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## 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

The educational system of my country is an imitation of the United States. The curriculum and teaching are greatly influenced by American educational theories. Recently, my country has paid more attention to the reform of education; thus learning the ideas of American education is the best way for improving the education of my country. The purpose of this paper is to describe my thoughts about educational administration and the roles of the school administrator. First, I want to define educational administration. Then, I will describe the roles of the school administrator, and finally, I will discuss how I would perform as a school administrator.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS:  
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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Presented to  
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Master of Arts in Education

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by  
Ming-Ling Lin  
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has been approved as meeting the research paper  
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The educational system of my country is an imitation of the United States. The curriculum and teaching are greatly influenced by American educational theories. Recently, my country has paid more attention to the reform of education; thus learning the ideas of American education is the best way for improving the education of my country.

The purpose of this paper is to describe my thoughts about educational administration and the roles of the school administrator. First, I want to define educational administration. Then, I will describe the roles of the school administrator, and finally, I will discuss how I would perform as a school administrator.

#### A Definition of Educational Administration

Knezevich (1984) noted that educational administration is a specialized set of organizational functions, with the main purposes to insure the capable and effective delivery of relevant educational services. Educational administration also implements legislative policies through planning, decision making and leadership behavior. It speeds determination of the main changes to satisfy future and emerging

needs of students and society. Finally, it stimulates and coordinates professional and other staff to produce a coherent social system and desirable organizational climate.

### The Roles of School Administrator

Bookbinder (1992) pointed out that the principal is the main factor in the effective and productive school. Being an administrator, the principal is the first and continuing contact with parents and the local community. He/She replies to teachers, supports staff needs, staff development and inservice. The principal anticipates students' learning needs and promotes an educational environment. He/She communicates with the central administrative staff, outside agencies and institutions.

### Mission Statement

The purpose of my administrative practice will provide the effective learning environment for each student to succeed to his/her level of competence.

### School Goals

The glue that ties the system together is the common goal. The need for school goals is that they provide directions for policy decisions. School

goals contribute the framework for program design, implementation and evaluation. In addition, operational and instructional goals assist administrators in deciding how and where to allocate resources. Finally, school goals are tools for decision making, problem solving and improvement (Glatthorn & Spencer, 1986).

In developing school objectives, I will use the Delphi Method, described by Gorton and Schnieder (1991), which can be adapted for utilization.

First, for obtaining the school objectives, administrators should identify individuals or group opinions, judgment or knowledge. Then, they ask for anonymous recommendations for proposed objectives from those individuals and groups.

Third, after collecting the data, the administrators compile a list of the proposed objectives recommended by individuals and group and give the list to those who participated in step 2.

Fourth, they solicit participants to indicate the priority of each objective. Finally, the administrator summarizes the results and distributes data to participants. They request participants

to review the results and identify any change in the assessment of the importance of objectives. Until there is a consensus on the objectives, the process should be repeated.

I think the Delphi Method is an excellent approach for establishing school objectives. However, there are some problems which should be resolved.

The first problem is whether the design of questionnaire can meet the need of developing school objectives. Whether the responses should be the sole basis for deciding school objectives is the second problem. The third problem is who is responsible for organizing the process of developing objectives and attending to their implementation.

For solving the problems and questions, I agree with the ideas provided by Gorton and Schneider (1991). Both administrators and the staffs need to develop committees on school objectives to plan and implement the process. These committees should prepare a report to the school board about the proposed objectives their schools would like to adopt. It is useful for committees in providing support to help administrators and staffs to solve problems by contributing materials and data.



## School Climate

DeRoche (1985) noted that the school climate is one of the aspects in an effective school. It is the interrelationship of the personal, social and cultural factors that influence individual and group behavior. A positive school climate exists when school personnel are conscious of the causes of conflicts and promotes solutions to the problems. The climate exists when problem solving and decision making are shared, and when the ideas, suggestions and involvement of all personnel are valued by the principal.

