Creating the Eduerati: Professorial Leadership to Create K-12 Educational System Change

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Summary

People say I don't take criticism very well, but I say what the hell do they know? Attributed to Groucho Marx

Introduction

Public education in the United States has been in a steady decline by almost any measure for the last 29 years -- since 1980. Losses in placement on international comparisons in science, math and problem solving test scores, equality of education opportunity, teacher supply graduation rates, and rampant leadership turnover, are but a few of the afflictions affecting public education in the United States. These trends, cycling downward, are searching for a bottom (Buchman, 2006; Goldin & Katz, 2008; Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008).

With the release of the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* by National Commission on Excellence in Education, policy makers, not necessarily educational practioners, have tried their hand at stabilizing our failing educational system. The results: wobbly and uncoordinated attempts at changes that cause inter education sector conflict as various professional and union education organizations oppose what is legislatively proposed. Consequently, Federal education funding is very likely to falter, as the response to the sub-prime financial and banking crises drains our tax revenues to pay for the growing governmental costs to prop up failing institutions. States, too, will likely experience a period of reduced tax income as property taxes plunge, business activity turns downward due to tightening credit availability, and unemployment continues to rise. Concurrently, fewer children are being born, wealth distribution discrepancies are widening and more parents are opting for private or non-public assigned school (Goldwin & Katz, 2008; Tice, Chapman, Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). Facing a frustrated public, policy makers reacted and opened options for parents though voucher plans and charters schools. Times have changed. With change comes a new concept for transforming and developing educational leaders – the Eduerati Leadership. This "paper/roundtable discussion" provides a review of extant literature and a new conceptual framework in support of our contention that "New Eduerati" leadership will initiate the transformation. Driven by an ego that does not need entitlement, Eduerati are futuristic, looking back at the present. Eduerati are the intellectually excited architects of the educational system who, like the Literati and Technerati, are deeply knowledgeable and committed to improving their field with new ways of thinking.

Review of Literature

The Federal government passed landmark accountability legislation *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). Private foundations added billions of dollars (Zellner, 2006) in new resources. Courts struggled to balance ongoing financial inequities, (CEPM, 2002). Major urban school districts including New York, Chicago, Cleveland and to some

degree Los Angeles have eliminated school boards in favor of municipal organization for student learning systems and/or have selected chief executives who lack any training in educational administration. Furthermore, we can expect a shortage of education leaders (Byrd, Drews & Johnson, 2006), as the boomer generation of principals and superintendents, born between 1946 and 1964, retire. The result: the general public continues to favor educational reform, with a preference for alternative school options, and is losing hope in No Child Left Behind (Rose & Gallup, 2007). In addition, there is a decline in employers and college level educators beliefs that public education is as good as it needs to be for students (Weiss, 1999) while the public as a whole continues to give low marks to schools on a national basis (Rose & Gallup, 2007).

Educational leaders face a choice: continue to rely on state and federal policy makers confused reform agenda or seize the leadership role to achieve systemic change to revitalize our public education system at the grass roots level. The decentralized education system built for a localized agrarian community now confronts a confluence of a highly networked global economy, instantaneous communication systems, vast wealth inequities, unstoppable human migrations, impending ecological disasters, ethnic/religious violence and questionable ethnic conclusions. Can human intelligence and adaptability be summoned from a drooping education system to produce the social and intellectual strength fit to address these escalating challenges? Clearly, effective educational leaders are the key to redesigning a learning system able to prepare the next generation to address, cope with and reverse the major negative trends affecting our world culture.

Education can develop young learners who will emerge to be wise adults, ready to vigorously confront these daunting global trends if the educational system changes at its core. Or, educational systems can continue to wither, victims of their own blind spots. Educators failure to envision and implement needed change has left us blinded to the examples of better systems in other nations. Educational leaders will either continue to be reactive by committing to low level cosmetic change or change the system from which they came--a courageous task by any standard.

