

EDUCATIONAL LEADER

A. VISION OF LEARNING KNOWLEDGE BASE

An effective educational leader is responsible for the development of a vision for a school. Bennis & Nanus (1985) define vision as a mental image of a possible and desirable future state for an organization. While a vision may be as vague as a dream, most are precise and shapes the purpose and goals of the organization, giving control by concept (Wheatly, 1994). It creates a “consistency of purpose” throughout the organization, and a school is an organization (Deming,1986). Senge (1990) makes the point that shared visions must emerge from personal visions. The development of a vision should emerge or evolve through the dynamic interaction of the organizational members. While the educational leader should not develop a vision statement without the involvement of all stakeholders, he/she is solely responsible for giving leadership in the creation of a vision, as well as assuring that the vision is in a form suitable for articulation to others..

The vision, however developed, must permeate the organization, connecting beliefs and values to behavior. “Experience suggests that visions that are genuinely shared require on going conversation where individuals not only feel free to express their dreams but learn to listen to each others’ dreams. Out of this listening, new insights into what is possible emerge” (Senge, 1990, pp 217-218). Once a vision is formulated, the educational leader must understand and accept the responsibility of communicating that vision to students, staff, faculty and community leaders. He/she communicates with passion the vision to all through words and actions.

A vision by its very nature is generally vague. It is through the mission and belief statements that the educational leader articulates the vision in more specific terms. Upon the vision, goals, objectives, strategies and tactics are set and established. While it is through the contributions of all school community members that the goals, objectives, strategies and tactics are set and established, it is the educational leader who shepherds the process.

Once a plan for school improvement, driven by a vision, is formulated and articulated, it must be implemented. A strong, effective educational leader mobilizes the resources of the organization to enable the vision to be realized. He/she gives the instructional leadership to a well-organized planning system. He/she identifies the major hurdles that are likely to be faced in implementing the plan of improvement. Through communications and negotiations the values and activities of all the members are ordered and reordered in line with the vision. He/she continues to develop among all stakeholders a sense of ownership and empowerment via involvement, motivation and morale building.

Evaluation of the success of implementation comes at the end of the visionary cycle. With a sense of stewardship, the effective educational leader monitors constantly the progress made towards fulfilling the mission and realizing the goals and objectives of the organization. Cognizant of the state of affairs before the plan, he/she compares the state periodically. If progress is unsatisfactory, corrective measures are taken in future operational plans. The information collected is reviewed every few years to make sure that the plan is appropriate for the time and state of the organization.

Supervision is the process of improving instruction in order to increase student performance. It is no coincidence that the word is made up of two smaller words, super and vision. To have an effective school it takes “super” involvement, but it won’t be achieved without a “vision.”

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B. SCHOOL CULTURE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE BASE

Supervision is the glue of a successful school. It is the function in school that draws together the discrete elements of instructional effectiveness into whole-school action (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross, 2001). Key to school success is the creation of an environment for learning and professional growth. Many studies of successful schools confirm the importance of climate; studies on the importance of school culture reach the same conclusions (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). It is the educational leader, as a strong instructional leader, that is responsible for the creation of such an environment. He/she provides the leadership in assuring that all members of the school work and learn in a physically and emotionally safe, inviting, and nourishing environment. The importance is underscored by the work of Ashton and Webb (1986) that links climate and culture to student academic and social performance.

Supervision is improving instruction in order to improve student learning. According to Glickman, Gordon & Ross (2001), effective supervision requires a knowledge base, interpersonal skills, and technical skills. These are applied, among other things, through the supervisory tasks of direct assistance to teachers, professional development, group development and action research. The effective educational leader demonstrates understanding of and knows how to be a change agent. He/she knows how to overcome resistance and how to not only establish, but institutionalize a culture of excellence.

Effectiveness in improving student achievement requires, few, if any, new economic resources, but rather a redirection of already committed resources (Walberg, 1984). Using effective school research, he/she fosters teacher development by promoting commitment and bringing together a knowledgeable faculty working for the benefit of all students. He/she changes the attitude of many teachers that a classroom is an island unto itself and provides the leadership to engage the faculty in a common schoolwide instructional task that transcends any one classroom. Positive academic change comes school by school, not classroom by classroom (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Reed, 1985).

