A Developmental Model for Educational Planning: Democratic Rationalities and Dispositions

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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The Developmental Democratic Planning (DDP) model frames educational planning as a process that extends beyond the immediate focus of a particular planning effort to acknowledge and cultivate the potential of all members of the organization to fulfill their roles as active participants in the democratic life of the organization. The DDP model construes educational planning efforts as a vehicle for enacting organizational change. To create a democratic planning culture, educational leaders cultivate and promote approaches to organizational leadership and planning that include (1) the leadership dispositions of hospitality, participation, mindfulness, humility; and (2) the organizational dispositions of mutuality, appreciation, and autonomy.

Introduction

This paper moves forward a model for educational planning grounded in key leadership and organizational dispositions that are salient to developing and enhancing the capacity of the organization to foster and promote a democratic culture. Central to the model (and unique to the literature on educational planning), the process is explicit and deliberate in moving forward both individual and organizational goals. The model frames educational planning as a process that extends beyond the immediate focus of a particular planning effort to acknowledge and cultivate the potential of all members of the organization, individually and collectively, to fulfill their roles as active participants in the democratic life of the organization. Educational leaders who are committed to creating a democratic culture in their schools must provide ongoing opportunities for individual members of the educational organization to contribute to the development of the organization, through "group thinking, group action, and group responsibility" (Mursell, 1955, p.68). The planning model presented here describes an approach to utilizing educational planning processes to create the kinds of opportunities that Mursell describes.

The model, which we term Developmental Democratic Planning (DDP) builds on existing work engaging democratic leadership in educational settings (e.g., Woods 2005, Woods, 2006; Woods, 2011; Woods & Woods, In Press), but extends that work by modifying and applying it to the specific context of educational planning. The result of that application is an approach that positions planning efforts as a vehicle for enacting organizational change—both directly (i.e., by planning and implementing changes in the organization that support and facilitate democratic practices) and indirectly (i.e., by undertaking the planning process in ways that model democratic ends and are explicitly attentive to the goals of developing capacities for participation and contribution from all members of the organization). The DDP model describes a process that seeks to develop and sustain an organizational culture that is supportive of effective planning while simultaneously cultivating a democratic ethos that has implications for other functions and goals of the organization. The result of this process is an organization that embraces planning as an integral part of its ongoing work and institutional mission, and embraces democratic practice as key to its planning processes (and to all other work within the organization).

Central to this model is the idea that a democratic culture serves organizational ends beyond the immediate focus of a particular planning effort. Woods (2005, 2006) describes such ends in terms of *democratic rationalities:* ethical rationality, decisional rationality, discursive rationality, and therapeutic rationality. The cultivation of such ends demands alternative approaches to organizational leadership and planning, approaches that are described here in terms of *democratic dispositions* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Johnson & Hess, 2010). Included among those dispositions are (1) the leadership dispositions of hospitality, participation, mindfulness, and humility; and (2) the organizational dispositions of mutuality, appreciation, and autonomy. Importantly, the leadership dispositions influence the disposition of the organization (of note, the reverse can also be true). In a democratic culture, the two types of dispositions can interact in a synergistic manner, with each supporting the development of the other and resulting in a *culture of certainty* within organizations – certainty of forward movement, of common vision, and of commitment to a democratic process.

According to Johnson and Hess, "educational leaders have the greatest responsibility (and even obligation) to develop, support, and participate in humane and democratic educational environments" (2010, p. 8). By making that responsibility an explicit element of the planning

process, organizations can both improve the quality of planning outcomes (Ewy, 2009) and contribute to the engagement and well-being of individuals and to the organization as a whole (Fletcher, 2008; Woods, 2005; Woods, 2011; Woods & Woods, In Press). Furthermore, educational organizations that engage in a democratic planning process provide their students with a model and the opportunity "to explore democracy as a lived experience of citizenship in their schools" (Johnson & Hess, 2010, p. 6), a deep experiential understanding of democracy that is not generally available in American schools today (Johnson & Hess, 2010).

