

THE EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE AS AFFECTED BY ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIOR
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of the principal in the high school of today is increasing in importance and difficulty. As problems are solved, more appear that seem to be even more perplexing than those that were resolved.

The principal is looked upon as the head of the school. Everything that happens within the confines of the educational facility is his responsibility. A principal must be aware of the incidents that take place in his school. Everyone in the educational climate is under the scrutiny of the principal, either directly or indirectly, and he in turn is held responsible for all of his actions and decisions.

Many books are available that describe the duties and responsibilities of a principal in a secondary school. The principal, however, is the person who must interpret the rulings from the central office and answer calls from parents who have questions about the school in general and their children in particular. It is the primary responsibility of the principal to administer the school in such a manner that the students, the faculty, and the community derive the greatest benefit from the school which is a sizeable investment in both time and money.

The principal has several options as to what procedures will be used in the school he administers. He can be the tyrant who decides policy and dictates his edicts to the lesser beings under his control. In a situation such as this, one man may make a mistake but all must suffer for it.

The principal may assume the role of the benevolent despot who knows what is best for all and sees to it that all interests are served according

to his personal feelings. This is a noble thought but he should realize that others may have something of value to contribute. With a staff of professional educators who have some valuable contributions to make to benefit the school, it would be a mistake for the principal to disregard the help that is near at hand and readily available.

A democratic principal is the most current and practical alternative that covers all aspects of education as authorities of the present perceive them. This type of administrator realizes his duties and obligations and is anxious to utilize all the help that is available to him. The faculty, the students, and the community enable him to guide the school in the direction that will benefit those who profit the most from a well-run and properly administered school, the students.

The role of the principal depends upon who is looking at it. The parent whose child has been disciplined might see the principal as an extension of the learning process or a brute who is taking out his frustrations on a poor, defenseless child. Others in the community may see the principal as a good bet to judge the flower show, or a good guy to join an organization because he has a secretary and access to a ditto machine. The principal must be conscious of the variety of roles in which people see him. The community as a whole views this man as the head of the educational center of the community and holds him responsible for the product that is turned out by this institution, the pupil.

The student, on the other hand, may see the principal in a different light. He can be any number of things: (1) the man who calls assemblies to remind them of rules concerning tardiness, (2) the person that they must face when they return to school after an absence, (3) the disciplinarian, (4) a friend to go to in time of trouble, or (5) the man who runs the school. The

principal is usually all of these things. Regardless of what the pupils think of the principal, most of the students realize that he is the leader of the school or at least should be.

Individual teachers have different perceptions of the principal. The insecure teacher may see the principal as the superintendent's spy who is out after his job. An older teacher might see the principal as a young whipper-snapper who is causing trouble and more work for the teacher by encouraging new classes or new methods of teaching when the old methods have worked for thirty-six years. The young or beginning teacher might find the principal to be a friend to help them when they encounter a problem. Most teachers realize that the principal is the chief administrator in the school and that this position carries with it a certain degree of authority depending upon the individual principal and his decision as to the manner in which he chooses to exercise his authority.

The principal's role in the school community depends on how he sees his job. If a principal sees himself as a dictator on a throne then he will expect the underlings and peasants to gather around his throne to catch the pearls of wisdom that fall from his ruby lips. The principal who sets up committees to perform tasks that should be handled by the principal is removing or divesting himself of some of his authority. He will be held responsible for the successes and failures of the groups he has established. The principal, who believes the education of children in the best manner possible is his responsibility, will utilize all the resources available to him: faculty, students, community, and facilities to accomplish this goal.

The varying roles of the principal as perceived by various groups of people create a dilemma as to the type of administrative behavior to be used.

The purpose of this report was to attempt to identify the impact that a principal has on creating and maintaining the educational climate in keeping with the goals of the school.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Administrative Behavior

Administrative behavior is the manner in which the administrator conducts himself and leads his co-workers. The behavior of the administrator has an important part to play in the over-all attitude of those who attend and support the school.

