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CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE: A CRUCIAL
FACTOR IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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By

Agripino C. Segovia

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030 - 88 Institute for Christian Teaching
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring Md 20904, USA

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE: A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**Introduction**

For decades, social scientists, psychologists, and researchers have studied diligently the social phenomenon called leadership. Probably, more has been written on this subject than in any other topic in the behavioral sciences. Although their investigations did not yield concrete and unequivocal definition on the matter, it is generally believed that leadership plays a very vital role in the development of society. Ted Engstrom states that "leadership is the key to the development of modern society" (Engstrom, 1972, p. 20). This is true to the society at-large, as it is true to organizations and its institutions.

Schools are society's custodians of traditional values and precious heritage, as well as agents for societal changes. An excerpt of the 1956 White House Conference on Education acknowledges the significant function of the schools in the history of the United States:

The schools have become the chief instrument for keeping this Nation the fabled land of opportunity it started out to be...As long as good schools are available, a man is not frozen at any level of our economy, nor is his son...The schools stand as the chief expression of the American tradition of fair play for everyone, and a fresh start for each generation. (Halpin, 1958, p. 168)

The fact is, institutions of higher learning today are caught in the vortex of social changes. With a growing population, rapid economic growth, and expansion of sophisticated technology in developed and even in the less developed countries, colleges and universities are challenged to participate in programs deemed vital for the growth and security of the nation. What is needed to generate these human potentials, now in the

halls of colleges and universities into dynamos for national progress, are leaders who have a "vision for the institution and being able to excite others with the articulation of this vision" (Green, 1988, p. 142), as these institutions contribute their share toward the building of the nation.

A Christian school participates in community development programs where it is established. To be able to contribute productively in the affairs of the community, a leader with vision, drive and initiative is an asset. As the leader is, so is the institution. It could be said, that the institution is the shadow of its leader. This paper on Christian Leadership Initiative: A Crucial Factor in School Administration, is an attempt to delineate leadership's role in the administration of a Christian school. Three components are presented: Christian Leadership Behavior in School Governance, Christian Leadership Initiative in Human Interactions and Christian Leadership Initiative in School Administration. Crucial leadership behavior are explored in these areas.

I. Christian Leadership Behavior in School Governance.

Our understanding of leadership in school governance is influenced by the leader's behavior in the exercise of his responsibility. It is a common knowledge that leadership characteristics are influenced by several factors, such as, the administrative structure of the institution, expectations of the community for the school, professionalism of the faculty, attitude of the students, policies of the board, objectives of the institution, social prestige gained through years of operation and even the geographical location of the school. In such a complexity of influences impacting on the leader, there can be no clear-cut model for governance.

His style may vary as he evaluates the situation and what he thinks is necessary to ensure effective functioning. An eclectic approach often is the best direction to follow. He functions in accordance with the accepted principles of administrative leadership, operative in secular institutions. However, he has a particular concern which may not be shared by other school administrators, serving in secular institutions. He believes that the school is one of God's instruments to bring redemption to humanity. In this respect, he becomes the Lord's partner in the administration of the school. Paul supports this concept when he enunciated, "For we are labourers together with God..." (1 Cor. 3:9). Crossland speaks of a Christian leader as a "Christlike personality, whose wisdom, self-sacrifice and labor cooperate with others in finding and doing the will of God" (Gangel, 1970, p. 14). He manifests a kind of behavior that is consistent with his value system.

1. Christlike Personality

This is a tall order for any school administrator to consider. The apparent failures of man-styled leadership is replete in history, just as the visible success of Christ' leadership style is so influential even in our times. The ultimate objective of "Christlike leadership" is to love people. This is the essence of Christ's ministry. Christ was compassionate and sensitive to the needs of the people. The miraculous feeding of the people recorded in Mark 8:1-3, illustrates this basic truth. What could be a better commendation for a school administrator than that of being compassionate and sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Sanner and Harper write that "the leader should love his followers. This requires a knowledge of people and a willingness to share their interests.

