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**Developing school leaders who can effectively implement innovations:
Contributions from the case study of an entrepreneurial assistant superintendent**

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Abstract

Implementing innovations that can improve students' learning is a major responsibility of school leaders at all levels. The skills needed to do so effectively are very similar to those employed by entrepreneurs, as shown by the in-depth case study of a school leader who successfully promoted many worthwhile innovations in her district, first as principal of an elementary school and then as assistant superintendent for instruction. We argue that the “entrepreneurial” attitudes and practices identified in this case study should be included in the preparation of school leaders and share some ideas about how to do so.

NOTE: The authors recognize that there may not be enough detailed information in this paper to fully convince the reader all of the findings we claim. This is always a dilemma – deciding how much detail to put in a story without completely overwhelming the reader or making the paper unreasonably long. Since the purpose of this paper is to provide the discussant with some clear and concrete ideas about what we have been studying and what we will be sharing we decided to keep the story as brief as possible. However, the documentation can be found in the detailed case study report and data base, which we can provide if you require it.

Introduction

School leaders at all levels – whether they are department chairs, principals, assistant superintendents of instruction, superintendents, or serving K-12 schools in other leadership roles – are increasingly expected to initiate and successfully carry out new initiatives that can result in increased learning outcomes for their students. This paper explores what the field of entrepreneurship can offer to better prepare school leaders to play this important role. More specifically, the main objective of this paper is to identify “entrepreneurial” attitudes and practices that could empower school leaders to more effectively implement innovations in their schools and, thus, should be included in their preparation.

While connections between entrepreneurship and leadership (and especially transformational leadership) are beginning to be recognized in the literature (e.g., Eyal & Kark, 2004; Hentschke & Caldwell, 2005; Saboe, Kanter & Walsh, 2002; Vecchio, 2003), there is still very little research on how, if at all, school leaders in different positions are currently using entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and processes to improve their organizations and the services provided to their students, families, and broader communities. Furthermore, even less has been done to translate these findings into recommendations for the preparation of educators in general, and school leaders in particular (as documented in a recent literature review on entrepreneurship in education, see Rios-Aguilar, Khan & Borasi, 2006).

To begin to address this gap, we conducted an in-depth case study of a school leader who, over a period of 18 years, introduced a number of important innovations within her suburban school district, first in her role as principal of one of its elementary schools and later as the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction for the district. Using concepts from entrepreneurship as analytical lenses, and case study methodology as the research approach, we set out to determine if this transformational leader employed “entrepreneurial” attitudes and practices successfully and if so, which ones. In this paper, we report the main findings of this case study, as well as derive implications for the preparation of school leaders.

This paper contributes to the overall theme of the conference, “Research on Schools, Neighborhoods, and Communities: Towards Civic Responsibility” by showing how the activity of this successful school leader was driven by a strong ethical impetus to improve the conditions of her students, their families and communities. We will also show that empowering school leaders to develop entrepreneurial skills can enable them to better serve their schools, students and communities by becoming more effective in the implementation of worthwhile innovations.

Theoretical framework and relevant literature

The theoretical framework informing this presentation comes from a synthesis of a variety of different disciplines to study entrepreneurship including economics (e.g., Casson, 1982; Schumpeter, 1934), business (e.g., Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2004),

psychology (e.g., Brockhaus, 1982), sociology (e.g., Thornton, 1999), and more recently education (e.g., Boyette & Finlay, 1993; Brown & Cornwall, 2000; Leisey & Lavaroni, 2000; Hill, 2003; Hentschke & Caldwell, 2005; Hess, 2006). While there is no agreed-upon definition of entrepreneurship (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991), there is considerable support in the current literature for conceiving of entrepreneurship not just as “starting a new business” but more broadly as the process of *transforming ideas into enterprises (i.e., sustainable initiatives) that generate economic, intellectual and/or social value* (Green, 2005). This broader interpretation of entrepreneurship is of particular interest to the field of educational leadership, especially as we strive to develop school leaders who can be “agents of change” within their institutions by initiating sustainable innovations to the benefit of the institution and the students they serve.

