

# Training for Effective School Administrators

Development programs for educational leaders should include study of management functions, leader behavior, and instructional leadership skills.

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Few social institutions could withstand the pressures faced by schools over the last decade. The mix of accountability laws, competency tests, mandates for equity and a more responsive curriculum, declining enrollments, lid bills on financing, and collective bargaining have placed demands on school administrators for skills unheard of several years ago, much less taught in universities.

As a result improved university preparation programs and more effective Human Resource Development (HRD) for practicing administrators are more important than ever. We must now think through what the curriculum for school administrators should be and what pedagogy (or andragogy) will best assist administrators to better cope if not lead.

## **The Educator's Response**

Educational leaders have responded to outside pressures with a heavy press for a management approach to running schools or "systems" thinking and all that goes with such efforts for efficiency and effectiveness. Precise goals in both short- and long-range planning, closer teacher supervision, criterion-referenced testing, and tougher performance evaluation now characterize life in many districts. This mystique of "management" continues, even though the concept is not well understood by many of its admirers, and school administrators have rarely been trained to Plan, Organize, Direct, and Control.

## **The Administrator's Perception of the Problem**

Where does all this leave the practicing school administrator? Slightly bewildered.

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dered and ready for early retirement.

If one examines rationally the sources of bewilderment—accountability, competency testing, mandated curriculum, negotiation, and shrinking revenues—one can derive a set of skills very much needed by the contemporary school administrator:

- Skill at building consensus among diverse viewpoints
- Skill at flexible programming to accommodate a variety of student needs
- Confidence in instructional improvement strategies that offer hope of getting results
- Organization development skills—relieving the pathology almost all organizations have
- Improved management skills.

The partial list doesn't look at all like the needs perceived by school administrators. During the past five years, I've opened dozens of leadership training workshops by asking principals and other leaders to write in a sentence or two what they see as their biggest leadership problems. Expressed in their own words, their list looks like this:

- Motivating teachers to accept new ideas (always number 1)
- Organizing my time; time management
- Communication (whatever that may be)
- Getting things accomplished without authority to do so
- Being too directive; asserting my views too strongly
- Involving others in decisions
- Too many forms to fill out; central office paperwork
- Discipline.

And the list goes on. In a typical group of principals, about 90 percent of the topics cited are *people problems* (or those of relationship behaviors in lead-

ership training lingo). The following account for only about 10 percent of such spontaneously reported perceptions of leadership problems:

- No sense of direction in our district
- No priorities have been established
- Everyone pulls in different directions.

These comments, of course, reflect goal problems or those dealing with task behaviors. Rarely does a school leader mention improving productivity; improving achievement, reducing drop-outs, improving school climate, or motivating student interest in important societal issues.

The dilemma early recognized by people who train school administrators is how much to focus on perceived needs of administrators vs. the needs perceived by someone else, such as productivity. HRD programs that are well received deal with both, quite obviously, but what then is the substance of a curriculum that will have a tangible and positive effect on students, administrators, and teachers?

### **A Proposed HRD Program for Administrators**

A comprehensive HRD program for potential or practicing school administrators entails four major components, requires substantial time, and must be a *sustained* effort. The four components are:

1. *Training in Leader Behavior.* Leaders are expected to lead, to provide a sense of direction, to motivate others toward attainment of goals, and to build consensus. We need to help people become sensitive to style flexibility, alternative models of leader behavior, and what they imply for practitioners.

Typically, training programs take people through conceptualizations of leader behavior, such as the Ohio State

model, and the work of Fiedler, Likert, Blake and Mouton, and Hersey and Blanchard. I've done this for some time, but more recently I've given increased attention to the relationship behaviors (people aspects) of leadership. The education community is beginning to show interest in the concept of productivity (quality circles, for example), the Quality of Work Life (General Motors), and is occasionally applying McClelland's important work at Harvard on how to motivate people. Herzberg's work is necessary but insufficient; to use Theory X and Theory Y, one must know Theory Z.

