

Ethics and Social Justice within the New DEEL: Addressing the Paradox of Control/Democracy

Leadership for Learning in the Context of Social Justice: An American Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This paper addresses the ethical and social justice implications of an educational movement called, The New DEEL (Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership). In particular, this paper emphasizes the ethical underpinnings of this movement by focusing on the paradox in the form of the dyad of control/democracy. This important paradox is developed through a discussion of the profound contradictions between the accountability thrust and the democratic emphasis in schools, particularly in the United States. The paper attempts to grapple with the inconsistencies within the paradox and provides some suggestions for coping with the challenges of blending these two very different and opposing concepts together during a very turbulent era. It also attempts to illuminate what a New DEEL moral educational leader might value, especially in the area of social justice, as well as how he or she might guide an organization.

Introduction

This article focuses on the ethical and social justice implications of Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership (The New DEEL). This is a movement that promotes democratic action using a moral framework focusing on leadership in schools, in higher education, and in the wider community.

In response to the challenges facing the field of educational leadership today, colleagues from leading University Council of Educational Administration's (UCEA) members joined committed practitioners to take action. During the 2004-2005 academic year, faculty and department leaders from Temple University, The Pennsylvania State University, the University of Vermont, Rowan University, the University of Oklahoma, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and the University Council of Educational Administration, as well as U.S., Canadian, Australian, British, and Taiwanese practitioners, launched a new movement in the field of educational leadership. Since its inception more than ten universities and colleges have joined the group and more and more educators across the globe are responding to its call. The New DEEL aims to change the direction of educational administration away from an overly corporate and controlling model towards the values of democratic and ethical behavior (Gross & Shapiro, 2005).

Those who are part of this movement believe that the first job of the school is to help all young people become effective citizens in a democracy. Democratic citizenship, in any era, is a complex task but it seems especially difficult at this time when international conflict and growing economic and social inequality are the rule and not the exception. The spirit of the New DEEL is towards a liberating education enabling students from different social classes, ethnicities, races, and even genders, to make intelligent and moral decisions as future citizens.

The mission of the New DEEL is to create an action-oriented partnership, dedicated to inquiry into the nature and practice of democratic, ethical educational leadership through sustained processes of open dialogue, right to voice, community inclusion, and responsible participation toward the common good. The group strives to create an environment to facilitate democratic ethical decision-making in educational theory and practice which acts in the best interests of all students.

What the New DEEL hopes to stimulate is a focus on educational leadership and not educational management. One difference in creating these kinds of leaders is that they have been prepared, through the study of ethics, to appreciate a difficult paradox or inconsistency when they meet it, and then know how to deal with it in ways that are not purely managerial in nature, but, instead, are morally sound.

This paper will focus on the ethical underpinning of the New DEEL. To accomplish this, the emphasis will be on a paradox that seems to play a central role in the working lives of school administrators in the U.S. in this current era. It is framed using the dyad of control/democracy. In this article, then, there will be a discussion of these two differing and opposing concepts followed by an attempt to blend them together, taking into consideration the turbulence of this period.

An Important Paradox

Purpel (1989), in his inspiring and classic book, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis of Education*, provided some excellent examples of paradoxes. In particular, he dealt directly with the inconsistencies that he felt existed between control and democracy. Purpel (1989) wrote that most of us wish to control our destinies. He went on to say that this is hard to do in a world riddled with terrorism, nuclear bombs, and internal violence; where there are economic depressions, tidal waves, famines, pollution, volcanoes, and hurricanes. He continued that because of this desire for control, in our bureaucratized, computerized culture, we value “work, productivity, efficiency and uniformity over play, flexibility, diversity and freedom” (p. 48).

Then Purpel turned to democracy. He spoke of how bureaucracy “sharply conflicts with our dedication to democratic principles which stress self-determination and a process for both sustaining autonomy and adjusting conflicts” (p.49). Purpel continued by discussing John Dewey’s conceptualization of the school as a “laboratory’ of democracy where students and teachers could wrestle with the challenges of the democratic experience” (p.49).