Authoritarian Administrator

The authoritarian administrator seeks to reserve for himself all of the power delegated to him.

Democratic Administrator

The democratic administrator is one who actively seeks the help of all concerned in the educational process to enable him to create conditions that will provide the best education possible for the students.

Educational Climate

The educational climate is the over-all atmosphere of a school that is determined by the administrative style and its effects on the achievement of the goals and objectives of the school.

Laissez-Faire Administrator

The laissez-faire administrator is one who delegates his authority to others. The administrator who assumes a hands-off attitude in the leadership of the school has little or no power of his own.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The principal has become a most important participant in the secondary schools of today. He is perceived to be the leader of the school he administers. "It has become common to designate leadership as the primary function of the principal."¹ This role of leader of the school places the principal in a very important and a very delicate situation. He has the opportunity to determine the educational climate to a great extent. "The principal is in a position to affect attitude, social climate, morale, progress, cooperation and direction of effort in the secondary school."²

Not all educators are satisfied with the amount of time that principals are able to allot for actual educational leadership. Some feel that other duties tend to interfere with the most important responsibility of the principal, educational leadership. Thomas J. Johnson said:

The principal of a school today has become the keeper of the keys, the director of transportation, the coordinator of correspondence, the quartermaster of stores, the deviser of intricate schedules, the publisher of handbooks, the director of public relations--and, when time permits, the instructional leader capable of exercising significant leadership of an educational nature within the school.³

Leadership and authority go hand in hand. The principal must have a certain amount of authority if he is to be the leader of the school. Principals

¹James A. Van Zwoell, School Personnel Administration (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), p. 227.

²John E. Corbally Jr., T. J. Jenson, and W. Frederick Staub, Educational Administration: The Secondary School (2d ed.; Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc., 1965), pp. 138-39.

³Thomas J. Johnson, "Implementing the Model: An Example," The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 56:362, March, 1972.

are given authority by the school boards which represent the community through the office of the superintendent, the chief administrator in the school district. The principal uses this authority to lead the teachers and students of the school toward the goals and objectives of the school.

The American Association of School Administrators recognized the importance of professional leadership by the principal in the first paragraph of the Preamble of Policies To Govern The Ethical Professional Behavior of School Administrators where it stated:

Public schools prosper to the extent they merit the confidence of the people. In judging its schools, society is influenced to a considerable degree by the character and quality of their administration. To meet these challenges school administrators have an obligation to exercise professional leadership.⁴

Most administrators realize that the professional leadership they exert for the good of the school is what makes their job a success or a failure. "The priorities the principal establishes in his own behavior will go far in establishing what is important in the minds of students, teachers, and community."⁵ An administrator who fails to lead his staff and school in a manner that facilitates the teaching of children so they can learn according to their capabilities is not living up to his responsibilities.

There are three basic types of leadership found among administrators, (1) the authoritarian type, (2) the laissez faire type, and (3) the democratic type. Each type of administration has its own characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages. It is rare, however, for an administrator to be totally committed to one type of behavior.

⁴1. Chester Wolte (ed.), An Introduction to School Administration: Selected Readings (New York: MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 318.

⁵John M. Jenkins, "The Principal: Still the Principal Teacher," The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 56:361, February, 1972, 33.

The authoritarian type of leadership is the oldest type of leadership observed in schools. When teachers began to feel a need for someone to turn to in time of trouble and the need became apparent for an administrative position, the role of the principal became a reality. The principal was given power to enable him to direct the actions of the school in a manner that would benefit everyone in the educational process. Most of the institutions of the day were authoritarian in nature so it followed that the man who administered the school should be an authoritarian figure.

Principals were anxious to demonstrate that they were deserving of the authority that had been placed in their hands with the creation of administrative positions.

The exercise of authority seemed to be desirable for the purpose of demonstrating to all concerned, including pupils, teachers, boards of education, and the public, that the individuals occupying positions of authority were competent to exercise it. The exercise of authority also served to discourage any challenge on the part of pupils and teachers.⁶

The desire to protect the authority given to the principal has continued to be very important to administrators. Only in the last few years have people begun to question the authority of school administrators.

