

### Staff Development: Knowledge, Volition and Action

Knowledge, volition, and action are the three essential elements of a staff development program. Any inservice that fails to account for these three elements will be a failure and any inservice that effectively utilizes knowledge, volition, and action will be a success.

Knowledge is often considered the key element in a staff development program. The idea is to give the staff the information, skills, or understanding they need to function better. Experience quickly reveals that knowledge by itself does not create change.

Knowledge, information, facts and skills, are components of change. People need to be aware of the facts pertaining to a situation before they can effectuate meaningful change. This knowledge can take many different forms. It may be an awareness of what one does not know or new information needed to solve a problem. Awareness of our prejudices, limitations, capabilities, and attitudes, as well as the learning of new skills, ideas and understandings all fall in this category. If knowledge is the missing element in a staff, the consultant must determine what knowledge is needed and the most effective means of imparting that knowledge.

Volition, refers to the motivation, commitment, and will-power of the staff. This is the most illusive of the necessary elements of change. It is much easier to determine what knowledge or action is required to remedy or improve existing conditions and to see that that knowledge is given or certain actions are carried out then to motivate a staff and see that they are committed to the established goals. Volition refers to intention and intention is the beginning of attainment. Will is needed if we are to utilize knowledge and actively participate in a transformation

process. One manifestation of volition is the setting of goals and making efforts to achieve them. Knowledge and reinforcement are factors that influence one's commitment and desire to persevere toward certain aims and objectives. Volition is the least understood and is often the missing ingredient in a successful staff development inservice. Staff must first of all want to change, and then have the will to translate that desire into reality.

The final element that is necessary for an inservice designed to further develop the potential of an organization is action. Unless knowledge and volition lead to some constructive action, no real change will occur. It is fine to have deep insight and high ideals, but until these are realized in action, their benefit is limited.

Constructive action depends on knowledge and volition. When a person sees things differently, then he may begin to feel differently, which may ultimately cause him to act differently. We must know what is the best thing to do, feel that it is important to do it, and then carry it out in action. If an inservice program does not lead to application and changed behavior, then it can not be considered successful. If at all possible, some provisions for application to the work situation and follow-up must be made.

The true evaluation of an inservice program is how well it has contributed to the accomplishment of established goals and objectives.

The good inservice gives relevant knowledge. This comes in the form effectively presenting new information, research, and skills with the purpose of identifying and solving problems or concerns. This

can take many different forms and utilize various methods. The poor inservice does not meet the above requirements. It either contains little or no relevant knowledge and/or is poorly presented.

The good inservice accounts for volition by involving and encouraging the staff. This can be accomplished through activities that increase staff enthusiasm, unity, commitment, and concern. Setting realistic goals, resolving dissension, building group spirit, and conveying high expectations are examples of such activities. The poor inservice does not account for the feelings of the staff and therefore the staff may not be involved or committed.

Finally, the good inservice leads to action. By providing for practical application through practice, on-the-job supervision, and evaluation, one can facilitate the realization of ideas into action. The poor inservice does not result in real change as it fails to create means by which goals are carried out.

The above may be represented by the formula  $K \times V \times A = X$  where K is knowledge, A is action, and X is the accomplishment of any objective.

The greater the variables, the greater the results, but if any variable is missing, there will be no real accomplishment.