

## **MANAGING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ONLINE TEACHING IN A DIVERSE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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**Abstract.** This paper consisted of an overview of leadership and its definition and a discussion of who and what surrounds the leader in a diverse society of ever-changing technology as he/she make decisions that impact the students, teachers and staff of school districts and other educational institutions. The discussion supported the notion espoused by Thomas Freeman that the world is indeed truly flat and getting smaller through instant communication. Leaders interested in applying the best practices in communicating are now able to utilize the internet in ways that can save time, energy and money. Selected technology and best practices from various disciplines were outlined as examples of how leaders can bring about positive change and focus on cutting edge techniques for classroom and business applications. Methods were discussed in the use of an analysis of a business or corporation, to the use of bringing experts to students, university professors, managers and chief executive officers via the internet and other electronic devices. The author included several examples of best practices for use with the adult or P-12 learners in the classroom, or managers of a Fortune 500 organization. Examples of how to conduct live, online international connections were presented in detail. Key concepts such as defining leadership, who controls leaders, and the managing leadership in a diverse society as contradiction were discussed.

Leadership is something that we know when we see it, yet when asked to define leadership we need to stop and think about leaders we have known or read about as well as our own experiences regarding this term. For the purpose of this paper, the author will narrow the scope to educational leadership in the area of teaching and administration. The discussion will include a description of leadership, when it occurs, where we can find it, why it happens and how does it happen. The managing and the training of leaders are the people and events that surround the leader providing support, guidance and oversight in the form of organizational parameters. The writer will show that research indicates there is a gap in the dissemination of information technology as a leadership tool and a challenge in communicating with the various cultures inclusive in our educational environments. The notion of additional leadership training is needed in technology for school district staff development as well as the courses we teach in our educational administration programs in order to be competitive in this rapidly changing world.

## **What is Leadership?**

The role of a leader has had multiple definitions and connotations throughout history. The writer will use “influencing others to take action, recognizing the action and reporting on the results.” Although this definition can include multiple organizations, the author will direct this paper toward the educational arena including the use of technology and dealing with cultural diversity.

Leadership is power. It inflates the ego, creates perceptions, and brings about expectations. It is a dynamic for bringing about change, as well as instilling confidence and security. Moreover, it is the ability to influence people and can alter the course of history personally, locally, nationally and internationally. It is central to the success of any institution.

Philosophers have discussed the concept of leadership for centuries. Dialogues on the topic can be found in works of Plato and Caesar. According to Bass (1981), leadership is a robust concept that “occurs universally among all people regardless of culture, whether they are isolated Indian villagers, Eurasian steppe nomads, or Polynesian fisher folk” (Bass, 1981, p.5).

There are multiple theories of leadership. Included are suggestions of the “Great Man” theory, saying, as an example without Moses, the Jewish nation would have remained in Egypt, and without Churchill, the British would have lost to the Germans in World War II. Some trait theories state that leaders are empowered with superior qualities and set them apart from followers. Environmental theories contend that leaders emerge as a result of time, place, and circumstance. No matter what theory is used to explain it, leadership is strongly linked to the effective function of complex organizations throughout the centuries as well as more simplified endeavors undertaken by individuals (Marzano, 2005).

The Great Man theory is evident in today’s business world with mixed public reaction. This popular leadership notion gained popularity in 1979 with Lee Iacocca leading Chrysler, Jack Welch the head of General Electric, Microsoft’s Bill Gates, and Berkshire Hathaway’s Warren Buffet who became celebrities and are among the world’s richest men.

On the negative side of leadership, Bernie Madoff stands out. This former broker and investment advisor developed a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme causing thousands of investors to lose large sums of money. According to Greg O. McCrary, a former special agent with the F.B.I., who spent years working with criminal behavioral profiles, Madoff has the characteristics of a psychopath who lies, manipulates, deceives, and has feelings of grandiosity and callousness toward his victims (Creswell, 2009). Jeffrey Skilling’s criminality with Enron is now a classic case of lying about the company’s profits and concealing debts causing the collapse of the corporation. Maurice “Hank” Greenberg left AIG floundering in 2005 and in need of a bailout. Many of the aforementioned leaders considered themselves irreplaceable. Perhaps these leaders of industry were unaware of France’s Charles de Gaulle’s statement “The graveyards are full of indispensable men” (Collingwood, 2009). In the business world, boards of directors usually manage the Chief Executive Officers. In education, it can be graduate councils, faculty senates, boards of education, school site councils, and county, state and federal agencies.

### **Types of Leadership**

Educators are interested in leadership that pertains to schools and the teaching/learning process. School-based or site-based leadership empowers staff to create conditions in schools that facilitate improvement, innovation and continuous improvement (David, 1989). The activities and management of these leaders are monitored by individuals and groups such as school boards, principals, superintendents, parent teacher organizations and school-site councils.

