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**Variations in Value Orientations in the Implementation of Multi-Grades: Implications for Moral Leadership**

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The process of educational change often requires individuals to confront philosophical beliefs and values (Fullan, 1991). Consequently, successful educational change involves moral leadership whereby the "leader and led develop a set of shared values and commitments that bond them together in a common cause" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 23). Administrators who provide guidance, encouragement and nurturing during the implementation process (Fullan, 1985; Scott and Jaffe,1988; Leithwood, Fullan, and Heald-Taylor, 1987) are more likely to create an environment which enhances school improvement. Further to the administrator's critical role, the problem in education is in knowing what to change and how to change it (Anderson, 1993; Fullan, 1982; Mills, 1992).

In an effort to understand the change process, particularly the implementation of change grounded in administrative necessity rather than desirability, a recent study of the implementation of multi-grades in a traditionally single-graded school was undertaken. The multi-grade change provided a rich source of information because of the conflicting values among participants who were involved. Teachers, parents and administrators often view adoption of multi-grades as a regressive step in education.

Consider this depiction of the one-room schoolhouse:

How chilly the schoolroom was! The windowpanes were frosted over and the ink wells were frozen and often broken. Our work was done mostly on slates, including our homework...The seats in the classroom were something like church pews, with several students in one desk,...one teacher attended to the needs of all pupils, beginners to Grade 11. (Hackett, 1992, p.45)

Nostalgic charm notwithstanding, it is little wonder that the educational community experiences frustration, discontent, and value conflict when faced with the challenge of implementing multi-grades in today's schools (Doody, 1990; Mulcahy, 1993; Ziegler, 1992).

Teachers' conflicts are rooted in the pedagogical task of implementing curriculum designed for single-graded programs within a multi-graded setting. The potential ill-effect that this complex and problematic approach to teaching and learning (Mulcahy, 1993a) has on student achievement is a cause for concern; in other words, teachers worry that the quality of education will be compromised (Ziegler, 1992). Parents' misconceptions about the program (Wild, 1986) stem from their association of multi-grades with the early one-room schoolhouse.

While they come with "genuine concerns", they often have "a very narrow paradigm of what school should look like" (Kasten and Clarke, 1993, p.46). Parents do not value this change as progressive. The implication for administrators is that, apart from their own philosophical concerns regarding multi-grade implementation, they also bear the responsibility of dealing with teacher and parent concerns (Doody, 1990).  
  
Specifically, this research addresses the following questions:

1. What types of values do administrators, teachers, and parents demonstrate in the process of implementing multi-grades?

2. Are there variations in value orientations among, administrators, teachers, and parents toward the multi-grade change?

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Successful implementation of change is a challenge for many reasons, not the least of which is the natural tendency to resist jettisoning familiar practices. Unless the individuals involved in the change understand it and believe in it, success may be both parsimonious and tenuous. "Solutions must come through the development of shared meaning. The interface between individual and collective meaning and action in everyday situations is where change stands or falls" (Fullan, 1991, p.5). Change then, is dependent upon organizational members' shared meaning for the change. Hodgkinson (1991) states:

Values are synonymous with meaning in the sense that we live within an invisible world of meaning in which the objective referents or contents of experience are distinct from whatever meaning or value we might ascribe to them. (p.101)

Consequently, if values are synonymous with meaning, and solutions must come through shared meaning, then successful implementation of change at an individual level depends upon whether or not the change is valued; ideally, then, at an organizational level the change would be collectively valued.

Concomitant with this knowledge for successful change is an understanding of the role of values and the potential impact they have on the implementation process. Rokeach (1979) suggests:

We employ values as standards, moreover, to decide what is worth and not worth arguing about, worth or not worth persuading and influencing others to believe in and do. And finally, we employ values as standards to guide processes of conscious and unconscious justification and rationalization of action, thought, and judgement. (p.48)

The importance and role of values in bringing about educational change clearly suggests that the administrator's role in the change process demands both a knowledge of the values of the participants in the change, and an understanding of how to bring about a state of shared values for the particular change.

Undoubtedly, not all educational change is agreed upon or desired at the initiation stage. Oftentimes, educational leaders feel compelled to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, teacher allocation, resources and other matters based upon administrative necessity rather than shared philosophical beliefs and values for the innovation. This has implications for administrators embarking upon change.

