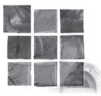

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#4 **MONOGRAPHS** FROM THE MANDEL FOUNDATION – ISRAEL

Educational Identity

as a Major Factor in the Development of Educational Leadership

Mordecai Nisan
in collaboration with Daniel Pekarsky

About the Mandel Foundation

> "*The hallmark of our philanthropy is our commitment to invest in people with the values, ability and passion to change the world.*"
>
> Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel

The Mandel Foundation was established by Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel, of Cleveland, Ohio. Its primary mission is to help provide outstanding leadership for the nonprofit world.

The Foundation supports leadership education programs in its own institutions and at selected universities and organizations. The Foundation has these areas of priority: Leadership, Management of Nonprofits, Higher Education, Jewish Education & Continuity, and Urban Neighborhood Renewal.

The Mandel Foundation's approach to philanthropy is characterized by a conviction that exceptional leaders, professional and volunteer, are the critical factor in contributing significantly to community and society. Such leaders are guided by a powerful vision of the future that is illuminated by clear purposes, inspired by profound ideas and energized by imaginative resolutions to today's challenges.

Author's Note

This article was first published in 1997 and has since been widely read. My colleague, Prof. Daniel Pekarsky, and I revised this article. The English version was written together with Prof. Pekarsky and I thank him for his important contribution in content and in style, in the Hebrew version as well. Dr. Daniel Marom, editor-in-chief of the *'Mandel Foundation Monographs'* series, initiated the publication of the first edition; his comments have been enriching, and for this I thank him.

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Introduction

Because there are so many raging controversies concerning the critical ingredients that enter into high quality education, it is of interest to note that there are also pockets of widespread agreement. One of the things that many educational theorists, educators, and citizens agree on is the central importance of leadership to the success of the educational enterprise. Popularly expressed in movies like "Stand and Deliver" and in accounts of schools that succeed with allegedly uneducable youngsters, this idea is also widely embraced in more sophisticated circles. The leader, in this view, plays an indispensable role in guiding institutions, in creating a culture and a social environment that foster educational progress, and in motivating both teachers and students to do their best.

Generally speaking, the leader's role is to guide the organization toward the achievement of its aims through efforts that elicit the cooperation and enthusiasm of those whom he or she leads. Some individuals grow into leadership roles as a matter of course through their continuing work in the field of education; and some of these become exceptional leaders. But it seems undeniable that a community interested in substantially enhancing its educational programs and institutions would do well to identify, recruit, and create tenable conditions for the training of effective leaders.

Though this is a promising route, it also immediately forces on us some difficult questions: First, what are the critical characteristics that individuals need in order to be effective leaders? Second, how do these characteristics arise? Third, on which characteristics should we focus at the point of admission to a leadership development program, and which ones can be fostered in adult learners? Fourth, what are the processes through which those characteristics that are amenable to cultivation can be fostered?

This paper will develop a set of responses to some of these questions. But it is important to note at the outset that the effort to do so is complicated by more than one circumstance. As an example, even the most basic question of all – what counts as a good leader? – is not easy to answer. In part, this is because people's expectations of leaders may differ, depending on the domain, role, and the cultural milieu in which the leader is active. Indeed, in light of the complexity of individuals and society as a whole, it may be necessary to abandon the idea that there is a single paradigm of a 'good leader'. Different leaders may exemplify unique leadership types that cannot be reduced to a single paradigm. Nevertheless, it is possible to indicate some basic traits of a good educational leader. One of these, which is the focus of the present paper, is 'educational identity'. Roughly speaking, I will be using this term in reference to people who consider themselves educators, who are committed to their work in education, and who are guided by carefully considered views concerning the goals and values that should guide their educational activities in light of their abilities, attitudes and preferences.

At the heart of the identity-view of leadership development that I will offer is the conviction that leadership development needs to give those who would be leaders serious and sustained opportunities to struggle with questions of goals and values. In order to sharpen its distinctness, I will explain the identity-view by contrasting it with a very popular approach to leadership development, an approach that I will call "the training view". In its strong version, this view assumes that it is unnecessary to invest significant time in addressing questions of goals and values, but that it is essential and possible for those who would be leaders to acquire tools that will help them to pursue whatever goals they undertake to realize, no matter what organizational settings and social contexts they are in. This view is embedded in a variety of

programs for the development of personnel, including educational leadership, and some of its elements may make sense; but I will argue that the overall approach is wrong-headed.

I will begin by briefly presenting and critiquing the training-view before moving on, in the next part of the paper, to articulate the core ideas at work in the identity-view. After I have explained the identity-view and tried to make its reasonableness apparent, I will go on to discuss some of its implications for leadership development programs. But before proceeding with this agenda, it is necessary to say a few words about the concept of educational leadership itself.

Much has been written about leadership. Analyses have focused on its conceptual dimensions, that is, on what ideas are built into the concept of *leader;* other analyses have focused on the empirical dimensions of leadership, dealing, for example, with what leaders are actually like, how they make their decisions, and how they deal with organizational and other problems; and yet others have focused on the normative aspects of leadership, advancing and/or critiquing views of what leaders ought to be like, how they should understand their work, and how they should approach it. Indeed, so much has been written on leadership that it would be impossible to develop an adequate systematic account of this subject in a paper of this kind. Fortunately, it is also unnecessary to develop such an account. It will be sufficient if we can assume a relatively intuitive understanding of educational leadership that reflects the way we think and talk about educational leaders, one that covers the kinds of people we are likely to encounter in educational leadership programs, and that focuses our attention on the kinds of tasks, roles and contexts that are likely to define the professional work of such individuals.

As ordinarily and intuitively understood, an educational leader is a person in charge of an educational initiative (for

example, a school, a summer camp with an educational agenda, an adult learning program, or an educational tour) that typically involves subordinates, groups of learners, interested parties like parents, boards, and funders, and a program of learning. My own discussion adopts this intuitive understanding but is also intended to encompass other kinds of leaders – for example, individuals who lead curriculum development projects, or who are in charge of communal bureaus of education, or foundations organized around the improvement of education, or pulpit-rabbis who think of themselves as educational leaders and of the various domains of synagogue life as arenas of education. Typically, these are individuals who not only occupy roles that are designated as leadership positions, but who are expected to use their power and position to exert a favorable influence on the quality of education in the domain over which they have authority. To this it is important to add that, even when they do not formally teach in the program for which they are responsible, educational leaders are themselves decidedly educators, for their work typically demands that they educate relevant constituencies – for example, teachers, curriculum developers, support staff, and community-leaders – concerning matters that bear on the success of education. Moreover, the organizational environment and institutional culture they establish inevitably and in sometimes important ways affect the education that takes place in the program or institution that they lead.

