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Hans Vaihinger was a philosopher from the late 1800?s. Vaihinger?s most noteworthy work was a book entitled

The Philosophy of the As If
(Viahinger, 1925). In this work, Vaihinger examines how we come up with conclusions which are ?right? when the basis of our ideas are decidedly false or a fiction (Fuller, 1967). Viahinger describes these fictions as mental structures which allow us to develop artificial classifications (Vaihinger, 1925). These classifications are a substitute construct of reality, where analysis may be made ?As If? one were talking about a real thing. For example, concepts such as ?The Average Man,? infinity (Fuller 1967), or treating a corporation as a person under the law can all be regarded as fictions. We regard these concepts as if they are real, keeping in mind that they are not.

As Viahinger suggests, the purpose of these fictions facilitates the discovery of provisional properties of a system which at some future time are to make room for better and more natural systems (Viahinger, 1925). Viahinger refers to the use of the ?As If? as provisional, where the concepts are in constant change and thus merit later correction or replacement.

In the ideal school and community relations environment, a school board is elected that represents the diversity of the community. In turn, the board selects a superintendent who has views that are congruent with both the board and the community. When the values of the community change, ideally the board and the superintendent are sensitive to those changes and respond appropriately.

However, the reality is that, over time, values tend to differ. As Lutz & Mertz (1992) noted, when the congruence of values erodes between these three elements that shape educational policy, the effect is almost always political action resulting in new leadership. In the ideal world, this new leadership has a perspective that is aligned with

the community. However, reality indicates that this ideal of realignment is purely a fiction. In the time that it takes to remedy the disparity by the election of new school board officials, which in turn may or may not appoint a new superintendent, the community values may have changed again. The resulting gap between the three elements that shape educational policy may perpetuate this cycle indefinitely.

The question that communities are now asking is how can these three elements reduce the dissatisfaction that exists and promote a more stable, continuous, and harmonious relationship? Cultivating a responsive educational leader is often viewed as the solution to these problems.

When denoting the characteristics of an effective educational leader, it must be done ?As If? such a person exists. The effective principal exhibits a managerial style that is persuasive, proactive, and decisive. As a motivator, he encourages his staff and his students to visualize success and achieve their goals. The leader delegates and fosters empowerment of employees by assigning responsibility and giving the locus of control to others, when appropriate.

Communication is the art of effective interactive conveyance. It is a process that allows the source of the communication and the receiver of the communication to have an impact on each other (Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawson, 1994).

Models of communication illustrate how this process operates. Within the paradigm, there are several basic components; the speaker, the receiver, and the interactive feedback the receiver gives to the speaker (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 2001). Communication is therefore dynamic (Burgoon et al., 1994).

A primary factor that inhibits effective communication is noise. Noise enters the system of communication and distorts or interferes with the message. (DeVito, 1988). This interference can be physical, semantic, or internal and can be the source of much dissatisfaction between the elements that shape educational policy at the community level.

Physical noise is the audible noise between the speaker and the receiver. Physical noise is easy to identify because the source is generally recognizable. It could be a loud radio in the background or another person talking at the same time.

Semantical noise refers to a conflict between the speaker and the receiver in understanding the meaning of words. This noise is harder to identify because it requires

a meeting of the minds as to what the words mean. For the participants communicating, this process of understanding is not easy to articulate.

Internal noise is the psychological drama of the interactive communicators. This is perhaps the hardest noise to identify because it requires knowledge and understanding that may not be possible. One participant may be unable to understand the inside of the mind of the other participant. Others may be simply unable to connect with themselves.

Perception is the process of making sense out of the experience. It is the imputing of meaning to experience (Haney, 1967). Thus, the ability to have a meeting of the minds within the interaction is a major component of successful communication.

In short, educational leaders must communicate well within and between the many communities that make up the general community. Kowalski (2000) suggests that a carefully administered needs assessment may be helpful in determining exactly who are the members of the sub-communities.