One who would be a Christian leader cannot escape involvement in the lives of persons" (Sanner & Harper, 1978, p. 388). Leadership alertness to the desires of the people in the school is a good measure of Christian sensitivity.

Christlike leadership is not only compassion and a sensitive spirit, but also that of a heart willing to serve. Christ has the servant's heart. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of man came not to be administered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He gives the model for Christian leaders to follow. The servant-leader model of leadership is further amplified in His instructions to the disciples. In Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus articulated the true meaning of Christian leadership. A Christian leader operates on a different positional perspective than the leaders of the secular world. The leader in God's institution has no license to exercise coercion or manipulation to advance his personal interests. In clear warning He instructed His disciples, "It shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." It is in the genuine practice of the virtues of Christlikeness—love and compassion, sensitivity, and service, that a Christian administrator finds real satisfaction in his labors. Paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required for all Christian leaders to be found faithful in exercising the virtues of Christlikeness."

There are other components vital in the administrative leadership role. Stogdill has identified twenty eight (28) leadership behaviors that affect performance in school administration which he classified them into five categories, namely, **capacity, achievement, responsibility,**

participation and status" (Gibb, 1970, pp. 92-125). Responsibility, which illustrates leadership as a function of a situation or group, complements substantially the personality traits of a Christian school administrator.

2. Responsibility.

Responsibility can take many forms. In this category, Stodgill mentioned seven characteristics, namely, **dependability, initiative, persistence, aggressiveness, self-confidence, and the desire to excel.** These are basic characteristics that the person in the leadership position must possess. Reynolds writes that "Dependable leadership is trustworthy leadership—a leadership that can be counted on. Confidences are kept. Promises are fulfilled. The leaders word is as good as his bond" (Reynolds, 1986, Vol. 1, No.4). There is assurance that Christian leaders, under the power of the Holy Spirit, will be true to their duty "as the needle to the pole." One of the most reassuring leadership ability which a Christian leader should exhibit in his ministry is dependability.

According to one of the "Management Capsules" of the United States Treasury Department, "there are three types of personnel: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who don't know what has happened." A school administrator belongs to the first category. He/she is the promoter of programs and gentle prodder of people to act. Engstrom asserts that a "true leader must have a strong drive to take the initiative to act—a kind of initial stirring that causes people and an organization to use their best abilities to accomplish a desired end" (Engstrom, 1976, p. 24).

A leader has always an eye for the future. His/her planning points clearly to the direction where he/she desires the institution to be. This

is initiative.

Gibb points out the challenging responsibilities a leader must face in the administration of an institution in the following statements:

"People perform best under leaders who are creative, imaginative and aggressive. It is the responsibility of the leader to marshal the forces of the organization, to stimulate efforts, to capture the imagination, to inspire people, to coordinate efforts and to serve as a model of sustained effort" (Gibb, 1967, p. 316).

Accepting responsibility is a basic discipline in all forms of leadership, but when it is viewed in terms of a Christian perspective, there is much more in responsibility than being just an efficient executor of administrative functions; it becomes a way of life. The Christian leader performs all the legitimate functions of secular leadership, plus the added dimensions of faith, acceptance of the power of the Holy Spirit in his life and service, and trust in the providences of God. He is willing to face up to his obligation, regardless of consequence, ever conscious of the promise that his Master, who gave him the gift of leadership, is just a prayer away from him.

More could be said about the dynamic spiritual behavior of a Christian leader, but his initiative to effectively interact with the people surrounding him deserves candid consideration.

II. Christian Leadership Initiative in Human Interactions.

In the fine art of human interaction, the school administrator finds his greatest challenge, because human emotions are in constant "flux and change." This section of the paper will identify three variables in human interactions, that appear most important to the writer, in administrative leadership function.

