

"Un moment... un rêve..."

The Spiritual Factor in Educational Administration

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Yeats was possessed of a gloomy but not uncommon foreboding about our times when he wrote those lines, anticipating a joyless Second Coming by some rough, unknown, slouching beast. Can one have convictions of a spiritual sort without the passionate intensity that is associated - in the minds of many - with the word "religious"? The difficulty, in Thom's view, has delayed too long the recognition that people in positions of leadership in education cannot manage their full responsibilities on technique alone. They must have conviction about the rightness of what they do, a conviction communicated to those working with and under them: and education must be animated once more by the idea of service. He cites a number of current thinkers and practitioners who maintain, as he does, that being spiritual is a necessary condition for the really effective administrator.

You have lost your subject when you have lost his inclination; you are to preside over the minds, not the bodies of men. The soul is the essence of a man; and you cannot have the true man against his inclination.

Sir Walter Raleigh to a Young Prince.

We live in a fast, complex world, it is clear. And inevitably this characterizes our organizations - fast and complex - and the nature of managerial work. This, particularly with a disproportionate emphasis on the economic aspect of things has created a troubled current situation with respect to leadership of our educational institutions.

Education is an extremely important activity in a society. Educators have profound effects on our impressionable young children and on keen mature student learners, effects which contribute to these individuals' future lives and to the current and future fabric of the total society. But, being as objective as possible, we see many behaviours on the part of contemporary educational administrators which just do not seem proper. Many administrators seem not to approach the managing of their employees, the teachers, with an air of human decency and a belief that humans can develop to a desired end with guidance and time.

Specifically, many teachers are made to feel insecure, through being hired on short-term appointments and by an administrative overemphasis on teacher evaluation. Often they are assigned to teach in subject areas for which they are not formally trained and are asked to retrain for these subjects, usually through summer or extramural courses. Behind all this we find that many educational administrators are operating from a hedonistic base, trying to strengthen personal power or planning a next career move upwards, thinking greedy, and carefully collecting written documents to protect themselves if challenged by their superordinates. Generally they do not support their staff members, but use arguments about economic constraints, changing student numbers, general turbulence, and potential teacher redundancy to keep their employees at bay. Does all this seem unrealistic? Not from my experience.

Developing this article

Several things provided the motivation to prepare this article. First, in a series of my published articles over the past few years and in my teaching of the management of education, I have been calling for good interpersonal relations development and for more humanism. These ideas have been well received; in actual practice, however, I see school system problems escalating. Then, it struck me that something more than "interpersonal relations" and "humanistic approaches" is the key to greatness in educational management.

It seemed to me that the idea of an educational leader's being "religious" had not been impressed on me in my graduate training or through the literature. I could recall selected articles in publications by the Roman Catholic-based schools in Canada which linked religion and administrative behaviour. Certainly I had never thought of my professors of educational administration as being religious. Oh, I do remember a developing interest area in our discipline in the 1970's called "Ethics in Administration", which included ideas about moral behaviour in educational administration; however efforts to organize and hold a conference on the theme failed, and there was a flippant comment from a senior Educational

Administration colleague: "Do any of us really care about this sort of thing?"

I began reflecting on the various suggestions which have appeared in the literature in recent years on how to upgrade educational leadership to meet the educational problems of our times. Much of this literature presents ideas on "how to cope", and predictably, the suggestions put emphasis either on the administrator (about traits or job description), on the setting, or on some technique or process.

The suggestions and opinions are many and varied. Together they encompass the many different schools of thought on administrative approaches - classical theory, human relations, behaviour, systems, and so on. And they represent both the mechanistic and organic conceptions of organizations. Each of the suggestions has merit in the appropriate context. Yet this does beg an intriguing question: is there one particular idea which is a necessary condition for effective educational administration in the 1980's, a concept that applies universally?

For some time my writings and my thinking had been striving for a clearer idea of just what I mean by the "spiritual factor". I do know that it is something inside the leader himself - I had thought that it is such a thing as an "inner calm" which is employee-contagious (February, 1979) or a "genuine, authentic humaneness" (Fall, 1979) or a "courage based on lofty educational, practical, and moral ideals". (March, 1981 and November, 1981) Offhand I could think of others who have put forward similar ideas in the management literature (McGregor; Perrow; Farquhar; Sergiovanni; Greenfield; Gilbert, et al.; Argyris; Mayo; even Drucker). In recent years administration texts have had a general flavour of "humanistic approaches".

