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Book reviews

Bishop provides excellent guide

By Robert E. Scott

Staff Development & Instructional Improvement, by Leslee J. Bishop, Allyn & Bacon, Inc., Boston, Mass., 1976, 360 pp. \$17.95

This authoritative guide, written by a professor of education and Director of the Center for Curriculum Improvement and Staff Development at the University of Georgia, is designed to assist the reader in acquiring new planning and implementing skills for improving in-service training, staff development and instructional effectiveness.

The text follows a flow-chart type analysis which is organized in a functional sequence and is broken down into six major components. Not to be overlooked, however, are the excellent appendixes covering such items as sample needs identification questionnaires, a monitoring plan for staff development projects, and a superior discussion of representative impact strategies and techniques. A brief introduction sets the rationale for a higher priority being given for staff development as it is so desperately needed in the vast majority of school systems, whether they be large or small, urban or rural. Such activities do not just naturally occur, but well-drawn and carefully conceived plans for such development are the most conclusive commitment that any school system can exhibit towards its personnel and their achievements.

(1) The first component covers diagnosing and determining **needs**, setting priorities and developing objectives. Although it is not fair to say that any one of the six components is more important than the others, it is critical that this step be completed successfully, because individuals in the past have had a tendency to minimize this phase of the program by not involving all personnel or faculty and seeking out as wide a research/data base as possible. Unless an awareness for change is forthcoming, all that happens during the following stage will be of no avail.

(2) The second component, **diagnosis-analysis**, establishes procedures for good settings, identification of objectives and production of a table of specifications. Resources, both staff or outside experts, also are identified.

(3) Program **development** deals with selection, commitments, and adoption of the instructional change under consideration. Different alternative changes also need to be considered and possibly built in at this point.

(4) **Validation** of the change can be a most exciting though painful process. Most staffs are usually critical of the appropriateness of the assessment procedures. But this component offers an important contribution in identifying problems as well as determining the impact, soundness and efficiency of the proposed solutions.

(5) The functions of the **implementation** step is to install, train and support the change. This demands a full commitment from the staff, and especially those directly involved in the new program. This will require full leadership and support from those in authority, such as superintendents, curriculum supervisors, building principals, boards of education, parents and other members of the community.

(6) Finally, the formative and summative **evaluation** procedures that have monitored installation, collected data, and assessed discrepancies should involve the entire staff in diagnostic, development, research and evaluation activities. As the data are evaluated and communicated, implications for staff review and professional growth should emerge. As the cycle is completed, the program and its staff will mature in their understanding and performance, due to the fact that all participants and each educational segment are vital to the process, and each is held accountable in accordance with his or her responsibility and contributions.

Bishop believes the most credible results will be evidenced by student learner gain, a more adequate staff, and better community acceptance. He notes, however, that such achievement must include process as well as product modifications.

The author summarized the text best by stating: "We recognize that education is not merely a building function, that learning is not exclusive to the school, that teaching is more than directing and telling, and that in-service, staff development and instructional improvement are interactive processes and not a schedule, a day so-assigned, or a non-personalized intervention." ²⁻⁹This book is an excellent guide that can be of considerable value to anyone interested in the staff development process.