1. THE TRAINING MODEL: Its Appeal and its Limitations

The character and appeal of the training model

According to the training model, the principal task of leadership development is to equip prospective and emerging leaders with the tools they need to perform their tasks. Tools include not just technical knowledge of various kinds but also an array of skills and qualities – for example, expertise in finance and budgeting, management and supervision skills, strategic planning skills, the ability to develop an agenda and to run a meeting, conflict resolution skills, assertiveness, the ability to create consensus, the ability to orchestrate instructional-improvement processes, and effective communication skills. Put differently, the training model focuses on acquiring the means needed to achieve certain ends or goals, rather than on goals themselves. That goals are beyond the purview of this approach to leadership-training is grounded in the assumption that attention to them is unnecessary: the goals that steer the educational process are usually well-known in the community – for example, goals like acquiring understanding and skill in areas like English or mathematics, which are themselves intermediate goals on the way to widely shared higher goals like "shaping cultured individuals" or preparing students "for life" or "to be good and self-actualizing persons". In other cases, the goals may not be widely shared by the community but are well-known givens that define the agenda of the particular institution that hires the educational leader. As the foregoing suggests, this view assumes that we can identify tools that leaders need in a variety of leadership contexts, and that these tools define the content of leadership development. This also sets the pedagogical agenda: the challenge is to help aspiring leaders acquire these tools in ways that will enable them to use them across the varied organizational and social contexts in which they may find themselves as leaders.

The training-view is associated with two well-known traditions of thought and research. One of them is the instrumentalist paradigm of decision-making and behavior – what is called the "value-expectancy model" in motivational psychology (analogous to the "rational choice model" in economics). According to this model, people who are faced with various behavioral options will choose – and ought to choose – the one which they view as having maximal utility, where this utility is a function of the value the individual assigns to the outcome and the confidence (subjective probability) that this outcome can be achieved. This model takes the value of any outcome as a given that is grounded in the preferences of individuals, whatever these may be. In the context of the education of young people as educational leaders, this model emphasizes the same thing: the acquisition of tools that can help individuals achieve their purposes, whatever these purposes happen to be.

The second tradition of thought associated with the training-view is a well-known liberal approach in social philosophy. According to this view, a person has the right and the ability to set and evaluate his or her own goals, and social institutions should therefore refrain from taking stands on or intervening in matters of values. The prominent qualification to this is that it is the right and duty of society to intervene when an individual's pursuit of his or her own values threatens the right of others to live their lives as they choose. It follows from this that educational institutions must exercise care not to intervene in their students' lives in matters of values and goals. Rather, as suggested in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice,* their job is to equip members of the community with what Rawls calls *primary goods,* that is, with tools and qualities that will facilitate their achieving whatever life-plan they decide to adopt. As should be clear, this fits the outlook assumed by the training model.

One of the attractions of the training model is that it seems to be especially appropriate to contemporary circumstances, this being an era in which leaders often move through a succession of positions in institutions that differ from one another in respect to size, organization, and purpose. The manager of a food marketing network may move on to manage a computer company, only to become the CEO of a trendy network of coffee houses. Nor would it be surprising for such an individual, if viewed as successful, to be hired by a struggling school system that is seeking greater efficiency and quality. If, as the training model asserts, there is a generic set of core tools that are needed across leadership contexts, and that are teachable in ways that will render them usable across these contexts, this is, indeed, very appealing. Unfortunately, the training model is problematic in ways that frustrate its ability to make good on its promises.

Critique of the training model

In this section, I argue that the training model is riddled with problematic assumptions. Taken together, these problems are sufficient to undermine the model's overall credibility.

First, the training model makes the assumption that it is possible to identify and articulate the qualities and tools educational leaders need to carry out their tasks. While this may be true of some of the tasks associated with leadership (perhaps budgeting or certain aspects of personnel management fall into this category), it is doubtful that this is true of many of the other qualities and tools needed to lead (rather than administer) effectively. Though we may be able to identify some of the elements that enter into, say, the ability to convince and motivate, to resolve conflict, or to build a positive culture in the work-environment, it may well be impossible to fully articulate the elements that make for effectiveness in these areas. Equally important, it is far from clear that we know how to cultivate the relevant skills and abilities

in ways that will facilitate their effective use across a variety of leadership contexts.

More importantly, there are deep problems with the assumptions that underlie the training model's view that goals should be outside the purview of leadership development programs. Recall the considerations that typically enter into this outlook: First, the goals of education are already clear enough in the sense that society's educational expectations are well-articulated and in the sense that most institutions have a clear system of goals, sometimes articulated in mission statements. Second, those who are worthy of admission to leadership development programs already possess an adequate system of professional goals, so that, should an employing institution turn to them for help in charting its future, or should these educational leaders want to develop their own institutions, this existing system of goals would suffice to offer the proper guidance. In neither case would it be necessary for a leadership development program to intervene with the goals of their clients. Third, in a liberal community that cherishes individual autonomy, it is ethically wrong for training programs to seek to influence the goals and value-commitments of their clients, and therefore these programs ought to bypass questions of goals altogether.

But these assumptions are all problematic. It is, in the first place, simply not true that communities and institutions typically stand for a coherent system of educational goals which a willing educational leader might embrace. On the contrary, often what pass for goals turn out to be general slogans ("social justice", "being a good person", "subject-matter competence", "decision-making skills", etc.), the meaning of which is unclear; and even when lip-service is paid to them, it is not clear to what extent they are genuinely embraced.

