

REFRAMING THE PATH TO SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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- In diagnosing any situation, you will draw on past experience and learning. These have given you mental lenses that you rely on to define and frame reality.
- University education typically gives short shrift to broadening your vision, sorting out social dynamics in your classroom or school, or working with others.
- The best leaders use multiple frames or lenses, each offering a different perspective on common challenges. The ability to use multiple frames has three advantages:
 - Each can be coherent, focused, and powerful
 - The collection can be more comprehensive than any single one
 - Only when you have multiple frames can you reframe.
- When we don't know what to do, we do more of what we know – we're only digging ourselves into a deeper hole.
- The political frame points out the limits of authority and the inevitability that resources are almost always too scarce to fulfill all demands. Schools and classrooms are arenas where individuals and groups jockey for power. Everyone is caught up in this political vortex. Goals emerge from bargaining and compromise among competing interests rather than from rational analysis. Conflict becomes an inescapable by-product of everyday life. If handled properly, it can be a source of constant energy and renewal.
- The human resource frame is a favorite among teachers and principals. It highlights the importance of individual needs and motives. It assumes that schools and classrooms, as well as other social systems work best when needs are satisfied in a caring, trusting work environment. Showing concern for others and providing ample opportunities for participation and shared decision-making are among the ways to enlist people's commitment and involvement. Many teachers and principals have found that involving others in shaping decision gives them a sense of ownership in what happens each day.
- The structural frame emphasize productivity and posits that classrooms and schools work best when goals and roles are clear and when efforts of individuals and groups are highly coordinated through authority, policies, and rules as well as through more informal strategies. Holding people accountable for their responsibilities and setting measurable standards are an important part of this rational approach.
- The symbolic frame centers attention on culture, meaning, belief, and faith. Every school or classroom and every human group creates symbols to cultivate commitment, hope and loyalty. Symbols govern behavior through shared values, informal agreements, and implicit understandings. Stories, metaphors, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and play add zest and existential buoyancy to an enterprise. The school becomes a joyful way of life rather than a sterile or toxic place of work.
- In dealing with leadership challenges most educators rely primarily on the human resource or structural lenses. Yet, many of the situations you face are highly charged politically and emotionally packed symbolically.
- Frames
 - The frames are powerful, memorable tools
 - The frames help people see things they once overlooked and come to grips with what is really going on.
 - When individuals reframe, they see new possibilities and become more versatile and effective in their responses.

- Shouldn't you get to know this school and how we do things before you preach about how we should teach?
- The climate there (in business) had been competitive, even cut throat, but people never went for the jugular.
- It may take a little while, but I hope he'll realize that I was telling him what he needed to hear – why the teachers didn't like his opening salvo.
- If you really want to torpedo an administrator, you don't do it with a frontal assault. Silent resistance and passive aggression are deadly.
- The first law of holes: when you're in one, stop digging.
- I needed someone to level with me when I was screwing up.
- Leadership lessons
 - Expect to be tested: New teacher was tested by custodian,, assistant principal
 - Study cultural clues: What do you notice when you enter the building. Notice artifacts, photos, trophy cases. What's on the walls? Photos, graffiti, What do people wear? How do people greet you?
 - Find guides: mentors, priests, and storytellers; listen for clues about trouble ahead, find out who the heroes and heroines are
 - Connect with the grapevine gossips: use it to learn what is happening and to get your word out.
- Lyndon Johnson: It's a lot better to have (enemies) inside the tent peeing out, than outside the tent peeing in.
- Draw a political map: players, what they want and how much power they have; identify who is with you, who is against you and who is on the fence and might be persuaded to your side.
- When a new principal comes in, all the unresolved issues get opened up. The different interest groups are all jockeying to hold on to what they have and see if they can get more.
- Very few school leaders know how important it is to learn how to facilitate your opposition. Otherwise your opponents agree to your face then stab you when your back is turned.
- Some people have power because of their information and know how; others were influential because of their friend and allies. Others are powerful because of their control of rewards and ability to coerce. Others have power based on memories of genial warmth. Others have power as a result of their influence over agendas and symbols.
- Sometimes it is necessary to take decisive steps. The key was to do it in a way that does not create a martyr or a victim around whom others would rally.
- A school and a kindergarten classroom have a lot in common. Like an ocean, you never turn your back on them.

