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A reflection on the roles of the elementary school principal: A reflective essay

Abstract

One of the purposes of this reflective research paper is to articulate a professional vision for administrative practice that includes, a set of beliefs, values and procedures designed to guide initial administrative performances. Many of my beliefs and values about education have developed over the last 10 years of my teaching career and it will be from this decade of duty that I draw my views

A REFLECTION ON THE ROLES OF THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper
Presented to
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts in Education

By
Alan G. Kehe
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It is important that I convey to the readers of this paper the fact that I have never taught in the United States. My entire professional experience has been obtained in private American Schools overseas. It is important to note, that besides seeking an administrative position, my goal is to continue, for the remainder of my professional career, to be employed outside of the United States.

Since my reflective research paper in part will be conceived from both the informational contents of the educational administration program and from the practical experiences I have encountered both past and present teachers, pupils, parents and administrators, this essay will be visualized from mostly an international perspective. Having an international perspective means that I will expand on all the topics in this paper from my experience in teaching in three different schools, which, were all located in different countries. The names and the location of the three schools are The American School of Pachuca in Pachuca, Mexico; The International School of Kenya in Nairobi, Kenya; and The American School in Japan in Tokyo, Japan.

Although the nature of my setting is different from those who reside in America, the practical application of the course work material from my preparatorial program should not differ significantly from anyone else. All three of the international schools, like any stateside school, have similar qualities. One similar quality for example would be that like stateside schools, you would find that overseas schools are managed by as many different styles of leadership as there are principals.

Also, the international schools are structured on American curriculums. The schools are financed privately, not unlike private American schools. The school's daily and yearly operations are governed under the same dynamics as you would find domestically. They are served by teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards and a very active parent community.

Finally, I hope by bringing the above information to the attention of the readers of this paper, I will have established some boundaries for the understanding of my reflections. My goal is not to make a comparison between international and stateside schools, nor is it intended to be read as a comparison between the two. They are as different as apples and oranges. My goal is simply to understand the role of the international administrator by reflecting on my past experience, working with the present conditions and preparing myself mentally and academically for the future.

My First International Teaching Experience

It all began after I graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in May of 1982. My career as a physical education instructor started in September of the same year. I entered the life of education through the doors of the international school system. At that time, I had not entertained thoughts about becoming an administrator, let alone any thoughts of obtaining a Master's degree. I can still remember the first day of school in Pachuca. It started off with the traditional flag ceremony. As the first few months got underway, I would try to remember all the things I learned in school and hoped I was doing everything correctly. Two years later, after completing my employment contract, I am happy to reflect that it was a very successful beginning.

Unfortunately, at the end of these two years my friend and my supervisor, Jerry Selitzer, was going to leave Pachuca. After the news broke that Jerry was leaving for Puerto Vallarta to open a new American School, many of the other American teachers and myself realized we would probably leave Pachuca for good or follow Jerry. I believe now, as I look back, I still use his leadership style as a standard of measure when comparing other administrators' leadership qualities and the type of qualities I feel I would want as a principal in an overseas school.

At that time, I really did not pay much attention to the daily operations of the school. It did not consciously occur to me the real extent of what was expected of Jerry in order to manage a school.

It was not that it did not concern me, because I do remember, on many occasions, sitting around with the other American teachers, Jerry and his wife and talking about this school problem or that school issue. In those situations, I was gaining insights into administration without realizing it. Even with these insights and after the two years of working in Mexico, I still viewed education almost entirely from a teacher's perspective.