Analogous considerations apply at the level of individuals who aspire to be educational leaders. As is the case with most

people, the so-called goals and values these individuals embody or claim to embody, are often not sufficiently well-developed to guide them in pursuing their mission as educational leaders. True, they have preferences and long-term wishes which may give rise to some kind of a system of goals. But, not uncommonly, this system of so-called goals suffers from a number of limitations, including the following:

- ***Lack of clarity.*** In various domains of life, including their professional work, many aspiring leaders have never stopped to articulate their goals and values in a profound way. Such matters are important for educational leaders to consider, but, oftentimes, their existing schemas and patterns of behavior "save them" from the trouble of thinking seriously about what their values and goals really are. This is very problematic because when they do stop and articulate them, it turns out that their so-called goals can be interpreted in a variety of ways, each with different implications for practice; and typically, they have not stopped to sort out, much less to choose between, these different interpretations.
- ***Lack of depth.*** Even if their goals are relatively clear, many educators have not stopped to think carefully about their reasons and justifications, about the consequences, implications, costs and benefits of striving to achieve them, and about their defensibility as compared with other possible goals. Consider, for example, the educational goal of "loyalty to one's nation", and let's assume that we have clarified which of the possible interpretations is the one we have in mind. But have we stopped to ask ourselves how we came to hold this goal? Is it possible that it was simply imposed by particular life circumstances? What, then, is the rationale for this goal, and what are its practical

implications in different situations? And have we stopped to consider what the limits of this value might be, and whether there might be principles and values that are equally, if not more, worthy of our allegiance in all or some situations? In addition to the moral question at stake here, there is an important practical consideration: since it is often impossible to pursue all attractive goals that present themselves in a serious way, an educator must decide which among them ought to be pursued. And deciding this matter may, in turn, depend on an assessment of one's own ability to achieve various goals that may be under consideration. But it is hard to decide these various matters in a thoughtful way if one hasn't made room for genuinely in-depth deliberation.

- ***Limited breadth.*** Even when educators have clear goals that have undergone a rich process of justification and that reflect a commitment to certain core-values, their effectiveness may be weakened through a failure to be attentive and sensitive to values that are regarded as important by people in their client-populations and communities. Even if they do not end up embracing these values (which in some cases they might!), it will be important for them to develop thoughtful stances towards these values which they can explain to relevant groups of stake holders and which they can take into account in their planning and interactions.

The foregoing suggests that there are excellent reasons for a program that develops educational leaders to help clients achieve clarity and depth concerning their own goals, to develop a broad awareness and a sophisticated understanding of the ideas about goals that circulate in their communities, and to reflect on the place of goals in their educational work. More strongly, for the following reasons, progress along these dimensions is essential to

their work and is likely to enhance their effectiveness as educators: First, the clearer and deeper understanding of the goal that emerges is likely to confirm and strengthen the leader's commitment to it and his or her decisiveness in acting to achieving it. Second, the clearer educators are about their goals and the goals of their institutions, the better able they will be to make decisions that will advance their educational agendas under complicated life-circumstances. Third, clarity about goals and about how they might be defended and evaluated will enable educators to help critical constituencies associated with the institutions they work for to become more aware of the importance and significance of goals in education, to deliberate more intelligently about their own goals and value-commitments, and to have more fruitful discussions about the way to organize practice in light of the institution's priorities. In a related vein, such clarity will enable educational leaders to explain more clearly and persuasively the nature of their institutions to important external constituencies (for example, funders, government agencies, and relevant publics). Fourth, sophistication about goals is especially important in a fluid, post-modern society like our own. Even if old goals have served an institution well, rapidly changing conditions may give rise to a need to reconsider them and to entertain basic reforms. Only a leader who is sophisticated about goals can be trusted to deal with such situations in a responsible and effective way. Moreover, a change in the institution's or the leader's goals (or in their interpretation) may bring about a gap between the leader's own value-commitments and those of the employing institution. A clear awareness of the differences between one's own value-commitments and the institution's goals may protect the leader from unintentionally and very subtly letting his or her own values displace, or inappropriately influence, his or her interpretations of the institution's goals in the conduct of his or her work.

We come now to another flawed assumption that guides the training model: the belief that addressing questions of goals illegitimately intrudes on the learners' value-commitments. To say that a leadership development program should address questions of goals does not entail that it will or should be striving to shape the value-commitments of its clients in a manner that is in any way indoctrinatory. The intention might be – and, I will argue, it should be – to provide them with sustained opportunities to work towards a clearer, deeper and broader understanding of their own value-commitments, an understanding that might grow out of the following:

- Opportunities to clarify their present preferences and action-guiding beliefs.
- Opportunities to understand the origins and justifications of these orientations.
- Opportunities to critically examine the beliefs that underlie these existing commitments.
- Opportunities to explore the implications of their value-commitments for practice in relevant educational and other domains, with attention to the risks, costs and benefits associated with acting on them, to trade-offs with other values, etc.
- Opportunities to learn about other goals and orientations in education.

Not only is an approach organized around providing such opportunities not indoctrinatory, the opposite is true: it advances the individual's development as an *autonomous* educational leader. For, as suggested above, it is not typically true that the action-guiding beliefs and values that people, including the clients of leadership development programs, bring with them are products of autonomous choice that grow out of critical consideration of

what is at stake and of alternatives. Rather, what they bring with them are often attitudes that reflect insufficiently considered preferences and prejudices rather than a thoughtful set of commitments – attitudes that reflect the inevitable chains of their past experience and their indoctrination at the hands of their society and environment. If this is true, then rather than avoid addressing questions of values and goals, our job is to offer future leaders opportunities to develop a more autonomous position vis-à-vis the values and goals that they say they are committed to.

The interpenetration of means and ends

The various considerations already discussed call into question the wisdom of the training model's insistence that we should stay away from questions of goals in our training programs. Now I want to suggest that training model-inspired programs that focus on developing tools, without venturing into the tangled world of aims, and without emphasizing the need to choose, define and evaluate each tool in terms of the aims it is supposed to serve, are grounded in the false belief that it is *possible* to bypass the world of goals altogether in dealing with tools. This belief is itself an expression of the naïve and seriously problematic assumption that means and ends are independent and that it is therefore possible to divide sharply between the tools an educator uses and his or her aims. For one thing, the means or tools available to us influence our aims. From the outset, we may avoid considering aims that we perceive to be impossible or difficult to achieve, which we lack the means to achieve, or which can be achieved only by means of a prodigious effort or at too high a price. Concomitantly, if the appropriate means to achieve a particular type of aim become available, we may be disposed to adopt the aim, even if it was originally low in our order of priorities. Moreover, the means at our disposal for achieving an aim will shape our understanding of the aim and the criteria we employ to judge whether we have

been successful. As an example: an available tool for enhancing creativity may affect the way we understand what it means to be creative.

