

Educational Leadership: Toward the Third Era

John I. Goodlad

"Recent years have been harrowing ones for school administrators. We have yielded to the pressures and temptations of becoming experts in fiscal and personnel management, public relations, collective bargaining, and the political process. Few of us are trained or experienced in any of these, even though we must take responsibility for them. . . . It is now time to put the right things at the center again. And the right things have to do with assuring comprehensive, quality educational programs in each and every school under our jurisdiction."

I take my theme from the address delivered by Saul Bellow upon receiving the 1976 Nobel Prize for Literature entitled simply, "The Challenge." One sentence, in particular, lifts the eyes and mind from the page: "It is a long time since the knees were bent in piety."¹ In education, it is a long time since we paid homage to the essence of our profession.

We were much closer to this essence, I believe, 30 or 40 years ago than we are today. Then we spoke openly and proudly of the special character of our work, of teaching as a noble calling. Interestingly, principals were viewed as head teachers rather than administrators. The principal of the elementary school I attended taught most of the time, and the principal of the secondary school taught several classes of mathematics each week. There were quite a few schools in the system before the first superintendent was appointed—and he was not called such. He was a kind of supervisory head teacher, with a part-time secretary. He had a master's degree in English literature, but no formal courses in administration. He had been a highly successful and pop-

ular teacher and high school principal who never reached his level of incompetence.

I realize that it was another era—so long and yet so brief a time ago—and that comparisons are unfair and misleading. Nonetheless, there is a lesson here. Those charged with administrative responsibility for the schools kept learning and teaching at the center.

Today, for all but a handful of administrators, learning and teaching no longer are at the core of their daily existence. Instead, the center seems to be filled up with crises. It is a long time since we paid homage to the essence of things.

Two Eras in Educational Administration

Those of us who have been active in the field for two or three decades or more have lived through two eras or schools of thought regarding

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¹ Saul Bellow. "The Challenge." Address delivered at the Nobel Foundation, Stockholm, 1976.

the role of administrators. With a little luck, we may live through at least a little of a third. The first has been with us for a long time and has not been completely extinguished. The second began in the 1950s and, although seriously questioned in some quarters, prevails today.

The nature of these two eras is rather faithfully reflected in university preparation programs. In their more mature years, superintendents and principals joined university faculties, usually part-time or during the summer, to teach the burgeoning courses in educational administration. They taught the specifics of budgeting, the state Education Code, the structure of the educational system, scheduling, and curriculum administration. The charismatic leaders of places perceived to have outstanding programs such as New Trier and Evanston were in high demand. Ultimately, most university programs in educational administration came to be staffed by former superintendents and principals teaching the accumulated conventional wisdom of superior practice. Most are now retired; the rest will soon follow.

Although this group was often sharply criticized by the Young Turks of the second or scientific era, what they did and especially what they stood for bears careful scrutiny. Theirs was very much a "hands-on" approach, those who were there or had been there transmitting their hard-earned knowledge and skills directly to neophytes. If only what they taught had been linked to a related research effort, on one hand, and to continuing clinical experiences, on the other, as in medicine, it is quite possible that the history of the field would have been different and, I believe, programs and practices vastly better. Regrettably, research in education was still primitive and schools of education lacked the funds to mount extensive quality internships. But even given these limitations, much of what went on was relevant and useful. As my colleague, Gary Fenstermacher, says so succinctly, ". . . No one has yet outdone the common wisdom that emerges from simple experience, reflection, and informed intuition."²

The new ideas moving in on this scene early in the 1950s appeared to be eminently sensible. The behavioral sciences were coming of age and spawning concepts and principles that might help increasingly busy administrators to cope with the

demands, many of them new, of their rapidly expanding school districts. (It is said that, during a period in the mid-1950s, it was necessary for Los Angeles to provide space for 500 new elementary school youngsters every Monday morning in order to keep pace with the burgeoning population.) Social psychology, in particular, brought into focus essential considerations in seeking to serve simultaneously the needs of both individuals and institutions.³ The leading schools

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of business administration were rapidly incorporating the new substance and rhetoric, often changing their names to schools of *management* in the process. Could schools of education be far behind?

