

Educational Leadership

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Managers maintain, oversee and follow policies set by others; leaders by example induce others to follow, they set goals and often are the catalysts for change. Managers are most comfortable when adhering to policy, leaders want to be unfettered by policies. Managers are more likely to look for pragmatic solutions to problems while leaders favor the ideal. Administrators value a smooth managerial operation and efficiency when leaders seek that which is most effective.

Leaders and managers represent two different functions, and in most instances, two equally distinct types of personalities. Boards and administrators like to believe they appoint leaders who are good managers. In my experience, this rarely happens as there are such fundamental conflicts between *leading* and *managing*. The very qualities that make good leaders are the same ones that often are disruptive to the managerial process.

A rather generic description of institutional organization from around or before the 1950s would be: A governing Board of Trustees or Regents; a President and Administrative staff to carry out academic, business, service and maintenance functions; a Provost to oversee academic affairs and faculty. At one time, there was a Dean of Faculty but this position

has been eliminated or combined with the Provost's office at most universities; Deans to supervise College operations and Department Heads; Department Heads to assume responsibility for individual programs of study and faculty members. Educational degrees were offered on three levels of undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate studies. Ivy League universities have always adhered most faithfully to academic tradition and organization. Many of the smaller private universities have modified as dictated by pressures to survive. Independent Schools of Art forewent their traditional organization as part of becoming accredited during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Within academic organization, there are several levels where at different times leadership has strongly impacted. There was a period in the history of American education when the President was expected to exhibit educational as well as institutional leadership. Presidents were chosen for exceptional academic credentials and they were to guide programs of study toward excellence. Leadership was broad, often visionary in nature, but Presidents also were directly involved with academic programs and faculty affairs. Trustees began to reduce their role in institutional operations and policies. As they did so, more responsibility for operation of the institution and the attendant authority were assigned to Presidents. Trustees, regents and legislators now place a higher value on managership, fund-raising and a good public image rather than leadership in academic affairs. As the role of the President changed, so have the qualifications and type of personality selected for the position.



An active relationship between President and faculty continued at independent schools of art for a number of years after it ceased to be a factor at academic institutions. The Department Heads served as the primary advisory group to the President in educational matters, but the President was available to individual faculty members on request.

During a period of thirty-six years and five institutions, I worked for only two presidents whom I respected, Wilhelmus Bryan at the Minneapolis School of Art and Andrew Morgan at the Kansas City Art Institute. It is interesting to note that both men were driven from their positions, one through action by the trustees and the other by fund-raising demands. The basis for my respect was that throughout most of their tenure as presidents, both individuals strove for educational quality, and their administrative decisions were always consistent with that goal. Near the end of their presidencies, each was under enormous pressure and their decisions or actions became less true to educational values.

A significant part of the traditional definition for Provost related to responsibility for academic affairs and as the representative of faculty members and interests. In many respects, that role has changed dramatically since 1960. The managerial duties of the Provost have greatly multiplied, responsibility for academic affairs has perhaps changed less, but most faculty members today do not see the Provost as representing them or their interests. The Provost is currently viewed

as an *administrator* and less as an academic leader. The more cynical faculty might see the Provost's position as mainly being the last step on the ladder to becoming a university president. It is not uncommon today for Provosts at numerous institutions to stay in position only two to five years.

I think there has always been a managerial role for Deans but today, in the colleges committed to research, administration is beginning to look for leadership rather than managerial qualities.

What appears to have changed the most is the relationship between the Dean, faculty within the college and upper administration. My observation is that today Deans are to be more identified with institutional than college interests. This occurs because of recent moves toward closer working relationships between Deans and Provost. Traditionally, Deans were the principal advisory group to the President. Now the Vice-Presidents are most associated with the President and Deans are the advisory body to the Provost.