Interest in trait theory is surfacing again. One researcher concluded that good schools result when the principal has vision, resourcefulness, and high leadership skill. I would add the ability to "size up" the school's needs and a "can do" attitude, but these traits are tough to measure.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals' work in adapting industry's assessment center idea is a significant venture into better identification of persons capable of educational leadership.<sup>1</sup> The current refinement of the assessment center may be a useful resource to school districts since the people operating these centers are developing training experiences designed to strengthen traits known to be related to effective leadership.

Useful HRD experiences can range from an intensive workshop on leadership style to an informal seminar discussing James McGregor Burns' book, *Leadership*. Efforts should be made to stimulate a lifelong interest in continuing one's professional development in the study of leader behavior.

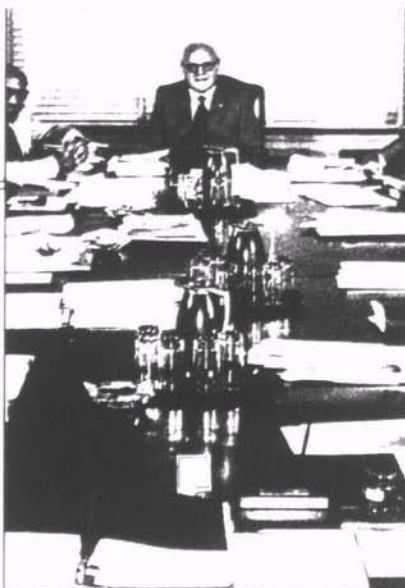
2. *Training in Management Skills.* The management approach to leading an institution is, very simply, a disciplined way of looking at one's job that helps

put leader behavior knowledge into perspective. I'm always amazed when principals debate whether they should be "managers" or "instructional leaders." In pushing these discussions a little, I often find that those who advocate the "manager" role really don't mean management in the sense of its classic functions. Instead, they are referring to operations—a maintenance role in handling logistics, schedule, policy interpretation, and so on. An "operations role" is not leadership any more than a management role is. Leadership implies providing a vision or sense of direction.

The classic management functions are:

- *Planning*—requires training in formalized systems ranging from a relatively simple but useful Gantt chart to the much more complex Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) and other Critical Path Methods (CPM). Improving skills in forecasting, establishing short- and long-term goals, and implementing an MBO approach are appropriate topics as are budgeting and policy making.

- *Organizing*—refers to the grouping of activities or functions necessary to accomplish goals and plans and assignment of authority and coordination. Drucker suggested that organizational structure can be determined by activities analysis, decision analysis, and relations analysis. Clarifying roles through job descriptions, studying issues of span of control, delegation, and other topics will help the administrator see more clearly his or her responsibility for the organizing function. Considering alternative roles for the assistant principal is a central issue. Most schools are organized the way they were last year rather than according to a structure that has been *determined* most likely to help attain the school's goals. Although some scholars classify it separately, selecting staff can also be subsumed within the



organizing function.

- *Directing* (motivating)—refers to the manager's responsibility to operate, coordinate, "trouble shoot," and generally motivate employees to accomplish the goals of the organization. (While the training in leader behavior discussed earlier could be included here, I've given it separate status because of its importance.) Leaders spend most of their time and often are least effective in this function. Topics for HRD programs here can include communication techniques, how to motivate teachers, conflict resolution techniques, and job enrichment approaches.

- *Controlling*—involves (1) establishing standards, (2) measuring performances against these standards, and (3) reallocating resources to correct deviations from standards or plans (for example, adding a reading clinician to a school where achievement is well below grade level expectations). The discerning reader will note the similarity of the control function to Bloom's mastery learning model. HRD training would include work on teacher performance evaluation, developing systems for obtaining periodic data on achievement, and getting feedback on teacher morale or the leader's style. Some districts have developed Management Information Systems (MIS) to perfect these control systems. The program with the control function is controlling it, not asking for too much data.

Many examples of abuses of the management approach exist, particularly in the business community where preoccupation with profits has distorted values and created inhumane working environments.<sup>2</sup>

The person sensitive to leader behavior issues will resist temptation to attain "goals at all costs." An early source of management instruction was the university business school, but more and more

educational administration professors have specialized in some of these functions.

