Journal of Research on Leadership Education
Volume 3, Issue 1 (May, 2008)

WANTED: GOOD LEADERS FOR URBAN SCHOOLS

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For children served by urban districts, a deprivation in learning is life threatening.
(Jackson, 2005, p. 197)

Introduction

During the 1990s, people were deliberating about the new century and the changes it might bring. Futurists expounded on some of changes we could expect in "this experiment called democracy" (Goodlad, 2004). Globalization has brought basic changes in all sectors of the American society: most prominently in economics and politics. Globalization, as Fink (2000) points out, also leads to changes in education:

> Just as our economies, cultures, and politics, for better or for worse, are becoming increasingly globalised, so is education. Policy makers, aware of this shifting international terrain must focus on policies that help their nation, province or state to participate and survive in a strange and somewhat chaotic game in which the rules keep changing. (p.2)

Thus, as has happened numerous times in American history when the economic future is questioned, the education system is the target of intense political pressure to make changes that will lead to school improvement and increased student learning.

Demands for change have manifested in the role of the education leader. Leaders are expected to generate significant improvement and increase student achievement while simultaneously meeting the daily and long-term learning and social needs of the students they serve. In urban schools, leaders face extreme challenges as they strive to meet these

expectations. Working with student populations that are increasingly diverse and struggling to learn, children who are from low socio-economic families and/or whose cultural backgrounds or characteristics fall outside the main stream,

> Leaders in urban districts need a coherent and morally courageous framework for thinking through the challenges of an environment where the purpose of education is being narrowed, where public schools are being attacked for not solving the problems of cities, and where the shift to meet the current agenda leaves many districts without the human capacity to meet their goals. (Jackson, 2005, p. 197).

The purpose of this article is to identify the constructs, conceptual foundation, and initial implications of a model for preparation and renewal of urban education leaders who can meet that daunting challenge. It focuses not on the pedagogical and curricular tenets of needed school improvements, but on discerning theoretical concepts from various knowledge bases and constructs of educational leadership that endow future leaders with the wisdom, astuteness, and understanding needed to surmount the challenges and demands of leading tomorrow's urban education systems.

Profound Change

The greatest impact of globalization is noticeable in economics. The emerging economy demands a new approach to preparing for work and career. The effects of globalization are also evident in government and public life. Gliddens (2002) expounded on how basic changes create tensions between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism. He purports that shifting the public domain from public sector to private sector norms profoundly affected the norms of public responsibility. The decrease in public responsibility is evidenced by the: 1) decreased public engagement; 2) calls to reduce taxes; 3)

transference of responsibility from the family to the state in meeting the needs of the young; and 4) profoundly increased gap between the rich and the poor.

Demographic and social changes in the United States heighten the tensions between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism: changes that threaten the world many adults know and lead them to take opposing stands on dealing with the new realities. An aging population preparing for retirement, alternative family structures, a flood of poor children coming from diverse communities entering school with unequal social capital, an influx of new (many of them illegal) immigrants, differing views of how the world was created, and divergent perceptions of how life should be lived all lead to societal conflict. Competition for resources is inevitable.

Reacting to the profound changes described above and the social alterations in process, American politics are in turmoil. In no other societal arena is the clash between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism, designated "red" and "blue" by the media, more apparent. Tension resulting from the human trauma of change converges on the front line of politics: the education system. Education systems, community schools in particular, serve as the branch of a democracy most accessible to the general public and those they directly serve. Thus, schools have become the battlefield between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism forces. Education is both the core and the means of the American experiment called democracy. Specifying the democratic concepts of social justice, access, and equity, politics are focused on accountability in education. Schools are experiencing unprecedented pressure to educate *all* children, meet specified academic standards, and provide data documenting student learning.

Context Specific Needs

Tensions resulting from economic, social, demographic, and political changes described above most directly impact the tenor of urban education systems, sites of the most ethnically diverse, high poverty student populations. According to Snipes, Doolittle,

and Herlihy (2002), there are 16,850 public school districts in the US, 100 of which served 23% of all students. Most of those are in urban areas and serve 40% of the country's minority students and 30% of its economically disadvantaged students. Fink (2000) points out the specific challenges school leaders face in this context:

> . . . face the reality of promoting the learning of a specific group of children, with all their diversity and complexity . . . each context creates a set of variables with which policy implementers must contend, and policy initiators are often unaware or unimpressed. Poverty, for example, does affect children's learning. Moreover, each child comes equipped with his or her own set of needs, interests, and abilities. (p.2)

In every urban education system, black and Hispanic student achievement lags far behind that of their white and Asian counterparts (Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy, 2002). Adding to the urban education dilemma, Greene (2006) reports

> Our district-level results suggest that high school graduation rates are a particular problem in our nation's most populated school districts . . . the graduation problem is centered primarily in the nation's largest school districts . . . if the public is to improve high school graduation rates, it would do well to focus its efforts on the education provided in these urban areas. (p. 5)

Exacerbated by complex and dysfunctional bureaucracies, lack of human and material resources, and diverse student populations, urban schools are under intense public and political scrutiny for low student achievement. Urban school environments exude stress, anxiety, confusion, and, in some cases, hopelessness. Consequently, at the time the education system is being called upon to meet the adaptive challenges of educating a very

diverse citizenry to think critically, evaluate information, and participate as full citizens in a democracy, urban educators at all levels are leaving at an unprecedented rate.

