
Foreword

It is troubling and at the same time ironic that when Sharon Rallis and her colleagues spoke to school leaders about what the word *policy* means to them, most often those leaders spoke of rules and procedures and programs imposed on them from outside—from the board, from the state government, from the feds. Rallis and her colleagues—Gretchen Rossman, Timothy Reagan, Casey Cobb, and Aaron Kuntz—wish to reorient leaders’ thinking about their role and their relationship to the manifold political forces attempting to shape the nation’s schools. Yes, rules and programs are imposed from without, but who will be the guardian of the school’s fundamental values; who will guide the organization, ever mindful of the position of its lodestar; who will exercise moral leadership and not merely preside over the implementation of programs that embody, often invisibly, the values of distant others?

“Policy is a broad statement of values, a desired future state . . .” We live in an age that worships “technical rationality,” to use a most apt phrase favored by Donald Schön in his analyses of the misdirection of so many of our efforts. The belief is widespread that the management of vital and dynamic organizations is a problem in problem solving, calling for the application of scientific management techniques. Our authors demur. The education leader’s foremost responsibility is to identify, seek, and protect the fundamental values the organization exists to serve. So often the attempt to realize these values is not fostered by the many rules and regulations visited on the organization; indeed, that attempt is frequently undermined by them. At this point, the call for leadership is a call for moral insight and courage.

To an earlier generation of school leaders, Thomas Sergiovanni spoke of moral leadership. Rallis and her colleagues renew the call, but more important, they illustrate the various subtle ways in which new problems and newly proposed solutions present today’s school leaders with moral dilemmas. Reflection and deliberative discourse displace organization charts and policy and procedure manuals at the top of the

modern school leader's list of priorities. Policies are no longer things inherited from school boards and governmental agencies. "Policy decisions" represent the continuing struggle to reconcile the various pressures that meet at the school leader's desk with a just, fair, and right vision of what the school is meant to be. There is no escape from the responsibilities of moral leadership. Those who struggle to provide it earn our profound respect and whatever help we can give them.

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