EXAMPLES OF LEADERSHIP: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION LEADERS

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There are many perspectives on leadership and how best to develop leaders. When I reflect on the career of Dr. Maley, I think of a person who set the pace and demonstrated a model of leadership. We can learn much about leadership by observing models, or examples, of people who are, or have been, leaders. My intent this morning is to share several vignettes of educational leaders with you and glean from these vignettes a list of key characteristics we should emulate. Therefore, this morning I will share examples, or profiles, of leaders with you, many in technology education. Some you will recognize by name, others will likely be new to you.

Elmer Traman—Passion for Teaching

When I reflect on people who have been an influence in my life, I remember the teachers who loved teaching—those who had a passion for teaching. One of my teachers who had such a passion was Elmer Traman, an industrial arts teacher at Benjamin Franklin Junior High School in Aurora, Illinois. Mr. Traman was nearing retirement in the early 1960s when I was a student in his industrial arts classes, but his students knew that he truly loved teaching. He not only taught us the industrial arts content, but he effectively built our confidence. As a result, we accomplished much more than would normally have been expected. When I applied for admission to college at the age of 21, I originally listed "undecided" as my major on the application form. However, before sending the application, I once more reviewed the options in the college catalog, and as I saw the "industrial arts teaching" major I thought of Mr. Traman, his passion for teaching, and how he made junior high enjoyable for me. Based on my reflections of his passion for teaching, I decided to list "industrial arts teaching" as my major—after all I could always change it later. I never changed my major, and I am very pleased that Mr. Traman set a positive model of passion for teaching in industrial arts.

John Wagley—Pass It On

John Wagley was the industrial education department chair at Belvedere High School, Belvedere, Illinois in the 1970s. I met John in the fall of 1973 as a result of being assigned to student-teach at Belvedere High School. John was active in the Illinois Industrial Education Association (IEIA), as were the other industrial education teachers at Belvedere High School. I attended a local roundtable meeting that fall, and John encouraged me to attend the state conference in February after graduation. As a new industrial arts teacher at Danville High School, Danville, Illinois, my department chair was pleased when
I told him that I wanted to attend that IEEE state conference. I attended the state conference, and John Wagley was genuinely pleased to see me there.

Three and a half years later, shortly after starting my job as an assistant professor at Northern Illinois University, I visited Belvedere High School to touch base with John and the other teachers. John had just been elected President-Elect of IEEE and he encouraged me to get involved in the state association. He indicated that he needed to appoint a secretary for IEEE and he thought that I would do a great job. I said yes and was appointed secretary. He also made arrangements for me to make a presentation at the upcoming conference—my first conference presentation.

As IEEE Secretary, I traveled with John (and often his wife) to several IEEE Board meetings over the next three years. I specifically remember a trip to a Board meeting in Normal, Illinois. John, his wife, and I were having dinner, and when it came time to pay, John picked up the tab. I protested, but John and his wife said “pass it on” when you are in a position to do so. John exemplified the “pass it on” philosophy of leadership by helping the newcomers get involved. He instilled the “pass it on” philosophy in me. As a result, I have tried to follow John’s “pass it on” philosophy when I was in a position to do so. After successfully publishing several articles and receiving some research grants as a faculty member, I involved new faculty members and graduate students in co-authoring articles and research proposals. I was passing on the opportunity to be involved in the profession.

**Franzie Loeppe—Take the High Road (Jettison Your Ego)**

I first met Franzi Loeppe, now an emeritus distinguished professor from Illinois State University, during my first semester of teaching at Northern Illinois University. At that time NIU and ISU were collaborating in a two-day retreat for our student teachers. Franzi was always upbeat and displayed a positive attitude. Furthermore, he always exhibited the highest moral and ethical standards in his professional and personal life. Most of my interactions and collaborations with Franzi were professional, and I found that he was a very good sounding board for new ideas.

There was a situation in my career, however, in which I felt that I had been unfairly criticized, and the criticism had been disseminated widely. I felt that the misrepresentations were libelous and I was contemplating contacting an attorney. Before doing this, I sought advice from a few trusted colleagues, Franzi being one. In discussing the situation with Franzi, he specifically advised me to “take the high road” in this situation. He suggested that by taking the high road—that is not getting into a public (or private) conflict—I would gain respect in the profession. As I reflected on Franzi’s advice, I realized that he was right. I decided to take the high road in this situation—it meant that I had to jettison my ego and move forward. This, by the way, was some of the best advice I ever received.

