A preferred vision for administering secondary schools: A reflective essay

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A preferred vision for administering secondary schools: A reflective essay

Abstract
An educational leader is the key element in any educational organization, and likewise the principal is the pivot around which the whole success of the school building is dependent. In this paper, I would like to express my views as an aspiring educational leader—my values, beliefs, and educational philosophies that I would practice as I enter the field of school administration. As I sat to write this reflective paper, the question that my friends often asked me was, "Why do you want to choose a career in education?" This question kept recurring in my mind. The only simple answer that I had was that I love being with children. It gave me great pleasure and satisfaction when I was able to work with them and help them in their personal development. However, now I know it is not only my love for children that inspired me to choose a career in education, but more than that, it is the importance of education that is stressed so much in every country: More so, it is a crucial need in my oppressed country that is under illegal subjugation, where even the basic education is denied. If there is any education, it is only indoctrination of communist ideology.
A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

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by

Tashi D. Dholotsang

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An educational leader is the key element in any educational organization, and likewise the principal is the pivot around which the whole success of the school building is dependent. In this paper, I would like to express my views as an aspiring educational leader—my values, beliefs, and educational philosophies that I would practice as I enter the field of school administration.

As I sat to write this reflective paper, the question that my friends often asked me was, "Why do you want to choose a career in education?" This question kept recurring in my mind. The only simple answer that I had was that I love being with children. It gave me great pleasure and satisfaction when I was able to work with them and help them in their personal development. However, now I know it is not only my love for children that inspired me to choose a career in education, but more than that, it is the importance of education that is stressed so much in every country: More so, it is a crucial need in my oppressed country that is under illegal subjugation, where even the basic education is denied. If there is any education, it is only indoctrination of communist ideology.

In the present world where most of the nations are relishing the fruits of freedom, equality and justice, blessed with freedom of choices, where every child is provided with the best education, unfortunately, the children in my country are unconsciously struggling hard under the illegal totalitarian regime. For the
enlightenment, personal development of children, and for the nation at large, a proper education has become a basic necessity.

Education is no doubt the most effective tool. It is with this purpose in mind I obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.) and a degree in Education (B.Ed.) before I enrolled in the University of Northern Iowa for the Master's degree in Education. My interest in education was further cemented during my two years of practice teaching. Each day was a new learning experience for me. Each day I would learn more about the children and their diverse needs. The study of the subject matter would help me to improve my own knowledge and personal horizon. The interaction with the children and faculty helped me in my personal and professional development. I cannot agree with some of my friends who think that there is stagnation for professional growth in an educational career. "To take action for the children's sake. Principal's learning is continuous, just as the learning of teachers and students" (Ackerman, Donaldson, & Bogert, 1996, p. 2).

I know the job of an educational leader is very challenging, just as is the very concept of education. The big questions about education, What is the purpose of education? and Who decides what to learn and how to teach? have always remained an issue and occupied the focus of discussion among educators. However, controversies and disagreements are always there in every walk of life. In the educational profession an educational leader would not be able to please and
satisfy each and every one in society. This makes the job of an educational leader all the more exciting and challenging. Everybody would look to the educational leader to build an atmosphere of trust, a healthy and proper learning experience for the students, faculty members, and the community.

I look forward to becoming a principal. I have the confidence and the determination to work hard to build a proper learning atmosphere in the school as expected by my role as principal. My effort will be able to provide the best education for the children, and to promote education in general so as to help children to become a better human being for a better and more harmonious global family. As I prepare myself to become a principal, I often ask myself "How can I become an effective principal? Will I be able to put into practice all the knowledge and information I have gained from this program? What are the main areas of my emphasis in school administration?" In order to know my own position on these questions, I need to examine my own personal character, value, belief, and philosophy of education.

Personal Characteristics

My country of Tibet is facing numerous difficulties. I am one of those refugee children from Tibet, whom their parents send over the border to neighboring countries such as Nepal and India for freedom and education. The parents make this unfortunate decision to send their children away from them to
such far off countries separated not just by the perilous geographic boundary but also the irreconcilable and unfriendly political conditions. Due to these reasons, sometimes the parent and child never meet again for the rest of their lives. The reason for this ultimate sacrifice lies in one word—education. Like any refugee from my homeland, I see education as an indispensable part of society. Without education the parents know their children will grow up impoverished with the thirst of knowledge. They see this effect in the lives of other children who are still in Tibet under the Communist regime.

