ucea

UCEA REVIEW

University Council for Educational Administration

Headquartered at the University of Missouri-Columbia

Winter 2005

Vol XLV

Number 1

Educational Leadership in East Asia: Implications for Education in a Global Society

Philip Hallinger- Mahidol University, *Allan Walker*- Chinese University of Hong Kong, *Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid*- UNITAR, Malaysia

A decade ago, scholars advocated a more explicit analysis of educational leadership using the lens of national culture (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995; Hallinger, 1995). Subsequent findings in East Asia support the assertion that deeply held values drive leader beliefs, thinking, and actions (e.g., Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968; Walker & Dimmock, 2000; Wong, 1998). Evidence further suggested that the "valued ends" towards which East Asian school leaders strive are shaped by religious and cultural traditions that differ from Western societies. These traditions turn influence the nature of leadership in schools (Bajunid, 1996; Hallinger, 2004; Wong, 1998).

In this paper we discuss how value differences shape school leadership in East Asian schools and the implications for leadership in a global education community. To foreshadow our argument, we assert that indigenous approaches to school leadership in East Asia have been and continue to be fundamentally concerned with the moral development of individuals and the creation of community (e.g., Bajunid, 1996; Wong, 1998). However, in East Asia "community" manifests in a cultural context that differs markedly and systematically from North America and Europe. This contrast between East and West challenges scholars to suspend our cultural assumptions as we seek to deepen our understanding of educational leadership.

Leadership and Values

Leadership is centrally concerned with the interpretation and enactment of values. Recent debates in the field of educational administration emphasize the distinction between what we lead *for* and *how* we lead (Furman, 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 1999). Furman, for example, defined leadership as the, "creative, dynamic and moral sense of purpose that suffuses and motivates the group and that can lead to our valued ends" (2003, p. 4).

We assert that the values towards which Asian schools and their leaders strive differ in significant ways from those that predominate in "Western" societies.[1] The core values of East Asian societies include filial piety, sincerity, loyalty, respect for elders, self-discipline, respect, honesty, responsibility, cooperativeness, happiness, humility, tolerance, sympathy, simplicity, freedom, and oneness. In general, East Asian societies place less value on the personal freedom and liberties that predominate in Western societies than on the rights and responsibilities that individuals have to their family, affiliated groups, and social institutions.

Education in East Asian societies plays a central role in fostering values of respect for the collective society and a sense of community. In Malaysia, for example, integration of Malays, Indians, and ethnic Chinese into a single society represents an explicit goal for the educational system. This has spurred Malaysian educators to consider the role of schools (as well as families and religion) in building and sustaining a national culture.

> *Bergotong-royong* or "community-effort" is a time-honoured custom practiced by Malaysians. . . It is therefore important for the spirit of community effort to be instilled in the consciousness of all Malaysians, particularly the young. The spirit of goyong-royong sows the seeds of neighborliness and the strengthening of unity. (Tun Uda, 1990, p. 16)

In Thailand recent education reform legislation set new educational goals for the nation. These emphasize that education should develop students who are knowledgeable, moral and happy. The reform legislation further suggests that it is the responsibility of educators to strive for a balanced integration of subject matter, integrity, values, and desirable attributes.

A strong component of indigenous leadership is the role played in identifying, articulating and developing the core values deemed to be unique and significant to the culture (Bajunid, 1996). Given the cultural values of East Asian societies, it is not therefore surprising to find that educational leaders have been concerned first and foremost with building and sustaining a strong sense of community in their schools. Indeed, indigenous perspectives on leadership in the region never defined leadership as the "means" for increasing performance in schools. The indigenous practices of East Asian school leaders have been grounded in the Confucian and Buddhist traditions assume

that the development of social values of self-discipline, humility, respect for others, and community responsibility are the precursors to student learning and school performance.

Leadership and Community

In the prior section we asserted that community-building is the core responsibility of East Asian school leaders. We would note, however, that the conception of roles and modes of participation in community-building differ from those that predominate in the West. For example, as ongoing conversations in most East Asian societies would attest, Western conceptions of "democratic community" are foreign to East Asia and interpreted through local lenses.