The emerging concepts of cultural pluralism and respect for cultural identity in the United States are replacing “melting pot” connotations with a “salad bowl” concept (Burden & Byrd, 2003). An effective educational leader respects the diversity of our society and assures that the school’s curriculum celebrates and attends to the needs of a diversified student body. He/she demonstrates an understanding of student growth and development and provides leadership in applying learning theories. Technology and varied methodology are used to promote student learning and the professional growth of the staff. High expectation is a behavior that is modeled by all and that impacts the potential and future of students.

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C. MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE BASE

A school is an organization and is often thought to be bureaucratic in nature in that it has a hierarchical structure and division of labor and is controlled by rules. It involves systematic discipline and contributes to the formation of career employees (Weber, 1964). An effective educational leader is a manager and is responsible for the management of the entire organization, the school. He/she understands and appropriately applies different theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development in plant management. He/she demonstrates knowledge of the operational policies and procedures at the school and district level.

Management concentrates on making decisions about how things should be done; that is, work is directed toward controlling and using resources (Hanson, 1996). The primary activities of managers include work supervision, material resource supervision, and conflict resolution – action intended to sustain organization efficiency (Orlosky, McCleary, Shapiro, & Webb, 1984). Fayol (1949) claims that all administrative managers perform five basic functions: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Gulick (1937) adds reporting and budgeting to this list. The educational leader knows and demonstrates mastery of these functions as he/she manages the organization.

The management aspect of educational leadership is inundated with decision making – one that must be made within the realms of what can legally be done. Leadership, communication, and organizations change and ultimately influence the school's clients – the students. Strong leaders build a culture for success, noting that all decisions affect the organization and play an important role in motivating all stakeholders towards the organizational goals. Adequate time is used reflecting on one's knowledge of learning, teaching, student development and emerging trends, as well as the input of all stakeholders, in reaching decisions. Effective educational leaders must develop their decision making skills. Decision-making is a very important technical skill.

Referencing the literature on effective school leadership, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2000) note among the quantifiable indicators are the ability to plan and influence student outcomes. They state that “principals do influence student learning; they do so indirectly by influencing school processes – establishing goals, setting academic expectations, promoting a mission/vision, encouraging change and innovation, enhancing teacher cooperation and teacher communication – in short, by planning” (p. 343). Incorporating the latest technology available, operational plans and procedures are designed, implemented, managed and evaluated with student success always in mind.

Managing is a process that involves a preoccupation with all aspects of goal attainment (Bryman, 1986). It is a process focusing on the efficient utilization of financial, human, and material resources to achieve the purposes of the organization and ensure that the school plant, equipment, and support systems operate safely, efficiently and effectively. Often management responsibilities can be overwhelming, because many issues requiring time are unanticipated. Effective educational leaders are competent in identifying problems and opportunities, confronting and resolving problems in a timely

manner, and managing time allocations so that the supervision of instruction doesn't become secondary to plant management.

In every organization conflict arises. In effective schools conflict is effectively managed and trust is built. The confidentiality and privacy of employee and school records are maintained. Strong educational leaders respect collective bargaining and contractual agreements, yet provide leadership in the formulation and enforcement of a code of ethics and respect and adhere to actions central to the teaching profession.

Evaluation is key to management, as it is to other aspects of educational leadership. Effort should be expended to make sure that the evaluation systems don't take on an artificial or mechanical quality or that they don't become ends in themselves. Effective educational leaders reflect on the organization's evaluation systems, as well as those entities being evaluated.

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D. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE BASE

In recent years two-way communications, collaboration, school-community relations and overall school public relation have increased significantly in importance.

Gallagher, Bagin and Kindred (1997) note that the importance of better communication skills and improved public relations skills is documented in studies conducted by Phi Delta Kappa, the National Institute of Education, the Nation's Report, and the New York State Department of Education.

Holliday (1997) defines school and public or community relations as a program established on all levels of a school corporation to improve and maintain optimal levels of student achievement, and to build and maintain public support. The effective educational leader understands the goals of a school community-relations program and therefore communicates and collaborates with parents and the community.

Few would argue the public nature of schools and that citizens in the community hold the status of part owners of schools by virtue of the fact that it is their taxes that support schools. This view of shared ownership, Gallagher, Bagin and Kindred (1997) state, dictates that people must be supplied with accurate and adequate information about the school or school system if they are to form intelligent opinions, to transmit their thinking to school officials, and most of all to participate as supportive partners in the quest for academic excellence. Strong educational leaders are active and visible in the community and communicate with the overall community. They reach out to different business, religious, political and service entities. Relationships are established and nurtured with community leaders. Individual and group values, concerns, opinions, and expectations are respected and referenced in the establishment of instructional and community-relations plans.