1. **Knowing the Person's Name.**

A person's name is music to his/her ears, and even pleasant to his/her sight, when he/she sees it in print. It becomes mandatory to know the names of the people in the institution at the quickest possible time. Some experienced administrators think that it is the "first law" in school administration. Calling people by their first names indicate closeness of relationship, but "name-calling" is a sure sign of dysfunction in human interaction.

Elder Robert H. Pierson, former president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, told a story of a tiny tot who lived in New Haven, Connecticut, who was learning to pray the Lord's prayer. This little angel prayed, "Our Father, which art in New Haven, how did you know my name?" This experienced church administrator counsels, "Learn peoples' names and call them by their names" (Pierson, 1978, p. 17). In the parable of the shepherd, Jesus underscored the importance of this matter. The shepherd "...calleth his own sheep by name..." (John 10:3).

2. **Personalized Communication.**

Information service is vital in any organization, such as a school. This information may be transmitted through a mixture of formal and informal channels. Administrators are aware that to the degree they pass on to their followers vital information relative to the schools activities, personnel performance is affected. James Lewis, Jr. makes this observation: "When people are kept informed as to the results of their efforts, even if their results are below target, they are more inclined to improve performance than if they are not kept informed" (Lewis, 1986, p. 47).

Many of the best-run companies are advocating informal communication, believing that personalized communication brings people together and closer relations are established. Visible management is the mark of leadership in these companies, which means that the "managerial personnel go to employees to listen, to inform, and to facilitate understanding" (Lewis, 1986, p. 52). Gilley and associates made a study of 20 presidents of the "on-the-move" colleges and universities in the United States, and they found that these "presidents for the most part are accessible and visible on campus, constantly looking for information in formal and informal ways. They are willing to listen, to have their ideas challenged, and even to be proven wrong" (Gilley, 1986, p. 15). Mutuality is a crucial factor in communication. The administrator's strength is not just in giving instructions, but also in listening what his followers have to say. Other Christian elements that are essential in communication are sincerity and courtesy.

Writing memos is perhaps the most common and efficient way of communication. This is often done in large institutions. However, there is still a place for a face-to-face contact. Here is a commentary worth remembering: "Underneath our veneer of sophistication, most of us still respond more strongly to the gut feelings, whether good or bad, that come across in face-to-face encounter than we do to ideas transmitted however skillfully on paper" (Folio, 1982, p. 27). From the same source, this counsel is specially given to school administrators,

Don't hide in your office; that is fatal to school administrators. Make it easy for teachers and other employees to come and talk to you. Be accessible to parents, whether angry or not. And yes, be accessible to students—that-often overlooked group of people, for whom the school, ostensibly, exist, and be accessible psychologically as well as formally. An open door, though commendable, is little help if the mind is closed.

A Christian leader is one among his people, not separate from them. Because of his position in the organizational chain of command, he has the "greater responsibility toward developing positive human relations through proper use of interpersonal communication...This is largely accomplished by means of face-to-face interaction during the working hours" (Gangel, 1981, p. 315). Again, Gangel makes this striking statement, "The most significant factor in human relations is genuine interpersonal understanding...Relating oneself to other people as a person is important for all Christians but **essential for the Christian leader**" (Gangel, 1981, p. 298). The leader's genuine interpersonal understanding with the people in the institution is a product of his relationship with the Lord.

3. Family Spirit in an Academic Culture

The school is a large community of people called to function in their individual expertise to achieve the goals of the institution. In this environment, they interact in various ways as a family of professionals. The presence or absence of togetherness and belongingness in a school campus, values that are dominant in a family relations, depends to a large degree upon the behaviour of the administrator who can significantly influence the behaviour of others. Green says that "College presidents are the living symbol of their institutions. They embody the values and aspirations of the college and its constituents, who project onto them their hopes and goals" (Green, 1988, p. 38). This is not just hallow symbolism. The leader's character is the reference point in the institution's moral strength.