Whereas the significance of values in educational change may be recognized, the nature of the administrators' role in understanding how to determine what the values of the participants are, or how to arrive at a meaningful and shared value orientation for the change, is less clear. In other words, what is the role of an administrator for understanding variations in value orientations and what are the implications for successfully implementing change?

Recent attention to the topic of values has given rise to the use of value models (Hodgkinson, 1991; Beck, 1993; Ashbaugh and Kasten, 1984) for conceptualizing the nature of personal values, for the investigation of value preferences, and for the categorical organization of these values (Begley and Leithwood, 1990; Campbell-Evans, 1991; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1991). The focus of these studies are value-conflicts, decision making, and problem solving, all of which are elements of change. The problem of change, however, is exacerbated by this complexity:

Seeing the patterns of change can be difficult; stake-holders in a system tend to see change primarily from their own perspective. Often teachers may not understand what is seen by administrators and parents, nor do administrators or parents see change from a teacher's perspective, or from each other's. (Anderson, 1993, p.14)

Meaningful change is more likely fostered when an educational vision is shared and valued by parents, teachers and administrators. Values play a significant but obscure role in implementing change. In an effort to better understand the administrator's role in the implementation of change, and to gain insight into the value orientations of various stakeholders involved in change, Ashbaugh and Kasten's (1984) typology of operant values was used to conceptualize the nature of values used by administrators, teachers and parents. The typology is, according to Ashbaugh and Kasten, "grounded in principals' descriptions of the conscious values utilized while making difficult decisions, but Hodgkinson's model of value concepts (1978) substantially influenced the authors"(1984, p.202).

Ashbaugh and Kasten's framework is comprised of three major categories which are representative of "PERSONALISTIC", "ORGANIZATIONAL" and "TRANSCENDENT" values. A summarized and comparative description of each follows:  
  
1. **PERSONALISTIC** values are highly idiographic and are generalizations drawn from personal experience; however, they may be "shaped in part in organizational contexts" (p.202). Included in this category are three subcategories:

\*Personal Style such as,"I use common sense."

\*Human Relations such as, "I like to be honest with kids."

\*Nature of Schooling such as, "School is not all fun."

The focus is on values grounded in personal experience.

2. **ORGANIZATIONAL** values are those that appear to be grounded in "organizational norms, systems concerns, and professional ethos" (p.199). Included in this category are also three subcategories:

\*Professional Norms include those that reflect the organizational goals such as, "Students must learn to communicate."

\*Professional Group Behaviour values are "...organizational convictions reflecting professional orientation to the treatment of individuals in the group"(p.199).

\*Organizational Operations includes values about what makes the organization work.

Professional Norms and Professional Group Behaviour values are nomothetic in that they are biased "... toward satisfying the purposes and expectations of the organization"(p.201), while Organizational Operations values are idiographic in that they reflect individual orientation toward how the organization should be run.

ORGANIZATIONAL values, then, exist on a continuum from the nomothetic to the idiographic. The main distinction between ORGANIZATIONAL values and PERSONALISTIC ones is that, though both may be idiographically biased, the former are prescriptive or normative in nature while the latter are not.

3. **TRANSCENDENT** Values comprise the third major category and reflect convictions that are grounded in more "broadly based codes of behaviour"(p.109). They are universal values that may be rooted in philosophy or religion.

Ashbaugh and Kasten acknowledge that the categories and subcategories are not mutually exclusive.

**METHOD**

A qualitative case study paradigm was used for the purpose of understanding the nature and influence of values in the implementation of multi-grades in a traditionally single-graded school in rural Newfoundland. Charlotte River All-Grade is one of approximately twenty schools within the geographically large Bluewater District. Observations of teachers and administrators were made during the process of initiation and implementation over several months. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the following participants: a) three teachers specifically involved in the change; b)two parents of students in the school's multi-grade classes; and c) two district administrators, a superintendent and an assistant superintendent.

A limitation of this study is acknowledged in that the number of participants within each of the administrator, teacher, and parent groups is low. However, it is not the purpose to generalize the findings of this study to all change processes; rather, the intent is to shed light on the necessity for understanding the significance of values in educational leadership and school improvement.

