Curtis Paul Ramsey

Leadership Preparation

Can we see actual progress?

LEADERSHIP is not a new experience for any of us; we have been influenced by leadership from the beginning of man's plural existence on this planet. The best leadership which has emerged has always led man to a higher plane of humanitarian existence.

The influence of an inept, evil, untimely or insensitive leader ranges from moderate group discomfort to possible human annihilation. While the possible effects of educational leadership are not fraught with disaster to the above magnitude, the consequences of good or bad leadership are very important indeed.

A large body of research evidence and philosophical writing exists in the field of leadership. Much of this research is applicable, in varying degrees, to problems of educational leadership.[1] What have we learned that we can turn to good account?

[1] Recent reviews of leadership research and philosophy are: Curtis Paul Ramsey, "Some Implications of Leadership Studies and Management Development Projects for a Program of Preparation for the Elementary School Principalship," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, Peabody Contributions to Education, Second Series, No. 569, 1959; Roald F. Campbell and Charles F. Faber, "Administrative Behavior: Theory and Research," *Review of Educational Research* 31: 353-67, 1961; and Robert Dubin, "Human Relations in Formal Organizations," *Review of Educational Research* 24: 357-66, 1959.

The bitter truth is that the literature on leadership since 1945 has been voluminous regarding teacher, student, military, and community leadership. Relatively little, however, has been published about leadership preparation for the principal, supervisor, or school executive.

Farley and Santosuosso reported in their study that "inadequately trained personnel in educational leadership appears to be the greatest lack and a major handicap to effective supervision."[2] Why should this lack exist, particularly in light of the great amount of writing, theory building, and research activity related to preparation for leadership?

Is adequately trained educational leadership of marginal importance after all? Eight years ago only slightly more than one-half of the states required specialized certification to perform as an instructional supervisor.[3] Yet on every side we experience the dismal effects of inadequate or misapplied educational leadership—on the part of the principal, supervisor or superintendent.

[2] Genevieve J. Farley and John J. Santosuosso. "The Effect of Training in Leadership on a Supervisor." *Education* 78: 365; 1958.

[3] Virginia W. Richard. "Certification Requirements for Supervision in the United States." *Educational Leadership* 12: 173; December 1954.

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Is leadership such a personal and intangible art that it cannot be taught—or prepared for? Ample evidence exists to suggest that it can. Baum, in her dissertation, reported that "leaders can be trained to develop insight and perform creatively in the act of guiding, directing or influencing people."[4] Mendenhall and Larson have reported similar success in leadership training,[5] as have many others.[6]

Leadership: Science or Art?

Scholars date the "scientific techniques in leadership" movement from the classic management studies conducted at Western Electric's Hawthorne plant. It was "here" that the nameless, faceless individual was officially discovered and marked as important for the leader's consideration. Roethlisberger and Dickson concluded that one of the leader's primary functions was

. . . maintaining the equilibrium of the social organization so that individuals through contributing their services to this common purpose, obtain personal satisfactions that make them willing to cooperate.[7]

It is imperative to consider two subordinate findings related to the importance of individuals in groups: (a) there is informal organization within any group; and (b) leadership success is contingent upon expressed and active concern for the individual in the group. Such "scientific" leadership became so popular and "efficient" that Hobbs was compelled to warn:

The psychologist, the educator, the business man, the industrialist, as they gain increased technical knowledge of how men may be manipulated, are faced with increased ethical and moral responsibilities which require more than technical competence.[8]

Surely this answer suggests a major focus that leadership preparation must take. However, Campbell and Faber[9] cite DeGrazia's work and lament that it is much easier to train people *to study* administration than it is to train people *to be* good administrators.

In retrospect, it appears that a leader is successful not so much because of what he *knows*, as for what he *does*, e.g., Farley and Santosuosso[10] found that the actual *effect* of a leadership act is more important than either the knowledge leading to the act, or the nature of the act itself. Successful leadership, therefore, appears to be more an art of application, and less an exercise in scientific techniques. What a leader *knows* about his speciality, and about the structure of his group is of prime significance,[11] but the *effect* of what he knows and does remains the crucial test of success.

[4] Celia F. Baum. "Developing Competencies in Democratic Group Leadership." *Journal of Educational Sociology* 30: 282; 1957.

[5] C. B. Mendenhall and Ruth Larson. "An Evaluation of Leadership Training." *Ohio Schools* 34: 14-15; 1956.

[6] Hollis A. Moore, Jr. *Studies in School Administration.* Washington, D. C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1957. p. 202.

