NOW IS THE FUTURE

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One means of predicting the future is to take measure of the past. That is, if one analyzes the recent history of educational administration, aspects of its future can be extrapolated to give some indication of the field's direction, especially as it relates to developments in other fields. Reflection on the past raises several issues regarding which future educational administration will arrive at and how it will interact with other fields in getting to that future. Historically, one area of concern has been the development of an educational administration knowledge base; this has been the field's Holy Grail for the last half of the twentieth century. A defined knowledge base in educational administration has been sought by the profession but remains an elusive goal. The attempt to identify the knowledge that informs and defines educational administration has been a frustrating academic polemic. Given the lack of success thus far leads one to wonder whether or not it is necessary and should be done. This elusiveness is an indication of the difficulty in bringing the people and process together to achieve this goal. The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) is attempting to position the right combination of people and process to finally achieve success in identifying aspects of a knowledge base in educational administration. If one looks beyond NCPEA, it appears that there is a readiness to bring elements of a knowledge base under the educational administration professional umbrella. This includes participation on the part of professional and practitioner organizations.

It appears that the profession is now poised to capture, in electronic form, some of the best knowledge available about the field of educational administration. NCPEA is in the first phase of a project to address this issue, which has become a goal for the profession. Perhaps it would be best to put to rest the definitive search for a knowledge base and then allow the profession to spend its time improving, refining, and articulating what is known to exist.

What has hastened the task of disseminating a knowledge base in educational administration has been a steady drumbeat of negative reporting about K-12 leadership and K-12 preparation. Haller, Brent, and McNamara (1997) stated that, "Before we seriously consider requiring such extensive preparation of our school managers, perhaps we should ascertain the likely efficacy of the training" (p. 223). They further suggested that "there is little evidence that

graduate training increases the effectiveness of school managers" (p. 224). More recently, Levine (2005) released a report criticizing the preparation of school leaders and the system that produced them. "Many university-based school leadership programs are engaged in a 'race to the bottom,' in which they compete for students by lowering standards and offering faster and less demanding degrees" (p. 1).

Professors of educational administration in 2005 are faced with the same issues Culbertson (1990) outlined in bringing "old practices in line with new purposes" (p. 106). He described educational administration as a field evolving into a profession, with a clear mandate to be relevant to the practice of being a principal, superintendent, or school leader. The field of educational administration will have to consider:

> (M)oving beyond yesterday's failed efforts to achieve an administrative science while defining and pursuing more realistic and liberating research objectives; clarifying the basic premises needed to guide tomorrow's inquiry; ensuring that concepts borrowed from other disciplines are tested in practice before they are enshrined in textbooks; and remapping relationships with other disciplines, especially those in the humanities. (p. 106)

Guiding the Profession by Standards

Perhaps the single greatest unifying document for the profession of educational administration has been the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards released in 1997 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Murphy (2005), in describing the development of the standards expressed, also, the concern that continues to swirl about them. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) attempted to develop standards that would establish some basic practitioner and training standards. Their goal was to:

> create a set of standards that would provide the basis for reshaping the profession of school administration in the United States around the perspectives on school leadership and (b) to direct action in the academic, policy, and practice domains of the profession consistent with those perspectives across an array of strategy leverage points (e.g. licensure, professional development, administrator evaluation). (Murphy, p. 155)

The purpose of the standards strikes at the heart of the knowledge base problem in educational administration. For those who found fault with the ISLLC standards, it was because they focused preparation around discrete strands of

knowledge that encompassed the role of school principal. The standards were criticized for lack of depth and breadth about knowledge and applied practice. Yet, they were intended to be descriptors of knowledge to inform the development of curricula for educational administration programs and guide practitioner behavior as school principals. They were not intended to be anything more than standards for the preparation of school leaders. These standards are guidelines and nothing more.

The ISLLC standards were lumped into the knowledge base debate because they attempted to give some measure of definition to what principals should know and be able to do. As noted in Murphy's review of the development of the ISSLC standards, "the goal of the Consortium was to provide the raw material—that is the *Standards*—to reshape the profession" (p. 155). The ISLLC document was clear in stating that the standards were not inclusive of the knowledge within the field of educational administration. "(B)ecause we didn't want to lose the key issues in a forest of standards, we deliberately framed a parsimonious model at the standard level. Thus, we produced only six standards" (p. 102). The *Standards* were a starting point, and can be considered a rudimentary attempt at outlining a general base of knowledge for educational administration. They were, and are, a working document that can inform a continuing need to reshape, expand, and improve the profession through an agreed upon knowledge base.

