# Beyond Compliance: The Obligations of Leadership

## Richard Andrews

**A** remarkable thing happens every year in this country: a new crop of 18-year-old children is born. Observations of these newborn children in the hospital nursery reveal how much these newborns look remarkably alike. They look so much alike, it is difficult to tell which are White, Black, native American, Asian or Hispanic. We cannot tell which are rich or poor, which were born to single parent teenage mothers, and those born into two-parent households. Without close inspection, we cannot even tell the boys from the girls. Indeed, they look so much alike the hospital puts labels on them lest their parents could not tell which child was theirs. One has only to note the celebrated cases where the names of two children were switched and their parents could not tell that the child they took home from the hospital belonged to someone else.

Five to six years later these children enter our schooling system. We measure their level of cognition and find considerable differences in their performances based upon their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and/or family type. Those children who were born into families that provided them with rich cognitive environments perform at higher levels of cognition than do their counterparts who were born into families who have less resources, less stability, and/or have different cultural norms than those expected at school. The evidence is legend that after 13 years of treatment by our schooling system these initial differences are greater than they were when the children entered the schooling system. Contrary to our high ideals that our schooling system should give all children equal access to knowledge and equal access to the benefits of our society, our schooling system does nothing more than the British system of education — it gives birthright societal privilege. Our schooling system engrains patterns of cognition already present in these subpopulations of children.

For nearly three decades, we have tried to explain why children do not succeed in school by studying the characteristics of the children — or the methods that teachers use to teach — or structures beyond the school. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that we have looked in all the wrong places. Instead of the failure being inherent in the children — or the methods teachers use to teach — or structures (federal rules, state rules, district control, or not enough resources) beyond the school, the failure is the product of the expectations for schools and the structure of relationships among teachers and the principal within the school.

The expectations for schools and the structure of relationships between teachers and principal are not independent of each other. Expectations for schools create the structure of relationships in schools. Therefore, changing the structure of relationships within schools is dependent upon first changing the expectations for schools. Over the past three decades, we have expected our schools to comply with rules, structures, procedures, and community norms rather than expecting them to produce specific measurable student outcomes. Thus, we have operated and evaluated our schools on a compliance model rather than on a student outcome model.

We have chosen to inspect, accredit, and reward schools on the extent to which they comply with standardized curricular and instructional materials, course and subject format, time allocated to subjects, hours per day, days per year, and easily identifiable procedures for determining whether or not special dollars have been spent on children with identified needs (Chapter I, remediation, at-risk, special education, gifted, etc). Contrary to popular rhetoric, the average school in this country is not an overregulated organization. The average school in this country is an island unto itself, free to do, day in and day out, whatever the principal and teachers decide to do, and held accountable for absolutely nothing in terms of student outcomes. The average school is adrift in a sea of uncertainty, unsure of where to go and unsure of how to get there. School people are assured that they are doing alright if they are in compliance with predetermined rules and regulations.

In the average school, the curriculum and instructional processes are decentralized to the classroom teacher. The culture of the school is one in which the classroom of the teacher is a private sanctuary where the teacher can do whatever he or she pleases. School principals spend their time busying themselves with managerial tasks rather than instructional matters. Principals and teachers pretend that teaching is easy, and it can be done in isolation of other teachers. To ask for assistance or to consult with others is a sign of weakness — not a professional obligation.[1]

How many of us would go to a physican who practiced in such a manner? How many of us would allow a surgeon to operate on us who said, "I can do this job all by myself. I do not need the anesthesiologist, the radiologist, the support system, I can do this job alone." Yet, we will allow a teacher who espouses and operates in such an isolated and self-reliant manner to go into the classroom and close the door and do surgical procedures on the minds of children. Clearly, these conditions have not served the needs of children who desperately deserve good schools.

As educators we have been comfortable having our performance judged on the basis of compliance. Compliance is relatively easy. If we are to create the kinds of schools that will give all new crops of 18-year-olds equal access to society's benefits, we must transform our thinking to have our performance based on the **outcomes** that we expect from our schools and the **processes** that we desire to have in place. Under the compliance model, the evidence is overwhelming that bad schools get rewarded and good schools get punished. If the teachers and the principal of a school practice in such a way that their children do not need remediation, their children do not get referred to special education and they lose resources to run their school. But, on the other hand, if teachers and principal operate in such a way that they produce greater and greater numbers of students who need remediation and special education, they get rewarded. Their school gets more money and additional staff to operate the school. How does this make any sense at all? It does not! We must fundamentally change what we have been doing.