However, by sending the children to a better place, they know that education will be the key to their future, the firm foundation upon which they can build a better life for themselves and for their community. I have experienced this myself. I received my formal education in many different schools and in several countries. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to gain knowledge through a plethora of sources. Of course, it is needless to say that I wish my country did not have the political problems it now faces and then I could have received an education in my homeland.

However, I see advantages of being exposed to educational systems of many different communities. It has enabled me to gain insight into what education is all about. In every community I have been in, education has been a focal point of the society. I have personally seen the different ways in which people let their
community know the importance of education. This has helped me see the good and the bad in many different communities.

Education is a lifelong process and I feel very fortunate to be able to integrate the many different positive things that I have seen in education. Just as in every other deprived community where there is a need of proper educational facilities for the younger generation, my community is struggling hard against all odds to at least provide a decent education to the younger generation. There is a great need of proper qualified personnel to work in the various educational institutions that is managed by an exiled Government in India. Thus, education of younger children, development of a good educational system, and to have schools with qualified people to work in, is one of the major requirements in my community.

It is not only because of the importance of education that instills me to opt for a profession in education, but more importantly it is my interest and zest for insatiable knowledge. To fulfill this desire, there is no better way to educate through teaching and through being an administrator where each and every day you keep on learning. Each new day brings forth decisions that will affect your school and your community.

"It's time to lend a hand, to light the greatest gift of life..." (Jackson & Richie, 1985). These famous words from the song, "We are the World," tells why
I want to be a school administrator. Whenever I hum these words to myself I feel the desire that I have to lend a helping hand. There are so many ways in the world where you can help out, but education is the greatest gift of life. I firmly believe that our land, our country, our world, and ultimately our future lies in the knowledge and wisdom that we bestow upon our children. They are our future and to give something so precious as education is truly the most beautiful thing I can do.

Value and Belief

I believe schools are created for the education of children. They are established in every community in order to internalize the community's culture, beliefs, and values to the younger generation. As such, the school needs to develop a proper conducive environment for learning. The development of awareness, creativity, responsibility, sensibility, respect, a desire for learning, and a spirit of inquiry can be taught to the children only if the school is organized in a way as to be able to champion and nurture these qualities. The achievement of this goal is very much dependent on the effectiveness and sincerity of teachers in accepting this goal of the school as their own personal and professional commitment.

To promote such a commitment, the administrator has the greatest responsibility to build such an atmosphere where every staff member in the school
cherishes this goal. The administrator also needs to make sure that every child is taken care of, instill in them the desire to learn, and provide proper guidance and adequate educational facilities. I believe that the school administrator holds the key to academic success for all children. Through the policies and the procedures that the administrator strives to implement, he/she is establishing a school atmosphere that is conducive for learning. My goal will always be to work towards the academic, social, and economic success of the students. I believe education enables a community to work together to achieve the common goals of the community. I firmly believe that education is what life is all about! It is a lifelong process, and I for one, want to join this process and make my presence felt in this wondrous world of education. I want to give this wonderful gift to every child as much as possible. I want to stimulate the thirst for knowledge in them and create the excitement to come to school.

The process of education is very demanding mentally, physically, and emotionally. It demands wholehearted dedication and sincerity to work hard towards the welfare of the children. Unlike other organizations, the school is very much human based in its process and also in terms of its product. The effectiveness of the school is very much dependent on the diverse, yet rich human resources in the school. Therefore, I feel it is the ultimate responsibility of the administrator to value the effort of each and every member of the school faculty.
The administrator needs to care for the needs of the faculty who then will be able to take care of the children.

