

You Say You Saw What? Which Veil Did You Lift?

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The term "veil" was used to describe the topic of leadership in educational administration in an earlier published article in Education Leadership Review (2000), 1 (3), 1-7. Achilles and Mitchell have joined in the discussion about the propriety of the metaphor and offer some concurrences and some differences. What is proffered here is that Achilles and Mitchell have looked under a different veil and not the one described in that article. This is another look behind the reasons for the erasure of leadership in educational administration. It cuts to the heart of the response by Achilles and Mitchell, i.e., as long as leadership is subordinated to structure we will continue to prepare efficient bureaucrats and technological managers. Furthermore their insistence on grounding prospective school administrators in the extant knowledge base guarantees that there will be no radical changes in how schools have always performed in the larger society. If schools are currently good enough we need not consider any changes. This view is rejected.

Introduction

I am grateful for the response of Achilles and Mitchell to my earlier piece, "Looking Behind the Veil: Addressing the Enigma of Educational Leadership" in *Education Leadership Review* (Fall, 2000, 1-7). While their response is thoughtful and includes many resonant thoughts and themes in my own writing, I believe what they claim is a "simple, focused approach to education" is the same old stuff and assumptions which prohibit any advance in our conceptual thinking. Without solid conceptual advances there can be no improvement of our practices to substantially improve our schools.

I want to take issue with the following concepts and ideas which Achilles and Mitchell put forth in their article. Among them are:

1. that efficiency and effectiveness stem from different paradigms;
2. the idea of "leadership in general" is a detour which will not improve education or make schools better places;
3. the idea that "structures" are an important aspect of leadership;
4. the substantive knowledge base (or KB) of a field is what the leader exerts leadership skills to get done;
5. a "paradigm shift" must be driven by three forces;
6. certification standards must require a knowledge test;
7. educational administration must embrace the spirituality of leadership.

The Veil That Was Lifted

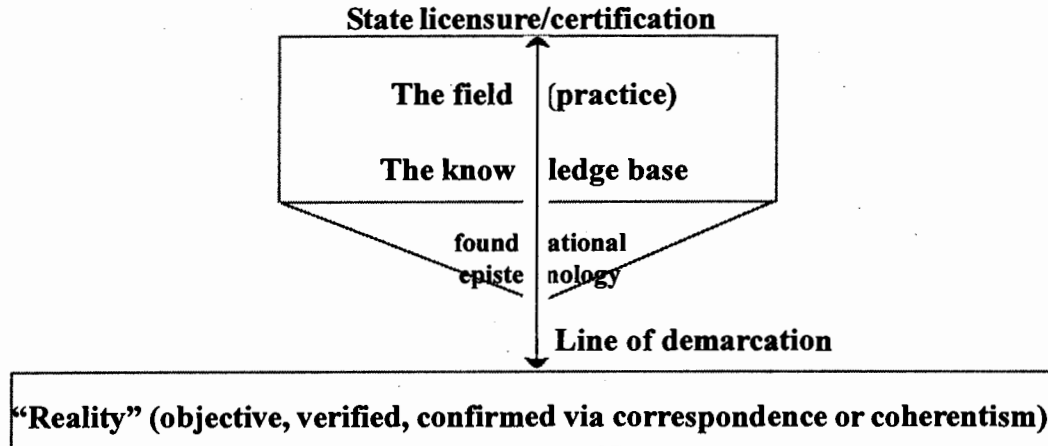
Here's what I see behind the veil which has hidden a discussion of leadership and made it into such a mystery. *Exhibit 1* is a representation of how "the field" of educational administration has been historically constructed. A "field" is a body of content which contains theories and practices which have been bound up into a domain loosely referred to as *the knowledge base* (or KB as Achilles and Mitchell label it). The KB came into existence when claims were advanced that knowledge derived from "research" defined that which was true about either concepts in use and the direct or derivative practices which flowed from them.

Exhibit 1 shows the knowledge base (KB) supporting the idea of a "field" which is always defined as a unifying and comprehensive repository of concepts and applications. A "field" is bounded, that is, some things "are" and some things "are not" within it. A "field" is an historical construction and it is assembled rather than discovered. Michel Foucault's (1988) re-construction of the psychiatric profession clearly enunciates how logical positivism created a "field" and led to the creation of the asylum (pp. 241-278). The creation of a "field" is often accompanied by the creation of veils hiding its own subjectivity (see Usher and Edwards, 1996, pp.33-55).