3. *Training in Instructional Leadership.* The third component recommended for administrator HRD activities lies in the areas of skills and processes used to improve instruction. If a principal or superintendent is to be remembered as an instructional leader after five years in a school, what kinds of leadership activities will be given priority? I contend that the four major instructional improvement processes used by schools to help teachers are:

- *Curriculum development*—assessing needs, selecting goals and objectives, selecting and organizing content and learning activities, and evaluating the curriculum. Training experiences are available in all of these areas and must be provided to raise the confidence level of school administrators if they are to feel comfortable in doing curriculum work.

- *Clinical supervision*—improving skills in this well-developed sequence which includes a pre-observation conference, observation and data collection as per a "contract" with the teacher, careful data analysis and conference preparation, a follow-up conference, and a post-conference analysis. Skilled trainers in clinical supervision can help principals acquire this skill to the point that teachers will regard it as a valuable opportunity for professional growth.

- *Staff development*—training in helping principals realize the potential of HRD activities, alternative resources for providing staff development, knowing principles of adult learning and the necessity for experiential approaches, and giving teachers opportunities to observe other teachers.

- *Teacher evaluation*—since the primary purpose is improvement, the process should focus on factors related to

effective teaching, or on issues perceived by teachers themselves as weaknesses. The reliability of persons evaluating teachers can be improved by training and much can be done to reduce teacher dissatisfaction with this required supervisory activity.

The instructional leadership component is essential if we are to help increase the productivity of principals in school improvement. An ASCD study<sup>3</sup> investigated perceptions held by teachers, supervisors, principals, and superintendents of the extent to which these four instructional improvement services are provided to teachers when needed. Typically only about a fourth or a third of any of the reference groups rated the adequacy of services favorably, but the reference groups farthest from teachers tended to rate instructional services *more* favorably. We clearly have a long way to go in improving the instructional services suggested in this model. Studies by Bruce Howell at the University of Tulsa suggest that principals often spend only 25 percent of their time engaged in the four components.<sup>4</sup> Most of their time is spent on operational duties, including forms and reports, discipline and parental involvement, and other noninstructional functions. Very few principals report spending up to 50 percent of their time improving instruction.

The reasons for this situation are numerous. The principals' level of confidence in instructional matters is not high and they are commonly rewarded more for a "tight ship" than for a good science or art program.

4. *Traditional (Generic) Administration Course Topics.* In the past, many university preparation programs or inservice workshops focused on topics such as school finance, theory, law, and personnel. More recently topics such as collective bargaining, public relations, educational technology, and community

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involvement have become necessary to the success of today's school leaders. While these topics continue to be important, one can argue that a different emphasis may be needed.

### Toward Effective Administrators

A growing body of research<sup>5</sup> shows a positive relationship between the leadership ability of principals and student growth in basic skill achievement. Scholars such as Brookover, Edmonds, and Lezotte have much evidence to support this common sense proposition. Accordingly, if principals can improve their skills *and* if their leadership efforts focus on the characteristics of effective teaching,<sup>6</sup> one can anticipate more successful schools and a reduction in political moves to legislate learning, which, as Goodlad has suggested, offer little hope for real school improvement. See Figure 1 for teacher effectiveness/school effectiveness characteristics.

### Summary

Figure 2 shows the four components of a comprehensive HRD program for school administrators which I believe can train people to have confidence that they can improve schools. Some topics are missing—change strategies or how bureaucracies work, for instance. We can't do everything; even these four components present substantial curriculum problems.

In considering the redesign of HRD and administrator preparation programs, I believe these observations can be made:

- One immediately faces the classic curriculum problem of selection: there is too much to teach in a limited amount of time.
- We know precious little about the effectiveness of alternative strategies such as lecture, training experiences, simulation, use of technology, and in-

Figure 1. Research-Based Focus for Instructional Leadership.