I had decided at one point that what I meant is that the leader must be a religious individual, a person who actively and sincerely uses "good Christian practices" in dealing with employees, the "do unto others" concept. But I needed some more time and discussion with others before I could really detail this thing. Two happenings helped.

First, I prepared an article entitled "What Really Motivates Today's Workers?", because of my belief that the literature on human work motivation needs to be updated to suit modern times. It emerged that many contemporary workers in many parts of the world seem to be motivated primarily by money, fun, and sex (M, F, and S). It did appear that some, especially older employees, are motivated by such things as job challenge, autonomy, prestige, and responsibility, but mostly I found my discussion calling for managers to implement practices which cater to the satisfaction of M, F, and S needs in their employees. Something seemed amiss; it seemed to be a sad commentary on the conditions surrounding modern-day management efforts. Surely loftier ideals should come to bear.

"Why do many administrators give up"

Then I was invited in March 1982, with a dozen others, to attend a three-hour discussion session with Professor Derek Pugh of the London Business School, visiting Hong Kong, on the general theme of "The current state of organization and management studies." The invitees had come from the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and from the local business community. After they had each in turn described his or her current work, Professor Pugh eventually came to his presentation. He spoke specifically to some of the invitees' remarks, making suggestions or asking for clarification. Then he made some general comments on changes in recent years in the study of organizational behaviour, and he delineated, as he sees it, five developing thrusts in organizational and management activities: increasing cross-cultural work; power and political processes having become the major explanatory variables in organizational behaviour; a rising interest in inter-organizational behaviour; an intensifying examination of the external control of organizations; and a resurgence of subjectivism. He presented the prevalent view of organization as "the collective neurosis of its members", and the critical (Marxist) approach that our organizations are rooted in class conflict.

Points in Professor Pugh's presentation prompted one of the seminar participants to ask him why, especially in recent years, management and organization personnel have been quick to abandon certain approaches (e.g., a particular management style) and to grasp another approach, abandon it, grasp another... and so on. This participant wondered if there was not some basic core, or essence, to consistent success in management, one which perhaps cut across the total spectrum of possible approaches. "Why do we see so many administrators who have 'given up'?" he asked.

Pugh took some time to think about the point and eventually suggested something to the effect that change and "giving up" are products of our current culture. There was a silence. No other participant had a comment, so I made mine. I humbly suggested that I felt that the answer lies in something within the modern-day administrator himself - a lack of faith, or religion, or spirit, if you wish. I elaborated slightly as to a connection between possessing "spirit" and attaining success, and I sensed that I had intrigued the participants, even Pugh. In that plenary group a few then supported my point by recalling references in literature to at least the general notion of "organizations as a religion", for instance, in Chester Barnard's The Functions of the Executive. And after the seminar, several invitees individually confided to me that they felt that, "You are on to something very important."

What is the "spiritual factor"?

Generally my next step was to examine suggested references carefully. Several authors whose work I felt was worth a review came to mind, namely Mason Haire on "the biological model for social organizations" and Matthew Miles with his notion of "organizational health". There seemed to be some promise in this type of material which drew analogies between organizations and the human being (body, mind, and spirit). Through discussions with others over a period of weeks following, my ideas grew. It was suggested that I look at Ellul's The Technological Society and some of the works of C.S. Lewis.

My idea of what I meant by "the spiritual factor" had somewhat crystallized. However, I was becoming increasingly aware of my limitations. I am not formally trained as a theologian, philosopher, anthropologist, or sociologist, or as a psychologist, historian, or cross-cultural researcher. Yet my topic requires delving into the content and approaches of these areas. On frequenting the library to search particular references I would be painfully reminded of my potential deficiencies as I passed shelves containing large sets of volumes of such things as The Journal of Theological Studies or volumes of anthropological materials - materials which I had not examined and which realistically I never would be able to examine. Impressive new books were continually appearing, such as Hofstede's Culture's Consequences (1980), based on longitudinal cross-cultural studies of value systems, containing sections on management approaches and comparative religions, and using framework concepts unfamiliar to me such as Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance. Who was I to think that my ideas could worthily be put alongside the ideas of the many great management theorist minds of both the present and the past? Finally, I am not personally a devoutly religious person, and this might matter. These limitations could keep me from validly developing my concept of "spiritual" into a concept of religion in a pure and formal sense.