[7] F. J. Roethlisberger and W. J. Dickson. *Management and the Worker.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1939.

[8] Nicholas Hobbs. "Critical Requirement for Leadership Roles." Reprinted from: *Proceedings of Texas Personnel and Management Association 1955.* Austin, Texas: University of Texas, Hogg Foundation, 1955. p. 12.

[9] Roald F. Campbell and Charles F. Faber, *op. cit.,* p. 363.

[10] Genevieve J. Farley and John J. Santosuosso, *op. cit.,* p. 363.

[11] Richard O. Carlson. "Informal Organization and Social Distance: A Paradox of Purposive Organization." *Educational Administration and Supervision* 4: 366-74; 1958.

Findings of many studies now support the view that preparation for successful leadership involves not so much the *cognitive* element of the potential leader as it does the *affective* elements, i.e., to become a truly effective and successful leader, the attitudes of the leader must be changed. Unfortunately, most preparation programs for leadership—in all avenues and enterprises—seem to focus most sharply on the academic, cognitive approach to preparation.

Many executive development programs have been instituted in business and industry. It should be noted, however, that the enterprise's commitment to these programs has varied with the profit and loss structure of the company. In hard times, leadership development programs are among the first expenses cut.

Additional concerns have been expressed—selection is still haphazard. Persons selected for executive development are generally already in outstanding leadership positions. The early identification and special selection phases have led to some concern for "prima donna" attitudes that have developed.

A more positive note—business and industry leadership programs place great stress on human relations training, and also emphasize "general" or "liberal" education. Top executives must be intelligent, knowledgeable persons. Many companies are convinced that their technical specialists have developed a myopic "trained incapacity to lead."

When the *human* nature of group membership was acknowledged, a major shift in theory of administration began to occur.[12] Some very fruitful theories of

leadership phenomena have been suggested;[13] leadership styles (the art of leadership) have been studied;[14] and the dynamics of conflict in role expectations have been researched extensively.[15] The major dimension interwoven in almost all of these activities has been the human interaction factor.

As we have become more sophisticated in group dynamics, the dangers Hobbs and others warned of have become more real. Striking evidence exists to suggest that educational leaders constantly are faced with the problems of balancing their leadership power with their concern for human values and individual uniqueness.[16]

What Can Preparation Add?

Controversy continues regarding whether an educational leader is a "generalist" or a "specialist." Obviously, he must be both—but his speciality changes. He becomes a specialist in "leadership"

[12] See Robin Dubin, "Human Relations in Formal Organizations," *Review of Educational Research* 29:357-66, 1959; and Chester W. Harris, editor, *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960, p. 21.

[13] Jacob W. Getzels and Herbert A. Thelen, "The Classroom Group as a Unique Social System," *The Dynamics of Instructional Groups*, Fifty-fifth Yearbook, National Society for the Study of Education, Nelson B. Henry, editor, Chicago, Illinois: the Society, 1960, 53-82; and Roald F. Campbell and Russell T. Gregg, editors, *Administrative Behavior in Education*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957. p. 547.

[14] Gordon L. Lippitt, "What Do We Know about Leadership?" *NEA Journal* 44: 556-57, 1955; Melvin Seeman, "Administrative Leadership Is a Question of Style," *The Nation's Schools* 6: 42-44, 1957; and Donald J. Willower, "Leadership Styles and Leader's Perceptions of Subordinates," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 34: 58-64, 1960.

[15] J. W. Getzels and E. G. Guba. "Role, Role Conflict, and Effectiveness; An Empirical Study." *American Sociological Review* 29: 164-175; 1954.

[16] Richard O. Carlson, *op. cit.*, p. 373; Roberta Peterson, "Leadership and the Power Structure," *Education* 82:232, 1961; and Ray T. Wilcox, "Authoritarianism and Educators' Expectations of Leadership," *Educational Administration and Supervision* 43: 418-28, 1957.

along two dimensions. Halpin labels these functional dimensions as "Consideration" and "Initiating Structure." [17] Getzels and Guba call these "Nomothetic" and "Idiographic" styles of leadership.[18] Carlson prefers to think in terms of commitment to the total structure vs. commitment to the "tools of the organization"—the group members.[19] Under any label, the old and cruel dilemma of leadership function continues: command is a lonely posture, requiring constant balancing and judging of responsibility to the organization, and responsibility to the individual group members.

Many giant strides in program development were made under the aegis of the Kellogg Foundation's Cooperative Program in Educational Administration during the 1950's.[20] However, the subsequent published reports in leadership preparation are disheartening.

