Paul Begley: Values and Leadership

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Abstract
Administrators are faced with increasing demands to make decisions everyday. The impact of globalization has made many of the decisions increasingly difficult as competing values cause conflicts. In many instances there are no clear answers that will appease all stakeholders. As administrators make these tough decisions it is becoming increasingly critical for them to base their decisions in values. This paper demonstrates that Paul Begley’s work in educational administration supports the use of values as a basis for making decisions. A discussion of values, including definitions of values, the types and origins of values as well as possible value conflicts that occur within and between individuals and organizations will be based on Begley’s works.
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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the contributions of Paul Begley to the academic field of education and more specifically, leadership in education. Although Begley began his career as an elementary school teacher, he did not intend for a career in education nor was he interested in higher education at university.

Very early on, after embarking on a journey in the field of education, Begley became disillusioned (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006). In spite of his reluctance to pursue education as a career, he has made some significant contributions in the area of leadership. Begley has been an advocate of considering values in educational leadership. It will be shown that Begley believes the changing world around us leaves educators no choice but to include values in their educational decision-making.

In order to frame the discussion, a biography of Paul Begley will be presented. A listing of Begley’s important works as well as a discussion of the influences on his works will be included. The themes of Begley’s work will be presented. These themes include the definition of values and types of values, the arenas in which values are formed and the impact of values in decision-making.

It will be shown that, as the works of Begley suggests, values can be an important basis on which to make decisions in an educational setting. Values from a variety of arenas and perspectives must be considered when making decisions. The more complicated the conflict, the greater the need for a decision to be made based on values. It will be shown that this view is supported by a variety of authors.
Biography

Paul Begley was born in 1949 in Canada. He studied history and English at the University of Toronto where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1971. He then left academia to pursue a career in motorcycle sales (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006).

Begley’s wife-to-be lured him back to the academic world, convincing him to attend Teachers College. Begley began his teaching career in 1974 as an elementary teacher in Waterloo County, Ontario. Begley began his journey into higher education only because it was required for principal certification. In order to obtain the principal’s certification Begley began a Master’s program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto that he completed in 1984 (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006).

Becoming disillusioned with the value conflicts he encountered in school from the perspective of a combined administrative and teaching role Begley was ready to abandon his career in education. In the end though, he took a leave to study and pursue a doctorate degree. In 1988 Begley received his doctorate degree from the University of Toronto. In 1991 Begley was appointed to the faculty at OISE after working at the Center for Leadership Development since 1986 on a secondment from his school division. Begley was responsible for Principal Certification Programs from 1986 until 2003 when he left OISE (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006).

Currently Begley is a Professor of Educational Leadership in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Penn State University. He is also Executive Director of the
Willower Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006).

Begley’s academic interests lie in the field of administrative values and the dynamics of school leadership (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006). Begley has authored and co-authored numerous journal articles on the subject of values and school leadership. As well, he has co-authored and edited books on the same subject.

As both a prolific author, professor of education and Executive Director of the Willower Center for the Study of Ethics and Leadership Begley is an influential scholar in his field. He often works in collaboration with others both in writing and editing books and journal articles. Begley is cited in the references of numerous books and journal articles (Starratt, 2004; Evers & Lakomski, 1996; Hodgkinson 1999; Leonard 1999; Begley & Leonard, 1999; Leithwood & Stager, 1989; Campbell-Evans, 1991).

In addition to his academic life, Begley has an active personal life. He is married and the father of three adult children. He enjoys hunting, canoeing, scuba diving, listening to music and playing the guitar (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006).

Important Works

One of the important works by Begley was *The influences of personal beliefs and values on principals adoption and use of computers in schools* written in 1988. One of the first works that Begley wrote, although unpublished, was his doctoral dissertation in 1988. In the dissertation he discussed the influence of values and beliefs on administrators and their adoption and use of computers. This work launched Begley’s career as a researcher and an author.
Begley’s work *Cognitive Perspectives on values and administration: A quest for coherence and relevance* was published in 1996. This work provides a comprehensive discussion of the definition, origin and theory of values. As well, value conflicts are discussed.