While early research on entrepreneurship studied either the traits/characteristics of entrepreneurs (Brockhaus, 1982; McClelland & Winter, 1969) or the context in which entrepreneurship takes place (Casson, 1982; Kirzner, 1979; Schumpeter, 1934), more recent studies on entrepreneurship challenge this artificial dichotomy to offer a more comprehensive approach to study entrepreneurship, one that focuses on entrepreneurship as a *process* (Baron & Shane, 2005; Timmons, 2004). At the core of the “entrepreneurial process” is the development of enterprises or innovations through a process that involves identifying and evaluating opportunities, developing carefully thought-out plans, implementing these plans, and monitoring and evaluating the results (Timmons, 2004). A number of attitudes, behaviors and skills have been identified in the literature as supporting the entrepreneurial process and the effectiveness and success of the specific initiatives undertaken by the entrepreneur. These include elements such as being alert to opportunities, carefully evaluating and selecting which ideas and opportunities to pursue and when taking calculated risks, being very attentive to the “market,” thinking creatively about resources, building coalitions, and developing and implementing detailed plans (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2004).

Assuming the broader definition of entrepreneurship identified above, in this study we examine the practice of an effective school leader whose activity has been characterized as initiating and successfully carrying out major innovations that added value to her school district and the students it serves. In doing so, we found it useful to

consider the following relevant findings from the literature on entrepreneurship. These categories will also be used as organizers as we report our key findings from the case study.

- a) *Visioning*. Having a clear vision and being able to share it with others has been identified in the literature as one of the key characteristics of entrepreneurs in general, and social entrepreneurs in particular. For example, Bornstein (2004) describes social entrepreneurs as “people with new ideas to address major problems who are relentless in the pursuit of their visions” (p.1), individuals who are “possessed, *really* possessed by an idea” (p.117) and are driven by a strong “ethical impetus” (p.238).
- b) *Dealing with risk*. While it is unquestionable that anyone engaging in innovations has to deal with greater risks than people that do not, it is important to note that most entrepreneurs would not characterize themselves as risk-takers, but rather evaluate risk differently because of a combination of their knowledge, experience and high self-efficacy. Entrepreneurs seem to give greater weight to the risk of “missing the boat” (i.e., missing an opportunity and the potential benefits it could produce) than the risk of “sinking the boat” (i.e., failing) (Brown & Cornwall, 2000).
- c) *Marketing*. Marketing is especially critical for entrepreneurs, yet it also presents additional challenges because of their limited funding and the fact that their products are often novel (Ali & Seiders, 2004). It is important to take into consideration the different ways in which initiating an innovation involves marketing – as *market awareness* and *market research* often play a role in identifying and evaluating opportunities, while *advertising* one’s services or products is an important aspect of the plan and implementation phase.
- d) *Dealing with resources*. Financial considerations are at the core of what business entrepreneurs do, as not only do they need to secure the necessary funding for any initiative they want to launch, they usually operate with very little funding directly available to them and their overall success is often measured in monetary terms. While the latter does not apply in the case of social entrepreneurs, the common saying “no money, no mission” reminds us that the extent to which one’s vision can be put into practice depends to a great extent on the resources one is able to secure. Entrepreneurs have also been characterized as individuals who “pursue opportunities

without regard to the resources they currently control” (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990, p.23). In other words, once they have determined that an initiative is worth pursuing, they are confident that they will find a way to secure the necessary resources – taking on new debt, bringing in new partners, etc.

