Educational Reform of Democratic Schools: A Case Study of New DEEL

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Abstract: New DEEL (New Democratic Ethical Leadership) originates from the 9th Annual Values and Leadership Conference. Since the end of 2004, members of New DEEL embarked a research study on curriculum worldwide which enable teachers and students form the US and Australia to participate in the processing of reform, expression their opinions, and play a role in the school development of curriculum, instruction and assessment. On February 2005, educational unites in the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania and members from Temple University, Penn State University, and Australian Catholic University et al. initiated cooperation and strategy association in hopes that starting with the US, concepts of New DEEL will be widely spread in schools. As the primary advocate of New DEEL project, Gross found that based on a few examples on the reform of curriculum, instruction and assessment promoted by several districts, leaders are likely to experience different degrees of organizational turbulence or otherwise volatile conditions. The beginning stage of current project has not completely categorized the details of leadership missions.

Failures of past educational reform are often resulted in the opposition of conservatives or accidental incidents that impedes reform facilitation. A leader’s behavior should no be monotonous; rather he/she should change in accordance with the degree of the opposite force, or turbulence. In other words, leaders’ behavior during extreme turbulence is not necessarily the same as those during light turbulence. Leaders must learn to always consider the time and current situations. The path of reform consists of many unknown factors. Reformists may also induce the opposite force from anti-reformists. This study attempts to investigate whether New DEEL is suitable for curriculum reform in Taiwan. In addition, Gross’s Turbulent Theory is also utilized to describe how leaders create a democratic educational environment with the paradigms of ethical leadership.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Turbulence Theory, Vocational High School, Curriculum Reform

摘要：新民主與道德領導(the New DEEL)的概念起始於2004年第九屆「價值與領導年會」。從2004年底，New DEEL成員開始進行跨國性課程研究計畫，讓美國與澳洲的教師與學生有機會參與改革，表達意見，並且可以影響學校發展課程、教學與評量。在2005年二月天主大學、賓州州立大學、佛蒙特大學、盧安大學、奧克拉荷馬大
In 1921, Dewey spent two years in China where he delivered a number of public speeches and talked about how to incorporate democracy into China’s educational reform. Dewey felt that the school should be the basic unit in the reconstruction of China (Keenan, 1977).

Five of his most significant speeches were translated into Chinese by famous figures such as Paking University President Hu Shi. These speeches were widely circulated in China and had profound influences on many recent Chinese philosophers such as Lian Su-Ming regarding issues of educational reform. Unfortunately, Dewey’s concept was not highly valued during the period of civil wars and the two world wars. Educational problems in China remain, such as the highly centralized educational system, communist political education, lack of democratic education, inefficient educational mechanisms (Zhou, 2003).

Since China’s economy was opened up more than two decades ago, the belief states that education is the driving force for economic development prevails in the society. After the reconstruction of economy, the demand for education reform increases. The system of Unitarianism has become the target of critique by many education reformists. Both the principles and teachers seem to have lost their well-respected status as advocated by the traditional five cardinal relationships. Many reformists even considered educators as rebels against education reform. As much as we see democracy as a powerful impulsion to education reform, only doctrinal stereotyped writing style was included in educational curriculums and yet we see no intention of cultivating students’ democratic sensibility in these curricula. Autonomy in programming and determination of curricula also seems to be absent within the Chinese system (Turner & Acker, 2002). On the other hand, the teachers have no access to the curriculum development, and neither the students could learn about the...
concept of democracy in school. Thus, to incorporate democracy in education seems to be a far-fetched ideal.

Furthermore, during the period of rocketing economic development, rather than the achievement-oriented transactional leaderships which are highly valued in business management, the democratic and ethical transformative leadership may be more appropriate in school education which also corresponds to the well-regarded conducts of a school leader. Confucius’s innovative and revolutionary saying “instruct all and reject none” breaks the barriers of education accessibility which was then the privilege to the class of nobles. Both Confucianism, the “School of the Literati” and Taoism have profound influence to Chinese culture. However, after the abolition of feudalism and the invasion of western culture, many educators discarded traditional Chinese philosophy and embraced only western theories. Nonetheless, can traditional Chinese philosophy and western culture co-exist? Do they share anything in common?

