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Leadership and Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

The current study explores leadership and learning environment. Educational leaders as visionaries who can predict future changes need to stay abreast with the technical advancements along with social transformations. The 21st century requires leaders who quickly assess and extensively contemplate crucial issues. It requires educational leaders work jointly with various groups to stay at the forefront of school reform. The 21st century leaders are required to understand the importance of utilizing technologies for teaching and learning. The study identifies an effective 21st century leader who has to be people – oriented; relying on both theory and practice of democratic principles to improve their social and professional characteristics. The study suggests two - model diagrams. Model (1) diagram identifies both the intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics of an educational leader. An educational leader needs behave professionally, must be knowledgeable and have technical skills in order to lead effectively. A visionary leader should strive effortlessly to promote student achievement by facilitating the learning process and be equipped with the philosophy that the learning is a capacity shared by all. Such an administrator should promote the success of all staff members and faculty by nurturing and supporting a culture. This is contributed to the professional growth as well as intellectual challenge.

Model 2 diagram suggests a three - dimensional professional development for educational leaders, teachers and students. The educational leader should assist teachers to grow over their classroom management, and utilize all the required resources to create a safe classroom environment. S/he brings about more success to the school via communicating with families community members who advance student success by acting with dignity and fairness. Teachers and administrators bear the responsibility to provide educational resources to help students to fulfill their social and academic duties and grow into their responsibilities as citizens. In school buildings, educational figures must be lead by example. They should exert their utmost integrity; providing for teachers' professional development of their teaching methodologies, providing opportunities for students to grow stronger in the educational realm and assisting them to become more reliable and productive followers of human beings.

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القيادة وبيئة التعلّم

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المستخلص

يدرس البحث الحالي العلاقة التي تربط بين القيادة والبيئة التعليمية. بينما يعد القياديون التربويون أناس متخصصين وذوي رؤيا واسعة للمتغيرات الكثيرة في البيئة التعليمية، وذلك بغية تحقيق المواكبة للتطورات التكنولوجية في المجتمع. وفي غضون القرن الحادي والعشرين، يتطلب القياديون التربويون القدرة الفائقة على التقويم السريع للقضايا التربوية المهمة، حيث يتطلب من القائد التربوي أن يعمل على شكل مجموعات مختلفة، كي يبقى في مقدمة الإصلاح المدرسي. ويتطلب منه أيضاً أن يتفهم أهمية استعمال التكنولوجيا الحديثة في التعليم والتدريس.

يقدم البحث الحالي مواصفات دقيقة للقائد التربوي والمؤثر في القرن الحادي والعشرون، وأن يكون ميّالاً إلى الناس، ومعتمداً على التطبيق النظري والعلمي للمبادئ الديمقراطية بغية تحسين الخصائص الاجتماعية والمهنية. واقترح البحث أنموذجين مهمين: الأول يصف الخصائص الذاتية والاجتماعية للقائد التربوي، فيجب أن يتصرف بشكل مهني ولديه المعلومات الكافية والمهارات التقنية لأن يكون قائداً مؤثراً. إن القائد التربوي ذو الرؤية الواسعة يحاول دائماً أن يشجع إنجازات التلاميذ لتسهيل العملية التربوية وأن يكون ملماً بالفلسفة التعليمية وأن التعليم إنجاز موزّع للجميع. بينما يشجع الإداري التربوي نجاح الموظفين الإداريين من الأساتذة وغيرهم لاكتساب الثقافة العالية والمساهمة في إنماء المهنة و وتطوير عنصر منافسة الذكاء. ويقترح الأنموذج الثاني التطور المهني للقائد التربوي وبثلاث اتجاهات. القائد التربوي يجب أن يساعد الأساتذة لقيادة الصف واستعمال كل الوسائل التعليمية لخلق محيط الصف المؤمّن، ويجلب نجاحاً أكثر إلى المدرسة خلال لقائه مع أعضاء الأسرة في المجتمع، ويضمن نجاح التلميذ بتصرفاته العادلة والأمينة. ويتحمل المدرسون الإداريون مسؤولية توفير الوسائل التربوية للتلاميذ ولأداء مهمتهم الأكاديمية والاجتماعية كمواطنين مسؤولين. أما في داخل بناية المدرسة، فعلى القياديون الإداريون أن يقتدوا بالمثال، ويجب أن يتحلوّا بالخلق العالية والرفيعة وللمعلمين أن يطوّروا الطرق التدريسية لإتاحة الفرصة للتلاميذ أن ينموا قابليتهم أكثر فأكثر لكي يكونوا مواطنين يثق بهم ومنتجين للمجتمع.