I feel Hunsaker and Alessandra (1980) appropriately described Jerry when they used the term interactive management, because this type of management is the process of dealing with people as individuals in order to build trust, openness and honesty in the manager and employee relationship. It may very well have been this one characteristic more than any other that made me and the other teachers feel that we would either leave or follow Jerry after our two years in Pachuca. I thought Jerry adjusted well to the personal style differences of his staff. This particular characteristic helped make Jerry's leadership style flexible, a trait I feel is very important in the international setting. He was both a friend and a boss. We worked and socialized together. He and his wife were very personable and it was a pleasure to be with them. They made you feel relaxed and comfortable when teaching at school or socializing outside of school. I think most everybody at school, including both the Mexican and the American teachers, respected and liked Jerry as both their supervisor and as their friend. When I think about it, it was this closeness and friendliness that gave the school a relaxed, healthy and positive atmosphere.

Interactive Management

This interactive management is critical for the international administrator for two very important reasons. The first being, that after a new administrator arrives at their school, they would find a faculty from extremely diverse cultural, social and educational backgrounds. The staff members will be from all different parts of America and will also include a number of foreign staff as well. Being able to deal with and accept different personal habits, idiosyncrasies and nuances of people will always challenge the international principal. Smith and Andrews (1989) note that a teacher's perception of the school principal as an instructional leader is the most powerful determinant of a teacher's satisfaction with their professional role. I feel this is only partly true in an international setting. For example, after arriving in Mexico, it was Jerry, from the very beginning of our arrival, who was always concerned for all the new teacher's well being. We were a very diverse group of teachers. He offered hospitable assistance that made great impressions on all of us. His guidance helped us all to become more comfortable and relaxed in our new homes. Once our acclimation to the new culture was under control we could adjust faster to the responsibilities of our jobs. This to me has been and will remain a valuable lesson in overseas principal and teacher relationships. Because he took the time to see that we were all settled in properly, I always felt thankful to him. He created a bond between us that I felt never waned in the two years that I worked for him. I was satisfied with the help I received from my new employer. This assistance in the long run made it easier for me to concentrate both on

my professional roles and on following his efforts as an instructional leader. Therefore, I believe that in an overseas setting, a principal must be perceived as not only a good instructional leader but as well a person whose actions are thought of as helpful, reliable, thoughtful and without reluctance. The international principal should avoid presenting him or herself as too superior over the teachers. Over keeping your professional distance between you and your staff, especially during the first few critical months, could produce unfavorable first impressions that may last the entire time of your sojourn.

Criteria for Hiring

The second reason is the fact that administrators are involved in the hiring process. The international administrator must look beyond a candidates credentials and references when recruiting for new teachers. It is very important to try to ascertain and measure up the candidates personalities, along with their philosophy and goals concerning their pursuit of international employment. Living abroad can be very stressful depending on where you are going and what the international teacher is leaving behind. Russell (1958) points out, that to endure uncertainty is difficult, but so are most of the other virtues. This phrase holds true about the reality of living overseas. Many American School locations throughout the world are considered hardship posts. For example, living in London with an English speaking population and all the modern conveniences is not rated as a hardship position. Living in Timbuktu, Mali would be. I have seen teachers quit before completing the full terms of their contract because they have left something behind that they could not

live without, or they just could not recover from the cultural shock they were bombarded with. Good teachers come in different packages. I have known administrators who hired people for what I believed was solely due to their credentials. Unfortunately, credentials alone do not guarantee creative, adaptable, flexible or adventurous teachers which are also important and vital characteristics an international candidate should possess and ones that an administrator must try and learn to recognize and accept.

My Second International Teaching Experience

My next position took me to Nairobi, Kenya, to The International School of Kenya where I worked from 1985 until 1989. I was employed again as an elementary and middle school physical education teacher. I enjoyed the comment by Manning (1988) about how a school's personality often reflects that of its administrator, because once again I was fortunate enough to experience a friendly and open relationship with my superiors. For example, when I say open I mean it reminded me of the relationship I had previously with Jerry. He was there at the airport to meet me and afterwards there were many get togethers either at his house or at local restaurants throughout the year. He enjoyed socializing extensively with the staff. The superintendent at the school had twenty years of international experience. His personality was upbeat and positive and it pervaded throughout the school. You got the feeling that he really enjoyed life. His international career had given him a vitality which was very suitable for the wide open expanses of the great African

bush. The school had a robust atmosphere about it that made the working environment both positive and exuberant.