In my view at this time, the educational administrator who possesses "the spiritual factor" is hardworking, adequately trained, committed, works "smart", likes people; is well-meaning, confident, has vision and imagination, is empathetic, reasonable, witty, courteous, courageous, and action-oriented; maintains integrity, is a good listener, is generous, a supporter and facilitator; is realistic yet idealistic, rational yet creative and emotional, keen and sure yet anxious, and definitely natural and genuine. Above all, this leader has a sense of decency, dignity, and development with respect to others, looks on others as resources and opportunities rather than as problems, costs, and threats, and strives to produce an honest community of educators all engaged in zestful enterprise. Finally, I know that hope and faith (in something) in the face of

ambiguity is involved.

Many would say that the person just described is a religious person in the true sense of the word. He or she is a good Christian using good Christian practices ("do unto others...") in dealing with subordinates. I know educational administrators who fit the description above who definitely are not religious, and I know some who are called religious who do not fit the description.

Barnard

Across the established literature related to organizations and management (McGregor, Follet, Mayo, Bakke, Maslow, Haire, March, Sergiovanni, Herzberg, Argyris, Perrow, Likert, Homans, Bennis, Halpin, Miles, and so on) one finds concepts and terminology which give support to the idea of "the spiritual factor". Commonly referred to are the following: esprit; morale; optimism; commitment; calm; the affective; the humanistic (Maslow uses "eupsychian"); maintenance; self-worth; self-actualization; self-renewal; re-vitalization; and faith. Henri Fayol (1949) recommends that administrators cultivate "esprit de corps", a harmony and union or cohesiveness among the employees of a concern which effects great strength in that concern. One suggestion he makes is that a manager should aim for a workable situation in which he gives his subordinates oral rather than written directions or explanations whenever possible, because face-to-face contacts make for speed, clarity, and harmony.

The works of Chester Barnard and Jacques Ellul are of special significance. Barnard's book The Functions of the Executive (1938) has a profundity about it which previously I had not realized. First, as a participant at the Pugh seminar had mentioned, Barnard did hold a general "organization as a religion" type of view. He says:

"... organization is a new entity. You cannot get organization by adding up the parts. They are only one aspect of it. To understand the society you live in, you must feel organization - which is exactly what you do with your non-logical minds - about your nation, the state, your university, your church, your community, your family."(p.317)

Again:

"Such a story (the story of man in society) calls finally for a declaration of faith... I believe that the expansion of cooperation and the development of the individual are mutually dependent realities, and that a due proportion or balance between them is a necessary condition of human welfare. Because it is subjective with respect both to a society as a whole and to the individual, what this proportion is I believe

science cannot say. It is a question for philosophy and religion."(p.296)

At several points Barnard suggests that he believes that the best leaders are religious in the true sense of the word.

"Executive responsibility, then, is that capacity of leaders by which, reflecting attitudes, ideals, hopes, derived largely from without themselves, they are compelled to bind the wills of man to the accomplishment of purposes beyond their immediate ends, beyond their times... when these purposes are high and the wills of many men of many generations are bound together they live boundlessly."(pp.283-84)

Ellul

Jacques Ellul in The Technological Society calls for a re-examination of what he describes as the essential tragedy of a civilization increasingly dominated by technique. He puts forceful emphasis upon the erosion of moral values brought about by technicism (referring not only to machine technology but to any complex of standardized means for attaining often carelessly-examined ends). The society becomes, not the expression of the will of the people nor a divine creation, but an enterprise providing services that must be made to function efficiently. Politics revolves around what is useful rather than what is good. Ellul sees every part of a technical civilization responding to the social needs generated by technique itself, and progress then consisting in progressive de-humanization. Men suffer from a spiritual privation.