Vision

A vision is the guiding light of life. It is the reason why one goes to work, and the reason why organizations exist. A school is a complex organization of different people. The efficiency of the school depends to a large extent on the quality of human relationships existing in the school. My vision of a good school is one in which the human relationships have been well developed between the teachers, students, and within the community. The importance of human relationships has been emphasized by Metcalf and Urwick who write, "Human relationships, the ways and work of society and of industry, are at their best when difference is solved through conference, and integrate those viewpoints and become united in the pursuit of their common goal" (Bridges, Campbell, Corbally, Nystrand, & Ramseyer, 1971, p. 109).

The task of educating the children is carried out by the teachers, parents, and the administrators in collaboration. I believe this is team work which involves collective responsibility for the success of education in the school, since values, beliefs, and all that we try to educate in the school is the outcome of what the community members cherish. Therefore, in the school there are many different
people working towards the common goal of educating students in the values of the community.

However, numerous members of the community, as well as the school staff, have differing ideologies and values. As an administrator, my vision will be to understand this diversity and to generate the energies of the diversity towards the common good of the school. I will endeavor to understand the values of my faculty and on the common cherished values, I will build my vision of the school. It is truly said that vision should be built on values. According to Peter Senge (1990), "A vision not consistent with values and the way people live day by day will not only fail to inspire genuine enthusiasm, it will foster outright cynicism" (p. 223).

In order for me to become a successful educational administrator, I must also be a good educational leader. As a leader, I am expected to organize the school's varied resources to meet the school's requirements, but more important than that, I am expected to lead by example. Through my example in teaching or any other activity of the school, I should be able to be a good model. This importance is emphasized by John Bartky (1956), "A leader who does nothing to improve his followers may be a good leader, even a great leader, but he is not an educational leader" (p. 249).
The administrator needs to have the ability to build loyalty and dedication of staff towards the school's success. To me, true leadership is the ability that the leader of a school must be able to look at the strengths of others. Once these strengths are found, a good leader will use them to the school's utmost benefit. The leader pools the talents of everyone and then coordinates this talent in the most advantageous way.

As an educational leader, the most important thing to me is the children's overall development. I believe that there is far more to education than just academic subjects. I will endeavor to create the best atmosphere of learning for the children, an educative and sound working environment for the staff, and a school system that is satisfactory to the entire community. I will value the achievement of the children, their overall development, their future success in their respective fields and their journey into adulthood as a good human being. I will value the cooperation of the students and the staff alike, especially the ones who go above and beyond what is expected of them in their sincere efforts to benefit the school atmosphere. For I believe that good, consensus decision making can be achieved only with the cooperation of responsible staff members. I will also value a positive and healthy relationship with community members for the maximum development of the school. I will certainly not negotiate against that I do not believe in and which I feel is inappropriate for the proper development of the
school system. Negligence on the part of the school staff in setting unhealthy role models will certainly not be tolerated. I would never support a staff member who endangers the safety of our primary resource: OUR CHILDREN! I will adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards any type of weapon and drugs on the school premises.

Philosophy

It is my philosophy that education is a life long process and in the environment through which the individual passes his different stages of life, he leaves a great influence on inculcating his behavior, beliefs, and values. School and community are two such important agencies of education. School is a formal educational agency established by the community to preserve and inculcate the communities custom, tradition, belief, and values upon the younger generation for internalization of these important and significant knowledge bases.

Community also plays an important role in the educational process. Other community agencies such as the home, church, library, and mass media all play a very important role in the educational process. Hence, school and community are interrelated and play a significant and beneficial role as an agency of education. If a school wants to truly succeed, it must emphasize the role that the community plays in the lives of its students. The teaching and learning process in the school is a reciprocal relationship. The lessons children learn in school form an important
basis of their development. Therefore, the teaching and learning process of the child in school forms a significant part of his/her overall development. As the educational leader, I have to create a nurturing environment by employing teachers who are caring, creative, empathetic, skilled in the art of teaching and mastery of the subject content.

Strategic Planning

The most important part of the school's dream is to make it happen. "Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision just passes the time; vision with action can change the world" (Joel Barker, Personal communication, February 12, 1996).

Visions are not realized unless there is an action. Action requires hard work and a systematic way of working to achieve those goals. To give proper direction to our action, planning is the most important part of the process.