Currently, in U.S. public schools, accountability is very much in vogue. Discipline and school policies are of major concerns. Meeting standards through the raising of test scores are a central focus. Student government is lying low. Debating societies are not emphasized. Controversy and critique are not desired nor is there really any time for it in a curriculum that is driven by high stakes testing. While schools can and should be the way to encourage democracy, by teaching young people to be good citizens, this is clearly not the case in this era. Civics education seems to be missing in many schools that are focusing on testing and a very basic education.

Despite the trend, there is a counter movement in America. For example, there is at the very least an increasing cry for more service education (Keith, 1999, 2005). Service learning does ask students to go beyond the school and help organizations within society. In addition, there are a number of scholars (Aiken, 2002; Boyd, 2000; Crow, 2006; Driscoll, 2001; Furman-Brown, 2002; Gutmann, 1999; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; O’Hair, McLaughlin & Reitzug, 2000; Mitra, 2004; Reitzug & O’Hair, 2002; Shapiro & Purpel, 2004) who maintain that students should have a strong civics education to be prepared to play important, assertive, and meaningful roles in the democratic process.

Not too long ago, I talked about this paradox of control versus democracy in my ethics class with graduate students. These students were also administrators and teachers from urban, suburban, and rural schools in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. I asked them about student government, as we had just finished discussing Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1981) *Just Community*, in which students with their teachers actually made some decisions relating to important school issues. Interestingly enough, in this class of twenty-five graduate students, none of their schools had active student governments that provided young people with decision making opportunities in areas that mattered.

Accountability: A Contagious Disease?

Schools have been captured by the concept of ‘accountability,’ which has been transformed from a notion that schools need to be responsive and responsible to community concerns to one in which numbers are used to demonstrate that schools have met their minimal requirement—a reductionism which has given higher priority to the need to control than to educational considerations (Purpel, 1989, p. 48)

Despite many of the positive arguments that are made regarding accountability today (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000), there are a considerable number of negative aspects associated with this

concept. *Accountability: A Contagious Disease?* was a paper that I wrote in the late 1970's. The article (Shapiro, 1979) was published in a journal in the U.K. when I was doing postdoctoral work at the University of London's Institute of Education. At that time, I was able to view the U.S. educational scene from a distance and realized that the time had come to warn British educators about a movement developing in America that could have profound effects on them. In particular, I wrote about a taxpayer's revolt that began in California with Proposition 13. In one sweeping decision, in 1978, California voters rejected local school district support of public education. This trend followed in Massachusetts with Proposition 2 ½. I also noted that, in Michigan, "blanket" testing was in place and that there was an attempt to utilize those test results as vehicles for dismissals and promotions of teachers. A form of *payment by results* had become a reality. In the area of teacher training, at that time, performance-based standards were required in seventeen states. Back to basics was the slogan used for curriculum development.

In that period, accountability occurred for two major reasons. Bowles and Gintis (1976) explained one motive when they described the public's increasing disdain for the American Dream in which the majority of the young people in the country could graduate from college and find excellent jobs. In that period, there was a restricted employment market for youth. Another reason had to do with the instability of the social reforms and progressive education that occurred in the 1960's. Control, through accountability and through a back to basics curriculum, was thought to be the panacea. In the late 1970's, in the U.K., educators were hearing the term, accountability, for the first time. In the U.S., the movement had begun in earnest. The accountant's ledger was just becoming the bottom-line in education. This movement was seen as a way to put educators in their place by making them produce measurable results through testing. Underlying accountability, at that time, was attribution theory or blaming, and it was very much a part of the discourse.

In the U.S., *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *America 2000* (1991), *Goals 2000* (1993) and *No Child Left Behind* (2002) were documents that developed the concept of accountability in education. These reports from various commissions, departments, governors, and even presidents, made it clear that holding educators accountable was essential. Deconstructing *America 2000*, for example, my colleagues and I (Sewell, DuCette, & Shapiro, 1998) discovered that the term, accountability, was mentioned 23 times—the same number of pages as the report.

Although discussed in general terms initially in the earlier reports, accountability has proven to be far more complicated concept than we thought initially. For example, Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992) discovered five types of accountability—*political, legal, bureaucratic, professional, and market*. Later on, my colleagues and I (Gross, Shaw, & Shapiro, 2003) added four other forms of accountability that we discovered in scholarly journals, practitioner journals, and newspapers. They were *parent, fiscal, student, and personal*. *Gold and Simon* (2004) contributed a tenth type, public accountability, to append to the list.

