

# Leadership Lessons from North Korea: An Analogy to the ISLLC Standards

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*This module draws parallels between conditions in North Korea and the work of school leaders, as defined in the 2008 ISLLC Standards. It is intended to demonstrate to educational leadership preparation programs how seemingly unrelated contexts may be utilized to capture students' attention, hopefully with the result of enhancing their understanding and internalization of basic principles of educational leadership.*

## INTRODUCTION

The *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008*, developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, have been adopted or adapted by almost every state (Canole & Young, 2013). These standards provide the theoretical framework for this module. They also form the basis for the vast majority of school leadership preparation programs in the US. These standards were based on over 100 research projects and studies (CCSSO, 2008) and are supported by numerous studies since their publication (see the comprehensive reviews of Canole & Young, 2013 and Young & Mawhinney, 2012).

The second theoretical foundation for this module comes from the writings of Cha (2012), Demick (2010), and Lankov (2013) on North Korea. The purpose of the module is to draw an analogy between leadership issues in North Korea and the leadership guidelines contained in the 2008 ISLLC *Standards*. The premise is that leadership challenges and principles cross disciplines and cultures. The challenges that face North Korea's leaders may seem very different than those faced by US school leaders, but, fundamentally, there is much each could learn from the other.

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Because most participants in educational leadership preparation programs are teachers who have put in a full day of strenuous work prior to attending class in the evening, it is essential that the chosen content be delivered in a manner that is engaging and memorable. The decision to draw the analogy between the ISLLC *Standards* and North Korea was based on the fact that it is a country about which most Americans have scant knowledge, even though it often dominates the headlines. Therefore, it is hoped that this analogy will draw students' attention to the ISLLC *Standards* somewhat creatively.

### **Sources of Knowledge on North Korea**

Due to governmental restrictions, it is extremely difficult to obtain first-hand knowledge of the conditions in North Korea. However, there are several current books that have achieved substantial acclaim for what many people believe to be unbiased reporting. The fact that there is such great concordance among their perspectives and descriptions helps to support this veracity.

The first book is *The Impossible State: Past and Future*, by Victor Cha (2013). Cha is a former White House official whose professional expertise was North Korea. A second book is *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*, by Barbara Demick (2010). Demick is an award-winning journalist who followed the lives of six North Korean citizens over a 15-year period. As a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent stationed in South Korea for seven years, Demick interviewed North Korean defectors and visited North Korea when permitted. A third source is *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*, by Andrei Lankov (2013). Lankov is a native of the former Soviet Union who lived in North Korea as an exchange student in the 1980s. Fluent in Korean and with a network of North Korean contacts, he has studied that nation for his entire career.

### **The Importance of Leadership**

The ISLLC *Standards* are based on the premise that: "Studies find leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influencing student outcomes" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 8); this conclusion is based largely on the work of Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004). A qualitative study of low-income high-performing elementary and middle schools in Alabama revealed that the high-achieving schools all shared one common element – strong leadership (Carter, Lee, & Sweatt, 2009). On North Korea, Cha (2012, p. 60) wrote, "My friends who are China scholars remain eternally optimistic about North Korea's reform prospects....But North Korea does not have a Deng Xiaoping."

North Korea has had very stable leadership, however. Kim Il-sung ruled for five decades (1948 to 1994); his son, Kim Jong-il, ruled from 1998 until 2011; and his son, Kim Jong-un, took office in 2011. Schools, in general, do a far worse job of succession planning (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). An unpublished follow-up to the Carter, Lee, and Sweatt (2009) study revealed that student performance in some of those high-achieving schools had dropped considerably; this generally coincided with a change in the school's leadership. In the medium-sized city where this author resides, 30% to 40% of the schools have changed leaders each year for the past five years.

National estimates are for a new principal every three to four years (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010).