A Christian administrator who is conscious of his role as a spiritual

leader, exercises what may be termed as "transformational leadership." He enjoys special rapport with the faculty and students, therefore, he can inspire and lead those teachers and students to adopt a better quality of life. This enhances the solidarity of the campus family.

Sometimes the spirit of independence in what is popularly called exaggerated individualism appears in the family of scholars. Or, individuals of kindred interests form their own faction. Petty differences sometimes divide the family. When this happens in a school campus, leadership works with undiminished resolve to restore the spirit of oneness and lead the people into the "path of the trusting personal encounter", which eases tension and restores harmony back into the family.

Someone jokingly said that "Everyone expects to pass the examination at St. Peter's gate, but very few are practicing the harp." A harp is a musical instrument with 47 strings. A harpist must know how to use the 47 strings to produce the sweetest melody. In like manner, any person who assumes the position of leadership must play the great principles of life. The Christian administrator leads his people in playing the Christian harp, touching the strings of sharing, tolerance, patience, love and support, to mention just a few. It is better to see a model, no matter how imperfect, than to hear a fine presentation in the art of modeling. As the saying goes, "I would rather see a sermon, than hear one." Paul seconds the truthfulness of this statement when he exhorted the Corinthian believers, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). In a Christian institution, the manifestation of a family spirit is highly coveted.

Leadership quality has much to do in influencing personnel behavior,

as it has a significant influence in directing institutional programs. It provides the paradigm by which administrative functions operate. Administration, as an active dimension of the institution, cannot be divorced from leadership technique. The last section of this paper deals with leadership initiative in the administration of the Christian school.

111. **Christian Leadership Initiative in School Administration**

The administrator's ability to exercise problem-solving skills and bear the burden of responsibility in making decisions demands the exercise of personal power, authority or influence. Power, authority and influence are words that are often associated with administrative leadership. In the context of institutional governance, Hartnett defined **power** as the "ability of individuals or groups to control the policy-making processes in the academic community. **Influence** ...connotes informal procedures (of control) in contrast to formal ones...**Authority** refers to power vested in an office or role (that is "authorized")... Authority may be viewed as limited power relegated to certain roles" (Hodgkinson & Meeth, 1971, p. 27). The school administrator who is the executive officer of the institution wields personal power, authority and influence as he implements the policies and programs voted by the school board. The succeeding discussions deal with such administrative perogatives.

1. **Christian Administrator's Power and Authority**

Every administrator, by definition, wields personal power and authority. The board, the policy-making body of the institution, has delegated such power and authority to the school administrator. This power should be recognized by the followers, otherwise administration cannot function efficiently. But, what kind of personal power or authority does a

Christian administrator display? Where does he get his "real" power?

It should be noted that "administration" is a distinct gift of God. 1 Corinthians 12:28 says that God gives gifts to His church, and one of them is the gift of "government" which could be well interpreted without damage to the text, as the gift of administration. The Christian administrator operates with the full knowledge that his human power must be subordinated to the divine. The patriarch David expressed explicitly that he was dependent on God's power even as the king of Israel. "God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect" (2 Samuel 22:33). Paul declared that he "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" him (Philippians 4:13)

What would be the dominant power in the Christian administrative leadership? The power of love, which is the foundation of God's government, undergirds every administrative function in the school. Love is the only valid motivation in Christian leadership. Without it, the administrative task would be unbearable. A Christian writer puts it this way:

The leader cultivates friendships based on genuine love—the agape of which the New Testament frequently speaks. It is sacrificial, focusing upon the value of the object loved. Moreover, it is God-given rather than engineered on a human level. Many times in the lonely life of a leader it is unilateral as he reaches out by the grace of God to love someone whose acts and words are unlovely and unloving in return (Gangel, 1987, p. 302).