Chapter Five

- Instead of a difference between two individuals, we have a potential war between two groups. People are starting to rally the troops to make sure their interests triumph. You have a political problem. You need a political strategy.
- Political:
 - Who are the people who are likely to make a difference in how the issue gets resolved?
 - Befriend your enemies.
 - What is it that the opposition is really concerned about?
 - Focus on students, not on stance.
 - Acknowledge your own struggles.
 - Use pilot projects as a way to learn more about how new approach might work.

- Schools are political because of two essential features
 - There are inevitably coalitions of different individuals and groups with enduring differences in background beliefs, and agendas. People differ by role (parents, teachers, administrators, students), by discipline or grade level (counselors, special education teachers, resource teachers), by race and ethnicity, by social class, and by ideology (beliefs about how best to teach reading or mathematics)
 - Scarce resources. There is never enough money, time or human energy to do everything or to give everyone all they want. Choices have to be made.
- Politics
 - Who are the key players? Who are the people, or groups, who care about the issue at hand? Will they care enough to support or oppose you? Who will, or might, make a difference in how things turn out? Whose help is necessary? Whose opposition is too important to ignore?
 - What is the interest of each of the key players or groups? That is, what stake does each player have in this issue? What does each player want, and what can you do to help them get at least part of what they care about?
 - How much power does each player have? Who is likely to have the greatest influence over how this issue plays out? What are the sources of power for each key player? Who could become a valuable ally if their power was mobilized? Are there any “sleeping dogs” better left undisturbed?
- Use above answers to draw a map.
- Develop an approach
 - Clarify your agenda: You are clear on your agenda when you have both a vision of where you want to go and a strategy for getting there.
 - Build relationships and alliances: Work on building relationships with the key players. Spend time with them, and find out how they think what’s important for them, and what they would like from you. The better your relationships, the more likely you are to build support and defuse opposition.
 - Soothe and learn from the opposition: Talk to potential opponents. Listen to them, ask questions and listen some more. Make sure that you understand how they think and what they care about. Acknowledge the importance of their perspectives. Encourage them to engage in a dialogue with the people with whom they disagree.
 - Deal openly with differences: it is tempting but dangerous to ignore conflict or to sweep it under the rug in hopes that it will go away. Usually it just festers and gets worse. People need a chance to voice their concerns and to hear other people’s as well. Otherwise, difference too easily descend into personal animosity, backstabbing and street fights.
 - Negotiate: When you know what you and other key players want, you’re ready to talk about options and possibilities for “win-win” solutions. Optimism and persistence can work wonders when guided by the question, what can we do that works for as many people as possible?

Human Resource

- One way people are different from plants is that they can often tell you what they need, if you pay attention. Are you sure what you’re giving them is what they want from you?
- Mystery-mastery model. People have a tendency to protect themselves. One way is blame someone else when things go wrong. But they rarely tell the person they’re blaming, because that’s risky. Maybe it’s human nature to protect yourself and other people from the truth sometimes. But I’ve always liked the adage that if life gives you a lemon, try to make lemonade.
- A neutral third party can help get the conversation going.
- In my first year as a principal, I worried about losing my authority and teachers’ respect. So I tried to prove how strong I was. It backfired. People could tell that I was insecure. I learned that sometimes

the best thing you can do is to let other people know how you're feeling. You don't have to be the only gardener. Your needs are as important as anyone else's.

- Something goes wrong in a relationship. We get upset, and we start to blame the other person. Then we start trying to fix whatever we think is wrong with them. We pressure them, try to manipulate them, tell them what they're doing wrong. We try to get the other person to change. It doesn't work very well, but then we blame the other person for being defensive and not listening.
- Alternative? Communication. Listening. Working together. Start with the things you have in common.
- What's crazy is that we're at war because we both feel the same way.
- I learned how big a gap you can have between what you think you're doing and what your teachers think you're doing.
- The truth often hurts in the short run, but it seems to bring dividends over the long haul.
- She found that in the US, principals tended to feel the weight of just about everything on their shoulders. In Japan, staff and students feel a responsibility to make the principal's job easier. In Japan, the principal cannot stay too late in the afternoon, because teachers felt they could only go home after the principal had left.
- Leadership Lessons
 - Empower yourself and others: when leaders try to do everything themselves, they leave everyone else frustrated and disempowered.
 - Open up communications – ask question and tell the truth: Much of M. Juhl's ability to be helpful to Rodriguez and Hilliard came from her willingness to risk telling the truth to her boss as well as to her friends – even when she knew they might not like what she had to say
 - Ask for feedback
 - Take initiative to empower yourself and others.

