

EDUC 552
Processes in Elementary and Secondary Administration
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Applying Leadership Styles in Schools

School budgets are tight and many programs and teachers are being cut.

Principals are faced with upset parents as industrial arts, fine arts, physical education, and home economics programs are losing funding. While core subjects teach students math, science, reading... the technical, hands-on courses teach students how to implement these skills in real-world tasks. In *Case 13: Back to the Basics*, (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2011) the principal of a school whose prevocational programs are very successful might take on situational leadership skills in a fight against the system to create staffing and budgeting plans in order to provide the best situation for the students and staff.

Operating under an autocratic leadership style, the principal will take charge, assigning tasks to different members, to accomplish the goals and outcomes they see as best. They will not consult the group, but direct them during a critical situation. The authoritarian leader is able to “mobilize people towards a vision;” unlike the autocratic leader who will simply implement their ideas without group buy-in. The authoritarian leader is an “expert at persuasion and steering people towards” their own predetermined goals (Richter, 2012, p.12). For this reason, the authoritarian leader may be the most successful in this particular situation because they are adapt at creating buy-in and a following, which will result in the support of their goals. In this situation, the principal would need support because the school board is involved and the decision goes beyond his or her power.

While the authoritarian leader already knows their solution to the problem, the democratic leader maintains an open mind letting others propose solutions and recommendations. The democratic leader then weighs the value of the proposed ideas to make their final decision. The laissez faire principal however, will allow for the employees to make all of the decisions, providing no guidance or direction. This could lead to a chaotic transition for teachers and programs. The affiliative principal might fail in this situation because they are deeply invested in building or preserving relationships rather than reaching a goal (Richter, 2012).

I would take on the role of an authoritarian leader in this situation because when the school board is involved you must create a following, support, and buy-in for your vision. The final decision is beyond the principal's individual power and the other's involved in the decision must be persuaded that there are other solutions or compromises that will better serve the students and community. An autocratic leader will not get their way in a situation in which there are powers higher than their own involved.

References

Richter, R. (2014). Lewin's seven leadership styles and summary [Class handout].

Seward, NE: Concordia University.

Ubben, G. C., Hughes, L. W., & Norris, C. J. (2011). *The principal: Creative leadership for excellence in schools*. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Education.