On North Korea, Demick (2010, p. 180) wrote, “An absolute regime needs absolute power.” All three authors illustrated that over-control leads to compliance, but not necessarily to productivity. Although no one approach to educational leadership has been proven superior, it is known that school leaders’ primary effects come through shaping school conditions such as goals, vision, culture, and structures and by motivating teachers and providing instructional guidance and feedback (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). These roles do not appear to lend themselves well to authoritarian leadership. Each school presents a unique set of characteristics and needs; these change over time. Rather than adopting Fiedler’s (1964, 1967) *contingency approach* of selecting a leader whose style seems best suited to the present conditions, it may be wiser to pursue a *situational approach* to leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988), wherein the leader reads the situation and adjusts his or her leadership style accordingly, or the *transformational approach* (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1993, 1994; Burns, 1978), in which the leader sets the vision and motivates, not forces, followers to accept and pursue that vision while attaining their own higher order needs. Canole and Young’s (2013) analysis of the first ISLLC *Standard* found that maintaining stewardship of a school’s vision falls well within the concept of servant leadership brought forth by Greenleaf (1997).

Idolization of a leader may only be temporary if results do not measure up. From the 1970s, it was declared that every home must display a portrait of the Great Leader and all adults must wear a badge with his portrait on it. On the Great Leader’s birthday, every North Korean must worship at the nearest statue of the Great Leader. “In school, 33 percent of the curriculum is devoted to the personality cult of Kim” (Cha, 2012, p. 165).

As much as strong leaders may contribute to a school, they must guard against their own idolization. Successes must be organizational or communal successes, not the leader’s success. The focus must be on the school’s mission and vision, not on its leader. For this reason, shared or distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006; Rasberry, with Mahajan, 2008; Leithwood, Marshall, & Strauss, 2009) may well be even more effective than *heroic* or *focused* leadership (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2009). One of the functions of *Standard 3* is to develop the school’s capacity for distributed leadership.

### **ISLLC *Standard 1*: Setting a Widely Shared Vision for Learning**

The first ISLLC *Standard is*: An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

The five functions that further articulate this standard are:

- A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission;
- B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning;
- C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals;

- D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement;
- E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans. (CCSSO, 2008)

All three authors concluded that North Korea's leaders believe their current vision and policy choices have no feasible alternatives. Although many people around the world question some of North Korea's international, and internal, politics as irrational, all three authors rejected this assessment, concluding that these behaviors demonstrate some rationality and consistency. North Korea desperately needs external aid. However, its leaders fear strong intervention from the United States, China, S. Korea, and even Russia (which used to provide copious aid until the breakup of the Soviet Union), so it can only accept aid on its own terms. Therefore, North Korea maintains a nuclear threat and becomes moderately aggressive in order to force appeasement and to garner more aid. Although this may not be in the long-term interests of the nation, it is certainly in the short-term interests of its rulers.

A similar dilemma is often faced in schools, although it is generally less about the self-interests of the school's leader than about two competing demands or values. For example, few principals favor the extensive standardized testing that arose under *No Child Left Behind*. It has produced a narrowing of the curriculum, primarily to those subjects tested. It has changed instructional techniques, favoring those best suited to producing higher test scores over those fostering creativity or integration of content areas. Principals understand, and often lament, this situation; however, they accede to it. The alternative would appear to them to be accepting lower test scores, resulting in negative publicity and a strong likelihood of their being replaced. They ask themselves if *that* would truly be in the best interests of their students and the community.

### **ISLLC Standard 2: Developing a School Culture and Instructional Program Conducive to Student Learning and Staff Professional Growth**

The second *Standard* is: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. The nine functions that further articulate this standard are:

- A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations;
- B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program;
- C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students;
- D. Supervise instruction;
- E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress;
- F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff;
- G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction;
- H. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning;
- I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program. (CCSSO, 2008)

School leaders' primary influence on the school is through shaping its culture and climate (Leithwood & Jantzi; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). In turn, the culture and climate of the school influence teachers' motivation and students' performance.

However, cultures differ. Demick (2010) drew several telling portraits of how the cultures of North and South Korea differ. One of these involved views on romance between unmarried people. In North Korea, men and women do not hold hands until many years into the relationship. In South Korea, men and women are often seen holding hands, embracing, or even kissing in public. Demick noted that in North Korea, women were forbidden to wear slacks (although this is a rule not uniformly enforced) or to ride a bicycle. No such restraints exist in South Korea.

