

Administrative Manager or Leader?

Wrestling with Twin Temptations

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Some administrators label everything they do as "administrative leadership." Leadership in Extension has to do with long-range planning which will lead to optimum educational contributions to society. Administrative management is concerned primarily with preservation and survival of the enterprise, with human relations, methods of operation, and general "housekeeping." These two orientations to administering an organization can lead to creation of differing administrative climates. Ideas posed in the article are presented to help administrators examine and assess their roles as they consider whether they are managers, leaders, or a combination of both.

WHAT kind of administrator does a public enterprise such as the Cooperative Extension Service need? An administrative manager? An administrative leader? Is there a difference? If so, what is it? Is it an either/or situation, or is it possible or perhaps desirable to have some appropriate mix of both management and leadership functions to provide the guidance needed by staff members? If there is a mix, should it exist in one man or be divided among several men?

When changes in organizational structure and job descriptions are as frequent and far reaching as they are today in Extension, such questions seem relevant and timely. The answers to the questions may be as relevant in meaning to district, area, or county administrators as to directors, deans, or vice-presidents of Extension.

RED FLAGS AHEAD

An administrator must avoid the inviting but dangerous temptation: (1) to label everything which he does as "administrative leadership"; and (2) to surrender to the painfully urgent pressures to

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attend to administrative management matters, leaving the important administrative leadership matters until he "finds time." It takes a skillful and tireless wrestler to pin these two tantalizing temptations to the mat permanently. *Leadership rarely can be equated automatically with people holding high offices in an enterprise.*

Both "leadership" and "management" are concepts fabricated by the human mind in which certain attributes, characteristics, or features are identified and arranged in such a way as to enable human beings to differentiate or discriminate one idea, object, event, activity, or environment from all others. These concepts, like all other concepts, mean whatever men want them to mean. Neither of these concepts can be identified or defined by describing the overt behavior of a given administrator or a given group of administrators.

WHAT IS AN ADMINISTRATOR'S JOB?

What is the job of an administrator? What factors affect this job? Are there periods in the life of an enterprise when either leadership or managership is needed more than at some other periods? These are hard questions to answer, but they are questions which the persons in top positions in any enterprise must wrestle with as they function within that enterprise. These are questions which Extension administrators need to ask and answer, whether they are county directors, area directors, district directors, or state directors.

Let's take a good look at the two important concepts: (1) administrative leadership and (2) administrative management.

Administrative Leadership

Administrative leadership in a public educational enterprise such as the Cooperative Extension Service has to do with long-range planning—planning that will lead to optimum educational contributions to society as it strives to utilize available resources to best advantage and as it moves toward maximum growth economically, socially, and intellectually. This planning has to do with purposes, programs, personnel, policies, people, and possible sources of support.

The administrative leader's work includes three major responsibilities: (1) locating conceptually his enterprise and its specific functions among all public and private enterprises in a contemporary and increasingly more complex society; (2) developing, clearly articulating, and constantly re-examining the major missions, goals, or objectives of the enterprise; (3) designing an organizational

structure and developing the kinds of policies relating to both the external and internal world—policies which will enable that enterprise to accomplish its missions efficiently and effectively.

He is much concerned with the long-run evolution of the enterprise as it adapts itself appropriately to the constantly changing needs of a contemporary society, and as it prepares itself for productive contributions for the future. He is also concerned with the development and articulation of an enterprise philosophy, a distinctive identity for the enterprise, as well as with the development of some broad administrative ideologies.

As Selznick so well said, "The executive becomes a statesman as he makes the transition from administrative management to institutional leadership. This shift entails a reassessment of his own tasks and of the needs of the enterprise. It is marked by a concern for the evolution of the organization as a whole, including its changing aims and capabilities."¹

Administrative Management

An administrative manager is concerned primarily with the preservation and survival of the enterprise. He tries to protect the enterprise and its members from external enemies and internal disruptions.