- e) *Dealing with human capital.* In addition to securing the right personnel to work on specific new initiatives, most entrepreneurs also need to deal with a variety of human capital issues on an on-going basis – such as selecting and working with collaborators, hiring personnel for the organization, dealing with personnel problems, developing effective teams, developing partnerships, and networking – always under the constraints of very limited resources.
- f) *Decision-making and problem-solving.* Engaging in innovation involves a lot of decision making and problem solving. Entrepreneurs are characterized in the literature as having a unique style of decision-making and problem-solving (Bygrave, 2004). First of all, as they are aware of the importance of not missing a window of opportunity, entrepreneurs tend to make decisions and solve problems quickly, and if needed are willing to do so with somewhat incomplete information. Even more importantly, once they reach a decision they implement it without delay, while at the same time being ready to “adjust” during implementation if necessary. Entrepreneurs are also likely to consider “out-of-the-box” solutions for problems, and often approach problems as a catalyst for innovation.
- g) *Dealing with the drive to expand.* Expansion is a key concept for entrepreneurs whether it is continuing to grow a business or organization or expanding ones influence to maximize impact (Bornstein, 2004). The literature on entrepreneurship also points out how the size of an organization affects leadership structure and roles. As entrepreneurs grow their businesses, they also need to change their role and responsibilities. At transition points, the leader of the organization needs to trade-off some of his/her direct contact with – and, thus, ability to influence – the operations to take on higher level managerial and decision-making roles (Kelley & Marram, 2004). It is worth noting that not all entrepreneurs are able to make this shift successfully, and it is not uncommon for a successful entrepreneur to choose to pass on the leadership to someone else at a certain point.

h) Developing an entrepreneurial culture. The culture of an organization may be a powerful factor in encouraging or hindering entrepreneurial behavior on the part of its members (Brown & Cornwall, 2000). While we know little about entrepreneurs' role in developing an "entrepreneurial culture" in their organization, it is to be expected that they will try to affect their organization's culture to some extent, as entrepreneurs are rarely people who "let things happen to them."

Methods and data sources

The case study of the school leader reported in this paper is part of a larger research project including the case studies of other "entrepreneurial educators." The subject of this case study was chosen because the authors had been able to observe her "in action" as they collaborated in a major systemic reform effort involving mathematics instruction and recognized her rare ability to effectively carry out significant innovations within her school system.

An exploratory case study approach was chosen for the entire research project because such a methodology is considered to be especially appropriate when context is important, multiple data sources are used, and theoretical propositions guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003). All these elements were present as we aimed at gaining a better understanding of how entrepreneurial educators in general, and school leaders more specifically, could make use of entrepreneurial practices to be more effective at pursuing their mission.

A rich set of qualitative data was collected for all of the case studies in order to examine *how* each educator "transformed ideas into sustainable initiatives that added value" as part of their job. In order to do so, we designed the following sequence of interviews, each guided by an interview protocol:

- A preliminary interview with the subject, to gather background information and to identify particular innovations initiated.
- A second interview with the subject, focusing on examining how the subject went through the various stages of the "entrepreneurial process" for a few specific initiatives.

- A third interview with the subject, focusing on gathering information about the attitudes, behaviors and skills the subject perceived as most important to accomplish his/her mission, as well as characteristics of the environment that most affected his/her performance.
- An interview with one of the subject’s close collaborators, to gather impressions about the attitudes, behaviors and skills demonstrated by the subject as well as to triangulate information provided by the subject on specific events.

In addition to the verbatim transcripts of the interviews we also collected and examined relevant artifacts. For the school leader who is the subject of this paper the artifacts included district policy documents, school and district newsletters, Board of Education meeting minutes, job postings, and district curriculum documents. One of the two authors also contributed fieldnotes of key meetings involving this subject as well as transcripts of interviews with the subject conducted for another study.

All these data were coded through an iterative process to identify evidence of the conceptual categories derived from the literature on entrepreneurship and to allow for new codes to emerge as a result of the analysis (see Appendix A for the final set of codes). The coded information was then organized and synthesized in a “case study database” (Yin, 2003) organized along the same coding scheme. To minimize errors and biases and, thus, meet standards for validity and reliability, we

- systematically triangulated data obtained from the multiple sources described above
- used detailed protocols to guide each interview
- employed a team of three researchers to code the data collected
- did a final “subject check” by asking the subject to review and provide feedback on the completed case study database.

Key findings

Engagement in innovations

This subject is a remarkable example of a transformational school leader, as demonstrated by the changes she was able to institute in her school system, first at the

school level as the principal of one of the elementary schools for nine years, and then at the district level as assistant superintendent for instruction for nine years. What most characterized her activity – and contributed to her successes – was her relentless engagement in innovations. As initiating enterprises and innovations is at the core of the definition of entrepreneurship we have assumed, we will first report on a few representative innovations and the value they added to her school system and the students it served. This abbreviated story will also serve to provide a context for the findings reported in the next section.