School cultures also differ. Core values and beliefs differ. School cultures differ in the extent to which that culture is shared, and to what depth. Teacher support, the consistency and clarity of rules and expectations, students' achievement orientation, peer interactions, disciplinary harshness, student and teacher input into decisions, instructional innovation and relevance, support for cultural pluralism, and school safety vary from campus to campus (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003). School mythologies differ, as do their heroes and heroines. As *Standard 2* mandates, an essential skill of a school administrator is assessing the school's climate and culture, selecting those elements to which the leader wants to give emphasis or to modify, and to systematically extolling or shaping those elements.

Appreciation of beauty depends on a healthy culture. All three authors depict North Korea as bleak and drab. North Koreans are astounded with the use of color in Chinese and South Korean clothing. In North Korea, new clothes are dispensed by the government: drab indigo for factory workers, black or gray for office workers (Denick, 2010, p. 62). Other than huge statues idolizing the "Great Leader," the only artwork mentioned in any of the books was the mandatory two photos of the Great Leader, which must hang in all homes and buildings. Songs were almost all patriotic; North Koreans are punished for singing popular music from South Korea.

This maxim also carries a strong lesson for school leaders. Just as North Koreans who are hungry and/or repressed have little appreciation for beauty, children in school who may be hungry or intimidated also lose touch with the beauty around them, affecting both their learning and their lives. Too many children come from homes sharing some of North Korea's negative characteristics, across all socio-economic strata. School leaders must help build a school environment and culture and climate, which addresses these problems so that those children become able to see the beauty of learning, of their relationships with teachers, of their relationships with their peers, and of their own inner self. Schools must have cultures of safety, nurturing, and trust. School leaders must also ensure the same culture and climate for teachers, staff, and parents. Many parents had negative previous experiences in school as students or as parents of students. For them to appreciate the beauty of their child's school, the school must offer them a welcoming, safe culture, climate, and environment. They must be helped to feel a partnership with the school. Teachers and staff also can lose appreciation for the beauty of their work. Most educators who have worked in schools for any length of time can recall a "lounge lizard" who virtually never had a good word to say about students, colleagues, the administration, or the profession. Leaders must recognize these individuals and attempt to

engage them in the positive aspects of the school culture or to minimize their potential toxic effects on that culture. At the same time, the leader must recognize those teachers and staff who embody the positive aspects of the school culture and celebrate them.

Weekly *Life Review* sessions are mandatory in North Korea. At these sessions, everyone must criticize him or herself, as well as criticize others. These sessions are generally viewed as obligatory, but minimally effective, at best.

As Follett (1926) noted pointedly, people respond negatively to orders or to criticism. Although principals may have to give orders, e.g., in an emergency, and may be tempted to criticize a teacher's teaching performance or attitudes toward students, parents, or peers, these must be minimized in order that they represent a clear, intentional divergence from the norm. This is a crucial precept of building a healthy school culture.

### **ISLLC Standard 3: Ensuring Effective Management of the Organization, Operation, and Resources for a Safe, Efficient, and Effective Learning Environment**

The third *Standard* is: An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation and, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. The five functions that further articulate this standard are:

- A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems;
- B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological
  - a. resources;
- C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff;
- D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership;
- E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction
  - a. and student teaching. (CCSSO, 2008)

It is imperative to be careful in interpreting data in judging results. For example, North Korea officially claims a 0% unemployment rate, yet many of its factories have been closed down for years; the workers just sit around talking and attending government propaganda sessions. No paychecks have been issued in years, yet the government claims that the people remain employed. Similarly, with an almost total lack of medicines, North Korea's hospitals eventually emptied out. Demick (2010) pointed out that hospitals often had no heat, electricity, food, blankets, or bandages. They reuse hypodermic needles and perform surgery and even amputations without anesthesia. Doctors go years without any salary. People stopped bringing their loved ones. Yet, the government claims to offer a free public medical system.