More generally, aims we are unable to define, both in terms of the means needed to achieve them and in terms of the degree of their attainment, will often cease to actively engage us. On the other hand, aims which can be defined in these terms are likely to capture our attention. Thus, the effects of means on aims are more extensive and far-reaching than initially appears to be the case and than we find convenient to admit.

In the opposite direction, the adoption of certain goals often sits uncomfortably with the employment of certain kinds of means. Thus, the calculating, planful, utility-oriented, strategic orientation of the instrumental paradigm cannot easily be reconciled with goals like the capacity for genuine relationship or generosity; once you start calculating such goals in terms of personal utility, their essential nature is likely to change and even evaporate. Similarly, the adoption of sincerity *as a strategy* cannot be carried through without abandoning one of the key elements of sincerity; and to teach people to be independent via a process of conditioning would seem to be at best odd, if not also a contradiction in terms.

There is much more to be said concerning the complicated relationship between means and ends. But I hope that what I have presented is already sufficient to shatter the naïve illusion that goals and means are independent and that training based on acquiring means allows us to bypass issues of goals in the process of leadership development.

2. THE IDENTITY-APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Setting the stage

In emphasizing the need to attend to matters that relate to values and goals in leadership education, I am not claiming that it is unimportant for leadership education programs to impart various tools. What I am claiming is, first, that we should not seek to do so naïvely, that is, without thoughtful attention to the limits and difficulties that pertain to the attempt to cultivate them in prospective educational leaders; and, second, that leadership development programs should not focus on the acquisition of tools in ways that preclude adequate attention to other important dimensions of leadership development. Insisting on the centrality of goals is one way of protecting against over-emphasizing the need to impart tools; and it is one of the virtues of the identity-approach to leadership development that it *does* give a prominent place to questions of value and purpose in our own lives and in education.

In introducing this approach, it will be useful to make some additional comments that specify what I mean by questions of value. By 'value' I mean a belief based on judgment and evaluation, and not on the mere existence of need or desire, that a certain end state or way of doing things is 'good' and worthy of aspiration. A value thus points to aims which we have examined within our life-context and have come to appreciate as good and worthy. At the same time, values furnish us with criteria for evaluating proposed end-states and actions. Inquiry into values demands a process of considered reflection that involves the dimensions of *clarity, depth,* and *breadth* (as presented above). That is, this process involves clarifying the value-commitments in question, as well as considering their justifiability, with attention to the assumptions at their base, conditions and limits, practical implications, costs

and benefits, and competing value-commitments that could be embraced or that might have to be sacrificed or compromised. And, of course, such an inquiry will also include a serious attempt to understand the activities and actions that are required to achieve the goals we have identified as important and how we would evaluate whether we have achieved them. If we have no reasonable sense of these matters, our goals are insufficiently developed and not yet worthy of our commitment. Keeping these matters in mind, we turn now to the concept of identity.

Identity and the activities guided by it

Achieving clarity, depth, and breadth of understanding about goals is insufficient to motivate people to act in accordance with their goals or to persuade others to pursue them. For this result it is necessary that the goals in question be adopted by the individual so that he or she feels committed to them, with a conscious intention of acting according to them. The requisite outlook is objective in the sense that, based on impersonal considerations, the person judges his or her goals to be good in and of themselves; but it is also subjective in the sense that this person sees the pursuit of these goals as good and fit for him or her and as making a claim on him or her. Put differently, the commitment to these goals must become an aspect of the individual's *personal identity*, as this concept is understood in psychology. In this section I present an account of personal identity. This will serve as background for the following section, where I introduce the concept of *educational identity* and claim that its development should become a major goal of educational leadership programs.

Throughout our lives we struggle to understand the world around us, and this struggle includes our attempt to understand and define ourselves. We ask questions like: Who am I? What constitutes my "self"? One component of my answer to these questions takes shape as my self-image, which refers to the picture

I have of what I am actually like – a picture that includes a mix of traits, some of them traits I may like or be proud of, and others that make me uncomfortable. Another aspect of thinking about who I am is organized around a different kind of question: What things in my life do I find so important and essential that I could not consider myself the same person without them? My answer to this question gives rise to a definition of myself that reflexively designates who I take myself to be – the particular characteristics I choose and adopt, to the exclusion of others, on the grounds that I view them as important to me and as having claims on me. In this sense, the self-definition is normative, offering me and others clarity about myself (Who am I *really, at my core*?), as well as both motivation and a sense of direction as I seek to determine what to choose among the various alternatives and requirements that present themselves. Thus, our self-definition elicits, directs and motivates our behavior. It is the basis of our activities as autonomous agents controlling and shaping our lives.

The self-definition that we adopt stems partly from what feels like free choice, based on our experience, and partly from acceptance of the given situation in which we find ourselves. When, for example, we adopt a particular political direction or a hobby, we may feel that free choice is at work. On other occasions, though, we are confronted by givens that seem to be forced on us, for example, belonging to a particular family and nation, or certain personality traits, or imprints of powerful experiences. But even in the case of such givens, we usually feel we have some elbow room to decide how to relate to these elements – for example, how to interpret them, and whether to embrace them actively or reduce their importance (possibly to the point of ignoring them). In the modern world, with the immense growth in our freedom to choose a way of life, our chosen self-definition has become a major factor in shaping our personality and behavior.

The set of self-definitions we choose to adopt for ourselves with a measure of conscious awareness constitutes our personal identity. Erikson and other psychologists suggest that identity provides us with our sense of existence and our sense of continuity over time and across variable situations. Evidence, empirical and impressionistic, shows that people have a tendency to preserve and affirm their identities – they strive for harmony between their identity and their actions; they initiate actions that express their identity and they tend to avoid actions that cannot be reconciled with it. In extreme situations, people may be prepared to pay a very high price, sometimes sacrificing their very lives, so as not to betray their identities.