The administrative manager emphasizes the "greasing of the wheels" or "smoothing of ruffled feathers." He might correctly be called a connoisseur of enterprise serenity. He is concerned extensively with human relations, methods of operation, internal coordination and control, personnel (recruitment, employment, training, counseling, promotion, demotion, dismissal), budgeting and its ramifications, troubleshooting and extinguishing internal fires, as well as with a wide range of other types of activities sometimes labeled as basically housekeeping duties. Many, but not all, of these major and extremely important responsibilities can be standardized relatively easily and/or made routine. It is also generally easier to employ people with expertise for these things than it is to employ people with expertise for leadership.

Executives who are oriented toward a "keep the water calm" philosophy are generally preoccupied with maintaining an organizational equilibrium and developing a "smooth-running" enterprise which can attain a given set of objectives with minimum static. Persons holding this philosophy tend to elevate "reducing static" to a

¹ Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration* (Evanston: Row, Peterson & Co., 1957), pp. 4-5.

high priority objective, often at the sacrifice of a substantive program objective.

MANAGEMENT OR LEADERSHIP?

The real question is: Is the administrator (i.e., the Extension Director at state, district, or county level) utilizing his time to best advantage by concerning himself primarily with a group of decisions related to administrative management, or should he instead deal primarily with the group of decisions described under administrative leadership? In an enterprise such as the Cooperative Extension Service, which averages almost 300 personnel per state, few men, either physically or intellectually, can successfully handle the full range of both kinds of decisions.

Concept of role is one perceptible trademark which might help us differentiate administrative leaders from administrative managers. The latter are primarily preoccupied with current decisions which help assure efficiency and contribute to the stability of a smooth-running enterprise. Administrative leaders are occupied primarily with long-range planning which reaches far into the future but which occurs in a constantly evolving present which often has deep roots far in the past.

The Urgent vs. the Important

Many types of internal management decisions have a way of seeming more urgent than decisions on long-range planning. For example, a vacant position, a disagreement between staff members, an insecure employee who needs counseling, a request for a speech, or the determination of specific content of in-service training often easily acquires an aura of importance which transcends the need for giving attention to locating the enterprise, formulating and articulating enterprise goals, and designing structure and policies. It is relatively easier to attend to management decisions than to leadership decisions. The general consensus of writers in this field is that it is easier and more common for top executives to drift toward administrative management decisions than to persist in dealing with administrative leadership decisions.

As one authority in this area said, it is difficult to abandon or even seriously challenge familiar ways of doing things or traditional reasons for doing them, as an administrative leader must be willing and able to do. It is not uncommon to discover a rather uncritical reverence for tradition in many organizations, including Coopera-

tive Extension. This attitude encourages rigidity and unresponsiveness in administration.

Leadership and Management Necessary

Performing productively as an executive in an adult educational agency such as the Cooperative Extension Service usually demands both administrative leadership and administrative management. Thus the proportion of time and talent devoted to each becomes critical. If we expect to have maximum contributions to the development of people by the Cooperative Extension Service, we dare not succumb to an operational situation recently used to describe public school systems: "The demands of the modern school organization compel the almost complete devotion of the administrator to duties that we have labeled administrative management. Buildings, budgets, buses, and bonds consume his time and energy."² Adopting this as an operational pattern would lead to an eventual degeneration of the institution which permits or encourages this kind of executive to stand at the helm. Such management problems do demand time and talent, but talent to do them is usually easier to employ than talent in administrative leadership.

We do agree with Dimock, who says: "Irrespective of the social institution with which one is connected, the common factor in all executive work is navigation—knowing where you want to go, what shoals you must avoid, what the forces are with which you must deal, and how to handle yourself, your ship and your crew effectively and without waste in the process of getting there."³

ENTERPRISE VIABILITY

In our judgment any viable enterprise is *sustained* in the public eye by its objectives or goals, not by its methods or techniques, although one has candidly to recognize that it is often the colorful technique or method which captures the attention of people, at least temporarily. It is the top executives who are assigned to the role of administrative leaders who must give real direction to the formulation and articulation of institutional goals or objectives to sustain that life. Nobody else is likely to. At the same time, if an administrative manager is employed to perform an administrative leadership role, something must give. As Boulding said: "When a square

² John Walton, *Administration and Policy Making in Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Free Press, 1959), p. 57.