The DDP model requires democratic leadership that supports and sustains an organizational commitment to ongoing planning and continuous improvement. Mursell (1955) argues that educational organizations need to "promote and encourage thinking and planning as widely as possible" (p. 417). From this perspective the planning function of an educational organization hinges on the creation of a *planning culture*. Mursell observed that the structured and organized planning activities of an organization usually occur in formal settings (e.g., organized staff meetings, parent-teacher associations, committees, and study groups). The success of these formal planning structures can serve to encourage organizational members to take a "spontaneous active interest in the educational problems of the enterprise" (pp. 417-418). For this *spontaneous active interest* to occur, educational leaders need to nurture an organizational culture that encourages all members of the organization (importantly, not just those members holding formal leadership roles) to engage in the ongoing planning activities needed to address the *problems of the educational enterprise,* for democracy depends on "widely diffused unofficial leadership" (Mursell, 1955, p.60).

Democratic Foundations for Planning

Deep Democracy

Our understanding of democracy goes beyond the "thin" description of basic structural and governmental democracy as it is generally understood and communicated (i.e., a representative legislature, the three branches of government, election, etc.). Rather, our understanding focuses on a *thick* notion of democracy encompassing those characteristics and skills that citizens need in order to become fully participatory members of their democratic society. For Green (1999), this is a "deep democracy," which "can guide the development of characters with socially conscious responsible agency, as well as the emergence of a more sensitive awareness of each individual's gifts, and needs, and a fuller realization of our most valuable human potentials" (p. xiv). For the purposes of the current work, we rely on Green's description of democracy.

Democratic Faith

Democracy is based on "an ethical faith applied to social living" that people have the capacity to resolve their own issues and problems (Mursell, 1955, p. 14). Mursell writes, "It is based on faith that if people are honestly and devotedly helped to understand issues and problems of life, they will be able to achieve understanding; and that if they achieve understanding, they will act on it" (p. 25-26). A faith in the people—all people—to be active, participatory and responsible is at the core of a social understanding of democracy. Futhermore, Preskill and Brookfield (2009) note that "democratic faith rests on the idea that ordinary people are more likely than isolated elites or narrowly trained experts to make decisions that are in the broad interests of the majority of

people" (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p. 152).   At its core, then, democratic faith is an important construct for educational leaders engaged in ongoing planning efforts because "Democracy is the faith that the process of experience is more important that any special result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process" (Dewey, 1939, as quoted in Hickman & Alexander, 1998, p. 343).

Democracy's Developmental Capacity

Participation serves as a vehicle for developing individual and organizational planning capacity. Dewey (1939) argued that "democracy as a way of life is controlled by personal faith in personal day-by-day working together with others" (as quoted in Hickman & Alexander, 1998, p. 343). For Dewey, the social nature of democratic discourse and action was crucial to sound decision-making and the development of cooperative living. Mursell (1955) understood that democracy cannot be imposed as a readymade solution to a given situation or issue; it is a social process. For Mursell,

> Democracy can never be imposed. It can only be learned . . . democracy lives only in the minds, the hearts, the consciences of individual men and women. It can do no better than human beings. It can be promoted only by evoking what is wise and just in individual men and women. Democracy has no readymade solutions. It simply challenges individual men and women to work for the solution of their common problems, through reason and conscience. (p. 51)

When organizational leaders lead from a democratic stance, the planning trajectory of the organization is extended beyond a given task; specifically it is the authors' contention that such a trajectory extends into the development of individuals as continuous organizational planners. To the degree that members of the educational community share in the activities of the organization, they are "saturated with its emotional spirit" (Dewey, 1916, p.22). The boundaries between leader/teacher/student/learner are blurred as all members of the educational community contribute to the planning and direction of the organization building and sustaining an "architecture of ownership" (Fletcher, 2008) or "common mind; a common intent in behavior" (Dewey, 1916, p.30), which is foundational to the development of a democratic culture.

