

## OVERVIEW

### A Different Kind of Leader

Ron Brandt

Instructional leadership is out. Transformational leadership is in. An oversimplification, perhaps, but the articles in this issue confirm a major shift in perspective among those who study leadership and—to some degree—among those who practice it.

Kenneth Leithwood (p. 8) sets the stage by reviewing the concept of instructional leadership, contrasting it with an alternative interpretation of the leader's role that, as often happens, originated outside our profession. A landmark book by James McGregor Burns (1978), published over a decade ago, examined the behavior of political leaders, noting that great leaders do more than satisfy their followers' wants in exchange for support; they win allegiance by sensing and articulating followers' deeper needs. The relationship "... raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (Burns 1979, p. 382). Informed by research he has conducted in schools, Leithwood pinpoints three strategies used by principals who are transformational leaders.

Next, Richard Sagor (p. 13) provides brief portraits of three such principals, and Michael Fullan (p. 19) critiques the conventional notion of vision, a central theme in the literature on instructional leadership. Good principals, Fullan observes, do not create a vision independently and impose it on people; they develop a collaborative culture in which participants build a vision together.

Does this really mean that instructional leadership is "out"? Loretta Shimniok and Mike Schmoker (p. 27) don't think so. They tell how their principal, in the tradition of strong "top down" instructional leadership, prodded a complacent staff to convert their school from a junior high to a more productive middle school.

Douglas Mitchell and Sharon Tucker (p. 30) believe they can explain the apparent contradiction. Noting that life in settled communities is different from life on the frontier, they point out that leaders need to behave in accord with these cultural differences. Matching and crosshatching the two cultures with the two forms of leadership (which they contend reflect the leaders' beliefs about the nature of the organization—or community—they serve), Mitchell and Tucker identify four approaches to the control of school performance: supervision, administration, management, and leadership.

Such formulations are never as precise as they appear; most experts on supervision, for example, would not define supervision as giving directions and closely monitoring subordinates for accountability. Even so, Mitchell and Tucker's analysis helps clarify the roles leaders play under varying circumstances.

Tom Sergiovanni (p. 41), respected for his willingness to explore innovative ideas, rounds out this reexamination of leadership by suggesting that maybe personal leadership has been overemphasized. He shows that norms and values, such as professionalism; can act as powerful substitutes for leadership. If so, one of the most important things a leader can do is help build a culture in which people's behavior is influenced less by direct leadership and more by commitment to shared values. □

#### References

- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row.  
Burns, J. M. (March 1979). "Two Excerpts from *Leadership*," *Educational Leadership* 36: 380-383.

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