This study introduces the theory of “New DEEL” and attempts to interpret the viewpoints of New DEEL based on the philosophy of Confucianism and Taoism and further discuss issues that deserve careful examination by China’s education leaders. As an educator, I believe that we can discover the same value and faith among different cultures.

Since Dewey advocated democratic education more than 80 years ago, can New DEEL insert new ideas to China’s education? In addition, how do leaders cope with the turbulence caused by education reform? How does authoritarian leaderships transform into democratic leaderships? How do leaders maintain traditional ethical values under today’s dilemma of education reform? This paper will explore the above issues in the following discussion.

**Predicaments of the Principles**

The expectations derived from China’s enormous education reform urge school principles of all levels to face changes of today’s education systems. For example, in Taiwan, a new system of principle election was implemented since 2001. In the beginning, because of the public’s misunderstanding towards the new electoral system, many people were skeptical about the advantage and efficiency of the new system. After the end of the first four-year term, all of the principles were evaluated by the community and school. They were also challenged by their competitors. Thus, many principles proposed to abolish this electoral system and decrease teachers’ involvement in the election which appeared to be the most controversial issue at the time.
In addition, the central education department was under the pressure from some principles due to the possible failure to win consecutive elections. They thus assumed the roles as coordinators and attempted to diminish opportunity of free competition. To further explore this issue, it appears that most principles strongly have ‘hierarchical difference’. It means they biased against them being degraded as merely Inferior (teachers) once they had been promoted to the Superior (principles). Thus, they demanded the central administrative department to consolidate their positions regardless of public opinions.

Moreover, strong economic development replaces traditional ethical values with utilitarianism. Many parents believe that by fair means or foul, students must obtain good grades, which subsequently promise good colleges and lead them to higher social status. As the economic gap widens in many major cities in China, education resources are no longer equally distributed in remote areas. As a result, the idea of “winner takes all” has profoundly influenced students’ judgment and social values in China.

**New Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership (DEEL)**

In response to he challenges facing the field of educational leadership today, colleagues form University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) joined committed practitioners to take action. During 2004-2005, faculty and department leaders from Temple University, Penn State University, University of Vermont, Rowan University, University of Oklahoma, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Australian Catholic University, as well as U.S., Canadian and Australian practitioner leaders have launched a new movement in the field of educational leadership, This movement, called the New DEEL (Gross & Shapiro, 2005).

New DEEL movement aims to change leaderships that overly emphasized achievements and goal-realization by increasing the focus on democracy and ethic in the training of leaderships. The system of literati and officialdom in during the time of feudalism heavily influenced the forming course of expectation for schools. Chinese traditions value school achievements greater than ethical training.

As Dewey (1903) said, ‘The isolation of the school renders school knowledge inapplicable to life and so infertile in character.’ *Schools have been captured by the concept of “accountability,” which has been transformed from a notion that schools need to be responsive and responsible to community concerns to one in which numbers are used to demonstrate that schools have met their minimal requirement* (Purpel & Mclaurin, 2004).

As a result, achievement-oriented schools which eschew creativity in favor of rote memorization often exhibit low administrative efficiency. Moreover, there are fewer devoted
and enthusiastic teachers and students only pay attention to their grades rather than the overall personality development.

Because accountability in all its forms has become such a popular approach to educational reform, it is important to understand the parameters of how the term is used, and to explore as well the underlying philosophies that guide concepts of accountability (Gross, Shaw & Shapiro, 2003).

On the other hand, bureaucratic administrative organizations seem to dominate all of the decision-making in schools. The lack of a democratic environment has always been a stumbling stone on the course of educational reform. *Democracy is the belief in equality and shared power among members of the schools community* (Gross, 2004).

After the reform and open-up of China’s economy, utilitarianism, credentialism and diplomaism became rampant in schools. Schools became places that trained college-bound students rather than a bethel that trains dignified and ethical individuals. Perhaps, New DEEL movement can emerge as a force that promotes the democratization of China’s education and ethical leadership.