There are a number of power outlets available to a school administrator. He may use the **reward power**, bestowing rewards to those who are worthy of the honor; **expert power**, exercising power for reason of his knowledge and expertise; and **referent power**, capitalizing on his popularity and charisma. While these power outlets have been practiced in schools

with some degree of success, the better power outlet is the **legitimate power**, which is not inherently resident in the man, or in the office he holds, but in the faculty's acceptance of his leadership. Green observes that the "desire for power or its cultivation seems incompatible with academic norms...The power that administrators do hold is usually invoked with restraint, and academic protocol discourages overt reminders of a hierarchical structure, such as referring to one's chair or dean as one's 'boss'" (Green, 1988, p.16).

It seems surprising that even in secular institutions, there is an aversion to the undistinguished exertion of power and authority. The practice is considered unprofessional. In Christian schools, such display of power and authority is simply unchristian. From a secular writer we have this advice: "The real source of power is not in the person. It is not something for the executive properly to arrogate to himself and to become self-important about" (Tead, 1951, p. 126). Vigorous assertion of personal power may lead to abuse. The truth is painful to accept, but that absolute power corrupts the possessor.

School personnel has no reason to suspect that an administrator, who practices the visibility concepts of management (management by wandering around, management by walking around, & management by socializing) is doing some managerial spying. He does this to inspire, to motivate, to teach, to assure each one that he is a "brother's keeper" and he is for the best interest of the people and institution.

The ultimate truth about personal power as it channels through administrative posts is that, it can be relied upon for good outcomes, if it is combined with a deep moral and ethical sense in executives who are leading normal, healthy lives and are animated by strong belief that "life means intensely and it means good. The outward exercise of one's desire to be powerful is so

much a result of one's whole attitude toward life, so much an evidence of the quality of one's faith, hope and love, that management and morals show themselves inseparable at this as at many other points" (Tead, 1951, p. 124).

No matter how capable is the school administrator, he cannot possibly cope with all institutional programs. He needs associates to team up with him. "It is good to remember the economic principle of the division of labor; the leader who tries to do it all is doomed to failure" (Engstrom, 1976, p. 76). Delegation of power and authority is a natural consequence for effective administration.

2. Delegation of Power and Authority

Delegation is a method that allows other individuals in an organization to function responsibly in a given task. There is no way of judging that one aspect in administrative leadership is more valuable than the others. "Functioning leadership is a seamless garment of variable activities," says Gangel. But he further says that on the "firing line (actual performance), delegation comes as close to being indispensable as any leadership characteristic can be" (Gangel, 1987, p. 341).

It appears easy on paper, but in real practice, some administrators have difficulty. An administrator who is very particular with details, may be reluctant to delegate a certain task, for fear that it may not be accomplished the way he wants it done. The other delegation problem is, when the leader adopts a free-rein type of administration, where he delegates almost all the functions of the school. His control is so slim that he does not have the full grasp of what is going on in his school. While both illustrations present negative connotations, generally speaking, delegation is productive. The leader has invested something into the future of the persons who were given some responsibilities. On the other

hand, the act of delegation can be an administrator's way of escape in making some hard decisions. He is a weak administrator who delegates certain activities or decisions because he fears their outcomes. If he is in charge, he has to take charge.

The act of delegation serves very important motives. The first, is to see that the work is accomplished in time and in greater quantity, hoping that they are also quality finished. The second, is for training leadership for the present needs, as well as for the future. An administrative internship program for future leaders, is in fact a practice in delegation. The third, is to release the senior administrator from minor responsibilities so that he can devote his time for more creative types of work. There is a biblical base to vouch for this idea. Exodus 18:13-21 records Jethro's counsel to Moses. Moses was doing all the listening to peoples' complaints from morning till evening. Jethro said it clearly, the thing that you are doing is not good. You be the peoples' spokesman to God, but the ordinary responsibilities of societal life, give them to the other leaders of Israel.