Metamorphose Begins

During this period, my perspective on administrators and their role developed rapidly. I feel that this change in attitude towards administration came from the following reasons. First, I had matured as a teacher and as an individual and that this maturity gave me more confidence to become involved with school affairs. I began getting involved with school matters, such as curriculum development, school committees and community relations. Through these endeavors I had more contact time with the principal to discuss issues relevant to my work. Over the four years, I developed a broader and deeper professional attitude towards my work. I could create change in the school due to my own initiatives. I was beginning to understand how deeper involvement in school affairs could both create or impede change. I also began to better understand the dynamics of the principals job in helping to facilitate and expedite the dimensions of change.

The Change Agent

Second, as I came to better understand the dynamics of the administrative role, which included facilitating and directing teachers that were working on school issues, I realized how much of my future was directly associated with the principals. My views on being an educator changed from the view that I am just a teacher to one of realizing, I am an intricate part of the broader educational process. This is not a negative reflection of my days in Mexico. I just realized that as my maturity as a

teacher and as a person increased, so did my feelings and attitudes. I was getting involved. Conferencing, meeting and planning rose to new heights. My responsibilities, as a consequence of my own making, had become greater than I had ever known. I now realized how the relationship between teacher and administrator could be forged closer.

Environmental Differences

Third, I have to admit that the difference between the schools was enormous. The Nairobi job was by comparison more demanding. There were five administrators compared to just one in Mexico. There were 40 different nationalities of students as compared to just two in Mexico. It was a larger school and it had both an internal and an external climate that was much more diversified than in Mexico. For example, the internal climate refers to the dynamics between either the teachers themselves or the teachers and the administrators. Our multicultural teaching staff had people from at least 10 different countries. I quickly realized how conservative my thinking was and how little knowledge I had of the international school system. I was naive. Often staff meetings were full of opinions and ideas I had never heard of before. The external climate refers to both the diversity of our parent community and the city community outside of the school. I believe it was here that I first really realized that being a teacher did not begin nor end, either at the moment upon arriving or leaving the school grounds. This was my first experience with a true expatriate community. This expatriate community was not all from our school either. There were families whose children went to the other international schools in Nairobi. They had their opinions of our

school. When I was out and about in town I was always meeting new people. Education was often a topic of conversation among adults who had school aged children. I can concur with the statement by Hoyle, English and Steffy (1990), that building public support for school is not something an effective administrator does on the side. I found myself either discussing education in generally positive terms or sometimes defending our school from negative criticisms, attacks and idle gossip with both parents who did and did not have children enrolled in our school. I am still amazed at how hot the topic of education can be in the community. This intensity was due to a much more diversified staff, student and parent body. To say the least, my eyes were opened.

My Current International Teaching Assignment

My current position, which I have held since 1990, has been an elementary physical education teacher at The American School in Japan. I would say that this is where the awakening has truly set in when it comes to the triad of administration, teacher and community relationships. There are six administrators overall that run the school, two of which are in the elementary school. It is the largest of the three international schools in which I have worked. It also has the least personable atmosphere of the three in regards to the administrator and teacher relationship. I believe that one of the main reasons for this clinical ambiance is partly due to the high demand placed on the administrators by the teachers and the parent community. Again, I do not mean that there were no demands burdening the shoulders of the principals in Pachuca or Nairobi, because there were, but in Tokyo it is fascinating to

witness the daily stress the administrators are under. The internal climate is thick with both parent involvement and very active teacher committees. Both of these groups are very vocal when either school policy or curriculum need amending. All the administrators feel the pressures these and other groups can muster when they rally to either lobby for support or rally against an agenda. It is just that kind of school. At this level, I have witnessed a whole new approach to administrative practices.