Of course, not all the self-definitions that enter into our personal identity are on a par with respect to their subjective importance. The degree of importance of an identity-component is connected with the extent to which we see it as an essential part of ourselves; at the extreme, if a particular trait were no longer present, we would feel that we had changed to the point of no longer being the same person. The greater the importance to us of a component, the more we insist on preserving and affirming it. It is important to add that an identity-component may be more or less important for the same person at different times in his or her life.

It is also noteworthy that, on the scale of importance, identity-components can have different behavioral implications and weights for different people. For example, some people may feel that the national component of their identity places restrictions on their behavior but does not obligate them to positive actions that give it expression. Others may feel the need for positive actions of certain kinds, and if they don't engage in these actions, they may feel that they have betrayed their personal identities.

While many of our activities are identity-guided, not all of them are. Some of what we do is dictated by biological needs or

the need to make a living. Though I recognize the importance of behaviors that answer these needs, and although my identity may well limit the way I respond to these needs, the behaviors themselves are often not core expressions of my identity or expressions of it at all. Such activities are to be contrasted with those that emanate from and express our sense of identity, like scientific or artistic creation, or participating in demonstrations for causes that are important to us, or studying the sources of our culture. I call such actions "identity-guided actions" to distinguish them from actions that I will call "utility-guided actions" – actions that are pursued in order to assure material well-being, satisfaction of biological needs, or pleasure.

For our purposes, it is important to draw attention to the distinction between utility-guided and identity-guided actions because of a pronounced tendency in the Western world to exaggerate the extent to which our activities are utility-guided. In fact, a great deal of what we do is better understood as identity-guided; that is, many of our activities are performed out of a sense that they express who we are – that they are intrinsically important to us, that it would be unbecoming for us not to act in this way, or that we are under an obligation to do so. We experience such activities as emanating from the self, rather than imposed on us from the outside; and they are associated with a particular sort of satisfaction, one that stems from our feeling that we are being loyal to, and actualizing, our selves.

Educational identity as a major factor in the development of educational leadership

A major component in the identity of adults is their profession or career. Though commitment to a professional area is only one of the many commitments that individuals in our culture typically embrace as part of their self-definitions, it has a special position among them. The fact that many people give so much time and energy to their professional endeavors can be read as both a manifestation and cause of the centrality of these endeavors to their personal identities. Given how much of a person's life is organized around his or her professional activities, it is not surprising that this area of life is both shaped by and shapes a person's value-commitments, or that this would be an area to which one looks for self-fulfillment and in relation to which one thinks about the meaning of one's life.

The foregoing remarks tend to apply even more forcefully to leaders in education. The reason for this is that, as educators concerned with the development of others, their work gives expression not just to their ideas about the process and organization of education and its immediate results, but also to their visions of the good person and a good society. As this suggests, there is likely to be an especially intimate connection between their personal and professional identities: On the one hand, their educational calling is a particularly important part of their lives and their personal identity; on the other hand, their ideas about what is worthy and good in life enters into the ways they think about and approach their work as educators.

I will call the kind of commitment to education that I associate with educational leaders "educational identity". It is a commitment that embodies beliefs and values concerning the aims and the process of education against the background of basic convictions about what is right and good for the individual and the society. It

also encompasses the leader's beliefs concerning his or her own distinctive inclinations, capacities, talents, and aspirations for advancing the cause of education. An educational identity, in this sense, is invaluable for those who will serve as educational leaders. It enables them to make (indeed, it is a necessary condition of their making) decisions autonomously, that is, as expressions of carefully considered beliefs and principles, rather than being driven primarily by outside pressures, personal interests, and the like. Educational identity can be seen at work in the personalities of individuals we regard as exemplary educational leaders like Janosch Korczak, whose work was guided by a vision that expressed both the educational project that he set out to actualize *and* value-commitments that he regarded as a central part of his identity. As further analysis of such examples would bring out even more strongly, our personal identity shapes our ideas about education, and, at the same time, our approach to education and what we learn in the course of our work shape our personal identity.

It is important to add that educational identity is necessarily connected with one's view of the educator's role (in the sociological sense of the term) – the system of social expectations that surround a person in the position of educational leader. This system includes beliefs, values, forms of activity, attitudes, and the like that are seen by the society as central to the practice of 'good education'. The educator is a *shaliach tzibur* (representative and emissary of the community), and, as such, he or she has to fit the expectations of the society he or she serves. Individuals who define themselves as educators typically understand and, to greater or lesser degrees (and with greater or lesser sophistication), internalize this system of expectations as part of their educational identities; even if they don't effectively embody them, they usually know that they are supposed to and try to present themselves as though they do. For us, the relevant point is that to the extent that elements in the

established role-concept are part of the educational identity of an educational leader, they have been interpreted, endorsed, and adopted by the person. They are now expressions of the individual, rather than impositions to which he or she automatically submits.

Some core elements of educational identity

As just suggested, in addition to beliefs and values which are related to the specific work of the educator, educational identity also includes some more general features, features which, though not always embodied in the actual conduct of educators in a profound or sophisticated way, typically reflect distinctive components of the conventional image and even role-concept of "educational leader" (as discernible, for example, in literature and in popular culture). Below I briefly present five such features (obviously, others could be added). But I want to emphasize that I am offering these particular features here not just as sociological points about the role-concept of "educator" in our society but as integral elements of a normative conception of educational identity, a conception that may reasonably guide the recruitment and training of educational leaders.

A. Awareness of the tension between vision and practice. A leader's educational identity relates both to commitments that concern what is good and worth bringing into being and also to the difficult challenge of achieving these goods through educational practice. This tension between vision and practice – between aspirations, realistically expected outcomes, and actual outcomes – is a constitutive feature of educational identity. Educational leaders see themselves climbing and stumbling, then picking themselves up and continuing to climb the educational ladder – a ladder which stands on the ground but which also reaches to the sky – all the while paying attention to the top, to the base and to everything in between. The tension between what

should be and what is, also appears on the affective level: educators seesaw between the joy of achievement, the anxieties and the sense of excitement associated with encountering and addressing new challenges, and the pain of falling short of their goals.