Introduction

It is pivotal for the 21st century's school systems across the nation to have leaders who are visionaries and who can predict future changes as well as stay abreast with technological advancements along with societal transformation. The new century needs leaders who quickly assess and extensively contemplate crucial issues, and who work jointly with various groups to stay on the forefront of school reform. The 21st century leaders must understand the importance of utilizing technologies for teaching and learning in this technologically advanced world (Gunningham and Cordeiro, 2003).

An educational leader needs to behave professionally and must be knowledgeable and have technical skills in order to lead effectively. It is essential for an educational leader to possess expertise in related technology to improve educational settings. S/he must be people - oriented and possess superior communication skills as society has become multicultural across ethnic lines.

An educational administrator as a visionary leader should strive effortlessly to promote student achievement by facilitating the learning process. S/he must be equipped with the philosophy that learning is a capacity shared by all. Such an administrator should promote the success of all staff members and faculty by nurturing and supporting a culture that may contribute to the professional growth and intellectual challenge. An educational leader should assist teachers to grow over their classroom management, and utilize all the resources needed to create a safe classroom environment. S/he brings about more success to the school by communicating with families community members. An educational leader advances student success acting with dignity and fairness. An educational leader must be an *agent experts* in the fields related to education. Administrators should strengthen servanthood leadership principles by sharing their common values, beliefs, and professionalism.

Effective Educational Leader

Historically, educational institutions have been managed through autocratic leadership styles, where absolute authority, inflexibility, and accountability were the only norm. The strategy of a top – to - down decision - making approach was the way of running the school. Although, this method brought about efficacy, ultimate control and prognosticated results, this style also minimized any trends of inventiveness and enterprise that a leader might have. Instead of creating a school - employee interdependency, a pecuniary relationship was formed (Lashway, 1996).

At the dawn of the 21st century, leadership cannot operate unless it is democratic, people - oriented, and potent in promoting organizational strength. School leadership is not confined to the principal's office; it is a wide - ranging phenomenon, which should exist in every teacher and must be applied in every classroom. This culture can become a reality only where a collective and collaborative working mentality exists. Therefore, effective school leaders should create a sense of ownership by expanding the decision-making spectrum to all faculty members. They ought to delegate responsibilities to all who are involved, and encourage all teachers to assume personal accountability and should continue to motivate them to be creative and innovative (Reeves, 2002).

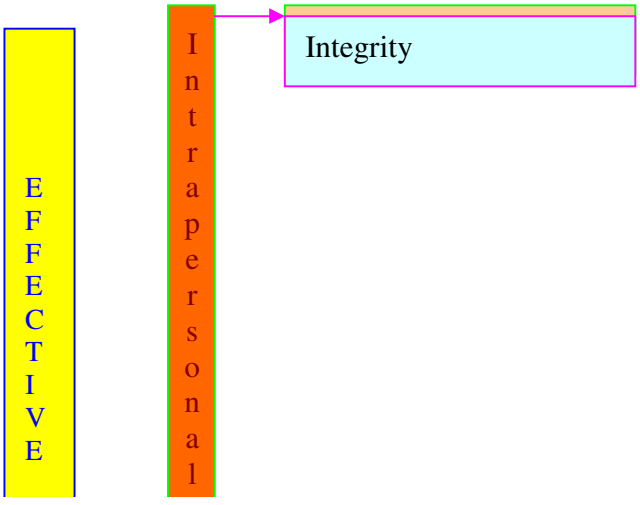
Effective leaders are managerial figures. They realize that managerial skills are required in order to run an organization more efficiently. In the institutional decision - making process, they emphasize their undivided attention on four pivotal components:

