

# Leadership Training for Aspiring School Administrators

Kakembo Aisha Annet

Faculty of Education, Kampala International University, Uganda

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolving role of school administrators in the context of modern educational demands, focusing on the comprehensive preparation of aspiring leaders. With heightened accountability, increasing student diversity, and persistent inequities, today's educational leaders must possess more than administrative competence they must be visionaries, advocates, communicators, and agents of change. The study examines key leadership theories, effective communication, strategic planning, and conflict resolution, while emphasizing the importance of fostering positive school culture and collaborative practices. Special attention is given to leadership's role in addressing racial and socioeconomic disparities, re-engaging post-pandemic learners, and navigating systemic change. By synthesizing best practices and emerging models, this work outlines a framework for leadership training that equips future school administrators to meet current challenges with integrity, adaptability, and purpose.

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership, Aspiring School Administrators, Equity in Education, School Culture, Instructional Leadership, Visionary Leadership.

## INTRODUCTION

The growing importance of leadership in education has heightened expectations for school leaders facing complex challenges. Shaw emphasizes that education administrators must engage proactively in developing critical leadership skills. Despite a better understanding of school leader traits, confusion persists about training emerging leaders in these skills. National and local discussions highlight declining educational leadership despite increased recognition of its importance. There is a national call for improved preparation of aspiring principals with the skills necessary for today's schools. Leaders need to grasp accountability measures and analyze data from various perspectives. Understanding factors influencing student achievement is insufficient; educational administrators must also plan, implement, and evaluate strategies for school improvement. Given the diverse U.S. student population, leaders must address inequities faced

by Latino, African American, and other students. Although demographic studies show that many school administrators are White or Asian American, this group is rapidly becoming a minority compared to the demographics of public-school students. In many urban areas, minority students are the majority. Today's leaders confront increasing inequities and gaps in education based on race and poverty. Addressing past social justice issues is no longer enough; leaders must ensure every student's success, a significant task unanticipated in traditional school leadership roles. Additionally, after the COVID-19 pandemic's remote learning, principals face the challenge of re-engaging students in a school environment. The narrow timeframe for effecting change, combined with the complexities of leadership and the challenges faced, makes this an almost impossible task [1, 2].

### Understanding the Role of School Administrators

Essential to understanding administration is defining what it is, one of those occasionally overlooked tasks that when performed, tends to

reveal more than expected. "Administration" is a generic term, stemming from the Latin word's ad ("to") and minster ("serve or lead"), meaning

“to serve and lead,” which seems simple enough. However, taken apart, the words “school” and “administer” reveal more about what it is not. The blanket term “school administrator” generally conjures up a vision of one man or woman sitting in a plush office or eating lunch with their peers at a local eatery. For many teachers, that image becomes the dartboard of their professional lives. What do administrators actually do? If the question is put to teachers, principals, or district administrators their replies often differ. To one set of respondents, administrators are a necessary evil. But when asked, “What is an administrator?” it is not the flesh-and-blood persons they accuse of perpetrating all manner of ill-conceived and uninformed management. Rather it is a generalization, a kind of invisible force in the expanse of school. In the domain built of brick and mortar, it metamorphoses into overregulated machinery, rules that arrive in

### **Key Leadership Theories and Models**

In order for school administrators to advocate for schools, leadership theories and models that center on democratic approaches must be explored. The effectiveness of a democracy depends on leaders advocating for the common good and not just special interests. The belief that a school administrator can lead a school to improvement, reform, vision, and hope requires training and practice to become a school administrator who empowers teacher leaders. Aspiring school administrators must explore leadership theories and models that advocate for equity, a collective responsibility of school governance, and a health promoting, trust fostering school. This exploration will begin with instructional leadership. Instructional Leadership is the focus of a number of leadership models. It is the effective practice of school leadership with high leverage; that is, relatively few actions that, if taken well, can yield many positive outcomes. New leadership practice will be recommended to be added to the