**Confucianism and Ethical Leadership**

Ethic is a shared value between the east and west. In Confucianism’s philosophy, ethic is the required discipline of a true leader. In The Analects, it was stated that even in the most complex social scenarios, Confucius always referred to ethic in assigning the right form of behavior to the leader. *Confucius believed that the cultivation of individual ethics was the foundation of society* (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

On the other hand, in the western theories of leadership development, a change of focus was seen from ‘transformative leaderships’ to ‘ethical leaderships’. Years ago, a book entitled “Ethical leadership and decision making in education” by Shapiro and Stefkovich drew awareness of the public on theories of education leaderships. Ethical leadership states that the following ethical disciplines can help education leaders to make favorable decisions when facing dilemmas. In book, it takes into account the four ethical paradigms of justice, critique, care and the profession.

1. Ethic of Justice
   Justice represents a foundational concept of well-regarded social order (Lin, 2000).
   ‘The leader takes justice in order to do his duty. (the Analects, Book XVIII)’
Leaders should always bear the essence of ethic in mind and cope with all tasks with justice. There is a story in the Analects: ‘Once, Chi Kang Tzu asked Confucius about leadership. He answered, “To leader is to do justice.” If you set an example by doing justice, who would dare to remain injustice?’

Confucius' political thought is based upon the rule of virtues. He argues that a ruler must have a sense of justice and expects himself to be the role models for his people. In so doing, his people will follow his leadership. Lao Tzu of Taoism also argues that leaders should lead his subordinates with justice. It was mentioned in Tao Te Ching: ‘Tao (the way ahead) is like the stretching of a bow. The high it presses down, the low it lifts up. (LXXVII, Tao Te Ching)’

Taoism believes that Tao implies the essential, unnamable process of the universe. Lao Tzu argues that only justice is the Tao in the unruly society. Leaders must lead his people and handle all tasks in an unselfish manner. A selfish and recalcitrant leader is likely to incur discontent from his subordinates.

2. Ethic of Care

‘The Way of Heaven, to protect the inferior people, made for them masters, and made for them instructors. (The Shoo King , The Great Declaration)’ The philosophy of Confucianism embraces the belief that the ruler and teacher are the two sides of one coin (Lin, 2000). Confucius believes that ethic can change a utilitarian society and is the essence and internalization of leadership.

‘The rule of ethics can be compared to the Pole Star which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place. (the Analects, Book II)’ Confucius also argues that one should act towards others from an underlying attitude of ‘Ren (Benevolence)’ when confronting dilemmas. The concept of Ren is also the ultimate manifestation of Confucian ethic. This, regardless of one’s situation, leaders should always care for their students and prioritize the students’ interests.

3. Ethic of Profession

In creating the ethic of the profession paradigm, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2004) placed the best interests of the student at the center. A story in The Analects, one day Tzu-lu asked about leadership. Confucius said, ‘Encourage the people to work hard by setting an example yourself. (the Analects, Book XIII)’ Those who hold higher positions have greater responsibility. They have to worker harder than their subordinates. In other words, leaders must lead his subordinates with wisdom and professionals (Ju, 1999).
However, in China’s education system, a professional educator is valued by his/her students’ academic performance rather than his/her educational logos.

The Confucianist tendency to emphasize the “master” as expert leads to an expectation that student performance ultimately mirrors the direct competence of the educator (Turner & Acker, 2002). From the viewpoint of ethical leadership, school leaders should become professional educators and instruct his students with well-regarded educational logos instead of sacrificing students’ interests by placing excessive emphasis on personal benefits.

4. Ethic of Critique

Unfortunately, Confucianism rarely examines a leader’s ability to criticize. In the wave of post-modernism, ethic of critique is well regarded by educators. In studies on China’s leadership, no one has yet considered criticism as an appropriate behavior. In addition, most educational leaders do not have the capability of reflection. They often treat their subordinates’ critique and opinions as nothing but complaints. Traditional leaders rarely refer to others’ ideas. Worst of all, the psychological state of differential matrices often dictates leaders to involve partiality treatment (differential mode of the association) in decision-making. Thus, a controversial issue is likely to be treated as the result of controversial personnel.

Educational Leader Behavior in a turbulent era

As a leader, he/she should understand social expectation for reformation. Unfortunately, most principles are accustomed to authoritarianism-oriented curriculum standard and are insensitive to the demand of the focus on ethic education from the society. In the past, authoritarianism placed its emphasis on a stabilized society which often backfired and resulted in a society inured to the old system., Leaders often tend to treat the demand for reform with ignorance and are reluctant to respond to social expectations.