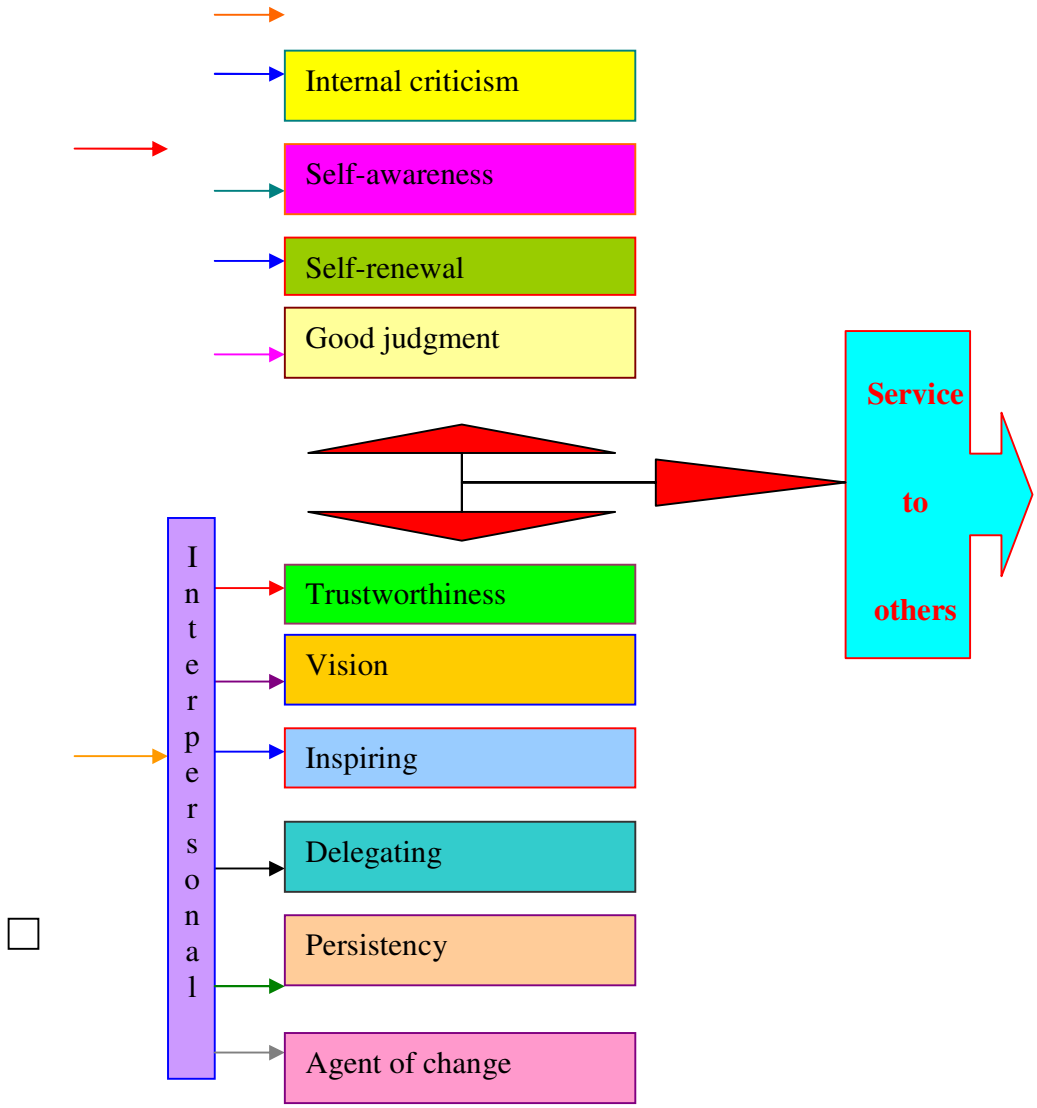
1) Creating a solid ground for mutual understanding and cooperation, 2) Forming an effective collegial teamwork, 3) Establishing a symmetric channel of communications to send and receive information, and 4) Assisting in delivering group decisions. Meeting such criterion most certainly is based on strengthening common values, goals and objectives to invigorate healthy collegial relationships. School leaders must design multi - dimensional approaches to make the organizational policies relevant to all faculty members (Floyd, 1996).