Once a person was placed in a position of power it was difficult to give up this position or share the power that had been given to him. "The pleasure that comes with enjoyment of power over other individuals naturally has caused those invested with power not only to oppose sharing it with other individuals but also to develop sincere and strong beliefs in the soundness of the authoritarian system."⁷

⁶Harl Roy Douglass, Modern Administration of Secondary Schools (2d ed.; New York: Ginn and Company, 1963), p. 4.

⁷Ibid., p. 5.

There are certain advantages to be found with the authoritarian type of leadership. The principal who practices this type of leadership finds that it is unnecessary to refer to others to assist him in the decision-making process concerning the administration of the school. This saves a great deal of time that would be taken up by faculty meetings that are no longer needed to ask for opinions of others who are concerned with the problems of the school. Another advantage of the authoritarian type of leadership is the ease with which the principal assigns duties and punishes or rewards individuals in relation to the manner in which the assignments are completed. In a true authoritarian administration, there is never any doubt that the principal is the boss.

There are certain disadvantages of an authoritarian administration. The most glaring weakness of a situation where the principal is a virtual dictator is the fact that he has denied himself some very valuable help in resolving problems that face him. The staff, which could provide an excellent source for ideas and information, may keep their true feelings to themselves when they realize that the principal has already decided what course of action he will follow. "The principal does not have a monopoly on all the good ideas."⁸

An authoritarian principal may not even realize that he is a virtual dictator. "I involve my teachers. They are really a part of things around MY school. Just last week I formed a committee to solve the tardiness problem."⁹ A principal who cannot recognize the type of leadership under which the school operates can prove to be a serious handicap to the school he administers.

⁸David A. Singer Jr., "Staff Leadership Teams: Listen To Me! (Dammit!)," Journal of Secondary Education, 46:2, February, 1971, 79.

⁹Ibid., p. 80.

The authoritarian principal neglects to involve his students in the formulation of policy that affects them. A man who sees himself as the answer to all of the problems of education will not appreciate the attempts of high school students to express their opinions of wants and needs in their education. The authoritarian principal runs the very real risk of alienating the most important people in education today, the students. If the students do not profit from their educational institution, then the school is not worthwhile.

The other extreme of administrative behavior present in schools is that of a laissez faire principal. This principal has given up the power or authority he possessed to others either by delegation or absence of leadership. Laissez faire leadership may lead to a power struggle between members of the staff when it becomes apparent that the principal is not exercising the power that has been entrusted to him. This struggle for power can create an uncomfortable atmosphere or climate within the faculty, thus disrupting the entire educational climate of the school. Teachers who are involved in a struggle to obtain power will not perform their duties of teaching students as well as those teachers who feel that they have a fair share of authority. The students of the attendance center will be able to sense that there is something amiss when the administrator has given up his leadership and authority. Anything that upsets the educational climate or impairs the learning of students must be avoided for the good of the school and the students.

A laissez faire type of administration tends to create a power vacuum and when its presence is recognized, there will be a rush to fill the vacuum. This causes collisions between the forces that would occupy this position of power. The collisions cause friction within the school and may lead to a division of the faculty into opposing groups. The secondary school has enough problems without adding a power struggle to the list.

An advantage of a laissez faire administration is the fact that the principal will have more time to handle problems which will increase in number and complexity when the principal forfeits the power he was given. It is possible that the teachers who have taken over the vacant power may do a better job of running things than the principal who allowed this to happen. It is not very likely that a teacher or group of teachers will be able to rise above their own feelings and prejudices to get a truly objective picture of what the school really needs. The people who obtain the decision-making power will attempt to keep their position of power. This will make it difficult for the principal to reassert himself or for a new administrator to make inroads into a deteriorating situation.