The context of the new educational leadership model proposed in this article, New York City (NYC), is the epitome of an urban education environment. A microcosm of democracy, complexity, and diversity, over eight million people live within an area of 321 square miles in relative peace and safety. According to *The Newest New Yorkers* (2000), immigrants and their U.S.-born offspring account for approximately 55 percent of the city's population. NYC schools are forced to deal with issues related to race and class – assimilating immigrants, teaching students whose first language is not standard English, the effects of poverty – and according to Cuban (2001b) "racial isolation, ethnic conflict, and economic disparities as they affect academic achievement both in the schools and in the city itself" (p. 1).

The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) is America's largest school district. Operating approximately 1,400 schools and programs that serve 1.1 million students (NYCDOE Website, 2006), NYCDOE is experiencing three challenges facing most urban systems: a leadership crisis, demoralized school climates, and low student achievement. The turnover at the leadership level is at an all-time high. In the past four years, over 50 per cent of the school leaders in NYC have left the system, thus creating a void of experienced leadership and stability within the system. Currently, more than half have been in the job for less than three years.

Exacerbating the leadership and school morale crisis, student performance in the NYC schools is among the worst in the nation. According to NYCDOE Reports, approximately 58 percent of the Black students and 55 percent of the Hispanic students in grades 3-8 DID NOT meet standards on ELA and math tests. High school student achievement data is even worse. The high school graduation rate in NYC is the third lowest in the nation (Greene, 2006). Greene reports "only about 43 percent of the 1.1 million students in New York City public school district graduate from high school" (p. 6). Even more alarming is that only 33

percent of the black male students and 30 percent of the Hispanic male students graduate. NOTE: The higher the diversity and poverty rates of the school, the lower the student achievement rates.

Needed: Good Leaders for Urban Schools

Public demands for more effective schools and increased student learning have amplified attention on the crucial role of school leaders. As the impact of leadership on student achievement became evident, school leaders came under even greater political and public pressure. Beginning with the effective school studies (Purkey & Smith, 1983) to the most recent work on comprehensive school reform (Copland, 2003; Smylie, Wenzel, & Fendt, 2003; Beach & Lindahl, 2004) leadership is cited as an explicatory variable in schools where all students meet ambitious learning goals. The leadership impact is even greater in schools in more difficult circumstances and where the learning needs of students are most acute (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, 2004). Paradoxically, these schools tend to have higher leader turnover rates, as well as the greatest challenges in recruiting candidates to fill those positions.

Ironically, a meta-analysis of research that examined the features of leadership associated with student achievement suggests that the ways in which leaders address the context-specific needs of teachers, students, and other stakeholders may be underemphasized in educational leadership preparation and renewal programs (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Incongruently, findings from research on school leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) provide evidence suggesting that successful leaders in *highly diverse contexts* focus their efforts on a specific set of tasks: 1) building powerful forms of teaching and learning that are appropriate for the populations they serve; 2) creating strong communities in schools with a strong sense of affiliation and caring; 3) establishing school climates that promote equity and justice for all students by challenging and negating patterns of discrimination; 4) nurturing the development of families'

educational cultures; and 5) expanding the proportion of students' social capital valued by the schools.

Literature on the tenets of educational leadership also points to an expanded interest in ethical leadership practices and for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural influences that shape schooling (Murphy, 2006). The value-added approaches to school leadership identified by these findings provide guidance for the ***Good*** leader model for urban schools.

Good leader constructs

Why is the word ***Good*** used to convey the image of leadership needed in urban schools? Applicable definitions of good as an adjective in the American Heritage Dictionary (2000) are:

> **1.** Being positive or desirable in nature: **2a.** Having the qualities that are desirable or distinguishing in a particular thing: **b.** Serving the desired purpose or end: **3**. Superior to the average: **4a.** Of high quality: **b.** Discriminating: **5.** Worthy of respect: honorable: **6.** Competent: skilled: **7a.** Reliable: sure: **b.** Valid or true: **c.** Genuine: real: **8.** Of moral excellence: upright.