The educational system, like many other human enterprises, often takes as one of its guiding principles that more is better and so what is good in any new movement frequently is promoted to excess. Out of the new behavioral science concepts and the exciting new stirrings in humanistic thought, we zeroed in on those having most to do with armies, factories, and businesses. We became enamoured of input, feedback loops, and output, and made efficiency a cult.⁴

But, interestingly, if we use the business definition of efficiency that has to do with cost effectiveness, we didn't become efficient. We simply added the trappings of the new era to the baggage of the old. The new program planning

² Gary D. Fenstermacher. Unpublished remarks to the Board of Education, San Diego Unified School District, February 10, 1977.

³ See, for example: Jacob W. Getzels and Egon G. Guba. "Social Behavior and the Administrative Process." *School Review* 65:429; Winter 1957.

⁴ Raymond E. Callahan. *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

budgeting systems (PPBS), PERTing, managing by objectives, and all the rest required new personnel as well as the training of present personnel. We added, but didn't prune away—and evidence of this for some large urban districts grows. What should we have added, and what should we have taken away? The right question to ask was not whether we *could* follow our cousins in business management, but whether we *should*.

The tragedy was not that we attempted to become more efficient. The real tragedy was that we erroneously applied too much of the new scientism both to our self-concepts and roles as educational leaders and to the conduct of educational practice. We corrupted the educational process through overcultivation of the system.

And now, as we reflect on all of this—and reflection is a luxury in which we too little indulge—we become dimly aware of something missing. That something is what motivated most of us to become teachers or educators in the first place. The essence that should be at the center has been replaced for many by a whirling carnival of feverish activity that is stilled by neither more scientism nor the second or third scotch and water. For others, what should be at the center has been replaced by a struggle simply to survive.

The emergence of a third era in educational leadership depends on whether we can turn away from the excitement of being always in motion or, in the case of those caught up in sheer survival, whether we can move beyond crisis management. Some of us have grown so familiar with crises that we prefer for them to fill up the center, even as we complain. The third era that we glimpse now and then depends on whether we want to come back to a more quiet center and, of course, whether we can.

I am guardedly optimistic. Many of us are tired of carnivals and exhausted by crises. We can no longer be traumatized by dire forebodings of the future or, worse, no future. As Norman Cousins puts it: "Nothingness is conceptually impossible."⁵ My optimism stems from a growing awareness that many educational administrators—in rapidly growing numbers—want to put education at the center again, want to become educational leaders again, not mere managers. Some want to return to first principles, to the essence of what education is for and is. To quote Bellow

again: "Out of the struggle at the center has come an immense painful longing for a broader, more flexible, fuller, more coherent, more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for."⁶

Toward the Third Era

For the past several years in the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, we have been very much aware of the need to rethink our preparation programs in educational administration and leadership. We have been and will be very hard hit by retirement of *all* our senior professors in the field. This is occurring at a time when the first era in educational administration has almost disappeared, and the second no longer inspires. I have discussed the problem of where to go now with fellow deans, professors of educational administration, practicing administrators, and others. For the most part, their advice adds up to "Good Luck!"

It was in the conversations with practicing superintendents and principals that I began to get a glimpse of what might be required in the new era. Contrary to what I had been led to expect, they expressed little interest in programs designed to help present and future administrators simply cope with problems for which they felt ill-prepared, even as they spoke of being overwhelmed by them. They wanted something far more fundamental. Part of this clearly has to do with fundamental concepts and principles that might give some guidance with collective bargaining, decentralization, financing, public relations, and the like. They were convinced that *ad hoc* solutions are not sufficient and that useful knowledge exists, knowledge which the university might help provide.

Gradually, however, I began to sense that "painful longing" so well articulated in the quote from Bellow. As one superintendent in the group invited to discuss the matter put it, "I'm not an educator anymore. I'm no longer doing any of the things I came into this job to do. And I don't like it. If I must go on like this, I'll retire early."