Strategic planning is merely a long range action agenda of usually three to five years. The essence of strategic planning is analyzing the current state of the school measured against its future vision and finding ways to get there (McCullough, 1991). Strategic planning is basically a process of setting goals and spelling out what it takes to achieve them. A school is a complex organization with varied demands and needs. It is important for the principal to recognize
decentralized decision making but initiates as the leader on the strategic planning team.

The planning should be done step by step by prioritizing the needs according to the goal and mission of the school. The first important step in strategic planning is to define the mission of the school (Blumberg, 1989). The principal and the staff should review the changes in the society and assess the future needs. The schools' strengths and weaknesses too should be reviewed. This process is called scanning. When the school has been scanned, it is time to identify goals and set priorities. The new goals are either defined as either long range or short range. Then the planning for implementation is discussed. All the available resources must be identified and responsibility must be assigned. Progress towards achievement should be monitored and reviewed. The principal needs to review the plan for periodic evaluation.

Staff Selection

One important duty of the principal is to see that there is a teacher who is properly teaching and evaluating the learning that is going on in every classroom. The principal will have to make the significant decision to select the staff in the school. It is a duty called for by the principal to select the right and the most qualified teachers. This selection is too important to be done by the principal alone. It is best done with the collaboration of the teachers. A team should be
formed representing a balanced staff comprised of the best teachers with diverse strengths and styles. Such a team would represent a balanced perspective in the selection process. The goal is to achieve a total staff that works like a kaleidoscope made up of varied elements that shift and adjust to changing situations, while always blending together to form an integrated and meaningful image (Sergiovanni, 1992).

The principal today is well advised to use a selection team to screen, interview, and select personnel for all positions in the school. Members of the team should be identified by the principal and may include at least one member of the employee group in which the vacancy is to be filled. The aim of the selection program should be to select the best possible candidate and the process should be devoid of any form of discrimination. The selection should be done on the basis of the criteria which was advertised and described to all candidates. The candidate may also be judged on the knowledge of the teaching skills, instructional methods, learning styles and other extracurricular activity skill abilities.

Management of the School

Management of the school is another important job of the school principal. The principal is responsible for the management of the school program, school plant, student behavior, and attendance. The principal has to manage the resources available to the school and utilize it to the fullest benefit for the students. It is the
principal who has the ultimate responsibility for the creation of a safe teaching/learning environment. It would be impossible to expect proper teaching and learning without such an environment.

The school atmosphere must be free of all kinds of violence and corruption. As the building principal, I will endeavor to maintain a proper decorum and discipline in the school. I will make sure to have proper educational programs to check drug use, student gang formation and fights, and harassment of teachers and students. "Balance the two things: keeping an orderly environment and treating each child justly, according to his or her personal and educational needs" (Ackerman, et al., 1996, p. 23). This is the goal I wish to strive for.

Leadership and Empowerment

I believe an effective school is where there is quality of teaching, learning, and that positive growth and development are taking place every day. Such growth is possible when the principal is able to establish a healthy understanding and respectful rapport with his faculty. In this atmosphere, everybody working in the school takes responsibility for the students' growth and works to their maximum potential for the childrens' benefit. The principal is able to enjoy good cooperation from the faculty only when he/she is able to share the dream and the vision of the school with the faculty. Also, the ability to work with them to achieve the mission that they have collectively created. It is a good leader who
knows that if you want people to share in the vision and the dream, they need to work together for its achievement. The educational leader believes in cooperative decision making and planning by sharing power.

The pooling and coordinating of ideas, techniques, resources, and strategies create a synergy best described in the adage 'It takes a whole village to raise a child.' A synergy is generated when the institution's challenges are laid before the group, and the group openly struggles to create new practices that all members can support and implement. (Fulan & Hargreave, 1991, p. 62)

Empowerment is sharing decision making, authority, and responsibility. When power is shared, people are able to work more effectively. I believe empowerment is one very important decision that a leader must make for the effective functioning of the school. Empowerment enhances the self-esteem of the faculty, encourage active involvement, and infuses a sense of joint responsibility. This generates better ideas and information towards the achievement of the common goal. Empowerment is not giving up your power but it is extending your power to the staff so that they could each work effectively in their own field. As Mentell (1993) stated, "Empowerment is not giving up their leadership. They are extending it by concentrating on the talents of the staff and giving them permission to take risks" (p. 16).