Returning to the title of my paper in 1979, I still believe that accountability could be classified as a disease that has metastasized over time. In fact, Leithwood (2001) calls this era the "accountability age," while Normore (2004), when discussing the plight of school administrators today, refers to the current situation as "the edge of chaos" (p.55). The major difference in the form of accountability that I wrote about in the 1970's is that it has changed from one overarching concept into, at the very least, 10 types, and most of these, but not all, have increasingly been used to blame educational leaders and teachers for not doing their jobs.

While accountability tends to blame educators for all kinds of problems, the term, responsibility, is something quite different. It comes from the heart rather than from the head, and is an ethical concept. Responsibility asks everyone to become a part of the process and help to educate the next generation (Gross & Shapiro, 2002). Since responsibility comes from within, blaming others is not its focus. Thus, Gross and Shapiro (2002) are urging educators to reconsider the term, accountability, and substitute the word, responsibility, in its place.

Democracy and Public Schooling

The barrage of accountability measures aimed at schools has caused educators to focus on varied and questionable purposes, such as teaching to the tests and "dumbing down" the curriculum (McNeil, 2000) rather than preparing students to become useful and productive citizens (Kochan & Reed, 2005).

Kochan & Reed, in the above quote, addressed directly the control/democracy paradox currently being played out in schools and warned educators that accountability, at its extreme, can hurt students by not preparing them to be

useful and productive citizens. Unfortunately, as the authors cautioned, the continuing focus on accountability, with its emphasis on high stakes testing, places social studies and civics education off to the side. A major reason for this is that reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3 Rs) figure prominently on the tests while social studies and many other subjects are too often treated as peripheral disciplines within the curriculum. Even if social studies is included on the tests, the citizenship piece is something that requires much more than answering questions on a high stakes exam. It requires dialogue, debate, and decision making.

Recently, a social studies teacher from an affluent suburb in the Northeast told me that she feels as if her area is inconsequential because it is not part of the major areas to be tested. While there is a fairly strong debating society and a student government at her school, she is dismayed that it is only the same very bright students who take part in these activities. She lamented that all students needed to take part in these outside experiences and, above all, that the school needed to make citizenship education central in the curriculum.

At a more global level, Madeline Albright, when she was Secretary of State, discovered that if she “ran down the list of challenges faced by the world—from terrorism and war to poverty and pollution—democracy was the surest path to progress” (Albright, 2003, p. 561).

Although it is clear that democracy is extremely powerful and important and needs to be taught in schools, Amy Gutmann (1999), in *Democratic Education*, raised what she considered to be the central question of the political theory of education: “How should citizens be educated and by whom?” (p.xi). She framed her discussion around two paradoxes. The first inconsistency that she described was between multiculturalism/ patriotism. This paradox rests on the assumption, by some, that those who are different from the norm cannot become good citizens. The underpinning of this belief focuses on the issue of social justice or the lack of it. Difference, then, can be defined in the all-encompassing term of diversity that would include categories such as social class, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and exceptionalities, as well as cultural variations (Banks, 2001; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1992; Shapiro, Sewell, & DuCette, 2002). Brown (2004), Larson and Murtadha (2002), Marshall (2004), Shields (2004) and many others would argue that those who are different from the majority can add a great deal that is positive to a society. By keeping the hopeful aspects of differences in mind, and by providing excellent citizenship education and opportunities to children within a democracy, many scholars believe that all of them can develop into outstanding citizens.

The other tension Gutmann (1999) turned to was the dyad of parental control/public control. In her discussion, she spoke of civic minimalism that some parents thought was appropriate for public schooling. These parents believed that they should “have the right to exempt their children from any part of the school curriculum as long as the education that they wish to substitute satisfies the civic minimum” (p. xii). Gutmann also discussed the democratic educationalists who offered “a principled defense of schooling whose aim is to teach the skills and virtues of democratic deliberation within a social context where educational authority is shared among parents, citizens, and professional educators” (p. xiv). Gutmann (1999) made a sound case for what she called deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democracy asks all parties to come together to discuss in depth controversial issues and attempts to deal with them in such a way that their problems can be resolved. Gutmann (1999) requested a more principled educational debate on the difficult problems related to education. She further asked for education that teaches students to handle complex problems. She wanted them to learn about the civic values that made up their own country and the moral purpose of other nations.

