

# THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

## STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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### VOLUME 1

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The volumes – monographs and edited volumes – should represent work from different parts in the world.

# THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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*In Memory of Donald J. Willower*

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Chapter 2: *Democratic Leadership Theory in Late Modernity: Oxymoron or Ironic Possibility?* by Robert Jerome Starratt is a revised and updated version of a paper originally presented at the 2000 Conference of the UCEA Center for the Study of Values and Leadership, Bridgetown, Barbados. It has also been previously published as an article in a special issue (Vol. 4, No. 4, 333-352) of the *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (2001).

Chapter 3: *Let Right Be Done: Trying to Put Ethical Standards into Practice* by Elizabeth Campbell was published originally in the *Journal of Education Policy*, and appears with the permission of Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Chapter 8: *Valuing Schools as Professional Communities: Assessing the Collaborative Prescription* by Lawrence and Pauline Leonard is a revised and updated version of a paper previously published as an article in a special issue (Vol. 4, No. 4, 353-365) of the *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (2001).

Chapter 13: *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow: A Post-postmodern Purview* by Christopher Hodgkinson is a revised and updated version of a paper originally presented at the 2000 Conference of the UCEA Center for the Study of Values and Leadership, Bridgetown, Barbados. It has also been previously published as an article in a special issue (Vol. 4, No. 4, 297-307) of the *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (2001).

# EDWARD HICKCOX

## FOREWORD

Among the many significant features of this volume is the dedication to the late Don Willower, Professor of Education at Pennsylvania State University. It is significant in light of Willower's long record of major contributions to the empirical literature in Educational Administration and his mentorship of many students steeped in the tradition of the so-called science of administration. These include scholars like Wayne Hoy and Peter Cistone who readily acknowledge their personal and intellectual debt to Willower.

How is it, then, that Willower, a colleague of the giants of Educational Administration in the 60s and 70s, people such as Dan Griffiths, Jack Culbertson, and Roald Campbell, to name just a few, came to associate himself with this relatively upstart group of academics and practitioners interested in values, of all things? As an inheritor of the mantle thrown down by Getzels and Guba all those years ago, it might seem strange to see Willower consorting with people who argue about the distinction between fact and value.

It is true, of course, that Willower majored in philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo as an undergraduate. So the language and the ways of thinking among many of those interested in values and ethics were not all that foreign to him. He could certainly hold his own in debate with his friend, Chris Hodgkinson, the foremost philosopher of Educational Administration in the field today, and a contributor to this volume.

But Willower's interest in this thrust, and in the particular group represented by the authors of these papers, was more than simply a connection to his very early undergraduate studies or his ongoing joy in engaging in academic debate of any kind. Rather it had to do, I think, with a recognition on his part that the work of the members of the UCEA Values Centre at Virginia and at OISE represented an important beginning thrust at conceptualizing a new central focus for educational administration, or educational leadership as we now tend to call it. Perhaps he imagined that over time this thrust would become a defining set of ideas informing research and practice in our field, even as notions of the science of administration had informed activity beginning in the 60s.

Paul Begley, the head of the Values Centre at OISE/UT and the organizer of the conference at which these papers were presented (in Barbados of all places), has an apt phrase in his introduction to the volume. He says that the field of leadership studies should be "a working of the edge of administrative practice..." And that is what I see in this book, efforts to define, to take a creative look at what we do in organizational leadership, to grope here and there for some new synthesis, to thrust up and down, to see what is there.

There are a number of important aspects to the volume. For one thing, there is a kind of global perspective, bursting out, in a sense, from the strictures of strictly

western notions of values and their relationship to leadership. The emphasis on community and community values is crucial in this respect. The difficult notions about democracy and values in organization are treated. And there is a lot about self awareness. In a sense, the writers here, and in the previous volumes in this series, are pushing the envelope. But they are pushing it overall in the same direction.

And there is a need. Our field is in a pretty sorry state, in my view. The journals are full of articles unrelated to any central theme or way of thinking. Doctoral students write theses in isolation, seldom linking with any programmatic research program. There is diminishing interest in educational organizations or educational administrators, especially school principals and superintendents. In Canada and the United States, at least, there are fewer and fewer Departments of Educational Administration or Leadership. Instead we have Departments of Policy Studies, a name so general that anything is possible, any study approved, any grant acceptable no matter what the topic. There is no common frame of reference any longer. As a result, the responsibility for the training and nurture of administrators and for the development of knowledge about organizations is falling to government agencies, professional organizations and other disciplines.

William Butler Yeats had it right in his poem *The Second Coming*: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.” And he wrote in 1921, before postmodernism. But Yeats also spoke of a new unity emerging, in some form we might not recognize but nevertheless a form which could inform and guide.