Structural

- Everyone's talking about empowering teachers and sharing decision making but people are also telling principals that they're supposed to be strong instructional leaders. So principals often feel in a bind.
- CAIRO: C: consulted, A: approves decision, I: informed of decision, R: responsible; O: out of decision loop.
- A group needs to be clear about four things
 - What it is supposed to do
 - What authority it has
 - Who it is accountable to
 - What it is accountable for
- Over the years, I've learned not to attack when there is nothing to be won.
- In a classroom, a school, or any other group, people like to know where they're headed, who is charge, what they are supposed to do, and how their efforts related to others'.
- Leadership lessons
 - Clarify roles
 - Design groups for success rather than failure
 - What are we supposed to do? (What is our goal? What is the task we are charged to do?)
 - What authority and resources do we have?
 - To whom are we accountable?
 - What are we accountable for? (What are we supposed to produce? A policy? An implementation plan? A written report? An oral presentation?)
 - Groups with manageable tasks, sufficient authority, and clear accountability have a higher probability of success.

- Set or clarify goals.
- Shape a structure that fits (arrangement of roles and relationships). Structure can work for or against us, though we're much more likely to notice when it misfires or gets in our way.
- Schools have good and bad goals. The good ones are displayed as virtues. Shadier ambitions are hidden.
- We need to make the formal system work for us. This is not the sole province of anyone. It is an ongoing dance. It only happens when teachers and administrators stop blaming and learn to dance the same steps.

Symbolic Frame

- We even bond to things we don't like – like devils or scapegoats. We blame them for problems we don't understand.
- Change is a little like what happens when a trapeze artist has to let go of one bar before grabbing the next. It's scary to let go but there is more danger in hanging on too long.
- They've never had a chance to mourn his loss or celebrate his life at the school, so it is harder for them to let go.
- How would you feel if someone went up to your grandmother's attic and tossed everything out?
- It wasn't the stuff itself that was important, it was what it represented. You tossed out memories.
- I'm just a great teacher!
- Celebration and ceremony are antidotes to boredom, cynicism, and burnout. They bring members of a group together, strengthen bonds, and build spirit and faith.
- Leadership lessons
 - Learn and celebrate the history
 - Diagnose the strength of the existing culture: Some schools have very strong cultures. Beliefs, values, and practices are clear and widely shared. Others have weak cultures. There is little agreement about or pride in the school's identity. Weak cultures often call out for change; they are an invitation to strong leadership. Strong cultures are the reverse: They resist change and reject newcomers who are seen as enemies of tradition. Unfortunately, the educational landscape is littered with too many toxic schools that have developed an entrenched culture of blaming, defeatism, and circle the wagons. If you sign on with one of those, you'll need patience, persistence, and a lot of support from somewhere to have much hope of making a positive difference.
 - Reinforce and celebrate the culture's strengths
 - Mark transition with ceremony. Beginnings and endings, like triumphs and tragedies, require some form of symbolic recognition.

Values, Ethics and Spirit

- I still wish I'd found better way to balance teaching and the rest of my life.
- Problems have solutions. Dilemmas don't exactly have solutions, because you're caught between different values – like between commitment to teaching and commitment to family.
- Four issues that every organization, schools, included, need to address
 - Create a structure that works
 - Respond to people's needs and provide the skills that they need
 - Manage conflict effectively
 - Develop a shared sense of meaning and commitment.
- Managers do things right and leaders do the right thing.
- Excellence: Our job is to help kids achieve as much as possible. In terms of that, the role of the leader is like an engineer or an architect – diagnosing how things are working and figuring out how to do it better.

- Caring: People have an obligation to care about one another and to look out for each other's welfare.
- Justice: fairness. People have a right to fair and equal treatment.
- Faith: Something that everyone could believe in.
- The longer that I've been a principal, the more I'm convinced that a principal has to be a spiritual leader.
- Somewhere along the line we got confused and started to think of schools as factories instead of temples.
- It is a level we are almost embarrassed to talk about – the spiritual dimension that makes teaching calling. It is about values: the values we live by and the values we pass on to our students.
- Faith is believing in things when everything tells you not to.
- This book tries to illustrate the process of converting knowing-about into know-how.
- Reflect and dialogue about practices. Reflection is something that readers can and should do by themselves, but its value is enhanced immeasurably with help from others: friends, colleagues, and mentors.
- Both teachers and principals often feel isolated and trapped in their classrooms and offices. Though rarely alone, they are often lonely. They are starved for opportunities to talk freely and openly with other adults who can really understand what their life is like.