### **Effective Communication Skills for Leaders**

Education leaders consistently cite communication skills as essential for success in their work. Having strong communication skills means that the individuals have the ability to listen and respond to questions, encourage quiet staff to speak up, and explain what they mean through verbal and non-verbal communication and writing. This sentiment is echoed by other colleagues. They feel that nearly every part of a job can improve with proper communication skills. However, starting now will certainly put

the summer and are supposed to be remembered in perpetuity. In the same domain, the intermediary between teachers and faculties is also the harbinger of steps taken by far-off officials. Underneath the mantle of this administration creeps the principal, whose actions either advance or deflect its initiatives, whose presence is either welcome (in the building) or loathed (in the faculty lounge). Ultimately, an administrator is responsible for the enigmas known as a school. The post is sometimes seen as a great prize and sometimes as a fate worse than death. Whether viewed with yearning or despair and whether revered by some or condemned by others, the reality is that the principal is the school. Whatever the degree of devotion to or disillusionment with the bureaucracy, schools would be unrecognizable fluff without school administrators [3, 4].

lists of those influencing agent, target, and duration. The two lists will be extended from the taken-for-granted paradigm to include ways of knowing. In some instances, such new methods have already been put into practice by innovative school principals. Others would require further motion to turn into useful tools. As for systemic inequities regarding student learning opportunities and outcomes in education, schools should not be blamed. They could just be a reflection of the social inequities of the society. To address this social justice issue will take the means and the will of changing the larger systemic structural inequities. In the meantime, in addition to these wider targeted inequities, called for the agency to engage schools to seek interim reforms via teacher and school improvement to service the competing goals of equity and excellence. In this regard, the model of health promoting schools would provide some enriching insights [5, 6].

one ahead of most other leaders and will begin a long journey of growth and improvement. The main focus is on how to develop good communication skills as a leader. Good communication is only effective if it is used properly. Everyone must be cautious of the words and tones used to convey information. If the words are full of sarcasm or condescend, the listeners will automatically begin to “turn off” or get defensive. Use clear, concise, and understandable phrases, evenly paced and

natural tone, and audible voice. When trying to convey something important, one must keep it simple. It is better to say something at all than to say something only after confusing others with “fluff.” A fair voice must also be used. If the tone raises more than necessary, the listeners will take that as a cue to put their guard up. Make sure that there is a clear, level, and steady tone. Allow the listeners to hear and comprehend the words without fear. Nonverbal communication is just as important. There is definite truth in the saying, “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.” Good posture is vital.

### **Building A Positive School Culture**

Many authors have discussed school culture, yet crucial aspects related to school leaders' approaches remain overlooked. This study investigates the manipulation of school culture. Leading schools in inclusion and excellence often do not share their methods, leaving a gap in understanding how they evolve. The research aims to reveal the characteristics of school culture and the influence of leaders. Reliable school culture comprises shared assumptions about reality, humanity, and ethics, shaping what schools teach and model. Transformations in culture are essential; they don't occur merely due to new policies. Positive cultures can exist

Sitting up straight not only makes someone feel better, but it also conveys a more engaged presence. Poor posture is detrimental. No one wants to listen to someone who looks like they are about to fall asleep. Good eye contact must also be made. It is only polite, and it shows that they care about the listeners. When someone is speaking with others, give them their full attention. Don't be looking at papers, emails, or other distractions. Personal appearance is another large aspect of communication that people forget about [7, 8].

in maladaptive settings, created by misconceptions that are difficult to change. The changing environment raises philosophical questions about teaching and learning. If culture changes, the impacts are gradual and ownership of ideas complicates rapid adaptation. Leaders must actively embody ownership through their actions; inaction often stems from ignorance or an adherence to outdated assumptions and routines. This inertia is compounded by poor character traits such as opportunism, where individuals resist change unless it serves their interests, obscuring the connection between character and inaction [9,10].

### **Strategic Planning and Vision Setting**

Visionary leadership is often the critical component to improved student learning and better school climates and cultures. The role of the administration is to inspire others to see a preferred future for the school and ensure those others are empowered to take action to reach that vision. Creating and communicating a vision is not easy. Voices at the table need to be continually nurtured so that everyone feels valued and understood. However, educators need to know that a school vision will never be etched in stone. Just as schools are dynamic with outside forces and societal changes, so is the effective school vision. Communications with internal and external stakeholders must remain in place. Assisting with change and realizing a vision is the most important thing an administrator can do. It is blatantly simple yet exquisitely complex and nuanced. Understanding that people, both students and

adults, do not like change must be recognized. Systems of stars, purposes, and moles create a series of small, unintended, yet unavoidable meetings. Changes need to happen in small, sustainable pieces. During the time of individual change, support and super-structure are essential. Concerned with everyone revolving around the same focus is supporting a vision. To assure success, the staff's role and purpose must be understood before moving on to students and parents. To create a new vision, this community-building aspect must be closely adhered to. With teachers embedding a hang-it-on-a-post vision, students will have difficulty accepting a change unless it is well established. Experienced educators leave to fill functional needs in other buildings, and new needs are hired to fit the structure of those teams. How the vision looks from staff to board to community is a personal commitment [11, 12].