B. Commitments that face outwards, beyond the self. Educational identity faces outwards: it strives to promote the flourishing of individuals as well as the welfare of society. Guided by the conviction that at both these levels progress can be made, educational identity embodies a basically optimistic outlook, unlike the cynicism characteristic of some political theories. A corollary of the focus on individuals and collectives outside the self is that the educator gives up the centrality of the self in his or her deliberations and actions: to have an educational identity in the sense I intend is to view the objects of one's educational efforts as the heart of the matter. This is not to deny that educators have personal aspirations and commitments to themselves as well, but it is to suggest that their concern with self will not override their higher commitment to their larger educational task (though a concern with self may sometimes be in tension with the task).

C. Breadth and complexity. Educational identity embodies a commitment to education that is broad rather than narrow. It is not limited to specific goals such as teaching mathematics or developing a critical attitude; it is directed towards the broader goal of promoting the development and welfare of the students and the society, a goal that reflects ideas concerning the nature of a good person, a good society, and a good life. Therefore, the approach of educators to the challenges they face is complex, drawing on perspectives and considerations from various domains of knowledge to judge how to proceed. A complex view of this kind is required in order to understand the unprecedented situations that regularly arise and the possible novel courses of

action that will be needed to navigate them. The availability of a broad array of perspectives protects educational leaders from being unduly influenced by urgent, salient, but very local considerations.

D. Integrity. Integrity, which refers to the presence of a conscious match between one's personal beliefs and attitudes and one's professional behavior, is an essential aspect of educational identity. Its centrality is a corollary of the close relationship we have posited between personal identity and educational identity. I am not claiming that people will necessarily be incapable of teaching about and on behalf of ideals that they personally don't embrace, but I am suggesting that they are unlikely to do so effectively. Moreover, even if they prove able to do so effectively on some occasions, it is unlikely that they will be able to sustain this stance in an effective way: not only is their insincerity likely to adversely affect their work in ways that will subvert their announced aims, this dishonesty is likely to contaminate their capacity to serve effectively as models for identification. As for the educators' relationship with themselves, it is hard to imagine that they can long continue in educational work if they are aware of the gap between what they really believe and how they present themselves. This sort of situation involves such sharp dissonance that it may easily turn into a heavy and perhaps impossible psychological burden.

E. Openness. In addition to its status as a universal value within liberal societies, one that makes it possible to seriously consider views that are very different from one's own, openness, in the sense of listening to others and undefensively exploring beliefs, values, and modes of behavior that are different from one's own, is an important factor of educational identity also for education-specific reasons. At a minimum, openness to the values and ideas

of their students is an expression of the respect owed to the people the educator is supposed to be helping; but three additional points are also relevant. First, when these people feel respected, they are more likely to be positively disposed to the educational process. Second, understanding how their students and colleagues perceive and evaluate their situation is necessary for educators to treat and help them effectively. Third, the perspectives and interpretations offered by others might prove more convincing and sounder than the educator's own original view.

Having just urged the importance of listening respectfully to the views of others, especially one's students and colleagues, it is important to add that this does not require the educator to avoid taking and expressing a stand. On the contrary, there is often a need to do both these things. This aspect of educational identity is one expression of a characteristic tension in educational work between, on the one hand, openness and respect for students and, on the other hand, one's commitment to certain aims and practices.

These features of educational identity would seem to be intrinsically bound up with the educator's role, contributing in important ways to the proper and efficient functioning of teachers and others in the field of education, at least in Western culture. That is not to say that the development and adoption of these qualities do not pose problems. Not only is the road to their acquisition in a useful form often paved with difficulties, but, once present, these qualities are sometimes in tension with one another. As an example, recall that one of the basic characteristics of educational identity is commitment to basic values and beliefs, a commitment which provides the educator with clarity of purpose and an energizing sense of direction. While this is a great asset, psychological research shows that commitment to an idea or an aim frequently leads to bias in attending to, perceiving and

interpreting reality. If so, might not the educator's commitment to certain chosen goals interfere with an open and valid evaluation of reality? In view of the narrow-minded, often destructive, extremism that we see all around us, we may feel all the more strongly that uncompromising clarity of purpose and commitment could prove counter-productive. Here, openness comes to the rescue, insisting that the educator not be so committed to a particular ideal or approach that conflicting evidence or ideas can no longer be entertained. But is there not also a danger from the other side, namely, that openness will threaten the educator's effectiveness by undermining his or her sense of clarity and direction? In effect, we seem to be faced with a serious dilemma: on the one hand, there is good reason to think that education should be driven by clear and strong value-commitments; on the other hand, the presence of such commitments in the leadership of an educating institution may preclude the kind of openness and self-critical outlook that makes it possible to re-examine the wisdom of these very commitments. This is just one salient example of the conflicts that do not allow the educator to feel entirely at peace.

Educational identity and vision

Educational identity is closely related to the concept of a vision, which comes up frequently in discussions of educational leadership. Generally, a vision is a picture of an ideal to strive for. But the vision may be merely an abstract idea that does not give rise to motivation and to behavior designed to actualize it. Even an educational vision, which is necessarily anchored in and influenced by a particular context, may remain just a wish. Educational identity rescues the educational vision from this fate. As a part of educational identity, the vision is incorporated in beliefs and commitments that give it vitality and make it a motivating force in the individual's life. If the vision is a peak, a wonderful, longed-for mountaintop, educational identity embodies both a longing for

this peak and a conception of the whole process of climbing up the mountainside on the way there.

To elaborate, two essential conditions for motivating action on behalf of the vision are constitutive components of educational identity: (1) a felt obligation to make progress toward realizing the vision; (2) a belief in my capacity to make such progress, grounded in a sense of personal competence. The sense of obligation stems from recognition of the value of the ideal; the sense of competence is a result of the individual's evaluation of the task in light of his or her inclinations and abilities, based on past experience. The sense of competence is a prerequisite for the sense of obligation, which in turn is a prerequisite for commitment leading to adoption of the goal as the object of one's efforts. These are attributes of the person and not of the vision. If I feel incapable of realizing a vision or am not committed to it, this does not necessarily detract from my evaluation of the worthiness of the vision, but it will leave me disabled. Thus, my feelings about a vision or about my ability are not an adequate basis for affirming or rejecting it, but they may well be a basis for deciding whether I am the right person to lead the effort to advance towards it. My belief that I possess the commitment, the skills, and the knowledge needed to make progress towards a particular vision, will significantly affect my efforts to achieve it.

