VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS:
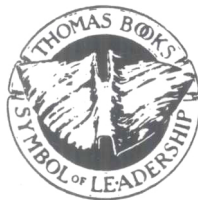
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EDUCATIONAL VISION

By

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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To Patti

FOREWORD

The terms vision and visionary leadership are new additions to our professional vocabulary. One could make an extensive list of the waves of words adapted and adopted by our profession. Frequently, the words are incorporated into the daily lexicon before clear definitions or applications of the terms are identified.

Educators are ready to rally around the need for vision and visionary leadership in our schools. However, we are in search of someone to point the way. We need a means of identifying vision and a means of assisting individuals who want to develop their visionary leadership skills.

The development of visionary leadership is critical because of the challenges education faces. As educators are asked to respond to issues such as those raised by *America 2000,* restructuring, choice, and financial constraints, a new leadership will be required.

These new leaders will need clearly articulated beliefs, commitment to attaining their goals in schools, ability to create the shared ideology necessary to achieve the goals of the school, risk-taking ability, innovativeness, and a view of the future that is significantly better than the present. These characteristics describe the visionary leader.

Edward Chance provides a framework for developing visionary leadership. By identifying both the theoretical basis as well as specific methods for developing visionary leadership, Chance bridges the theory—practice domains of educational administration.

Chance's treatment of the subject of visionary leadership reflects both his academic credentials as well as his extensive experience working with school districts throughout the United States. His contribution to the literature concerning visionary leadership is timely and significant.

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Chapter I

EDUCATIONAL REFORM
IN THE UNITED STATES

Reform. Restructuring. Redesigning. Career Ladders. Site Based Management. Outcome Based Education. Lead Management. Collegiality. Empowerment. Shared Decision Making. These terms represent only a partial list of the concepts and ideas to bombard the educational system in this country during the past decade. The result of the advocation of such postulates found policy makers and political leaders racing to implement and mandate new curricular guidelines, increased graduation requirements, mandatory testing of students, explicit extensive certification requirements, and expanded, albeit often unrealistic, societal expectations. Add to this picture financial chaos in numerous states and school districts as the result of lawsuits and court decisions condemning inequitable and unequal funding formulas.

It is no wonder that the view of a large portion of the general populace became one that perceived the country's educational system as second rate, outmoded, and decrepit. Too many believed the economic woes experienced were the direct result of a shoddy, antiquated institution. School leaders were often forced into a response mode that was both managerial and reactive. Visionary and proactive leadership became a thing of the past as schools were inundated by state and federal mandates, rules, and regulations. The absence in this country, or in local districts, of an individual and collective vision led to confusion, disenchantment, and an increased organizational disequilibrium.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT

Where did this reform begin? How did it evolve? How has it influenced schools? What impact has it had on schools? This reform movement began ostensibly with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983). This relatively small document which took two and a half years to

produce served as the catalyst for this reform cycle. The remarkable thing is that the cycle has lasted so long, although it has evolved through several stages or waves (Murphy, 1990; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). Reform is not new to education in this country. Cycles seem to come and go each decade. Some impact the system, many do not.

The Committee of Ten on Secondary School Social Studies in 1893 recommended changes in the educational curriculum that would provide an expanded academic nucleus of English, history, mathematics, science, and foreign language. By the end of World War I, The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (1918) signaled another reform effort which advocated a varied curriculum that instigated the rise of the comprehensive high school. The 1930s fostered the concept of progressivism with an expanded, more diverse curriculum. The 1940s saw the publication of the National Education Association's report *Education for All American Youth* (1944) which provided public schools the opportunity to develop life adjustment curricula which further varied the academic offerings.

The 1950s contributed a reform movement that was deeply concerned about the absence of rigor in the curriculum as well as the quality of teaching. As is often the case, politics and political concerns came to the fore in this reform cycle. James Bryant Conant's report on high schools provided education with new math and new science as part of the answer. The political and educational scramble to maintain industrial and technological superiority would persist into the mid-1960s. The late 1960s and early 1970s found a sense of chaos in both school and society as the country attempted to understand and interpret the meaning of Viet Nam. This same period saw a change in the type of youth that schools were called on to educate, as the number of minority and lower income students increased and the cultural diversity of the nation became even more apparent. The late 1970s brought a call for a return to the basics and the re-establishment of a core curriculum.

