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AUTHOR Moritz, Helen E.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a graduate seminar for educational administrators, using works of ancient Greek and Roman literature as bases for the consideration of organization and leadership problems identified in theoretical literature. The seminar was team taught by professors from the Departments of Educational Administration and Classics at the University of Minnesota. The purposes of the seminar were: (1) to provide historical perspective on the problems of leadership and authority: (2) to provide for analysis and discussion "case studies" which could be approached with considerable objectivity by virtue of their distance in time and space: and (3) to introduce humanistic content for its own sake into the training of leaders in a field which is ideally the most humane of professions, education. The subject matter of the seminar consisted of works of ancient Greek and Roman literature, history, philosophy, and biography selected to illustrate concepts of organization and administration theory considered pertinent to the educational leader. Each seminar began with a lecture establishing the literary, historical, and theoretical contexts for the ancient material assigned for that day. A general discussion followed. In addition, students were required to make seminar presentations and to write papers. Some examples of topics covered in the course are provided in the paper. For example, the interaction of values and legitimation comes into play in the famous speech of Pericles. Plutarch's "Life of Themistocles" shows another Athenian statesman sagely controlling information to effect a successful alteration of policy at a crucial point in the Persian Wars. By managing the interpretation of oracles and therefore giving his proposals the authority of divine support, Themistocles persuaded his countrymen to abandon the city and risk all in a naval engagement--a strategy that proved successful. Evaluations indicate a high level of student satisfaction with the course. (Author/RM)

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Given at the annual meeting of AERA, Los Angeles, April 13, 1981

Helen E. Moritz

Classics Department

University of Santa Clara

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In 1972-73, with the support of an Educational Development grant from the University of Minnesota, Professor Samuel Popper and I developed a team-taught graduate seminar entitled "Applied Humanism in Administrative Behavior: The Classical Perspective." On receipt of appropriate university approval, the seminar was subsequently offered three times, with considerable success. The paper is a report of the purposes, content, and conduct of that seminar, with some reflections on further rationales for the incorporation of Humanities into the preparation of educational administrators.

The luxury of the development grant made possible an intense collaboration in preparation for the seminar over the period of an academic year. Both the amount of lead-time and the careful joint planning for the offering contributed greatly to the coherence and academic merit of the resulting course. Professor Popper, with primary competence in Educational Administration and long-standing interest in the Humanities, had the opportunity to review a great deal of Classical literature with the intent of selecting material appropriate to our purposes. I, with primary competence in Classical literature, had time to become, under Professor Popper's direction, at least tolerably conversant with organization and administration theory. In our discussions during that time, we became familiar with some of the concepts and assumptions of each other's disciplines. What emerged was a close agreement about the Classical works to be employed and the theoretical concepts to be addressed in connection with each of them. The integration of material was outlined in a

comprehensive syllabus of seminar themes and bibliography.

This highly structured interaction enabled us to avoid the diffusion of effort and disparity of goals which occurred in several cases described in Robin Farquhar's 1970 monograph ("The Humanities in Preparing Educational Administrators," ERIC State-of-the-Knowledge Series, Number 7), e.g. in the Concepts Seminar for Ed.D. candidates at the University of Florida in 1969 taught by an English professor (pp. 26-28), and in Achilles and Keller's live-in summer seminars at the University of Tennessee in 1968 and 1969 among some of the contributing faculty (p. 39).

The Minnesota seminar was conceived as a joint offering of the Departments of Educational Administration and Classics, and was, indeed, granted exceptional approval for cross-listing between two disparate units of the University, the Educational Administration Division of the School of Education and the Classics Department of the School of Liberal Arts. Intended primarily for doctoral students in Educational Administration, the seminar was also accepted as appropriate in the graduate program of Classics students interested in alternative methodologies for comprehending and explicating the Classical material.

In practice, the student mix proved to be as we had anticipated. Most students were advanced doctoral candidates in Educational Administration, many of them practicing administrators, with a background in the literature of administrative behavior and complex organizations. A very small number were graduate students in Classics; these lacked the theoretical background in social science--a deficiency they remedied on an ad hoc basis while the seminar was in progress--but were integrated easily enough into the seminar discussions.

The subject matter of the seminar consisted of works of ancient Greek and Roman literature, history, philosophy, and biography selected to illustrate concepts of organization and administration theory considered pertinent to the educational leader. The rationale for using Greek and Roman material, rather than literary Classics of other periods, is that, being the work of members of the upper classes in societies with intensively participatory governments, this literature frequently concerns itself with the very problems of leadership and group interaction we wished the students to consider. In addition, the manifold and sophisticated recognition of these problems displayed in literature of times and places so greatly removed from twentieth century American society provides the most vivid possible reminder that the important problems to be faced by the administrator are world-wide and timeless, not amenable to easy answers, rather requiring an infinitely adaptable sensitivity and ingenuity for their successful resolution.

With Classical works providing the content, then, the purposes of the seminar were three: (1) to provide historical perspective on the problems of leadership and authority; (2) to provide for analysis and discussion "case studies" which could be approached with considerable objectivity in virtue of their distance in time and space; (3) to introduce humanistic content for its own sake into the training of leaders in which is ideally the most humane of professions, education.

When the seminar came to be offered, both Professor Popper and I attended all sessions. While one or the other of us assumed primary responsibility for individual sessions, both participated actively in all discussions. Each meeting began with a lecture by one or both of us establishing the literary, historical, and theoretical contexts for the ancient material assigned for that day. There ensued general discussion in which the students

and professors identified the dynamics operative in the sources under study and analyzed the extent to which the concepts of modern sociological research and theory were borne out in the situations described in the ancient literature. In their own seminar presentations and papers the students undertook similar investigations in Classical works or ancient topics not considered by the group as a whole.

