

Traditional preparation for educational administration is no longer adequate.

# Educational Administrative Competency for Multicultural Populations

by Jimmy Smith and James Boyer

Competency may be defined in traditional terms but today's pluralistic society demands much more than we have traditionally expected from the administrative role. Historically, administrative competency has centered on the management of human enterprises—but with the unstated assumption that the human profile in America was primarily monocultural, monoracial, and monolingual. The reality is that America's educational enterprise is quite diverse. While much of educational administrative knowledge has been borrowed from corporate America, the essential thrust of the management of learning rests with an understanding of the motives, profiles and perceptions of those being served. Today, those being served are multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic, and multiracial. What has been traditionally useful and functional in the preparation of educational administrators, in our judgment, must now be broadened to prepare persons for competency with this level of human diversity.

## Academic Administration with Multicultural Populations

Multicultural Administration is the management of an agency, institution or educational program which fosters teaching, learning, behaviors and prac-

**Jimmy Smith is an associate professor of educational administration at South Carolina State College, Orangeburg.**

**James Boyer is a professor of curriculum and instruction at Kansas State University, Manhattan.**

tices that support cultural diversity and individual ethnic uniqueness. Unlike traditional administrative competency, multicultural competency requires that practitioners study the various ethnic/racial milieu despite the fact that there may be individuals in the groups who do not reflect the cultural image held by administrative personnel. Competency for this decade requires also that the administrative practitioner constantly seek newer understandings of culturally motivated perceptions and behaviors.

The position taken here is that traditional preparation for educational administration is no longer adequate for competency in leading, managing and directing the educational programs serving multicultural populations. While much attention must still be given to information management systems, physical plant and fiscal operation responsibilities, even more attention must be given to the recognized human diversity reflected in school and college populations. It is also urgent that prospective administrators realize the following increases in the rate of growth for selected populations—reflected in a recent decade:

Caucasian (White) Americans	11%
Black Americans	17.5%
Hispanic Americans	61%
Native Americans	71%
Asian Americans	2.5%

(Source: U. S. Census Data, 1980)

Considering these rates of growth for the general population, one must prepare for academic services which recognize and enhance the ethnic identity of persons representing these groups.

## Traditional Preparation Phases

Traditional preparation phases for educational administrators have included the following:

—**Phase 1:** educational politics, school organization, control, policy development, staffing and staff development, planning, organizing, directing, research and budgeting,

—**Phase 2:** Legal and financial aspects of administration,

—**Phase 3:** The administrative role, and

—**Phase 4:** Cooperative harmonious existence with internal and external publics.

## Multicultural Preparation Phases

Multicultural preparation phases require that the management and leadership skills for ethnically/racially diverse populations be built on a strong cognitive foundation of ethnic literacy and cultural mobility. The administrator is most effective when she or he understands the mores and folkways of the individual populations within the group being serviced. Additionally, this cultural comprehension must be accompanied by a sensitivity to those cultural aspects of the groups in instances of confrontation and crisis. Administrative competency can never be reached, however, without adequate attention to reaching aca-

demographic goals. While the most significant aspect of traditional administrative preparation is the accomplishment of predetermined goals, with multicultural populations this must be done with extremely high levels of ethnic/racial/linguistic understanding. Guiding human behavior with multicultural populations requires "really knowing the human beings whose behavior is to be guided."

Such preparation may need to include extensive internships in settings which reflect the ethnic/racial/economic diversity of the larger society. Key elements of such preparation (or competency) includes the understanding that policies must be implemented in ways which provide adequate educational opportunities and options for learners and staff in an environment which psychologically accommodates persons of different races, colors, creeds, language identities, religions, and varying economic states.

Competencies are never achieved except in relation to the individual candidate's commitment, the skill in cross-cultural communication, the grasp of student-faculty attitudes/perceptions, and the equitable enforcement of policy.

