CRITICAL, NEW DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Educational leadership is an emergent field, newly constituted and developing. As with any new concept, field or arena of action, there are forces at work which, over the long run, may operate to open the field up or close it down. In an attempt to keep the field of educational leadership open as long as possible I will push the boundaries of educational leadership. My role here is that of a provocateur. My intent is to provoke, to stimulate, not to alienate.

There are three primary areas of critical, new work either being done or in need of being done in educational leadership. The three areas of educational leadership (and research into educational leadership) that I will focus on are these: 1) the re-integration of the human subject; 2) the ethnography of educational leadership; and 3) the democratization of educational organizations.

THE REINTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN SUBJECT

Recent work, especially by educational psychologist Howard Gardner (1983, 1998) on multiple intelligences, has broadened our view of the mind, how we view it and assess its capabilities. Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence has further expanded our understanding of the mind. In education, work on the emotions has been undertaken by, for example, Noddings (1984, 1992) and Denzin (1984), and this rich area of inquiry has been applied to educational leaders and leadership (Beatty, in press; Hargreaves, 1999).

However, this work, taken in its totality, while expanding our thinking about education and the mind, leaves untouched large areas of fruitful possible exploration concerning the human subject. Conventionally, when speaking of the totality of the human subject, mention is made of mind, body, and spirit. The work mentioned above only touches upon the mind, leaving the body and the spirit untouched and unexamined. If education (as opposed to training or schooling) is concerned with developing the whole child, work in understanding the body and spirit and their education or development--with implications for educational leadership--desperately needs to be done. Strides made through these projects, if successfully undertaken, would serve to integrate the whole of the human subject, and, I suggest, lead to a more complete education of the person/child/student.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Recently, Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) have called for research into the culture of school leadership and have begun sketching a research agenda for such study. I have advocated the ethnographic study of educational leadership (Waite, in press). Some few scholars have embarked on such a research agenda (Cordeiro, 2000; Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Moller, Johansson & Moos, 2000).

Ethnography, like educational leadership, is unsettled, and can be unsettling. Clifford Geertz (2000, p. 64) wrote, "We [ethnographers] have, with no little success, sought to keep the world off balance; pulling out rugs, upsetting tea tables, setting off firecrackers. It has been the office of others to reassure, ours to unsettle." Ethnography reveals possibilities through examination of alternative lifeworlds, either contemporaneous, or, as I have suggested elsewhere (Waite, in press), those of future possibility.[1] Both educational leadership and ethnography are amorphous, polysemic concepts. "One of the advantages of anthropology as a scholarly enterprise is that no one, including its practitioners, quite knows exactly what it is" (Geertz, 2000, p. 89). Whatever else it is or does, ethnography attempts cultural description or cultural translation (Wolcott, 1999); that is, understanding and communication. This understanding is essential for us as academics, as teachers and as leaders. Adopting an ethnographic disposition--a tentative, open stance toward learning from others what they value and how they both see and construct their worlds—would serve both us and our students. It would serve us as we come to understand and communicate to our students the potentialities of educational leadership, not only locally, but globally as well. Such an ethnographic disposition would serve our students as they undertake their studies—including

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[1] I must acknowledge the debt I owe my recently deceased professor of anthropology, Dr. Richard Chaney, for planting the seeds of this idea in me many years ago.

dissertation research—and as they go about their practice.

The Democratization of Educational Organizations

Throughout the history of schooling in the US, and perhaps elsewhere in the world, increased size has been met by increased levels of bureaucracy. However, the global work trend is that of downsizing or reorganization. In business and industry the current popular concept is of flattening the hierarchy.

The mission of institutions of higher education, in the US at least, has been said to be tripartite--comprised of teaching, research, and service. I believe the tripartite mission is a myth, a lie. In truth, the mission of higher education is quadripartite—actually consisting of teaching, research, service, and administration (though some might include sports as a fifth mission or purpose[2]). The fourth aspect of higher education institutions, that of administration (and this critique applies to primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions), is in reality only tangentially associated with the core mission of educational organizations. It is my contention that the purpose of administration is not to support teaching, the primary mission of educational organizations, but to support the bureaucracy. Further, I contend that the bureaucracy, and by extension, administration and administrators, do little to further the primary mission of educational organizations.

If administration (and the bureaucratic functions it advances and enables) is not in reality part of the mission of educational institutions, why then is administration of a higher status than teaching? Why is a teacher (or coach) 'promoted' to administration, to a vice principalship or principalship? Why, when a professor is 'promoted' to the position of a departmental chair or to a deanship, are they relieved of some or all of their teaching duties, if administration isn't prized over teaching? What about the other rewards that come with such promotions? Increased salary, secretarial assistance, etc?

What of the work of the common administrator? When people assume administrative positions and give up teaching (some may have been inept teachers in the first place, though some excellent teachers feel as though there are no other career advancement opportunities open to them other than assuming an administrative position), what is the nature of their work? What is their contribution to the core mission of the educational institution they now administer? In short, very little. Administrators' time is spent, for the most part, in meetings. In fact, meetings are the work of administrators. What is accomplished in these meetings? Again, very little—at least very little that contributes directly to the core mission of an educational organization. Meetings are simply another bureaucratic function and the business of meetings is to perpetuate the bureaucracy. Meetings are face-to-face encounters where the assembled reinforce each other's taken for granted beliefs, biases, prejudices, and assumptions. In short, meetings perpetuate bureaucratic organizational norms. Meetings are, or can be, closed to outgroups (see Corson, 2000, for an example), and can serve to marginalize, or further marginalize, certain others.

Corruption, rather than being either/or, is really a question of more or less. Countries, people, organizations are more or less corrupt, on a continuum. Bureaucrats who feather their own nest, who reap the benefits from perpetuating a dysfunctional bureaucratic regime are more or less corrupt. Paying exorbitant salaries and benefits to such bureaucrats is a form of corruption.

What is the value added by the bureaucrat, by the educational administrator? What does he or she do to justify the rewards granted him or her? When educators become administrators, the 'higher' they rise in an educational bureaucracy, the more political their position, their actions and concerns, and the less those actions are centered on the core mission of education, educating students, teaching and learning.

Rather than flattening the hierarchy, why not eliminate it totally? In business, the hierarchical position of CEO (chief executive officer) has been listed by Time magazine (Rawe, 2000) as among the top ten jobs likely to disappear: "Top-down decision making will be too cumbersome, and golden parachutes too obscene" (another of the top ten jobs likely to disappear--ranked number 2--is that of teacher). If freed from bureaucratic obligations—reporting to state agencies, responding to mandates, and the like—teachers, or in the case of higher education, professors, themselves could operate educational organizations. Large and reactionary (i.e.,

[2] Some highschool football coaches in Texas make $116,000 (US) per year (Texas Monthly, August 2000), and are relieved from all teaching duties. The football coach for the University of Texas-Austin, Mack Brown, is paid $1,000,000 per year, plus incentives (Texas Monthly, August 2000).

change inhibiting) bureaucracies are unnecessary for teaching and learning to take place. They simply substitute state control over teachers in place of teachers' professional control over the teaching-learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Work done within the mainstream of educational leadership (and educational administration) will no doubt continue. That is as it should be. However, if we are to realize the potential inherent in the unfolding area of educational leadership, further work in the three new, critical areas I've identified—reintegration of the human subject, the ethnography of educational leadership, and the democratization of educational organizations--(and others) needs to be undertaken, and soon, lest we allow the opportunity to make profound, meaningful contributions to the lives of the children and adults with whom we work slip from our grasp forever.

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