We must clearly and precisely define both the outcomes that we desire from our schools and the processes we expect to be in place if we are to serve the children desperately in need of good schools. Our research, as well as that of others,[2-4] clearly suggests that under the compliance system of education we have enormous differences in the quality of teaching and learning in schools. However, using compliance as our measure, good schools and bad schools look alike. Each can comply equally well. However, when considered on the basis of outcomes, the differences in quality become quite evident.

Why are the expectations that we have for schools so important to us now? Our expectations for schools are important not only because all children deserve good schools, but also because of the rapid rise in children who have not historically succeeded in a compliance model of schooling. The Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at Johns Hopkins University estimates that the number of children under the age of 18 will increase by 17 percent between now and the year 2020. The percentage of Hispanic children will increase from 9.3 percent of the nation's 0- to 17-year-olds to over 25 percent of this age group. The population of black youth is expected to increase by 22 percent; the number of white youth to decline by 13 percent.

The number of poor children is expected to rise 37 percent; children living with one parent, 30 percent; children living with mothers who have not finished high school, 56 percent, and children whose primary language is not English, 7.5 percent.[5]

New schoolwide and districtwide approaches will be necessary if we are to serve the interests of these children and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to function effectively in an increasingly technological world. The formula is simple, we must change from a prevailing attitude that performance equals compliance to the prevailing attitude that:

**Performance = Processes + Expected Outcomes**

To implement such a change requires that we turn upside down what we do now. We have centralized curriculum and instruction design and decentralized outcomes and accountability. Currently most states and districts design instructional delivery systems and school processes and hold schools accountable to the degree that they comply with these procedures. To date, only five states in the nation accredit schools based on student outcomes, and the sixth state, Wyoming, is developing such a process and expectation.

In the new model, districts or states must clearly and precisely specify the outcomes and the organizational processes that are expected of schools: leadership of the principal, learning climate, high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress. These variables must be measured at least annually, and schools must be held accountable for delivery. At the same time, we must centralize the school's curriculum and instructional delivery system from an isolated classroom model to an integrated school model.

It is not my intent here to add to the list of outcome expectations for schools, but to specify the parameters under which the model should operate. There are

excellent examples of outcome expectation in the country. Two are worth mentioning here: At the state level, a new set of expectations for high schools has been developed by the New York State Vocational Education Department; at the district level, a comprehensive set of criterion referenced outcomes for grades and subjects have been developed by the Campbell County School District in Gillette, Wyoming. Whatever expected outcomes are chosen, if all children are to benefit the outcomes must meet the test of excellence and quality. By excellence, I mean nothing more than that all children will master the outcomes we expect and will achieve at their true and natural level. By equity, I simply mean that initial entry-level difference between children of color and white children, poor children and affluent children, and single-parent household children and dual-parent household children will be eliminated as these children progress through the schooling system.

What implications does such a change in perspective have for the leadership of schools? In an outcome-based performance model, leadership becomes much more important; it is dynamic, change-oriented, and performance is based in the power of processes rather than the authority of office. In a compliance-based model, leadership is benign, status quo oriented, and performed through the authority of roles and office. Clearly, such a transformation will increase uncertainty and cause agonizing doubts among many parts of the educational establishment. Conditions of uncertainty and doubt demand new forms of leadership. As noted by Bennis and Nanus, "Nothing serves an organization better — specially during times of agonizing doubts and uncertainties — than leadership that knows what it wants, communicates those intentions, positions itself correctly and empowers its work force."[6]

In his earlier work, Bennis[7] reminded us that there are four competencies of leaders: management of meaning, management of attention, management of trust, and management of self. As noted in our earlier work[8-9] "management of meaning" indicates that the school principal must have a clear understanding of the purpose for schools. Management of the symbols of the school toward fulfilling that purpose becomes the primary theme, then, about which all activity must be organized. "Management of attention" simply means that the educational leader has the ability to get the teachers to focus and expend their energies toward fulfilling the purpose of schools. In the main, this means that teachers will use their talents to teach children. "Management of trust" simply means that the school principal can behave in such a way that others believe in the principal to the

extent that style of leadership is not an issue. "Management of self" means nothing more than I know who I am; I know my strengths and weaknesses, and I play to my strengths and shore up my weaknesses.