Formal Operations

In Tokyo, because the accountability and scrutiny of teachers is more magnified, due to the fact that various parent committees take active roles in certain aspects of curriculum development, teacher evaluation and general school mandates, the responsibility of implementing the school curriculum and activities seems more intensified. This intensity, I feel, is partly due to the fact that with so many people involved in school affairs, which is good, does occasionally leave a few without their agendas being fully realized. This causes a backlash at times and produces, what is called by Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1990), the condemnation of education made by special interest groups which is in part responsible for weakening popular confidence in the work of the instructional program and in the competency of professional personnel. This at times is also as much of a factor with certain parent groups as it is with teacher groups. It is very competitive with sometimes negative but mostly positive outcomes. I am really not surprised by this competitiveness considering the professional backgrounds of our parents and our teachers. For the parents, many of the bread winners are chief executive officers, corporate

managers and career diplomats. These are very aggressive players who recognize the benefits of achieving high standards in their own personal goals, the goals for their families and for society. For the teachers, the majority of the staff have graduate degrees and have had previous overseas experience. These are very resourceful teachers who always have a lot to say about the direction of our school. This much brain power being mixed together actually creates a glutinous effect on the efforts of change. This may be what is referred to by Barzun (1959) about the idea that schools are thus as fully the product of our politics, business and public opinion as these are the products of our school and therefore, because the link is so close, the schools are hard to change. We often see that schools are run to suit other adults in political, intellectual or business life. Thus, the processing and implementation of any new school proposal is done with administrators at a snails pace. First, because of the fact that there is an overload of too much involvement and second, because unfortunately, of what McWalters (1992) over emphasizes when he says, that a system of centralized authority and decision-making discourages innovation at the building level. The school's negotiations are slow and tedious and sometimes almost discouraging and begrudging. We have an entrenched top to bottom management at our school that makes many teachers hesitate before stepping foot into a long protracted endeavor. Therefore, I have learned much about patience. The relationship with my supervisor is cordial and polite rather than open and natural. Where the other two schools had an over all more relaxed and personable atmosphere about them, the Japanese setting is more

formal. I have adapted to the circumstances and continue to challenge myself with new experiences.

Finally, it has been interesting to look back on all three schools and to see how each represents a different phase of my own growth in education. I have been fortunate to have witnessed three very distinct styles of administrative leadership. I would describe the Mexican style as open and friendly and one that fostered close personal relationships between the administration and staff. The Nairobi style was a little more formal yet it was still personable and flamboyant. The Japan style is very formal, with a business type atmosphere. In Tokyo, the relationship with administrators is no where near as casual as it was with the first two schools. All the styles have been very influencing on my reflections about the good qualities that make an international principal. I have learned about administration by observing both successful and unsuccessful administrative directives.

The broad experiences I have had from the three schools have been exceptional in regards to identifying different leadership styles and understanding their influential natures. In retrospect, I have been influenced by the principals who were gifted more in leadership using good people skills rather than with the principals who were better at leadership technique and methodology. After working with these different principals, I feel I have learned some very important lessons about being a good international principal. One of these involves good people skills and acclimation and another centers around job performance.

Criteria for the International Principal

The very nature of being overseas has to be taken into regard by any international principal. It is their duty to be part of the welcoming committee and to see that their new arrivals are afforded comfortable surroundings and adequate care during their relocation time. It is important to note that there are more American schools in third world countries than there are in the developed countries. Each year the majority of drafted recruits from the overseas recruitment fairs will be heading off to developing nations to work. I believe there are people who are not suited for the international lifestyle. I have met these types of people. There are many reasons why they do not belong overseas and it mostly relates to their preconceived notions of what life will be like for them once they arrive. Usually they have envisioned the wrong picture. They may have gotten confused with the lifestyles of the rich and famous. Although, regarding the issue of acclimation to a new country, it is a pleasure to be welcomed sincerely by your superiors regardless of your level of anxiety. For example, if you pull duty in a developing third world country, then receiving assistance for daily routines and errands until you are properly adjusted could save you time, money and frustration. This is the time meant for you to prepare for school. This frustration is what causes people to have bad experiences overseas. Relieving this anxiety and frustration is critical yet one that I believe can be resolved easily. The fact is, birds of a feather must flock together. The expatriate community tends to socialize together. The schools often become the focal point for weekend outings and recreation due to the fact that it often