In book ‘Staying Centered: Curriculum Leadership in a Turbulent Era’, Gross(1998) found that sites that had developed curriculum, instructional and assessment innovations for several years, all experienced some degree of organizational turbulence or otherwise volatile conditions. According to Turbulent Theory, Gross further conceptualizes the degree of turbulence at the ten schools and districts he studied into four degrees:

1. Light: Associated with ongoing issues, little or no disruption in normal work environment, subtle signs of stress.
2. Moderate: Widespread awareness of the issue, specific origins.
3. Severe: Fear for the entire enterprise, possibility of large-scale community demonstrations, a feeling of crisis.
4. Extreme: Structural damage to the school’s normal operation is occurring. Collapse of the reform seems likely.

The essence of “turbulent theory” states that leaders must guide the teachers to achieve tasks of reformation in a multiplicity of turbulence, which corresponds to the revelation of I Ching by Lao Tzu. China’s classic I Ching treats an organization as an entity. There might be conflicts among different entities but they move towards the course of harmony. Hence conflicts and contradictions are seen as the transformative interaction of yin and yang. Ying and yang are two opposing but complementary forces, they both originate from Tao and converge into Tao which creates the evolution of events as a process, and acceptance of the inevitability of change. The continuing interaction between the two creates momentum that results in harmonious organizations (Hsu, 2005).

Other than the inevitability of turbulent era, the binary sequence of yin and yang, Lao Tzu believes that leaders should go by the saying “Turning back is how the way moves” under the turbulence of reformation. In other words, Tao is the principle behind the unceasing flow of change towards the opposite direction. Based on the concept of Tao, Lao Tzu argues that the opposite force presented by yin and yang symbolizes the idea that everything has its opposite. The two opposite forces consume and support each other and create a harmonious motion in the universe.

The philosophy of Lao Tzu centered on the idea that one should avoid explicit intentions, strong wills or proactive actions. In other words, there is not an absolute way to be a leader. In contrast, one would arrive to his real efficiency by following the movement of spontaneously. Hence, in the face of large-scale reformation, school leaders should not passively oppose the reformation. Instead, actions should be taken in accordance with the trend of reformation. The goal of educational reforms is to accomplish missions of education reform, which centers on democracy and attributes ethic as faithful belief.

Research method

The author conducted an observatory study on new curriculum project of vocational school during the period of August, 2004 and July, 2005. Current study is conducted with qualitative approach and two vocational schools are selected as the research subjects. This study aims to study curriculum reform in these two schools and describes leadership paradigm and the response measure to the predicament of curriculum reform. The research scope of current study focuses not only on basic theory but also the discussion of aspects on
the issue after a long-term observation. Finally, analyses of curriculum reform in the two schools chosen are based on the scenario of curriculum reform and the leaders’ plans in guiding curriculum development.

Research subject background and Organizational Turbulence

The first vocational school current study observes is located in central Taiwan, hereinafter referred to as S. S school was established during the period of Japanese Occupation and is specialized in cultivating industrial man force. The major business activity in the County of S School is agriculture and thereby the academic inclination of students recruited is ordinary. The percentage rank for Basic Academic Examination of students enrolled is about 50%. Although numerous students attended junior college after graduation, more than 30% of students enter the work force. The second school (hereinafter referred to T school) studied is located in northern Taiwan. Because T school is located in the outskirt of a city, and the success of implementation of alternate cooperative education, T school has maintained active interaction with local markets, companies and service industry. However, as the growth of service industry slows down in recent years, the focus of cooperative education changes accordingly which also has an influence on relevant curriculum planning.

Based on the Turbulence Theory proposed by Gross (1998), S school and T school are undergoing different degree of organizational turbulence. The chaos concomitant with curriculum reform is likely to cause turbulence in the school and debacle reform. The description below introduces some important observations and the degree of turbulence that might be caused by these observations.

1. Reform Predicaments of S School

One of the department directors mentioned during the interview that “it is important to first gain teachers’ trust when implementing the reform. After all, it is not easy for the teachers to change their specialty.” On the other hand, in the newly developed curriculum, it is hoped that technical training will be reduced in future professional course and increase the cultivation of professional ethics and basic ability. However, many teachers do not agree with this concept. Hence, this proposal was criticized by many teachers in the curriculum meeting.