Good can be interpreted as a moral word, but is also indicative a level of quality, competence, capability, and authenticity. These definitions of good can be applied to leadership in each of what this author deems the four critical aspects of urban education: purpose, people, practice, and place. ***Good*** is used to emphasize a conception of leadership that is sorely needed in an urban context: leadership that is explicitly purposeful and ethical, but is guided by an understanding of human development and needs, is knowledgeable about the best and most appropriate practices of teaching and learning for a diverse population, and keenly aware of the social and cultural forces that impact and challenge schooling in an urban context. Fink (2000) aptly describes the embodiment of this conception of leadership:

> Sad to say, but all the courses, exhortations, competency lists in the world cannot help a person who does not have an intuitive sense of what is the right or wrong course of action in a particular situation . . . I call it 'presence'. Some people exude confidence, control, conviction in a course of action, and the courage to act even 'against the odds'. (p.12)

A good school is a moral thing in that it does good things: good things for kids, good things for teachers (Goodlad, 2005). ***Good*** leaders make good schools possible. Thus, *preparing* and *renewing* ***Good*** leaders is essential for creating good urban schools.

Through integrating the conception of a ***Good*** leader and the focus of successful leaders in highly diverse urban schools, the constructs for a ***Good*** leadership model begin to materialize. Specifically designed to meet the contextual needs of NYC's urban schools, the constructs must support a framework that addresses the adaptive challenges of educating a very diverse citizenry, inspiring and creating a strong, positive school climate, resolving inequity in schools, providing access to quality learning opportunities to *all* students, and preparing students and their families to participate in and contribute to the society in which they live. Thus, as suggested by the discussion relating to urban school issues and needs, emergent ***Good*** leader constructs (with actions necessitated for turning being into doing) include:

- *leadership for democracy* – create strong emotionally and socially intelligent school communities with a strong sense of affiliation and caring that build collaborative efforts among the internal and external constituents and a sense of personal responsibility to actively participate in shaping America's future.
- *leadership for sustainability as school improvement* – cultivate and recreate an educational ecosystem that can stimulate ongoing improvement without compromising the development of the surrounding environment (Hargreaves &

Fink, 2003); identify and implement forms of teaching and learning appropriate for the student population including accessible and engaging curriculum content, assessment methods that monitor performance and motivate students, and school structures that will ensure *all* students the opportunity to build their capacity and realize their potential;

- *leadership for social justice* – examine, question, and rectify the policies and procedures that shape urban schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to markers of otherness (Dantley & Tillman (2006); and
- *leadership for social mobility* – ensure that urban students, especially immigrants and children of immigrants, develop capacity and skills and are aware of opportunities to contribute their talents to the American society, to benefit from opportunities offered by the American society, and to nurture their families' educational development.

Conceptual Foundation

The complexity of the urban educational environment is daunting. Designing a program to prepare leaders for urban schools is equally daunting. A range of theories is needed to shape the preparation of urban school leaders. The emergent ***Good*** Leader model constructs identified above require a conceptual foundation that amalgamates and integrates theories and insights from several fields of research: aims of education, systems, complexity, leadership, organizational change and sustainability, social justice, social constructivist and emergent human development, social-emotional learning, and cultural foundations. As presented below, each of the constructs draw upon a varying number of knowledge bases for support.

Leadership for Democracy

Aims of public education

Formal education, from its inception around 3,000 years ago in Greece, Egypt, and India, has been primarily a socialization process (Padel, 1992). The United States is a country founded by immigrants seeking opportunities for improvement and change for the betterment of their lives. Education was seen by our founding fathers as a key to obtaining those opportunities and, following earlier tenets, to sustaining the principles on which America was founded. Thomas Jefferson placed education as the foundation of democracy and a prerequisite to vote. According to Jefferson, ignorance and sound self-government could not exist together: the one destroyed the other. Jefferson's beliefs are clear in his writings:

> If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. (p. 384)

> The objects of ... primary education [which] determine its character and limits [are]: To give to every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business; to enable him to calculate for himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts and accounts in writing; to improve, by reading, his morals and faculties; to understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either; to know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains, to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor and judgment; and in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed. (p. 434)

An overview of the education systems established by each of the 50 states illuminates very clearly the impact of Jefferson's philosophy on those state systems.

The concepts of democracy, equal opportunity, and change are embedded in the social order that evolved in this country. Along with a learned population, a democratic society must demonstrate respect for others, concern for the commonwealth, fairness and justice, as well as voluntary, active participation in society (Michelli & Keiser, 2005).

