

1254 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION AMENDMENTS

One week the teachers, teacher-aides, and neighborhood workers met separately; the following week they had a combined meeting. To achieve small intimate groups in which views and ideas could be expressed freely, meetings were held at each school, and, in addition, the combined meetings were divided into two sections.

In one of the training sessions observed, a number of topics were raised and discussed briefly. There were a few moments when no one volunteered to speak and some prodding on the part of the leader resulted. He later told a member of the visiting team that it had been a very slow meeting without much emerging from the group itself. He suggested that the Study Team's interviews had taken a lot out of the teachers and aides and caused them to "dry up."

At another of the observed training sessions the concern with which the meeting began was punishment. The social worker, who did the actual leading, explained to the aides that punishment effects no change. "The children who are most resentful here had the most beating." A little later she urged that aides should not confront parents with wrong-doings of a child but report it to a teacher. An aide said, "I'm negative to the idea of suspending a child. I'd want to ask, 'What have you done for my child?'" From that point the discussion rapidly evolved into mass verbal assault by the aides (acting at that point only as parents) on the teachers.

At a third training group session the aides (again apparently forgetting they were aides), as parents, complained that Negro children were discriminated against when they are ready to enter high school. "If a child comes from Columbus and goes to Garfield (the high school), he is automatically placed on the lowest track." "If the children were taught early they would be fully competent when they reach high school." The teachers responded that they should not be blamed for what had happened years before. The spokesman for the aides proclaimed, while the others nodded their heads affirmatively, that their children are as bright as white children, that parents should tell the person who decides the tracks, "Take my child out of the low track because I know he is bright."

A sixth grade white male teacher asked if the aides know the statistics, "It is the same problem in other cities." After this discussion the leader attempted to arrive at a topic for the next session.

The leaders of the T-groups were graduate students at the University of California and were prepared for their role as group leaders at a weekly seminar held on the University campus, conducted by the project research director. At these seminars the process involved review of the previous T-group sessions and adoption of strategies for the next session. Preparation for each seminar consisted of listening to tapes of the previous T-groups sessions. A group process observer (a more advanced graduate student) said a teacher told her teachers could not criticize aides nor accept criticism from them. Aides were reported to have said only good things about each other. Generally the trainers agreed that the teacher should preserve professionalism but be friendly with aides. The trainers noted that aides and teachers tend to sit separately in the lunchroom and at coffee breaks. In some instances, the group agreed, aides were using trainers as a bridge to the administration, and suggested that aides were more sophisticated at attempts to manipulate others, including trainers.

At an interview with the staff, it was suggested that trainers may be hearing negative expressions from aides, because the aides' new closeness to school opened up their feelings of inadequacy. The project staff believed that this reaction may have to be lived through before the aides can go on to an intellectual understanding of what the school is trying to do. One group seemed to be entering the second stage as it has moved beyond discussion solely on discipline and on to content. At the beginning of training the aides bring with them the parents' concept of authority status. To them the teacher is the authority figure. The staff stated that each culture has its own learning style; these aides are reflecting problems of motivation and a sense of powerlessness.

One teacher commented in an interview that the first part of the training program should concentrate on content and the classroom and let the "human relations stuff" come later. Opinions about the trainers differed among the teachers: some teachers feeling they were good leaders, others that they did not supervise the groups effectively.

Two of the trainers reported in writing that to date (after six weeks) there appeared to be some anxiety in much of the group about what will come out in the meetings and what use might be made of disclosures in the T-group sessions.