The artful, effective communicator is mindful of the participants, their perceptions, and the factors that inhibit communication. Educational leaders are sensitive to the types of noise that obstruct meaningful conveyances. This art of skillful communication is a significant aspect of our practice to become understood (Goldstein, 1994). When we eliminate the internal or semantic static in the communication, we are best understood.

An analysis of communication reveals that meaning and understanding are personal. Krishnamurti (1964) suggests that self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom and therefore understanding. Knowing and understanding who you are results in the elimination of the internal noise that often impedes genuine communication. Beck (1989) describes this enlightened educational leader as the Buddha. Understanding and utilizing this power of perception is a product of self-discovery for the learned communicator.

Staying in the present moment is a challenge for the effective communicator. Noise enters and obstructs the flow of dialogue. Focusing on the present moment of the ?here and now? permits genuine communication. This is essential for the maintenance of the status quo, which in turn reduces the dissatisfaction and incongruence that develops between the community and its school leadership.

Ram Dass (1973) describes an incident that illustrates the meaningfulness of being in the present moment. His father is elderly

and in a state of depression, and he laments about how horrible his life is. The father tells this story while making jam with his son. Instead of reinforcing ideas about his father?s feelings, Ram Dass joins the conversation and turns the focus of the discussion to the process of making jam. He asks questions about the procedure and whether or not he is doing things appropriately. Eventually, his father lets go of his attachment to the harmful and noisy thoughts and realizes the significance and beauty of the present moment with his son. They make a connection.

Beck (1989) describes this process as the father becoming a lamp unto himself and attaining self-knowledge during the process. This is the paradigm of sincere, heartfelt communication. It is an ideal communication because the participants in the model are in the present moment, free from noise and distractions. Great communicators understand the power of being in the present moment and are not attached to beliefs that impede dialogue.

As one writer has said, the foundation to happiness is mindfulness (Hanh, 1992). The Dalai Lama (1998) states that we do what we do because we expect to achieve happiness. The learned communicator therefore is mindful of the goal of happiness within the particular communication. The maximization of happiness seems to be part of the general effort to reduce dissatisfaction and retain the status quo within the realm of effective school and community relations.

Huxley (1954) notes that to be mindful is to be aware. However, mindfulness goes beyond the simple recognition of what is happening. Goldstein (1994) suggests that being mindful helps uncover the characteristic nature of the experience itself. Watts (1979) concludes that mindfulness requires the communicators to recognize that they must give up their thinking, judgmental mind.

This practice helps reduce and eliminate noise that inhibits understanding between the speaker and the source. This is a difficult step to take for the effective communicator, because it requires one to invest fully in a theory of non-attachment to ideals, thoughts and beliefs in order to completely be immersed in the present moment.

This moment is hard to describe or recognize; however, a poem by Hanh (1988) beautifully describes this event:

Breathing in, I calm my body

Breathing out, I smile

Dwelling in the present moment

I know this is a wonderful moment

It is this type of self-recognition that is at the heart of effective, noiseless, and reflective communication.

Ram Dass (1995) asserts that attachment to ideals is the strongest block to realization. Krishnamurti (1964) describes non-attachment as a state when the mind is no longer comparing, judging, or evaluating, and is therefore capable of seeing what is from moment to moment. This requires clarity of thought and the elimination of all noise from the communication model.

A popular Zen koan illustrates how the effective leader can communicate the idea of freeing the self from the attachment of ideals, reducing noise, and yet stay in the present moment:

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era, received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor?s cup full and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. ?It is overfull. No more will go in!?

?Like this cup,? Nan-in said, ?you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?? (Reps, 1989, p. 5).

Listening is another important element in the communication process. Ram Dass (1988) describes the effective leader as a good listener. He is awake, yet his mind is quiet. The willingness of all of the participants in the policy shaping process is an essential consideration.

An educational leader?s ability to complete these seemingly idealistic tasks is based on one?s capacity for compassion. The Dalai Lama (1988) defines compassion as possessing a mental attitude that is nonviolent, nonharming, and nonagressive. It is a mental attitude based on the wishes of others to be free of their suffering and is associated with a sense of commitment, responsibility, and respect towards the other.