Creating a Process to Develop a Knowledge Base

When asked to outline the knowledge base appropriate to preparation programs in educational administration, which has been and is being done, most of us would have to pause and reflect on an adequate answer. For most, the answer would be difficult or impossible to provide. The field is broad and at the same time deep. Few of us are sufficiently familiar with this breadth—law, finance, leadership, policy, planning, reform, organizational culture, systems theory, etc. It is probably true that, as individuals, we do not completely know the knowledge base on which our profession rests. But, collectively we do know. It is this collective knowledge that the field is hoping to capture as a source and resource for the preparation of educational leaders.

The effort to identify a knowledge base should be considered within Culbertson's charge to the profession. However, it is not the knowledge base, itself, that should be held up for scrutiny, but the effort to make knowledge about educational administration accessible, relevant, and meaningful to the professor, student and practitioner. Our field only recently has begun to recognize and to address this gap.

Process Goals

Associated with this effort is a concern about the costs required to maintain access to the knowledge base. Fiscal constraints are impacting libraries and restrict the expansion of holdings in a way that prevents a fair percentage of

preparation programs from maintaining current holdings. In addition, the cost of books and journals, including maintenance, and the funding for electronic data bases has increased significantly. This has also impacted student costs--text books are becoming almost prohibitive relative to use.

This has resulted in a reframing and extension of the concern for access into a viewpoint that sees cost as a limiting factor in the access issue. The mantra of this viewpoint is that knowledge should be free. This perspective views the development of knowledge that is encoded, i.e., a book, as awarding the author with perhaps 10 % of the value of the book and the publisher with 90 % for production and profit. This cost relationship is no longer necessary. Electronically knowledge can, in fact, be made accessible at minimal cost to libraries, students, and practitioners.

Additionally, many professors do not find a single text to be adequate. Many wish that they were free to have students purchase multiple texts but are constrained by the cost to students. The ability to adapt material from several sources, while at the same time adding the professor's individual viewpoint, is difficult, time consuming, and probably a forum for copyright infringement.

Questions then naturally arise: How can the knowledge base be articulated so that all who are interested in educational leadership can gain access and contribute to that knowledge base? How can costs be significantly reduced? How can the elements of the knowledge base, which exist in multiple sources, be integrated (or juggled) by a professor into one coherent course without students having to acquire several texts? Emerging simultaneously are the advances that have been made in a very old field, graphic and textual information processing, which now provides an alternate medium. These advances create the ability to have a virtual, electronic, multimedia compilation of knowledge about the field of educational administration.

What follows is a history of the development of the ability to have a virtual, electronic environment as the supporting medium for the knowledge base. Note that the following section was deliberately created in such a format and is an example of what is possible now. While fragmented, not entirely accurate, and with links that degenerate rapidly with time, the form for our future can be seen in this section.

Caves, CPUs and Networks

It began a very long time ago. Its invention probably was not understood for what it was. Perhaps it came about from a gradual evolution growing from an inner gestalt, or desire to control the environment, or the related need to communicate with the Gods. No one really knows why or when, but the graphic depiction of real objects by early mankind set humanity on a journey that continues to this day. The earliest depictions of graphic (painted) objects occurs in France.

The earliest painted art known to us is cave painting in Chauvet in southeastern France dating back 30,000 years. These and cave paintings in

Lascaux depict animals with style, full of color and life (The Museum of the Antiquities, N.D.). From this beginning, and perhaps multiple beginnings, the graphic representation of objects grew, becoming conceptually more complex, giving rise to the use of symbols and drawings to represent objects and ideas, which in turn evolved into written communication, an invention of importance:

> The preponderance of archeological evidence has shown that the urbanizing Sumerians were the first to develop writing, in 3200 or 3300 B.C. These are the dates for many clay tablets with a proto-cuneiform script found at the site of the ancient city of Uruk. The tablets bore pictorial symbols for the names of people, places and things for governing and commerce. The Sumerian script gradually evolved from the pictorial to the abstract, but it was probably at least five centuries before the writing came to represent recorded spoken language. (New York Times, 1996)

And writing also evolved. Clay was a stable medium and was used to record content conceptualized by symbols. Skins were used next, and later papyrus, which was replaced by paper.

With these changes in medium, ideas could be encoded, reproduced, and distributed throughout a civilization. But, distribution was limited by the number of copies that could be created. Monks and other scholars developed their ideas and data and placed them on paper using pen and ink. By using scrolls and bound pages, considerable information could be encoded in one document. The scrolls could be copied to a limited extent, and were. Later the invention of movable type had a profound impact on information dissemination:

> In 1403 the earliest known book was printed from movable type in Korea, a process which had been used by the Chinese as early as 1041. (Knops, 2000).

The invention of a device that could easily create multiple copies for general distribution and so changed the world occurred when:

In 1450 Gutenberg printed his 42-line Bible in Mainz on a quality of handmade paper which remains unsurpassed to this day. Twenty-six years later William Caxton brought the art of printing to England, and in 1486 the first English coloured illustrated book was printed in St. Albans. (Knops, 2000).