In an empowerment school, people more openly share information, ideas, and work together to solve problems. I will involve the staff in the decision making concerning goals, curriculum development, hiring, evaluation, staff
development, and budgets. The leaders who believe in the effectiveness of empowerment and their success of joint efforts need to win the faculties credibility. The principal must enjoy the trust and faith of the staff. In order for the principal to establish a positive impact on the school and in the community, the principal must be open and honest. Selden (1988) stated, "Administrators must eschew moral relativism; their daily ethical behavior must be consistent on a day to day basis" (p. 10). The principal must be a person of integrity and must not compromise any value or belief or violate any trust of the school faculty.

All leaders make mistakes and have imperfections, but the best principals are never willfully unethical (Black & English, 1986). People support and follow when they trust the leader. The principal must develop such a trust over a time by behaving honorably and by being considerate to others legitimate problem. The principal must respect the confidentiality of others, accepting criticism and acknowledge the accomplishments of others. Such a principal always encourages the staff to work for and not against the school by his/her own exemplary standards. "When power is shared, many positive things will grow and multiply. This is one very important secret of truly successful schools" (Witcher, 1993, p. 35).
Instructional Improvement

Another important skill a new administrator needs is one of those that concern instruction. Effective instruction is the purpose of the school organization. The performance and the achievement of students are very much dependent on the quality of instruction provided to the children. From time to time, I will access whether the ongoing instruction programs are able to meet the objectives of the school curriculum. One important quality for effective instructional leadership is the ability to identify the problem areas. The instructional leader must plan appropriately. A way to deal with identified problems is to establish an instructional leadership team consisting of teachers who have visions of instructional quality and who are respected among the faculty for their effective teaching skills. Formation of such a team will enable the administrator to integrate the requirements of the school and that of the teachers.

However, due to the ever demanding managerial work in the school, the administrator may not be able to devote as much time as he/she would desire for instructional improvement. McGreal (1983) stated, "Studies of principals and the principalship have consistently shown that the tide of administrative events in schools engulfs even well intentioned principals leaving them few opportunities for instructional supervision, evaluation, and leadership" (p. 62).
This is one reason why I think it is important to have a good reliable instructional improvement team. This would help me to establish a continuous process of an instructional improvement program. I believe professional improvement should be continuous. An effective principal must be committed to the goal of instructional effectiveness of every teacher. Good teaching is important, and all teachers should want to be a good teacher. It is the principal's duty to be involved in the teachers' business and help them become a better educator. "Research in the principalship demonstrates that this type of significant commitment makes a real difference to the quality of instruction in a school" (Smith, 1989, p. 88).

As a principal, I could effectively share this belief with the teachers and carry the role of instructional leader by building a collaborative instructional team with dedicated teachers. Being able to generate good support from the staff, I am certain that the task of becoming an effective instructional leader could be achieved. There are many teachers, who over the years, in the teaching profession, have lost their motivation and have become complacent. With my zest for improvement and further knowledge I hope to become the greatest encouragement for these teachers. One important step that I think is important towards the improvement of instruction is having a competent and consistent evaluation program for teachers and remediation efforts provided by the principal.
Staff Supervision and Evaluation

No doubt, other elements in the school operation are equally recognized as important, but without a good teacher all other materials will be meaningless. The effectiveness of the teacher has direct influence on student learning. It is the teacher who makes the difference in the formal learning process. If teachers are so important for student learning, and if the school cannot function without their work, then teacher evaluation is essential for improving the school's programs. Without a proper supervision and evaluation program to help the faculty, all educational efforts in the school could become unproductive.

As an aspiring school administrator, it is no doubt very important for me to have proper knowledge of supervision and evaluation of school operations, especially the evaluation of teachers.