School principals as instructional leaders must always allocate resources for improving *curriculum* and *instruction*. Their whole educational agenda should be based on the renewal of leadership concepts and *standards - based accountability*. This process is intertwined with the leader's continuous policies to provide specific measurement for ongoing improvement of teaching and learning process. Other crucial tasks of educational leaders include a clear vision for achieving institutional goals, renewing curriculum settings by allocating educational and technological resources, invigilating teachers' lesson plans, and assessing their teaching methodologies (Lashway, 2002).

To be successful, educational leaders, at the advent of their career, must assume the leadership role to guide the learning communities. They have several important tasks to accomplish in order to succeed as instructional leaders. They must make learning a priority for students and raise the expectations for their academic achievement, creating content - based standards, promoting self - improvement as a common culture, establishing a database for monitoring a school improvement plan. Furthermore, they must work with community members to advance the school - community cooperation (Lashway, 2002).

Educational figures must be people - oriented and rely on both theory and practice of democratic principles to improve their social and professional characteristics to promote their leadership effectiveness. The two dimensions of leaders, intrapersonal and interpersonal must work interchangeably not only to move the institution forward, but also to inspire all the members to grow in leadership responsibilities (Woyach, 1992).





Model 1-Indicates a Leader's 2-dimensional style to provide service to others

A visionary educational leader assists faculty members to realize the best in themselves, and to use their untapped talents to widen their mental horizon and aim to a higher order of thinking. Through their vision, leaders identify the needs for the future and opportunities that lie ahead after which they develop an

organized mission that has a clear plan of action to accomplish the desired goals and objectives (Woyach, 1992). They should work tirelessly to keep the institutional environment safe where teachers and students can feel secure. They must strive to keep the school climate free of anxiety by avoiding situations that would put the school community at risk. They should be knowledgeable about the legal system with the respect to the students' and teachers' rights, and must also be careful not to exploit their professional relationship with the faculty and staff members, which might cause impairment of the institutional uniformity (Bernard, 1994).

They carry the belief that they have an ethical commitment to teachers, students, and community to provide the best quality education (Lashway, 1996). Their ethical foundation should enable them to step out of the rigorous rules and approach the problem with their moral convictions to teach responsibility while trying to find a solution to the conflict by demonstrating a personal commitment of service to create a school culture that fosters motivation in students (Renchler, 1992). Finally, they should broaden their thinking horizon by adapting a curriculum that challenges the knowledge - base of faculty and students.

Teachers as Leading Figures

Until the latter part of the past century, teachers were trained to educate students for the industrial era. With technological advancement teacher development became inevitable. This notion required not only changes in the curriculum and materials teachers used, but also reforms in teacher preparation and development programs to train and retrain teachers to meet the needs of the new century. At the dawn of the new century, to fulfill such needs, teachers' potentialities would have to be expanded beyond the classroom settings. Teachers must be involved in the curriculum planning, school development projects, and decision - making process. Teachers' roles have gone beyond and above teaching cognitive skills and analytical dimensions *per se;* now they must widen the teaching tent to include ethics and moral values (Sanches, 1998).

Opportunities should be provided for teachers to empower their professionalism and enrich their knowledge base. Without teachers' professionalism, the improvement of student performance is almost impossible. Therefore, teachers must be motivated to fully practice their leadership role in school reform in order to see positive results. Teacher quality is one of the most crucial components for student performance and educational advancement. Their role as leaders is not the same as principals' role, however; their role requires them to negate the *top - down hierarchical* style, and work toward

adapting a culture of group decision - making, collaboration, and team performance (Wynne, 2001). For teachers to become effective leaders they should:

- Always stay on the cutting - edge to renew their knowledge base.
- Exercise professionalism in their teaching process.
- Teach locally and perform nationally by involving in the national educational network.
- Stay involve with the decision - making process.