has great facilities and property to use. A principal, I believe, can and should initiate various activities for the teachers, offer assistance and be involved more on a social level with teachers. These little things, such as in Jerry's case, go a long way in developing strong and meaningful relationships with his or her staff. A principal should be seen as a human and not just a boss. It also helps develop a healthier atmosphere in the school. I think any principal who neglects this responsibility of friendship will lose an opportunity of personal contact that is so necessary for survival in a foreign setting. Murphy and Louis (1994) expound on visionless leadership as an unclear picture of the future and an inability to disengage from current practice that often makes the search for a new role for principals precarious at best. I agree with this and know that a principal's job performance will be tested daily. You can never learn everything from a book, but you certainly have to have the academic background to begin. After that, it will be the beginning of a continuous cycle of learning and doing because according to Hoy and Miskel (1982), common sense only will be a poor guide for evaluating knowledge and making decisions because in a rapidly changing society, the narrowness of individual experiences and the subjectivity of common sense limit their usefulness as foundations for making decisions in modern schools. Of course there are many more attributes to consider but the fact is, the position of the 21st century international principal is complex. Kaiser (1995) reduces in simplest terms to the fact that wisdom does not come from memorization of rules, but from the understanding of possible

outcomes from available options. This advice is critical in the diverse world of international schools.

What I have witnessed over the last 10 years has not only been three different administrative styles at three different schools, but also the professional growth of myself as well. My own enlightenment has strengthened my determination to become more involved in the world of education.

Positive Experiences

How does one become enlightened? My enlightenment is feeling great about being in the field of education. This feeling has been nourished yearly by the positive setting of each of the schools. This positive attitude and atmosphere regarding education has been consistent in all three of the international schools. I believe there is one outstanding reason for this wonderful and supportive feeling international educators receive as a bonus for living abroad. That reason lies behind the fact of the near total absence of negative mass media reporting and imaging about education, teachers and schools on either local or national news. Green (1994) castigates the press for demoralizing teachers and administrators and reaffirming the widely held view that public education is failing to educate kids. This kind of damaging publicity is almost nonexistent in the international schools. The mass media circus seems to be a phenomenon of America. Fortunately, I have been surrounded by nothing but support and goodwill towards me as a teacher. This is paramount I believe in order to maintain any future commitment to the education process.

Lasting Influences of the Decade

Knowing that I have been influenced by all my administrators in some way. The people oriented style is one I feel very strongly about emulating, especially being overseas. The fact that teaching overseas puts people in strange and unfamiliar places is the key to understanding how your influence and character can be utilized. There is usually some degree of culture shock and anxiety before a person begins to feel settled into his or her new environment. Being an international principal means being the cushion of support for both new and sometimes veteran teachers who seek comfort while either settling in for the first time or needing comfort when they are worried about something back home. Actually, the international principal often comforts the newly arrived families too. When a principal can provide this type of comfort I believe it is similar to what Sun Tzu (500BC) meant, when one treats people with benevolence, justice and righteousness and reposes confidence in them, the people will be united in mind and all will be happy to serve their leaders. A positive and supporting atmosphere at any international school creates positive morale. Still, I have seen administrators whom I believe practiced sound managerial and office skills regardless of the difference of school size and school duties, yet if they did not have the people skills, this ultimately was the critical factor in the development of poor school climate. Being a supportive and open person of course is a simple answer to the complex issues of principalship, and of course are not the only attributes of a good principal.