Obviously educational reform, actual or perceived, is a continuous, cyclical process in this country. Each cycle creates new problems, resurrects old ideas, places blame, and too often seeks easy, simplistic answers concerning complex issues. Each reform cycle begins in a similar manner with various articulated concerns about the quality of education provided by schools. Task forces and study groups are established and given the charge to ascertain solutions to the perceived problems and issues. Task forces traditionally include business and lay citizens, public

officials, concerned taxpayers, and occasionally educators. Reform policies, rules, or regulations are advanced that often do little but temporarily satisfy the public and politicians. Cuban (1990) argues that there "are really tactical moves to ease political tensions over the role of schools" (p. 139). After the policies are adopted there generally is a time of relative peace before the reform cycle begins anew. The uniqueness of this reform movement is its longevity and its impact on both public and higher education. The current effort has endured at least two, and possibly three, waves of reform (Bacharach, 1990; Murphy, 1990; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989).

The first wave of reform was exemplified by reports such as *The Nation at Risk* (1983), *Action for Excellence* (1983), *High School* (1983), *Educating Americans for the 21st Century* (1983), and *A Place Called School* (1984). These and other like-minded reports exhibited certain similarities and commonalities. Sizer (1983) identified seven trends that were evident in the first wave of reform. These were:

1. A call for a return to the basics.
2. A concern about understanding and strengthening the relationship between schools and the economy.
3. An appeal for the resurgence of adult authority over students and the schools of this nation.
4. A belief that the state, not the federal government, should serve as the agent of reform.
5. An assertion that the financial cost of schools and education must be reduced.
6. A conviction that the diverse needs and abilities of students should be met by establishing several different types of schools. It was maintained that the students and their parents should have a degree of choice in selecting an appropriate school.
7. An opinion that students and their schools need to be evaluated as to their performance and that this could best be accomplished by utilizing measurement techniques that seek to ascertain the results of teaching and learning (p. 1).

The first wave of reports resulted in the development of numerous policies which were often implemented at the state level and bureaucratically imposed on local school districts. Although in the past these actions might have settled the reform issue, it did not do so this time. Indeed, policies of this first wave were barely written and disseminated when the

criticism began. Much of the criticism and repudiation of these policies focused on the absence of a suitable educational and organizational framework that would guarantee success. It was charged that the reform dictates were realistically unworkable with the organizational system as it currently existed.

Thus, it was that the second wave came into existence with a call not for changing policies but for changing the very structure of schools themselves. The second wave of reform with its emphasis on restructuring was typified by *School Leadership: A Preface for Action* (1988), the Carnegie Forum report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986), and *Tomorrow's Teachers* (1986) by the Holmes Group. Murphy (1990) indicated that the areas of "(1) the professionalization of teaching, (2) the development of decentralized school management systems, and (3) the enactment of specific reform topics . . . (such as programs for at-risk students" (p. 28) were the primary focus of the second wave of reform. This second surge began in 1986 and provided the impetus for site based management, teacher empowerment, and the development of school-business partnerships.

The essential problem with this round of the current reform movement is that many have misunderstood its goals. The initial surge of reform was much easier to accept with its programmatic goals of long school years and days, extensive monitoring, and higher standards. The second wave which essentially required the development of new relationships, new power structures, and extensive change has been more difficult to develop. Many schools, for instance, indicate that they utilize site based management strategies but a close scrutiny of practice finds only the establishment of more committees and task forces to study inane problems and recommend solutions that are often ignored or diluted. The concept of teacher empowerment is feared by many administrators because of the issue of control and is avoided or supported by teachers depending on their personal or political philosophies.