The *knowledge base* is a potpourri of prior research studies, derivative concepts from what was considered acceptable "scientific" literature and is itself embedded with

Exhibit 1

The Hegemonic Modernistic Interlocking/Interdependent and Assumed Foundational Nature of Epistemology and A Unitary Knowledge Base, a "Field" of Practice with Accompanying Licensure Apparatus



currents, themes, and ideas which are screened by *the line of demarcation*. Lakatos (1999) spent an enormous amount of time dealing with the problem of demarcation, that is, separating knowledge that was considered scientific from that which was non-scientific. The fundamental problem with the *knowledge base* is a problem of epistemology.

Positivism held that the truthfulness of knowledge and the theories which spawned them could be ascertained by observation. A *correspondence* between what we observed and what we postulated could be turned into a proof (Lakatos, 1999, p. 14). This model had to assume that the "truth" was "out there" and one only had to work at "discovering it." The conjecture which supported this "bridge" was one based on two assumptions. The first postulated that there was a "natural" break between theoretical and factual observations, and the second was that if a proposition could become observational it was true (Lakatos, 1999, p. 14).

The collapse of the "bridge" occurred because as Dan Griffiths (1988) noted, "...it is virtually impossible to construct an observation statement that does not include theoretical concepts" (p. 40). What was occurring was that theoretical statements were being verified by other theoretical statements and not "pure observations." In short, there was no independent reality that could be hooked into, compared to, or verified apart from the theoretical network in which observations were embedded. The epistemology which led to the cre-

ation of the so-called *knowledge base* has been effectively erased. Kuhn (1996) said it best when he observed:

There is, I think, no theory-independent way to reconstruct phrases like 'really there'; the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its "real" counterpart in nature now seems to me illusive in principle. (p. 206)

Leadership vs. Management

Now to my point about leadership. A discussion of leadership occurs within a theoretical framework. When I insisted that leadership be studied outside schools it is because once it is placed within schools *it is transformed into management via organizational theory*. In short our view of how schools work as organizations transforms the leaders in them into bureaucrats. My criticism that schools were "underled and overmanaged" represents the nexus of this problem. It was one of my primary criticisms of Joe Murphy's 1999 AERA/ UCEA paper/monograph in which he subordinated leadership to extant school improvement models which are the epitome of the status quo (English, 2000d, pp. 445-463). Organizational/bureaucratic theory decapitates leadership, a charge which is at least as old as T.B. Greenfield's original work over twenty years ago (see Greenfield and Ribbons,

1993, pp. 1-22). Schools cannot be changed as long as the leaders in them are placed in the conceptual prison of bureaucracy and must act in conformity to the characteristics of them. Murphy, Yff and Shipman (2000) did exactly that when they talked about the ISLLC standards and how they were formulated to privileging "those dimensions that focused on shaping and directing the core technology"(p.23). The notion of *core technology* can be traced back to the work in bureaucratic theory by James Thompson in 1967 (pp. 14-24) and to earlier conceptual work by Frederick Taylor (Kanigel 1997, p. 19). As long as we insist that leadership designed to change schools be examined through the dominant lens of organizational/bureaucratic theory, there will be no real changes in schools because what leaders do will be defined by institutional constraints that are part of their existence.

To imagine non-bureaucratic schools we must have leaders who can think outside of them. That is not likely to happen as long as we subordinate leadership to organizational structure. That is why I insisted that "The proper study of leadership begins outside the schools in non-organizational contexts" (English, 2000b, p. 6). It is also why Achilles and Mitchell cite Deming's notion that 85% of the barriers to improvement are not the fault of individuals but of the system. The reason is that the individuals have been subordinated to the system. Taking causality outside of individuals removes the responsibility for anything but fidelity to conformance. Chris Argyris (1972) commented:

It [theories of casualty which are located outside of individuals] tends to create man as a reactive being with few proactive tendencies. The individual becomes a subject, if not a prisoner, of the social structure.(p. 47)

A Paradigm Is Not a Paradigm Is Not a Paradigm

It's also why I believe that Achilles and Mitchell are mistaken when they separate leadership and management without dealing with organizational context. When they say "Efficiency is a management paradigm; effectiveness is a leadership paradigm" they fail to grasp the nature of a paradigm. *The paradigm at work is modernism itself. It's the paradigm that is described itself in Kuhn's (1996) classic work on paradigms, and not the vulgarized writings of a Stephen Covey (1990) who used the term 143 times in 340 pages of text to describe everything from current managerial fashions to internal mental and emotional states (English, 2000c).*

Chester Barnard's (1938) distinction between *effectiveness* and *efficiency* was defined within organizational con-

text and was centered in organizational sociology, that is, a science of organizations which has long been dominate in educational administration. There are no separate paradigms for effectiveness and efficiency, they are of the same paradigm. This quote from Barnard's text is illustrative:

The strategic factor in cooperation generally is leadership, which is the name for relatively high personal capacity for both technological attainments and moral complexity...(p. 288.)