Principals are sense makers for their schools. Their success at leading hinges, to a great degree, on their ability to see clearly the school's core functions, to evaluate events in light of those functions, and to help the members of the school community conduct their work and their relationship in ways that serve these core functions. (Ackerman, et al., 1996, p. 1)

However, my knowledge and understanding of evaluation was very vague. Initially, I understood evaluation as a simple process adopted by supervisors and administrators to find teachers' teaching efficiency. I had never thought about the evaluation of teachers' efficiency in terms of the operation of the school. My understanding of evaluation emphasizes little value on providing constructive
feedback which I now understand is the most important part of the evaluation procedure.

Throughout the course, Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction, I have learned that evaluation is done with the purpose of improving the teaching skills of the teacher. "Evaluation in education should be designed to ensure the improvement of teacher effectiveness" (Dr. Robert Decker, personal communication, September 23, 1996). I now understand that evaluation is a process to bring positive change in the teacher or any school employee. The primary goal of evaluation is improvement. The evaluation procedure should be a continuous personal and professional improvement of all segments of the staff. As an evaluator, one has to think how best one can make the teacher more effective. I have learned that I must have a clear idea of effective teaching and understand the job description of the teacher.

The school administrator has the sole responsibility to bring positive change, and this positive change can be introduced effectively with a good knowledge of evaluation and supervision. I should be in a position to provide effective alternative ways to what I think needs improvement. I want to seek out a variety of ways to help staff members grow and improve. The main objective of supervision and evaluation is to help provide alternatives for improvement,
promote professional growth, and check complacency and negligence. It is a great help to the teacher to meet the learning needs of children.

A planned evaluation technique will help improve teaching skill and enhance student achievement. I now know that evaluation is not just referred to class work, but it can also cover other profunctionary areas of the school staff. I understand that evaluation done within the class is to identify the weaknesses and strengths so that appropriate remediation could be offered. This type of evaluation is developmental and called formative evaluation. "The effective leader can help promote growth or improvement of instructional practices when the formative evaluation procedures are used" (Manning, 1988, p. 5). On the other hand, evaluation is also done for making career decisions such as granting tenure, terminating, or rewarding staff, which I now know as summative evaluation.

Evaluation focuses on critical decisions regarding job performance and could pertain to retention or dismissal of a questionable employee (Turkerladd, 1992). As Manning (1988) has stated, "Formative evaluation procedure should be non-threatening to the recipient, and the evaluation should identify ideas to help the recipient adopt performance strategies which will result in growth and increased effectiveness" (p. 3).

Sergiovanni (1991) addressed five stages of formative evaluation: pre-observation conferences, observation of the teaching act, analysis and
strategies from the study of the observation while in the classroom, post observation conference which occurs after the observation and used as a feedback session to the teacher, and the post observation conference analysis which is used by the evaluator to determine how well the person being evaluated has accepted the improvement plan decided upon by both the teacher and the evaluator. The remediation model is used to assist in the correction of an identified weakness.

An evaluation procedure provides a good guiding process for the principal to have a one to one evaluation process with a teacher on a regular basis. The principal and the teacher discuss the design and objectives of the lessons, at the same time the principal clarifies the evaluation process with the teacher (Witcher, 1993). The principal then visits the classroom for a teaching observation. The primary aim is to look for areas needing improvement. I also want to "catch the teacher doing something right." I agree with Seyfarth (1991) that "Formative evaluation helps teachers to improve their instructional effectiveness by providing feedback on identified teaching behavior" (p. 205).

It is true that many of the teachers do not like to be evaluated by their supervisor. I am now better able to understand why this is so. I have learned to place importance on the impact of the evaluation. I have learned that it is very important to make the teacher feel comfortable, to catch them doing good and offer yourself for help to work as a team to improve the effectiveness of the
teaching act. The primary job of the administrator is to initiate improvement and development. However, not all teachers are ready to change even if that means adopting better skills of teaching, learning, and understanding. Since the school administrator may be held accountable for the poor teaching of the teacher, the administrator needs to stretch the teacher towards improvement as much as possible.