⁵ Norman Cousins. *The Celebration of Life*. New York: Harper, 1974.

⁶ Bellow, *op. cit.*

In further discussions with educational administrators, much the same point was made. "We want to be educational leaders again; we want to make a difference in the education of our young." It is less a cry of the starving than of the malnourished. It is as though we stand in the land of plenty and yet derive little satisfaction, little nourishment from what we eat. Surely, our condition can be corrected. There are some useful steps we can take beginning right now, in the spirit of this being the first day in the rest of our administrative lives.

One step is to check our present perspectives regarding what is central to our work. If, in so doing, we conclude that collective bargaining, bal-

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ancing the budget, and informing the public are central, something has gone amiss. These are the conditions surrounding, complicating and, perhaps, endangering our jobs. We ignore them at our peril; we would be well advised to attend special institutes or workshops so as to be thoroughly updated on the issues and our role in dealing with them. But to put these matters at the center, often for understandable reasons of survival and expediency, is to commit a fundamental error which, ultimately, will have a negative impact on both education and one's own career. *Our work, for which we will be held accountable, is to maintain, justify, and articulate sound, comprehensive programs of instruction for children and youth.*

The school superintendent, school principal, or college president is the educational leader presiding over one or more institutions and, as such, is responsible for all that goes on there. But he or she cannot personally manage personnel, the budget, public relations, curriculum development, and instruction. He or she must delegate. What he or she delegates is most revealing.

In the first era of educational administration to which I referred, the school superintendent was

first and foremost, in everyone's eyes the *educational* leader. The budget was managed by the secretary-treasurer of the board or a business manager. For the superintendent to have delegated his or her responsibilities with respect to curriculum and instruction would have been unthinkable.

In the second era of educational administration, superintendents more and more were trained in budget and personnel management; backgrounds in curriculum and instruction increasingly became optional. This ordering of priorities became the mode in the criteria for employing superintendents and judging their effectiveness. Recently, in another state, I was told that a curriculum background is more a negative criterion, to be kept out of the picture in applying for the superintendency.

While I am not prepared to claim a cause-and-effect relationship, I cannot refrain from observing that disaffection with our schools and the production/management model for the superintendent have been in the ascendancy for some years. We can argue, of course, that this role has been forced upon us by rising costs and taxpayer revolts and, indeed, that it is dissatisfaction with schooling that has necessitated conforming to the management production model. It is my belief, however, that if there is a cause-and-effect relationship, it is precisely the other way around. Whether through seduction or in self-defense, we have allowed ourselves to follow false prophets and worship clay idols. Most of us are neither management nor public relations experts, more because of than in spite of our few courses in these fields. *Nor should we be.* These responsibilities should be delegated under our supervision to experts in the several fields required; their positions, except in the rarest instances, should represent the top to which they aspire in the system.

The superintendent, the top *educational* leader, should be representative of long educational experience and solid academic and professional preparation in educational foundations. If the demands are now something else, we must examine the extent to which we have ourselves created the expectations we decry. We have allowed the wrong things to move to the center of our thinking and use of time. In a third era of

educational leadership, we must commit ourselves to the educational program.

With self-image clear and educational priorities at the center, two steps follow for the superintendent. First, he or she divides into functional categories everything for which he or she is responsible—budget, research, public relations, curriculum, and so on—and delegates *all* of it to his or her administrative team. Only one member of this team carries the “associate” title—the person responsible to the superintendent for administering the instructional program, the person who should become a superintendent some day. These persons do not merely assist in their domains; they are responsible for them and are held accountable by the superintendent. They carry the superintendent’s authority and make decisions in his or her name. They administer within a set of understandings developed by the team under the leadership of the superintendent.

