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# Educational Leadership: No Longer A Potpourri

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*An "Educational Management Grid" can help the school leader analyze his or her own motives in administration. These authors believe that there are times to be authoritarian and times to be "student developmental." The day of paternalism, however, is, they hold, largely past.*

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In the study of educational leadership in the past, we selectively used what we considered the best from other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, communications, and management. Now, as we move from this eclectic mode into our own discipline, we need to reconsider some of what we "borrowed" from other areas. How applicable are items in that potpourri to education?

For example, from the area of management, some educators are using managerial grids such as the Blake-Mouton grid to obtain feedback on their leadership style and administrative behavior. The problem is that these other grids were designed specifically for business and industry and, therefore, are geared to production. Our "product" in education is the child, and this "product" should not be dealt with in classical business management terms.

Why not have our own educational management grid?

Significant information about our own leadership style can be obtained through the use of our own instruments specifically designed for educators by educators. The authors of this article have designed such an instrument—the *Educational Management Grid*.

The accompanying self-test describes 28 situations or observations that will lead to information that will help you identify your own administrative style. React to each question quickly, without attempting to "read between the lines," and then calculate the score, without judging the results until after reading the explanation of scores.

#### The Educational Management Grid

*Instructions:* Each item in the following self-test describes an aspect of administrative behavior as you interact with students and colleagues. Circle each response according to the way you are most likely to act in your present administrative role. Circle "5" to indicate that you strongly agree with the statement and "1" if you strongly disagree.

##### *Decision making*

- 5 4 3 2 1 1. When I make decisions, I rely solely on my own knowledge and past experience.
- 5 4 3 2 1 2. Faculty should always be involved in decision-making that affects their work.
- 5 4 3 2 1 3. I attempt to persuade others that my ideas are to their advantage.
- 5 4 3 2 1 4. Decisions pertaining to the cafeteria menu should be made by student government with school administrative approval.
- 5 4 3 2 1 5. I am willing to tolerate postponement and uncertainty in order to get maximum input from the faculty.

##### *Conflict*

- 5 4 3 2 1 6. As superintendent, I think the principal should be loyal to the administration's point of view instead of to the needs of teachers.
- 5 4 3 2 1 7. Faculty conflicts are resolved the way I would predict.
- 5 4 3 2 1 8. When I conflict with faculty, I take a stand and try to win the argument because I am their leader.
- 5 4 3 2 1 9. The most effective way to handle student conflict is to get a complete report on the situation, react by applying counseling and advising skills, and take appropriate action to correct the problem.
- 5 4 3 2 1 10. When I am in conflict with faculty, my policy is to call in everyone who is involved in order to work out the difference.

##### *Group Dynamics*

- 5 4 3 2 1 11. In problem-solving work groups,

titles reflecting levels of administration and faculty should be de-emphasized.

- 5 4 3 2 1 12. In a group composed of administrators, faculty, and student leaders, I have very little confidence in the opinions of the student leaders.

- 5 4 3 2 1 13. When I am chairperson of a work group, I realistically allow student members the same freedom of action which I would allow my boss if he or she were a member.

- 5 4 2 3 1 14. As an administrator, when I have played a major part in the decision-making process, I like to speak for the group.

- 5 4 3 2 1 15. I give complete freedom in problem-solving to committees which have the authority to recommend action.

- 5 4 3 2 1 16. I always consult several faculty members before I make decisions that affect them.

- 5 4 3 2 1 17. Faculty should never be evaluated by other faculty members or by students, but solely by the administration.

- 5 4 3 2 1 18. Within the faculty in every school, informal subgroups form in order to resist the administration.

##### *Motivational Skills*

- 5 4 3 2 1 19. The administration should create competition among the faculty in order to ensure maximum work effort.

- 5 4 3 2 1 20. The responsibility of administration is to make it possible for students to recognize and develop their potential for learning for themselves.

- 5 4 3 2 1 21. Students should take a final exam because they wouldn't study otherwise.

- 5 4 3 2 1 22. The primary responsibility of administration is to arrange operations and remove obstacles so that students can achieve their own goals by directing their own efforts.

- 5 4 3 2 1 23. Since I believe that students today tend to lack ambition and a sense of responsibility, it is important that administration develop artful ways to persuade and reward students.