As principal (in the mid 1980's)

In stating her vision this school leader said education should foster and enhance students' ability to think and problem solve and do so in a way that honors individuality – educating them for participation in a democracy. She developed this vision in graduate school and has maintained it throughout her career. She said that her vision guided all of her practice.

As she became the principal of one of the elementary schools in the district, she realized that the teachers were very committed to student learning, but the instructional practices they used did not always address the needs of all the students. Also, teachers were doing “their own thing” in their classrooms with little coordination within the grade level or across grades. Thus as students moved across the grades they often encountered repetition, gaps, and instruction informed by very different beliefs about how students learn. Discovering that the district did not have a policy or practice of coordinating curriculum or instructional practices – something she felt was important to insuring that all students had opportunities to learn and grow – one of her first initiatives was to establish and lead a committee that would develop a comprehensive “reading curriculum” for her school. This reading curriculum was intended to help coordinate what teachers were doing within and across grade levels as well as improve reading instruction overall by articulating common goals, identifying research-based instructional strategies, and generating a list of good literature for students (at the time student basal readers were void of good literature). Because reading instruction is the responsibility of all elementary teachers this innovation impacted all of the teachers in the school and

significantly effected how teachers did their work. In addition to fostering changes in classroom instruction this innovation fostered changes in their professional practice. They began talking about their beliefs, instructional practices and curriculum in other content areas. Even now, twenty years later, the faculty in this school – many of whom where there during this school leader’s tenure – is known for their innovative practices and collaborative culture.

Another transformative initiative involved the process for evaluating teachers in her school. The existing practice was to have the principal do observations of specific lessons, write down what she observed, and then meet with the teacher and discuss her report. While this process might serve the purpose of evaluating teacher performance by uncovering poor performers, she did not feel that it did much to help teachers get better at what they did. Guided by the belief that “teachers would be better teachers if I could help them become better thinkers about teaching,” she thought that it would be much more meaningful and productive for each teacher to set goals for themselves and collect evidence of their progress towards those goals over the course of the year, reporting on it in the form of portfolios. To make this happen, she had to get permission from the teachers’ union to set aside the existing negotiated process, and substitute it with the portfolio evaluation she had devised. Interestingly, some years later the entire district established a committee to review the teacher evaluation process and eventually adopted an evidence-based system as an alternative to the traditional 1-shot observation system.

As assistant superintendent (mid 1990’s)

Nine years after becoming principal, this school leader was asked to take on the role of interim assistant superintendent for instruction at her district. Feeling satisfied that she had accomplished most of her goals as principal she accepted the offer. She was subsequently appointed the district’s assistant superintendent for instruction and held the position for nine years until she retired.

Part of her motivation for making this move was her belief that it would allow her to have an impact on the quality of education for all students in the district. She soon realized, however, that initiating and carrying out innovations at the district level was quite different than at the school level and required her to take on different roles and use different strategies. Among other things, she had to come to grips with the fact that

“initiatives at this level take a *very* long time ... to come to fruition.” She also could not directly lead these initiatives in the same way she did as a principal, but rather had to delegate and rely a lot more on others.

At the time she took on her new role the district administrators, including the superintendent, and teachers were realizing that students were not being well served by the “one size fits all” approach to instruction that pervaded the district. This was true in general but was particularly obvious in mathematics at the middle school where some students were bored, some weren’t succeeding, and most were not performing well on state assessments when they got to high school. The assistant superintendent believed that she had to simultaneously address the instructional problem and increase the rigor of the mathematics program. She took this on as her first major district initiative. This initiative eventually transformed into a two major initiatives. One was the commitment to introduce and support faculty to develop the skills to implement the new research-based concept of Differentiated Instruction, which was presented to her by one of the middle school teachers. The other was a major K-12 mathematics systemic reform effort, an opportunity she seized that partnered the district with a local research university in a series of state and federally funded grant projects supporting the adoption of research-based curricula and instructional practices.