The more that the school knows about the community and involves all stakeholders the better are the chances of designing a school-community relations program that will achieve the school's goals and objectives. The traditional stakeholders, teachers, students, parents, and paraprofessionals, of course, must be considered in developing a program. However, with only about 29 percent of the parents having a child in the public schools' grades K-12 (Gallagher & Bagin, 2001), educational leaders must seek other external support bases. Most recently the focus has been on establishing partnerships with the business community, institutions of higher learning, and non-parents. Educational leaders will have to focus on services and offerings that appeal to others. Community education and volunteer programs have been excellent ways to enlist the support of the business community and non-parents. The effective educational leader understands the community, seeks outside support, and involves all stakeholders in designing a school-community relations program. The school and the community serves one another as resources.

The effective educational leader is aware of emerging issues and trends that will potentially impact the school community. He/she is knowledgeable of potential community resources that will assist him/her in implementing the school-community relations program. In setting up a school-community relations program he/she addresses

the organizational plan and who will be responsible for what. An important feature is the role(s) of teachers and support staff. The educational leader must provide opportunities for the faculty and staff to develop collaborative skills. He/she must model community collaboration with the faculty and staff. He/she must promote multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial and ethnic appreciation in implementing the program.

In order for a school-community relations program to be successful in collaborating with the external stakeholders, attention must be given to setting the tone internally. Poor attitudes, dispositions and actions can affect others. The effective educational leader is aware of the above and works to set a good tone in the building. Good internal communication is achieved and positive staff morale is not an after thought but is constantly cultivated.

Finally, the educational leader knows that the media play an important role in the school-community relations program. The media provide the school opportunities to positively communicate with the community. Educators often state that they are aware of need to respect the media's representatives but they often treat them with disrespect. Positive relationships must be developed with media representatives. Efficient use of the media and effective media relations are ways to meet today's demand of accountability.

Rebore (2003), referring to John Dewey's philosophy of empowerment, suggests that successful schools are those that have all segments of the school empowered. A school culture that considers all stakeholders as team members rather than individual players gives these stakeholders a sense of ownership and empowers them to contribute to the success of the school and the school community.

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E. ACTING WITH INTEGRITY AND FAIRNESS AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR KNOWLEDGE BASE

Howlette (1991) argues that professional ethics actually begin where the laws of right and wrong end. Rebores (2003) notes that conscience is that human capacity that allows an administrator to make ethical decisions. He describes conscience as (1) an inclination or instinct that helps a person decide how to act in relations to a particular ethical dilemma, and (2) a skill acquired through experience that a person can use to make an informed judgment. Rebores stresses that an effective educational leader rethinks the value and meaningfulness of his/her actions, makes appropriate adjustments in future behavior, and rectifies wrongs committed against people. "Educational leaders can sustain an ethical direction in their professional lives only through striving to find meaning in their daily activities" (p. 69). Accepting Hodgkinson's (1991) view that "values, morals, and ethics are the very stuff of leadership and administrative life" (p. 11), they continually search for what is ethically good in providing services for students and in supporting the activities of their faculties and staff.

A person's attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and dispositions are expressed in every action. An educational leader should reflect on his/her philosophy of education and administration. He/she should use a systematic approach to eliminate or minimize those attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and dispositions that negatively affect their management and supervisory tasks. The goal is to exhibit integrity and practice fairness. He/she should "acknowledge the rights of individuals to be who they are" and accepts them "in their authentic individuality" (Starratt, 1991, p.195).

Effective leadership calls for a genuine desire to promote the self-actualization of all members of the school and the school community. The educational leader understands that the personal qualities of a leader are more important than techniques of leadership (Rebores, 2003). He/she understands the nature of power and limits the use of coercion, reward, persuasion, and knowledge to the quest of established organizational goals, and not for his/her personal gain. He gives attention to both rights of individuals and the common good (Starratt, 1991).

Spring (1994) has identified four critical issues that are related to equity in the education of children in the United States. These issues are:

- access - programs open to students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, social class, handicap or other factors;
- quality – equal resources and equal programs;
- outcomes – the result of the educational process across groups; and
- deculturalization – the exclusion of the language and/or culture of minority students from school programs.