Genuine compassion is free from attachment. A strong connection exists between compassion and happiness. Human beings have the desire to be happy and to overcome suffering. A true, heartfelt communicator is cognizant of this desire and is genuinely compassionate within the interaction. This compassion helps alleviate suffering which may be a noise variable present in the communications model, and thus increases happiness.

Principals exhibit compassion by understanding the plight of individuals and considering the uniqueness of their circumstances. Excellent communication and listening skills are essential for understanding. Goldstein (1994) notes the present moment is best understood when listeners have the ability to wipe away the hindrances to effective listening. Kunich and Lester (1997) describe this process as the Wallenberg Effect. Leaders mature by listening to themselves, learning who they are and what they stand for. This practice fosters an atmosphere where the ability to perceive alternative perspectives flourishes, an essential element of guiding others.

The effective principal reduces noise present in the communication and is mindful of the variety of perspectives and skills people possess. Bolman and Deal (1993) suggest that reflection is a deliberate effort to look at the same situation from multiple perspectives. Ram Dass (1995) asserts that attachment to ideals is the strongest obstacle in the effort to reshape perspectives. Krishnamurti (1964) describes non-attachment as a state when the mind is no longer comparing, judging, or evaluating, and is therefore capable of seeing what is from moment to moment.

Goldstein (1994) suggests that being mindful helps uncover the characteristic nature of the experience itself. As Napier (1999) indicates, this process of self-reflection permits consideration of alternative perspectives essential for reshaping the existing paradigm, enabling educational leaders to understand the evolution and gravity of their moral commitment to education.

Goldstein (1994) defines judgments as views and opinions that are held strongly. Kornfield (1993) notes that we judge others and ourselves. Escape from these judgments is difficult, until we realize the harm caused by our emotional investment in them. Judgment artificially introduces noise into the communication dynamic, obscuring the ability for understanding, and causes harm. More importantly, engaging in judgment tends to promote the kind of dissatisfaction that generates disharmony within school system governance.

The effective leader knows and understands that effective communication is more than the individual parts of the model. Watts (1973) suggests that connecting, communicating, and understanding require that the speaker and source have a sense of rhythm and oneness. This state of oneness is free from noise. In this state of oneness, the model of effective communication is in its fullest dynamic. The speaker and the receiver are in unison, connecting with each other. Barlow (1975) describes this oneness as the music that plays the band.

Krishnamurti (1964) defines an intelligent mind as one that is

constantly learning, and never concluding. With an intelligent and learned educational leader, the quality of communication improves over time. However, Beck (1989) cautions that the practice of effective communication takes a lifetime. DeVito (1988) echoes this when he describes communication as a continual process, an ongoing activity. It is inevitable and irreversible.

Reflective community members maximize their effectiveness by promoting a nurturing environment that is sensitive to the various needs of learners. They understand that promoting and enabling learning are the primary goals of education. Cognizant of the role that a safe school environment has on maximizing learning opportunities, the principal, the community, and the elected board officials strive to make the school a safe place.

Principals encourage teachers to promote their student?s active participation in the classroom. Providing students with an opportunity to link their personal experience and interests to the curriculum is crucial to maximizing the learning potential. As Dewey (1938) suggests, the effective educational leader promotes high quality educational experiences that help students become autonomous and intelligent in guiding their own future educative experiences.

Members of the educational community understand that in order for teachers to excel in the classroom, they must be provided tools that are essential for growth. This requires more than extensive professional development; it requires community officials to help teachers to understand their strengths and limitations and to recognize the power of connecting with students.

The educational leader?s ability to possess a vision facilitates the opportunity for a reshaping and reframing of perspectives, crucial for the school?s success. However, it is not enough simply to have a vision and hope to effectuate change. According to Bolman & Deal (1993), the educational leader must continually ask what can be done to make the school a better place. This person must challenge the established paradigm and constantly reframe its vision while promoting quality to those served. As Kuhn (1996) notes, a new paradigm emerges when expectations continually challenge the forces that resist change.