What I see in these chapters, but more, in the small group of able and inquisitive investigators who write them, who attend the yearly meetings, who talk and argue in a refreshingly focused manner about interesting and important issues, is the start of some creative ways of thinking about organizations. Maybe, just maybe, these efforts eventually will rescue our field and make it once again relevant to the practice of administration in educational organizations.

I have no way of knowing but I would like to think that Don Willower saw something in this group of scholars that gave him hope for a future that he would not see but which his students and their students would inherit.

Edward Hickcox  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
October, 2002

PAUL T. BEGLEY AND OLOF JOHANSSON

## INTRODUCTION

### NEW EXPECTATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

This book is very much a product of our times. Not so long ago school communities in Canada, Sweden, the United States, and the United Kingdom reflected the relatively stable cultural homogeneity of the communities they served. Administrators managed schools through a fairly limited repertoire of managerial processes. There was seldom much need to reflect on the suitability of established practices as guides to action, although, as Coombs argues in Chapter 4, such reflection has always been the mark of a wise leader. Management was largely a function of comfortable, well-worn, and proven procedures. As Johansson points out in Chapter 12, schools were traditionally an arena for professional activity, the community stayed at a comfortable distance, and professional expertise seemed a sufficient warrant to earn the trust of the community.

Those days now seem to be pretty much gone and have been replaced by a much more complex set of social circumstances. Societies have become more pluralistic in make-up and the demands and needs of communities more diversified and insistent. On the surface, these circumstances would seem to signal the onset of a golden age for nations and communities with democratic forms of governance; however, as Starratt (Chapter 2) and Johansson (Chapter 12) explain, democratic leadership theory is as much strained as vindicated by current social circumstances. Consequently the nature of school administration has altered dramatically. One very obvious outcome is the increase in the frequency of value conflicts in school environments. Campbell (Chapter 3) discusses the extent to which putting ethical standards into practice can be extremely challenging as administrators strive to “let right be done.” Begley (Chapter 1) argues that school administrators must strive for authenticity in their leadership practices. Johansson (Chapter 12) suggests that administrators conceptualize their work context in terms of arenas of influence in order to lead schools effectively.

Fortunately, there have been a number of encouraging trends. During 1996, two research centres were established in North America, both devoted to the study of values. One is the OISE (University of Toronto) Centre for the Study of Values and Leadership. The other is its University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) affiliate based at the University of Virginia (Charlottesville), the Center for the Study Leadership and Ethics. Annually, since that year, an important gathering of the minds has occurred at the Values and Educational Leadership Conference held alternately in Toronto and Charlottesville, Virginia. In 2000 this pattern deviated with a decision to hold the conference in an

international setting, Bridgetown, Barbados. Philosophers, theorists, and researchers in the values field assemble for three days annually at this conference to engage in what has since become a sustained dialogue. Many outstanding papers have been delivered at the five annual conferences held to date. The best papers of the year 2000 conference in Barbados have been edited, updated, and brought together in this book. We have also included invited chapters by three additional scholars who did not attend the conference - Richmon (Chapter 3), Walker (Chapter 9), and Collard (Chapter 11).

Of course, value conflicts have always been present in educational administration to some extent, if only as a result of the generation gap between adult faculty and youthful students. However, value conflicts now seem to have become a defining characteristic of the school leadership role. The work of educational leaders has become more complex, much less predictable, less structured, and more conflict-laden. For example, in many sectors of the world there is considerable social pressure for greater stakeholder involvement in significant decision making within school organizations. There is also a heightened sensitivity to matters relating to racial, ethnic and gender equity. This implies the acquisition of new skills by school administrators who must now lead and manage outside the immediate and traditional professional context of the school. Several contributors to this book explore these important issues and concepts. Notions of community and collaboration are defined by Strike in Chapter 5. Two further chapters (Chapter 6 by Stefkovich and Shapiro, and Chapter 8 by Leonard and Leonard) deepen our understandings of community and collaboration in the applied setting of education. Walker (Chapter 9) advocates for the adoption of a cross-cultural perspective to replace the Western dominated notions of culture that dominate the English language leadership literature. Finally, Collard (Chapter 11) focuses specifically on gender as a context variable that influences leadership practices.