To promote quality work of teachers, policy makers in the educational system should use all strategies available for teachers to improve the teaching methodologies and enrich their knowledge basis in order to deliver the most effective teaching possible. Teachers should be helped to create and maintain the spirit of educational improvement, and to continue to strive for widening their intellectual substratum (Wynne, 2001).

Teachers as role models should increasingly devote serious efforts to not only raise test scores, but also to instill in all children the love of learning, a sense of integrity, and respect for all living souls. By assisting students to rise above expectations, teachers can minimize discipline problems that might exist in their classrooms (Lumsden, 1998).

Teachers should also be aware of the continuity of the technological improvement. They must always remain abreast with the new changes that take place around them, keep professional growth alive, and fulfill their social duties by engraving their moral message that their profession is not merely a job, it is a commitment to educate the unborn generations.

To promote teacher quality, the system is required to do all it can in order to help teachers to reach their higher - order needs to be able to use more resources in quality teaching and learning process. Through such supportive strategies teachers can create a demonstrated and strong connection between student achievement and teaching methods. It is teacher's knowledge and effectiveness that reflect in student performance. In short, better teachers help students learn better. Therefore, principals, and educational policymakers should acknowledge the pivotal role teachers play in improving student achievement (Sparks & Hirsh, Website 2004).

As leaders in the 21st century, teachers must elevate the teaching of democratic principles. To accomplish this objective, they must teach and transform democratic values to students, and help them to comprehend and adhere to their civil rights and responsibilities in order to be prosperous in their social and professional lives (Patrick, 1991).

Teachers as leaders of diverse student population must be keen to understand the sensitivities that exist among various cultural settings. This issue is crucial for educators to promote social equality among students with different ethnic backgrounds (Coballes-Vega, 1992).

The tasks of today's teachers are not one - dimensional any more, indeed, their duties have tripled. They encounter a multi - faceted program which includes their expertise in technological advancement, school demographic changes, and social promotion. Their profession has become more complicated. To stay current, they have to stay abreast of new knowledge and inventions related to their profession.