Jacques Ellul's therapy for the technical disease which he sees as pervading society, including the activity of management, is Christian therapy - whereby one affirms one's freedom through the revolutionary nature of one's religion. His book seems utterly fascinating. He is a sociologist of significant interdisciplinary perspective, and my particular training and experience put limits on the extent to which I can delve into his specialty. Suffice it to say that Ellul's book is very readable and extremely thought-provoking; modern administrators would do well to read and to contemplate. I believe that it follows from what he presents that a truly effective administrator must be religious. Ellul actively encourages recognition of "the extraordinary power of spiritual resistance to technical invasion of which human beings are capable," and exclaims, "It does not seem that those sources of vital energy which might be summarized as sexuality, spirituality, and capacity for feeling have been impaired."(p.415)

Administration without soul

Generally, now, I believe that administration does have a soul. Earlier in this article the general characteristics of an educational administrator who possessed "the spiritual factor" were outlined. In this section a general description of a non-spiritual educational administrator is given. Why is this necessary? Cannot the reader assume that the non-spiritual type is simply the opposite of the spiritual type described earlier? No.

I admit to the following: I have known and presently do know very religious educational administrators whom I consider to be ineffective, and I have known and presently do know educational administrators whom I consider to be very effective who are not religious. Singer and Wooton (1976) provide a fascinating example of the latter type in Albert Speer, Hitler's Minister of Armaments and War. This is worrisome with respect to my thesis. The best I can do is to say that my argument is meant to be of the "in general" type, and that often behind a particular administrator's being religious or not I have found that there is a complex dynamic of critical incidents usually related to personally perceived success or failure, to delve into which for clearer understanding is beyond the scope of this article.

The educational administrator who lacks "the spiritual factor" I characterize as follows: usually lacks clear, relevant goals and objectives; deep-down is authoritarian, paternalistic (and pompous); views employees (and others) generally in terms of costs, constraints, and problems; believes that considerable conflict amongst his subordinates is a healthy, good thing; is inconsiderate as to interrupting others' schedules and activities; claims to know more about everything than his specialist subordinates do; refers to many who disagree with him, especially the younger ones, as being "wet behind the ears"; keeps subordinates uninformed and confused;(1) could be termed "a legend in his own mind"; and it is not the case that "his heart is in the right place."

This type of individual is self-serving. Budgeting and support systems (typing, general secretarial assistance, supplies, telephone systems, copying, ordering, equipment, and so on) are set up for the good of, or to make look good, the administrator. Further, this administrator tends to approach an employee only when he wants something or has some criticism or trouble to give to that employee. He actively seeks out subordinates' human weaknesses and "plays" on them, often bulldozing them into things through striking at the opportune time. He seems to revel in creating and maintaining feelings of insecurity in employees, using such practices as term appointments as an example.

A technique of recent years, with declining student enrolments (or falling rolls), is to remind a staff periodically (in meetings or through circulating "gloom and doom" written

articles) just how fortunate they are to have any job at all. When an employee approaches this type of administrator with a genuine and relevant request or problem, the normal reaction is for the administrator to dismiss the immediate issue and to say things such as "You think you have problems - compared to so-and-so you are in fine shape," or "Let me tell you about the problems I have to deal with," or "I'm sorry, my hands are tied" (supposedly by someone else). Generally we have here a non-facilitator, a scoundrel, Machiavelli style. The flavour of things can get ruthless, dishonest, and brutal. My coined acronym for him is CHOA (Covers His/Her Own A--).(2)

In fairness the above description must be qualified somewhat. It is exaggerated for effect with respect to its comprehensiveness. And notice that it is not being said that the non-spiritual administrator does not possess some of the characteristics of the spiritual administrator; both may be hard-working, committed, and confident, and so on. Further, some administrators become this way not purely because of their own fault but because of circumstances (often of variety and complexity). In a different setting, a different person could emerge.

Nonetheless, the non-spiritual educational administrator is an undesirable who harms many employees, as well as those employees' families and acquaintances. The failure is in not using decent practices in dealing with others.

Greatness in educational leadership

Modern society and its educational culture have grown into something very complex with many varied and awesome problems. The key phenomena of the rapid pace of life and information overload alone would seem to be the roots of a host of others with which human beings are trying to cope day-to-day, and which many are just not capable of handling. Time management has become a big issue. One perspective is that technological development is racing alongside human beings' capabilities, and the former is overcoming the latter. Thus we see such a "therapeutic emphasis" in our world; so many people are breaking down.

Fortunately, writers like Jacques Ellul have given clear, believable accounts of just what is happening to society and man, and have presented suggestions for how the individual (and groups) can carry on full and comfortable lives.