Modernism is the paradigm which requires a center and silences and/or subordinates alternatives and counterpositions to the margins. Lyotard (1997) defined it as:

...any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse...making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative...(p. xxiii)

Shown in *Exhibit 1* modernism is that perspective which requires an epistemology that will separate truth from non-truth. Culbertson's (1988) periodization of the field of educational administration is instructive. Periodization is a cornerstone of modernity. The various periods cited by Culbertson are actually searches for the "true" center by which a field can be constructed. At one time it was believed that such a prospect was quite bright and that educational administration could take its place upon respectable social science disciplines. The "theory movement" was a search for a field based on science. The knowledge base produced by it becomes:

...an end in itself. It is its own justification. It is totalized because it is pre-given and totalizing because it seeks to embrace within its compass all that there is to know. It is dominant because it brooks no challenge to the authority of its claims and dominating because it positions learners as completely subject to it. (Usher and Edwards, 1996, p. 76)

It is modernity which requires a *field* as a *totalizing discourse*. It becomes a *master signifier* which is required for an identity in a specific place called the university.

In the discourse of the University scientific knowledge knows no bounds and no limitations. It is a self-perpetuating system of knowledge which is its own end and and justification. (Usher and Edwards, 1996, p. 76)

But that which remains in the so-called *knowledge base* of educational administration is largely the flotsam and jetsam of positivism which even the most diehard advocates have confessed to its internal inadequacies. The paradigm of modernism is a selected perspective that governs more of the behaviors of those working "in the field" than anything else. The function of a paradigm is first and foremost to discipline the members working within it to conform. Once again Kuhn (1996) comments:

No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena: Indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories and they are often intolerant of those invented by others...that enterprise [normal science] seems an attempt to force nature into justification the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. (p.24)

We will not obtain new models of schools from the knowledge base, nor will we learn anything more about leadership than we already know. Using the knowledge base as the lever to promote organizational changes is an oxymoron. The knowledge base was produced by a grand narrative which was intolerant and antagonistic to anything but its own rules. So the value of the knowledge base is limited to a perpetuation of current practices. And it actively subordinates people to structures and will continue to do so until we educate leaders who are not subordinated to them. In the words of Gandhi in a writing of 1921, "I have discovered that man is superior to the system he propounds" (Iyer, 1973, p.90).

The "Exemplar" of the Medical Profession's Knowledge Base

Achilles and Mitchel posit that the medical profession is an example of the need for a discrete knowledge base. Such a knowledge base may be a defining characteristic of a professional preparation program, but it is not a defining characteristic of progress within the profession. I will use their analogy of medical knowledge as an example.

In highlighting the "ten defining moments of modern medicine" beginning in 1941 with the identification of penicillin, Le Fanu (1999) indicates that most of the dramatic breakthroughs happened "out of theory," that is, out of the extant knowledge base of the medical profession at the time. As Le Fanu (1999) notes, "...this scientific approach to drug discovery could never have led to penicillin or cortisone" (p. 218). In fact, the knowledge base actively worked against making such

progress.

Take the case of peptic ulcers, which Le Fanu (1999) lists as the tenth on his list of a definitive moment in post-war medicine. It is now known that peptic ulcers are caused by the helicobacter, a crescent shaped bacterium that attacks the lining of the stomach. The presence of the helicobacter in the stomach was not believed to be possible, since the knowledge base of the times indicated that bacteria could not live in the stomach because of the acids produced which would "destroy" them.

Peptic ulcers were believed to be caused by either a defective personality or undue stress, both of which resulted in excess stomach acid. There were elaborate psychoanalytic theories advanced to explain peptic ulcers in the 1930s and 1940s based on the idea that those suffering from them had dominant mothers and passive fathers (Le Fanu, 1999, p. 151). It took a person who was not schooled in the knowledge base to puncture the pseudo theories in it believed to be true.