A wise leader knows that there are certain matters that he cannot delegate without relinquishing or abdicating his position. However, delegation is an important component of leadership, for when it involves significant responsibilities, with corresponding authority, it is the most important form of in-service training for future leaders. Preparing people for future leadership is an important task of school administrators.

Jesus spoke to the two recruits, Peter and Andrew, "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4: 19). Actually He made them leaders of men. His leadership was directed at building people. Inspiring them to follow His

example. This will be the same motivation for Christian leaders, building leaders for the cause of the Master.

Decisions have to be made. Arthur Holmes reasons that decisions are products of values and presuppositions of people. He says,

"Decisions are mirrors of the soul, and souls are honed and shaped by the flow of information and the rub of other minds. Our decisions, when not based primarily on impulse, peer pressure or custom, normally rest on gathered data that has been filtered through the values and presuppositions that we hold" (Holmes, 1985, p.9)

While the above expression is true, the Christian administrator seeks to avail of another source, the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the next sub-topic, the matter of decision-making is addressed.

3. Decision-Making in Administrative Processes

Directing and controlling the decision-making processes is central and very important function in administration. Halpin says that decision-making is the "heart of organization and in the process of administration" (Halpin, 1958, p. 122).

Leaders make decisions. Should it be unitary, or collaborative? Some people are in the opinion that if an administrator expects to have a speedy action, a unitary decision is better than the participative way. There are biblical principles that argue against this theory of unitary decision making. The wise man who wrote the book of Ecclesiasties has this to say: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor...a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccl. 4: 9, 12). Unitarianism is a shade of authoritarianism and Christian leaders shy away from it. Again, in Proverbs 11:14, we can picture a participatory type of decision-making: "...in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

Decision-making as a deliberative process necessitates the acceptance

of all available information. It is also a process where a free expression of ideas, opinions or assumptions can find a forum. Leadership does not stifle this right of free expression. But once a decision is reached, all the dissenting voices should forever be silent, and everyone must support the action.

Every school administrator understands that many decisions taken involve some elements of risk. For this reason, even if decisions have already been reached, sometimes their implementation is held in abeyance. There is always that hope in the administrator's mind for problems to fade away with time. Nevertheless, the leader must "face the music" no matter how disconcerting is the sound of discontent and act accordingly. A delayed decision shows an administrative weakness and a possible breeder of other problems.

The leader as the implementer of the decision in which a person or persons are affected, employs all what he knows in the art of diplomacy and Christian brotherhood. As the Scriptures say, "...be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). An experienced Christian administrator observes that decisions have to be placed on the balance of truth and mercy, and he would rather "err on the side of mercy." There is still another biblical principle worth the administrator's awareness. Decisions, especially those touching on morality should be restorative, rather than punitive. Galatians 6:1 exemplifies such Christian principle.

Let us now hear the summary of the whole matter.

Summary

A Christian leader-administrator embraces the best theories and practices in school administration resulting from studies and performances

of secular leaders. However, his/her understanding of the position is further enriched by a recognition that he/she serves in partnership with the Master Leader of the institution. The servant-leader profile is the unerring distinction of his/her leadership behavior.

As a servant-leader of the Christian school family, he goes about his duties with the keen perception of his ministerial calling as a spiritual leader, counselor and guide to a better and more elevated life-style. He desires to put the institution on the plane of excellence with the full support of the people he leads. The success and glory is shared with his people, as well as its adversities. His dexterity in human interaction is not a product of human scheme or political diplomacy, but a result of his perception that the campus family is God's family here on earth and he acts as the overseer.

The power of love becomes his motivating force in dealing with his fellowmen. Love still shines even in days of adversity. Decisions are made with the keen consciousness that mercy and truth are the only factors underlining such decisions. He is a diligent student of human behavior, of the will of God for him and the institution he serves. He leads not for personal aggrandizement, but to accept the responsibility, as Peter and Andrew did when the Lord made them fishers of men. Christian leaders are called to be leaders of men.

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