Hofstede (1992) noted the more distinct "power gaps" that exist among people in Asian cultures. The American credo, "All men are created equal" is neither revered as a national philosophy nor reflected in the cultural practices of daily life. For example in Thailand:

> Respect for elders is taught very early, however, and by the time a child walks he is aware of his position in the family hierarchy, a distinction that applies not only to the relationship between siblings of different ages. This same delineation of roles also applies to the wider world outside the family and will remain deeply ingrained throughout life, thus explaining the reluctance of younger Thai to oppose or otherwise confront a senior during their subsequent careers in business or government. (Seravatamol, cited in Taraseina, 1993, pp. 66-67)

This vertically aligned cultural system exerts a profound influence upon social relations in the workplace. Persons of lower status (i.e., age, position, seniority) naturally defer to those of higher status, accepting differences in power as a normal feature of social relations. Thai people commonly show the norm of *greng jai* towards each other. *Greng jai* means to be self-effacing, respectful, humble, and extremely considerate. The norm of *greng jai* means avoiding behavior that would cause embarrassment to other people or impose upon them.

Educational leaders and followers in East Asian societies consequently tend to be more conscious of status and hierarchy than colleagues in Western contexts, even as they are more conscious of the need to foster community. Leaders are granted respect by followers based on age, formal position and seniority. There is tacit acquiescence among followers as long as the leader's behaviors remain aligned with these cultural norms. This respect and acquiescence is publicly accorded inside and outside of schools even when the leaders' competence is in doubt or a poor decision is about to be made. In return for this status-based respect, leaders are expected to protect followers in terms of their *face* and job security.

This normative reciprocity preserves relationships and promotes surface harmony among the members of social groups. An investigation by Lin (2000) in mainland China found that over 50% and 75% of teachers respectively described their relationship with principals as "obedience" and "unequal". Lin suggests that teachers tend to feel dependent on the principal, even when formal policy promotes shared decision making. It appears then the high power distance reflects underlying beliefs held by both teachers and principals about the roles that leaders and followers should play.

East Asian societies are also well known for their collectivist orientation. This suggests that people in the region form their personal perspectives first and foremost in terms of their significant group associations (Hofstede, 1992). Consistent with collectivism, individual teachers, as well as the principal, subjugate their needs, ambitions and, if necessary, opinions for the greater good of the school.

The combination of high power distance and collectivism of East Asian societies creates an interesting interplay when it comes to Western conceptions of distributed leadership and empowerment. While, high power distance does reinforce the formal authority accorded to those folding leadership roles in East Asian schools, collectivist tendencies place a strong reign on the actual enactment of that power. It is the consensus-building in which leaders engage within the values and norms of their school communities that creates the legitimacy needed to act.

Thus, different cultural understandings of empowerment may help explain the stalled progress of reforms simplistically imported from the West (Hallinger, 2004; Walker & Dimmock, 2000, 2002). Leung and Chan (2001) assert that empowerment through participatory management is, "based on the principle of equality and a contractual relationship between the boss and subordinates [that] is culturally alien to a Chinese society like Hong Kong" (p. 242). Lo (2002) notes that Chinese teachers are not active seekers of professional status and political influence. Moreover, their regard for hierarchy and deference for people based on position makes it awkward, and even undesirable for them to promote personal views in open forums. Teachers in Hong Kong schools, for example, are reluctant to confront superiors, express dissent and criticize peers since these could damage relationships within their community.

Similarly, within East Asian schools collaboration happens extensively but tends to take place among individuals of approximately equal status. These groups feed their opinions to leaders further up the hierarchy. Divergent opinions are welcomed as long as they take a subtle and accepted path and are not presented as openly confrontational or challenging. So teachers do have opinions, do attempt to influence changes, and are interested in school affairs. At the samc

In This Issue...

time, their involvement tends to be hierarchically enacted through a diffuse set of intra-group and inter-group relations. In this way collaboration builds group consensus and coherence and ensuring that relationships remain harmonious.

This means a school where staff work together quietly without engaging in open confrontation and disagreement. This does not mean that discontent does not ferment beneath the surface, but it does mean that this must not be allowed to rise to the surface for others to see. In this way leadership may be sometimes more concerned with maintaining illusory or surface harmony than with actual harmony. It can also mean at times that the desire for harmony and smooth relationships can interfere with task achievement.

Conclusions

Since leadership involves the achievement of goals through people, it is no surprise that leadership is influenced by the cultural context. Leadership in East Asian schools is grounded in social values that differ in significant ways from those that pervade Western societies. We have elaborated some of the ways in which these value differences shape the practices of East Asian school leaders. As a closing example, Hallinger and colleagues reported the perception of Hong Kong school principals who noted:

> Sometimes even if we want to involve staff more actively in determining the direction and procedures for change they misunderstand us. If we really spend a lot of time asking their opinions, they even begin to think we don't know how to do our job! It's as if they say, "You're the principal. If you have to ask me, it must mean that you don't know what you're doing." (Hallinger, Chantarapanya, Sriboonma, & Kantamara, 2000, p. 218).