Developmental Democratic Rationalities

 For Woods (2005, 2006), democratic educational leadership is premised upon an approach to developmental democracy comprising four *rationalities*: ethical rationality, decisional rationality, discursive rationality, and therapeutic rationality. Within that model, the four rationalities are intended to differentiate among dimensions of democratic practice with differing foci, priorities, and consequences, and to illustrate how the four rationalities complement and interact with one another. The most complete form of democratic practice, in this model, would be exemplified by practices that engage all four rationalities. Woods (2006, p.328) describes the goals of the four rationalities as follows:

1. *Ethical rationality*: supporting and enabling aspirations for truth, and the widest engagement of people in this.

2. *Decisional rationality*: freedom from arbitrary and imposed rule by others and the imposition of others' values. It concerns the right to participate, including rights to select representatives and to be involved in decision-making and to hold power-holders to account.

3. *Discursive rationality:* open debate and the operation of dialogic and deliberative democracy.

4. *Therapeutic rationality*: the creation of well-being, social cohesion and positive feelings of involvement through participation and shared leadership.

While it may seem overly obvious to offer up a definition of the term *rationalities* here, it is important that the term is not used to represent *ways* of going about leading. Rather, these rationalities represent the *reasons* for going about leading in democratic ways; they represent the ends that transcend the immediate work and support the work of bringing about real change and growth in individuals and in the organization. As stated earlier, the idea that democratic culture serves organizational ends beyond the immediate focus of a particular planning effort is the distinguishing feature of a developmental approach to democratic practice and leadership, and is an essential element of the planning model we describe in this paper. For our purposes, then, these rationalities represent the *why*, the individual and organizational ends that transcend the immediate focus of a particular planning effort to acknowledge and cultivate the potential of all members of the organization, individually and collectively, to fulfill their roles as active participants in the democratic life of the organization. The *how* is considered in the following section, via a discussion of planning dispositions.

Democratic Planning Dispositions

The Developmental Democratic Planning (DDP) model asks educational leaders to pay attention to and practice several key democratic dispositions. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) offer insights into the importance of practicing selected dispositions inside a democratic classroom where discussion is the pedagogical vehicle (p. 8). As part of the DDP model, we move Brookfield and Preskill's dispositional thinking beyond the classroom and into the larger organizational arena, reorganizing it with an eye toward distinguishing between (1) dispositions that directly engage the leader and (2) dispositions that are more appropriately ascribed to the organization as a whole. Thus, we argue here that certain dispositions serve as a foundation for both the organizational leader's actions and the overall organizations ethos related to DDP.
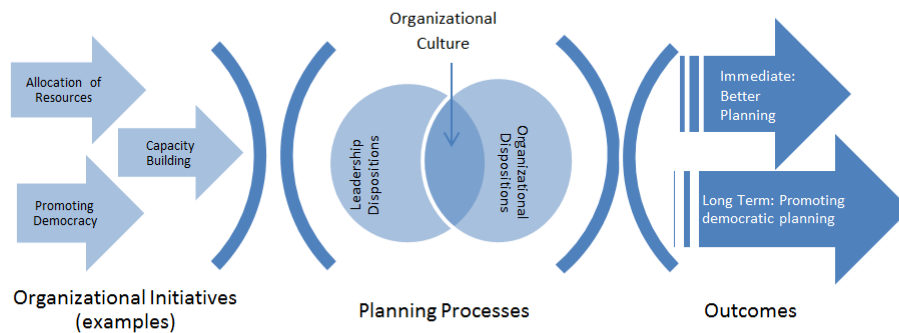
Figure 1. Developmental Democratic Planning Model

Core Leadership Dispositions

As educational leaders engage in the work of leading and planning inside a Developmental Democratic Planning model we believe certain depositions help facilitate the model's success. These include Hospitality, Mindfulness, and Humility.