Being on the international circuit has helped not only my professional growth, but also my individual growth in character. During a tour of duty, administrators as well as their staff must adapt and acclimate themselves to their new surroundings. Some people do this better than others. For myself, I love being in new countries and learning about the customs of the host nation. I always take the time to study the host country's language, history and past and present political dynamics. People who try sincerely to learn about their new culture and find ways to work in it and together with it, I believe, are viewed by the host population with more openness and less reservation. Not only are you learning about your host country, but one must always remember also that students and parents represent another whole category of culture awareness in an international school. A thoughtful administrator must truly become an international person. Beyond the personality characteristics of the principal, I realize that there are many other considerations to identify in order to understand what creates a well prepared principal candidate. One of these considerations is your own understanding of what you believe the education profession means.

Belief in the Educational Process

The philosophical concept that schools provide social value is something I hold as an important part of my new enlightenment. Orr (1991) contributes the idea that education is no guarantee of decency, prudence or wisdom because it is not enough for only students to hear about global responsibility in their classes, they need faculty and administrators who will be models of integrity, care and thoughtfulness.

With an international student body, there are many students enrolled who come from impoverished third world countries, although, they themselves do not come from impoverished families. Many of these students will someday return to their native countries as educated responsible citizens. They must not only return as educated citizens to help further the development of their country but also with the habits of sound environmental practices and genuine concern for the betterment of their people. These habits and sound social practices can be reinforced from the influences of a strong role model, such as a school leader.

International Expatriates

My experiences, have also given me great insight into community relations. Our school families are a key part in the educational triad of school, teacher and parent relationships. Many of these parents are themselves highly educated, intrinsically motivated and successful business people. This is where Toffler (1990) hits the mark when he describes education as no longer just a priority for teachers and education reformers, but is a priority for the advanced sectors of business as well, since its leaders increasingly recognize the connection between education and global competitiveness. The international schools are usually patronized by a very large number of high profile private and public businesses and corporations along with diplomats and government organizations. These people have a high regard towards education. A principal's contact with the school community is considered by the school as an extremely vital and necessary component of the schools continuous open door policy.

In all three schools I have experienced overwhelming support for education by the parent community. It is a good feeling to be shown kindness and support by the parents. Regardless of their nationalities and through thick and thin, parents from all three schools believed in our school's education program.

At all three institutions, communication with parents, inviting parents to school and encouraging teachers to invite volunteer parents to come to the classrooms to help out have all been high priorities. Ayers (1993) disseminates the message about parents being a powerful and usually under utilized source of knowledge about youngsters. That may be true in America but not on the international circuit. By letting parents have access to the school, we are able to generate and sustain more interest in their children's education. We enjoy having both Moms and Dads working at the school. The kids love it and so do the parents. I believe this helps build stronger bonds between school, teacher, family and community. The philosophy of the American educational tradition can be felt overseas as Reutter (1981) elicits that education is kept closer in the control of the people than other aspects of government. The expatriate communities love their schools.

Also, in all three of the schools, the emphasis of creating a positive environment has been considered very important for the overall productivity of both teachers and students. Robbins and Alvy (1995) emphasize that whatever is celebrated reflects what is being emphasized in the school and that celebrations put the schools value on display. We enjoy publicly tooting our own horn. We relish the enjoyment of

acknowledging good deeds, good results and successful accomplishments. It creates a euphoric sense of pride and good morale. There is nothing wrong with feeling good about yourself.

Concluding Thoughts on the International Principal

In conclusion, I realize that I would like to be innovative in my approach to educational leadership. Rand (1961) maintains that every creative job is achieved under the guidance of a single thought. Team players begin with good individual preparation. I think you get positive feedback out of people when they are happy about their work. Negativism is an impediment to growth. Guthrie and Reed (1991) simply remind school leaders of an important point, and that is to possess a vision. One of my visions is to promote internationalism through my leadership style. I want to do this because I believe teachers want to be guided not only by educational leadership but also through the broad terms of international education for both their students and for themselves. An overseas principal should be an international figure who truly represents the kind of an individual who seeks and shares knowledge from an international perspective. This is what is meant by having a world perspective. Share your experiences and your thoughts and encourage others to do the same and you will succeed in opening the minds of your teachers. As Naisbitt (1984) reminds us, yesterday is over and we must now adjust to living in a world of interdependent communities today. Part of the whole exciting experience of living overseas is the fact that you are educating a diverse group of students, travelling around the world, meeting new people, visiting new places and experiencing new adventures. This is exciting.