Dr. Barry Marshall, working in an Australian hospital was assigned to work with patients suffering from ulcers. Marshall had no experience with medical research. He simply observed that one ulcer patient who had been treated with an antibiotic completely recovered.

In commenting on Marshall's success Le Fanu (1999) observed, "It was precisely because he was young and inexperienced that he was able to think the 'unthinkable' that peptic ulcers might be an infectious disease. The knowledge base had worked against knowing the true cause of peptic ulcers. The implication was humbling:

There was now no escaping the scale of their earlier self-deception, for not only had they failed to see these bacteria even though they were present in virtually all their patients, but they had systematically misinterpreted the many clues pointing to the fact that peptic ulcers must be caused by an infectious organism. (p.155)

The current knowledge base in educational administration has not made schools any better, nor is it likely to. We are preparing people to become managers of institutions which cannot be improved until the leaders in them can see something different. The knowledge base does not perform that function. It's major purpose is to continue the theories and practices which are now known. Just as with the medical profession and its knowledge base, it may perpetuate the profession, but it does not assure progress. Why should the knowledge base of educational administration be any different than the medical profession? If not one significant medi-

cal "defining moment" was anticipated by the extant medical knowledge base of the day, what is different in our knowledge base that would? I submit there are none. Schools are as good as they are going to get with the knowledge base we have, period. Is anybody satisfied with that? And before my notion of leadership is panned, it ought to have a chance to work. After all, the model proffered by Achilles and Mitchell has had at least fifty years to do its thing and has yet to substantially improve schools.

About Spirituality in Leadership

Finally, I want to comment on the idea of the spirituality of leadership. Some kinds of management theory and practice have roots in religious practice. Pattison (1997) has examined new wave management theory and observed that, "Not since the earliest days of the Christian Church, if then, has the language of visions, missions, doom scenarios and the like had such widespread currency" (p. 68). The currency of management in such movements as TQM (total quality management) can be seen to be a religious cult regarding the enshrinement of the doctrine of perfectionism which have been present in Christianity from its beginnings (Pattison, 1997, p. 74).

While spirituality can be seen to be present in some leaders (I think here of Weber's charismatic leaders), considering teaching spirituality in the confines of an educational administration program is disturbing. So-called "faith based leadership" is new wave management's next hula hoop. It fits very well with "...language and metaphors drawn from religion, particularly millenarian Christianity" (Pattison, 1997, p. 68).

Management contains a theology. Its concepts are theory laden and value-embedded. While it may posture itself in the neutrality of science, it is very much entwined with its own theology. Browning (1991) captures the essence of this idea:

By using the phrase theory-laden, I mean to rule out in advance the widely held assumption that theory is distinct from practice. All our practices have theories behind and within them. (p.6)

Teaching the spirituality of leadership should proceed from a sound, theological perspective so that all sides of the argument are presented. I doubt if very many educational administration professors now feel comfortable dealing with a very deep theological perspective, even though they may have been trafficking in theology all along with much of new wave management theories advanced by Covey and Tom Peters.

Summary

To summarize the main points. What is to be seen when the veil is lifted? Again, I refer to Exhibit 1 as a referential frame:

1. Leadership should first be examined outside of any structure before it is subsumed in it. How structure defines, shapes, and conditions leadership should be carefully examined.
2. Organizational theory is of marginal value in the preparation of educational leaders, though it may be more important if a person is going to be a manager and a defender of the organizational status quo.
3. The knowledge base (KB) of educational administration has more epistemological holes in it than a wedge of Swiss cheese. The actual truth content of the knowledge base is dubious at best. The KB is chiefly useful to see where we have been and not very useful in developing the future where schools will be substantively re-defined. Using the knowledge base to license practitioners reifies current practice and places conceptual and practical limits on the type and content of possible change. In this respect the ISLLC standards establish a ceiling on the nature of schooling.
4. The only true "paradigm shift" in educational administration is postmodernism (English, 1998) All previous "paradigms" fit into the schemata and assumptions of modernism and are compatible with historic methods of verification within it, from correspondence to coherency theory. None of the latter have any thing to do with what is true (Lakatos (1999) calls coherence theory simplicism (pp. 21, 46, 173-7).

The promise of postmodernism is that it de-reifies the past and places it in competition with alternative views of the future. To do this requires ending the mythological supremacy of the scientific method as it has been inherited from logical positivism, which like some viruses has simply transformed itself again and again in our discourse. The Achilles and Mitchell perspective does not even deal with the problem. *I suspect the veil they lifted was not mine.*

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