To a considerable degree, then, our seminar adhered to the principle that "Humanities and the Social Sciences say the same things in different ways." Some examples:

The Funeral Oration attributed to the Athenian statesman Pericles in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War is an excellent illustration of a leader seeking to reinforce appropriate citizen role behavior in war time by linking the stern demands made by the state for its collective well-being with the rewards accruing to citizens who discharge their responsibilities fully.

The interaction of values and legitimation was a thread common to many of the pieces we considered, and clearly comes into play in the famous speech of Pericles. Plutarch's Life of Themistocles shows another Athenian statesman sagely controlling information to effect a successful alteration of policy at a crucial point in the Persian Wars: by managing the interpretation of oracles and therefore giving his proposals the authority of divine support, Themistocles persuaded his countrymen to abandon the city and risk all in a naval engagement--a strategy that proved successful.

Of course, the master of legitimation in the ancient world was the Roman emperor Augustus. To study his statesmanship we used Gibbon's acute presentation of the evidence from ancient sources. An examination of Augustus' policy in detail reveals how Augustus accomplished, to the applause of strongly

tradition-bound Romans, a revolutionary but essential change to autocracy after a century of civil war. This he achieved by declaring a restoration of the Republic and scrupulously maintaining its external forms while in fact transferring all the effective tools of power, including money and the military, to his personal control.

In more strictly literary sources we observed ends-means reversal in Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, when force, initially eschewed by Zeus as the means of establishing his power over the gods, becomes the paramount feature of the new cosmic regime. Another example of ends-means reversal, more effective for its human setting, is found in the Antigone of Sophocles. A new, insecure king issues a decree by which he means to ensure the security of the state, but persists in the decree even as it becomes apparent that it will bring disastrous consequences. This rich play also gives us a paradigm of anomie in the challenger of the decree, Antigone.

The students responded to the material with considerable interest, and the discussions were lively and thorough-going. The only formal evaluation of the course consisted of typical student evaluation questionnaires, but these showed a high level of student satisfaction. Student papers were sophisticated in their analysis of situations, naturally less so in their control of classical background. Both in the design of the seminar and in practice, the purposes of the seminar were met.

To conclude this report, I would like to offer my reflections on those purposes as I see them at this distance. The first is the aim of providing historical perspective. Because, as Robin Farquhar notes in the 1970 ERIC monograph to which I referred before, Educational Administration as a professional field only came of age in the 1960's and the organization and administration literature which provides many of its underpinnings is, at least relatively

speaking, not much older (p.1), there may be a tendency among its students to regard its problems and situations as solely a product of the modern world and its complexities, and to think that the written records of other ages have nothing of value to say about it.

Factors endemic to the field of social science contribute to the same outlook. Research on organizational and administrative behavior is of necessity based on contemporary situations and is so dynamic that this year's investigations may well render last year's obsolete. Therefore it is not merely the newness of the discipline but the focus of its scholarship which militates against the long view. The object of study is human behavior, or better, human nature, but in the scientific design of the research project the object must become these executives, those employees, and this narrow aspect of behavior, all other aspects controlled, so that the sense of the milieu in which the individual or group operates, the complex of historically and socially (as well as legislatively and financially) determined forces operating on the individual or group is lost. By comparison, though works of Classical literature are reinterpreted not merely once but many times in each generation in light of changing styles of critical theory, the work remains, and the very fact that it comes alive for each generation tells us something about the enduring qualities of human nature and behavior.

Again, in our seminar we used Classical literature to provide "case studies" of human behavior. The research of social science is not only contemporary, it is conducted in such a way as to produce quantifiable results, responses which yield statistically significant patterns. Its task is to describe the norm, and for the most part to disregard highly individualistic or erratic behavior. Yet it is precisely the unusual situation, the unpredictable individual who, for better or worse, will interrupt the smooth running

of the organization. Classical literature, unlike social science, tends to select in favor of the unusual, the extreme, and it places it in a context where responses automatically conditioned by twentieth century preconceptions are impossible and the complexities of human interaction become more apparent.

The third purpose was "to introduce humanistic content for its own sake into the training of leaders." On reflection, this purpose appears strange because of its very literalness: we introduce humanistic content because to many of our students it is virtually unknown.

All of us involved in these projects in humanism in educational administration are committed to the Humanities, recognizing that it provides sensitivity to the universal in human interaction, a historical, literary, and aesthetic awareness that gives pause, resists facile labeling, and fosters an appreciation of the infinite variability and yet the remarkable unity of the human experience. Implicitly we consider that this sensibility is essential in educational administrators, both for the conduct of their administrative duties as such, and for their commitment to preserving the humanistic tradition in the curricula they supervise. And yet all too often we find that our humanism seminars are the only exposure or one of very few exposures to Humanities in the higher education of our students.

The graduate professional program should not have to be in the business of remedial education, and yet in many cases that is one function served by our Humanities in Administration seminars. The humane sensibilities we want in our students, however, cannot be developed in the space of a term. Our seminars, despite their limitations, are currently the only attempts in the field of Educational Administration, to recognize and remedy this deficiency, and for this reason are to be applauded. Yet the humanities must be incorporated

into one's life, and this requires much more thoroughgoing familiarity over a longer period of time. And so I close my discussion by suggesting that the desired goals might be achieved more completely, and our graduate seminars themselves be more satisfying, if a strong preparation in Humanities could be guaranteed in students of Educational Administration, either by the incorporation of a substantial Humanities component in the graduate program itself, or, more effectively, by shaping the students' pre-graduate educational experience by including work in Humanities among the entrance requirements for graduate programs in Educational Administration.