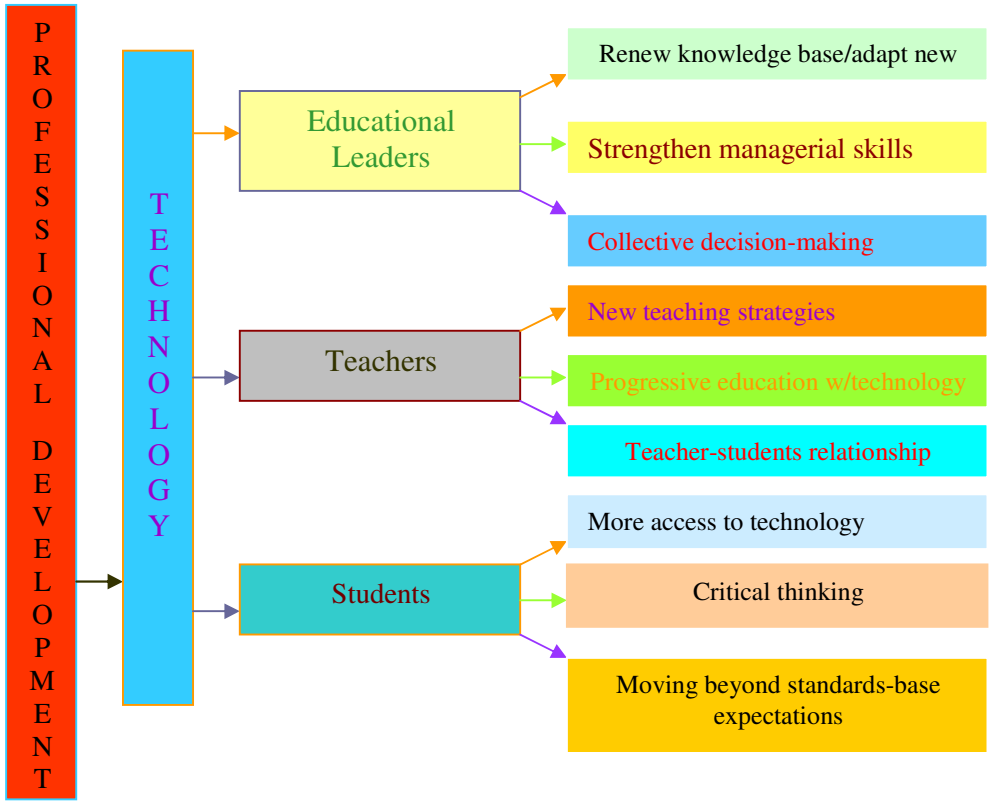
Professional Development

Professional development offers crucial remedies to a thriving educational institution. It determines where aspiring and experienced educators stand and where they need to face new challenges for providing students with better instruction and what they must change or maintain to accomplish a higher educational standard. Professional development should create a high quality course content, improve teaching and student learning methods. Further, development should also promote organizational skills to provide a better guidance and preparation to the *career - long* development of administrators and teachers to advance the educational settings as well as the organizational culture. It should touch both ends, pre - and in - service, to ensure a quality education. This also, requires an educational network among schools across the nation, including colleges and higher education institutions to elevate all educational entities that impact the teaching and learning, and the organizational climate within those institutions. It should be used to provide an ongoing evaluation to ensure sustained educational reform (Building Bridges, Goals 2000).

Through professional development, educators must focus on the end - results, which could be achieved through the improvement of teaching strategies, as well as institutional effectiveness that ensures success for all learners. Educational development must start in the classroom, where students learn. For teachers to provide quality education, they must renew their knowledge and skills to reshape their visions as educators. Professional development must also set new expectations for teachers, administrators, and students to work as three - dimensional entities to promote educational settings. It is essential that teachers and administrators have access to a data - base that would increase the span of information, which helps to maximize effective teaching experiences, and *problem - solving* capabilities in various disciplines that are necessary to have a school culture conducive to a safe teaching and

secure learning environment (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1997).

Professional development is designed to deepen the knowledge - base, generate new ideas, promote critical thinking, and develop leadership and managerial skills. These characteristics must provide fresh idea, new knowledge, and expand opportunities for administrators, teachers, and students to meet their professional and academic responsibilities, where all these entities in their own capacities view themselves as pillars of professional community (Cathy Miles Grant, 2004).



Model 2- Indicates three-dimensional professional development

The theory of leadership must educate, enlighten, and inspire, whereas the practice should fulfill the ultimate goals, which is to engender a whole human being out of a student. Based on this premise administrators must exhibit a high

level of competence in their leadership abilities to promote student academic and social status.

Conclusion

School principals as educational leaders have an ongoing responsibility to allocate resources for improving *curriculum and instruction*. Their whole educational agenda should be based on renewal of leadership concepts and *standards - based accountability* for teachers and students. This process is intertwined with the leader's ongoing policies to provide a specific measurement for the continuing improvement of teaching and learning strategies (Lashway, 2002). By encouraging professional development, administrators can assist teachers and staff members to stay abreast with technological advancement. Administrators must always be cognizant of new changes that take place around them in order to keep professional growth alive. Teachers and administrators bear the responsibility to provide educational resources to help students to fulfill their social and academic duties and grow into their responsibilities as citizens.

The impact of educational leaders extends far beyond their important roles in improving schools since, through schools they assist in promoting society to expand its opportunities in the economic, social, and cultural fields. Such leaders should strengthen the moral message that their profession is not merely a job. It is a commitment to educate unborn generations. In school buildings, educational figures must lead by example. They should exert their utmost integrity; providing for teachers' professional development of their teaching methodologies, providing opportunities for students to grow stronger in the educational realm and assisting them to become reliable and productive fellow human beings.

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