3. EDUCATIONAL IDENTITY "IN PROCESS"

The picture of educational leaders that seems to be emerging from the discussion so far is that of individuals with a consolidated identity, one that embodies a commitment to a clear approach to education. Such an identity would seem to provide a solid basis for educational practice – for hiring, for planning, for deliberation, and for thoughtful evaluation of the organizational and educational environment. It allows for long-term continuity and consistency across situations, and makes it possible for the individual to take decisions without continual internal debate. But while it would not be hard to identify educational leaders who fit this description, many educational leaders depart from this description in various ways. More importantly, as already intimated, one needs to consider the possibility that it may be unnecessary and sometimes even undesirable for educational leaders to have this consolidated sort of identity.

More specifically, in a territory as complex as education, which struggles with eternal questions about the nature of human beings, the good life, and the good society, in the context of an open, multifaceted society that features people of very different kinds, disparate systems of beliefs and values, and also rapid technological and social change, it may be unrealistic to expect educational leaders to develop and sustain this type of consolidated educational stance. Indeed, there is good reason to hope that, living as they do in a world characterized by changing circumstances, new ideas, and novel information and research, they will be open to the probable need now and then to review their guiding commitments and dispositions.

While this kind of flexibility may seem worth encouraging, this also raises a serious problem, one that we already pointed to above from a different angle: Don't the very qualities that underlie this

kind of openness tend to undermine the very things that make educational identity a desideratum? Might these qualities be misinterpreted by the educational leader's key constituencies as – or might they actually give rise to – unhealthy doubt and insecurity? And if so, won't this impact unfavorably on the educator's ability to assess situations, make decisions, and influence others? In this section, I relate this issue to forms of what I will call a flexible educational identity. I put forward the claim that although such an identity may, beyond a certain point and in certain circumstances, prove dysfunctional to an educational leader, it is not inherently so.

In developing this point, I want to distinguish two dimensions of flexibility that can be manifested in both personal and educational identity: *coherence* and *confidence.* I shall call educational identity *coherent* when the elements that make up the individual's outlook – e.g., his or her value-commitments, attitudes, and beliefs – hang together in a way that allows for consistency of response across different situations. To be clear: it is not that people with a coherent identity do not embody value-commitments that may in certain situations point in different directions; but when this does happen, they have higher-order principles and/or a decision-making process that will effectively guide the attempt at resolution in relatively systematic ways. Turning now to the second dimension, my sense of identity can be called *confident* to the extent that I feel sure of the reasonableness of the values, loyalties, and plans that it embodies.

Although there has been a widespread view in psychology that coherence and confidence are necessary elements in a healthy sense of identity that facilitates effective functioning, in recent times their requiredness is being questioned. Researchers point out that there are many apparently well-functioning individuals whose identities fail to fully exhibit coherence and confidence. To investigate this matter further in the context of educational

identity, it will serve our purposes to use the two dimensions of identity under consideration to build and then investigate four schematic structures of educational identity.

1. A confident and coherent identity is a *stable* identity. It expresses itself in a lack of uncertainty and the presence of consistency in deciding how to approach matters in a variety of domains. The confidence of people with a stable identity allows them a certain kind of openness to new ideas and people. However, as indicated above, at the extreme, people with such an identity may neglect or actively disregard realities and ideas that challenge their outlook.
2. An identity that is not confident but is coherent is a *conditional* identity. Individuals with a conditional identity embody some uncertainty concerning the validity of their value-commitments and their approach to the challenges they face. A mechanism for dealing with their doubt is making a commitment to a way of life while acknowledging the constraints of reason and the unavoidability of doubt, on the one side, and the need to decide and choose a way of life, on the other side. They may be open to considering other ideas and approaches, but, at some point, their continuing commitments may lead them to withdraw from difficult decisions or to seal themselves off from considering other approaches because this may further exacerbate their sense of uncertainty.
3. An identity that is confident but not coherent is a *multifaceted* identity. A multifaceted identity includes orientations, tendencies, and sometimes even beliefs that are fundamentally irreconcilable with one another, but with which the individual feels strongly identified. These internal incompatibilities may enable those who have a multifaceted identity to be open to a variety of different

views, but in circumstances that involve clashes between their irreconcilable attitudes and values, it may sometimes prove difficult for them to make choices.

4. Finally, an identity that is neither confident nor coherent is an *opportunistic* identity, a case that we do not need to consider in the context of this discussion of educational leadership.

Needless to say, the boundaries between the four structures are somewhat fuzzy. I do not intend these structures to represent types of people; rather, they are an attempt to present types of "flexibility of identity" and thereby help us to see how types of flexibility fare in the arena of educational leadership. From our earlier discussion, one might conclude that educational leaders need to have a stable identity. One might, that is, wonder whether a leader whose identity is not *both* confident *and* coherent can function effectively. However, as already intimated, an examination of a variety of educational leaders whose identities are not both confident and coherent shows that there are among them people who are capable of evaluating and deciding matters of importance competently. That is, lack of perfect confidence and coherence in beliefs and values is not necessarily an obstacle standing in the way of an educational leader. Indeed, it may even serve as a foundation for commitment to a way of life that makes possible behavioral decisions and a meaningful life without denying or ignoring doubts and questions. Moreover, it is precisely this quality, a kind of critical attitude vis-à-vis one's commitments and a degree of openness to apparently incoherent values and beliefs, that has made for progress in human inquiry. More strongly, this may be the right zone for an educational leader to be in: sufficient confidence and coherence to facilitate a thoughtful and proactive approach to the challenges of practice, tinged with enough uncertainty and pluralism to make possible genuine openness to other views and thoughtful self-criticism in domains relevant to one's professional commitments.