Participating in the reform project enabled her to leverage valuable resources – in terms of external expertise, access to high-quality curricula and professional development for her teachers, and even funding that would allow her to partially support the creation of a new role of “mathematics teacher leader.” Due to the radical nature of this reform, especially at that time, this initiative encountered a number of challenges. There was a small but vocal group of parents who opposed the new instructional goals and practices, the focus of the statewide assessment reverted back to an emphasis on procedural skills rather than on conceptual understanding and mathematical thinking, and a few high school teachers refused to implement the new program and practices. The assistant superintendent decided to work with the high school faculty to revise their aggressive agenda and move more slowly toward reforming their piece of the mathematics program. Nevertheless, by the time she retired, she could identify significant and sustained changes

in elementary and middle school mathematics teachers' beliefs and instructional practices and signs that the high school teachers were moving in a good direction.

The assistant superintendent's belief that "having a guaranteed and viable curriculum is an indicator of opportunities for students to learn" and that "you can expect a large effect-size in student achievement in a district that has a viable and guaranteed curriculum" drove another of her major initiatives. She engaged the faculty in developing K-12 district-wide curricula for every content area and instituting a process for an on-going review of these curricula. Building on her early experience developing a schoolwide curriculum for reading, she established committees for each content area, and charged them to identify overall goals, outcomes for each grade level, essential questions that would guide instruction, and assessment criteria. These curricula were not intended to curtail individual teachers' creativity but rather to guide their curriculum decisions and instructional practices to ensure that they were informed by research and best practices in their respective fields, as well as to provide a coherent and comprehensive learning experience for students as they progressed through the grades. Her strategy for ensuring the success of this initiative was to identify and appoint key people to lead each of the committees, establish a process to accomplish the task and train committee members accordingly, negotiate with the various stakeholders (superintendent, Board of Education, teachers, parents, and community leaders) to ensure understanding of and support for the project, secure the funding needed to carry out the initiative (to cover for teachers' time, external consultants, new curriculum materials, etc.), and create the necessary incentives for teachers to comply with the new system.

Overall observations

Even in this abbreviated story, it is clear that this school leader demonstrated the drive and ability to initiate worthwhile innovations – in her own words, "my life is about starting things." Equally important, though, was her ability to bring initiatives to fruition. Many of her innovations had a lasting impact on the district – especially when she was able to "institutionalize" them by making them part of the everyday operations (such as the portfolio evaluation of teachers and the process of district-wide curriculum writing). In other cases (like reforming the K-12 mathematics program) she was not able to effect as comprehensive a change as she had hoped, but her efforts nevertheless resulted in

sustained improvement in the learning opportunities offered to students served by her district.

While this school leader was quite successful in initiating and carrying out worthwhile initiatives both as a principal and as an assistant superintendent, it is interesting to note that she perceived her role and effectiveness in these positions to be quite different, as captured by the following quote:

“[as a principal] at XX elementary school I was a lightening rod, I was a proposer. [As assistant superintendent,] I’m much more of a permission granter, resource provider, recognizer of good ideas brought in from other people. ... I cannot affect change as directly at this role as I could with the principalship. Here, I’m completely dependent on others. As a principal, you’re dependent on your teachers always, but I had daily contact with them. I could nudge that culture, I could move their thinking, I could help them get to the place where I thought we should all be. But here, I can’t do that, I’m isolated. So I need other people to do that.”

Key entrepreneurial attitudes and practices used by this school leader

As we reconstructed how the subject approached the implementation of specific innovations as well as her leadership role more generally, we were able to identify a number of attitudes and practices that made her effective with respect to each of the categories identified earlier in the Theoretical Framework section.

a) Visioning

This subject’s compelling vision and her ability to share it with others were certainly among her greatest strengths, and underlie many of the other aspects of her practice. All her initiatives and decisions were consistently driven by her belief that schools should foster and enhance students’ ability to think well, problem solve and develop as individuals, while also recognizing their responsibilities to society. Her profound respect for students’ individuality, for example, is demonstrated in her desire to promote differentiated instruction. When deciding whether or not to engage in a specific innovation, her key question was “how is this good for kids?” This vision also affected her decisions with respect to hiring personnel, especially in leadership positions, as she

looked for people who shared a similar commitment to student learning and respect for students' individuality.

