

RIGHT QUESTION, WRONG EXTRAPOLATION: A RESPONSE TO DUFFY'S "SUPERVISING FOR RESULTS"

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Francis Duffy has done a service by asking "whether education managers could, or should, learn similar behaviors."¹ His admiration for the insurance manager is deserved when loyalty, competition, and revenue are the desired goals. Unfortunately, the extrapolation to the world of education is a misguided attempt to extol the Lee Iacoccas of the world as saviors of our schools. He portrays this insurance manager—this helper, loyalty inspirer, trust builder, humorous extrovert, knowledgeable insurance agent, incentive inducer, and promoter of positive relationships with superiors—as a charismatic leader. But frankly, what this manager has created is an interpersonal relationship of dependency with his agents. They vie for his attention and his rewards; they jockey to outperform each other in his eyes.

Insurance agents are in the business of selling policies and bringing in revenue. Noted for its absence in this case study is mention of personal care for the client (those who buy insurance policies). Duffy relates no stories about personal and extraordinary efforts to do whatever is necessary to help clients. I'm not suggesting that this manager is insensitive to clients, but his attention seems to go to the individual agents, their individual efforts, and their individual revenues. (Why not publish a "care" indicator of how well the agents serve their clients instead of the sales and money made?) Education is foremost a calling of service to people, not a revenue occupation. People choose the field to do good for children and young adults; care as an educational goal transcends the goal of materialism.

Educators are not in business for the sake of business. The aim of schools is to educate students to become productive citizens of a democracy. Duffy's examples of production and process goals are not the major aims of education (incidentally, I'd argue that his goals are really objectives). He mentions that

¹Francis M. Duffy, "Supervising for Results. A Case Study from the Business World," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 6 (Fall 1990): 31-38.

insurance agents are autonomous persons, and they really don't have to do anything. Yet these agents don't feel that way, they are psychologically and emotionally attached to their manager—they feel punished by neglect. These agents are not treated as adults but rather as children. The manager has established a paternalistic relationship with them.

We don't need more of this relationship in education. Blase has uncovered in his studies of micropolitics in schools that most teachers already are caught in dependency relationships with their school leaders.² Boyer, Wise, Lieberman, and Goodlad, for example, would concur that we need less—not more—of this type of leadership in our schools. The image of the principal as the all-knowing, all-wise, and psychologically powerful manager is harmful to the health of our public schools where teachers need to have a shared voice in preparing students for democratic living.

This manager may be fine for business, and indeed, he produces results. If I knew this manager firsthand, I'd probably be equally admiring of the miracles he works. But what we should be proving in education is not the cultivation of personal and institutional loyalty but the cultivation of equality, collegiality, and interdependence of adults working collectively with each other. Duffy's study has interest, just as the story of any influential person has interest, but the value of his article is the question it asks about what we in education should value.

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²Joseph J. Blase, "The Micropolitics of the School. The Everyday Political Orientation of Teachers toward Open School Principals," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 25 (November 1989): 377-407.

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