Preface

About 40 percent of the workforce in the United States telecommute from home to their workplaces (Chafkin, 2010), and slightly more than 2% of the U.S. employee workforce (2.8 million people, not including the self-employed or unpaid volunteers) consider home their primary place of work (Lister, 2010). Not surprisingly, roughly one in six students enrolled in higher education — about 3.2 million people — took at least one online course in the Fall of 2005, a sharp increase defying predictions that online learning growth is plateauing (Pope, 2006). Americans have made E-leadership important and necessary in the 21st century. They prompt researchers and scholars to reexamine technology and its impact on educational leadership. Indeed, technology has played a major role in shaping educational leadership. Without a doubt, we can claim that technology is omnipotent and ubiquitous. From the military, infrastructure, and manufacturing, to education, technology is transforming the way we view ourselves, others, and the situation around us. U.S. stealth fighters still dominate space competition; Chinese trains fly the fastest at the speed of 486 kilometers per hour; U.S. commercial airlines by Boeing are the most popular in most countries. All these important fields and others are powered by technology. The whole world is truly technology-driven, and technology has made our lives easy.

In education, it was the U.S. adult educator, Malcolm Knowles who predicted in the 1970s that education in the 21st century would be delivered electronically. As universities and colleges in North America began to launch more graduate programs in educational leadership, these programs have been delivered by cutting-edge technology such as Blackboard, WebCT, or other educational software. Once again, technology has prompted American educators to invent new terminology to describe teaching, learning, and research in the new century. And the new term is 24/7, which means teaching and learning or research can occur anywhere, anytime given the synchronous and asynchronous nature of teaching and learning via Web 2.0 technologies. USA has been leading the rest of the world in many fields, especially in terms of science and technology for over three-fourths of the 20th century. She is still leading the rest of the world even though she has been challenged by newly emerged industrialized nations such as China and India. People from other countries get the impression that Americans believe in innovation and change. That was probably why Americans have invented the saying, “change is the constant in our society.” Only less than 1 percent of Americans are farmers. Yet this small number of farmers is capable of feeding all Americans and potentially the rest of the world if distribution problems can be solved (Wang & King, 2008). The key lies in the use of cutting-edge technology. Visitors from other countries are amazed by the huge machines that American farmers use on the farms.

Yet, professors, scholars and school leaders are more amazed by the latest test results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). American students were mired in the middle: 17th in reading, 23rd in science and 31st in math — 17th overall (Paul, 2011). For the first time since
PISA began its rankings in 2000, students in Shanghai, China took the test, and they blew everyone else away, achieving a decisive first place in all three categories. These Chinese students took the tests in a foreign language, English. Most Chinese schools are under-funded, and they do not have the cutting edge technologies we do here in the United States (Wang, 2010). Many school classrooms are not even equipped with a TV, let alone computers. Many experts quickly point out Chinese students work harder, with more focus, for longer hours than American students do. Other experts claim that Chinese students have tough parenting (Paul, 2011). The key lies in the Chinese innovative educational leadership. As one of the ancient civilizations, China has never stopped learning from other countries. For example, prior to 1950, China modeled after Russian education. After China opened its door to the outside world in 1978, she began to model after U.S. education. Modeling after foreign education does not mean a “cut and paste” approach. China has taken foreign education models steps further and invented their own education models in terms of how students, young and old, can excel in the three domains: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domain. Miracles have been performed by Chinese students for the past 30 years; Chinese students have repeatedly received perfect scores in TOEFL, SAT, and GRE while taking these tests in their own countries and English is not their mother tongue (Wang & Farmer, 2008).

As most, Western educators/scholars criticize Chinese educational leadership (too much memorization and rote learning); British social scientists (Jarvis, 2002) concluded that rote learning precedes critical thinking. Then, Chinese educators made rote learning and memorization “innovative” approaches. Indeed, the success or failure of students depends on educational leadership in addition to their own effort and internal motivation. While educational leadership and school leadership are used interchangeably, it refers to the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, students, and parents toward achieving common educational aims. Educational leadership as a field of study, did not come into being until the early 20th century for one apparent reason, that is, USA has always wanted to lead the rest of the world in all aspects including education and technology. USA has experienced several “Sputnik moments.” After Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, U.S. educators received the warning that American education lagged behind other countries. The release of A Nation at Risk in 1983 directly impacted public school accountability and, ultimately, the superintendency. Then Congress passed No Child Left Behind in 2002, indicating that U.S. schools should offer test-oriented instructions at all levels including colleges. The most recent American educational initiative by the Obama administration emphasized the same instructional and administrative approaches. While these federal educational mandates prescribe some fundamental approaches and practice, have school leaders and instructors changed their philosophies and practice?

“Educational leadership” is also used to describe programs beyond schools. Leaders in community colleges, proprietary colleges, community-based programs, and universities are also educational leaders. Educational leadership draws upon interdisciplinary literature, generally, but ideally distinguishes itself through its focus on pedagogy, epistemology, and human development. As a field of study, it has prescribed pertinent philosophies and practices. It has specified specific roles for the school superintendents and teachers. Then, the question becomes should school leaders including college leaders and teachers adopt these philosophies and practices without any modifications? Take a look at the vision statements and mission statements created by some graduate leadership programs in relation to the use of technology:

We create leadership opportunities, promote research, and provide academic excellence in:

- Instructional technology applications for business, government, and education organizations;
- Leadership of educational institutions for educational improvement; and
• Research and evaluation methods derived from the behavioral sciences, taught through a creative balance of theoretical understandings coupled with practical applications, and appropriate for graduate candidates.

Most of these vision statements or mission statements neglect the question on “how we can create leadership opportunities.” The answer may lie in “innovation and change” if not “tiger moms” (Paul, 2011).

TARGET AUDIENCE

Traditional books on education leadership and technology often deal with K-12 education, and it is hard for professors/scholars and practitioners from higher education to find appropriate instructional materials for college level students. While this book may not offer panaceas, it is comprehensive, covering not only K-12 educational leadership, higher education leadership, but also Web 2.0 technologies in relation to educational leadership. The contributors have delved into some chronic issues that have perplexed the educational establishments revolving around technology and its impact on educational leadership. Their research and professional experience have contributed to the literature, which can serve as the best resources for learning and further research for professors, scholars, researchers, and graduate students in the field of educational leadership and allied fields. The answers to these chronic issues may lie between the lines as you flip through the pages. While these answers may not be definitive, at least they will prompt you to think further and research into the same issues in order to provide answers. With that, we invite you to engage in live dialogues with the authors of this book to learn from one another. Worthy of note is the fact that this book was reviewed by the following experts:

Beth Kania-Gosche, Lindenwood University, USA
Jim Berger, Western Kentucky University, USA
Lesley Farmer, California State University, Long Beach, USA
Kerry Lee, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Vivian Mott, East Carolina University, USA
Judith Parker, Teachers College/Columbia University, USA
Thomas G. Reio, Jr, Florida International University, USA
Maria M. Witte, Auburn University, USA

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REFERENCES