For improving the school climate, I would like to adapt the ideas, offered by DeRoche (1985). First, administrators should assess current environment. The process of assessment begins with a self-analysis which is a list of fifteen questions (see Figure 1).

After collecting the data, administrators need to elect a representative committee to work together and to analyze the problems. The analysis contains: (a) listing the problem(s), (b) designating who and what has been or has not been affected, (c)

prioritizing problems to be solved, (d) specifying what each problem does or does not contain, (e) distinguishing possible causes and most likely causes creating the problem and (f) discussing relevant conditions that may be causing the problem.

Third, in order to solve problems, administrators and the committee may adopt some steps. The first step is that administrators and the committee list the problems. Then, the problems are restated as objectives. In the third step, administrators and the committee list strategies to accomplish the objectives. The final step requires an evaluation of results.

In addition, I will utilize four programs, provided by Cook (1985), to improve school climate.

    Birthday Card Program-- All students receive a positive message from the staff members that indicates they are concerned.

    Personalized Report Cards-- When a student makes the honor roll or improves his/her grades, he/she will receive a comment from the administrator on the report card.

Student of the Month-- Selecting one student from each staff member's classes each month, the student receives a certificate. The program can encourage the staff member to focus on positive student behavior.

Student Awards Program-- The students will get specially designed certificates in the areas of scholarship, service, achievement and attendance.

Birthday Card Program, Personalized Report Cards and Student of the Month are the new ideas for Taiwan's schools. I think they can also help to generate positive feelings of students and parents to the school.

#### Staff Supervision

Rossow (1990) indicated that staff supervision is an important factor of the principals' roles in an effective classroom. He also noted that, as supervisor, the main duty of the principal was to communicate all of the school goals to the teachers as part of the evaluation process. Glatthorn and Spencer (1986) mentioned that staff supervision is a helping act. It creates a trusting relationship which allows staff to seek the principal out when they are having difficulties.

Gorton and Schnieder (1991) noted that the supervisory techniques supervisors used were classroom visitations, preceded by and followed by individual conferences. All of the processes were referred to as clinical supervision.

To make clinical supervision more effectively, I accept the ideas provided by Glatthorn and Spencer (1986). Beginning with a pre-observation conference, the supervisor and the teachers discuss a combined revised list of effective teaching behaviors to be sure that they both understand and agree on the behaviors desired. Then, they discuss unit and lesson planning. In this process, the supervisor plays a role in raising questions about time allocations and asking questions about goals. The meeting concludes with the supervisor explaining the nature of the diagnostic observation that will be made.

The aim of the observation is to collect data about all teaching/learning transactions and identify areas for improvement. For collecting the data, the supervisor may use a form (see Figure 2). The form identifies the five general aspects of teaching

and a code number for any special skills relevant to that subject. During the observation, which should be an unannounced visit, the supervisor should keep a running record of the time in the left hand column and, in a condensed narrative form, make notes on all teacher and pupil behaviors. The data should be as specific as possible.

After collecting the data, the supervisor should analyze the information to prepare for the diagnostic conference. The goal is to review the notes to identify areas of strength and weakness. If the analysis suggests that there is more than one area where improvement is needed, the supervisor has to put the teachers' needs in order of priority by weighing two factors: which aspect of teaching seems to interfere most with the learning of the students? and, which aspect of teaching does the teacher seem most ready to deal with?

After the period of analysis, the supervisor should prepare a tentative agenda for the diagnostic conference. In the conference, the supervisor and the teacher review what happened in the class and

identify an area for improvement. The conference should end with the teacher and the supervisor agreeing on the priority need.

Identifying the need, the supervisor has to be sure that the teacher gets the required help. One or more training sessions could be held to help the teacher with the improvement. The supervisor might decide to provide the assistance or to call upon some other resource person, like a department chairperson. The resource person should prepare a more detailed analysis that provides specific information on the skills involved.