Administrators in charge of institutions not only have to deal with the overall situation as individuals, but they are also immersed in a network that separates home, the church, government, business and industry, the media, education, and a variety of other social and cultural agencies. Many of them are continually grasping for techniques to help them cope - and the book publishers respond, pouring out the books on time management, tips from Japan, solutions for balancing all aspects

of one's life, and so on.

In this kind of situation administrators can easily lose perspective on the ultimate goals of their organization. Consider the following from Singer and Wooton (1976):

"... there is increasing evidence that management theorists and practitioners, regardless of the seemingly positive nature of their actions, have been and are creating and maintaining institutions which are destructive for mankind. The creation and maintenance of these institutions implies an insulated role of management in a highly interrelated, technological society. That is, too many managers today are so caught up in the procedural demands of their work that they easily lose sight of the important end results of their activities."(pp.98-99)

With respect to educational administrators, many appear to have lost sight of the basic goal of their organizations - to enhance teaching and learning in classrooms. Considering the complex milieu in which we now live, the spiritual or religious factor is now a requirement for educational leadership. Barnard has pointed out that,

"Executive positions (a) imply a complex morality, and (b) require a high capacity of responsibility, (c) under conditions of activity, necessitating (d) commensurate general and specific technical abilities as a moral factor... in addition there is required (e) the faculty of creating morals for others."(1938, p.272)

I suggest that in our contemporary (Toffler "Third Wave") society these ideas apply with even greater force. And the individual great leader is one who has necessarily the faith (that he has an assigned mission), the calm, the patience, the emphasis on the promotion of warm ideals and humane standards, the sense of history, and the courage to meet the challenges - all things which possessing the spiritual factor brings.

I do acknowledge that I personally view "spiritual" as equivalent to "religious", at least in the sense that Karen Horney meant when she said that our civilization still attests to a secularized Christian ideology which sets the highest value on brotherly relations (1937). Interestingly she also stated that the structures of our world and its real norms represent diametrically the opposite, an idea that gives support to Ellul's argument.

Some specific suggestions

Drawing towards conclusion I wish to make some suggestions specific to educational leaders who have grasped, and are interested in exploring within themselves, the messages

of my article. Those school leaders who are interested in cultivating the spiritual factor I feel should consider the following things (many of which mean running against the current grain):

- choose your staff with extreme care, staff in whom you have confidence to do an excellent job; give them security in their positions and then leave them alone to do the job. Currently there is far too much unnecessary evaluation and professional development being thrust on educators, and it is bound to create feelings of anxiety and inadequacy in already excellent personnel who by their nature are sensitive, responsible individuals. Contemporary education, to my mind, puts too much emphasis on general tangible product over quality process.
- provide excellent support systems for your staff; facilitate their having assistance with typing, copying, mailing, telephoning, audio-visual aids, and "busy work" such as the carrying through of school-related errands. Presently in many organizations the wastage and anxiety resulting from failure to provide excellent support systems is appalling; tremendous improvement results from something as simple as purchasing lighter (yet strong) stationery and envelopes to keep mailing costs down.
- with respect to goals and objectives, encourage the basic principle that thinking generates the power to think students generating their own powers, and teachers using the collective minds of students as a key source for encouraging effective thought. The aim is to personalize education, the pursuit of truth in the company of friends, and the process is directed toward the full development of the human personality self-identity, self-worth, self-respect, independence, interdependence, and self-evaluation (Wees, 1976, p.15). At present, there is too much of teachers playing a paternalistic role with respect to students, attempting to do things to students "for their own good", (Bereiter, 1972, p.25) and measuring achievement by how much knowledge has moved from the teacher's to the children's heads.

Greenfield (1979) asserts things more strongly.

"... there is a profound sense in which to be a teacher or principal is to become a force as violent as those at play in being a guard in a concentration camp or being a pilot of an aircraft in a fire-bombing raid. The violence in being a teacher or principal is not usually overt, though as instruments of punishment they may inflict physical pain as well. Rather, their violence is found in the quality of their relationships with others; it is personal and it is existential. Teachers and principals stand for an organization, for society-social forms that require order and regularity. They

represent patterns of thinking and values that have spanned many centuries. They are symbols of knowledge and rationality. They must impose a way of being and believe that it is better than the impulsive, undisciplined, and often unruly actions of the young. This shaping of a person's behaviour according to patterns desired by another is not unique to schools; it is part of the human condition..."(pp.107-08)

explore the use of two techniques in the operation of your educational institution - the Organization Development (O.D.) technique, and the mentor relationship technique. The former emphasizes the building of competent staff teams to accomplish tasks, and caters to what Pascale and Athos (1982) refer to as superordinate goals (which include the spiritual or significant meanings and shared values of the people within an organization, and pertain to values or goals that "move men's hearts" and that genuinely knit together individual and organizational purposes); (pp.81-82) and the latter is an example of "working smart", because by delegation it assists the administrator with time management, and at the same time grooms younger able staff for the future leadership role.