There is nothing worse than having a principal who has not traveled, nor cares to travel, or simply does not show any signs of wanting to learn about other cultures from around the world. There are these types of principals in the international schools systems. These are principals, whom in my opinion, are out of touch with their position. I think it should be mandatory as a hiring practice to only recruit administrators with both successful international backgrounds and credentials. I look at this idea as a type of role modeling that is important for the international school's students, teachers and parents. I think with this requisite, the school leader would be in advantageous position to manage the diversity of the school population. As Glasser (1990) notes about the Nation at Risk report was that none of the recommendations focused on how teachers managed students. If you take this one step back you would perhaps have questions about recommendations on how principals should manage their teachers. It is not all about contracts, class schedules, curriculum development, standards, recess duty, discipline or evaluations. It is about dealing with people. I am trying to develop my human relations skills to ensure I may implement my vision.

The role of an educational leader is also very political in nature. Gorton (1980) developed the example, that many of the conflicts which arise in an organization are role conflicts. The role I expect to perform is only partly conceived at this time. Now my ideas are formed from books and observations. It is entirely possible, that after two weeks on a job I could and probably would feel a whole lot different about what I was doing. It still is a people oriented job and therefore I need to work more

on my human relation skills such as good communication, listening, non-judgmental actions, patience, humor and sincerity to name a few. Warger (1990) distinctly points out that technology in and of itself is not an exemplary teacher. I do not think that a teacher with a Master's degree in educational administration is necessarily an example of an exemplary educational executive either. It takes more than a piece of paper to be a principal.

Furthermore, I do not want to be too pedantic in my pedagogy of educational leadership. As I mentioned earlier, I felt that I would be more comfortable without the rigid, by the book approach to educational management. The reason for this feeling is because an international principal like any principal of course will have to adapt to the environment he or she is in. Although in the case of the overseas principal, the country of employment, the host country's culture, the school's families' nationalities, the teacher's educational background and the school's philosophy and mission statement are all factors that create an extremely diverse situation. The objective is to educate children but the means to the end is so dynamically different from one country to another it obstructs simple clarity. I have always thought that at each of the three schools there has been a strong emphasis on providing a solid foundation of education. This foundation is usually represented by an academically thorough core curriculum. The school's curriculum always includes, math, science, social sciences, language arts and foreign language as its core subjects. As a school leader, I would unwaveringly support this typical curriculum, but I still want to think of myself as a leader for the next

century in nontraditional ways. For example, many of the students and adults abroad are classified as what is termed as third culture kids. Being a third culture kid means that a person grew up or lived a significant amount of time outside of their own country. By being away from their own country of origin and living overseas, these students come to feel that another country is their home just as much as the home of their ancestors. This is very characteristic of the international school's students attitude. These students need an education that addresses their outlook and feelings on life. This type of education does not always come from books but from an environment that fosters the same thoughts and perspectives. Good education mixed with the philosophy of global awareness is a familiar idea in schools abroad. Therefore, besides leading a school's curriculum development and implementation, I think an international principal should be a leader in the understanding of many more areas too. Cultural and religious diversity, environmental awareness, international citizenship, technological competence and ethics, international law and economics and altruism are areas in reach of enhancement. In fact, in many ways, school children in overseas schools witness and live with these topics on a daily basis.

To embrace this kind of education is something I believe in. The overseas experience and excitement is truly an opportunity to grow as a human being. With my newly acquired administrative background coupled with the overseas knowledge I possess, I believe am ready to become an international educational leader.

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