What has made these new demands on the school leadership role profoundly more challenging is that the achievement of consensus on educational issues among even the traditional educational stakeholders has become more difficult. School administrators increasingly encounter value conflict situations where consensus cannot be achieved, rendering obsolete the traditional rational notions of problem *solving*. Administrators must now often be satisfied with responding to a situation since there may be no solution possible that will satisfy all. As Begley (Chapter 1) and Johansson (Chapter 12) discuss in their chapter contributions to this book, such value dilemmas can occur within a single arena of administration or among two or more arenas. For example, conflict can reside within the mind of the individual when the relatively unnegotiable personal core values of the individual compete with each other or run counter to professional or organizational expectations. Value conflicts may also be the outcomes of interactions among two or more individuals. Finally, value conflicts may be outcomes of an incongruence or incompatibility among one or more of several value arenas; that is, conflicts occurring among the domains of personal values, professional values, and/or organizational values. Richmon (Chapter 3) also addresses these persistent difficulties by critically examining existing values theory.

More than ever before, administrators recognize that the values manifested by individuals, groups, and organizations have an impact on what happens in schools, chiefly by influencing the screening of information or definition of alternatives. The more reflective life-long learners among administrators have also become more conscious of how their own personal values may blind or illuminate the assessment of situations. This capacity is one of the marks of what Begley theorizes in Chapter 1 as an 'authentic leader'. Friedman (Chapter 10) presents a research-based demonstration of how the clear articulation of organizational values can be used in a strategic way to motivate personnel.

Some respected scholars of school leadership working in the empiricist tradition still dismiss values and ethics as concepts too abstract and resistant to inquiry to be of any practical use to school administrators. Indeed, the need to clarify values only becomes important when one needs to know about intents and purposes, or when difficulty is encountered attempting to establish consensus within a given population. As previously suggested, school leaders in many sectors of the world are clearly encountering such situations these days. This is definitely the current situation in Ontario, Canada where several years of unrelenting educational chaos has resulted from the reform policies of a government with a ruthless commitment to an economic agenda. Similarly, principals from Petrozavodsk, Karelia in the former USSR and in Belarus report similar conditions of social turmoil associated with the collapse of their political systems. Recent visits to Hong Kong also produced observations of much the same circumstances. School administrators there are still struggling to understand the full implications of the 1997 reunification of Hong Kong with China. School administrators from these radically different contexts have intuitively developed an appreciation of the relevance of values to administrative practice. As the traditional managerial strategies of school leadership fail, administrators confront a challenge to respond creatively with new forms of leadership. One approach that is attracting increased attention within the scholarly community is the notion of cross-cultural perspectives, as presented by Walker in Chapter 9.

As tempting as it might be to use the theory and research findings presented in this book as a basis for developing a prescriptive guide to ethical or value-added leadership, this is not possible. Attempting to catalogue the correct values which school administrators ought to adopt without reference to context is not possible. The processes of valuation in school leadership situations are much too context-bound to permit this quick fix. Furthermore, although something is known about the problems currently confronting schools, nobody can predict with any degree of certainty the nature of future school leadership beyond the certainty that there will be more problems to solve and new dilemmas to confront. As a result, it is not enough for school leaders to merely emulate the values of other principals viewed as experts. Leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners that understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership, and authentic in their leadership practices in the sense that many scholars have advocated for some time. The first step towards achieving this state is, predictably enough, to engage in personal reflection - familiar advice to anyone who has kept up with the leadership literature. However, the adoption of a values perspective on school leadership can transform this sometimes vague advice into

something specific enough for school administrators to act upon. Once a degree of improved self-knowledge has been achieved through personal reflection, administrators must then take the next step towards authentic leadership. That step is to strive to develop sensitivity to the values orientations of others in order to give meaning to the actions of the students, teachers, parents and community members with which they interact. The payoff to this authentic form of leadership occurs when understanding the value orientations of others, and the political culture of schools, provide leaders with information on how they might best influence the practices of others towards the achievement of broadly justifiable social objectives.

The concluding chapter of this book is a classic piece by the best known and most respected philosopher of educational administration, Christopher Hodgkinson. It briefly summarizes our modernist past and examines our future prospects, using a tongue-in-cheek Post Post-modern non-structure to make the argument one last time for the adoption of an axiological perspective on educational administration. This is the essence of the message intended by this book. The traditional parameters of managerial and procedural responses to administrative situations must now be augmented with more creative approaches to leadership - a working of the edges of common administrative practice, perhaps even extending to artistry. The traditional notion of administrative knowledge based on the experience of many instances is superseded by a superior class of knowledge based on the form, essence, or idea, underlying each instance. Such knowledge can develop only as an outcome of reflection, cognitive flexibility, and sophistication - which leads to a key proposition introduced in chapter one: Acquiring administrative sophistication is a function of understanding the influence of personal values and collective valuation processes. It is values awareness that provides the links between theory and practice and generates praxis.