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THOMAS GREENFIELD AND ADMINISTRATION FOR ABORIGINAL SCHOOLS

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Aboriginal education, long considered the poor relation in education, is currently in a stage of development akin to a Renaissance. The success of the one-best-method of education is seriously being questioned, as are the twin constraints of the hidden curriculum - tradition and conformity.

The first major breakthrough in Aboriginal education came with the development of the concept of Aboriginal learning styles (Kearins, 1983; Harris, 1980). Teachers became aware that different strategies and materials had to be employed to cater more successfully for Aboriginal students. It is most likely the case also that school principals need to adopt an administrative style which is significantly different from that employed in urban, middle-class schools. Thomas Greenfield, a Canadian, has revolutionized thought in educational administration, and his thoughts may have relevance to administering Aboriginal schools.

GREENFIELD'S ALTERNATIVE

Over the last twelve years Thomas Greenfield has developed a theory which has the following important characteristics:

a) REASSERTING THE SELF

Greenfield contends that organizations and organizational theory have tended to neglect the role of the individual within the organization. Greenfield reasserts the role of the individual by noting that the individual is the ultimate building block of social reality (Greenfield, 1982, p.3) and by ignoring this, organizational theorists have defined the forest but ignored the trees (Greenfield, 1975, p.67).

Aboriginal education likewise is about the self. Teachers are committed to developing self-esteem and self-actualization in their students. The Aboriginal self has to be identified and developed within the limits of the Aboriginal society's expectations and with its guidance.

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b) VERSTEHEN

Greenfield promotes theory based on understanding-empathy (Verstehen) and the primacy of the self. Knowledge, he notes, is constructed by humans and facts do not exist except as they are called into existence by human action. In sharp contrast to the traditionalists in educational administration, Greenfield sees a role for the knowledge and understanding of poets, saints and artists (and ordinary people). Greenfield argues that all views should be considered in educational administration, not just those based on 'objective' facts. This clearly promotes Aboriginal involvement in the development of education by valuing the ordinary person's view when previously only the experts had credibility.

(c) A MORAL BASIS FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Traditional theorists and administrators may apply logic to the problems faced in the field and the resultant answers could have been just as easily decided by a computer. Greenfield argues the need for a moral valuing component in educational administration theory by noting that the "is" and the "ought" must be included (Greenfield, 1980, p.32). When deciding the "ought" in Aboriginal education, decision-making must include all parties (clients must be consulted). In the wake of the collapse of the "one-best-system" of administration, administrators need to look at alternatives, and consulting concerned bodies is one way to generate acceptable alternatives.

d) EDUCATION OF ADMINISTRATORS

Greenfield's most cutting criticism of traditionalists in educational administration deals with the mechanistic training they receive. Greenfield's view appears terse on the first reading when he says -

...there is no way of training administrators other than by giving them some apocalyptic or transcendental vision of the universe and of their life on earth.

(Greenfield, 1980, p.48)

When Greenfield was interviewed by MacPherson at Monash University he broadly described an education program that -

...had as its aim reflection, wider understanding, giving administrators a wider sense of what organizations are, what their own life is, what it means to have power, what it means to wield it, what it means to make decisions, what it means to wake up one day and realise that the decision you made was wrong! Insight and reflection certainly.

(Macpherson, 1984, p.3)

While apocalyptic visions are hard to come by, Greenfield is directing that school administrators (as people) should be well adjusted and value life. The qualities Greenfield is looking for in administration are - *humility (hubris), empathy, reflectiveness and insight* - all qualities that suit administrative styles in Aboriginal schools. Complete anathema to Greenfield is the upward mobiles with their M.B.A.s setting out to each new posting to apply mechanically the same administrative style in every school they set foot in.

The education necessary for Greenfield's school administrators comes from liberal education-arts faculties (philosophy, psychology, anthropology, history, literature and languages - a classical education) not from faculties of business or economics, and, while Greenfield has not made specific mention of this point, it is consistent with his approach for administrators to work outside education to experience a different set of administrative values.

e) ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE

Greenfield lies clearly within the organic dimensions of organization (which promotes the individual's place in the organization) compared with the mechanistic dimension (which promotes structured hierarchical management). Ogilvie's succinct table sets out the characteristics of the organic-mechanistic discontinuum, clearly demonstrating the differences between the two approaches:

	Mechanistic Characteristics	Organic Characteristics
Structure	inegalitarian status hierarchy	egalitarian status hierarchy
Purpose	extrinsic satisfactions from production	intrinsic rewards of development
Control	by authority, using direction or compromise	by consensual democracy using collaborative reason.

	Mechanistic Characteristics	Organic Characteristics
Communication	inhibited, closed and factional	uninhibited, open and communal
Administration	by management and headship	by delegation and leadership
Membership	social and mental adolescents	social and mental adults

Table 1: Dimensions of Difference (Ogilvie, 1985, p.39)

Similarly MacNeill's (1985, p.13-14) characteristics of a mechanistic (Machiavellian) manager of schools supports Ogilvie's definitive statement. Principals are not good for Aboriginal schools when they are the sole authors of all decisions, when the school is characterised by conflict, when staff and students are viewed as pawns, when ethics have no place in administration and when the window dressing to get the principal promoted is considered more important than real education.

Associated with the organic dimension is McGregor's theory Y which has important implications for school administrators. Theory Y says (*inter alia*) that people are not passive or lazy, they have become so as a result of organizations and so the prime task of administrators is to facilitate conditions so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts towards the organization's goals (McGregor, 1969, p.154). McGregor's words are extremely important in organization theory and they have particular relevance in Aboriginal Education.

CONCLUSIONS

Greenfield's criticism of traditional theory in educational administration does have important implications for Aboriginal Education. Traditional theory advanced an ideology which devalued the place of the individual and the individual's thoughts. Greenfield has reasserted the individual's place within organizations and, together with supporting concepts such as the organic alternative and McGregor's Theory Y, forms an alternative to traditional organization which has particular applicability in Aboriginal Education.

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