The detailed analysis will be useful in two important ways. First, it provides a focus for the training. Second, it also provides a structure for the focused observation, which limits its attention to the area for which training has just been provided.

Following the focused observation and analysis, the supervisor and teachers hold a meeting again. They should consider these questions. Is the skill area sufficiently mastered? If so, would another diagnostic observation be useful to build the next area for development? If not, is additional training needed?

In Taiwan, administrators always evaluate teachers by the grade of their students. I think it is not fair. Clinical supervision is a good idea for administrators in Taiwan to implement in practice.

#### School-Community Relations

Today's administrators should have the ability of understanding the public and keeping abreast of the community's thinking. Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1990) described that successful school-community relations program can help schools foster student achievement and develop citizen knowledge and understanding leading to financial support.

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) described that, though developing cooperative school and community relations is a complicated task, success in accomplishing this task is critical to the success of the school.

Loucks (1992) noted that parent/family involvement is one of the important factors in successful schools and it results in improving student achievement. In order to improve parents involvement in the school and enhance student learning, I will use the five programs, designed by Loucks.

The first program suggests parents be required to pick up their children's report card after the first grading period, at this event, teachers and parents meet in the classroom and hold roundtable discussions. The second one is to send good news cards. The cards are printed with school events on the front and space is left on the back for teachers to write a positive message about a student in their class.

Establishing PTA/PTO organizations is the third program. The organizations can assist with monthly newsletters, educational programs and a variety of other chores that need extra hands. The fourth method is to establish parent classes which help parents with parenting ideas/problems, homework/tutoring strategies and improving communication skill. The focus of the classes is parenting skills/wellness. The classes are taught by the school counselors.

Finally, the principal should request parents participation through some types of specific invitational event, such as a parent tea,



parent/teacher conference, new student/parent orientation night or financial aid/college information night.

### Technology Education

Thode (1989) indicated that the importance of helping today's students to be competitive in the technology-based society applies to all pupils. Students' future success in the job market or in higher education is directly related to their competence to adapt to change, to solve problems and to understand technology.

Weller and Wolfe (1985) noted that one of the principal's important responsibilities is to initiate curricular changes that reflect the demands of current society. On the other hand, Bitter and Yohe (1989) pointed out that educators have not accepted technology's roles in education. With the appearance of technology in education, the important focus is in teacher training. The success of technology in education depends on the teachers' ability in using current methods and adapting to future developments.

Bitter and Yohe (1989) also mentioned that the introduction of computers into the curriculum must have the commitment of the administration and the faculty. Long-range planning has to be devised, not only for the introduction of the necessary hardware and software, but for the sustaining and periodic updating necessary to keep current. The integration of planning and implementation should start with faculty support, which involves immediate access of hardware and software and sufficient training, when needed. The purpose is to enable faculty to become role models for the competent use of educational technology.

For the training program, I will approve the four linear levels of instruction, offered by Bitter and Yohe (1989). Level 1 is an individualized, skills-based introduction to technology. It is necessary for each teacher to take part in the program and that the introductory courses address the practical and hands-on experience.

Level 2 deals with content of technology program. The technology program should emphasize specific integration techniques, enhancing the fundamentals

learned in former coursework. Teaching strategies using both technology and traditional methods should be presented within the same subject area.

Level 3 supplies the advanced instruction. The final facet of coursework should focus on a number of courses for teachers to further develop skills in producing instructional systems that can be applied when they enter the field. Teachers should have the opportunity to investigate a topic in depth, with the final goal of having a number of practicing experts with specific knowledge and skill in diverse domains of technology.

After the program, teachers can receive more information through the final level. The teacher education program should extend after graduation in providing for formal and informal continuing education. The program also provides teachers with the results of research and extends professional opportunities in the form of conferences.

Bitter and Yohe (1989) also emphasized four considerations to design the technology program. First, the focus has to be upon the conceptual and technical domains of educational technology. New

technologies will evolve continuously, so teachers must adjust by understanding the changes in hardware, software and methods.