If this second wave of reform is to succeed, more must understand it and accept it. The attempt at restructuring and empowerment attempts to create change from the bottom up while the first wave sought change by dictating from the top down. Both have had some success but perhaps there is an additional possibility for reform.

Interestingly, Murphy (1990) indicated that the educational reform movement has now entered a third wave which focuses "directly on children" (p. 29). Table I provides an overview of the three waves Mur-

phy envisioned. Others have yet to fully support his contention. The problem perhaps lies in the very fact that the attention should have been on children all along. Whether the emphasis is on policies, teachers, organizational structure, or administrators, the bottom line should have always been whether reform improved the educational opportunities of children. Instead, it appears that the reform movement has accepted too enthusiastically the industrial model where the end product is all that matters. The paradox that exists becomes readily evident when the product (the student) should be an educated young adult able to read, write, and effectively follow directions in the business community yet also be creatively individualistic. It is still to be determined if both attributes can coexist within the same end product.

The question that has never been satisfactorily answered throughout the reform movement and its waves is what are we as a nation really trying to accomplish? What is the vision of what schools should be? Once the vision has been collectively accepted, then how is it to be actualized? Is restructuring, redesigning, empowering or any of the myriad of other ideas the answer to the complex issue of school improvement? Perhaps the problem with this, and other reform efforts, has been the proverbial cart before the horse. Without a cogent vision is this reform all for nothing?

Certainly, the reasons that the reform movement could fail are legend. If nothing else, previous reform efforts that have accomplished substantively little should provide a word of caution and concern. Obvious constraints such as the inadequate financing of schools, the embedded bureaucracy, the intransigent organizational culture, and the fact that education becomes a political football each election year all lend themselves to the argument that this reform attempt, like so many others, will be only moderately successful.

If one seeks some consolation from the pessimism expressed above, it must be in the fact that this reform movement has endured longer than most. Certainly, there is some truth to the belief that the longer it lasts, the more institutionalized its reforms will become. Obviously, this means that the reforms will eventually become entrenched in the organizational system and its bureaucratic norms, but that in itself is the purpose of the movement. Additional support for the eventual success of the reform movement can be found in the results of some of the earlier efforts such as improved test scores, indicating to some extent strengthened student learning. The movement has also provided a better understanding of the

Table I
COMPARING THE DIFFERENT WAVES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THE 1980s

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Metaphor	Fix the old clunker (repair)	Get a new car (restructure)	Rethink view of transportation (redesign)
Philosophy	Expand centralized controls	Empower professionals and parents	Empower students
Assumptions	Problems traceable to low standards for workers and low quality of production tools	Problems traceable to systems failure	Problems traceable to fragmented, uncoordinated approaches for taking care of children
Change model	Top-down (bureaucratic model)	Bottom-up (market model); lateral (professional model)	Interorganizational (interprofessional model)
Policy mechanisms	Prescription (rule making and incentives); performance measurement	Power distribution	
Focus	The system; incremental improvement	The people (professionals and parents); radical change	The child; revolutionary change
Areas	Specific pieces of quantitative requirements-standards	Governance and work structures	Delivery structure

From Joseph Murphy "Educational Reform Movement of the 1980's © 1990 by McCutchen Publishing Corporation, Berkley, CA 94702. Permission granted by the publisher.

relationship between teacher and administrator and education and the community.

Clearly, the reform movement is not over. The movement continues to expand and refocus. The first wave provided policy and curricular mandates, while the second addressed teachers and their involvement in the educational process at a variety of levels. Both waves, if one accepts the two wave standard, focused extensively on what changes occurred in

public schools, teaching, and student learning. Recently, there has been a realization that in much of the early reform school administrators were essentially ignored and placed in the roles of agents or enforcers of the reform. The renewed attention to administrators has primarily focused on their preparation by institutions of higher education, as it became apparent that administrators were an integral component in the reform effort and could mightily impact its success or failure.