Democracy, in this context, requires active participation by all citizens in social, political, and economic decisions that will affect their lives. Education of engaged citizens, according to this perspective, involves two essential elements: respect for diversity and the development of critical, socially engaged intelligence. Dewey's insights into democratic culture and meaningful education continue their relevance nearly a century later. In 1916, Dewey purported that a society that holds the ideal of change as a way to improve will have different standards and methods of education from one whose goal is the perpetuation of its own customs. He goes on to state, ". . . it is assumed that the aim of education (in our society) is to enable individuals to continue their education – or that the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth" (p. 100).

Goodlad (2004) reiterates that the purpose of public school is to sustain a nation grounded in "an experiment called democracy'. He further argues that "All societies want 'educated' citizens . . . most societies want a literate population . . . a democratic society demands a special kind of literacy . . . a more complex kind of literacy" (p. 4). As theories of education (teaching and learning) evolve through research and application, and as our society becomes more integrated and complex, accomplishing the mission of education in America becomes a greater challenge. Sirotnik (1998) points out:

> America is a collection of multiple communities defined by different interests, races, ethnicities, regions, economic stratifications, religions, and so forth . . . But there is a community – a moral community – that transcends the special

> interests of the individuals, families, groups, that stands for what this nation is all about: liberty *and justice* for all . . . It is a "moral ecology" held together by a political democracy and the fundamental values embedded in the system. (p. 181).

Thus, as the history of education mirrors that of our society, efforts in accomplishing the purpose of education becomes more challenging and complex.

The intended purpose of the foundations of education in a democracy, according to Goodlad (2006) is to provide

> . . . an understanding of the purpose of schooling in a democratic society: the social, political, and economic context in which schooling takes place; the developmental characteristics of the young; how learning occurs and is best induced; federal, state, and local responsibilities in the schooling enterprise, and much, much more. (p. 2)

Linking the purpose, the practice, and the outcome of educational leadership, Fullan (2003) affirms:

> Public value and moral purpose have always been the mission statements of democratic governments. It (moral purpose) must transcend the individual to become an organizational and system quality in which collectives are committed to the three aspects of moral purpose: 1) raising the bar and closing the gap of student learning; 2) treating people with demanding respect; and 3) altering the social and educational environment (schools and districts) for the better (p. 15).

Following on that train of thought, Starratt (2005) expounds on what he defines as responsible leadership. Asserting that five "domains" of responsibility are

central to educational leadership, Starratt identifies those domains as: 1) a human being; 2) a citizen and public servant; 3) an educator; 4) an educational administrator; and 5) an educational leader. Additionally, he contends "leaders want to transform the school from an organization of rules, regulations, and roles into an intentional self-governing community" (p. 130).

Leadership for Sustainability and School Improvement

System thinking

Emanating from theories of System Dynamics, a field of study initiated and applied in engineering, Forrester (1961) recognized the need for a better way of testing and analyzing new ideas about social systems. He contended that system thinking allows people to better understand social systems, and thus improve them. A system is a delineated part of the universe that is distinguished from the rest by an imaginary boundary. The key idea of "system" is that once a system is identified (the boundary described) then one describes:

- the properties of the system,
- the properties of the universe excluding the system which affect the system, and
- the interactions / relationships between them.

All systems interact with their environment. Thus, it is simply a task of the describer to identify the way in which the system is interdependent with the environment. Taking into account all of the behaviors of a system as a whole in the context of its environment is the systems perspective.

Senge (1990) takes system thinking to another level. He describes system thinking as a way of helping a person to view organizations from a broad perspective that includes structures, patterns and events. Looking at the organization from the larger perspective allows individuals to identify the real causes of issues and know where to work to address them. Much of this learning has come from the perspective that organizations are living

systems. Living systems are open systems that exchange matter and energy, an interacting or interdependent group of entities forming a unified whole.

Complexity

Complexity theory asserts that some systems display behavioral phenomena that are completely inexplicable by any conventional analysis of the systems' constituent parts. A system, either animate or inanimate, that is composed of many interacting components whose behavior or structure is difficult to understand is frequently called complex. According to Forrester (1971), the father of system thinking:

> The intuitively obvious "solutions" to social problems are apt to fall into one of several traps set by the character of complex systems. First, an attempt to relieve one set of symptoms may only create a new mode of system behavior that also has unpleasant consequences. Second, the attempt to produce short-term improvement often sets the stage for a long-term degradation. Third, the local goals of a part of a system often conflict with the objectives of the larger system. Fourth, people are often led to intervene at points in a system where little leverage exists and where effort and money have but slight effect (p. 16).

The increase in complexity is directly related to sweeping changes in the structure and dynamics of human civilization and the increasing interdependence of the global economics and social systems. The progressive historical increase of complexity means that organizations that do not change do not survive.