In my opinion, Department Heads have always been the most important position as it pertains to educational quality. Traditionally, each program of study was represented by a Department Head. It is the Department Head who has direct contact with students and faculty within a given program. In the most ideal sense, Department Heads have powers of overview and projection. This is important because many faculty members have difficulty identifying with matters beyond their

own courses or discipline. Department Heads teach, have daily contact with students and faculty members; they recommend new appointments, speak for the program, supervise budgets, keep departmental records, work with faculty on planning, serve the needs of faculty and students and lead the faculty through example and respect. Department Heads are the ones who set educational goals and student performance standards. Administrators do not have this direct involvement in the classroom or studio and often lack the understanding or perspective to identify needs of, or appreciate accomplishment by, faculty and students. Department Heads form the chief advisory committee to the Dean.

The role of Department Heads has always been controversial within educational organization in terms of the role. It has seldom been made clear as to whether the Department Head is the last outpost of administration or if it is the first line of representation to administration for faculty and students within each program. I have always chosen the latter definition because I strongly believe that is the way it was intended and should be.

Educational organization and governance have evolved over a period of more than four hundred years. My understanding of academic organization is that it is unique when compared to corporate, military or government organization. Definition begins with dividing the organization into Governing Body, President and Administration, Faculty and Students. Each group has assigned responsibilities with special powers to affect the other groupings. Balance is achieved

through tension between the four bodies. Whenever balance is lost because one group has undue powers over the others, it is predictable that there will be problems.

Boards can make only one appointment, the President. Faculty are professionals who contract with the institution, they are not employees. Students are the beneficiaries of the organization. Education of youth is the mission and it is presumed to be the highest priority of the institution.

Throughout the history of American education there have been internal shifts in power. Up until the Civil War, most responsibility and authority resided with Trustees. They oversaw almost every aspect of the institutional operation and mission. Following the Civil War, trustees began to shed many of the responsibilities by transferring them to the President. Presidents remained all powerful until after the turn of the century. At that time, to cope with excessive or abusive Presidential powers, faculty freely borrowed the concept of academic governance from German universities. The founding of the American Association of University Professors marks the beginning of a new faculty role. Faculty became the dominant force in universities until the 1960s.

There were fluctuations of power at various times which were usually brought on by financial constraints. During the depression of the 1930s, faculty powers were somewhat diminished because of a resultant decrease in students and funding. This was the era of *Publish or Perish*.

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It was the loss of control over institutions and destruction of property by students that motivated trustees, regents and legislators to make drastic changes in traditional criteria for appointments. It was amply clear that existing administrations and personnel had been unable to control student actions. Governing bodies were determined that the situation would never occur again.

Administration was expanded and administrative roles were redefined. This was the period when the number of Vice-Presidents increased, administrative and educational functions were combined to a greater extent than previously and more professional managers were hired replacing individuals who previously had come up through academic ranks.

The student movement was closely followed by economic conditions resulting from inflation, high interest rates, major reduction in government spending on education and less students making application to universities. The financial crisis came at a time when educational institutions were over-extended in terms of budgets, space, personnel, programs and public activities. Most of the excesses could be directly tied to government largess such as financial aid, a variety of title programs and a wide range of grants. At the time, the era was referred to as *Retrenchment*. Most institutions believed conditions to be temporary and that government would eventually resume its former

levels of financial support. To deal with current problems, there was an incredible increase in administrative offices with emphasis on management. This marked the beginning of Administrators as the dominating force in educational organization shaping the operation and mission of educational institutions, and the managerial era continues.

The impact has been overwhelming. Certainly not at every university, but at enough to make one uncomfortable, managerial values are more important than educational ones, universities are viewed as businesses selling educational services, teachers behave and are treated as employees rather than professionals. Decision-making tends to be pragmatic and grounded in *bottom line* considerations, image is more important than substance, traditional academic roles and responsibilities have been diminished and students are customers who must be catered to in order to sell more services. This should remind us that change does not always represent progress.

Educational leadership is most broad at the President and Provost levels, and it impacts mainly on the Deans. Leadership by the Deans is also quite general and it is directed toward Department Heads. Department Heads exhibit leadership which affect faculty members and students of each program; and it is specific and unique within educational organization because of the involvement in the classroom or studio. It is not unusual for a Director or Dean to teach one class, but it is infrequent and not required. On the other hand, Department Heads are extensively involved with teaching, curriculum development, faculty members and students within the program.