This duplication process accelerated until it achieved the ability to allow anyone to generate and distribute multiple copies at will. This was accomplished when:

> in 1937 when the process of Xerography was invented by American law student Chester Carlson. Carlson had invented a copying process based on electrostatic energy. Xerography became commercially available in 1950 by the Xerox Corporation. Xerography, which comes from the Greek for "dry writing," was a modern leap forward in mass printing. Carlson had been frustrated with the slow mimeograph machine and the cost of photography which led him to inventing a new way of copying. He invented an electrostatic process that reproduced words on a page in just minutes (Bellis, M., N.D.).

By populating desktops with small, powerful computers in the mid to late 1980s, mankind achieved the ability to encode original content and to share that content at low cost with anyone having e-mail service. The creation and dissemination of ideas could be undertaken by anyone at a cost that, relative to the printing of a book or journal, was acceptably low, even when distribution was limited. However, the capturing of this information in digital form allowed the exploitation of a confluence of technologies that has become known as today's internet. Using various technologies:

> The Internet has revolutionized the computer and communications world like nothing before. The invention of the telegraph, telephone, radio, and computer set the stage for this unprecedented integration of capabilities. The Internet is at once a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location.
>
> The first recorded description of the social interactions that could be enabled through networking was a series of memos written by J.C.R. Licklider of MIT in August 1962 discussing his "Galactic Network" concept. He envisioned a globally interconnected set of computers through which everyone could quickly access data and programs from any site. In spirit, the concept was very much like the Internet of today. (Internet Society, 2003)

Today the internet, in association with several of the technologies noted previously, has created a means for the development, capture, and distribution of graphic and written material at marginal cost to users. The user does not require a publisher, journal editor, or even formal recognition as a gateway to publishing. The internet has spawned groups and organizations that collect and distribute

information such as books, articles, music, pictures, and other content without the traditional conventions associated with the formal publishing world. Most of these traditional distributors have been, and are, commercial in nature, with organizations arising as a means of making a profit. Amazon.com is an early and famous example (Amazon.com, N.D.).

Reaching for a Solution

However, profit motives do not entirely drive the distribution of content over the internet. Powerful websites exist that work to make available content free of charge to all. Consider:

> Project Gutenberg is the oldest producer of free electronic books (eBooks or etexts) on the Internet. Our collection of more than 15.000 eBooks was produced by hundreds of volunteers. Most of the Project Gutenberg eBooks are older literary works that are in the public domain in the United States. All may be freely downloaded and read, and redistributed for non-commercial use (for complete details, see the license page). (Project Gutenberg, 2005b)

> The number of electronic books rose from 1,000 (in August 1997) to 2,000 (in May 1999), 3,000 (in December 2000) and 4,000 (in October 2001). Project Gutenberg had 5,000 books online in April 2002 and topped 10,000 in October 2003, when it had a team of 1,000 volunteers around the world making 350 new books available every month. These 10,000 books are also available on DVD for US$1 each. Michael Hart, the driving force behind project Gutenberg, hopes to have a million electronic books available by 2015. (Lebert, 2004)

What is interesting about these sites is that they have attracted a large number of volunteers working to capture content that can be distributed free. Although limited by copyright issues and a lack of titles of direct interest to educational administration, these sites are effective. Note that Gutenberg has a few titles that are of some interest to the field of educational administration:

- *Art Of War*, The, by Sun, Tzu (Promonet, 2003).

This is also available commercially from Amazon.com.

- *The Art of War* -- by Sun Tzu; Hardcover Buy new: $4.95 -- Used & new from: $3.43 (Amazon.com, N.D.).

Additional examples of the Gutenberg holdings, available free of charge, and the commercial doppelgangers that are sold for profit include Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Ellwood Cubberley's *The History of Education*, Frederick Taylor's

The Principles of Scientific Management, and John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*.

Note:

- Machiavelli, Niccolò Marriott, W. K. (William K.) [Translator] *The Prince*
  (Project Gutenberg, 2003).

- *The Prince* -- by Niccolo Machiavelli, Daniel Donno; Mass Market
  Buy new: $4.27 -- Used & new from: $1.29 (Amazon.com, N.D.).

- Creator: Dewey, John (1859-1952)
  Title *Democracy and Education: an introduction to the philosophy of education.*
  Language English
  LoC Class LB: Education: Theory and practice of education
  Subject Education
  EText-No. 852
  Release Date 1997-03-01
  (Project Gutenberg, 2005a)
- *Democracy and Education* -- by John Dewey; Paperback Buy new: $16.95
  Used & new from: $7.41 (Amazon.com, N.D.).