Even this observation, however, must also be accompanied by a postscript. The same group of principals noted that globalization had begun to reshape the context of Hong Kong as a society. Hong Kong citizens were beginning to expect greater involvement in government decisions that affected them and the principals could see signs of this change filtering into schools. This observation highlights the permeable nature of the cultural boundaries that exist between schools and the surrounding society.

East Asian educators find themselves increasingly in the position of making tradeoffs between policies that foster community and those designed to promote technical competence. Moreover, the spread of the global culture leaves even those leaders most committed to globalization and technical competence uncomfortable. As Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore observed: "We are all groping towards a destination which we hope will be identifiable with our past. . . We have left the past behind and there is an underlying unease that there will be nothing left of us which is part of the old" (Economist, 1994, p. 12).

This is the nexus at which East Asian school leaders are located today. Cultural values differ between the East and the West, and these differences carry over into education. We do not take the position *a priori* that that every culture's values are equally desirable simply because they are the culture's values. For example, the status differentiation that characterizes East Asian societies continues to legitimate institutionally unacceptable inequities in access to education among the poor, minorities and females. Identification and elimination of these inequities should be the moral responsibility of educational leaders in every society.

We agree that *moral leadership* represents a central role of school leaders and have noted that interpretation, articulation, and construction of community values in schools has been a key concern of school leaders. In a global era, however, we would caution colleagues in Western societies against delineating the particular set of terminal or instrumental values that define moral leadership. Such a position invariably makes sense to those who live within a particular cultural community. The cultural values conceived to comprise *moral leadership* in any given society are socially constructed and we assert culturally bounded (e.g., *democratic* community). History teaches the dangers of assuming that the values of one society are universally applicable. With the effort to redefine leadership and scholarship in education as normative enterprises (e.g., Furman, 2003), care must be taken in dictating definitions and actions based upon our values across cultural contexts. When viewed from different cultural traditions and outside of a set of shared universal values, moral leadership is itself a contested construct.

Therefore, we wish to cast a vote for Gail Furman's (2003) advocacy of an "ethic of community" among scholars in our field. We believe that our field should be focused on defining both the ends and means of school leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 1999). We further hope that a cultural perspective on educational leadership will remind us of the profound ways in which values frame our conceptualization of education and leadership (Getzels et al., 1968). We suggest that a cultural perspective can contribute to the possibility of productive scholarship and practice in a global educational community. This would in turn create a more respectful climate for dialogue within the global community of educators.

References

Bajunid, I., A. (1996). Preliminary explorations of indigenous perspectives of educational management: The evolving Malaysian experience. *Journal of Educational Administration, 34*(5), 50-73.

Cheng K.M. (1995). The neglected dimension: Cultural comparison in educational administration. In K.C. Wong & K.M. Cheng (Eds.) *Educational leadership and change (*pp. 87-102*).* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Economist. (1994, October 8). Teaching Asia to stay Asian, *The Economist*, p. 32.

Furman, G. (2003). UCEA presidential address. *UCEA Review, 45*(1), 1-6.

Getzels, J., Lipham, J., & Campbell, R. (1968). *Educational administration as a social process.* New York: Harper & Row.

Hallinger, P. (1995). Culture and leadership: Developing an international perspective in educational administration. *UCEA Review, 36*(1), 3-7.

Hallinger, P. (2004). *Making education happen: Is there an Asian way?* Paper presented at the International conference, Educational Reform: Learning from the Asian experience and comparative perspectives, Bangkok Thailand.

Hallinger, P., Chantarapanya, P., Sriboonma, U., & Kantamara, P. (2000). The challenge of educational reform in Thailand: Jing Jai, Jing Jung, Nae Norn. In T. Townsend and Y.C. Cheng (Eds.), *Educational change and development in the Asia-Pacific region: Challenges for the future* (pp. 207-226). Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitsinger.

Hallinger, P. & Kantamara, P. (2000). Leading educational change in Thailand: Opening a window on leadership as a cultural process. *School Leadership and Management, 20*(1), 189-206.