*Self Knowledge, capacity and sensitivity: Prerequisites to authentic leadership by school principals* is Begley’s latest work. This work will be published in August 2006 in the Journal of Educational Administration (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006). This article takes the role of values to the next step of not only reflecting on one’s own values but to take into consideration and be reflective of other’s values as well.

**Influences**

While working on his Doctorate, Begley met and was influenced by several people at the University of Toronto. Ken Leithwood, Michael Fullan and Thom Greenfield were all great influences on Begley (P. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006). These three were all professors of Begley’s. As well, each one of them was on the committee in charge of his doctoral dissertation (Begley, 1988).

Ken Leithwood was also an influence on Begley as he worked directly with Leithwood while employed at the Center for Leadership Development at the University of Toronto. While studying, Begley also met Chris Hodgkinson who had a great influence on him (P. T. Begley, personal communication, July 12, 2006).

Within Begley’s works the influences of other scholars are noted. The influences of Beck (Begley, 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2001), Campbell, (Begley, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1996, 2000, 2001),
Sergiovanni (Begley, 1994, 1996, 1999a, 1999b) and Willower (Begley, 1996, 1999a, 1999c, 2000, 2001) can be seen in many of Begley’s works.

Themes of Begley’s Works

The themes of Begley’s works are based on the use of values while making decisions in educational administration. Sergiovanni (1992) states “values play an important part in constructing an administrator’s mindscape and determining leadership practice” (p. 9). In order for a leader to be effective and authentic it is important for administrators to take values into account.

In order to be able to discuss the use of values one must first identify a definition of values. Values are those ideas and concepts that are especially important to individuals or groups. Values make an individual’s life or an organization’s world more humanistic. They make the world a better place although each culture, community or individual may have their own set of values.

The concept of values has been defined in literature within decision making as the desirable when making a choice (Hodgkinson, 1999; Willower & Licata, 1997). Beck (1990, 1999) defines values as those things that enhance human well-being, those things which humans deem to be important and which humans pursue. Campbell-Evans (1991) states that the values are the shoulds of decision-making. Begley (2000) uses Kluckhohn’s definition on which to base his works. “Values are a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action” (p. 240).

Once one understands the definition of values it is important to take a more in depth view of values. There are different kinds of values that are formed in different ways
and operate in different areas of one's life. Begley (2001) identifies three ways that values can be acquired. Some values can be formed instinctually, others socially and some are formed rationally by the individual.

Begley (1996) makes reference to Beck’s work on identifying classes of values. He identifies basic human values, moral values, social and political values, intermediate values, and specific values. Beck suggests that the values are not absolute. Some values are held worldwide but others are formed in individuals.

Begley (2000, 2001) refers to Hodgkinson’s work on values. Hodgkinson (1991) identifies arenas where values are formed. The formation of values occurs within the individual, group, organization, community and culture as well as in the transcendental area. Values originate from these arenas and operate in these arenas as well.

Hodgkinson (1999) suggests that values exist in hierarchic order and with that hierarchic order comes a decreasing motivating force at each level from the level of culture down to the individual. Begley on the other hand, has adapted the work of Hodgkinson with respect to the hierarchical order of values. Begley (1996) notes that Hodgkinson believes the same value can be held at different levels of motivation but Beck believes the motivations for different values can span across the arenas. The values can have the same impact on a decision at any level.

It has been shown that administrators will identify the values of consensus and consequences more often than personal preference or ethics to make decisions. Ethics are left for very special circumstances (Begley, 2000).

Begley’s works are based on decision making in schools from an administrative perspective. Begley (1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2000) believes that changes in society are
contributing to more dilemmas for administrators. Globalization and cultural diversity have a great impact on the decisions administrators make. Greater social needs, fiscal restraint and the expectation of diversity causes challenges for administrators. These challenges cause conflicts within the organization. As administrators encounter more dilemmas they will need to make more difficult decisions. As Beck (1990) suggests it is not possible when humans encounter decision-making situations to find a solution that is perfect. There are always several possible solutions. The goal is to find as good a solution as one can in that moment. It is imperative that the administrators use a value system to assist them in making decisions in order to be an authentic trusted leader in the school community.