The educational systems of advanced societies are highly complex, consisting of many components that interact within multiple layers of organization and at different time-intervals. The multiplicity of these components and of their loci of control, the diverse nature of the stakeholders and the richness of interactions among these groups, are all essential components of the system’s functioning and must be part of any attempts to

support, reform, or improve it. Bar-Yam (2004) contends that in their complexity, education systems are similar to other social organizations, and in fact, share aspects of interaction among components with most physical systems of global importance.

Leadership, organizational change and sustainability

The connectedness among current leadership and organizational change theories obviously link purpose, practice, and sustainability. A critical element in those theories in knowing and having the wherewithal to apply that knowledge in working with the people involved with the system. Reviewing the current literature on leadership, however, reveals an interesting phenomenon: the integration of leadership, teaching, learning, and organizational change. The overlap is apparent in the paragraphs that follow.

Researchers have examined leadership from various perspectives. Early analyses of leadership tended to focus on traits, behaviors, characteristics, and skills. Finding no single trait or combination of traits fully explained leadership impact, researchers began examining the influence of the situation on leaders' behaviors and skills. Researchers used the contingency model to examine the connection between personal traits, situational variables, and leader effectiveness. Findings from the above led to the conclusion that leaders and leadership are crucial but complex components of organizations.

" . . . there are not enough good leaders in the world . . . we were entering an era when the scarcity of leadership talent . . .the world desperately needs more and better leaders" (p. xxi), states Tichy (2002). Focusing on the premise that leadership is "the whole game," Tichy goes on assert:

> No institution – religious, military, educational, political, or business – can be great unless it has a great leader at the top who develops leaders at all levels of the organization. The goal is leaders at all levels who all teach and develop other leaders . . . they lead by teaching and they teach interactively, in a way that they and the "students" both learn (p. xxiv).

The emergence of the idea of the 'learning organization' is directly related to the notion of a learning society. Schön (1973) made one of the defining contributions to the concept of the learning organization in his contention:

> The loss of the stable state means that our society and all of its institutions are in *continuous* processes of transformation. We cannot expect new stable states that will endure for our own lifetimes. We must learn to understand, guide, influence and manage these transformations. We must make the capacity for undertaking them integral to ourselves and to our institutions. We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are 'learning systems', that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. (p. 28)

Schön provided a theoretical framework linking the experience of living in a situation undergoing increasing change with the need for learning.

Senge (1995) contends that system thinking is the foundation for a learning organization. Learning organizations require a new view of leadership: leaders as designers, stewards, and teachers responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and are responsible for learning.

Rooted in extensive research to determine the leadership competencies that are essential in getting extraordinary things done in organizations, Kouznes and Posner (2003) posit that there are five performance-based practices of exemplary leadership: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Sergiovanni (2005) purports that "teachers and students alike seek frameworks and norms that help them sort out how they fit into a school's culture . . . heartbeats of leadership and schools are strengthened when word and deed are one." He goes on to say "leadership as a moral action is a struggle to do the right thing according to a sense of values and what it means to be a human being" (p. 112).

Goodlad (2006) contends that education provides the grounding for the ecology of mind that teachers (author transfers theory to leaders) depend on in making hundreds of decisions each day of school. This ecology of mind provides the evidence that leaders draw upon for making those decisions, for better or for worse. Leaders with educative ecology of mind tend to embrace both the education of self and the educating one does and supports as a leader.

"The emotional task of the leader is *primal*--that is, first-- in two senses," asserts Goleman (2002), "It is both the original and the most important act of leadership" (p. 5). Linked to neurology, the primal leadership theory emphasizes the art of relationship - being connected to people and to networks, being open and frank, being flexible and informal, and being enthusiastic and passionate about what they do. This leadership approach stimulates and motivates others to be and do their best, thus creating added value through the essential human ingredients for organizational performance. A leader's emotional intelligence is directly related to the climate of the organization.

The climate of an organization is seminal to the performance of that organization. Over the last two decades there has been an extraordinary growth in research attesting to the importance of school climate in affecting a number of important aspects of children's lives and achievement. The effectiveness of schools, in terms of student learning and development, is significantly influenced by the positive quality and characteristics of the school climate. In terms of academics, studies from America and abroad have repeatedly shown that achievement increases as students feel safe, cared for, appropriately supported, and lovingly "pushed" to learn. Schools that emphasize supportive open communications,

collaboration, and intellectuality outperform those that emphasize constraint, restrictiveness, rigidity, coldness, and lack of communication. Outperform has been measured in terms of higher achievement and attendance along with lower dropout rates, frustration, and levels of alienation (Cohen, 2006).

Improving or renewing schools is a continuous process that necessitates different types of knowledge and skills at successive phases of the process. Thus, improvement is a practice as well as a process. Elmore (2005) contends, "educators have to learn and become fluent in new instructional practices, often with different content constructions designed around different expectations based on student capabilities" (p. 139).