Effectively communicating this vision to the various stakeholders (i.e., superintendent, Board of Education, teachers and administrators, parents, community leaders) was critical to gain these constituencies' buy-in in specific initiatives. Indeed, she herself considered this communication a very important part of her job. Her own steadfast passion and commitment to the vision, along with her ability to articulate it and support it with relevant research, proved to be effective tools to achieve this goal.

b) Dealing with risk

While this school leader never incurred any great financial risks, embarking in any major innovation presented considerable risks to her reputation and position – especially when we consider that educational institutions seem to tolerate the risk of “missing the boat” much better than “sinking the boat” (as suggested by Brown & Cornwall, 2000). The more radical the innovation, the greater the risk of upsetting some of the constituencies – as demonstrated in the case of reforming the mathematics program.

While aware of these risks and their potential consequences, this school leader was willing to take them if she concluded that the initiative met some critical needs and had a reasonable chance for success:

“You try your best – you have to be willing to have that fall apart and face the music”.

Far from being reckless, this school leader was very careful about evaluating the risks associated with every innovation she wanted to pursue, as well as figuring out ways to minimize them. She told us that her first step was always to ensure that the superintendent would support the initiative and was willing to support her if things went wrong. She said she would then purposefully involve key players in discussions about a potential initiative before deciding whether and how to launch it, and then again in the planning in order to benefit from their input and have them develop ownership for the initiative and its success. She also said she was careful to inform key constituencies of the progress of an initiative in order to avoid surprises that could result in losing their

support. She mentioned that there were a number of times when she decided to wait before starting a new initiative because she felt that the organization was not yet ready to take on such a challenge.

c) Marketing.

While at first the whole idea of marketing may seem foreign and irrelevant to a public school context, it is interesting to note that this school leader explicitly sought and demonstrated *market awareness* in at least two complementary ways: (a) by being alert to her students' unmet needs and continually seeking to uncover and better understand them, and (b) by attending conferences and reading research in an effort to “scan the environment” to find ideas, practices, approaches and materials that could be used in her institution to address the students' needs she had identified.

Also, while she did not engage in conventional advertising, this school leader gave explicit attention to how she could best communicate her vision and plans for any new initiative to her various constituencies, so that they would buy in and provide the needed support.

d) Dealing with resources

This subject reported that she never felt that resources were a major constraint for any of the initiatives she promoted – a finding that is very consistent with the characterization of entrepreneurs as individuals who “pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control” (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990, p.23). At the same time, it is important to note that she was quite good and creative at minimizing expenses (“bootstrapping”), she had a good understanding and control of the budget (so she was able to utilize the available funds in the most effective way to achieve her goals), and she proactively sought ways to leverage those funds with external sources whenever possible (such as participating with other schools in state and federally funded projects that would cover some of the costs of the innovations she wanted to pursue).

e) Dealing with human capital

This school leader was very aware of the importance of choosing the right people to lead and participate in the teams that would implement a specific initiative, and

worked hard to make this happen, despite the challenges presented by union contracts or commonly held beliefs about the roles of teachers and administrators in public schools. As she especially recognized the pivotal role played by the leader in charge of a specific initiative (a role she had often played as principal, but was mostly precluded to her as assistant superintendent), she told us that she made a conscious effort to identify and mentor teachers and administrators that demonstrated potential in that direction; indeed, she identified the resulting cadre of capable leaders she developed during her tenure as assistant superintendent as one of her greatest legacy to the school district.

Building trust in these leaders was especially critical for her in her role of assistant superintendent, as she had to rely on them for the implementation of specific initiatives. Maintaining good communications with each of these leaders was also important to her, so she made sure that there were regular opportunities to either meet face-to-face or receive written reports.

