

Chapter 19

Web 2.0 Technology and Educational Leadership Communication

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ABSTRACT

In today's interactive world, leadership is becoming more broad-based. Effective educational leaders know how to leverage such participation to develop a collaborative community that facilitates continuous communication and improvement. Technologies, particularly Web 2.0, can optimize such purposeful interaction, and help coordinate efforts so that leaders can focus on their important tasks of overseeing the health of the educational organization. This chapter examines the nature of current educational leadership, and details Web 2.0 technologies that support such leaders.

INTRODUCTION

In today's interactive world, the nature of leadership is changing. In many entities, stakeholders want to share and generate knowledge; they want more of a voice and shared decision-making. Effective educational leaders know how to leverage such participation to develop a collaborative community that facilitates continuous communication and improvement.

Technologies, particularly Web 2.0, can optimize such purposeful interaction, and help coordinate efforts so that educational leaders can focus on their important tasks of overseeing the health of the organization. This chapter examines the nature of current educational leadership, and details Web 2.0 technologies that support leaders.

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BACKGROUND

For educational institutions to succeed, they must be guided by effective leaders. A number of theories under grid leadership, and several aspects of leadership pertain to educational situations. Increasingly, leadership is seen as a collective process in which leadership is distributed in order to optimize the organization's effectiveness.

Educational Leadership Qualities

Who is a leader? Someone who can manage, monitor, and evaluate. Someone who is committed to a vision and can communicate it. Someone who has technical competence and people smarts. Someone who is creative and innovative. Heifetz's 1994 list of leadership qualities focuses on a "balcony perspective":

- working as a team member within social systems
- thinking creatively and using appropriate evidence-based practices
- differentiating between technical, known solutions and developing new solutions collaboratively.

James Weber (1989) identified five main functions of educational leadership:

- defining the school mission
- promoting a positive learning climate
- observing and giving feedback to teachers
- managing curriculum and instruction
- assessing the instructional program.

The American Association of School Administrators (1983) identified seven competencies for educational leaders:

- designing, implementing and assessing a school improvement program to attain school goals

- understanding and applying political theory in building support for education
- planning and implementing instructional management systems that foster student achievement
- designing staff development and evaluation systems to facilitate staff effectiveness
- allocating human and material resources to ensure student achievement
- conducting and applying research for making decisions that improve school programs and optimize student learning.

Theories of Leadership

Early theories about leadership examined inborn leader attributes and observable behaviors, which apply to educational leaders. Since then, leadership theories have focused on dynamic interactions between leaders and their organization, most recently on leading vision and organizational change (Williams, Ricciardi & Blackburn, 2006).

Several situational leadership theories focus on environmental contexts. Contingency theorist Fielder (1958) asserted that leaders were either task- or relations-oriented. Interaction theory is grounded in social learning, with leaders emerging as a result of interactions between demands of individuals and situations; Stogdill (1974), for instance, studied how leaders initiated interactive structures and expectations. Participative leadership focused on decision processes that include follower input and fosters their empowerment (Vroom & Yetton, 1988).

Transformational leadership, based on Burns (1978) and Bass (1998), asserts that leaders try to change and transform individuals to greater motivation and better performance. Leaders encourage people to transcend self-interest to achieve organizational goals. Such motivation is based on followers' respect, trust and loyalty to the leader.

Cultural leadership is based on the notion of organizations as cultural entities where the meaning of behavior is more important than the

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