To try such things as listed above involves vision, courage, and tact at the very least. Many critics would be concerned about issues of disturbing the "status quo" and innovating needlessly. My thinking here is that the wise educational leader will construct the teaching and learning system which he knows is best and then be prepared to defend it and **protect it** - leaving his competent staff alone to do the job well, while he personally spends ample effort in cultivating healthy relationships between the school and the external community.

Some hopes

My call is for "back-to-basics" in educational administration, placing priority on what is natural, healthy, and humane. And religion is "a natural" which our complex society, with its stimuli and information overload, has caused us to lose sight of.

Hope of a tangible nature I see in several individuals and organizations now spread around the world who are showing sincere, intense commitment to enhancing educational leadership. From my international perspective William Walker (Australia), Vern Gilbert (Canada), and Meredydd Hughes (U.K.) I much admire for their dedication. To me, these men possess "the spiritual factor in educational administration" to a high degree. And they are quite familiar with the critics' styles - the "threatened priesthood" (Crane and Walker, 1976, p.38), and the recurring reference to Peter Browning's "We're caught in the

middle, Lord. It's a tough place to be," in Farquhar and Housego's 1978 International Intervisitation Program (I.I.P.) text (1980). I believe that these individuals, because of personality and experience especially, understand well my message, and the reality that there indeed are cancerous tissues in the life of our modern society and educational systems which take more than just intelligent administrators, but decent ones too, to face. And they would appreciate the idea that to read and absorb works of philosophy and theology is a "categorical imperative" for survival in our modern era.

At the present time, the organizations in which I see most hope for enhanced educational administration, mainly through their providing a forum for free and open discussion, are the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration (Australia), The Department of Educational Administration of the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto (Canada), The British Educational Management and Administration Society (U.K.) - in which Walker, Gilbert, and Hughes respectively have had deep involvement - and the University Council for Educational Administration (U.S.A.).

What dims my hope considerably at this point in time is that there are not enough educational administration people such as Walker, Gilbert, and Hughes. Further, I am not convinced that educational administration is best served by having preparation programs for practising it attached to university settings. Increasingly I am disillusioned with the lack of "the spiritual factor" within universities. Preparation for educational concerns was viewed years ago in many countries - and is so viewed currently in others - as best occurring in training colleges (outside of the university) which have a strong school and classroom practice emphasis.

I fear our universities have become much too politicized for my hopes for our educational systems to be realized. Perhaps we need to consider how well preparation for teaching and educational administration fits into a total university setting. "The spiritual or religious factor" possibly is being stifled there. If so, I feel we must act. Education is too important. Our children and all students are too important.

My impression is that people fall into three basic categories as to what form the roots of their lives: (in progressive order) being rooted in what one possesses, or materialism; rooted in what one does, such as one's job; and being rooted in qualities of self such as honesty, kindness, and loyalty. The reader will know that I advocate the third type of root and believe that by having educational leaders with this type of meaning to their lives we will have more teachers and students who develop this kind of meaning. Then our school systems would make giant steps forward.

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NOTES

- 1. Pascale and Athos's NETMA Nobody Ever Tells Me Anything organizational phenomenon, which they describe applies here (1982, p.160).
- 2. I feel in respectable company here in presenting such a term, as Frederick Herzberg (1986) in his Harvard Business Review article on employee motivation presented the KITA (Kick him in the A--) technique).

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Douglas J. Thom has the concept of leadership as one of his main professional interests. He has published frequently in both Canadian and international contexts, and has written two books. After teaching at the University of Saskatchewan and Lakehead University, he moved to Hong Kong, where he is Course Director in Advanced Studies in the Management of Education at the University of Hong Kong.