The current trend of administrative behavior is neither the authoritarian nor laissez faire type; it is a movement toward the democratic type of administration. Experts feel that there is a real movement toward democratic administration. "The trend toward democracy in staff relationships is observed in the increased tendency to employ a democratic group approach to the solving of various types of problems related to policies and procedures of administration."¹⁰

The principal decides how the school is going to function and what type of administration it will have. If the principal decides that he wants a democratic type of administration then it is his responsibility to set the example for the rest of the school to follow. A democratic administration requires a great deal of training and preparation. To throw the door open to a democratic administration without adequate preparation is to invite trouble.

¹⁰Douglass, op. cit., pp. 6-7

Patricia Wertheimer found that the students in her school were not able to adjust to the freedom of an open climate. The teachers had been carefully selected and prepared for the experiment but the same was not true for the students.¹¹

One of the conditions that must be present to establish a democratic type of administration is the respect of the staff by the principal. "Without faith in the professional competence and personal sincerity of teachers there can be no democratic school administration."¹²

A democratic administration must be based upon mutual trust. It is imperative that the principal trust his staff and that the staff trust the administrator. "You can't practice democracy if you envision the world as being populated with scheming incompetents who look after their own hides and will get yours if you don't watch out."¹³ Without mutual trust a true democratic administration is impossible.

The worth of the individual is another important aspect of a democratic administration.

Democracy connotes regard for the individual, individual responsibility and freedom, and the protection of individual rights. It is a concept of individualism on the one hand and of social considerations on the other. Democracy may be thought of as a sort of dynamic balance between the individual and the group.¹⁴

The teachers and students who function under a democratic administration will

¹¹Patricia A. Wertheimer, "School Climate and Student Learning," Phi Delta Kappan, LII:9 May, 1971, 527-30.

¹²Stephen J. Knezevich, "Small Communities Need Big Men," America's Other Children: Public Schools Outside Suburbia, ed. George Henderson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 215.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Van Zwoll, op. cit., p.213.

have a better opportunity to feel important and worthwhile.

A democratic administration is important to teachers who feel that they are as competent as anyone in deciding what is best for their pupils and themselves. The students may also feel that they should have some say in the administration of the school that they attend. To deny either of these groups a feeling of worth may lead to a feeling of alienation which will defeat the purpose of the school, the education of students in the best possible manner.

The ability to function in a democratic society is a vital part of the education of a child. To deprive a student of democratic training during the years when he is attending school is a great mistake.

Let's involve students in our decision-making process. Students can be a great help. The principal and his staff do not have a monopoly on good ideas. One goal every school should have is to involve students in decision-making to the greatest degree possible. School is the place for students to make errors without having dire consequences. Many learn most when errors are made. Why should we be reluctant to give students these responsibilities? Our schools should be the laboratory for democratic living.¹⁵

It is beneficial to the child and the nation to prepare the pupil to function effectively in a democratic setting.

The advantages of an administration that incorporates democratic ideals are the feeling of individual worth, the cooperation that accompanies the feeling of importance when involved in decision-making, and an improved school climate brought about by a lessening of tension between the staff and the students. These advantages cannot be overlooked in the search for the best type of administration which will make it easier to have the best school possible. These three advantages make it worthwhile to spend the time to set up a democratic administration.

¹⁵Loren S. Jones and Virginia Jones, "Creating Opportunities for Individual Growth," The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 56:361, February, 1972, 44.

There are certain disadvantages that cannot be overlooked when considering a change to the democratic type of administration of a school. Human nature sometimes makes cooperation difficult. "The cooperative way of life is not the easy way, but it is the rewarding way. If democracy and cooperation were easy we would have tried them long ago. It takes faith in human beings to operate in a cooperative way."¹⁶

The faculty is not always composed of experts that have all of the answers at their fingertips. Sometimes faculties have a great deal of trouble at deciding the direction that they want to follow. "At times faculty groups will tend to legislate rather than deliberate on needed educational policies. There is a tendency to solve dilemmas by making a new rule."¹⁷

The type of administration varies from school to school and in order to get a clear picture of what to expect from schools and administrators the purpose of secondary schools needs to be identified.