Conceptualized in this way, then, there is a strategy for successful leadership that must accompany an outcome-based performance model. Leadership is successful only if it empowers the organization. Empowerment is an often used word today and tends to mean that something (curriculum matters, activities, processes) has been delegated to someone else or that I have involved others in decision making. These notions seem to serve at the heart of much of what has been written on building- or site-based management or teacher leadership. If we use what we have learned from 50 years of research on leadership within organizations, we arrive at different conclusions:

■ Leadership can be shared or expanded but not delegated;

■ The larger the organization the greater are the needs for diverse forms of leadership.

Empowerment, then, is not involvement — but an organizational state. Organizations (schools) are empowered when the majority of people buy into a dream and then get the results that they desire. Enpowerment, then, has ethical and moral implications circumscribed by what we expect from schools.

Surely, the results that we desire from our schools is to live up to what we espouse — schools should give all children equality of opportunity to enjoy the benefits of our society. Clearly, then, our dream must be to provide greater access to the benefits of society for youth based on birthright. Those who, by accident of birth, were born into white, middle-class families should not have greater access to those benefits simply by who they got as parents. We must restructure our relationships in schools such that we educate children from all families.

We must build a sense of empowerment of our schools that is based on the challenges that Kalman Hettleman, special advisor to Baltimore's school board president, Robert Embry, and to school superintendent Alice Pinderhughes put forth when he asked, "What would happen if we decided to ensure that every child in every school would reach the third grade on time and with adequate skills — no matter what? What would happen if we decided that no child would be assigned to special education for a learning problem unless he or she were seriously handicapped? What would happen if we decided that no child should need to be retained in-grade

or relegated to long-term remedial services? How could we design an urban elementary school that would simply refuse to accept the idea that even a single child will fail."[10]

There is a powerful body of research that suggests that the key to achieving such expectations requires that we must have school leaders who can empower the school. To empower a school, the leader's behavior must have the four key components illustrated in Figure 1 as drawn from Smith and Andrews[11] and Bennis and Nanus.[12]

As presented in Figure 1, **vision** is nothing more than being able to see a future desired state. The school principal must be able to see what this school must do to serve all children. Vision is not enough, however, as it has little value as long as it stays only with the school principal. The school principal must be able to **communicate** that vision clearly and forcefully to others in the school, or the vision will not be realized. To have a vision — and to be able to communicate that vision — requires that the principal be able to take the actions necessary to make the vision happen. **Positioning** means just that. The principal can diagnose and assess each situation and display the behavior needed to get things done. This means that there is no one best — or all-encompassing — style of leadership. But, rather, the situation dictates leadership needs. Last, but certainly not least, is **self-management**. The school principal cannot empower the school by simply saying, "Read my lips." Teachers will only hear what the principal is *saying* by what the principal *does*. The principal must behave in such a way that he or she promotes the best in self and others. The principal clearly must believe and behave in a manner that communicates that "the kids are first!"

The challenge before us is monumental. These are harsh and demanding times in education. Harsh and demanding times need leaders who will use strategies for taking charge. Taking charge does not mean picking up a bullhorn and brandishing a baseball bat. Taking charge means the principal does so with a sense of vision and commitment to have a school serve all children and increase the capacity of the school to perform through curriculum and instructional processes.

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## FIGURE 1

### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

Empowerment results from
**VISION**
*"I see a desirable future state"*
*plus*
**COMMUNICATION**
*"I can convey that future state clearly and forcefully"*
*plus*
**POSITIONING**
*"I can take the action to make the vision happen"*
*plus*
**SELF-MANAGEMENT**
*"I can behave in ways that promote the best efforts of self and others"*

## FOOTNOTES

1 Powell, A G; E Farrar and D K Colon. *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace*, Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

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4 Mortimer, Peter. *School Matters*, Berkeley, California : University of California at Berkeley Press, 1989.

5 For a more detailed analysis, see Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, *The changing nature of the disadvantaged population: current dimensions and future trends*, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, 29pp, 1989.

6 Bennis, Warren and Bert Nanus. *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, New York : Harper and Row, 1985.

7 Bennis, Warren. "The 4 competencies of leadership" in *Training and Development Journal*, 38, 8, 15-19.

8 Andrews and Soder, *op cit*. See Footnote 3.

9 Smith, Wilma and R Andrews. *Instructional Leadership: How Principals Make a Difference*, Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD Press, October 1989.

10 Madden, N A; R E Salvin, N L Karwett and B J Ziverson. "Restructuring the urban elementary school" in *Educational Leadership*, February 1989, 14-18.

11 Smith and Andrews, *op cit*. See Footnote 9.

12 Bennis and Nanus, *op cit*. See Footnote 6.