Today, when I reflect on what I have learned from this process, I feel I have more concrete ideas about evaluation. The lessons I have learned have shaped and extended my belief and knowledge of evaluation. In addition, the sharing of rich professional experience by our instructor in the field of school administration and the ideas from our no less experienced classmates who are currently educational personnel in different schools, all benefitted me greatly. The knowledge I have gathered from class lessons and from various discussions all helped build my attitude, behavior, knowledge, and skill towards an effective school administrator.

Technology Education

Technology has made a big impact in our every day life. Today education is considered not complete without at least core knowledge of computers. As the school principal, it is important see that the school curriculum meets the need to train our students to cope with advanced technology. The principal must have the
foresight and knowledge to see what skills will be needed to live in tomorrow's world.

Certainly the schools will be utilizing the computer and technology in a much greater extent than today. Educational television and computerized learning will receive increased utilization. This will force us to have a curriculum in the school with an emphasis on the knowledge of technology. The role of the principal will be to assist in the development of an appropriate technology plan with clearly defined vision, goals, and objectives so that the technology education requirement for our children are accomplished. I believe technology education at the school level is now necessary. Keeping this emerging trend in mind, the community members should be educated about the importance of technology and encouraged to secure every resource available to enable the school to provide a basic core knowledge of technology for our children.

The knowledge of computers will increase their potential for a better position when they enter the world of work. I believe the maximum benefit of technology is possible only when it is integrated into the school curriculum. Means, Olson, and Singh (1995) indicated, "Technology is no 'silver bullet' for transforming education, observation in technology using schools suggest that for technology to serve the purpose of reform, it must be tied to a coherent, school wide instructional agenda" (p. 69).
A further responsibility of the principal is to provide an in-service staff development program, to educate or improve the teachers' ability to utilize educational devices developed through increased technology. The principal must keep abreast of the ever increasing pace of changing technology in our lives; in the world of work and within education itself. Koza and Johnson (1991) agreed that computers will have their ultimate impact only when faculty members are presented with vivid images of how computer usage changes the classroom and changes how students learn. The school technology program should be able to provide all the basic information about computer usage and the student should have ample time to practice various programs.

Technology can provide students with support for strong and manipulating information (e.g., database and spreadsheet software), tools for writing and editing (e.g., word processing software), access to wide array of information (e.g., Internet searches), capabilities for communicating with content experts and other investigators (e.g., electronic networks), and representations that give tangible form to concepts that are otherwise difficult to utilize (e.g., Interactive graphic representations). Technology cannot become a useful support for student networks if they have access to it for only a few minutes a week (Means, et al., 1995).
Community Involvement

I believe the community involvement in school activities is one of the important features of the school's success. As school is meant for the children in the community, the school needs to function according to its immediate social context. Spillane (1989) characterized the school environment as, "Always being reactive to society's changing needs and values. The administrator needs to understand that the school's need to keep the values, beliefs, and traditions of the community" (p. 46). Also, Warren and Leaders (1985) said,

Perhaps most important is personal trust worthiness: if the principals intentions are clear and altruistic, and he or she has been proven worthy of personal trust, members of the community will respond by placing trust in the mission the principal seeks to fulfill. (p. 109)

If community members have faith in the service of the school, the members will more willingly support the school system. The leader of the building must make elaborative plans to incorporate community support in the school's activities. The success of the school is depicted by the community's support. Barth (1990) said,

School leadership is a quest not a battle to be won or a puzzle to be assembled. As with any quest, it calls for the companionship, resourcefulness, and energies of many talented people. Your challenge as a leader is to coalesce the capacities of your school community to meet the challenges of optimally educating and nurturing each child. Your greatest professional resource is that community and in its ability to respond healthfully to the challenges. (p. 105)
As an administrator, I would endeavor to develop an effective school community relationship. Teachers are the most important agent in the development of a good school relationship and I will encourage teacher involvement in public relations activities. Teachers will be encouraged to contact and collaborate with parents regarding the education of their children. I will emphasize that an effective communication system between the school and community exist. The school will not only provide information about school programs but will build an effective two way communication system. A system where the parents can also communicate effectively to the school about any school programs or problems. Principals need to make sure that parents are comfortable communicating with teachers or any other school personnel. The school should keep the parents abreast of everything their child does, especially their achievements.