An effective educational leader is aware of these issues and promotes the success of all students and staff with a genuine sense of fairness. He/she further understands that "schools have a moral obligation to provide minority students a quality education"(Hudson, 1999, p. 139).

The law must be applied to the school setting. Educational leaders must be knowledgeable of the issues around segregation, gender discrimination, religion,

language instruction, testing standards. An effective instructional leader understands the limitations the law places on his/her leadership and respects and fulfills legal and contractual obligations.

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F. POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, LEGAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT KNOWLEDGE BASE

Effective educational leaders fully understand that schools do not operate in a vacuum. All three units of government - federal, state, and local - exercise some degree of authority and control over public education.

Educational governance of public school is the result of constitutional and statutory provisions of the federal government, the state government, and case law (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). Educational leaders have the authority to operate and manage public schools, but their actions must be within the legal boundaries of federal and state statutes and local policies. The provisions of federal and state constitutions, statutes, local ordinances and policies of local boards of education do not guarantee proper execution of the law. When educational leaders and others violate the rights of an individual or group, those violated may seek adjudication in the courts. Educational leaders are knowledgeable of school law and court decisions related to schooling and operate within the limitations set by the same.

“Article I, Section 10, provides in part that ‘no state shall...pass any...law impairing the obligation of contracts.’ This article guaranteeing the obligation of contracts has been litigated in numerous public school cases. Court decisions have verified that contracts entered into by school districts (including personnel contracts and other contracted services) are fully protected under Article I, Section 10” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, p. 391). Effective educational leaders are aware of and respectful of contractual agreements.

Bagin & Gallagher (2001) note that “it is evident in the legal structure of the state school system and in the laws regulating its operation that the power to manage schools actually resides in the people” (p.9). At the local level citizens elect the members of the school board and the membership is expected to carry out the popular will. To ensure the public nature of schools, state laws prescribe parents’ and citizens’ rights. As agents of a local school corporation, educational leaders are aware of the public character of the school and are knowledgeable of the principles of representative governance.

People outside of the United States, in quest of freedom and quality of life, continue to migrate here. Such migration impacts on all aspects of a school. Educational leaders should recognize that multiethnic diversity exists in most communities. They must strive to understand the cultures of diverse groups in their schools and develop plans to celebrate and meet the needs of various cultures and ethnic groups.

“Education is big business” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000, p. 348). And because most school-related costs (including salaries) have increased more rapidly than inflation in recent years, Lunenburg & Ornstein have concluded that the business of schooling is in trouble. Today the focus is on “excellence,” “efficiency,” and “productivity,” yet taxpayers want lower taxes, interest groups are pursuing choice and/or voucher programs, and tax shortfalls draw money away from public schools. All of the above impacts educational systems that are required to provide academic excellence and equity. The design and funding of schools must be a priority of educational leaders. Effective educational leaders are knowledgeable of the funding sources for education and are

competent in school budgeting. They are aware of monetary trends that have direct meaning for educational leaders and are impacting on schools, and they are active in professional organizations that work to influence the flow of dollars to education.

Many educators (Getzels & Guba , 1957; Homans, 1950; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000) view the school as a social system. A social system refers to activities and interactions of a group for a common purpose (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Translated into the school setting, this means that the school is designed to serve one of society's needs – to educate. While the education of youth is the primary need that schools address, from time to time society has identified other needs to be met by its schools, (e.g., inculcating values, building patriotism, preventing sex and drug abuse, reducing teenage pregnancies, reducing hate crimes, eliminating teen smoking). It is quite evident that society impacts the school. Educational leaders must be aware of this and know how to effectively respond, keeping in mind the educational focus of the school.

Historically, Americans support a separation between public education and politics (Guthrie & Reed, 1991), “Historians and political analysts refer to this condition as education's ‘apolitical myth’ ” (Guthrie & Reed, 1991, p. 54). Much of this myth can be traced to illegal graft and corruption that characterized politics in the latter part of the nineteenth century and spilled over to the public school systems. Whatever the public's perception, education is linked to America's political system. In local communities education has its own form of special government; boundaries have been set. Yet education is influenced by other governmental systems. Governors, mayors and other political figures often exert substantial informal influence on the schooling process. Needless to say, legislative bodies, at all levels of government, have increased their roles in rule making. Courts have been forced to increase their roles in rule adjudication. Education is an area that has received intensified attention. Educational leaders are cognizant of the linkage between political systems and education. They identify, communicate with, and establish working relationships with “influentials” for the benefit of students, their families, and staffs.

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