been often neglected in learning situations. Workshops are designed to aid in the application of knowledge rather than the acquisition of knowledge."⁷

The function of working groups of teachers in the use of workshop techniques is further documented by Kelley as he states:

"Man has been searching for a more effective method of putting into practice the truths that have become known about how people learn. It is vital that a way be found to establish an environment which enables children and adults to learn. This environment must bring about recognition of individual worth; and it must help us to learn how to live among our fellow men with more understanding. A way must be found to enable groups of people to learn from each other and help each other toward the solution of common problems. Wayne University is continually seeking better methods to meet these needs. We who have experienced the method of the

7. Earl C. Kelley, "Why All This Talk About Workshops", Educational Leadership, Vol. 2, Feb. '45, pp. 200-204..

Education Workshop are convinced that through it and other similar experiences, these goals can be accomplished. We have found that the workshop creates changes in the individual that make him not only a better person and a more effective teacher, but a person whose relations with his students will be more wholesome and productive."⁸

The Dictionary of Education describes the workshop in the following way, "an arrangement under which special facilities including particularly a wealth of source material and specialized personnel for group and individual conferences are provided by an educational institution for individualized or small group study of educational problems that are of special interest to advanced students of education or to teachers in service; frequently provided in such areas as curriculum, administration, guidance, higher education and secondary education."⁹

The description of the teachers' workshop as a means of in-service training is explained by Melchior when he states, "The Workshop technique, in its professionally accepted use, is now rated high in programs of instructional supervision because it appears to meet in a better way the needs of educators for group cooperation in pooling ideas and experiences, for social integration, for better focusing on specific problems, for personal growth and development,

8. Earl C. Kelley, The Workshop Way of Learning, Harper Brothers, 1951, xi.

9. The Dictionary of Education, by Phi Delta Kappa, McGraw Hill Book Co., '45, p. 453.

and for integration of general and professional groups, the technique is now in common practice for lay groups concerned with educational programs aimed at changing and implementing the value patterns of their members."¹⁰

The workshop movement has aided in changing the concepts of in-service education. The commission on Teacher Education stated:

"The responsibilities of the colleges and universities for the in-service education of teachers were at one time largely discharged through the summer-session offering of courses originally developed to meet the needs of teachers in preparation. Often, of course, such instruction was adapted in greater or less degree to the needs of the returning teachers, but in general methods of undergraduate instruction were employed. More recently there has been a marked trend in the direction of relating summer offerings more directly to the problems brought with them from their home situations by attending teachers. In the last few years summer workshops and comparable developments under a variety of names have constituted a notable effect in this direction.

Such workshops, with the exceptions to be noted below, are held on college or university campuses where resources for intensive work are available and under circumstances conducive to mutual stimulation and friendly cooperation. They are staffed by faculty members and leaders from supervisory groups... The work is consequently highly individualized, although a considerable amount of group activity is usual. Attending teachers often come as representatives of committees active in the home school, and sometimes groups of teachers and administrators bring common problems on which they work together.

A different type of workshop has begun to be developed in particular communities under the auspices

10. William T. Melchior, Instructional Supervision, by Heath Publishing Co., '50, p. 331.

of local school systems, but usually in cooperation with neighboring institutions of higher learning. Workshops of this sort serve as the summer equivalent of activities which during the regular year provide teachers with opportunities for continued self improvement.

The current trend is indeed bringing to the fore a number of newer developments with much more definite local control. Among these are curriculum-revision programs, the extension and improvement of supervision, the formation of study groups of various sorts, and experimentation with local term-time workshops. The teachers, themselves, in cooperation with administrators, are playing an increasing role in planning and carrying out these activities."¹¹

A North Central Association Committee Report discusses the workshop in the following manner. "The name workshop is applied to many forms of in-service education. Most of these have similar purposes or objectives. Each is designed to help teachers secure new or modified points of view, to acquire new knowledge, new understandings, new ideas, new methods, new inspiration for their profession and their work."¹²

The educational workshop is further described by Harold Spears when he states:

"Of pronounced significance to in-service education today is the workshop. It is so frequently and so effectively used that school leadership would be hard pressed to do without it. It is a technique

11. Teachers for our Times, a statement of purposes by the Commission of Teacher Education, American Council on Education. pp. 20-21.