Principals need to encourage teachers to keep a positive personal rapport with parents. Teachers can communicate with parents through personal notes, telephone calls, or personal meetings. School personnel should participate in the community activities where they would better know community members. In addition, school personnel should value the input given by community members. The school should value the skills of parents and make use of them in school activities. Parents should be invited to help children in the field where parents
could be of some help. Such involvement will give parents a better sense of belongingness in the school organization, and also provide an opportunity to see their own children's activities. The administrator needs to reach out to different agencies and organizations in the community to supplement and enrich what the school offers to the children in their learning environment.

Parental Involvement

I believe home is the first school of the child. What children learn at home forms an important foundation of their development. Unfortunately, in my community, parents are not as involved as they should be. I attribute this to two main reasons: First, most of the parents are not educated enough to understand the school curriculum. Secondly, being a refugee in a foreign land, parents are more occupied in earning their livelihood. Most of our schools are boarding schools, where parents send their children to receive education and in the majority of instances these schools are far from their home, hence limiting their involvement. However, through the courses that I have studied here and through my own practical observation, I believe parental involvement in my school is neglected and needs improvement. I have realized how it affects the student achievements and how it improves the self-esteem of the parents themselves. Since some children are home after school and during weekends, I believe that parents could play an important role in the education of their child. "Sustained
parent/family involvement and community involvement depend on active advocacy by leaders" (Rutherford & Shelley, 1995, p. 66).

I would develop proper procedures for better relations with parents to deal with the education of their own children. As principal, I would explore all sources of communication with parents. I would encourage teachers to help parents provide information and guidance about their child's performance at school.

"Teachers can assist parents by recommending activities that nurture their children's literacy" (Raisinski & Fredericks, 1990, p. 105).

Conclusion

My understanding of school administration was vague before I enrolled in this program of school administration at the University of Northern Iowa. I do have the desire to become an administrator, but I was not sure about what it takes to be an effective educational leader. Today when I reflect back, I feel this program has prepared me well for the challenges of school administration.

The program has stimulated my mind about the important role the principal has to play in school administration. I am now more aware of the complexities of school administration. The principal of today has to deal with conflicts, stress, and a myriad of external forces and expectations. The principal has to keep abreast of the social and technological changes that keep affecting the school organization, curriculum, discipline, student behavior, community relationship, and the very
nature of the teaching/learning process. I believe, to become an effective educational administrator, one must work hard to understand these changes so that he/she is able to direct the school towards the achievement of the community's needs and requirements.

I learned that effective leadership is the key factor in the success of the school. In every school the entire organization looks to the principal for leadership. It is the principal who has to act as the most important agent of change. I believe the principal can influence the whole organization and can move the system into a better future.

In this paper, I have addressed my vision of leadership and a few of the components of secondary school administration that I would like to emphasize. As an aspiring administrator, I do not think I will be able to satisfy each and every one in the community, nor will I be able to provide a perfect solution to all the problems in the school. However, I have a systematic approach to deal with the problems of the school. I have clearly defined values, beliefs, and vision that I would like to establish in the school.

As a future educational leader in my community, where education is one of the most important needs, I will be called upon to build a school that is caring and serves as a home away from home to all the children. The school will be one in which children love to come and their proper development will be taken care of.
I believe, in order for me to develop such a positive atmosphere in the school, I need to build collegiality among my staff and effective collaborative teamwork with all the members in the school for the continued growth and betterment of the children. I believe, as a principal, I must keep a direct line of action and work cooperatively with the parents, local community, and teachers. I will work hard to articulate the vision of the school to the outside agencies and institutions who wish to make some impact upon the education of children.

As a future principal, I am now more confident to face the challenges of school administration. Although I do not have answers for all the problems, I will apply the knowledge that I have gained through this program and seek the best decisions. I will constantly look for areas that need improvement in order to provide the best opportunity for all children. I will initiate the responsibility and involve all the faculty in the school to make education for the children our most important goal.
REFERENCES