Hospitality. Inside the DDP model, educational leaders practicing the disposition of hospitality offer their organizations the greatest opportunity for honest and meaningful discourse. It is important to note that "there is nothing soft about hospitality" it demands "an atmosphere in which people feel invited to participate" (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005, pp. 8-9). As a dispositional practice hospitality supports the development of "conviviality and congeniality" leading to an environment that encourages organizational members to "take risks and to reveal strongly held opinions" (p. 9). More importantly, "hospitality implies a mutual receptivity to new ideas and perspectives and a willingness to question even the most widely accepted assumptions" on the part of both members and formal leaders (p. 9). The development of this dispositional capacity by an organizational leader is in direct juxtaposition to an autocratic style, a style that effectively limits full participation of most organization members related to decision making and planning. Educational leaders facilitate broad participation in the organization through "intellectual stimulation and direction, through give and take, not [through] that of an aloof official imposing authoritatively educational ends and methods…the leader is on the lookout for ways to give others intellectual and moral responsibilities not just for ways of setting tasks for them" (Dewey, 1935, p. 10).

Mindfulness. It is our position that an educational organization is different from a business organization. Cuban (2004) argues that "one difference between education and business is the values that draw people into the two fields" (p. 122). Specifically, Cuban notes that many people enter the field of education with the "ideal of serving the young" (p. 122). For him, people who enter the world of business do so for other values; he notes that these values are "not better or worse, just different" and may include the "love of competition" and "the rewards of . . .

successfully building a business" (p.122). We argue that an educational leader should remember this distinction and strive to develop the disposition of mindfulness, especially when engaged in planning activities. Specifically, Brookfield and Preskill argue that "mindfulness" means paying attention to the thinking and contributions of others. When educational leaders apply this idea to planning, we practice the art of curbing, holding "…in check our desire to express ourselves fully and vociferously" (p. 11) and allowing others the space for full expression. For us, this means being attentive to the discourse, ideas and experiences of those in our organization. In this way, our daily leadership example is consistent with the ideas of DDP as we model and develop the democratic capacity of those around us. In practicing mindfulness, we understand that "it doesn't mean compromising our principles or remaining quiet at all times . . . but it does oblige us to pay close attention to what others have said" (p. 11) when they share their ideas, experiences and insights. It is our contention that mindfulness is a core leadership practice in the DDP model related to the development of individual agency and action on the part of members.

Humility. Humility in the DDP model, is a "willingness to admit that one's knowledge and experiences are limited and incomplete and to act accordingly" (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005, p. 12). A leader must acknowledge the limitations of his or her own individual understandings and learn to embrace the knowledge and understandings of the organization's membership, both individually and collectively. If leaders hope to develop a democratic, ongoing planning culture they must acknowledge that others, including those who are typically excluded from planning activities (i.e. students, parents, and community members) have ideas, and that those ideas may be more robust and more salient than the leader's. Leaders operating from a democratic perspective encourage and energize other members of the educational community, most especially those traditionally not involved in planning processes. This acknowledgment demands a level of humility not often present in organizational leadership practice.

Core Organizational Dispositions

As noted earlier, we contend that certain organizational dispositions must be cultivated as part of the culture for organizations to fully employ the DDP model.. These dispositions include the concepts of Mutuality, Appreciation, Participation and a sense of organizational Certainty.

Mutuality. The disposition of mutuality is best understood as an intentional effort by all members of the organizations to ensure that others in the organization are as fully engaged in the planning process as possible. More specifically, Brookfield and Preskill argue that "mutuality means it is in the interest of all to care as much about each other's self-development as one's own" (p. 12). By acting with this mindset, we "realize that our own flourishing depends in a vital sense to the flourishing of others" (p. 12). This "mutual flourishing" depends in part on what Horton (as cited in Jacobs, 2003) called "the creation of the proper climate" (p.142). For Horton, participation, especially by those who have had little opportunity to participate, depends on creating a climate in the organization that encourages people to engage. Specifically he argued, "The creation of the proper climate for learning is conducive to working with any group of people who feel that they are not fully accepted. The first step is to parallel voice principles with visible practices" (p. 142). In summary, the organizational disposition of mutuality has the potential to create a climate of "mutual flourishing" that extends to all levels of the organizational strata.