The primary mission of the secondary school is to create conditions in which students, teachers, and administrators grow. People grow (1) when the climate is one of trust, warmth, acceptance, and personal worth; (2) when communication is open and in depth; (3) when people have an opportunity to determine their own goals and to evaluate progress toward these goals; and (4) when there are emergent freedoms and a sense of interdependence. It is the responsibility of the administrator to help create conditions in which this growth occurs.¹⁸

The administrator who wants to do a good job will be very busy keeping abreast of the happenings around his school. It is vital to the efficient administration of the school to know what is going on in the school. In addition the principal should be aware of the people and forces in the community

¹⁶Singer, loc. cit.

¹⁷Knezevich, loc. cit.

¹⁸Jack R. Gibb, "Expanding Role of the Administrator," The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 51:319, May, 1967, 52.

that may affect the goals of the school.

The secondary school principal, then, needs to be a student of his attendance area. The extent to which he understands and is understood by his community plays a major role in determining his effectiveness. The principal cannot be content to be an "office manager" or even to devote the great bulk of his time to staff personnel and curriculum development problems. It is inherent in his leadership position that he take advantage of existing opportunities and create new opportunities to know his community in much more than a superficial manner.¹⁹

The principal spends a lot of time in the performance of his duties. It is important that the principal treat everyone in a manner that reflects the environment of the school, a climate where all feel good about themselves.

When performing his duties, the principal should:

Show respect for each individual in his face-to-face relations. Be courteous at all times, even when the individual with whom he is speaking has shown in the past that he does not merit such consideration. Reveal in whatever he does or says that he is a person of integrity. Understand the individual with whom he is conferring, know something about his background and his abilities and about his needs and emotional adjustment. Practice an open-door policy and be available for individual conferences. Be warm, friendly, and considerate of the feelings and welfare of the other person. Never criticize anyone before others or discuss in any way before others matters which pertain to the personal. Always speak clearly.²⁰

Some administrators are more effective than others in determining the educational climate for the school. In the Tennessee Rating Guide some of the characteristics of the most effective school administrators were listed:

Characteristics of Most Effective School Administrators

1. Steadily warm and appealing in relationships with others.
2. Constantly seeks and considers the opinions of others.
3. Moves surely and judiciously in effecting policies.
4. Urges the use of processes consistent with best democratic practices.
5. Recognizes and analyzes problems.
6. Is dependable and predictable in word and action.
7. Tends to try out new ideas after careful study and follows through on basis of experimental evidence.

¹⁹Corbally, op. cit., p. 49.

²⁰Corbally, op. cit., p. 167.

8. Recognizes his mistakes and seeks to avoid repeating them.
9. Appears to meet crises with a contagious calmness; others feel at ease in his presence.
10. Places principle above his own personal advantages.
11. Chooses words which clearly convey thoughts; is able to express abstract ideas.
12. Is attentive in trying to grasp ideas expressed by others.
13. Facilitates a stimulating and well-ordered climate conducive to reaching group decisions.
14. Involves general public, staff members in major policy formulation.
15. Continually strives for careful group problem analysis; helps group recognize points of agreement.
16. Consistently seeks and employs new data.
17. Discusses intelligently major social, political and economic issues.
18. Is aware of and actively concerned with desires and interests of community groups, agencies and organizations.²¹

In the study it was pointed out that in order to be effective, the administrator should rate generally high in relation to the characteristics on this list in the opinion of the teachers.

The principal has as one of his major responsibilities the promotion of the growth of his staff and the students in the secondary school. In order to facilitate growth among faculty and students there are certain precepts that administrators should follow:

Golden Rules for Administrators

1. Listen to your staff's ideas.
2. Be accessible as an administrator to staff and students.
3. Recognize the individuality of teachers.
4. Plan for blocks of staff planning time in your master schedule.
5. Survey at regular intervals staff, community, and student opinion of the school program, and act on the result.
6. Make every effort to utilize differentiated staffing.
7. Stand firmly behind your staff once you give them the authority to make decisions.²²

Friendly relations in a school between the administrator, the staff and the students are very important in establishing a school climate that will

²¹Ralph E. Kimbrough, "The Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Educational Administrators," An Introduction to School Administration: Selected Readings, ed. M. Chester Nolte (New York: MacMillan Company, 1966, pp. 388-89.