The most definitive study in preparation for educational leadership [21] documents this lamentable condition. In the area in which the highest order of professional preparation and competence in educational leadership is needed—the superintendency—disappointingly little improvement is being made:

1. Entrance into programs is primarily on a self-selection basis—colleges *admit* students from among those who apply. Almost no real progress has been made in vigorous recruitment and careful selection of potentially outstanding educational leadership.

2. Few "programs" in fact exist. Most colleges and universities offer a collegiate cafeteria of college courses, with almost no differentiation in sequence for the master's, sixth-year, or doctoral student. The courses are excessively classbound, rather than field or experience oriented. The preparation for leadership is a "bookish chore." [22] There is little distinction (except in amount of courses) for the student aspiring to be a principal, a supervisor, or a superintendent. Preparation is almost exclusively in the cognitive domain, with evaluation primarily an academic grade matter.

3. In spite of the tremendous significance of several of the social and behavioral disciplines for the complex function of educational leadership, few reported programs of preparation reflect any direct or interrelated connection between the core school administration studies and the basic supporting disciplines.

4. The "programs" can hardly be considered professional programs with small, part-time, and infrequent student bodies. Very few students are so professionally inclined as to commit themselves to full-time residential study and preparation. Does professionalism, then, really exist in educational administration?

5. With small, fragmented programs, low financial support, and low institutional priority, most programs are defensive holding actions—rather than aggressive new efforts in experimentation and preparation for leadership.

6. Of shocking significance—beyond the academic nature of programs of edu-

[17] Andrew W. Halpin. *The Leadership Behavior of School Superintendents.* The School-Community Development Study, Monograph Series No. 4. Columbus, Ohio: College of Education, Ohio State University, 1956. p. 109.

[18] J. W. Getzels and E. G. Guba. "Social Behavior and the Administrative Process." *The School Review* 45: 423-41; 1957.

[19] Richard O. Carlson, *op. cit.,* p. 373.

[20] Hollis A. Moore, Jr., *op cit.*

[21] American Association of School Administrators. *Professional Administrators for America's Schools.* Thirty-eighth Yearbook. Washington, D. C.: the Association, 1960. p. 310.

[22] *Ibid.,* p. 64.

Supervisor of High Schools. In one of these states, proposals were submitted directly to the State Supervisor of High Schools.

5. Approval in two states was gained informally through discussions among local and state department personnel. One state stressed the importance of informal, cooperative efforts of professional organizations and colleges and universities in securing approval for new courses.

6. Course outlines were developed by the individual school in one state and sent to the Director of Curriculum for approval. The Director of Curriculum then conferred with subject-matter specialists. The course could be approved for one year at this point, or rejected. Following a one-year trial, the school could reject the course or revise it on the basis of the year's experience and resubmit it to the Curriculum Director for possible final approval.

7. Plans for new courses in one state were presented to a State Accrediting Committee for approval and were then submitted to the House of Delegates of the State Education Association for final passage.

8. In one state a school system requested the State Department of Education for approval of new courses based on the presentation of objectives, plans for content, and evaluative procedures. Approval, if granted, was for one year. During this year the Department of Education Supervisor visited the system. Final approval rested with a State Education Committee and was based largely upon success and demonstrated need for the course during the trial period.

9. Plans for new courses were made at the local level in one state and were submitted directly to the Bureau of Secondary Curriculum Development.

Courses were approved upon recommendation by the Bureau and by state subject specialists.

In summary, state boards of education, state departments of education and local systems or individual schools accounted for the majority of agencies responsible for the approval of elective courses. Miscellaneous authorities were varied and sometimes vaguely identified. Twenty broadly defined procedures were reported. Responses in a small number of states revealed uncertainty as to the exact procedure. Three states either did not reply to the question or the responses were so vague that they could not be reported. No clear pattern of procedures was found common to a majority of states. Most of the procedures, even though described in the broadest of terms, were common to a relatively small number of states.

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cational leadership preparation—is the finding that *no* major institution (258 colleges and universities were a part of the study) reported courses in "Human Relations," "Interpersonal Relations," or such equivalent.

In short, it appears we are not really learning anything about leadership preparation. Almost a quarter century of research and theory construction in the dynamics of leadership and focus on *people in education* has not been reflected in new program design to any significant degree! If *learning* implies changed behavior (based upon internalization of new knowledge coupled with the *will* to act), we have not learned much about preparation for educational leadership.