Willower and Licata (1997) support the notion that values are central to educational administration because administrators are constantly making decisions about what is most desirable. Willower (1994) states “educational administration requires approaches to values that can usefully inform those choices” (p. 33). Leithwood and Stager (1989) found that values appeared to be an important consideration in decision making for principals. In later research, Leithwood (1994) notes that in the rating of principals’ problem solving skills being clear about one’s values and deliberately using these values when unsure of knowledge about the subject was important when making decisions. Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1999) note that expert principals used their values more often than less expert principals. The principals would rely on their values when they did not feel they had expert knowledge in a situation. When they encountered a situation in which they had expert knowledge, other values became the dominant values used in decision-making.
Campbell-Evans (1991) supports the use of values in decision making. Values do not remain static. The values that an administrator may use may change with the context in which they are employed. As suggested above, conflicts arise not only in one arena of value such as at the organizational or community level but conflicts can arise between arenas of values. Decisions are made based on one value but the other values do not disappear. The other values one holds are just less dominant at that time. In a different context the less dominant values may then become dominant.

Campbell-Evans (1991) also suggests that while making decisions for an organization, a principal’s personal values are important. When principals encounter policies within their organization that run counter to the personal values that they hold, their personal values will be dominant. The principal will ultimately look at implementing some modifications to the policies in order to align them with their personal values.

Beck (1999) reminds us that a leader has been placed into their position but this appointment does not make them the expert on values at all times. An administrator must consider values of everyone. They must be willing to participate in the inquiry of values in conjunction with all stakeholders.

With all of the possibilities for value conflict within an individual, between two or more individuals, between an individual and an organization, or between different cultural values, administrators would seem to be faced with an increasingly demanding job with little hope for making a decision to satisfy stakeholders.

Begley (2006, in press) suggests that not only should an administrator consider values as they make decisions, they must take into account the impact of their value
decisions that will come after the decision is made. Campbell-Evans (1991) states “administrators need to start thinking about their values as they act and also to think about the role and influences of values after they have acted” (p. 177).

It would seem to be an easy conclusion to create a prescription for the use of values in making decisions. One could perceive that a prescription for values would lessen the burden on administrators as they wouldn’t have to agonize over decisions.

If it is important for all administrators to use values as well as to consider the impact of these value decisions one would think it would be beneficial for a scholar in the field to create a universal list of values to be used in certain situations.

Although this might seem to be an easy answer, it is in fact impossible. Every decision, in every situation is an individual situation. The context in which the decision is to be made is of ultimate importance in the decision. An administrator must reflect on the dilemma, consider the context, consider the values of those around and consider the consequences of the decision to be made.

After all of these have been taken into consideration then a decision can be made. The decision will not be perfect, as none are, but one would hope after careful reflection that the decision is the best decision that could be made at that particular time in that particular context.

Conclusion

As Begley suggests (1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2000) the world is becoming an increasingly more complex place. Globalization and cultural diversity are contributing to greater challenges in the schools. Often decisions need to be made that will result in
solutions that cause difficulty for some stakeholders as not everyone can be satisfied with all solutions.

Values are in fact a conception of the desirable that influence choices (Hodgkinson, 1999; Willower & Licata, 1997). The definitions of desirable though change with the context and individuals involved in the situation. An administrator needs to use values from all arenas to base their decisions on in order to remain a moral authentic leader that all stakeholders can have faith in to make decisions with careful thought.

A discussion of Begley’s work on values was presented in order to demonstrate Begley’s views of the importance of values in decision-making. The discussion included a biography of Begley, a list of his important works as well as the influences on his work. In addition, a discussion of the origins of values, the conflicts that can arise as well as the use of values in decision-making was also included. Through the writings of Begley it has been illustrated that values are an important basis for making decisions. It was shown that Begley’s ideas in the area of values and decision-making have been supported through the works of other scholars.
References