The superintendent retains two sets of responsibilities: chairing the sessions of the management team and serving as liaison with the board. All the rest is discretionary, except that the superintendent must never forget that he or she is responsible, ultimately, for everything. Nonetheless, his or her goal becomes that of creating as much discretionary time as possible; of not allowing all sorts of tempting sociopolitical matters and a vast array of busywork to move to the center of his or her life. These are always part of the environment, waiting to engulf one’s time and energy, but they must be spurned as constant companions.

Let us assume that the superintendent—and the same applies to the principal—has cleared 10 percent, or, joy of joys, 25 percent of his or her working week as discretionary time. What does he or she do with it? Again, an educational perspective is required. The schooling of young people does not take place in the superintendent’s office or in some nebulous territory frequently patrolled by supervisory personnel. It takes place in individual schools. The center of the educational enterprise is the individual school with its principal, teachers, and students. This is where schooling and a significant part of the education of those coming there take place. All of the rest of the district, including the superintendent’s office, is superstructure, good for providing support,

encouragement, and communication, but it is not where schooling and the education of the young go on. The superintendent who can get this straight in his or her own mind is a long way down the road in regard to establishing the proper priorities, creating an individual sense of purpose and maintaining sanity. The superintendent has taken a significant step toward making his or her job manageable and satisfying.

Next, the superintendent must clear up the traditional ambiguity with respect to the principalship. The principal occupies strangely nebulous, ill-defined territory, somewhere between the district office and individual classes. In some places, the superintendent and the teachers con-

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spire, both wittingly and unwittingly, to keep him or her there. When the superintendent needs help, as in collective bargaining, the principal is regarded as a member of the central administrative team. When the principal is in trouble with the community, he or she is a dispensable maverick.

For six years, several colleagues and I in the Research Program of /I/D/E/A/ worked with the League of Cooperating Schools, a consortium of 18 schools in southern California joined together for mutual assistance in self-improvement.⁷ These schools were granted considerable freedom to develop self-improvement capability. One thing we learned is that the principal is vital to the process.⁸ But to become effective, his or her role as leader must not be vaguely defined or ambiguous. He or

⁷ Reported in a series of seven volumes (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1973, 1974, 1975) and in a series of films entitled, “The League.” Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., 5335 Far Hills Avenue, Dayton, Ohio 45429.

⁸ John I. Goodlad. *The Dynamics of Educational Change: Toward Responsive Schools*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1975.

she must be given responsibility for developing a sound, onsite educational program, provided with opportunities to learn the necessary leadership behavior and be held accountable.

In recent years, we have talked a great deal about the desirability of what I am saying, but bold implementation has occurred in only a few places. The greatest hesitation pertains to budget; responsibility and some authority are decentralized to the individual school, but the budget remains centralized. The Tacoma public schools appear to be well on the way to joining the rhetoric with the reality. There, the superintendent pushes for initial budget planning at the level of each school where student needs are to be met—building the budget from the bottom up, with every tub standing on its own bottom.⁹

And now the superintendent's role as educational leader comes sharply into proper perspective. He or she exists for the purpose of assisting each school to develop and maintain a sound, comprehensive educational program for the children and youth enrolled there. But he or she does not do it himself or herself. Neither do the members of his or her administrative team. The necessary and appropriate persons for doing this already are in the schools. The superintendent's office exists to help—to provide resources, support, and encouragement and to unleash the talent residing in each school.

The several principals are to the individual school what the superintendent is to the district as a whole. A parallel is found in the university, where the wise president runs the campus through the several deans who are delegated authority and responsibility for leading their respective schools or colleges. Program and budget are built from the bottom up, and every tub stands on its own bottom.

Illustrating the Concepts

Now, let me illustrate the positions I am taking within the context of two sets of issues currently plaguing educational administrators. The first is collective bargaining; the second is best summed up by the slogan, "back to the basics." Either is enough to stir up a few ulcers; the two together are enough to do one in.

Collective bargaining is here to stay. Under

provisions of the Rodda Bill, negotiations began in California with a to-be-expected drawing up of sides, a good deal of tension for school administrators, and relatively little awareness or involvement on the part of the lay public. What the public ultimately will be very interested in is that part of the bill pertaining to optional arbitration with respect to the purposes and substance of the instructional program. This is an area of anticipated growing interest on the part of the union as well, if the experience of states such as New York is a harbinger of things to come.