**Don Malley—Collaborative Leader**

Don Malley, a strong leader, served the profession in many ways. In the late 1980s, Don was the chair of the ITEA Government Relations Committee. At the same time, I was the AVA Vice President for the Industrial Arts Division (now Technology Education Division). At this time both AVA and ITEA were developing position statements about the pending reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. Given my role as a member of the AVA Board’s Legislative Committee and being very knowledgeable on the issues of reauthorization, I prepared a white paper for the Industrial Arts Division. I shared this with Don and, since we had worked closely together, he used my white paper as the basis for ITEA’s positions on reauthorization. I should add that for several years Don and I would run sessions at both AVA and ITEA to educate the profession on legislative issues and effective techniques for influencing Congress. This collaboration was effective, as Don and I presented a unified front for the profession.

I recall, however, that at that time there was some divisiveness in the profession, as some had embraced “technology education” while others were hanging on to “industrial arts.” This led to some heated debates and personality conflicts. At a meeting with a few leaders from ITEA and the AVA-IAD, Don Malley presented the ITEA positions on reauthorization. As the ITEA position paper was distributed, the then U.S. Department of Education specialist for industrial arts said something like “Dr. Malley, it would have been nice if you would have discussed this with Tom Erickson and the leadership of the Industrial Arts Division before publishing ITEA’s positions.” Don replied something like, “Actually, Tom wrote almost all of this position paper—the positions are almost congruent, and we are presenting a unified front for the profession.” Collaboration leads to synergy.

**Doug Polette—Risk-Taker**

Doug Polette was the technology teacher education program leader at Montana State University. In the late 1980s the state of Montana was facing serious budget challenges. As a result, several programs that were duplicated across colleges and universities were targeted for elimination. Since the industrial arts teacher education program at MSU...
was clearly the strongest in the state, Doug and his colleagues felt that they would be held harmless. They were shocked, devastated, and demoralized to learn that their program was on the list to be eliminated. They were committed to fighting to save the program, but soon realized that the serious budget situation in the state would make saving any programs on the "list" almost impossible.

Doug questioned whether they should fight to keep an outdated industrial arts teacher education program. He decided the best defense would be a good offense—he took a risk. That is, the faculty agreed with the university system administration that the industrial arts teacher education program should be closed. However, there was a new educational initiative called “technology education,” and Montana needed a program to prepare technology teachers. So, Doug and his colleagues developed a proposal for a new program in technology teacher education, and while the industrial arts program was going through the elimination process, the new program was making its way through the university and system administration for approval. This was a great risk because there was no guarantee that the new program would be approved—the old program would, however, be eliminated. Doug and his colleagues were successful, as the new program was approved and continues as a strong program today. By taking this risk, they not only saved their program, but they were able to make the extensive changes needed to transition from industrial arts to technology education in a very short time.

**Paul DeVore—Lead by Actions and Stay Out in Front**

Paul DeVore is a visionary leader in our profession—a person who gets out in front and who leads by his actions. He advocated technology education in the 1960s, when the majority of the profession was still supporting industrial arts. Many of his writings provided a philosophical foundation for the standards-based technology education of our day.

While a PhD student at Penn State, Paul came across an intriguing journal, *Technology and Culture*, which led to his study of technology and his advocacy of it as the content base for our profession. He became the chair of a large industrial arts teacher education department, albeit a traditional department. He spent a sabbatical at the University of Maryland, interacting with leaders like Lee Hornbake, Walter Waetjen, and Don Maley, and studying technology at the Smithsonian. These experiences forever changed him and his outlook on the profession.

Paul returned to his department after the sabbatical but was visited by Tom Brennan, a faculty member at West Virginia University (WVU). The dean at WVU had just placed a moratorium on the undergraduate industrial arts teacher education program and was releasing three faculty members who did not hold terminal degrees. The dean, Stanley Eichenberry (later the president of the University of Illinois) thought that a new vision was needed for the program at WVU; after all WVU is the state’s land grant research university. Paul expressed some interest in the chair’s position at WVU, quite a risk at the time. He was hired and began in August of 1967—a department with one faculty member, a suspended undergraduate program, and no graduate programs.