Education does not suffer from too few innovations, but rather from too many ad hoc, unconnected, incremental innovations. Nearly all the success stories involve improvements in literacy and numeracy at the elementary level, with some closings of the gap between high- and low- performing schools. The problem is that the results plateau is well below acceptable levels. For example, in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLNS) in England, after a relatively sharp increase in student scores during the first three years of application (between 1997 and 2000), the results have remained at the same level for the past three years (Earl, Levin, Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson, 2003). Sustainability did not occur. Burnout, overload, and turnover took their toll.

Emanating from system thinking, Fullan (2005) defines sustainability as the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose. Leadership for sustainability requires system thinkers in action who, Fullan (2005) states, are "cracking a complex set of problems and doing something good in the process." Energy, not time, according to Fullan, is the key to sustainability.

Cuban (2001) tends to disagree. Identifying time as a major factor in the perception and test of sustainability, Cuban suggests that: 1) sustaining educational innovations is a complex process requiring long-term and distributed investments of time and energy; 2) factors beyond the sustainability effort (i.e., economic and demographic changes, policy

shifts, etc.) play a major role in sustainability; and 3) the sustained nature of innovations will not necessarily be visible except after sustained time.

Hargreaves' (2005) research suggests sustainable improvement and the contribution principals make happen over many years and several principals. Succession needs to be planned thoughtfully and ethically: deeper and wider pools of future leaders should be developed to avoid succession issues. However, Hargreaves emphasizes, sustainable leadership depends on more than succession planning - "it comes down to a battle for the soul of leadership itself" (p. 172).

Expanding on his earlier social development theory, Schön (1987) built on earlier premises of Dewey and Vygotsky, among others, in his "reflection-in-action" approach to learning. Schön describes teaching in the form of reflection-in-action:

> It involves a surprise, a response to a surprise by thought turning back on itself, thinking what we're doing as we do it, setting the problem of the situation anew, conducting as action experiment on the spot by which we seek to solve new problems we've set, an experiment in which we test both our new way of seeing the situation, and also try to change the situation for the better. (p. 5)

Noticeably similar, Fullan's (2005) and Heintz and Linsky's (2002) leadership concepts of "system thinkers in action" and "on the dance floor and on the balcony," respectively, parallel Schön's (1987) reflection-in-action concept. All three concepts accentuate using theory as applied practice in addressing complex problems, reflecting while doing, and changing behaviors/actions when warranted. Ensuing in a higher level of learning and change for the better, this leadership practice has the potential of having a powerful impact of schools and districts, and thus, getting results never before attained.

Knowledge and astuteness in the process of human learning and development are required for *Good* leaders. Leaders are encouraged to take their ideas public and use their

colleagues as sounding boards for the emerging understandings. Checking for understanding reduce the chances of introducing misconceptions into the public dialogue. Developing an understanding of how tasks can be undertaken in order to maximize the likelihood of positive outcomes is key to *Good* leadership.

Leadership for Social Justice

Justice

Clearly evidenced in the discussion of Aims of Public Education, beginning with our founding fathers, education was seen as a medium for supporting mobility, eliminating inequities, and embedding democratic principles in future societies. Voting records of and socioeconomic gaps within our citizens clearly indicate this ideal has not become reality.

The concept of social justice, drawn from the codes of morality prevailing from a culture, is typically framed around several issues (e.g., race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, marginalization, spiritually) and seen as both a means and an end. Rawls (1971) proposed "Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason, justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others" (p. 3). Social justice is "social" in that it involves activity with others and aims at the good of all in the whole.

Learning

The conscious integration of social justice and education is drawn from the concept of learning as a constructivist activity. The notions of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching are closely linked to Vygotsky's thoughts about the importance of social interaction in human development. Culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2000) contends, unleashes the higher learning potential of ethnically diverse students. Emphasizing the importance of conceptualizing and practicing social justice in teaching, Cochran-Smith (2004) defines social justice as enhancing life chances for children.

In educational leadership currently, a small number of empirical studies guide our understanding of leadership for social justice, but that number is increasing (Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Dantley, 2002; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003), Larson and Murtadha (2002) discuss three areas of work that provide the basis of leadership for social justice: "deconstructing existing logics of leadership; portraying alternative perspectives of leadership; and constructing theories, systems, and processes of leadership for social justice" (p. 137).