- 5 4 3 2 1 24. I turn students loose in a work group and encourage them to go to it without supervision, unless requested.

##### *Communication*

- 5 4 3 2 1 25. For the sake of efficiency, the best way to run a school is for the administrator to give orders to the students without their input.

- 5 4 3 2 1 26. Students should not deliver remarks in opposition to school policy at school board meetings.

- 5 4 3 2 1 27. Information passed upward from teachers to administrators can be trusted.

- 5 4 3 2 1 28. I trust that student newspaper reporters will exercise good judgment when they write stories after interviewing me.

### The Educational Management Grid

*Instructions:* The numbers to the left of the grid correspond to the 28 questions you just answered. Transfer your answers to the grid by *circling* the number that you selected. When you have completed the grid, you will see how you scored within each of the six categories, either toward the authoritarian or student developmental pole. Then count your responses in the first and last two columns, and record the totals in the appropriate blocks at the bottom of the grid. Be careful not to judge your score before you read the interpretation that follows.

Authoritarian					Student Developmental		
1	5	4	3	2	1	Decision Making	
2	1	2	3	4	5		
3	5	4	3	2	1		
4	1	2	3	4	5		
5	1	2	3	4	5		
6	5	4	3	2	1	Conflict	
7	5	4	3	2	1		
8	5	4	3	2	1		
9	1	2	3	4	5		
10	1	2	3	4	5		
11	1	2	3	4	5	Group Dynamics	
12	5	4	3	2	1		
13	1	2	3	4	5		
14	5	4	3	2	1		
15	1	2	3	4	5		
16	1	2	3	4	5	Leadership	
17	5	4	3	2	1		
18	5	4	3	2	1		
19	5	4	3	2	1		
20	1	2	3	4	5		
21	5	4	3	2	1	Motivational Skills	
22	1	2	3	4	5		
23	5	4	3	2	1		
24	1	2	3	4	5		
25	5	4	3	2	1		
26	5	4	3	2	1	Communication	
27	1	2	3	4	5		
28	5	4	3	2	1		
Totals							

*Note:* The Sexton-Switzer *Educational Management Grid* is copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without the authors' written consent.

*Note to the Reader:* The real value in taking this self-test occurs in discussions with your colleagues (other ASCD members) who have just

taken the *Educational Management Grid* on the use of different administrative styles as they apply to the following six areas: decision making, conflict, group dynamics, leadership, motivational skills, and communication.

And, to gain the maximum, educational supervisors and administrators should participate in rigorous "roll-up-the-sleeves" management workshops in which they can discuss their style and learn necessary skills in each of the six areas.<sup>1</sup>

### Interpreting Your Score

The *Educational Management Grid* was developed to help educational leaders identify their own style in working with students and colleagues. Scores plotted on the left half of the grid represent an "authoritarian" style; scores on the right half represent a "student developmental" style. The terms authoritarian and student developmental were selected to represent two extremes of management style in education. In keeping with language appropriate to education, this grid uses the student developmental pole instead of the "participatory management" pole often found in other management grids.

One style is *not* categorically better than the other, despite the fact that in this decade it is popular to be developmental. If student developmental style were superior to authoritarian style, scores closest to the student developmental dimension would be declared winners! Therefore, even though it is outdated to be labeled authoritarian there are times that an effective supervisor will use that style, and there are other times that they will approach students using a developmental style. It is possible to be able to use both styles, neither style, or just one style effectively.

Scores at the center of the grid, "3" on the 1 to 5 scale, represent contingency situations.

The primary theoretical bases for the opposite poles found in the *Educational Management Grid*—authoritarian and student developmental—

<sup>1</sup>The authors of this article conduct management workshops for public schools in the areas of time-management, conflict-management, and leadership style. Information may be obtained by writing Dr. Michael Sexton, Department of Educational Administration, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.

are assumptions in Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y.

### Authoritarian

If your scores lean toward the left half of the *Educational Management Grid*, then you perceive your behavior and philosophy as high in autocratic style. The term "authoritarian," used here in its broad sense, represents the combination of many theorists' approach to management that have one common factor—a primary concern for the institution (school) and its structure. The label "authoritarian" has many meanings in the literature of management, ranging from paternalistic to control-oriented or production-centered. For purposes of this study, the label "authoritarian" depicts autocracy and compliance with orders from the top.