Shared leadership distributes responsibilities, but accountability will often rest with the top administrator of the school, organization or district. A true school-based management (SBM) empowers the principal and professional staff members' with wide latitude in improving the effectiveness of the teaching/learning environment. According to Elmore (2000), teachers would be encouraged to introduce improvements that directly impact learning that in the past was the authority of upper administration. This includes budget responsibilities, personnel selection, curriculum, and program evaluations. This type of structure is a departure from the traditional leadership model and can have a positive or negative impact on the school depending on how the concept is approached (Elmore, 2000). Care must be taken to ensure that there is adequate information available to the staff and training for professional development included in order for the staff to make informed decisions. Additionally, a key part of this system is that a significant amount of time be provided to staff for planning and development, as well as a reward system set up to recognize improved performance (Odden & Wohlstetter, 1994). This does not mean that the administration can abdicate responsibility. On the contrary, it increases the need for effective leadership from those who serve in leadership roles.

The chances of success are increased when school-based management is used and the staff are given guidelines and the time to acquire new knowledge and share ideas as well and plan, implement, and report ideas on how to improve student learning. An important component of this system involves rewards such as money for professional development, materials, reimbursements for extra time, recognition meals, plaques, reduced teaching loads and public recognition (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993).

The SBM system is in keeping with Thomas Friedman's contention in his book *The World is Flat*, stating "hierarchies are being challenged from below or transforming themselves from top-down structures into more horizontal and collaborative ones"(Friedman (2005). Extending this line of thinking, universities are being challenged by students who grew up with the computer and by new delivery programs that are based in distance programs such as online classes. This knowledge and these ideas are brought into school systems as these students become teachers and administrators, thus opening the door to new forms of communication and instant messaging. Couple this with our increasing foreign populations with their diverse cultures and we have both a challenge and an opportunity to educate and communicate wide segments of our population world-wide. Friedman believes that there is an emergence of completely new business and organizational models, and new social and political models as well. With this in mind, the universities and school districts must be able to reorganize and reconnect with a world that has become smaller and flatter. He

goes on to say that greater use of distance learning is one possible way to reconnect to the new world (Friedman 2005, p.45).

### **Online Leadership**

As far as online technology leadership in education is concerned, there has been minimal research conducted on the effectiveness of complete online degree programs. Most findings have shown little or no differences in the effectiveness of the instruction be it online or face-to-face (Neuhauser, 2002).

Traditional methods of online instruction are constantly being modified with the advent of new technology. Integrating Internet video conferencing has emerged as well as the hybrid concept whereby classes are held both on site as well as online. These methods have also accelerated learning and condensed courses in what in the past was a semester course into a month long course. The class leadership can be shared via online presentations via Skype or through traditional platforms such as Blackboard or E-College. Learning theories, such as Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993) advocate multimedia instructional approaches to enhance learning. Multimedia is the combination of the various types of media such as video, sound, text, graphics, and color to better communicate and display the characteristics of a thought, function, principle, or concept. Online lends itself to his ideas and affords a wide variety of ways to transmit learning.

Clicking on a word or phrase can now hyperlink a student to any website in the world. When teaching online, the instructional leaders must be aware of the need to translate where necessary, the time zones reached and the technology available to the learners. Many areas of the world lower socio-economic areas do not have internet available. In some cases, if it is available, people cannot afford the expense.

Online instruction opens the doors to a diverse population from a multitude of cultures. Limited English speaking students often gravitate to this format where there are limited speaking opportunities and it is easier for them to text and write assignments without oral presentations. The instructional leaders must be cognizant of this as they conduct their classes.

When the instructional leader puts in place an academic program at an accelerated pace working with adults, every possible proven instructional technique that enhances learning, and reduces time required, should be used. Presenting lessons to learners from a variety of cultures, who are working, many with families, have a finite amount of time to earn a living while taking classes, instructors have an obligation to expedite and enhance learning as much as possible (Beckwith & Cunniff, 2009).

Facing severe budget cuts have forced universities to look at more efficient ways to deliver instruction. In 2009, the University of California's 10 campuses discovered they could not educate as many students as before and proposed opening an 11<sup>th</sup> campus, online. Dean of the law school at Berkeley, Christopher Edley Jr., is very interested in hearing more about online programs and says, "In all seriousness, I feel some sense of urgency about this for fiscal reasons." (Chronicle, 2009).

## Leadership Theories

Other popular theories of leadership with a focus on education include instructional leadership, situational leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and continuous improvement. Several of these have been a spinoff of business models used world-wide.

The instructional leadership model has been the most popular over the past two decades. It is one of the most frequently mentioned educational leadership concepts in America and yet not well defined (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 1999). This term is often used when defining the school principal's role and main function. Researchers have described this leadership role of one who is a resource provider, instructional resource, communicator and has a visible presence (Smith and Andrews, 1998). Some would also add availability to this list.

