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8505 Platform

Any discussion regarding the nature of leadership must not ignore the possibility that leaders may sometimes use their skills, abilities and knowledge for purposes of questionable intent. At the very least, any study of this topic must honor the fact that the end result of leadership is not always positive. The attention paid to the study of leadership in the latter half of the 20th century, as well as the emphasis placed on producing effective leaders in America, has been of great consequence to the American system of education. The proliferation of “leaders” in American education has left us with a bifurcated, disjointed, compartmentalized and fractioned structure, as individual leaders have each sought to create and implement their own vision for students. In many cases, the harm done has outweighed any benefit. This, of course, begs a few questions: Who should be driving American education? What does leadership look like in American education? To whom should the mantle of leadership be passed, and from whom is it being passed?

Traditionally, administrators and board members - as well as a small group of influential teachers - have held the positions of educational leadership in the United States. While government officials have certainly played a role in the changing face of American education, their leadership has not often extended beyond that of providing resources and external mandates. Furthermore, the onus of leadership has been geographically located at the top of the institutional hierarchy, evidenced by the truth that the American structure of education is designed in the image of higher educational institutions themselves. Yet a changing understanding of leadership in the 20th century suggests that the hierarchical educational paradigm within which we currently operate is outdated.

Bryman (1992) suggests that the new leadership paradigm that emerged as the 20th century came to an end centers primarily on the affective, rather than the effective elements of leadership.

Otherwise stated, the focus in the 21st century must shift away from prescriptive leadership styles towards follower development and empowerment. This sort of approach is commonly labeled *Transformational Leadership* (Northouse, 2012) and is concerned with “emotions, values, ethics and long-term goals” (p.185). In applying this style of leadership to the education paradigm in the United States, such an approach demands a major shift in our understanding of *who* should be leading. In the new paradigm, gone are the days of those at the top of the hierarchy (administrators, board members and post-secondary institutions as a whole) prescribing solutions to assumed problems of the educational realm. Arrived are the days of student-centered development, wherein a student’s needs truly drive what is experienced in the classroom.

While it represents a profound and abrupt shift in thinking, the implementation of such ideology is certainly not as difficult as one might think. Even as a teacher, simple steps can be taken to ensure a more transformational, student-centric approach to educational leadership. In my classroom, for example, student feedback (through course evaluations, electronic back channels, and in-the-moment polling) is often used to determine the direction of a single lesson or an entire semester. Student curiosity and the exploration of tangential topics are encouraged and space is intentionally made for the construction of knowledge, as opposed to the traditional transmission approach of yesteryear. Finally, in my classroom, student empowerment is first and foremost; a student’s gifts are never sacrificed on the alters of efficiency or standards.

Simply put, we must begin to honor the needs of our students by providing transformational leadership that develops the whole student, rather than seeking to exploit a particular gift or meet a perceived need in the marketplace. This must begin with the mantle of leadership being passed from the administrators, board members and teachers to the students themselves.

References

Bryman, A. (1992). *Charisma and leadership in organizations*. London: SAGE Publications.

Northouse, P.G. (2009). *Leadership: Theory and practice, 6th ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Part 1: From 6 Traits of Writing

- 5 - Strong shows control and skill; many strengths present
- 4 - Maturing strengths outweigh weakness; small amount of revision needed
- 3 - Developing strengths and weaknesses are about equal; first-draft stage
- 2 - Emerging isolated moments begin to show what writer intends; need for revision outweighs strengths
- 1 - Not Yet getting started, but the result is unclear, struggling, tentative;

Part 2: Scholarly Characteristics

Criteria	Scoring Guide	Comments
The platform <i>bridges or connects</i> your understanding and experience of leadership and the course materials and content.	5 4 3 2 1	
The platform includes insight(s) about yourself as a leader, based on brief but concrete examples and descriptions from the present, and your hopes or intentions or both.	5 4 3 2 1	

Criterion	Scoring Guide	Comments
Ideas and Content: -Writer grounds espoused theory(ies) about leadership by citing specific authors/ theorists and includes details (paraphrased or verbatim) from their works or ideas. -Writer provides brief concrete examples and details from current practice or what hopes to do or both.	5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1	
Organization: Writer composes a platform that is well organized so that the readers may move through text easily.	5 4 3 2 1	
Voice: Writer is engaged, imparts personal tone, individuality	5 4 3 2 1	
Conventions: Writer demonstrates standard spelling, punctuation, grammar and attribution of sources, if necessary.	5 4 3 2 1	