For the school superintendent or principal to view himself or herself as the keeper of the gates through which unionized teachers wish to enter is a grave mistake. They might well question some of the union's arguments regarding equity with the private sector through bargaining in the public one,¹⁰ just as they might defend teachers' rights to collective strength for obtaining appropriate salaries and working conditions. What they must seek in the long run, however, are collegial relationships through which sound educational programs are maintained. This may sound ideal, but it is the logical argument emerging from what I already have said regarding what must occupy the center of the educational leader's thought and behavior. And it is, as well, the administrator's road to sanity in an arena that otherwise will destroy him or her.

For the superintendent or principal to assume the role of gatekeeper is to delay the essential public participation in the bargaining process. Our public schools belong to the people; the gains wrested at the bargaining table by employees are paid for by taxpayers, not administrators. The board traditionally was supposed to represent the people, but we know that, increasingly, some board members are put into office by and serve vested interest groups. The future key point of access for citizens is the local school. And so, the local school is not only the key unit for program

⁹ Alex Sergienko. "Building the Budget from the Bottom Up." Memorandum to Principals, Tacoma Public Schools, June 10, 1974.

¹⁰ "Address of Professor Myron Lieberman on Equity and Collective Bargaining in Education to AASA Convention, February 28, 1977." *Government Employee Relations Report*. The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., March 14, 1977. pp. 699-33/699-37.

development, it also is the key entry point for lay and other participation in that program. To the extent that the superintendent succeeds in centralizing the involvement process, he or she will succeed in shifting the battle to himself or herself. I need not remind you that this will result in a much more tumultuous and hazardous existence than will result from reserving some of the participatory activity at the school site.

A likely direction for part of the collective bargaining process is increasing concentration at the state level. This is attractive for the teachers' union because it reduces the number of fronts at which strength must be mobilized. Future patterns of school financing probably will contribute to such centralization. If the state is to pay a larger share of the bill, legislators will expect to participate vigorously in determining what state funds are to support. Bills specifying state minimal curricular requirements are in the making. The Washington State Legislature is busily seeking to define basic education, presumably because what is defined is what state funds are to be used for. Needless to say, the teachers' unions can be expected to participate in curricular planning at this societal level.

What we can anticipate, then, are two movements occurring simultaneously: one at the state level designed to determine and fund basic education; the other at the local site level designed to determine the totality of the school program. Both movements favor the superintendent—if he or she is wise enough not to play Horatio, on one hand, and to move much of the curricular and instructional action to the individual school, on the other. This leaves him or her in the position of endeavoring to provide leadership for educational programs that balance state guidelines for basic education with the varied and diverse interests of local citizens engaged in collaborative planning with the principal and teachers. It is reasonable to think that in the process the very best school superintendents will come to be regarded as educational statesmen and stateswomen.

A unique opportunity lies waiting to be grasped in the current flurry of rhetoric urging that we go back to the basics. What is required, first, is a little sense of history and, second, a little more faith in and understanding of our citizens. Two seemingly irreconcilable modes of thought have struggled for dominance over the conduct of

education and schooling. They have been with us for a long time. William James characterized them as "the hard and the tough" and "the soft and the tender." Rather than being separate and discrete, they are descriptive of the human character. Whenever we encounter the "hard and tough," the "soft and tender" is not far away.

So far as the rhetoric of schooling is concerned, these two themes rise and fall like tides, one usually flooding as the other ebbs. Each during its high deposits its share of debris on the beach and occasionally changes the shoreline a little. But the vast interior of schooling is disturbed scarcely at all.

During the 1960s, both modes of thought struggled for attention. But the avant-garde was represented by the soft and tender. Teachers were exhorted to open up their classrooms; open-space schools were the work of an enlightened school district. But all of this has been replaced by the rhetoric of "back to the basics." It is now difficult for publishers to interest potential customers in anything but math, reading, and language arts books.