Social activism

Revolutionary in nature, leadership for social justice in education is values based, ethical, moral, transformative, and more akin to spiritual leadership than management science. It disturbs accepted beliefs, presents difficult challenges (in both preparation and practice), and requires building coalitions with other societal entities striving toward the same end. However, if education is to evolve into that ideal foreseen by our founding fathers, Marshall and Oliva (2006) assert "Policymakers and scholars talk about what can or should be done, but educational leaders are the people who must *deliver* some version of social justice and equity" (p. 1). Dantley and Tillman (2006) take that thought a step further:

> Linked closely with perspectives on leadership for social justice is the concept of moral transformative leadership and how leaders as transformative or public intellectuals serve as social activists who are committed to seeing a greater degree of democracy practiced in schools as well as in the larger society (p. 16).

Leadership for Social Mobility and Change

Social constructivist and emergent human development

The humanistic perspective evolves from the belief that the human being is always in the process of becoming. Human motivational theorists (Porter, 1974; Hertzberg, 1959; Maslow, 1970) provide ways of understanding the human needs and how those needs interface with the workplace. Respect plays a pivotal role in all relationships, personal and professional, including those in the workplace. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2000) contends that proper respect can create "symmetry, empathy and connection" even in unequal relationships. Thus, respect can provide a pathway for interfacing human needs and the workplace

Applying the systems approach to human development and organized ways for living, Graves' (1974) research suggests there are discernible and usable clues by which to organize the complex, systemic work relationships. According to Graves, the psychology of the human organism, institutions for organizing, and styles of management are emergent processes marked by the progressive subordination of older behavioral systems to newer, higher order systems. Humans live in a potentially open system of needs, values and aspirations, but often settle into what approximates a closed system. Thus, as the conditions of his existence change, the human tends to change his psychology, his institutions for organizing, and his styles of management.

Understanding social processes are considered essential to understanding how people think and learn in the real world (Dewey, 1916: Vygotsky, 1978; Schön, 1987). "The most notable distinction between living and inanimate things, " according to Dewey (1916), "is that the former maintain themselves by renewal . . . life is a self-renewing process" (p. 1). Learning is essential for renewal. Dewey purports that experience and thinking are critical to learning. He goes on to state, "Experience involves a connection of doing or trying . . . Thinking is the accurate and deliberate instituting of connections between what is done

and its consequences" (p. 163). As societies become more complex, the need for learning and renewal become increasingly critical to the continuation of that society.

Learning, as defined by Vygotsky (1978), is a constructivist activity. Human development takes place in the context of a culture. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of human cognition and learning. Expounding on that concept, Vygotsky asserts that human development evolves from experience on two levels; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the individual (intrapsychological).

Transferring this concept to leadership, reflection on motivations and interactions becomes imperative to developing ***Good*** leadership. When working with others in a learning community, especially in a diverse context, the vectors of race, class, gender, culture and language converge in a set of complex and passionate dynamics that often have as much to do with the adults' desires and needs as with those of the children. Particularly in an era that emphasizes the importance of parental involvement and collaboration, school leaders have to be more cognizant of these dynamics in developing relationships between the school, teachers, parents, and families. How the parent engages with the teaching and learning of their child in school matters more than the social, cultural, racial, class background of the parent to the achievement of the child (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003).

The Program Model

When considering the implications of the urban leader constructs and conceptual foundations for a ***Good*** leader program, recent research findings on leadership programs must be contemplated. Goodlad (2005), when asked to identify the most important concept leader preparation programs should be emphasizing, replied, "First, do no harm." Spillane (2005), in defining distributive leadership, implies that the interaction of school leaders, followers, and their situation is the starting point. Additionally, Davis et al., 2005, report that

> Research on principal preparation and development suggests that certain program features are essential to the development of effective school leaders . . . Evidence indicates that effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools. (p. 8)

These guidelines for programs appear to be aligned with the research on effective principal practice and are consistent with the literature on executive development and adult learning theory (Orr, 2003).

Program Co-Design and Construction

A dialogue between a college educational leadership faculty member, NYC district and school leaders, and two educational training groups, each with different perspective about leadership preparation needs, resulted in a program design that is both academic and practical. The partners' dialogue delineated specific practitioner knowledge and skills needed by new leaders in the NYC schools. Then the hard work of co-construction began.

The practitioner partners emphasized the need for application of theory as an action part of the Program. Reflecting John Dewey's (1916) premise "An ounce of experience is better that a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance" (p. 144) and that one doesn't learn in a meaningful way if the experimental "face" of a subject area – including its ambiguities and permutations – isn't encountered during the learning process, the practitioner partners strongly recommended that an apprenticeship under a mentor principal or assistant principal be integrated with the courses throughout the program. The candidates, they argued, needed to understand through experience that the challenges encountered in low-performing urban education systems require solutions that are efficient, sophisticated, powerful and amenable to action:

in other words, both theoretical and practical. The practitioner partners also requested that courses (rather than the standard 45-hour course) would: 1) organize content into customized modules; 2) require intensive work; 3) not conflict with school schedules; and 4) utilize and support use of technology.