Initially, interview data were examined for major value-laden themes. Then, in order to determine if there were variations in value orientations among parents, teachers and administrators in the implementation of the multi-grade change, statements were isolated and categorized according to Ashbaugh and Kasten's typology of operant values.

The inclusive nature of the subcategories presented some coding difficulties. For example, the difference between these two value statements is not immediately clear:

1. I have a little of the old mindset about multi-grades.

2. I think there's a way to merge and blend two grades.

Both, upon first examination appear to fit into the PERSONALISTIC category. However, returning to the model it becomes evident that, whereas the first reflects a more personal bias towards the nature of school, the second, although also idiographic, reflects a prescriptive nature about how a school should function, and therefore is subcategorized as Organizational Operations under the ORGANIZATIONAL category.

Furthermore, there were difficulties coding value statements within categories. For example:

1. It puts a lot of pressure on the teacher because of extra work.

2. The teacher must be well aware of the program.

These two statements are similar in that they both reflect convictions about the teacher. The difference, however, is that the first demonstrates a concern for teachers' well-being, and therefore was coded as a Professional Group Behaviour subcategory in the ORGANIZATIONAL category. The latter is more concerned with the operation of the school and consequently was coded as a Professional Norm subcategory in ORGANIZATIONAL category.

TRANSCENDENT values such as, "It's not fair to ask the teacher to do all that" could have been coded in Professional Group Behaviour subcategory of ORGANIZATIONAL values. However, the overriding concern for fairness seemed to have been based on principle rather than concern for the cultural ethos of the school, therefore it was coded as a TRANSCENDENT value.

It is acknowledged that the values framework was used solely as an interpretive lens for understanding the nature of variations in value orientations. Furthermore, in that the data were filtered through the researcher's personal lens, the subjective nature of this research is also acknowledged.

Consequently, neither generalizations, cause and effect, nor explanations are sought. Nevertheless, this research helps focus attention on the significance of values in the implementation of school change, and the need for further clarification of the nature and influence of values in educational leadership.

**FINDINGS**

The findings in this study underscore the importance of shared meaning and value for bringing about successful change. Two value-significant themes emerged through the data analysis:

1. Level of Commitment/Involvement: As the implementation of multi-grades progressed the level of involvement and commitment increased. The adoption of this change was initiated because of the decline in student population; however, through the process of planning, restructuring, reorganizing, co-operating and critical reflection, parents, teachers and administrators became increasingly committed to the philosophical value of this change.

One participant suggested that early in the change "there was a divergence of opinions about the multi-grading. Some teachers were quite in favour of it, some were perhaps neutral, willing to learn and a couple were very concerned about the system and if it could be a success." Later, through the process of implementation, teachers had developed "enthusiasm and a willingness to adapt and innovate as circumstances warranted it."

The variations in level of commitment at the onset of the implementation could be summarized like this: Opposed-Apathetic-Passively Supportive-Actively Supportive-Advocate.

2. Changes in Values: This theme is related to the first in that the level of involvement and commitment seemed to have increased as the root of the involvement changed from a basis of need to a philosophical base. For example, one parent went from feeling that "...children in multi-grading classes will definitely not benefit..." to "...it seems like my child has an individual program which challenges and suits her ability." This kind of change in values was also reflected in others, even administrators, as they began to see the multi-grade class restructuring as worthwhile. The significance of values in bringing about educational change became apparent in the findings of this study; however, more questions regarding the nature of value orientations and the role of the administrator emerged. What do these findings mean for educational leadership? Begley and Leithwood (1990) state:

The existence of multiple responses to a single innovation, sometimes within a single organization unit, suggests that we will not really understand how to make schools better until we better appreciate why people in those schools think the way they do about schools and what goes on in them." (p. 337)

And Jwaideh (1984) posits that, "principals with innovative staffs are more in tune with their teacher's feelings and values about education... " (p.10). It is reasonable to hypothesize, then, that leaders who have an awareness of the role of values in implementing change and an understanding of the potential variations in value orientations among participants in the innovation process will come to a better appreciation of why people "think the way they do".

It is this premise which gave impetus to the next level of analysis. The focus was to identify and categorize the types of values for the purpose of describing the variations in value orientations of parents, teachers, and administrators in the implementation of this particular change. The highest number of value references (54) was recorded for the administrators, while the lowest number (21) was recorded for the parents. Teachers came in between with 35 coded value statements.