#### **Basic Administrative Competencies for Multicultural Settings**

While many administrative programs are attempting to review elements which might address such competencies, the following listing is basic to the establishment of multicultural programmatic concerns:

1. Administrative awareness of federal, state, and local laws and legislation directly affecting specific ethnic, racial, or other groups.
2. Administrative awareness of agency and/or organizational policy which reflect racial, ethnic or other inconsistencies that are perceived as biases against such groups.
3. Administrative commitment to the deletion of any policy, practice, or guideline which may be an outline of institutional racism and which may be perceived as such by pluralistic populations.
4. Administrative design and support of academic programs which highlight "success stories" of various ethnic groups and which denounce differences which are seen as deficits.
5. Administrative awareness of the customs and traditions held in high esteem by members of various ethnic groups—particularly those which may be viewed by traditional administrators as being in conflict with "tradition."
6. Administrative skill in establishing and monitoring staff development programs which enhance human relations in racially-ethnically-economically diverse student/staff settings. (While this is critical for all administrative functioning, it is critically significant for those offering their services in areas in which ethnic/racial minorities are heavily represented.)

7. Administrative competencies of listening (really listening) as well as speaking in their daily communicative styles. Considering the "oral tradition" of many ethnic groups, the competent multicultural administrator must listen for statements as well as the implications of those statements from subordinates, students, and the public.

8. Administrative resourcefulness in providing information to faculty, staff and students on highly visible ethnic, racial, and cultural groups represented in the United States, and particularly those who are the most recent arrivals (example: Haitians and similar groups).

9. Administrative involvement in enhancing ethnic history, ethnic music, ethnic artistic expression, and the total elements which provide cultural identity and cultural satisfaction for persons who have been perceived as something other than "assets to society."

10. Assertive styles in informing populations of their legal rights and the rights of others in culturally pluralistic societies. It is understood that rights and responsibilities are concomitant elements.

11. Administrative influence in recommending the employment of faculty, staff and resource persons who reflect the ethnic/racial makeup of the region—and particularly the school or program. (This is essential for modeling and for authenticity.)

12. Administrative leadership in the identification, selection, acquisition and utilization of curriculum materials which are nonracist, nonsexist, nonelitist and which are inclusive of the human variation of our society.

Educational change and educational development are always based on the graphic need to better serve those who are clients of educational programs. Such needs are (for academic leadership/management) inextricably tied to ethnic/racial/economic identity.

Shirley Napier in **Multicultural Education: A Concept Paper** (ERIC: ED-17742) cites several points for top administrators, one of which is the educational reorganization for accommodating culturally pluralistic approaches to service delivery.

If administrative services are to keep pace with the increasing numbers of agencies, institutions, and educational programs whose populations are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, then a more rigorous and culturally refined set of competencies must become common goals for the preparation of those who would offer their services as leaders, managers, researchers and practitioners for public educational programs.

#### **References**

- Boyer, James B. **Administrator's Checklist on Multicultural Curriculum**. Kansas State University, 1978.

- Campbell, Roald F. **Introduction to Educational Administration**. Sixth Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon Publishers, Inc., 1983.
- Dickens, Floyd, Jr. and Jacqueline B. Dickens. **The Black Manager**. New York: AMACOM: A Division of American Management Associations, 1982.
- Kindred, Leslie. **The School and Community Relations**. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983.
- Napier, Shirley. **Multicultural Education: A Concept Paper**. New York: ERIC—ED-17742.
- Orlosky, Donald E. **Educational Administration Today**. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishers, 1984.
- Wiles, Jon and Joseph C. Bondi. **Principles of School Administration**. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishers, 1983.

### **An Aspect of Multicultural Education**

MULTIETHNIC INSTRUCTION includes

- A. Knowledge About Ethnic and Racial Differences
- B. Knowledge About Ethnic and Racial Contributions
- C. Understanding Nature of Instructional Diversity
- D. Dissemination of Diverse Content

—James Boyer