

# Re-Definition of Leadership and Its Implications for Educational Administration

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Woodrow Wilson (1987) once wrote:

The object of administration study is to rescue executive methods from the confusion and costliness of empirical experiment and set them upon foundations laid deep in stable principle.

The purpose of this presentation is to articulate a new definition of leadership as one function of administration and to show how that definition rests “upon foundations laid in stable principle.” We take “laid deep” to mean that a new definition of leadership which will have any operational significance must be a part of a broader theory of administration which in turn must be rooted in a coherent body of theory dealing with education generally--a body of theory which in itself must be derived from a broad philosophical basis.

For the last ten years we have been working on the development of a philosophical basis which will disclose the full nature of education and a coherent body of theory which contains propositions and definitions which have resulted in a new model. In 1971, the New England Program in Teacher Education invested around a quarter of a million dollars in a team of scholars at the Center for the Study of Human Potential, University of Massachusetts, for completing the conceptualization of this new model and initiating an implementation phase through in-service training programs. Thus, the new definition of leadership offered here, is derived from the theory of administration which is a part of a larger body of educational theory derived from a broad philosophical base. In order to understand the full implications of this new definition, it will be necessary to review briefly the philosophical underpinnings of this new model and the body of educational theory derived from it.

## B. PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

Man is at the center of educational concern; therefore, education itself cannot be understood apart from an inquiry into the nature of Man. Yet, the reality of Man himself cannot be glimpsed apart from his relationship to the cosmos. Thus, the philosophical base we have developed is one which articulates assumptions about the nature of man in the context of creation as a whole. Our efforts led us to a review of 3,000 years of man's thinking about the nature of Man—a review which gained its final measure of integration around the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead as represented in his cosmology, *Process and Reality*. The review of that work is far beyond the scope of this presentation; yet, a discussion of a number of its central themes is essential.

Reality, Whitehead says, inheres in the process of translating potentiality into actuality and that such a translation is the essence of creativity—the universal of universals-. Creation itself can be divided into different ontological levels—different levels of being—characterized by different degrees of indeterminacy, the higher levels being more indeterminate than the lower

levels. Man dwells on the highest level and has as one of his potentialities the capacity to extend or develop further potential. This in essence means that the fundamental nature of man arises from this infinitude of possibilities, each realization of which is stored as a kind of memory (immanence) which can be drawn on to negotiate the present. And when the present is negotiated with an eye to the future, man expresses his transcendence. This linking of the past with the present while having an eye on the future characterizes consciousness. It enables man to be in charge of making decisions about his own destiny; it means man has become self-determinate—self-actualizing.

From this basic philosophical position, we've generated a theory of development which categorizes potentialities and defines the key factor in their translation into actuality. Since the potentialities are infinite, they cannot be listed; however, they can be categorized, and we have established two broad categories of potentialities:

(1) Biological, and (2) Psychological.

The theory of development defines nutrition as a key factor in the release of biological potentialities and learning as the key factor in the development of psychological potentialities. The translation of potentialities (of both categories) into actuality is—sustained by the organism's interaction with the environment. Psychological potentialities are broken down further into the following categories: psycho-motor, perceptual, cognitive, affective, and volitional. The translation of these potentialities into actuality depends upon learning, which we define as the ability to *differentiate* aspects of experience, breaking it down into contrastable elements, *integrating* them in novel ways, and then *generalizing* the integration. Learning competence is thus defined as the conscious ability to differentiate, integrate and generalize whether the potentiality being actualized is of a psycho-motor, perceptual, volitional, etc., category. Education is thus defined as a drawing out of potentiality and an educational system is therefore any system which sustains the organism's interaction with the environment in a way that draws out potentialities at an optimum rate. A school system, then, is a social institution organized to guide children's interaction with carefully arranged environments for the purpose of drawing out their potentialities with the ultimate goal of enabling the children to become competent learners so they can be “releasers of their own potentialities—teachers of their own selves” thereby becoming in charge of their own destinies.

From this theory of development we have generated a theory of curriculum, a theory of pedagogy and a theory of evaluation. Our concern with these bodies of theory are tangential to our purposes here but are mentioned because the definition of leadership we propose is generated out of a theory of administration which concerns curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation and how the educational system maintains itself through time to achieve educational purpose as defined above.

### C. A THEORY OF ADMINISTRATION AND A NEW DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP?

Our view of administration is a general one (i.e., it is applicable to any social group or institution) but I will develop a perspective on administration which is particularly relevant to education as an institution.