REFORM AND ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION

The national reform movement, until recently, had been only obliquely interested and concerned about administrators and administrator preparation programs. Early warnings of criticism (Achilles, 1984; Peterson & Finn, 1985) primarily were concerned with the methodology utilized by many universities to train prospective administrators. As time passed, it became abundantly clear that any true reform must have the support and consent of school administrators. Without that support, reform measures could be subverted or weakened by leaders who had little commitment or concern for the success of the reforms.

The publication of *Leaders for America's Schools* (1987) was the first major attempt to identify deficiencies and recommend viable reform policies. This work, sponsored by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), advanced several postulates. These included but were not limited to:

1. The establishment of a National Policy Board for Educational Administration.
2. The notion that administrator preparation programs should adopt the professional school model utilized by law and medicine.
3. The supposition that too many higher education institutions prepared administrators and this diluted preparation programs. They therefore recommended that many small universities and colleges should withdraw from preparing administrators.
4. The call for a significant increase in the number of women and minorities admitted to preparation programs. This was deemed necessary in order to more fully reflect the multicultural diversity of society.
5. The belief that certification requirements should be substantially improved and expanded.

    6. The proposal that those higher education institutions which retained preparation programs should develop extensive partnerships with public schools so that administrator training could be significantly improved (p. xiii).

This report caused a tremendous hue and cry from the smaller colleges across the country which avowed that they provided a more pragmatic education for administrators than did the larger, more research oriented universities. Very few institutions responded by eliminating preparation programs. Indeed, many expanded their programs or developed new training models in response to the significant number of retirements among practicing administrators across the country. Amazingly, the recommendation for establishing a National Policy Board provoked very little discussion or criticism.

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPB) was established with the financial support of the Danforth Foundation, the UCEA, and other administrator-related professional organizations. These organizations included groups such as the American Association for School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The NPB was initially situated at the University of Virginia.

In 1989 the NPB released their reform agenda. The relatively brief list of recommendations titled *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform* immediately created a storm of debate. Many of the professional organizations that had supported the establishment of the NPB instantly disavowed some of the report's recommendations.

The report advanced nine proposals focused around three broad categories. These categories addressed the issue of people/personnel, programmatic concerns and needs, and the question of assessment. Several of the more debated recommendations were:

    1. That entrance requirements and standards for administrator preparation programs should be significantly increased;

    2. That each university's administrator preparation program have a critical number of qualified faculty which was deemed to be at least five;

    3. That the doctorate in educational administration (Ed.D.) be a mandatory prerequisite for certification as a school administrator;

4. That individuals who desired to become school administrators be required to complete one year of full-time residency as well as a year of full-time field-based residency;

5. That a common curriculum and unified knowledge base be agreed upon for all administrator preparation programs;

6. That long-term working relationships be established between public schools and universities for purposes of service and research;

7. That administrator preparation programs establish a plan to vigorously recruit women and minorities; and,

8. That national accreditation and a national professional standards board become the method by which quality assurance of programs and people be guaranteed (p. 5–7).

These recommendations caused exactly what they were intended, and that was an intense dialogue within the higher education community and among administrator professional organizations. The reform movement had finally addressed administrator preparation and it seemed that the reform discussion had been much more palatable when it was focused on policy or teachers rather than on administrators.

In October, 1989, the University Council for Educational Administration, one of the charter members in the two previously discussed reports, issued its own document regarding administrator preparation programs. This short one page position paper, *The Preparation of Educational Administrators* (1989), diluted some of the more controversial stands of the other two reports while reiterating those which seemed too innoculous and acceptable to all concerned. A few of the UCEA recommendations were:

1. That a relevant knowledge base for school administrators be established;

2. That each potential administrator participate in periods of intense concentrated study as well as be provided the opportunity for clinical practice;

3. That all preparation programs be required to maintain a critical mass of faculty;

4. That recruitment programs should focus on women, minorities, and educators who have been exceptionally successful; and,

5. That the completion of a master degree be a prerequisite for entrance into all administrator preparation programs (p. 1).

Clearly, this position statement supported many of the NPB's recommendations while homogenizing the more controversial ones.