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Regardless of its importance, no other position in the educational hierarchy has suffered more than that of the Department Head, and especially so within visual art education. The first inroads began to occur during the 1960s with the establishment of Divisions. Groupings of related programs such as Design, Fine Arts or Crafts were placed into Divisions under the supervision of a Division Head. Leadership for each discipline was eliminated in favor of one leader for several programs of study. It is not known if this practice was restricted to visual arts or whether it applied to other academic disciplines within the university.

More recently, *Schools* have become increasingly popular. Schools are under the direction and supervision of Department Heads or Directors and, infrequently, a Dean. At many universities, Schools of Art, Design, Architecture, Planning, Music, Drama and Performing Arts, etc. have replaced what formerly were Departments. I can only speculate that *Schools* has connotations of professional education and this is desirable from the standpoint of recruitment. However, most state university visual art programs are still grounded in Liberal Arts requirements and philosophies.

My first encounter with the *School* type of administrative organization was the School of Art at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor during 1976. Dean Bayliss invited me to come and give a lecture. Unknown to me, one of the teachers had died during the year and the

Dean was looking at me as a possible replacement. After the lecture, Dean Bayliss invited me to his office where he asked if I would consider taking the open position in Graphic Design? At one point I inquired as to how Graphic Design was organized and who was Department Head? He then explained that the School had no Department Heads and that he and the Assistant Dean oversaw all the various programs of study. My immediate and spontaneous reaction was to laugh. When he asked what was funny? I told him that I had never heard of anything so ridiculous in my life as a school without leadership for each program. I never received a formal letter offering me the teaching position.

During the day at the University of Michigan, I spoke with a number of individual faculty members from a variety of programs. They were as frustrated, cynical, angry, disgruntled and unhappy as any group of faculty that I have ever met. They were uncommitted to teaching and the institution. Their attitude was to concentrate on personal work, do the minimum while going for the maximum, it was only a job.

The problem is not what *roof* is used for instruction in visual arts, it is the organizational structure that is imposed with the new label. Schools of Design might have two to six disciplines under the singular leadership of a Director or Department Head. Schools of Art might have six to twelve disparate disciplines under singular leadership. This includes some if not all of Foundations, Painting, Printmaking, Drawing, Sculpture, Photography, Video, Ceramics, Fibers, Jewelry,

In education, doing is more important than hearing or telling about it.

Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Art History and Art Education. Within this array of programs there is an enormous diversity of objectives, content, methodology and requirements.

While it is credible for a Department, Division, Director or School Head to administer to a unit composed of several different programs in terms of records, budgets, services and maintenance, it is blatantly preposterous to think they can provide educational leadership. Each program has special leadership requirements that are going to vary from one program to the next, and one person cannot hope to fulfill all those needs.

At most institutions, this weakness soon became apparent and problems were dealt with in an ad hoc manner. The Director or Head selected a person from each of the disciplines, or logical grouping of disciplines, such as Fine Arts or Crafts. The individuals were given a designation of Coordinator, Program Head, Chair, Senior Professor or some other such title. The designation is usually with the consent, and at the invitation of, the Head. Occasionally, it is by election of faculty members within the program. Positions are not part of the university technical organization, there is no official description of job duties, conditions for appointment, no authority, no remuneration other than release time. It's an ill-conceived and thankless position. Denial of program leadership by administration should be unacceptable because of how it affects educational quality, faculty interaction, program planning, curriculum. etc.

One program I know of dealt with this situation through the faculty members within a program declaring themselves to be a Committee of the Whole which is an option under academic governance. As a committee, they elected a chairperson from their number to speak for them. The Division Head soon learned that life was simpler to simply appoint the Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole as Program Coordinator. I think this was good strategy by that faculty.

I can only speculate as to how and why this change in traditional academic organization took place. It is true that there were problems with the Department organizational concept. There were tendencies to create small fiefs, to compete and bicker among themselves, to be autocratic and sometimes abusive. In almost every case, problems occurred because administration did not take action to replace inept or abusive Department Heads, or because there was no prescribed review system where faculty could rid themselves of a Head who did not have the confidence of faculty members. However, with strong leadership and support of faculty, Departments can be incredibly effective as instructional units.