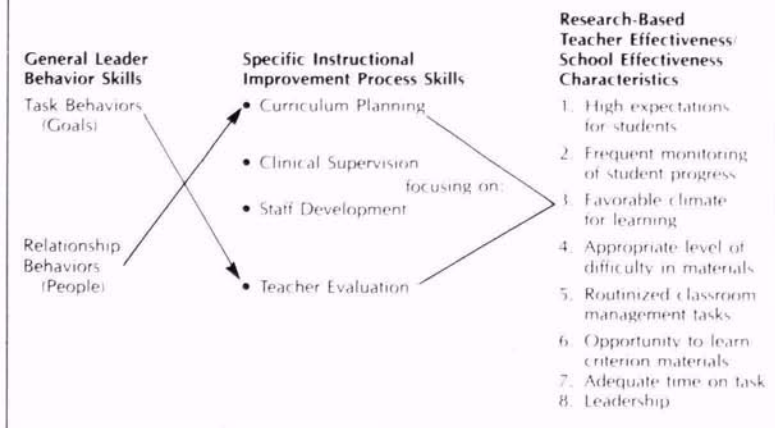


Figure 2. Components of Training for Effective Leaders.

|                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Management Functions</b><br>Plan-Organize-Direct-Control                                   | <b>Instructional Leadership Skills</b><br>Curriculum Development<br>Clinical Supervision<br>Staff Development<br>Teacher Evaluation |
| <b>Leader Behavior Skills</b><br>Task Behaviors<br>Relationship Behaviors<br>Leadership Style | <b>Standard Topics</b><br>Law-Finance-Theory-Policy Analysis                                                                        |

ternships except that on the whole, the yield of HRD programs hasn't been high. How much instructional time is enough?

- Very little thinking has been done at the national or state level on systematic approaches to training people to be more effective administrators.
- The selection process has a great

deal to do with producing effective leaders. Highly selective institutions clearly have a head start.

- With more to teach, and with such high variation in backgrounds of persons in graduate programs or HRD workshops, more must be done in prior assessment, use of instructional technology, self-study, and other ways of im-



proving the *efficiency* of our efforts.

- We need more focus on the rudiments that lead to effective schools both in the areas of basic skills and knowledge of content and teaching strategy issues in various subject fields. More focus on instructional improvement is needed.

I would, of course, like to see educators who are intellectual leaders in a community—people comfortable with ideas and a zest for new knowledge. I hope there will be time left in the graduate experience or HRD workshop for the liberal arts faculty to help produce visionary leaders who are capable of thinking about the nature of the good life in the 21st century.

Schools need revitalization as much as does American industry. William Ouchi's Theory Z<sup>7</sup> is replacing McGregor's Theory X and Y as more significant in raising productivity. Theory Z is simply a special way of managing people that has worked with the Jap-

anese and its emergence symbolizes the changing curriculum for educating school leaders. It is significant that the participative and humanistic elements of Theory Z organizations are being adopted now by "hard-nosed management" types who desperately seek improved productivity. We clearly are seeing in this emergence the importance of Rensis Likert's<sup>8</sup> work two decades ago in describing System Four organizations where all factors mesh in supporting efforts to attain an organization's goals. ■

<sup>1</sup>See Paul Hersey's article, "The NASSP Assessment Center Develops Leadership Talent," in this issue, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup>For a scholarly analysis of this problem, see Michael Maccoby, *The Gamesman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976).

<sup>3</sup>Gordon Cawelti and Charles Reavis, "How Well Are We Providing Instructional Improvement Services?" *Educational Leadership* 38,3 (December 1980): 236-240.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce Howell, "Profile of the Principship," *Educational Leadership* 38, 4 (January 1981): 333-336.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, the October 1979 issue of *Educational Leadership* which carries several articles on both school and teacher effectiveness research. See also Lawrence Lezotte, and others, *School Learning Climate and Student Achievement* (Ann Arbor: Institute for Research on Teaching, University of Michigan, 1980), 158 pp.

<sup>6</sup>Gordon Cawelti, "Effective Instructional Leadership Produces Greater Learning," *Thrust* 9 (January 1980): 8-10.

<sup>7</sup>William Ouchi, *Theory Z—How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1981).

<sup>8</sup>Rensis Likert, *New Patterns of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

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