

CHAPTER 3

LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSION: A REVIEW

The previous chapter examined various approaches to diversity. In it I concluded that not all of these approaches were consistent with inclusive educational practice. In this regard, critical perspectives proved to promote inclusive practice the most, while conservative approaches were the least helpful. Liberal/pluralist positions fell somewhere in between these two options. This book, however, is not just about general approaches to education and inclusive practice. It explores the work of administrators. My task in this chapter is to develop an approach to leadership that is consistent with critical approaches to diversity and to inclusive practice. Towards this end, I survey and critique various approaches to leadership. I conclude in the end that administrators interested in pursuing inclusive education will profit most from an emancipatory approach to leadership, an approach that differs markedly from more popular views. The most significant variation is that leadership is conceptualized not as a set of traits or actions associated with a particular individual, but as a communal process.

THE LURE OF LEADERSHIP

The idea and practice of leadership continues to be as popular as it ever was. This preoccupation with leadership and leaders is reflected in the words and actions of politicians, captains of industry, educators, academics and media personalities, among others. Their articles show up regularly in newspapers, magazines, journals and books, just as their speeches and casual conversations win wide audiences. Many practicing executives, managers and administrators read these offerings, others attend seminars and sessions, while those who take what these leadership gurus say seriously may eventually attempt to incorporate recommended forms of leadership into their own practices.

Why are we so preoccupied with leadership? The answer lies, in part, with the deeply held cultural belief (Gronn, 1996; Lakomski, 1999) that certain individuals can help us out, particularly in times of uncertainty or change. We continue to subscribe to the notion that particular men or women who are endowed with special skills have the capacity to act so as to profoundly influence future courses of events. And we continue to hold onto the hope that humanity will profit from the words and deeds of these gifted individuals. On the other hand, we also fear for our future in the absence of these sorts of leaders. Loeb (1994), for example, lamenting the apparent dearth of contemporary leaders, asks "Where have all the leaders gone?" He claims that wherever one goes in business and in government, people are perpetually asking where these unique individuals are. Loeb laments that we can no

longer name larger-than-life-leaders, like De Gaulle, Roosevelt or Churchill, who seemed to arrive on the scene just in time to pull the world through a crisis. For Loeb, the consequences for industry of this lack of leadership are all too real – as the icons of the business world fall, so do their corporations.

Loeb (1994) and others imply that leaders are needed most when there is a crisis in human affairs, when things seem to be slipping out of control, or when rapid changes render current organizational arrangements obsolete. If we accept the notion that leadership is important, then it would seem that some form of leadership is required for our rapidly changing contemporary social landscape. However, it also may be the case that current and accepted leadership practices and approaches are not appropriate for evolving social conditions. As the context for leadership changes, new or different leadership ideas, approaches, concepts and practices may be in order. This is as true for educational institutions as it is for any other sector of our contemporary world. And like these other areas of life, education in the Western world faces conditions that differ from those of fifteen and even ten years ago. Not least among other priorities, leaders of today's schools must work with school communities that continue to display increasing levels of diversity. This chapter outlines an approach to leadership geared to help school communities cope with the demands associated with diversity and to work towards inclusive forms of educational practice. Before moving on to this task, I will first address the meaning of the term leadership.

THE MEANING OF LEADERSHIP

Those who introduced the concept of leadership into the administrative and organizational lexicon did so with the idea that it would eventually be helpful in improving what organizations do. Over the years, however, the term itself has taken on many different meanings (Gronn, 1996; Leithwood, 1999; Yukl, 1994). Those who explore this concept will not always use this term in the same way. Yukl (1994) has assembled a number of different "definitions" of leadership that scholars have developed over the years. Other scholars go so far as to dismiss the concept of leadership as meaningless. Lakomski (1999, p. 36), for example, maintains that the "concept of leadership is without a referent," suggesting that "there is no natural object of this kind in nature to which leadership refers." Yet others refer to its vagueness (Leithwood, 1999). Despite the complexities associated with the concept, however, many – but not all – who use the term would probably agree that leadership refers to the ways in which processes of influence work between and among individuals and groups. Yukl (1994, p. 3), for one, maintains that "most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization."

The differences in conceptions of leadership that are relevant to inclusion revolve around the kinds of relationships among individuals and groups and the nature of the influence processes. Those who write about leadership inevitably make assumptions about how people in organizations relate or should relate to one another.

Approaches to leadership also differ with respect to the ends to which leadership efforts are, or should be, directed. Finally, those who study leadership also vary in their beliefs about the best procedure to improve practice. Some scholars make contributions to practice by making more or less explicit prescriptions for leadership practices or by adopting stances that suggest or outline particular inroads for approaching practice. Other scholars contribute to practice in more indirect ways. These people may look to devise concepts to help us understand leadership and organization outcomes or to conduct empirical studies to help describe the behaviour of people in leadership roles and their impact on others.

Each of the approaches outlined below assumes a position on the various elements of leadership, as the term is commonly conceived. Advocates of managerial/technical, humanistic, transformational and emancipatory forms of leadership all take a position on the relationships among organizational members, the form that influence takes, and the ends to which leadership efforts are directed.¹ They also approach leadership from either an explicitly prescriptive stance or one that attempts to explore leadership from a more neutral position. Some, however, are more appropriate than others for contemporary contexts of diversity and for inclusive education.

MANAGERIAL/TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP

Like assorted other forms of leadership, managerial/technical leadership encompasses a number of different approaches that themselves display some common characteristics. Thus, advocates of the managerial/technical approach (Simon, 1957; Fiedler, 1967; Evan, 1973; Katz & Kahn, 1978) assume that there are unique individuals in formal positions of responsibility who are quite distinct from the people who work under them (Callahan, 1963; Perrow, 1986; Gronn, 1996; Vanderslice, 1988). The division between leader and follower is exclusively a function of an individual's place in the organization. Those who see organizations in this way believe that the superiority that accompanies leaders' formal positions entitles them to act in ways that will ultimately influence their followers and benefit their respective organizations. Vanderslice (1988) goes on to say that this hierarchical view of leadership revolves around the idea that a large part of the leader's role is to behave in a manner that best controls or directs the behaviour of the followers. Those who subscribe to this approach believe, as Gronn (1996) observes, that there is a causal connection between what these leaders do and what eventually happens in organizations.

¹ Each of these types can be considered "ideal types" in the Weberian sense. They represent "pure" forms. As a consequence, none of the examples cited may conform in every respect to the type with which they are identified. They might just as easily display characteristics from two or more of the other forms of leadership. This typology derived very loosely from other reviews of leadership approaches (e.g. Heck & Hallinger, 1996; Leithwood & Duke, 1996; Richmon & Allison, 2003), traditions in social science and knowledge (Habermas, 1971) and traditions of inquiry in the field of educational administration and leadership. The crucial point here is not that this typology has a firmly anchored foundation but that it makes sense to readers, and in doing so, helps them gain insight in the study and practice of leadership in contexts of diversity.



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