Gutmann’s (1999) approach requires a great deal from teachers and from educational administrators. She emphasized tolerance as well as critical discussions of the concept itself. To teach this kind of democracy, there is really no place for the back to basics movement. Gutmann’s (1999) curriculum is comprehensive and broad-based. She advocated a kind of democracy where the process itself—the deliberation—is significant and must be taught and practiced.

In our own work, Gross, Shaw, and Shapiro (2003), which we wrote on accountability, the focus was very much on the concept of democracy as well. In fact, we accepted a complex view of both accountability and democracy. To accomplish this, we explored different forms of accountability using the lenses of three democratic philosophies—

progressive, free market, and essentialist. To define progressive education, we turned to the work of John Dewey (1902), who asserted that education should be student-centered, exploratory, and collaborative. Another exemplar of this kind of education was Maxine Greene (1978), who argued for an education that would not make students feel powerless. Turning to the free market approach to democracy, we discussed how it is often associated with Milton Friedman and Chester Finn's beliefs. This philosophy places schools in the same category as other institutions in our economy—that is, organizations competing for customers who have free choice. Our exemplar for the essentialist movement was William Bagely from Teachers College who, during the early decades of the last century, believed that schools must prepare students for a harshly competitive world. His belief was that the curriculum should become much more standardized with little local design and should above all be rigorous. So-called soft subjects, like social studies, were suspect, while Latin, algebra, and geometry were emphasized.

Through the review of 36 articles, published in the early 2000s in academic journals, practitioner journals, and the popular press, we discovered that relatively few of them had an underlying progressive democracy emphasis that was student-centered. We also noted that the free market form of democracy was not very much a part of the accountability articles. This form of democracy aims to choose the best educational product for children. There is little sense of community in this argument and there is little hope for the common good. However, we did find that the essentialist philosophy of democracy was clearly underlying the majority of the papers on accountability—this form seemed to be driving the debate. Unfortunately, although the strongest philosophy, with its standardized curriculum, it is a type of democracy that does not have the ability to respond quickly to rapidly changing conditions and to turbulence (Gross, 1998, 2004; Shapiro & Gross, in press).

Ethical Leadership from the Heart

Moral leadership, therefore, is broader than traditional school management. It demands a deep investment of the genuine or authentic self of the educational leader. Moral leaders have the courage to locate their work in a broader as well as deeper space as they work to bring about societal transformation (Dantley, 2005, p. 45).

In this complex and chaotic era, to educate leaders and not just managers, it is important that morality or ethics is at the center of educating leaders. The New DEEL treats ethical decision making seriously. Educational leaders need to know when they meet paradoxes, such as control versus democracy, and then must learn ways to solve or at least resolve them. Modeling rational and intuitive decision making abilities is powerful as it is bound to have an effect on staff and students. Hopefully, at its best, this kind of decision making can lead over time to the societal transformation that Dantley (2005) mentions in the above quotation.

It is important to realize that ethical leadership is not always rational. There is a need for the kind of leadership Sergiovani (1992, 2006) speaks of that is not just with the head and the hand, but also with the heart. Emotions enter the picture where good leadership, not management, is concerned. It is important for leaders to be aware of their own emotions as well as other people's reactions, and know how to channel them appropriately. This kind of leadership takes into account issues of motivation and self-knowledge that is so much a part of Begley's (1999) and Begley and Zaretsky's (2004) onion model of educational leaders that places "self" at the center. This kind of leadership should take into consideration Gross' (1998, 2004) turbulence theory, that asks leaders to gauge the level of upheaval when making an ethical decision, and to determine, in advance, if the decision that will be made will increase the level of turbulence or decrease it.

