

An Overture

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of professional development in its simplest form is not new. Industry and the business world have long had programs of development and renewal for their leaders and employees. Such investments in people are essential to a dynamic company or corporation. The education sector, however, has been neither concerned nor supportive of the concept of professional development at the level necessary for professional or institutional renewal.

Until recently there was a high turnover of faculty because of rapid expansion of educational systems and a mobile society. Educational institutions have traditionally relied upon the influx of new staff as a source of ideas and excitement for teaching and learning. The few exceptions to this approach were the federally funded institute programs, which lasted for a short decade or so, the minimal monies provided locally for in-service work or an occasional trip for some professional purpose, and a few creative leave programs funded from a variety of sources.

Although traditional approaches to professional renewal are still viable avenues for self-improvement, by themselves they are inadequate mechanisms for dealing with the contemporary problems of professional stagnation in a comprehensive manner. Cost-effective accounting, a decline in the number of positions, a reduction of monies for study, research, or travel, as well as diminished faculty mobility in all levels of education are factors that should be of concern to all professionals.

Some critics of education have consistently suggested that teachers should be more sensitive, resourceful, deft, and responsible in their teaching. It has been assumed that a new curriculum, style of teaching, form of administrative structure, or emphasis on the more "relevant" issues would generate such qualities, as if a new system requiring sensitivity and resourcefulness would necessarily also elicit them. Teaching is apparently viewed by such critics as a simple behavior that can be obtained with no special effort. Such observations tend to ignore the idiosyncratic qualities of the excellent teacher, the unique demands of teaching science, and the basic needs of individuals.

Improved teaching and learning is not simply a function of some in-service training or a little up-dating in content. It is dependent on the interrelation of knowl-

edge, teaching techniques, rewards for good work, support for special efforts, increased collegiality and an environment conducive to collaboration. An internal system to attend to the orchestration of these factors is essential if a climate that fosters professionalism is to be developed and maintained.

Although there is no single model of professional development, the emerging conclusion is that, if renewal is to be a dynamic and ongoing process, there are three categories to which attention must be given. Instructional development, personal development and environmental modification are all integral components of any comprehensive approach to professional development. Emphasis on one without attention to the others results in less than satisfactory results.

Professional development in the biological education community has primarily been devoted to instructional improvement. The focus has been curriculum reform and content updating through in-service training. While it is true that personal development may have occurred as a result of attending a summer institute or participating in a research program, such development was not of prime concern. The major goals of such programs focused on the academic discipline and not on people.

The personal development component has had some support, but generally it has been left to chance. There have been a few attempts at increasing self-awareness and other related aspects of personal growth. However, the biological education community has not really dealt with the problem in any systematic manner. Personal change has usually been left to chance.

In a similar sense, the sweeping implementation efforts of the past two decades had only side effects on the environmental modification component. The new curricula did not readily fit into the old structures and patterns. In such cases it was generally the "new curricula" that did not survive. Little or no attention was given to the local climate in which the teacher worked on a daily basis. One notable exception was an effort related to the implementation of the Human Sciences Program (BSCS) in the public schools of western Washington. The innovative materials require acceptance from teachers and the support of the community if the program is to reach its objectives. The delivery system tried at Western Washington State College involved parents and administrators and reportedly had much greater success

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than the usual implementation effort. One excited professional working alone does not have the endurance nor the relevant skills to overcome the inertia of the local climate; the support of peers, administrators and the community is essential.

It is becoming increasingly clear that to initiate changes within educational institutions, a comprehensive model must be utilized. Strategies must be employed that attend to all three components of professional development. Although the industrial organizational development model may not be appropriate, there is much that can be learned; tools to bring about change have been developed. Although curriculum can be viewed as a tool, it is a tool to better orchestrate concepts. Curricula are not tools to bring about change. If change is needed in the biologic education community then it seems necessary to use the tools designed for that purpose.

Continuous faculty renewal is the only alternative to stagnation in this age of diminishing resources and decreased faculty mobility. Renewal is probably only possible through a comprehensive program of professional development. There are tools for each component of professional development. It remains to be seen if we as concerned biology educators will learn how to use the tools and apply them for the sake of the profession.

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of resources is often an abyss too difficult to bridge. In an emotionally charged atmosphere in which differences revolve around philosophy and moral judgments rather than fact, it is extremely difficult to set aside these philosophical and moral persuasions and cooperate to unite in support of meaningful conservation policies and programs. Only in those instances when all concerned citizens have been united in a common cause and speak with a single voice have they been able to influence the national policies and decisions essential to protecting and preserving our nation's wildlife heritage.

Mutual Respect

For example, all citizens concerned with wildlife conservation, whether they are birdwatchers or big game hunters, must recognize that wildlife management, protecting some species and controlling others, are tools

the professional wildlife scientist must possess and use if wildlife is to thrive. If an individual believes that killing animals for sport is reprehensible or immoral, that choice must be respected by others who do not share that belief. On the other hand, a wildlife protectionist should respect the right of the hunter to participate in his chosen recreational pursuit, as long as only surplus animals are taken and basic brood stocks are preserved. All must support the concept that man has so disrupted both plant and animal ecosystems that he must now apply his knowledge of nature in order to protect nature's system from further damage and restore our threatened and endangered species to a more desired status.

Public attitudes have come almost full circle in the past fifty years. That many years ago we had politically appointed executives in charge of government wildlife agencies. They made decisions on the basis of political expediency rather than on the demonstrated needs of the wildlife resource. After years of watching wildlife populations diminish under this system, an outraged public demanded, and got, a new era of professional wildlife management. Wildlife management has become a science—as exact a science as our best minds, trained in our best institutions, can make it. If a concerned citizenry will insist that policy makers make decisions on the findings of scientific research rather than political or emotional grounds, our nation will enjoy variety and optimum numbers of wildlife in 2076.

Working Together

Unless all who have an interest in the welfare and perpetuation of wildlife—professionals, wildlife enthusiasts, hunters, birdwatchers, naturalists, environmentalists and protectionists—can muster a broad consensus in support of professional and scientific wildlife management, there is little hope of achieving our goals.

Just exactly what can concerned individuals do to preserve our wildlife heritage? First, join together with other concerned citizens so that you can work together for the achievement of common goals. Second, reject extremist, nonscientific, emotional positions; arguments about peripheral issues detract from the united front that is necessary to conserve wildlife, its habitat, and the environment. Third, emphasize at every opportunity that the differences between consumptive and nonconsumptive users of the wildlife resource are entirely philosophical. Wildlife management, on the other hand, is a science that works for the perpetuation of the wildlife resource for *all* to enjoy.

The task of wildlife conservation is not yet accomplished, but with concerned and educated citizens, we may have a chance. Concerned citizens have done it before, and they are *essential* to preserving our wildlife heritage for tomorrow.

As we celebrate our national bicentennial let us all take heart and give thanks for a great inheritance. The poet Robert Frost once said, "what makes a great Na-