Eduerati Leadership

Eduerati leaders will make the system anew- connecting the future with the present by integrating a variety of academic disciplines. The universities' graduate programs that train present and future educational administrators are the link to create radically new systems to instruct and inspire leaders of change. Much depends upon these professors who will re-educate these educational leaders. Most universities current instruction plods through courses often marginally related to the current/future of the students resulting in a credential that continues "what has been" rather than "what can be". Accountability improvements to failed system designs seemingly do not improve the system. Indeed, it locks in results into a grossly inadequate continuity with no chance of spotting the real risks. Bold action starts by redirecting graduate students of leadership to become aware and to prepare for what is unfolding in their future. Educators of

educational leaders must build new systems based upon the new needs of their graduates, not the past needs of a doomed educational system. They must understand and work within the rapidly evolving new realities created by scientific, economic, organizational and social advancements that are unprecedented. They must suspend habit, learn to listen deeply, expose their own blind spot and, in summary, quiet their minds enough to experience "presence", (Senge, Sharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2006). We pose the question: Can professors trained years ago in an older system overhaul the current system by creating a new leadership dynamic, the Eduerati?

Dynamics of Eduerati Leadership

Leadership for change at the school and district levels will truly begin with the inspired, thoughtful, and thorough redesign of the Educational Leadership Program at the university level led by Eduerati professors. The Eduerati professors will act as the inspirational conduits that empower future leaders to lead the systemic change. Systems that prepare Eduerati will support unique training. Systems will connect: philosophy to practice, career success to dynamic creativity, deviation to inspiration, and international studies to learning advancement. Advocacy and persuasion will become another method of the university program. Passive instruction will give way to dynamic team explorations of what can happen when we build our learning systems on a solid and inspired vision of what can be. Professors will enrich their leadership students armed with the knowledge of what the future is preparing for K-12 learners. They will shock their students with new ways to uncover who they are and who they can be in their career long contributions to learning.

Eduerati professors will build a stream of leaders committed to the radical improvement of learning for children and adults. Eduerati academic programs will be different in many additional ways. Their goal is not certification but inspiration, not to align but to explore, not to narrowly specialize but to embrace a variety of disciplines, not to conform but to create. The education of the Eduerati requires professors willing to act their way onto a new path they forge. These professors must be curious about the unknown, ready to discard the past system and passionate about possibilities. Eduerati leadership is not a task for the meek or intellectually stagnant. It will require openness and creative vigor. Leaders, by definition change minds (Gardner 2004). In a very real sense, universities are designed to open minds. Can professors and the universities they serve change their perceptions and practices by placing themselves in the future looking back at the present? (Sharmer, 2007)

Eduerati are the intellectually excited architects of the educational system. Driven by an ego that does not need entitlement, Eduerati are in the future looking back at the present. The Eduerati are akin both to the traditional cultural leaders, the Literati, and the Digerati, the inventors of the cyber systems. The Eduerati are deeply

knowledgeable about their field and committed to improving it. As young teachers who mastered instruction to become principals, Eduerati are clearly up to date in the present, able to create, organize and teach new systems in part because they know the existing system. Beyond knowledge, they are emotionally connected to the outcome of their work. They care. They care so much that they fight to create better opportunities for children. They make systems change. They are truth-facing, ethical, self-confident and passionate. Eduerati thrive doing the work they love. They act sometimes with detailed research sometimes with the institution that only experience can offer. Often they act their way into new ways of thinking. Some will be deviants, some may even be mystics, all are willing to create entirely new norms (Hendricks & Ludeman, 1996; Mathews & Wacker, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2006).

Eduerati are born of intention. The intention is the focus from within. A system of education for the Eduerati leads students to discover their motivation as leaders. Eduerati is a learning system of crystallizations of purpose (Sharmer, 2007), an awakening to what is inside, asking leaders to know first themselves at the innermost level. It is this deep thought that serves as a stairway inviting intellectual exploration and emotional growth. A self awakened leader intent upon engaging his or her "social brain"(Goleman, 2006), can inspire and lead others in the change process.

