

AN EXERCISE OF SELF EXAMINATION THAT EXPOSES SOCIETAL INFLUENCES ON DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP*

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Abstract

Leadership programs routinely offer candidates self-assessment instruments such as the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator to help them identify their probable leadership traits, leadership styles and other personality constructs. One routinely overlooked yet crucial component of school leadership programs is self examination that includes the development of intellectual and ethical attributes that transcend administrative tasks, namely their social attitudes. Professors of educational leadership are compelled to offer students perspective-taking opportunities that unearth weighty and influential dispositions and attitudes that are not consonant with 21st century school leadership. This manuscript offers an internship activity that helps programs to meet NCATE Standard 4 but also affords students an opportunity to delve into their interior life to assess whether their inner realities are based on truth or socialization.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

Introduction

Young (1995) purports that at the heart of organizational change, there is individual change, and at the heart of individual change is the capacity to change ineffective beliefs, values and perceptions. In this author's experience, a routinely overlooked yet crucial component of school leadership programs is training toward self examination. As Murphy (1992) purports, school leadership programs must prepare people rather than principals. This preparation would include the development of intellectual and ethical attributes that transcend administrative tasks. Professors of educational leadership are then compelled to offer students perspective-taking opportunities that unearth weighty and influential personal values that are not consonant with effective 21st century school leadership. Oversights of such introspection would be markedly more grave

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and noticeable in programs that produce graduates who will, in large measure, serve school districts with a diverse student population. This manuscript offers a helpful assignment that requires emerging leaders to consider the societal influences that may well impact their leadership platform.

Rationale

Unaware that self knowledge should be acquired before organizational knowledge, well intentioned graduates, like the phoenix from ashes, rise from school leadership programs with the knowledge, skills and dispositions for legal, curricular, instructional, organizational and fiscal leadership. They become licensed and sprint into the principalship only to be faced with overwhelming cultural and economic hurdles that thwart their idealistic plans to shepherd an effective school. As trained leaders, new administrators may initially examine the curriculum and attending instruction. Other times they may re-allocate budgetary priorities. When possible, they exchange personnel. In essence, all the tinkering is done to the exterior when perhaps it should begin within. School leadership programs can help candidates with a process of introspection that calls on social and attitudinal considerations that heighten personal awareness and foster conditions for principled and situational changes ((Blanchard, 2004; Bocchino, 2004; Cashman, 1997; Cheek, J. & Briggs, 1982; Clemmer, 2000; Covey, 2004; Green 2001; Hall, 2004; Murphy, 1992; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1992; Young, 1995).

Yesterday's News, Today's Views Internship Exercise

The objective of this exercise is to afford students an opportunity to reflect upon dispositions and attitudes that may be heretofore unexamined. The instructor encourages students to delve into their interior life to assess whether their inner realities are based on truth or socialization. They should be challenged to determine whether their internal state will serve them well as 21st century school leaders. Students would be requested to reflect on societal influences on their individual, environmental, national and organizational beliefs (Luft, 1984) as follows:

- When considering societal influences on individual beliefs, students should consider their personal history; background; parents' influences; personality; whether they have lived an integrated or segregated personal and professional life; if they have had a sheltered or broad existence; their typical response to difference; and their tendencies toward change.
- While evaluating environmental viewpoints, they should allow for the neighborhoods, regions and states in which they were reared; their socio-economic status; and whether they are accustomed to urban, suburban or rural dwellings.
- For the assessment of their national level thinking, candidates should bear in mind the type of educational systems they have experienced, social movements of their generation, as well as the faith-based affiliations they have.
- As candidates review their organizational values, they should take into account the employment or district policies and practices they tend to support in addition to those oppose; whether they are a company-man; whether their organizational loyalty depends on who's the boss and whether they tend to align themselves with cliques in the workplace.
- They should discuss how media, propaganda and sound bites, in particular, could influence their worldviews and whether such views would be consonant with 21st century school leadership.
- Students should be requested to record concrete ways in which they would safeguard their hearts and administrations from past and future negative societal influences.

Students could submit the assignment through some form of electronic delivery. Class time would be invested in discussing the themes and patterns of student analyses and in thrashing out ways in which societal values and beliefs present themselves in contemporary classrooms, home-school relations, school-community relations, and in school policies and practices.

Summary

Leadership programs routinely offer students self-assessment instruments such as the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator, Kiersey Temperament Sorter, Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode, Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability Description and the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior. These instruments are designed to assist emerging leaders in identifying their probable leadership traits, leadership styles and

other personality constructs that may be essential to their success as leaders. However, leadership programs should also promote self examination of social attitudes to ensure that candidates move into leadership roles with a keen understanding of not only their overarching beliefs but the source of those beliefs as well.

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