12. North Central Association Quarterly, April 1954, p. 424, Volume XXVIII.

for holding group conferences or study programs. It has established itself as an effective way of enabling a group to come together to work on matters of mutual concern. The workshop study pattern is applicable to all sizes of school groups. It is likewise applicable to various types of in-service situations.¹³

Harold Spears further explains the use of workshop techniques and an explanation of various types when he states,

"Growing in popularity for some time has been the preschool conference for orientation into the new school year. It ordinarily comes the week prior to the opening of school and includes all teachers, administrators, and other staff members. In a short survey of in-service training over the country, the writer found the practice reported from coast to coast, a few of the school systems being Cullman, Ala; Biloxi, Miss; Dubuque, Iowa; Evansville, Ind; Port Arthur, Tex; Greenville, S. C.; and Omaha, Nebr.

School systems are now accepting these days as part of the teacher's working year, as essential preparation worthy of teaching credit. Common features of the work of the conference are:

1. Orientation of new teachers to the school system.
2. Presentation of new policies and the consideration of problems of organization and planning for the year.
3. Presentation of new instructional materials and equipment.
4. Interpretation of special parts of the school program.
5. General meetings of all participants, often addressed by the superintendent.
6. Building staff meetings in the respective schools.
7. Social activities to foster good fellowship and professional morale.¹⁴

13. Harold Spears, "Improving the Supervision of Instruction, Prentice Hall Publishing Co., '53, pp. 364-365.

14. Harold Spears, Ibid., p. 369.

In the publication, *The Modern Rural School*, written by Butterworth and Dawson, the following workshop uses were described.

"A trend seems to be developing for the provision of more workshops or institutes using the workshop techniques. These meetings were held throughout the year and usually were confined to a specific area. An increasing number of these workshops were being conducted in the areas of art, music, educational psychology especially in the field of evaluations and testing programs, reading and social studies. Consultants for these workshops were usually secured from the teacher training institutions throughout the state."¹⁵

SUMMARY

The various definitions of workshops agree that a workshop hopes to provide an atmosphere where educators, concerned with professional problems of teaching, work out practical defensible solutions to their problems.

For the purpose of this study, the writer has directed consideration to the manner in which selected Nebraska schools use the workshop practice. The definition of teacher workshop which the writer has used was the proposed by Prall and Cushman when they defined the workshop as, "what we call a workshop are intensive consideration of practical problems that have arisen from the daily functioning of the teaching job, flexible and informal working

15. Butterworth, Julian E. and Dawson, Howard A., *The Modern Rural School*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1952, p. 109.

conditions, active sharing by workshopppers in developing plans for individuals or group study, and easy access to a wide range of resources -- in terms of staff, fellow participants, books and other aids to learning."¹⁶ These procedures may be used by schools in Nebraska and have been accepted by many schools as described by these authors.

16. Charles E. Prall and C. Leslie Cushman, "Teacher Education In-Service," American Council on Education, 1944, pp. 201-202.

CHAPTER III

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

"The old-fashioned routine teachers' meetings have been replaced by conferences or workshops generally lasting two or three days. They are used for orientating the old and new teachers and to develop plans for in-service programs."¹⁷

The above statement could be applied to many of the schools in Nebraska. During the past ten years, a large number of Nebraska schools have turned to the use of the pre-school teachers' workshop as a means of teacher training and orientation before school opens each fall.

The Nebraska schools which have been the basis for the present study serve only a small segment of the school population of the state. The group is large enough, however, that the results obtained are of significance. The accumulated data presents the situation in the schools studied and may or may not be representative of what exists in most of the schools of the state.

Information for this study was obtained from interviews with superintendents of participating schools. The

17. Roy C. Woods, "Professional Growth and Advancement of School Personnel," - The American School Board Journal, Nov. '53, pp. 39-41.