4. OCCASIONS FOR DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL IDENTITY

In this section, I consider what it might mean to take the development of educational identity as a guide for the design of leadership education programs. From an identity perspective, the challenge is to design a program that will provide opportunities to develop different facets of educational identity, including: convictions satisfying the criteria of clarity, depth and breadth concerning the aims and foundations of education (for example, conceptions of the flourishing person and the good society); a perspective on the way value-commitments can be meaningfully translated into practical educational arrangements; and self-knowledge concerning one's talents, abilities, loves, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses.

This is a tall order, one that is only likely to be achieved if certain conditions are in place. Perhaps the most important one is that the individuals entering the leadership education program are intellectually, motivationally and emotionally ready to take advantage of the opportunities that it will make available: they must be willing to undertake serious learning, some of it theoretical and not immediately tied to practice; they must also be ready to critically examine their own deepest convictions and commitments and their bearing on the kinds of work they might do; and they must be open to exploring the constellation of talents, abilities and other qualities they bring with them – characteristics which render them well-suited for some kinds of roles and ill-suited for others. Not everyone will exhibit these kinds of readiness. Those who do, however, and who in other ways show promise of becoming high quality leaders, may prove excellent candidates for a well-conceived leadership education program organized around the development of educational identity. Such a program will need to be made up of different kinds of activities, including theoretical

studies (focused on issues treated in philosophy, social theory, and literature); studies in education; policy studies; field work; group work; an individual project; and engagement in research. True, some or all of these activities are often found in programs not organized around development of educational identity. But what distinguishes programs that are so organized is that these activities are designed (and perceived by teachers and students as intended) to exploit their potential to foster educational identity.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to systematically work out what a program organized around the development of educational identity would look like, I do want to illustrate the approach by considering two elements of such a program – the field work and individual project components. I leave it to the reader (or for another occasion) to spell out kindred implications for other program-elements.

Field work, which figures frequently in leadership development programs, typically refers to experiences that demand practical decisions and acceptance of responsibility. There is general agreement concerning the importance of field experience in training programs, which is typically justified on the ground that it offers the opportunity to apply acquired skills and theoretical knowledge in a "real" setting. But in a program organized around the development of educational identity, there is a different reason for emphasizing its importance, a reason which should affect the design of this program element: Practical work in the field is a unique and valuable occasion for developing one's educational identity. It gives people a chance to learn about what really matters to them – what things they are prepared to commit to in a serious way; and it also offers them the opportunity to better understand their talents, abilities, tendencies, and leanings, as well as their strengths, limitations, and weaknesses. For the field work experience to catalyze this kind of learning, it

must satisfy four conditions. First, it must call forth a sense of involvement grounded in a perception of the importance of the work to oneself and to the community. Second, it must offer a challenging opportunity to express the individual's values and talents and thus actualize his or her identity. Third, it must offer the opportunity to develop a sense of mastering a challenging situation and, through this, feel not just a sense of satisfaction but also a sense of responsibility for future outcomes. Fourth, it must offer opportunities to seriously reflect on the work being done, with attention to what the individual can learn about himself or herself as an educational leader.

Individual projects that involve conceptualizing, justifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating an educational initiative that responds to some problem in the field are also integral to a program designed to foster educational identity. Such projects are not uncommon in leadership education programs, and their declared objective is typically to give the learner the opportunity to bring together, in relation to a living educational problem and setting, both old and newly acquired cognitive and operational abilities and skills, as well as relevant knowledge-bases. Using these tools in a way that is relevant to a task for which one is responsible at the stages of justification, planning, and execution is said to be an important part of leadership development. But as important as this may be, the identity approach emphasizes a less widely recognized educational opportunity that the personal project opens up: its potential contribution to the consolidation of the participant's educational identity. At the stages of project choice and planning, participants will, in effect, reveal to themselves and to others a lot about what they think important and about how they think education can contribute to what needs to be achieved; and they will also be communicating what they take to be their own interests and talents. As the project unfolds, they will have

numerous opportunities to deepen and sometimes to challenge their initial understandings, not just of the nature of education but also of their commitments, talents, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. They will also learn a lot about what does, and does not, offer them a sense of self-fulfillment in their work. In this way, the personal project will help them to clarify directions that are suitable for them to pursue in their professional work.

Conclusion

I have claimed that, despite its appeal, the mainstream approach to leadership education – what I have called the *training model* – is seriously problematic: While we have something important to learn from it, it is certainly not enough. It is grounded in at least two flawed assumptions: that excellent leadership consists of the ability to effectively use a set of identifiable, generic, value-free tools to achieve the employing organization's purposes, whatever these purposes happen to be; and that it is possible to transmit these tools in ways that will enable leaders to use them effectively in the very different work settings in which they may find themselves. I have urged that educational leadership programs should be guided by a different conception of leadership and leadership education – what I have called the *identity-approach*. At the heart of this approach is the idea that educational leaders should embody an educational identity at the core of which are convictions, the product of thoughtful, critical informed deliberation concerning their aims as educators, and a sense of commitment grounded in an examination of their abilities, inclinations, and their readiness to dedicate themselves to a particular educational agenda. An educational leadership program organized around identity, in the sense we have been considering, points in two directions in the cultivation of educational leaders: on the one hand, towards larger questions of value and purpose; on the other hand, towards the nitty gritty of practice – to the qualities, skills, and understandings we need in order to achieve the real-world aspirations to which we have committed ourselves.

In a society that increasingly thinks about educational success in narrowly utilitarian terms, it is especially important to emphasize the need for educators to develop a strong educational identity that embodies commitments to values, ideals, and purposes that have emerged through a process of thoughtful deliberation. But

I have also emphasized that commitment to a particular set of guiding value-commitments and aims can be dangerous if it closes off educational leaders from ideas and data that might broaden or challenge their convictions. The critical point is this: commitment does not have to be purchased at the expense of openness; though maintaining the desired orientation is not always easy, it is possible for educational leaders to be strongly committed to a particular set of guiding value-commitments, while at the same time being open to new ideas and to criticism. Equally important, it is possible to design educational leadership programs whose graduates will exemplify this conception of educational leadership. Not only is it possible to cultivate such leaders, it is desirable – for these are precisely the kinds of leaders we need.

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