In 1991, Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard coined the term "situational leadership". The concept focuses on the flexibility of leaders and their willingness and ability to adapt their style to the needs of the situation. Their concept included four styles involving telling, participating, selling, and delegating. They suggest that the effective leader is one who is skilled in all four styles and knows when they should be applied (Blanchard, Carew, & Parisi-Carew, 1991).

The desire to help others, or servant leadership was the motivation researcher Robert Greenleaf studied that became key components of other theorists such as Covey (1992); Elmore (2000); and Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2001). Here, the servant leader is in contact with all aspects of the organization and nurtures those within, understands personal needs, is an active listener, provides resources, and helps to develop skills within the organization (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977).

Transformational leadership is a term that has its roots in the work of James Burns in 1978, considered the founder of modern leadership theory and modified by Kenneth Leithwood in 1994. This concept states that the school leader must attend to the needs of individual staff members, help staff members think of old problems in new ways, communicate high expectations for students and teachers alike, and demonstrate through personal accomplishments--a model for the behavior of teachers. By doing this, the leader demonstrates individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and becomes an idealized influence in his or her organization (Leithwood, 1994).

Transactional leadership is defined by Burns as "trading one thing for another (quid pro quo), whereas transformational leadership is more focused on change (Burns, 1978). In more detailed terms, Bass and Avolio (1994), outline three types of transactional leadership: management-by exception-passive, management-by exception-active, and constructive transactional. Other researchers have further explained the concept in that management-by exception-passive involves setting standards, then waiting for problems to arise before acting, thus keeping the status quo. Those who choose management-by-exception-active watch everything, pay attention to issues, set standards, and monitor behavior. Constructive transactional leadership sets goals, provides clarity, provides feedback, and gives rewards. A characteristic of this style is that followers are invited into the management process and followers generally focus on achieving expected organizational goals (Sosik and Dionne, 1997).

Continuous improvement and total quality management are closely related. Edward Deming (1986) is considered the founder of total quality management (TQM) because of his work after World War II in helping Japan restore its manufacturing foundation and in the United States, for working with Ford and Xerox to improve their overall product and service quality. Continuous improvement is a term that came from the Japanese word *kaizen*, meaning continual and incremental improvement in all aspects of the organization. Deming said “a leader must invite continuous improvement into the organization and keep it alive by keeping the goals of the organization up front in the minds of employees and judging the effectiveness of the organization in terms of these goals” (Deming, 1982). The Deming award is given to organizations in Japan for outstanding quality reflecting Edward Deming’s beliefs. The Malcolm Baldrige award for quality products and services produced by organizations in the United States came about as a result of the work accomplished through programs of continuous improvement and total quality management.

### **Technology Diversity**

Mark Prensky (2001) studies the students who were born into the digital age and lists a variety of digital toys and tools that have flooded the digital age student since birth. Toys, tools and gadgets such as music players, phones, games, video cams and thousands of related applications are second nature to those born in the computer age. Many of these same devices intimidate those born prior to the digital age. Prensky coined the terms “Digital Natives” and Digital Immigrants”. He also wrote about the biggest problem in education today is that our immigrant instructors fail to engage the digital natives in their classes. Many bring this mentality to the creation of classes and programs that bore the natives. Prensky goes on to say that we need to confront this diversity issue of the native-immigrant gap or we should just forget about educating digital natives who in essence, will educate themselves (Prensky, 2001).

The digital natives are considered leaders as Internet experts, and in the early days of the dotcom boom, showed a bias toward the young over those with long experience in the organization. That bias for youth angered many mature adult leaders who thought that it was unfair that these young people were getting so rich so fast. Older administrators and instructors must get younger in spirit to fit in and in today’s fast-paced era of technology, must be willing to take direction by those who are their juniors and adjust their leadership style (Kanter, 2001).

It is time for universities and educators at all levels to address this issue in our programs and staff development training. Educators need to work with students and parents in this process so that we can learn to talk to the digital age youth in their language. Timothy Van Slyke (2007) believes it is not necessary to change completely our traditional approach to teaching and administration, but we definitely need to incorporate digital age applications into our methods of teaching and communicating to our public (Van Slyke, 2007).