In addition to the Gutenberg site is the Online Books URL, where:

> The Online Books Page is a website that facilitates access to books that are freely readable over the Internet. It also aims to encourage the development of such online books, for the benefit and edification of all. (Online Books, 2005)

At the same location is a more recent work provided by Ravitch:

- *A Consumer's Guide to High School History Textbooks*
  by Diane Ravitch 02/26/2004 (Online Books, 2005).

Free collections also can be found that deal with areas of topical interest. Those interested in history would find Fordham University's site informative where:

> The *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* is one of series of history primary sourcebooks. It is intended to serve the

needs of teachers and students in college survey courses in modern *European* history and *American* history, as well as in modern *Western Civilization* and *World Cultures*.

The *Internet History Sourcebooks* are collections of public domain and copy-permitted historical texts presented cleanly (without advertising or excessive layout) for educational use. (Internet Modern History Sourcebook Project, 2001)

A sample publication from this site is:

- Thomas Paine (1737-1809): *Common Sense*, Jan, 1776. (Internet Modern History Sourcebook Project, 2001).

This site also provides free books for which a corresponding commercial source exists:

- *Common Sense* (Dover Thrift Editions) -- by Thomas Paine; Paperback
  Buy new: $1.50 -- Used & new from: $0.99 (Amazon.com, N.D.).

The foregoing examples each present specific illustrations as to how the knowledge base goals and support process are currently operating in electronic format. The examples provide a background from which several conclusions can be drawn regarding the current capabilities and use of an electronic format as a medium for the development and dissemination of a knowledge base in educational administration:

1. Electronic media exist that can support a virtual/online database for educational administration.

2. The potential dissemination of "free content" is, in fact, just that, a fact. This has been widely undertaken with the advent of the information superhighway supported by the internet.

3. The contribution of content by volunteers is also a demonstrably valid approach to encoding the knowledge base.

4. Electronic media can distribute content for free that is also being distributed for profit.

5. Finally, widely published and commercially viable authors will contribute to a free, open, and accessible source of knowledge

> about educational administration. (See the Diane Ravitch contribution under the Online Books section above).

How will the previously undefined knowledge base, derived from the written word, be transferred and enhanced in an electronic format that supports video, music, text, and a multimedia format? As many are aware, NCPEA is working toward a future along the lines described. Facilitating NCPEA's efforts is the Connexions project--an internet-based site dedicated to accepting information and distributing that information free to users. The challenge of such a project is to make information accessible, meaningful, simple to use, inexpensive, and with a flexible modular structure. The importance of such a project is that it casts an unprecedented net to gather the best thinking in, and about, the field of educational administration. However, it also extends the limits of how knowledge, not only in educational leadership but in any field, can be presented in an open-access environment.

> Connexions is a rapidly growing collection of free scholarly materials and a powerful set of free software tools to help
>
> • *authors* publish and collaborate
>
> • *instructors* rapidly build and share custom courses
>
> • *learners* explore the links among concepts, courses, and disciplines
>
> Our *Content Commons* contains small "knowledge chunks" we call modules that connect into *courses*. Thanks to a *Creative Commons open license*, anyone can take our materials, adapt them to meet their needs, and contribute them back to the Commons. And everyone is invited to participate!
>
> Connexions is an environment for collaboratively developing, freely sharing, and rapidly publishing scholarly content on the Web. Our *Content Commons* contains educational materials for everyone — from children to college students to professionals — organized in small *modules* that are easily connected into larger *courses*. All content is free to use and reuse under the *Creative Commons "attribution" license*. (Connexions, N.D.)

Is such a possibility real and practical? Is this a way to act upon Culbertson's admonition to bring old practices in line with new purposes? Are we stepping into the next advance of knowledge acquisition within a virtual environment? Is the project to define a knowledge base also a process to put

knowledge in an accessible (virtual) environment and not an event?

How Can an Answer be Formulated?

The future of the knowledge base, or rather the process that develops a repository for information about educational administration, it would seem, rests within an electronic platform that can be added to and modified in perpetuity. Although some still see the world wide web as a curious source of knowledge, information, commerce, and unwanted e-mail, the pull of the electronic page is gaining momentum. The identification of a knowledge base is a difficult but straight forward goal experiencing an increasing urgency that has been discussed within the profession for 50 years. The association of NCPEA with the Connexions project seems to be a reasonable means of achieving the goal of assisting in the generation of an articulated, inexpensive, and universally available knowledge base in educational administration. As this chapter demonstrates, knowledge can be free, easily accessible, and quickly located—without a library, journal, or other traditional resource. Although internet information is not always accurate and less than respectable sites exist, it seems clear that electronically stored and shared knowledge is the future. NCPEA can assist in capturing this future for our profession, and do this in a way that makes information free and available to all who are interested, anywhere. Now is the future!

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