One teacher of technical course mentioned that “we understand the importance of professional ethics and basic ability for students. However, it is not an easy task to integrate these ideas into professional course. I am not saying that this is not a feasible idea, but there are difficulties that we will have to face.”
During conducting the study, S school went through moderate crises depicted in Turbulence Theory. As a result, the principal too believed that the controversy caused by curriculum reform will induce attention from outside.

2. Reform Predicament of T School

T school is located in the suburban area in northern Taiwan which in the past has focused on professional curriculum and internship training when implementing alternate cooperative education. In the past, students rarely participate in the process of class allocation or curriculum arrangement. However, after the implementation of new curriculum, the school aims to merge certain subjects and reduce the hours of internship training. These changes have a major impact on students and parents who are accustomed to the old system. In addition, due to the regression of consumer market in recent years, many companies who participated in cooperative education project reduce the employments of full-time employees but increase the quantity of internship students. Restricted by the law, the companies can hire only a limited number of students. Hence, many companies do not emphasize on the internship quality and protect students by taking the advantage of the loophole in law.

One of the teachers in T school said during the interview that “manufacturers participated in the cooperative education project have their own concerns, however, regulations of Alternative Cooperative Education Training have stipulated the principles of relevant course. In any case, the principal’s adherence to these regulations is far from being improper.”

After the political party substitution, many parents and students have circulated political issues on campus. The political inclinations of students, parents, or teachers have been the origins of most disputes. Even in the curriculum development meeting, employers of different political stands extend the political confrontation into discussions in the meeting.

One teacher said that “in fact, school is the epitome of the society. Hence, when the school loses its democratic faith, curriculum reform may not easily rivet great attention.

**Ethical Leadership of principals in S & T school.**

In the past, the appointment of vocational school principal is directed by central education unit. However, currently, the appointment of principal must be decided by the central, parents and teachers; hence, candidates of vocational school principal not only must be equipped with highly professional and educational knowledge and experience in educational administration, it would be difficult for them to be selected if they cannot gain the trust of central, parents and teachers. As a result, current vocational principals not only have knowledge of
Both principals interviewed entered vocational school as teachers and have served as directors. Hence, they both have accumulated enormous experience in curriculum and teaching. Prior to the appointment of principals, they have served in schools for more than 15 years and acquired experience in educational administration. The author and both interviewees have devoted themselves in curriculum reform and thereby eliminate the problem and confusions of academic terminology as well as cognition differences. In addition, current study have begin to collect background information of the two schools several weeks prior to the interview.

1. Ethical Leadership of Principal at S School

For S school, most of the current teachers are senior teachers and tend to be more conservative. They are especially resistant to curriculum reform and subject adjustment. In the initial stage of new curriculum development, principal at S school convened a meeting in regards to issues of subject adjustments. However, under the resistant pressure of the teachers, directors who attended the meeting did not propose any substantial plans. In the incident of subject adjustment, principal at S school believed that egoism of the teachers outweighed the purpose of the reform which posed a major difficulty.

Principal of S school said that “I was once a subject director myself and I understand their concern. What I can do now is convince them as a professional that curriculum reform is a must.

Shapiro & Stefkovich argued that the paradigm of ethic of profession is for the leaders to become educational professional. The principal at S school have devote himself to vocational education and earned a doctoral degree in vocational education. Hence, not only is he qualified for leading the faculty and staff to accept the necessity of reform but he is highly capable of demonstrating professional knowledge regarding the theory as well as practice of curriculum reform.

Another major incident of S school is the amendment and establishment of curriculum contents. Many teachers hold opposing opinions on the reform directions of simplification of specialized training and incorporation of humanity.

The principal of S school mentioned that “in the past, we lack the concept of students-first when developing curriculum which has become a methodism. Hence, I often criticize my
co-workers about their attitude in the meeting of curriculum development. I feel obliged to help teachers to reflect themselves and not to order their subordinates with authority.