The cry is picked up in the daily press, on radio and television, and at P.T.A. meetings. There is a flurry of activity—more of it outside the schools than within. Hundreds of conventions carry the theme; legislative bills are enacted—for accountability by objectives, competency-based teacher education and, of course, proficiency tests for high school students.

This activity builds up for two or three years, is intense for from three to five years, but then suffocates in its excessive rhetoric or falls of its own weight. Then the inflated rhetoric of the soft and tender rises to torment the ear drums.

What bothers me most is that educators contribute so significantly to these excesses. Indeed, they pick them up and, for a brief while, make dubious reputations out of them. Usually, too, they are just a little late so that they are swinging exuberantly to one drumbeat at about the time an alternate drumbeat is coming on strong. Some of us manage always to be out of sync so that the pendulum already has swung to the other side just as we are getting comfortable with where it was before.

I wish we had some kind of Hippocratic oath to remind us always to keep solid principles of learning, teaching, and education at the center

and to guide us in choosing what follows from them. Let me suggest the Goodlad oath: "I shall not support propositions which my professional conscience tells me are wrong; nor shall I engage in the practices stemming therefrom."

It takes only a little serious reflection to come to the conclusion that the people of this nation are committed to a broad range of educational goals. Early emphasis was on sufficient schooling to learn the principles of religion and the laws of the land. The skills required usually are referred to now as the 3 R's. Many people believe these to be basic. Then, the goals called for sufficient schooling for entry into the labor force. Vocational education emerged. Many people consider this basic. Then came emphasis on socialization and preparation to participate as a citizen in a complex society. This, too, is widely regarded as basic. More recently, we began to realize that it is not enough to be the good parent or good worker; one must be a self-renewing individual. This, too, is basic.

If one were to survey a community, it would be found that most people see all four of these categories as essential for schools, even though some would be favored over others for emphases. McIntire has created "the school game" in which parents build their preferred school from a list of choices in the areas of goals, program, teacher behavior, and so on.¹¹ Included in the choices are six statements in the major categories of goals I have listed. Most parents want all of them. Interestingly, a mother and a father selecting their preferences frequently disagree; and they sometimes want to create differing programs for different children in their family. None of this should come as a surprise.

Our responsibility is to assure that our young people have access to broad, comprehensive educational programs. A handful of people protesting at a board meeting or a few phone calls from irate citizens constitute no mandates for leadership decisions; nor are union leaders to be the final arbiters in deciding what our young people are to learn. It is neither the prerogative nor within the ability of state legislatures to define once and for all what is basic education and what is not. But it is the responsibility of such bodies to assess and to articulate what the people want.

Armed with the results of such assessments, which inevitably will reveal eclectic expectations covering all of the goal areas I have cited, the superintendent is in a position to provide criteria against which local school groups might assess the adequacy of the schooling offered at each site. Rather than setting a program to be followed by all, he or she challenges the principal and his or her advisory council of teachers, students, and parents to come up with five-year plans for educational renewal, plans that include both program and budget and that are updated each year.

I came back to where I began. Recent years have been harrowing ones for school administrators. We have yielded to the pressures and temptations of becoming experts in fiscal and personnel management, public relations, collective bargaining, and the political process. Few of us are trained or experienced in any of these, even though we must take responsibility for them. What we are trained and experienced in, most of us, is education—its traditional and emerging goals, its historical roots, alternatives, curriculum, counseling, instruction.

In the pressures and problems of our complex time in human history we have lost both our roots and our bearings as educators. "It is a long time since the knees were bent in piety." It is now time to put the right things at the center again. And the right things have to do with assuring comprehensive, quality educational programs in each and every school under our jurisdiction. Let us not follow propositions that our professional conscience tells us are wrong or engage in the practices stemming therefrom. [E]

¹¹ Ronald G. McIntire. "The Development of a Conceptual Model for Selection of Optional Educational Programs in an Elementary School." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976.



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