School leaders also must be cautious in interpreting data. For example, a few years ago Alabama instituted a questionable way of calculating if a school made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). On a four-anchor scale, of which the bottom two categories are below satisfactory and the upper two categories are satisfactory or above, Alabama declared that schools' AYP status would be calculated on the basis of adding the percentage of students in the top two categories *plus* one-half the percentage of students in the second category. It was quite common to have relatively low percentages

of students in the satisfactory categories and a very large percentage of students at Level 2; therefore, the school was judged as having attained AYP. Although the principal may be overjoyed at thus being spared the embarrassment of having the school's name, and the principal's name, splashed over the front page of the local newspaper as a failing school, he or she should look beyond this and realize that the majority of the school's students were performing at an unsatisfactory level. Similarly, school leaders must learn to disaggregate student performance data and school discipline data. Although overall numbers may look encouraging at first glance, it is often the case that sub-groups of the population are performing far below their peers.

The next set of lessons deal with resource management. The first is that it is not as much a question of how much money is spent as much as what it is spent on. For example, North Korea spends between 25% and 31% of its Gross National Product on the military, compared to less than 5% in most industrialized nations. It has over 13,000 artillery guns trained on Seoul, South Korea, alone (Cha, 2012).

This is very much the case for schools, also, where research has shown that the amount of money spent in a district is not related to student performance (Hanushek, 1981, 1986) and that how the money is spent is more important than the amount (Hanushek, 2003). For example, Alabama's Black Belt Region, named after the rich, delta soil in that portion of the state, serves an extremely poor student population. Because extra federal funding and grants monies are available to serve this deprived population, per pupil expenditures in many of these districts are among the highest in the state. However, in part because most federal programs and grants restrict *how* the money can be spent, performance continues to lag well behind the state average.

North Korea has learned to make do with what is available. For example, North Korean physicians hike into the hills to pick homeopathic herbs in the absence of other medicines. When intravenous fluid is available in hospitals, patients have to bring empty beer bottles to hold it. "If they brought in one beer bottle, they'd get one IV. If they brought in two bottles, they would get two IVs" (Demick, 2010, p. 141).

Effective school leaders must also make do with what is available. For example, in isolated, rural schools, it is far more difficult to find high quality chemistry or physics teachers, or Advance Placement teachers, than in wealthy, well-located suburban districts. Wise rural administrators must then recruit more aggressively, provide additional professional development to upgrade available teachers' knowledge and skills (admittedly difficult to offer), and provide additional feedback on their performance. They must rely more heavily on distance education to offer courses not able to be taught by the faculty in the school. They may encourage dual enrollment programs with institutions of higher education to supplement the upper level courses or technical programs provided by the school.

As all three authors noted, North Korea has painfully discovered that living on subsidy leaves little for the future if the receiving entity does not have contingency plans should the subsidy be removed. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics strongly subsidized North Korea until the Union broke up in 1990. Suddenly, there was no external subsidy and North Korea's economy crashed. Its infrastructure quickly decayed and the country entered a prolonged, severe famine.

A similar, but fortunately less severe, plight has been faced by many school leaders. Grant monies are often available to begin promising programs; however, they

generally have a finite life of only a few years. Unless the school leader has made proper contingency plans to replace the lost grant money, the program ends summarily, regardless of its benefits. Many grant proposals require the applicant to identify how the project will be funded following the grant period; unfortunately, these plans are seldom carried out, causing the need to find a different program for which funds *are* available, which creates discontinuity.

**ISLLC Standard 4: Collaborating with Faculty and Community Members,  
Responding to Diverse Community Interests and Needs, and Mobilizing Community  
Resources**

The fourth *Standard* is: An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs. The four functions that further articulate this standard are:

- A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment;
- B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources;
- C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers;
- D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners. (CCSSO, 2008)

Collaboration requires trust. In North Korea, *inminbans*, neighborhood watch commanders, keep close surveillance on their neighbors and report any perceived transgressions to the government. "An inminban head should know how many chopsticks and how many spoons are in every household" (Lankov, 2013, p. 39). This indicates a strong culture of mistrust and collaboration is minimal in North Korea. Trust and collaboration are also minimal between North Korea and any other nation.

Trust is also critical in schools. Teachers must trust their principal if he or she is to be effective as an instructional leader. Principals must trust the teachers, as, unlike North Korea's *inminbans*, it is not feasible, or desirable, to keep close watch on them throughout the day. Students must trust teachers, and teachers must trust students if learning is to occur. Teachers must trust each other if shared governance is to be effective and if professional learning communities are to be developed.