²²Catherine Hopper and William Hansen, "A Changing School: Growing Toward Humaneness," The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 56:361, February, 1972 51-52

enable all concerned with the school to feel good about it. "Relations between administrators and teachers are especially important in determining the general atmosphere and the general morale that characterizes a given school."²³ A happy teacher is usually able to do a better job than when he is unhappy.

The principal must realize that a democratic administration has an important effect on his staff and students. People in a democracy feel that they are important and have a more positive attitude toward themselves and others. When the principal is in the process of selecting the type of administration that would be best for his school, he should keep this in mind.

The principal must establish and maintain the best educational climate that he possibly can.

Whatever happens in school must ultimately be measured by its effects on boys and girls. For this reason teacher growth, teacher morale, and teacher understanding and support for the educational program are of singular importance. The principal must create a climate in which teachers feel free to involve themselves in the educative process.²⁴

The democratic administration which involves everyone in the school is not easy to attain but it is worth the effort. The democratic type of administration is desirable because it enables all of those involved in it to feel good about themselves, their school and the tasks they are working on together.

²³Robert J. Havighurst and Bernice L. Neugarten, Society and Education, (3d. ed., Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1967), p. 201.

²⁴Singer, loc. cit.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Although a certain amount of trouble, planning, and preparation are necessary to attain a democratic administration this is the best of the three types. An administrator who takes the time and effort to cooperate with his teachers and pupils usually has these two groups on his side in anything he might wish to do. This type of cooperation is possible only when everyone in the school feels that he is important.

Everyone, regardless of his position, has something to contribute that will help to make the school a success. The principal demonstrates by his democratic leadership that all are important. The janitor who feels good about himself and his job will do a better job than his counterpart in some other system where the janitor performs only menial tasks without participation and recognition. The teacher who feels he is an integral part of the school will be much more conscientious about his job of teaching students. The student in a democratic climate realizes that the success or failure of his school depends upon what he is able to gain and give because he attended that institution.

The evidence indicates, the principal who practices the policy of laissez faire is guilty of a serious fault. The principal who gives all of his power to others is depriving the school of the leadership that it so desperately needs. The principal who has lost his power or has given it away is not fulfilling his duty as an administrator. He has created a situation where all suffer because the only leadership is provided by the staff and students. A laissez faire principal is little better than having no principal at all.

An authoritarian principal is better than a laissez faire principal because he does provide leadership for the school. He does not provide the opportunities for personal growth that a democratic administrator does. The centralization of power is evident in an authoritarian administration. All know who the boss is but the chance for all to feel good about their cooperative achievements is very slim indeed. The authority flows as from on high and those who must follow the rules are not as eager to follow the edicts of the office as they would be if they had played an important part in making the policies. Teachers and students work better when they are allowed to participate in the decision-making process that directly affects them.

In spite of the fact that a democratic administration may have some pitfalls that must be avoided and potential weaknesses in some areas, evidence indicates that the teachers, the students, and the community derive the most benefits from a democratic administrator. The educational climate is affected favorably by the type of administration that believes that each individual is important and treats the individual in a manner that makes him feel good about himself and his achievements.

The success of a school can only be measured by the success enjoyed by the students that attend it. Evidence indicates that success is easier to achieve and more meaningful in a democratic administration that is designed with that purpose in mind.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report was to identify the importance and impact of administrative behavior on the educational climate of the secondary school. The writer identified three classifications of administrative behavior; the authoritarian, the laissez faire, and the democratic. He then emphasized the theory that the democratic administrator is the most common and desirable of the three types.

Much of the success or failure of a school is dependent upon the educational climate of that school. The principal, as designated administrator of the school, is the most powerful determinant of the educational climate of the school.