Justification for changing the organizational definition for Department Head might be as simple as administrative paternalism, that managers could do a better job. Eliminating Department Heads greatly reduced the number of people working with Deans, it eliminated rivalry between Departments. Generally, this means a smoother administrative

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operation, administrative expediency. Combining all departmental administrative duties into one office eliminated duplication, administrative efficiency. Reducing the number of *Heads* to one represents considerable financial savings both in terms of salaries and payroll. It also reduces the number of expensive searches for qualified Department Heads, a *bottom line* dollar and cents decision.

While it can only be speculated why the change in educational organization has occurred, the impact on education and faculty interests is crystal clear:

The motivation for change was not based on improving educational quality. Eliminating program leadership might be more efficient from a managerial standpoint, however it is devastating to faculty and educational programs.

It eliminates educational leadership at the most important level in terms of faculty and students. The Department Head as a program head and teacher has been transformed into a head of programs and administrator.

Without structured program leadership which is conducive to team effort, faculty members within a discipline are more likely to work separately. This affects the consistency and intensity of instruction with detrimental effects on the overall educational experience for students.

I have taught at two university Schools of Art and my experiences with faculty were about the same except one was more intense than the other in terms of faculty discontent. I found older faculty members to be divisive, disgruntled and focused on their personal work. They put in the required time at school and left as soon as possible. They were more concerned with their welfare than they were with students. I rarely heard any of them discussing students or education. There were always some young faculty that were still enthusiastic about teaching and students, but in time, this dissipated. This was totally different from my experiences at independent schools of art where faculty within strong Departments took pride in teaching, they were concerned with students and almost constantly looking for ways to improve the Department and educational experience.

I believe this disillusionment and cynicism is due in part to the School organizational structure which by its very nature promotes every teacher going in separate ways. This is detrimental to the development of team effort and common educational goals. What is perhaps most unfortunate is that once these changes are made, in time they become difficult if not impossible to undo. A good example of this is what has happened when universities relied on graduate assistants rather than creating additional faculty lines. Once the weaknesses of over-reliance on graduate assistants became apparent, it was impossible to establish new faculty lines to correct the situation.

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At first glance, my comments could easily be interpreted as anti-administration hysteria, but this is not the case. I have deep appreciation for the need of sound management as without it, educational institutions could not survive. I have collaborated with a number of administrators that I respected and enjoyed our working relationship. In these instances, I represented educational matters and they represented management and we worked toward a common goal. I think this represents the balance between educational and institutional concerns that is missing at so many levels and in so many situations.

My reactions are based on thirty-five years working in higher education and constantly having to deal with excessive layers of management, abusive or inept administrators, too many decisions based on better management rather than better education and decision-making that favored management values over educational ones. Situation ethics and pragmatic decisions that provided short-term gains but long time problems have been all too commonplace.

I see teachers treated and labeled as employees; I have seen millions of dollars put into art museums with nothing put into instruction in the visual arts; I see education as a societal obligation to ensure the future and not as a business. Furthermore, I deeply resent education being turned into a business. I think that universities try to sponsor too many services and activities within the community and region rather than focusing resources on education. I have watched the gradual dissembling of academic governance, organization, faculty prerogatives and vested interests.

I think that when an athletic coach is paid three to five times the salary of the President that someone's priorities are out of whack. I am disturbed that standards at educational institutions permit so many graduates to leave with dubious abilities to communicate orally or in writing.

I believe the imbalance of administration to education to be a serious problem. Educational quality at universities is not going to improve significantly until it is addressed in a meaningful way. Student performance standards need to be set higher and consistently enforced through faculty evaluation. It is essential that all educational matters be acted on in accordance with being the number one priority. The quality of education and graduates can be vastly improved, but to do so, governing bodies and legislators are going to have to look at education differently than they have in the recent past. They will have to *bite the bullet* and make some difficult de-establishing new priorities for expenditure, eliminating a number of services to the community and region, demanding specific performance standards for students, eliminating some educational conveniences such as repeating courses each semester, reexamining fee structure and identifying an organizational system which leads to better education rather than only better management.