Ethical Leadership from the Head and the Hands

Not only does ethical leadership take into account emotions, but it especially turns to the moral groundwork laid by Starratt (1991, 1994, 2004), in his writings about ethical schools, and the thoughtful work of Noddings (1984, 1992) and Sernak (1998) on the ethic of care. It also takes into consideration the writings of Davis (2000, 2001), Shapiro and Purpel (2004), and Young, Petersen and Short (2002), who turn to the ethic of critique to highlight issues of social justice. In addition, this type of leadership relates well to the model designed by my colleague, Jackie Stefkovich and myself (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Shapiro, 1994, 2003) focusing on the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession.

This kind of leadership asks us to prepare individuals who can deal with the hard questions such as: What is the law? Is it appropriate in this particular ethical dilemma? Could the law be wrong? Who will I hurt by my decision? Who will I

help? Above all, what is in the student's best interests? And, finally, what happens if my decision is in the best interests of some students but not all?

Because this is leadership preparation, the ethic of the profession requires particular attention. In this ethic, students are placed at the center instead of focusing on budgets, efficiency, accountability, and control. It means that educational leaders will think of what is good for their students throughout the decision making process.

The New DEEL: Control versus Democracy

The paradox of control versus democracy has become somewhat more complex in public education in the U.S. at the beginning of the 21st Century, but it is still very much with us. Kochan & Reed (2005) wrote:

Recent trends in education suggest two possibilities: Either greater control will be exerted over public schools and schooling, or conversely, educational autonomy will be expanded in the form of charter and independent schools, which would be unfettered by external controls and perceived as an alternative to public education (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002). No matter what the requirements or configurations of schools, educational leaders in the public sector will likely face greater stresses and increased demands for the successful performance of all students and for outcomes established by governmental and community groups (pp. 71-72).

Kochan and Reed (2005), in the above quote, point out that charter and independent schools may allow for some relaxation and freedom from external controls for public education. However, they also speak of the problems that educational leaders will still face because of increasing accountability.

The New DEEL (Gross & Shapiro, 2005) does not focus on restructuring some public schools by turning them into charters or independent institutions. Instead, this concept asks educational leaders to return to the historical mandate of the public schools to prepare citizens for participation in a democratic society (Retallick & Fink, 2002). It also goes beyond that mandate by asking educational leaders to create schools that prepare all students to be intelligent and thoughtful citizens who are able to make wise, ethical decisions.

The New DEEL, while innovative and broad in its scope, still aligns well with the current version of the U.S.'s Interstate Licensure Standards (ISLLC) that were developed for educational administrators to uphold. In particular, Standard 5 within ISLLC states: "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p.18). To meet this standard, an administrator, among other things, must: a) possess a knowledge and understanding of various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics, b) have a knowledge and understanding of professional codes of ethics, c) believe in, value, and be committed to bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process, and d) believe in, value, and be committed to developing a caring school community. While this standard is well written, it could go further by asking for more than a caring school community—which would be a fine start—but also for a democratic school community.

Conclusion

In this paper, the paradox of control/democracy is illuminated. This profound contradiction highlights the ethical underpinnings of the New DEEL. It focuses on both the hierarchical management style and attribution of blame that are noticeable in this era of increasingly diverse forms of accountability in public education. It speaks to the importance of creating more empowering and engaging experiences for all young people, no matter what their social class, race, gender, or other categories of difference might be. Therefore, social justice is at the very center of this paradox. It also advocates the importance of using deliberative democracy, as well as avoiding the Back to Basics curriculum that occurs because of high stakes testing. In addition, this paper considers the importance of leadership that emphasizes not just the head, but also the hands and the heart. Knowing how to make sound ethical decisions, taking into account both the rational and emotional contexts, is essential for educational leaders, especially in this challenging time.

With the inconsistencies, complexities and turbulence in this early part of the 21st Century, it is imperative that those of us who prepare educational leaders throughout the world keep a dialogue going to widen the discussion of the New DEEL so that we begin to have common understandings. Already, the New DEEL has attracted international

interest. Canadian, Australian, British, and Taiwanese practitioners are involved in this endeavor. Consensus should be achieved as educators work together to create new kinds of educational leaders. Hopefully, this broad-based group of educators can move towards implementation of the ideas inherent in this new movement—that is to develop educational leaders who are knowledgeable of diverse students and different communities, who are compassionate and supportive of their intellectual and emotional needs and their dreams, and who prepare all of them to be democratic and moral citizens.

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