³ Marshall E. Dimock, *The Executive in Action* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1945), p. 1.

peg is fitted into a round role, it is true that the peg becomes rounder, but it is also true that the role becomes squarer."⁴ An individual, whatever his background experience and preparation for a given role, seldom passively or comfortably fits into it. There is dynamic action between the personality and the role, which includes a whole series of role expectations of his subordinates, his peers, his superiors, and society generally. Differences in role expectations usually generate internal and sometimes external heat.

As Houle puts it: "The man who knows how to do something can always get a job, but it is the man who knows why who will hire him."⁵ And it is clear that every enterprise needs some alert and imaginative men at the top, administrative leaders, who know why.

Who Charts the Course?

If the educational system known as the Cooperative Extension Service is to keep pace with the constantly changing needs of society, it will take the best contributions of every member of that society, including professional Extension educators, to chart the course. Some deny that. For example, Walton states: "Originality and creativity, as well as conventional competence in intellectual matters, are not likely to be considered particularly desirable in educational administrators."⁶ In terms of the Cooperative Extension Service and in terms of the realities of a political democracy, Walton's statement seems at least 180° from the position taken in this paper.

In a political democracy it is true that people demand to be consulted and exercise the right to pass judgment, but they *do expect to be led* by the leaders of institutions in society. Walton seems to be shadowboxing with a popular myth frequently expressed as "government from the grass roots" or "educational programs from the grass roots." The underlying theme of these phrases is that all or most original, creative, and productive ideas emerge from the general populace and not from those in leadership positions. This simply is not or will not likely become a fact of life. The public expects leadership in terms of ideas from those in responsible positions in the various institutions in society such as the Cooperative Extension Service. They do not intend, as Walton indirectly but fairly precisely suggests, to have those in positions of responsibility operate as

⁴ Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Image* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1956), p. 60.

⁵ Cyril Houle, "Developing Goals for Public School Education," paper delivered at the 7th annual conference of the National Association of Public School Adult Educators, Buffalo, New York, November 4, 1959, p. 3 (mimeographed).

⁶ Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

puppets or isolate themselves from the demanding tasks of defining missions and formulating programs for consideration by the people who represent the "grass roots."

In the light of the public's stake in universal education, it cannot permit the Cooperative Extension Service to operate only with, or even primarily with, administrative managers any more than it can permit the development of a top-notch air force equipped with efficient machines, pilots, navigators, and mechanics who are all prepared to go but have no clear-cut destination.

The kinds of problems confronting society today—which Extension should be able to help solve—are so complex and all-embracing and are changing so quickly that solving them demands maximum contributions from everyone. Preservation of individual sovereignty and the democratic way of life doesn't necessarily imply the need for stifling individual initiative, imagination, and creativity on the part of public servants. So long as we retain that sovereignty in our form of social organization, this writer is not overly concerned about forward-looking public servants offering the people something which they will recognize the need for later. Though there are certain risks involved in being a pioneer, it is worth the risks.

EXTENSION NEEDS BOTH

In summary, obviously there are fundamental differences among intellectuals who are writing about the field of administration as it applies to public institutions. It seems imperative that an educational enterprise such as the Cooperative Extension Service, if it is to make its optimum educational contribution to our political democracy and to people living in it, must have both administrative managers and administrative leaders. In order to insure having both, however, every executive must be constantly alert to the possibilities—yes, even to the probabilities—of being submerged in the bed of institutional quicksand labeled "urgent management decisions."

It does, in fact, take a very able wrestler to pin to the mat the two temptations mentioned at the outset. It may be even more difficult to keep them pinned over time, because they seem to have the eternal resiliency of a spring. How successful a wrestler are you?