**Variations Among Categories**

The majority of value statements for each group was recorded as ORGANIZATIONAL values; 83 percent of the value statements made by administrators, 63 percent of value statements made by teachers, and 58 percent of value statements made by parents were coded for this category. Compared with the 45 percent of ORGANIZATIONAL values coded for administrators in Ashbaugh and Kasten's (1984) study of principal's decision making, 83 percent seems high. However, considering the organizational metavalue of maintenance (Scott and Hart, 1984; Hodgkinson, 1991), and the administrator's responsibility to and for the survival of the organization, this finding may make sense. Administrators are often guided in making decisions based on what is good for the organization. For example, one administrator expressed his concern regarding the implementation of multi-grades in this way:

That [multi-grade considerations] has to translate into tangible things as well, not just attitude but practical things in terms of budget allocation, teacher allocation, in-service implementation, etc.

By contrast, one parent's concern was more related to student outcome: "I really wonder if a teacher could handle two or three different grades in one class and have success with all those students."  
Multi-grade issues for teachers, too, were less rooted in concern for the organization as they were in questions about student achievement and pedagogical philosophy.

I think a teacher should be responsible for meeting children's individual needs. I think you have to be accountable to all children whether it is a multi-grade or a single-grade class.

However, not all of the administrators' values were grounded in concern for the maintenance of the organization, as will be addressed in the next section.

With 27 percent, the teacher group represented the highest percentage of TRANSCENDENT value statements made. Twenty-two percent of the parents' statements and 9 percent of administrators' statements were recorded for this category. Teachers more frequently referred to the "challenge and joy" of teaching and their responsibility to students. For example, when discussing the wide variety of abilities in the multi-grade class, one teacher stated, "I think that is what makes the job interesting and challenging." Parents more frequently valued what was best for their children over all other matters. As one parent explained, "My child should be working at the optimum level, and that's what all parents wants for their child."

On average, parents made more statements reflecting PERSONALISTIC values than did administrators or teachers. Twenty percent of parents' values were coded as PERSONALISTIC while administrators' and teachers' personalistic values represented 8 percent and 10 percent of their total value statements respectively. The statements that parents made reflect values grounded in traditional beliefs. For example, "A person who has been in the profession for twenty-two or twenty-three years is probably washed out." A natural assumption might be that much of what parents believe about how schools should function would be rooted in personal experience. In this respect, 20 percent is relatively low.

**Variations within Categories**

**ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES**

There was little variation among administrators, teachers, and parents in the percentage of value statements that were grounded in Organizational Operations; only a 6 percent difference was recorded, with teachers and administrators having 44 percent of their statements coded in this subcategory, and parents having 38 percent coded as such. Similarly, only a 1 percent difference was recorded for the Professional Norm category. On the other hand, however, there was a greater variation in orientation recorded as Professional Group Behaviour. Twenty-four percent of administrators' value statements were coded in this subcategory; only 3 percent of teachers' and 5 percent of parents' statements were reflected here. Administrators made frequent statements that reflected a value for the members of the organization; statements like:

\*Sometimes it's the newer, younger teacher who gets the heavier workload.

\*We must work closely with teachers and support them.

\*Teachers need to be given recognition.

Therefore, even though administrators' statements reflected more ORGANIZATIONAL values demonstrating a responsibility for the operation of the school, they also made more statements which reflected concern for the teachers. Given the experience that the two administrators had in implementing multi-grades, this finding may be indicative of the administrators' recognition of the significance of the teacher's role in successfully implementing multi-grades.

**PERSONALISTIC VALUES**

The greatest variations in this category is found in the values reflecting the nature of schooling. All of the parents' personalistic statements--20 percent--were coded in this subcategory. No statements by any group reflected the human relations category.

**Variations in Form of Values**

Whereas, most statements of administrators, teachers, and parents were grounded in ORGANIZATIONAL values, there were similarities and differences in the form this value category took. Administrators', teachers', and parents' specific expressions of values varied somewhat in form. For example, administrators' statements coded as Organizational Operations reflected concerns primarily about curriculum, budgeting, teacher allocation, timetabling, parental involvement, inservicing, and staff development, as reflected in these remarks:

\*We should look for teachers who are able to manipulate programs.