Eduerati are scientists. They perpetually study the emerging learning advances in biosciences, the teaching machines that nanotechnology is creating, the systems theories of social technology, and the interconnections of all the sciences on the advancement of human knowledge. Educational leaders must know scientific options that are remaking how and what we learn. For example, the study of the human genome offers new options for brain-centered learning research. Eduerati must imagine not only the outcomes of the use of transponders in the human brain to connect to the Internet, but the possibilities of gene modification and other neuroscience scientific developments that impact our future. The use of science to continuously refine the system of learning is a critical component of Eduerati education (Martin, 2007).

Eduerati are internationalists. Eduerati understand the planetary nature of knowledge and commerce. They respond to public urging to increase global studies. They comprehend the details of international systems, the interconnections that now exist and that will in the future. They build information systems to prepare students to work globally in communication, commerce and learning. They guide the American public as it moves more toward an understanding of the need for global education, (Rose & Gallup, 2007).

Eduerati are business entrepreneurs. Eduerati know the importance of marketing, media relations, accounting, team building, critical economic thinking, and strategic leadership. They learn the inter balancing of embracing risk and pacing organizational development. Eduerati connect business and education with learning development for their students.

Eduerati are students of change. Eduerati examine and understand the status quo and seek to improve it dramatically. They are socially adept, knowing how to build and sustain constructive relationships. Eduerati feel the urgency of preparing for the future,

not content to follow rutted paths or repeat past errors. They want change and they have the courage and skills to make it happen.

Conclusions

New learning designs are essential. Today's programs built on state or political credentialing from outside the learning system are not sustainable. Existing accountability of credentialing a failed system merely documents, albeit in an improved manner, the continued decay of our educational system. Disgruntled and disenchanted policy makers from outside the learning system have only added to the chaos. University professors with a vision can generate new leadership learning systems for the Eduerati. How will this be accomplished?

As with all change, it begins with dialogue. Professors must begin to talk about changing the curriculum to include succinct studies of the sciences that impact learning and the future: chemistry, biology, technology, and the environmental sciences. Professors must begin to think through the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of effective leadership and career success, studying the psychological center of decision-making, ethical structuring, intuitive and creative studies. Eduerati leadership is intended to integrate new leadership development programs that rise to the challenge and meet the needs of school districts to develop competent leaders and redefine educational leadership. Eduerati professors intent upon change will coalesce a variety of learning connected fields, creating a synchronism of leadership thought that will aid the leadership candidate in the Eduerati discipline to change the K-12 system. Professors will simultaneously span boundaries between academic disciplines thus helping assess new ways that a wide variety of research and might be more effectively integrated. In many ways, the Edueratic could be part of an educational reform effort to develop comprehensive and integrated plans, involving changes in strategy, leadership, management, relationships, and programming to prepare the next generation of leaders. Such discourse provides an opportunity for renewed discussion and expansion of the role of education leadership development programs as a potential center of interdisciplinary scholarship. This pertains to the necessary shift "in language, thought and mental models about leadership preparation" (Silverberg & Kottkamp, 2006, p. 2) operating at both the ground-level of the faculty who are charged with facilitating and teaching leadership, and at the program-level of design and implementation involving interdisciplinary partnerships between those who prepare leaders and those who employ them.

Finally, educational professors will need to reach out to other disciplines (i.e., business, social work, anthropology, sociology, etc) and International schools and link related cross disciplines that range from system comparisons to accounting, from social justice to wealth distribution from economics to language acquisition. The inclusion of diverse voices and interdisciplinary perspectives can contribute widely to the improvement of

educational leadership, policy and practice. There is much to connect as professors build stronger systems of leadership development. Will professors reach out to begin this process? The parents of our nations children and the leaders of our governments are asking for astonishing improvement in our educational system. They are unwilling to wait for educators to improve the system from within. Clearly, we need change. Our educators need to take charge. Learning creates leadership. Leadership creates change. It is time for the universities to act.

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