Paul instituted a series of symposia to develop a vision for the future of the unit. These symposia involved experts from both on and off campus, and throughout the symposia series each of the deans at WVU was invited to provide perspectives (and buy-in). The result of the symposia series was to focus the department’s resources on graduate education—graduate education programs in technology education. Thus, WVU developed the first true graduate programs in technology education, approved in 1969-1970. It is interesting to note that the president of WVU was the one who thought that the program’s name should be “technology education.” He called Paul, and the name was changed from industrial education to technology education—the first department to use the name.

Paul is a person of action, and the development of the first graduate program specifically in technology education shows his leadership through his actions. He got out in front in technology education and never looked back. The program at WVU has had significant impacts on the profession, including encouraging Davis Publications to publish a series of books on technology education. It also directly led to the first undergraduate program in technology education at Eastern Illinois University, as Don Lauda, one of Paul’s WVU faculty members, went to EIU as leader of the School of Technology, hiring John Wright, a WVU PhD graduate, to help with the reformation.

**Tommy Tomlinson—Educational Statesmanship**

Robert M. “Tommy” Tomlinson was my graduate advisor at the University of Illinois for both my master’s and doctoral degrees. As I recall, he never was elected to national office in a professional society, nor was he a department chair or dean. However, he knew how to get his students involved in the profession. Every year he took two doctoral students to the Mississippi Valley Conference and, as a doctoral student, it was my turn to go with him in November of 1976. He made sure that we were introduced to all of the leaders in attendance, including H. H. London, Harold Silvius, Don Lux, and Jerry Streichler, to name a few. Tommy also made
sure that we met the other Illinois doctoral graduates who were in attendance. We had dinner with two Illinois alums and, at dinner, one asked if Illinois was inculcating us in the doctrine of “educational statesmanship.” Somewhat bewildered by the question, I asked what was meant by the term. He responded that “educational statesmanship” was a concept in which Illinois graduates were expected to be leaders in the field of education, not just leaders in industrial education. That is, Illinois graduates were expected to “stand up” for our profession and justify its existence in the “language” and research of other education disciplines. I realized that Illinois was inculcating its graduate students with educational statesmanship—we were expected to become educational leaders who would stand up and be counted.

Tommy Tomlinson saw to it that we were so prepared. Tommy was a very good debater. He would often (almost always) initiate a debate, and advocate for one side whether or not he agreed with the proposition, as he believed that it was through debate that ideas were often generated and clarified. These discussions and debates motivated his graduate students to search the literature and to discuss issues with others. This model of standing up and being counted was powerful. There are times when it has served me well (and a few times when I wish that I had just kept my mouth shut!).

Rupert Evans—Positive Attitude

As a graduate student I heard a lot about Rupert Evans, then a faculty member at the University of Illinois, a former dean there, and the fourth Life Chair of the Mississippi Valley Conference, who was on sabbatical. I was in awe of his accomplishments and reputation, and probably somewhat intimidated taking my first class from him when he returned from his sabbatical. I soon learned, however, that he was very approachable and friendly with his students. He truly cared about each student, taking time to learn about each of us. He always had a positive attitude toward his students, and he sought ways to build our confidence. You see, he knew that there is correlation between confidence and accomplishment. That is, a confident person (student) accomplishes more. As a result of his positive attitude and confidence-building skills, Rupert seemed to be able to get his students to accomplish more than we thought we could.

Gleaning Traits of Leaders

I hope that you have enjoyed listening to my reflections of people who have influenced my life. The key question is “So what?” What can we glean from these vignettes that we should emulate? I believe that we learn that we should:

- Have a passion for teaching and for our profession.
- Pass it on and share opportunities with others.
- Always take the high road and jettison our egos.
- Become educational statesmen and women.
- Always work collaboratively.
- Lead by our actions and stay out in front.
- Be risk-takers.
- Have a positive attitude.

A final trait, noted by Nibley (1984), is consistent with jettisoning your ego: “A leader will be able to admit that he or she made a mistake, has learned from it, and makes changes to see that it doesn’t happen again” (p. 19).

Let me close my remarks with another quote from Nibley: “Leaders are movers and shakers, original, inventive, unpredictable, imaginative, full of surprises that discomfort the enemy in war and the main office in peace” (p. 19). People like John Wagley, Don Maley, Elmer Traman, Franzie Loepp, Tommy Tomlinson, Doug Polette, and Paul DeVore emulate this.

References


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