The Emergent Program: Academy for Promising Leaders of Urban Schools (APLUS)

Drawing from the constructs and conceptual foundation of a ***Good*** leader model, educational leadership preparation program research findings, and utilizing the co-design and –construction guidelines described above, the APLUS Program is being piloted during 2006-2007 academic year as a partnership effort among a New York City institution of higher education, a public school district, and a nonprofit business consulting organization, and funded by the Goldman Sachs and Hewlett Packard Foundations.

APLUS characteristics and unique features

APLUS is a 21 credit certification-only program delivered over Fall, Spring, and Summer I. Fellows (candidates) are supported by a mentor principal during an integrated apprenticeship that begins during the first month and continues throughout the program and by executive coaches from the business world during the second and third semesters.

Candidate selection is the touchstone of a successful school leadership development process. The APLUS Program's early identification process is a unique approach derived from proven practices regarding executive recruitment and development adapted to the urban educational environment. The four-stage process includes: 1) nomination by a principal; 2) resume screening, interview, and writing process designed and delivered by the district; 3) academic credential screening and interview selection process of the higher education institution; and 4) an early identification assessment lab featuring a holistic diagnosis of leadership potential designed for this pilot.

APLUS Program objectives are to:

- focus on "key habits of the heart and mind;"
- emphasize a system approach to develop the instructional leadership knowledge base and skills critical to building schools where students learn;
- highlight interconnections between a school's purpose, people, practice and place;
- prepare candidates to deal with daily "on the ground" issues of teaching and learning;
- develop knowledge, understanding, skills and workable strategies that shape and sustain organizational change;
- design program content around problems of practice in diverse, high need, high energy urban schools; and
- prepare advocates who demonstrate democratic and social justice principles in shaping the environment and promoting educational equity on behalf of student and families.

Guided by the Standards for School Leaders and New York State Leadership Characteristics, APLUS Fellows are required to participate in a series of "challenge cycles" that are calculated to foster deep understanding of working with complex problems of urban schools. Curriculum materials and activities, including role playing, further case studies, and in-basket exercises, require Fellows to analyze complex issues through addressing the multiple, interrelated factors impacting the issue. Successful completion of the challenges requires mastery of the content and understanding of how tasks can be approached to maximize positive outcomes.

The APLUS fellows

Nineteen master teachers were selected as APLUS Fellows to participate in this pilot program. The Fellows are as ethnically diverse as the schools they serve, either immigrants themselves or children of immigrants, representing the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Barbados, Mexico, Ecuador, Italy, and Columbia among others.

Most of the Fellows already serve in quasi-administrative role such as Teacher Leader, Special Education Coordinator, Dean of Students, Student Activities Coordinator,

Professional Development Coordinator, Technology Coordinator, etc. Only two of the 19 were in the classroom full-time. The Fellows' education experience ranges from 8 to 25 years. Seven of them are career-changers, having experience in the engineering, accounting, and legal professions prior to coming into education. They are well-educated, have a passion for what they do, and are committed to urban schools and the children they serve.

Next Steps

The aim of the ***Good*** Leader Model, which is manifested in the APLUS Program, is to prepare urban school leaders who positively impact the school climate, and ultimately, student learning. During 2007-2008, the plan is to expand the APLUS to include 2 cohorts at 2 institutions of higher education. A research agenda to evaluate, refine, validate, and examine the preliminary impact of the APLUS is warranted. The evolving research agenda is as follows:

- Review, critique, and refine the constructs, inputs, and processes of the APLUS Preparation Program
- Empirically examine the impact of school leader practices on the learning environment (school climate)
- Empirically examine the impact of school leader practices on student learning and achievement
- Apply research findings to design, document, and validate a series of research instruments to identify value-added leadership practices that improve the school climate and student achievement
- Use the data collected in the previous stages to design, pilot, and empirically validate a value-added model to assess school leader practices during different stages of leadership development.

Conclusion

'Good enough' leaders aren't good enough to lead high need, diverse urban schools. The urban environment needs ***Good*** leaders who commit to the social responsibility of

developing an informed citizenry that shapes the American society and participates in the highest levels of the economy, regardless of background or ethnic roots. It is the sacred responsibility of ***Good*** leaders to ensure that students learn habits of the mind and heart that enable them to become critical thinkers and problem solvers, achieve academically, develop ethically, and succeed in the global community. In today's world, it is imperative that students are prepared to become the citizens Jefferson envisioned: informed and responsible participators in and contributors to this experiment called democracy. Ultimately, those ***Good*** leaders with the wherewithal to thrive in a dynamic complex education system will make a difference in the academic achievement of diverse urban students, restore public trust in public education, and shape the future of public education and academe in New York City, and in turn, other urban education systems.

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