Appreciation. Appreciation is more than kind words; here we conceptualize appreciation as valuing others contributions through authentic and active engagement. Appreciative leaders value all points of view, all opinions, while withholding judgments. This active form of appreciation facilitates broad and sustained organizational participation. "Openly expressing our appreciation for one another engenders a kind of joyous collaboration that is characteristic of the most productive and most democratic of communities" (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p.15). In the daily life of an organization, appreciation acts as the glue that binds people together in both service to each other and in the ongoing planning efforts of the organization.

Participation and autonomy. It is a commonly understood that participation in organizational life is important. It could be argued that broad participation is the cornerstone of any democratic process. A democratic society "makes provision for participation for the good of all of its members on equal terms" (Dewey, 1916, p.105). In the frame of classroom discussions, Brookfield and Preskill (2005) argue that discussions are more fruitful "when a large number of students participate and when this participation happens in regards to varied topics" (p. 9). In the context of the DDP model, participation means that the organization has the opportunity to fully consider the ideas of all members of the educational community and to fully engage the expertise of the organizational membership. Brookfield and Preskill warn that "the incentive to participate is diminished when what one says or contributes is ignored or leaves no discernable impact" (p. 10). For us, the importance of not ignoring the contributions of others in relation to the planning work of an organization is worthy of careful consideration because the development and practice of this disposition is the responsibility of the entire organization. Finally, as organizational members participate in this model of planning they develop the potential to see democratic interactions as a "cultural way of being" (West, 2005, p.68), not as "something institutional and external … [and they] realize that democracy is a reality only as it is a commonplace of living" (Dewey, 1939, p. 343). The cultivation of broad organizational participation relies the participation, contributions and thinking of the individual. For us, individual participation is an important, if not crucial, component of democracy and the DDP model. A misguided understanding of democracy can limit individual participation in favor of a group orientation. Specifically, this misguidedness results when individual thinking and actions are seen as subordinate to the democratic culture of an educational organization. Brookfield & Preskill (2005) argue, "without people who are willing to take strong stands and argue assertively for them, democracy is diminished" (p. 17). Since the DDP model encourages participation and active engagement by individual organizational members, it is natural to expect strong opinions to emerge. This space of passionate opinions and engaged discourse is foundational to the democratic process.

Hope vs. certainty. Brookfield and Preskill argue for the importance of hope in a democratic space. For them, hope has a sustaining quality and implies a future orientation. "Hope provides us with a sense that all of the effort and time will benefit us in the long run, even if only in a small way" (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p.16). In this model, we propose a distinction between hope and an expanded, more robust, conception of faith. If hope can be conceptualized as a belief that positive outcomes *might* result, faith as we conceptualize it is a belief—a sense of certainty— that the outcomes *will* result. Organizations that operate from a position of certainty are not ignorant of the barriers and obstacles. Quite the contrary, a keen awareness and understanding of the challenges and certainty of the collective ability is required to address and overcome them (cf. King's [1963] notion of *creative tension*). Organizational members have a shared vision about the future and see that future as *fact*, not a hope or wish for

a possible future. All members of the organization move forward with certainty in the potential of the organization to face obstacles and to advance as if the goals are a certainty. In other words, one outcome of implementing the DDP is that all members of the organization contribute to the planning of—and thus the creating of—the community that they believe is possible.

Conclusion

As organizations engage in initiatives, a planning process inevitably occurs (whether consciously and deliberately or not) involving both formal and informal actions and activities within the organization. The Developmental Democratic Planning model discussed in this paper purposely engages leadership and organizational dispositions to maximize participation at all levels of the organization and move forward individual and organizational ends that transcend the planning effort itself (specifically, ends that cultivate and support democratic ways of being and doing throughout the organization). Actively practicing the leadership dispositions of Hospitality, Mindfulness, and Humility and cultivating the organizational dispositions of Mutuality, Appreciation, Participation, and Certainty are integral to the development of a democratic organizational culture. Planning that models and is enacted within a democratic culture facilitates outcomes that are both immediate (i.e. goals of the specific initiative) and long term (i.e. participation from all levels of the organization) thus promoting and sustaining ongoing democratic planning. The result of such a process is an organization that embraces planning as an integral part of its ongoing work and institutional mission, and embraces democratic practice as key to its planning processes and to all other work within the organization.

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