

Practitioner and professor: Strengthening the relationship

In May 1977, a group of Kansas public school administrators and university professors of educational administration met in Emporia, Kansas, for a two-day workshop focusing on an exploration of the practitioner/professor relationship. The workshop was sponsored jointly by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the Kansas Conference of Professors of Educational Administration (KCPEA) and the United School Administrators (USA).

The workshop provided an opportunity for a mutual exploration of how the practitioner and professor perceive each other in terms of roles, responsibilities, programs and constraints. The participants also explored ways to improve communication and cooperation between the public schools and universities.

Finally, four issues of mutual concern for the practitioner and professor were surfaced and prioritized. The priority issues included certification credit for administrator inservice programs, communication needs, clarification of role perceptions and certification practices and procedures. Tentative action plans were designed to provide a basis for cooperative action in resolving the identified issues. Representatives of USA and KCPEA were designated to consult with their respective constituencies about the events and plans of the workshop. It is anticipated that the representatives will meet in the fall 1977, to structure an implementation strategy if constituent support is forthcoming.

This meeting could be the beginning of a strengthened dialogue between practicing administrators and professors; or it may have been only a nice two-day visit away from the office. Some professionals may scoff at the idea of practitioners and professors cooperating over a period of time to resolve issues of mutual concern. They could cite a number of barriers, real or imagined, that stand in the way of cooperation: time constraints, apathy and the reality that there are some fundamental differences of opinion in some areas. They might conclude that the nature of the roles are so different that meaningful cooperation is virtually impossible. I disagree.

I opt for a strengthened relationship between the practitioner and professor in an effort to improve the theory and practice of educational administration. I believe that these groups must cooperate in providing leadership in a changing and challenging educational environment. There is much that can be accomplished together to invigorate the discipline. Both professional groups have strengths that should be tapped in the continual improvement of educational administration as practiced in the public schools and as taught in the universities.

This is not to suggest that all differences will be overcome by attempts at cooperation. Differences will continue because of the nature of the responsibilities. Dynamic tension in a profession can result in new ideas and insights and should be capitalized on rather than submerged. We will continue to have our particular professional needs, pressures, and responsibilities. But we also have important commonalities that can serve as a basis for dialogue and cooperation.

Cooperation does not necessarily have to evolve from a formalized arrangement between practitioners and professors. We should use the available organizational structure to foster cooperative ventures. Both groups have annual meetings which could provide a vehicle for dialogue. The establishment of more practicums or internships in educational administration could stimulate the professional relationship. Better articulation of research to the local districts should be attempted. These are a few suggestions from among many that could be undertaken to foster a cooperative spirit between the practitioner and professor.

The Emporia meetings is a beginning. I would like to think that we are partners in educational administration and that cooperation is possible to strengthen the vital relationship between practitioners and professors.

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