### **Decision-Making Processes in Education**

In light of educational reforms aimed at addressing student performance through data, schools must assess how technology can enhance or obstruct student learning. School leaders, especially teacher-leaders, play a key

role in implementing innovative technologies. The Ideal Technology Leadership Survey (ITLS) was created to gauge teacher-leaders' views on how principals can effectively support technology use. It also explores the link

between these views and principals' decision-making styles. Effective technology use requires school officials to understand the complex integration of technology with educational goals. Technology is often viewed as a solution to improving student achievement and meeting academic standards, driving extensive literature on technology's role in school leadership. Educational policy and change theories suggest principal support is essential for teacher-leaders to leverage technology in classrooms. Decision-making is a cognitive process that considers how individuals select options from alternatives, impacting educators' decisions. Research into decision style measurement highlights various

approaches to decision-making, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Cognitive Styles of Decision Maker Structures. Despite the Internet boom, the issue of unconnectedness remains. Data collection from extensive systems creates rapid changes, prompting state interventions and responses from political leaders, raising questions about the future of education. Consequently, principals' technology decisions are crucial as schools adapt to new demands for equitable access. This suggests research design could enhance understanding of the implications of emerging tele-technologies in education [13, 14].

### **Conflict Resolution and Mediation**

Even young children in leadership roles can face conflict situations, which may escalate aggressively. Future leaders need training in conflict management skills for peaceful resolution, instead of merely relying on authority. Prioritizing conflict resolution skills for leaders, it's essential to use adults as mediators to train students. As adult mediators become comfortable, they can oversee student-led mediation. Eventually, students can manage conflicts independently, reducing adult involvement. Training fewer leaders initially can lead to manageable situations, while also preparing other students for peer mediation. Peers can offer unique perspectives and alternatives for resolving conflicts. Evaluating these processes will help assess their

effectiveness and inform future directions for the Tanglen Student Leader Program, which can be compared over time. Additionally, these evaluation methods can benefit other student leader programs in various schools. Implementing and improving peer mediation programs shows great promise. Educating elementary student leaders on conflict management throughout their education can foster leadership and promote less aggressive conflict resolution in future generations. Students with these experiences can guide others in alternative conflict resolution, particularly aiding youth involved in the justice system or those from abusive backgrounds, offering them a path to escape harmful cycles [15, 16].

### **Team Building and Collaboration**

Leading an organization is one of the most difficult jobs imaginable. School leaders face a dizzying array of issues and challenges that require complex, multifaceted responses. In too many cases, school administrators are left to go it alone, without the necessary training and preparation: unprepared for the most important job they will ever have, or one that will have the greatest impact on their communities and society at large. Focusing on people and processes first—before documents, structures, resources, and policies—empowers school administrators with the tools to recognize, interpret, respond, and to approach challenges with confidence: skills that transfer to any career in the 21st century. A critical aspect of leadership is recognizing, interpreting, and responding to emergent issues and challenges present in an organization. Conversations about issues and challenges must not be narrowly defined, or opportunities for development and growth will be missed; therefore, theories of

child development, information processing, systems thinking, open systems, bureaucracy, learning, community building, collaboration, and cultural diversity are included. There is no single, defined, correct view. This process is dynamic and never-ending. In addition to providing the tools to recognize, interpret, and respond to issues and challenges, participants will develop a coaching style: a questioning approach to their practice as school administrators. This provides a frame on which to build professional development and job-embedded learning in practice Schools. Participants will view coaching as a skill to be continuously honed: a craft that can always be practiced and improved. The participatory approach to leadership; the art of asking questions, listening, and facilitating an organization's journey with inquiry; ensures the ongoing nature of this professional development strategy. Differences in culture, expectation of school leaders in regard to gender, language of

inquiry and such will shape this process. However, despite differences, the foundation is broadly applicable. Participants will pursue

resources and engage in professional growth specific to their contexts [17, 18].