The next lesson also deals with relationships. All three authors noted that North Korea maintains a positive relationship with just one country, China. This relationship is based on several major factors. First, China benefits from access to North Korea's low-priced natural resources. China fears that turmoil in North Korea could lead to a mass exodus into China, placing a drain on resources and adding an unwanted cultural element. North Korea benefits from trade with China and from economic subsidies. However, China worries that North Korea's ongoing political aggressiveness with South Korea, the United States, and Japan will cause China more harm than good. Although few countries have universally good relationships with all other countries, having only one positive relationship is highly unusual and problematic.



School leaders must be masters at forming relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders. School leaders who relate well only to a limited number of people seldom succeed. They are quickly labeled as “playing favorites” and lose the trust and involvement of the majority. Principals must be particularly “thick skinned” when individuals attack them negatively; for example, many parents are aggressive when discussing their child’s behavior or performance. The wider the net of positive relationships a principal can cultivate, the more likely the school is to develop a culture of shared leadership, trust, and involvement.

### **ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with Integrity, Fairness, and in an Ethical Manner**

The fifth *Standard* is: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. The five functions that further articulate this standard are:

- A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success;
- B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior;
- C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity;
- D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making;
- E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling. (CCSSO, 2008)

A primary, underlying theme in all three books is that the Communism exercised in North Korea leads to a lack of individual incentives. There is no evaluation or reward of individual contributions, nor individual accountability. The authors did note that after the Soviets removed their subsidies in 1990, and when famine ensued, many North Korean women violated Communist principles and left their assigned jobs to begin entrepreneurial activities in the local markets. The government essentially turned a blind eye to these practices. These women’s incomes depended on their individual work and became the primary source of income for many North Korean families.

This offers several lessons for prospective principals. First, evaluation, if properly done, can serve as an incentive. It is important for a principal to discuss with a teacher the positive aspects of an observed lesson, for this helps to ensure that the desirable behaviors will be repeated in future lessons. In discussing any negative aspects of the lesson, it is important for principals to employ Mary Parket Follet’s (1926) advice that effective supervisors devise methods by which subordinates can best *discover* the issues to be corrected, and how to correct them, rather than ordering, or even suggesting, they do so. This is the self-awareness referred to in this ISLLC *Standard*. Such feedback, often indirect, can serve as recognition and incentive. It clearly recognizes the contributions of the individual teachers. Similarly, principal evaluative comments or discussions, handled in the same manner as described between the principal and teachers, can readily motivate staff members, students, and parents.

All three authors discussed at length that democracy and diversity are antithetical to the culture of North Korea. It is clearly a dictatorship headed by a single family since the inception of the country. There is very little ethnic diversity, and diversity of ideas is squelched. Individual needs are basically disregarded, with the collective need seen as paramount.

As this ISLLC *Standard* guides, school leaders cannot afford to fail to promote democracy, diversity, and attention to individual student needs. Many schools are moving in the direction of becoming *professional learning communities* (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Sparks, 2005). This is a fluid, democratic, participatory form of school leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2007) in which there is active involvement in decision-making by individuals at all levels of the organization (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

School leaders must give attention to diversity. They are preparing students for a rapidly globalizing world (Friedman, 2005). To be successful in that world, students must learn to deal with cultural, linguistic, generational, religious, perceptual, ideological, and conceptual diversity.

Finally, school leaders must attend to the individual needs of their students, faculty, and parents. Despite its many critics, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 gave proper emphasis to monitoring each individual student's learning. It forced the disaggregation of test data to focus on the performance of sub-groups within the school, e.g., by race/ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced price meals, eligibility for special education, and limited English proficiency. It forces school leaders to determine which students are below Proficiency levels and for them to plan how to raise these students' performance. Failure to consider these individual needs can readily cause a school not to reach its Adequate Yearly Progress goals, as well as depriving the student of the best education possible.

### **ISLLC *Standard* 6: Understanding, Responding to, and Influencing the Political, Social, Legal, and Cultural Context**

The final *Standard* is: An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. The three functions that further articulate this standard are:

- A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers;
- B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning;
- C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies. (CCSSO, 2008)

What people value varies from one locale to another. In the 1990s, North Korea entered a period of extreme famine. As salaries are almost non-existent in North Korea, the government provides heavily subsidized basic rations to everyone; however, this was not possible during the famine. People had to give up their grain staple, rice, and were forced to eat grass and tree bark. However, the government found ways to ensure that the North Korean people continued to receive their beloved kimchi (fermented, pickled cabbage).