Then, every mission statement and program goals must be addressed at all levels of the teacher education program, with the objective being the improvement of instruction by using technology. Third, each of the four levels requires summative and formative evaluation. The summative evaluation happens at the completion of each course in the formal experience, and the formative evaluation occurs subsequent to graduation, following placement.

Finally, it is important for research to be continued in the areas of hardware and software use, content, methods and delivery and management of instruction at all levels of schooling. Teacher education programs have the ability to reduce ambiguities about technology and education.

Besides the considerations emphasized by Bitter and Yohe (1985), the administrator must know the products and processes of technology education when he/she design the curriculum of technology. The administrator should provide support to teachers and insure the desirable utilization of technology.

### Conclusions

According to my mission statement, I will offer the effective learning environment for students to succeed to their level of competence. To support that, I have stated plans with regard to school goals, school climate, staff supervision, school-community relations and technology education. Because each of these plans are of vital importance, I would ensure their implementation during my practice as an administrator.

Figure 1. Principal's school climate analysis  
questionnaire

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1. How would you rate the communication processes in your school?
2. What do you do to contribute to effective communication?
3. Do you feel you contribute to an open, trustful, supportive climate? What evidence can you provide to support your answer?
4. Do the people in your school have a clear idea of its mission, the goals, objectives, and purposes for which the school exists?
5. Do you encourage leadership among teachers, students, and others in the school? If so, how do you do it?
6. How do others perceive the climate in the school?
7. Do you feel that teachers and students like to come to school?
8. Are the rules and regulations you promote and carry out the result of discussions with personnel involved in implementing them? Are they in writing? Are they evaluated periodically?

9. Do you encourage a team effort in your school?  
Do you get it? why?
10. Are job expectations known by each member of  
your staff?
11. Do you encourage, praise, and reward personnel  
(including student) who demonstrate competence  
and who do a good job? How do you do this?
12. Do you utilize informal, small group procedures  
for sharing ideas, problems, concerns, and  
decisions?
13. Do you support and encourage personnel who want  
to try something different?
14. Do you engage in a continual appraisal of your  
own and others' activities? Do you encourage  
personnel to do the same?
15. Is your school a good place to be? A good place  
to teach? To learn? To explore? To create? To  
work? To study?

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From: "How School Administrators Solve Problems"  
by E. F. DeRoche, 1985. p. 44.

Figure 2. Effective teaching: a synthesis of the research.

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The Effective School Teacher:

1. Establishes a desired classroom environment by
  - a. Using class time efficiently.
  - b. Maintaining and communication a task orientation.
  - c. Managing pupil movement and pupil talking in a manner consonant with learning objectives.
2. Maintains desirable relationships with pupils by
  - a. Holding and communicating high expectations for them.
  - b. Showing warmth and positive feelings toward them.
  - c. Communicating enthusiasm about them and about teaching.
3. Establishes conditions for productive learning by
  - a. Providing clear and organized structure for lessons and units.
  - b. Clarifying learning objectives and tasks.
  - c. Holding pupils accountable for in-class tasks and homework.



4. Uses effective teaching and learning techniques by
  - a. Engaging pupils in learning tasks related to objectives.
  - b. Providing activities appropriate to pupils' developmental levels.
  - c. Making appropriate use of active learning strategies, including appropriate use of computers, television, and cooperative learning.
  - d. Alternating modes and methods of learning.
  - e. Emphasizing concept development by full explication, detailed exemplification, and guided discussion.
  - f. Strengthening achievement motivation and developing learner autonomy.
5. Effectively monitors pupil learning by
  - a. Diagnosing the pupil's cognitive readiness.
  - b. Monitoring the pupil's progress closely.
  - c. Giving pupils appropriate feedback.

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From: "Middle School/Junior High Principal's  
Principal's Handbook" by A. A. Glatthorn, and N.  
K. Spencer, 1986. p. 91.

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