### **Managing Change in Educational Settings**

Probably no term stirs greater debate among organizations than the word change. A perennial topic on talk shows, in editorials, and in boardrooms, change elicits conflicting responses. Change is a horrible, anxiety-ridden, bed-wetting process and, at the same time, an exciting, energizing, visionary effort to fulfill dreams and hopes. Change can, and does, make an organization successful or cause it to implode in despair. An organization can desire change but be unable to get there. To change is to make something different, to engender something from an existential state into a different one, not merely to modify what exists. To manage a change process means to create a planned condition with regard to time in which one or more persons accomplish another condition apart from that at which it is thought to take place. Change in human systems often initiates momentous feelings, ranging from “won’t this be fun?” to dread-filled terrors of cataclysmic proportions. It is this emotional context in which the organizational consultant must often

operate. The consultant can help think through the change process and examine its implications for the system, in some cases, defining the world of the here-and-now. However, his/her powers are often limited, for on-going, often unconscious feelings with respect to change are often beyond the rational abilities of any elegant model. Educational change, especially those initiated from outside, can be all-consuming, pushing aside or limiting others. Multiple system frameworks can be tracked over defined periods of time in an organization and pattern of sentiments can be seen—dyads diametrically opposed at the time of the change itself, converging at times, then diverging again during other periods, with activities spiraling to levels for a while, then dimming again to a status-quo stage with pockets of excitement not engaged with the system as a whole. Seek to understand and be sensitive to personal viewpoints of change and the disparate viewpoints held by those in an organization [19, 20].

### **Ethical Leadership Practices**

School leaders are subject to ethical standards that have wide significance and applicability. A school leader deals with an array of people and situations that allow for a wide variation in ethical behaviour; thus, leaders need to be vigilant to safeguard against ethical lapses. Ethical lapses can appear in many situations: when making personnel decisions, when developing budgets, when disciplining students and staff, and when dealing with parents. School leaders should know and understand a code of ethics and engage in behaviours that uphold ethical leadership. Ethical leaders will influence their organisations, strengthen their workplace cultures, and set an example in their community. Here are ethical leadership practices found in the research literature. Get to Know Your Stakeholders. Since ethical standards influence the behaviour of leaders, a good start is to develop awareness of the relevant ethical standards that apply to school leaders. Optimally, a leader will dig deeply into

professional ethical standards and remember high-level standards and specific standards that govern behaviours in an area of practice. Get to know the ethical standards that apply to your own behaviours as a school leader, and develop ways to think through specific situations. Be Fair and Considerate with Stakeholders. Ethical leaders balance their use of power with their responsibility to acknowledge the views of those affected by their decisions. Although they may change some policies and practices, they will expend a good deal of effort to consider everyone's views carefully before doing so. When Dave as a first-year assistant principal considered changes in the student discipline policy, which he accepted late in the school year, the results were more draconian and less enforceable than anticipated; several teachers questioned his consistency. When something was perceived as not fair or unfair, leaders will be left not knowing enough [21, 22].

### **Legal Responsibilities of School Administrators**

The topic of school law includes laws affecting public education, which school administrators, like principals and superintendents, are tasked with enforcing. Administrators must be aware of common law alongside legislative and

administrative rules established by state educational institutions and local governing bodies. These rules define the roles and limitations of school administrators. A landmark case in 1969, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent*

Community School District, shifted the public education focus towards student rights and the liability of school officials for violations. It established that students retain their constitutional rights within schools. Key rights include federal constitutional rights and protections against abuse, as highlighted in *Meyer v. Nebraska*, which also reflects that school officials have certain assumed rights regarding attendance and discipline. Despite constitutional protections, allegations of violations might arise. Balancing duties and liability are essential for school officials

#### **Financial Management for Schools**

In schools, accounting practices are concerned with recording and monitoring the state of finances for reference by various stakeholders. On the other hand, financial management for the schools entails prudent utilization of resources to improve the quality of education to be imparted in the schools. Preparing demand driven budgets for the schools is the most important part of accounting and financial management as the knowledge and skills acquired through such training needs is the basis of good financial accounting practices in schools. School managers who are well trained in the proper realization of income opportunities for the schools are able to generate funds for school development. Schools without revenue generating ventures have low development activities. School managers need self-reliance skill so that they can form good relationships with individuals and institutions that can assist their students financially. Directors of Education should involve school managers