Tichy and Devanna (1986) report that recognition of the need for revitalization within an organization is a crucial element in the transformation of an organization. Educational leaders must engage in meaningful self-reflection to reframe their perspectives. Likert (1961) notes that the process of self-reflection by the educational leader must be nurtured. This permits the leader to engage others in the kind

of quality thinking that promotes a paradigm shift, creating an atmosphere that Secretan (1997) describes as regenerative.

Kouzes and Posner (1987) report that the process of inspiration, enabling others, and encouraging the heart, helps reframe and transform educational organizations.

Effective information gathering via regular needs assessment permits the school and the surrounding community to gather information that helps maintain an ongoing and positive dynamic of educational growth.

The educational organization cannot be reformed without changing the way people view the formal and informal paradigms that govern the practice of education. If the organization as a whole is to be changed, then individual efforts to promote change will be insufficient. As Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggest, colleagues must be influenced to share the newly reframed vision so that the paradigm can shift for the entire organization.

Promotion of effective media relationships encourages the media to report the good news that often goes unreported about the success of school systems. This positive information flow generates a new vision for schools that permits a successful paradigm shift without promoting high levels of dissatisfaction among the school?s community.

In essence, the superintendent is the leader of the school district and must exude the characteristics that are embodied in the philosophy of effective educational leadership. The superintendent continually models professional behavior. Sensitive to a variety of children?s learning styles, he is aware of the role he occupies as each student?s mentor.

The effective educational leader understands that the school environment impacts the community, the staff, and the students. Timely implementation of appropriate policies helps the leaders meet their obligations to adequately prepare students for the future and enables students to meet the community?s needs. To actualize the organization?s vision, the educational leader employs effective decision making structures, staffing policies, and continually facilitates improvement of student learning.

Educational leaders understand that staff development is a process that rewards and recognizes professional growth, fosters a collegial atmosphere, and includes all staff.

The reflective educational leader has carefully considered and blended the styles of diversity, modeling appropriate professional behavior at all times. As an active promoter of professional development, the

leader eliminates distractions and focuses on meeting expectations for growth.

Principals also are aware that the value of parental involvement is paramount for vision actualization. Effective principals are skilled at implementing reform by utilizing creative and calculated risk taking, effective communication, and careful listening.

As Viahinger (1925) indicates, the process of verification of our assumptions is laborious. Thus, we must engage in a detailed and specific examination of whether our basic assumptions are false about what constitutes an effective educational leader.

Few can deny that effective leadership has an influential role in shaping the education of a child in a school setting. We expect that schools will teach our children the major lessons of the socialization process as well as provide them with an understanding of the basic skills necessary for success. Considering the poor quality of education in America, as evidenced in study after study, one might conclude that the educational leaders have failed our schools and communities.

At best, educational leaders selected and nurtured from the community can only mirror the community standards and values. The fiction has been that educational leaders are often viewed as capable of achieving educational wonders and social change without the necessary support mechanisms from the community. While there may be some examples of dramatic success stories in education in the kinds of communities that raises a reader?s eyebrow, the impact of the community is often overlooked.

It now appears that communities are failing to develop effective educational leaders. Any attempts to promote effective educational leadership standards must first promote those standards within the community that nurture the growth of the educational leaders.

One may argue that it is convenient to blame the community for lack of characteristics that meet the standard of an effective educational leader; that educational leaders somehow avoid the responsibility of proper self-growth. However, educational leaders are a product of a school system that still does not truly promote multicultural sensitivity, embrace visionary thinking, provide the time for self-reflection, or develop leadership. These notions are left for the external liberal thinking programs outside of the community.

Instead, the effective school leader has been ?fictionalized? to be that person who produces the appropriate quantitative gains on standardized testing, balances budgets, avoid lawsuits, and promotes

children to the next grade regardless of his or her ability to demonstrate educational competency. As Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) indicate, essentially this perspective equates competence with compliance.

Obtaining effective educational leadership will require a dismantling of the powerful fictions that shape the existing paradigm. This goal will be achieved when the provisional properties of what constitutes an effective educational leader resemble less of the current bureaucratic model, and more closely mirror the visionary, inspiring, self-reflective model that theorists advocate, resulting in less dissatisfaction within the community.

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