Fundamentally, administration means “to serve.” The question, “Service to what end or purpose?” immediately comes to mind. The answer to that question is supplied by the broader theoretical and philosophical context out of which our theory of administration has been

developed. The central purpose to be served by educational administration is releasing human potential of both children and staff by facilitating their becoming competent learners (i.e., fully able to teach their own selves by knowing how to arrange environments and how to guide their own interactions among them). The function of administration is to mobilize resources to achieve purpose as efficiently as possible. To do that involves accumulating the experience of the system from the past, bringing what is stored in its “collective memory” to bear upon the cutting edge of the present while at the same time providing for (foreseeing) its future. We therefore propose that administration is comprised of two basic functions: management and leadership. *Management* refers to the utilization of the “immanence” of the system—the cumulative experience of the institution—by bringing it to bear upon the achievement of purpose in the present; *leadership* concerns the shaping of present actions in terms of what the system might become in the future, thereby guaranteeing that the institution or system itself makes a perpetual “creative advance into novelty,” and releases its potentialities as a system, or “collectivity.”

To survive, all systems must strike a balance between what Whitehead calls “permanence” and “flux” or stability and change. We see the management aspect of administration largely responsible for maintaining continuity and stability while the leadership function of administration introduces novelty and change. Management has its roots in immanence whereas leadership arises out of transcendence. To exercise one function at the expense of the other is to reduce the viability of the system, though at different periods in development,” either may require emphasis over the other. Everything that is said from here on about leadership presupposes a balanced emphasis on management as its indispensable counterpart.

A full exploration of the meaning of leadership is not possible without a detailed discussion of the meaning of transcendence. Only a bare outline is possible here. According to Philip Phenix (1971),

The term “transcendence” refers to the experience of limitless going beyond any given state or realization of being. It is an inherent property of conscious being to be aware that every concrete entity is experienced within a context of further relationships and possibilities. . . all experiences characterized by an intrinsic dynamism that in principle breaks every bound of rational patterning or practical convenience may establish.

Closely associated with the notion of transcendence is the idea of “infinite” which concerns a never-ending stream of possibilities arising out of numberless contexts of experience within which any organism may become related. Another notion is that of “spirit” which, Phenix says, finds its “exemplification more in the yearning impulses of feeling and in the innovative projects of will than in the settled conclusions of intellect.” According to Whitehead, our becoming—our creative advance into novelty—depends upon our reaching towards an ideal. This reaching for an ideal constitutes the “principle of unrest” associated with all creativity. Thus transcendence always includes the notion of idealization.

A number of qualities of life are correlated with transcendence-qualities which have to do with the creation of expectations which are critical to the development of individuals and institutions alike. We define expectation as reserving energy for investment in an event anticipated in the future. One of the chief subjunctive manifestations of reserving energy for a future event that is anticipated with pleasure is hope, without which there is little incentive for

“becoming.” Loss of hope on an individual level leads to depression and ultimately suicide. Loss of hope within an institution leads to very low morale and loss of staff.

The word leadership comes from a root word which is similar in meaning to the Latin word from which education is derived. Both mean to “draw out” or “lead forth.”. To lead means to be out in front and presumes a following which is being taken in a particular direction. That direction is established by the objectives and purposes of the institution or organization which is being administered. Thus one of the critical functions of leadership is to articulate purpose with lucidity and to paint with vivid colors the visions of possibilities implicit in the general purpose of the institution or the system. From the articulation of purpose comes perspective. Perspective determines relevance and makes possible the establishment of priorities in terms of sub-goals and in terms of allocation of resources. Under such circumstances decision making—one very important function of administration—has all arbitrariness removed from it. Under such circumstances, decisions have a rationale which is clear to all members of the system. Clarity of rationale for decisions made establishes the grounds for their acceptability which in turn presupposes willingness to comply. Such wide-spread willingness coupled with a sense of hope emanating from the transcendent function of high purpose and continual feedback that provides information that purposes and objectives are being achieved that constitutes the essence of morale. When the system is characterized only by management which focuses on the past and the present only, it is easy for members of the system to become primarily concerned with salaries, fringe benefits, overtime, unionizing—i.e., the materialistic aspects of participation in the workings of an institution or social system.

#### D. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP FOR HANDLING PRACTICAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

Just as our theory of development stresses learning as the key factor in the release of potentialities of given human beings—learning being defined as ability to differentiate, integrate, and generalize—so do we see a parallel set of processes related to the drawing out of the potential of any social system. Following are a number of practical issues facing all administrators. The definition of leadership has implications for how each of these practical issues can be understood and dealt with effectively:

- (1) Creating appropriate staffing patterns,
- (2) Staff selection, training, promotion,
- (3) Conflict resolution,
- (4) Distribution of decision-making power: problems of authority and obedience,
- (5) Evaluation and feedback, and
- (6) Accountability.

#### E. A COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP STYLES

The first of fourteen propositions which make up the final report of the New York State Regent's Advisory Committee on Educational Leadership is:

The quickest way to change an institution is to change its leadership.

Different styles of leadership are possible within the definition we have provided. I propose in this last section to view a variety of leadership styles as outlined by Robert Havighurst and make some predictions about the kinds of leadership we need in educational administration during the years between now and the year 2000.

### References

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