Each adult received 154 pounds per year, and each child received 110 pounds per year (Kemick, 2010, p. 63). What educators and students value also varies from school to school. In some schools, e.g., academic magnet schools, students value learning and preparation for higher education; in other schools, there is less of an academic orientation. In some schools, students value athletic teams, whereas in others, the marching band is even more highly valued than the football team. In some schools, especially rural schools, teachers value close ties to the community; in others, there is very little outreach beyond the school. In some schools, teachers value staying long hours after school tutoring students; in others, after-school contact with students is essentially confined to those teachers paid to coach, sponsor clubs, or tutor. School leaders must understand the culture of their school and decide if there are aspects to be supported or aspects to be modified.

The final lessons revolve around solving problems. Facing famine, in 1996 the North Koreans began to breed goats for milk and meat. The goat population tripled in two years, helping to solve the short-term problem of hunger. However, the goats denuded the hillsides, eating all the shrubbery. As a result, flooding wiped out the farmland below and flooded the coal mines, created even greater long-term problems.

This prototypical failure is related to this *Standard's* function: "Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies" (CCSSO, 2008). School leaders must be extremely careful that in addressing short-term problems, they do not end up creating new, more serious problems. In adopting reading programs that reward students with prizes for reading the most books in a year, could the school be placing quantity over enjoyment, over comprehension, or external motivation over internal motivation? In guiding faculty to "teach to the test" in order for the school to reach its AYP goals, is a school leader moving away from creativity and higher level thinking skills that might benefit the students more in the long term? In suspending students for marginal behavior infractions, is the school leader downplaying the value of being in class or, worse yet, inching the student closer to becoming a dropout? Decisions must always weigh the short- and long-term consequences.

## **Conclusions**

There are many lessons that prospective school leaders can learn from North Korea's experiences. To the extent that these lessons are framed in an interesting context, such an approach may help aspiring school leaders to grasp and internalize them. To the extent that creative instructors presented and prepared these lessons, they can serve as the basis of rich discussion of students' perceptions of these issues within their own schools, as a foundation for designing (and possibly carrying out) research studies and instruments, for designing aspects of principal evaluation systems, and for linking to further reading.

As Cha (2012) noted, it is obvious that there are no silver bullets or magic potions to solve North Korea's problems; one should not expect a miracle. Changes are likely to be painful and even dangerous, regardless if the changes desired would be preferable to current conditions. Change will eventually occur in North Korea, "But one thing I am fairly certain of is that when the fateful day comes, the source of this battered country's renewal will be its people (Cha, 2012, pp. 462-463). This mirrors Hall and Hord's (2006) advice to school leaders that until the individuals change, organizational change will not

truly occur. However, as Evans (2001) and Fullan (1991, 2001, 2005) explicated, people often tend to resist major changes, and helping them prepare for and accept changes is one of the most difficult roles a school leader has. Moreover, as in North Korea, in schools there are also no silver bullets or magic potions (Ravitch, 2010).

### **Some Instructional Possibilities**

Because this module is intended as an instructional module in an educational leadership preparation program, a few andragogical possibilities are suggested:

1. Compare and contrast North Korea's realities to students' own school cultures and situations and discuss proper leadership responses.
2. Review and evaluate students' current school's leadership and culture vis-à-vis the ISLLC *Standards*.
3. Compare and contrast other nations' cultures and leadership with North Korea's and their analogies for school leadership.
4. Compare and contrast the state and/or districts in which the educational leadership preparation program is offered with North Korea and the implications for the optimal preparation of school leaders.

If the preparation program is a doctoral program, more emphasis should be placed on research. In this regard, some sample instructional activities would be:

1. Discuss what assessments and data might be collected in the students' schools, districts, and state to guide the proper implementation of the ISLLC *Standards*.
2. Design assessments to discern school and district cultures and a data analysis schema that would facilitate the determination of how best to align the planning of school leadership via the ISLLC *Standards* to that specific culture and situation.

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