The authoritarian style is closely related to both Max Weber's bureaucratic model and Douglas McGregor's Theory X.

First, authoritarian style measured in the *Educational Management Grid* entails beliefs consistent with Max Weber's historic picture of the ideal bureaucratic structure. Weber, the German sociologist writing at the turn of the century, said that authority comes from the top of the administrative hierarchy, and that duties are distributed in a fixed way by those at the top. He held that autocracy is superior to any other form of administrative style because of its machine-like efficiency. Authoritarian style is necessary in a bureaucratic system for reasons of pure efficiency.

The decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization. The fully developed bureaucratic mechanism compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production.<sup>2</sup>

Douglas McGregor, former Professor of Management at MIT, wrote that his Theory X involved several key assumptions about human nature:

- People lack ambition, dislike responsibility, prefer to be led.
- People are by nature indolent and work as little as possible.

- People are inherently self-centered; they are indifferent to and must be coerced to meet organizational objectives.

### Student Developmental

If your scores lean toward the right half of the *Educational Management Grid*, then you perceive yourself as high in student developmental style. The term, used here in its broad sense, represents the approach to nontraditional,

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management from the viewpoint of primary concern for the individual, his or her active participation and needs, as opposed to primary concern for the institution itself.

In the traditional approach to management, authority had been considered inherent within the role of the persons at the top of the organizational structure. While authority, the root of autocratic style, was questioned, Elton Mayo, a principal consultant in the Hawthorne studies, was using a behavioral science approach to management. Mayo emphasized concepts such as motivation, communication, viewing the institution (school) as a social system, and employee (student) development.

While the traditional style of management was concerned with efficiency, the human relations (student developmental) approach to administration was primarily concerned with effectiveness. It was at that stage that some writers began to take a hard look at the bureaucratic model.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958. p. 214.

Bureaucracy is the sworn enemy of individual liberty, and of all bold initiative in matters of internal policy. . . . We may even say that the more conspicuously a bureaucracy is distinguished by its zeal, by its sense of duty, and by its devotion, the more also will it show itself to be petty, narrow, rigid, and illiberal.<sup>3</sup>

McGregor's Theory Y involved several assumptions about human nature, diametrically opposed to his Theory X assumptions:

- People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs. They have become so as a result of experience in organizations.
- Motivation, capacity for assuming responsibility, and readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals are all present in people. Management does not put them there.
- People are self-directed, creative at work, and self-actualizing.

### Different Styles For Different Situations

As we stated in the introduction, there is no categorically "correct" style. Instead, the modern educational leader should know which style is better in which situation and should be able to draw from both poles at will.

One can see the clear advantages of the authoritarian style. For example, in the case of a fire drill, efficiency, via the authoritarian style, is essential. At that moment, the principal certainly does not want input, discussion, or feedback. Or, in the routine institutional functions such as opening and disseminating the mail, the most efficient and time-saving style is authoritarian.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, use of the student developmental style is obviously necessary. For example, in planning a new curriculum change, the student developmental style must be used for the sake of effectiveness rather than efficiency. Using this style, faculty and students would have a great deal of input and influence in the decision-making process. Another example of the student developmental style is when the educational leader develops a scope and sequence of the curriculum as it pertains to the different grade levels, or when choosing an appropriate textbook series.

### Beware! That Old Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

We've said that there are times to be authoritarian and times to be student developmental. But what if your skills and personality are consistent with only one or the other? Let's answer by way of another question.

Have you ever encountered a superintendent or principal who seeks out the faculty's opinion under the guise of wanting input, yet has no intention of really using it? An attempt is made to cloak an authoritarian style, but only some of the people can be fooled some of the time. As Chester Barnard, president of the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company, cautioned top-level administrators in 1938,

. . . the decision as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the persons to whom it is addressed, and does not reside in "persons of authority" or those who issue these orders.<sup>4</sup>

So the danger of attempting to misrepresent this paternalistic personality is that in today's era, dishonesty in leadership is pathetically transparent. [E]

<sup>3</sup> Robert Michels. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, cited by Robert A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*. New York: Basic Books, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Chester Barnard. *Functions of the Executive*, 4th printing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945. p. 163.



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