## **Technology Available to Leaders**

It is not possible to list all the technology that is available to today's educational leaders. By the time this is read, a new application and device will be on the market. Some common technologies are already embedded within our daily routines such as cell phones, computers and electronic calendars. What seems common to the educator, may be a mystery to a parent or student from another culture. We as leaders can educate our public by being selective and not overwhelming them with the dozens of devices and applications on the market. If we can select the two or three most effective technology devices be it the telephone, website, or cell phone, there will be a wider acceptance of communication modes. It will be up to the educator to educate his or her public or student, in order to obtain the communication needed for a successful program. The following is a list of some common technologies available to our educational leaders:

### **EMAIL**

Electronic mail is now common to both faculty and students. It is easy to send email, receive email, cut and paste, and forward email. Some school administrators use this as an effective communication vehicle by incorporating the following:

- Communicate to students, staff and community
- Respond to supervisor requests
- Respond to a complaint, concern or issue
- Request data, information, survey or input
- By having students use email as a vehicle for the assignment, they can distribute it to other class members, forward email to mentors for response/editing, or role-play with other students in exchanges to be shared later with the class or instructor.

### **BLOG**

A blog is an abbreviate term for „web log'. It is a text-based system and an ongoing commentary of information. Blog texts are displayed in reverse chronological order, and may include announcements, reports, shared reflections, and various discussion topics.

### **POWERPOINT**

PowerPoint is an electronic presentation software that is commonly used in schools and online classes. It allows the presenter to visually display text, graphics and pictures. It can also include audio, video files, and live links to the Internet. Delivering presentations on a number of topics is common for school administrators. Online and onsite instructors can have students deliver their presentations in this format as well.

### **PODCAST**

A podcast is „audio content' available to users on the Internet. Attendees can access the audio content at their convenience from their computers, iPods and MP3 players. They can do this at a time and a place convenient to them. There are several free podcast

websites such as <http://www.mypodcast.com>. Some advantages include the ability to have audio communication to students, staff and community, send standard messages, directions or welcome announcements, have short staff development trainings, and have an audio summary of new policies impacting the audience.

#### CONFERENCE CALL OR AUDIO CONFERENCES

Conference calls or audio conferences permit a number of people to share a single telephone line. This allows synchronous audio communications from a number of participants. These calls can be used to set agendas, introduce and host guest speakers, lead team activities, conduct calls to parents or community members on key issues, and have calls to superiors regarding difficult topics. One free Internet-based audio conference service is <http://www.freeconferencecall.com>.

#### WEB/VIDEO CONFERENCING

Web or video conferencing allows synchronous communication with both video and audio. This technology can be available free for computer users with access to a microphone, video cameras and the Internet. Video conferencing has been used to conduct interviews, team meetings across school sites and districts, and host guest speakers. Faculty can access web conferencing free by using <http://www.skype.com>. Some online programs offer Class Live Pro and Adobe Connect as video conferencing connections.

#### WEBSITES AND INSTANT MESSAGING

School districts often have their own websites available on the computer. Here is an area to share information about the school district or school. Calendars and schedules of events may be posted as well as information on the history and future district plans. Board meeting or school site council minutes may be posted here. Principals and Superintendents often use a website for general communication with the community. Some teachers or students may have their own websites. Texting, Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace are often used by students and staff alike for social networking and instant messaging. Many schools, districts, and universities have direct messages sent to land line and cell phones to alert recipients to emergencies, and report or collect information. Often these communication devices, especially the district computers, are monitored for appropriate usage.

#### ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO

Electronic portfolios are a means for storing student data and often used to chronicle activities performed during a certain period of time. Capstone courses are known to use this feature as a replacement for three-ringed binders. Portfolios can be stored on CD's or on the Internet through platforms such as Blackboard or E-college or a school or university website. Portfolios may include webpages, videos, PowerPoints, cover letters, resumes and other documents (Orozco, 2009).

Educational administration credential courses have been taught online for decades. What has not been taught effectively is how to use technology for administrative use.

Brooks-Young states that “In essence, the focus of educational technology preparation programs has long been on instructional technology and teacher education rather than technology for administrative use” (Brooks-Young, 2002). There has not been enough focus on the development of pre-service and in-service administration programs. Many colleges and university schools of education have not been keeping up-to-date with new technology available to our future administrative leaders and the challenges they will face, not the least of which is the digital divide. In many ways, the digital divide separates the haves and have not’s when it comes to being educated and having the tools of technology. Our university administrative programs and school district staff development training can go a long way in closing this gap.

By keeping things simple from the beginning and by selecting limited technology devices in communicating, the leader can gradually expand the use of other devices as the public, teachers, and students become more sophisticated. Increasing training in technology per se is not enough for the future administrator. Educational leaders of today must not be labeled as Immigrants. By keeping up on current technology as well as the changing demographics of their area they will have the ability to earn the label of community leader. In addition to understanding the multiple applications, that devices such as the I-Phone or I-Pad provide, there needs to be a greater understanding of state standards and the opportunities in school leadership preparation programs to discuss diversity in general, and race, poverty, language, and class specifically. Students need to be made more aware of the challenges currently being faced by school administrators and how they can be an advocate for the needs of diverse groups in our changing demographics. Using technology is one way, gaining the community trust through a shared vision, professional growth, and collaboration within each cultural context is another.

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