Shapiro & Stefkovich believed that in the paradigm of Ethic of Critique, reflection is the driving force of reform from bottom to top. In the incident of curriculum content, the principal of S school promotes democracy in curriculum policy making by teacher reflection. Specialized training shall no longer be the only goal in vocational professional curriculum. The wave of curriculum reform is to simplify specialized and internship courses and add elements of humanity and ethics in hopes that the students will acquire abilities when changing careers or pursuing further studies.

2. Ethical Leadership of Principal at T School

For T school, because of its location, the social environment is more complex and it is inevitable that teachers and students are influenced by the surrounding environment. In this curriculum reform, the conflicts of political positions among teachers and staff also have had an impact on the operation of curriculum development.

The principal at T school said that “the major problem of the reform is the distortion of values among teachers and students. The lack of trust from students to school and conflict of interests among teachers have caused misinterpretation of many valuable concepts.

The principal at T school believed that curriculum reform shall be supported by a harmonious community of teachers. However, conflicts of teachers’ political positions disunite the teacher community. As a result, the principal tends to handle these situations by showing them his concern and caring for them. In the case of conflicts between teachers and students during the period of promoting new curriculum, the principal attempted to place students’ interest above the ideology on campus. Shapiro & Stefkovich argued that the essence of Ethic of Care is for the leaders to constantly consider students’ interests regardless of the crisis. The principal at T school revolves the opposition among teachers by caring for them and eliminate the lack of trust on the reform from students and parents. These efforts of the principal are the true realization of the core concepts of Ethic of Care.

On the other hand, the principal conducted an overall inspection on issues of internship curriculum by convening teacher of professional subjects. In fact, companies participating in the cooperative education have not been able to build a communication channel with the teachers in regards to the design of training course. In addition, some companies are rather short-sighted by compressing training budget which jeopardize the students’ education right.
Some companies even threatened the school to concede by attempt of terminating the contract.

The principal at T school said that “in the past, because of the emphasis on human feelings, reasons and the law, the regulations are often neglected. For protecting the students’ best interest, the principal has the obligation to regulate these companies.

When handling the issues of cooperative education, the principal at T school approached these issues with rational communication pattern in solving the disputes of internship course. Shapiro & Stefkovich argued that Ethic of Justice is best realized when the leaders execute authority with justice instead of partiality. The principal at T school oversee the abuse of cooperative education training courses to reform the deep-rooted issues caused by the teachers and companies participating in the cooperative education training.

Conclusion (Recommendations on behalf)
1. Establishing appropriate research on the educational leadership of Chinese culture.

In recent years, a number of studies were published on the subject of China’s educational leadership. Most of the theories of educational leadership in these studies are western theories. However, only a few studies focused on the behavior of educational leadership. In general, these studies used educational leadership rubrics as the research tool to evaluate specific subjects in China. Although this type of research uses Chinese as research samples, all of the theories and research tools applied in the research originated from the west, an interesting phenomenon that merits deep contemplation.

2. The Spirit of New Democratic-Ethical Educational Leadership (DEEL) – A role model for future education.

Recently, Taiwan’s media is immersed with negative news. In order to make it to the front page of a newspaper, many politicians and actors conduct anti-ethical behaviors, which have negative influence to the society. Especially during the period of municipal elections when all we see on the news was the attempt of the candidates to manipulate the election with deliberate blackmails, malignant curse, and rumors. However, these politicians did not have any idea about the negative influence they have brought to the society. The New DEEL advocated by scholars such as Gross strives to revive ethical norms of personal behavior in the time of turbulence and ensure that leaders discard their original objectives.

3. Fulfilling expectations of educational reform from public masses - A leader’s responsibility.

Leaders must be capable of fulfilling expectations from the society regard their roles. It would be a challenging task for school principles to reconstruct the authority structure of
educational organizations and distribute executing power to teachers under the two opposite forces of reformation and conservatisms. Because it is impossible to see improvements in a short period of time in the implementation of educational reform, a gradual reform should be a common objective for all leaders. The key factor is to incorporate educational reform into the design of administrative structures in schools, not to exclude it outside of school structure. In addition, an open channel and a collaborative relationship among all administrative organizations in school are equally important in ensuring the efficiency of educational reform. Last but not least, it is only when all teachers can play a role in the process of decision-making can the democratization of schools succeeds.

References