#### **Curriculum Leadership and Instructional Supervision**

The maintenance of curriculum leadership is one of the most important roles of the school administrator, more so, in fact, for the principal than other administrators. The basic curriculum element of a school is its courses of study. Of the many boards and other supervisory agencies, the school principal is the Chief Assessment Officer whose responsibility goes as far as legal framework and constituency expectations permit. The principal's perspective is global and community focused, but all decisions must give priority to the student's learning environment. Effective school leaders are visionary educators and mentors who see learning as the school's primary business, who are focused on improving outcomes for each student, and who accept responsibility for results. School administrators at their best are systems thinkers who design schools as complex and interdependent social

empowered with discretionary authority. Public education operates like a large business that allows considerable discretion. Schools must implement stricter procedures before suspensions and recognize education as a constitutionally protected public right. Recent years have seen an uptick in litigation and changing legal trends affecting liability, where cities or school boards may be held accountable rather than individual staff. Schools must also provide the necessary resources for effective education while continually adapting to evolving circumstances [23, 24].

when preparing new training modules for them. Financial management training modules should form part of induction process for newly appointed Secondary School principals. Study groups should be formed in the districts to ensure participatory appraisal of for need assessment. Workshops and seminars at district level should be a part of continuing training for school managers to enhance their practice. Education quality is international, universal and local since countries are striving to provide effective, relevant, user friendly, affordable and accessible education opportunities for their citizens. Education has been internationally recognized as essential for personal, social and economic development of societies. Optimally developed human resource through education improves the physical climate. The quality of schools is determined by different factors and governance issues are viewed influential in this regard [25, 26].

systems. They build coherence in the system and create an environment for both student and staff learning as the center of the school. They create, strengthen, and communicate a common vision that serves as a roadmap for the school community. The success of a school relies heavily on its staff and students adhering to clearly defined values and goals. In addition to an effective faculty and student body, administration has the responsibility to provide staff, community, and students with a vision. In this regard, meta-cognition either describes thought patterns or one's thought process regarding a certain domain or discipline. The issues of state and federal reform movements as measured by standardized tests should improve schools. Theoretical perspectives which advocate daily practice and subsequent improvement through on-the-job evaluation

have merit. Identifying barriers to student learning using a systems perspective is a valuable construct. The emotional barriers of self and others are the largest impediments and

### Community Engagement and Stakeholder Communication

In educational organizations, a systemic, integrated approach to engaging parents and the community aids decision-makers. School leaders must address stakeholder perceptions and concerns, clarify expectations, empower stakeholders, provide resources, and create forums for participation in goal development. Skills for engaging schools and communities should be cultivated through pre- and in-service training. The need for a dedicated curriculum for educator preparation regarding school and community engagement highlights a gap. Effective communication is crucial for school leadership today, with technology playing a vital role in facilitating engagement. Technology enables diverse communication

subsequently the hardest to eradicate. Building caring school communities through safety and investment fosters academic success [27, 28].

forms and aligns with how students learn. Schools that encourage community roles in education receive more support. Leadership opportunities enhance stakeholder knowledge and communication skills, fostering engagement in decisions. Respect for differing views is essential in peaceful communities. Community members are given technical support to impact processes regarding education. Building capacity for effective communication involves developing understanding, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, resources, and processes. School leaders must first enhance their communication skills before addressing community engagement [29, 30, 31].

### CONCLUSION

In an era of rapid change and growing complexity, school administrators must be more than policy enforcers—they must be culturally responsive leaders, collaborative planners, and resilient decision-makers. This paper underscores the need for comprehensive leadership training programs that prioritize instructional leadership, equity-driven models, and interpersonal competencies. Effective school leaders must master the art of communication, foster inclusive school cultures, and guide their

communities through change. Moreover, they must approach challenges with a blend of empathy, analytical thinking, and visionary insight. By equipping aspiring administrators with the skills and mindsets necessary for 21st-century education, we ensure that school leadership becomes a force not only for academic excellence but also for social transformation. Preparing such leaders is not merely an option—it is an imperative for the future of equitable and effective education.

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