Hampden-Turner, C. & Trompenaars, F. (1997). *Mastering the infinite game: How Asian values are transforming business practice.* Oxford, UK:

Capstone Press.
Heck, R. & Hallinger, P. (1999). Conceptual models, methodology, and methods for studying school leadership. In J. Murphy & K. Seashore-Louis (Eds.), *The 2nd handbook of research in educational administration*. San Francisco: McCutchan.
Leung, J., Y., H. & Chan, H., M. (2000). The school management reform in Hong Kong: Administrative control in a new cloak of managerialism. In B. L. Cheung & J. C.Y. Lee (Eds.), *Public sector reform in Hong Kong into the 21st century* (pp. 229-260). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
Lin, J. (2000). Reform in primary and secondary administration in China. In C. Dimmock & A. Walker, (Eds.), *Future school administration: Western and Asian perspectives* (pp. 291-310). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
Lo, L., N., K. (2002). *Globalization, educational reform and the dilemmas of Chinese teachers*. Keynote Address At The Hong Kong Educational Research Association Conference 2003. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (2000). Leadership dilemmas of Hong Kong principals: Sources, perceptions and outcomes. *Australian Journal of Education, 44*(1), 5-25.
Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (2002). Moving school leadership beyond its narrow boundaries: Developing a cross-cultural approach. In K. Leithwood & P. Hallinger (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 67-204). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer.
Wong, K.C. (1998). Culture and moral leadership in education. *Peabody Journal of Education, 73*(2), 106-125.

Biographical Notes

Professor *Philip Hallinger* is Executive Director of the Graduate College of Management, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand
Email: Philip.h@cmmu.net

Professor *Allan Walker* is Chair of the Department of Educational Administration and Policy at Chinese University of Hong Kong Email: adwalker@cuhk.edu.hk

Professor *Dato Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid* is Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Email: iab@unitar.edu.my

Footnotes

[1] Without wishing to spark a new debate on this point we acknowledge that there is no single set of "Asian values" that are represented in equal intensity across all Asian nations. We do assert that there is more commonality among the strongest values extant within Asian societies than when compared with Western societies (e.g., filial piety, respect for age, value placed on individual freedom vs. group responsibility).

Ethical Imperatives for Educational Leadership: Fifty Years Beyond Brown

Margaret Grogan, University of Missouri-Columbia
Presidential Address, UCEA
Kansas City MO, November 11, 2004

Introduction

It is a great honor to be here this evening- a humbling privilege to speak to my UCEA friends, colleagues and students. UCEA has been for me the most important shaping force in my professional development since I entered the professoriate. I would like to thank especially those from 3 UCEA institutions who have mentored and supported me all the way — my professors, student colleagues and the staff at Washington State University, my colleagues, my students and the staff at the University of Virginia, and my colleagues, the students in ELPA, and the staff in ELPA at the University of Missouri-Columbia. And there is one special administrative assistant here this evening, who has helped me enormously with this presentation- Heather Brown, thank you so much.

We are celebrating two major anniversaries at this years convention, the 50th anniversary of the landmark Brown v. the Board of Education Supreme Court Decision, and the 50th birthday of UCEA. I know the convention planners have organized many tributes to these two important events. The theme of this years convention is The Changing Faces of Educational Leadership: UCEA at the Crossroads. I was interested to hear Jack Culbertson, former UCEA Executive Director talk about the crossroads and issues of his era. He mentioned the issues of internship training, the challenges of goal setting and of funding UCEA projects. I guess it's comforting to know that once UCEA was founded, the challenges facing the field were met by the collective minds of its membership, so much more effective at making change than each institution fighting alone. It is the value of that concerted effort that I will draw upon again tonight.

This evening, I am going to talk briefly about the legal route to equal educational opportunity and outcomes for all the importance of Brown and how the goals of Brown have not yet been met. I will also talk about a corollary to the legal route, the ethical and moral route to equal educational opportunity and outcomes for all. My message is that by itself the legal route cannot work. It will take an individual effort on the part of every one of us in this room to make it happen. We need to move towards a Tipping Point. Many have made enormous efforts to equalize educational opportunity and outcomes for all children but despite these efforts, both historical and contemporary, we have not reached that critical point from whence on equal educational opportunity and outcomes are guaranteed for all. To explain the notion of a Tipping Point, I want to borrow from Malcolm Gladwell's book the *Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. In his book, as an example of the phenomenon, he talks about how the needle exchange program to fight AIDS in Baltimore, in the mid 1990s really began to make a difference. To start with, the city sent vans stocked with thousands of clean syringes to certain street corners in its inner city at certain times in the week. The idea was that addicts could exchange dirty needles for clean ones. But addicts are not organized and rarely plan ahead. So just providing addicts with the information and possibility to use clean needles was not enough. Gradually however, the program did take off. What researchers discovered was that a few well-connected addicts were rounding up the dirty needles, bringing in backpacks filled with hun-