\*You must look at the teachers and the qualifications.

\*We have to do some detailed planning.

\*We need additional supports.

\*The lower enrolment puts less demands upon a teacher.

\*We have to have adequate resources and appropriate support.

By contrast, the same type of values for teachers did not include concerns about budgeting, teacher allocation, and other administrative concerns. They did, however, make value statements regarding curriculum and the need for "knowledge of the objectives; regarding the parents' role and the necessity for "communication with and education of parents; and regarding time management. Similarly, parents demonstrated convictions about the need for parental involvement in the operation of the school. They seemed to value the need for "teachers with good attitudes" for implementing change. Reflected in their statements, also, was their view of the significance of student/teacher ratio for achieving organizational goals.

These results suggest that though values may be grounded in the same category or subcategory, the form that the value takes may differ among organizational members. Administrators, then, must be aware of the implications of what variations in form and type would mean in the implementation of change.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Generalizations about the findings are not possible; however, it can be stated that this study data sheds some light on the two research questions posed:

Question 1: What types of values do principals, teachers, and administrators demonstrate when evaluating the need for a specific change?

Value statements in each group were coded as either PERSONALISTIC, ORGANIZATIONAL or TRANSCENDENT. Ashbaugh and Kasten's typology proved to be a useful framework in that the data analysed provided information about the value category, subcategory, and the form that each value took, as was discussed earlier. This provides some insight into the possibilities and need for further research into the types of values and that influence parents, teachers, and administrators in the implementation of educational change.

Question 2: Are there variations in value orientations among principals, teachers, and administrators toward specific change?

In this small sample variations in orientations were noted. The higher percentage of parents' value statements coded as PERSONALISTIC and TRANSCENDENT compared to the relatively low percentage of administrators' values coded as such begs further study. If many of parents’ values are grounded in personal experience or transcendent beliefs, then administrators may not get far in garnering support for change on the basis of what they perceive as good for the organization. The same assumption can be made about teachers. If change is a process of "...coming to grips with new personal meaning..." (Fullan and Miles, 1992, p. 749) then administrators must be aware of the variations in value orientations among parents, teachers, students, and themselves for successful implementation.

The task of analysing why members of an organization behave the way they do involves being able to differentiate between espoused beliefs and true underlying values. "To really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and overt behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel" (Schein, 1984, p.2) What this implies for administrators involved in implementing change is that they must have knowledge of the deep-rooted values of various groups participating in change.

Whereas the implication is clear, the method for accumulating group value-orientation knowledge is not. How do administrators come to a better understanding of the variations in value orientations of the stakeholders? How is this knowledge used to facilitate change? What do administrators do to bring about shared meaning and value for a particular change? All of these questions and more need to be addressed if administrators are to implement a "guiding value system" (Fullan, 1985, p.402).

Parental involvement, a collaborative staff, and shared expectations for students have long been recognized as major factors distinctive of effective schools. Fostering this type of environment requires an acknowledgement of the significance of shared meaning and values. Administrators are actively aware when they listen and talk with teachers and parents to find out what they are doing and what they value (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, p.86). With this comes a knowledge and comprehension of the variations of values that are being used "to guide processes of conscious and unconscious"(Rokeach, 1984) thought and action. A moral leader endeavours to cultivate a knowledge of the task, of the situation, of the followership and of himself or herself (Hodgkinson, 1991). This requires continuous critical reflection and value auditing:

If the blind are not to lead the blind, nor the sleeping to lead those who are even deeper asleep, then the leader must have vision, must become more conscious. (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 153)

In other words, educational leaders must have knowledge of the values of the followership and themselves. Research, then, should continue to generate knowledge and understanding regarding the powerful role of values in facilitating and implementing school change and innovation. After all, if leadership is a "moral art" and if the "central problem of administration is value conflict" (Hodgkinson, 1991), then leaders must become experts in the conscious practice of analyzing and resolving value conflicts. To do this they must develop a knowledge "...of human nature in all its rich diversity, complexity, and frequent simplicity" (Hodgkinson, p.112). Then, and only then, will the educational administrator have knowledge of self, colleagues, parents and students, and only then will he or she be able to use this knowledge in the successful implementation of change.

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