She also paid a lot of attention to hiring the best people for the organization (as they were the pool she would have to choose from when setting up teams to work on specific initiatives). As a principal, she was in a position to hire the teachers in her school; as an assistant superintendent, she was in the position to appoint the school principals and many of the district administrators. In both cases, her criteria included looking for people who shared the same commitment to promote and support learning for all students. If people did not work out in the position she hired them for she was ready to do whatever it took to move them to a different position or have them leave the district, something that is not always easy to do in a school district.

f) Decision making and problem solving

Consistent with most entrepreneurs described in the literature, this school leader's decision-making style can be best described as thoughtful and swift. She was aware that in most cases she had limited time to make a decision and she would need to do so based on incomplete information – but she was willing to do so and take the risks associated with it. She told us that she would take some time to think through a problem or decision and make sure she consulted with important constituencies, but once she believed she had reached the right decision or solution she was quick to implement it and did not look back

– but she was always ready to reconsider her decision and make corrections if the implementation did not go as expected.

This subject had an interesting approach for deciding whether a new initiative was truly an opportunity to be pursued. She reported that she always asked herself the following questions: (1) Is this “good” for kids ? (2) Can I pull it off ? (3) Is this the right time to do it? If all three answers were yes she moved forward.

g) Drive to expand

This subject’s desire to “expand her sphere of influence” as much as possible was the main motivating factor behind her moves from being a teacher (where she could affect the students in her class), to being a principal (where she could affect the students in her school) and finally to being an assistant superintendent for instruction (where she could affect the students in the entire school district). This desire to expand is consistent with the literature on entrepreneurship.

Along with her change in position came a shift in her role in implementing innovation. As she stated, she often found that she could not affect change as directly as in her previous position. This shift in role is very consistent with the literature on entrepreneurship which suggests that even when the organization itself is not “growing,” successful entrepreneurial leaders will have to face the dilemma of giving up direct contact with – and, thus, ability to influence – the implementation of specific innovations (something they had been very successful with) if they wanted to increase their sphere of influence by taking on a leadership position at a higher level. School leaders need to appreciate the necessity of this choice, and know themselves well enough to decide which option will allow them to best capitalize on their talents to the benefits of the students and institutions they serve, while at the same time ensuring sufficient personal satisfaction.

h) Developing an entrepreneurial culture

This subject explicitly identified changing the culture of the school she was leading as a principal as one of her goals, and she felt that she had been quite effective in this endeavor. She believed that as the head of the building everything she did was closely observed and thus could act as a model, so she behaved accordingly. When she

interacted with teachers, staff, or students she did so in an inquiring way, when she was confronted with a problem or dilemma she made her thinking visible. She also believed that, if appropriately designed, the tasks or initiatives teachers engaged in could challenge their existing beliefs and practices and thus impact the school culture. We see this belief in practice in her statement about why she promoted an innovative teacher evaluation system in her building, “(I believed that) teachers would be better teachers if I could help them become better thinkers about teaching.” Believing in the power of initiatives to transform culture, as the principal of the school, this school leader always worked directly with all appropriate constituencies in her building on each initiative.

In contrast, she did not feel that as superintendent of instruction she could have as much effect on the overall district culture. She believed that since she was not the head of the organization she was not as closely observed by, or have the same ability to act as a model for, the district’s constituencies – this was reserved for the superintendent. However, she continued to believe that tasks and initiatives, if appropriately designed, could have an impact on culture. This accounts for the very careful process she used to initiate an innovation at this level. Knowing that she could not take direct responsibility for the implementation of each district-wide initiative she thoughtfully brought key people into the conversations very early on and worked directly with them to develop a vision and plan for implementing the initiative. Once the initiative was underway she counted on the spontaneous feedback from and regularly scheduled meetings with her implementation team to provide her with enough opportunity to support and adjust the work as necessary. She claimed that the outcomes of the curriculum writing initiative were a good example of her ability to have an impact on culture even from a somewhat distanced position. In talking about the impact of that initiative she stated that “... When we started it was, “how dare she tell me what to do?” and now, particularly in K-5, but in other places too, they’re saying “would you please tell us what you want them to learn?” And that’s what the curriculum is! So that’s very definitely a cultural change.”

Implications for the preparation of school leaders

The findings from this case study suggest that knowing which initiatives to initiate and how to implement them successfully are valuable skills for school leaders, as

a school leader who wants to make important improvements cannot achieve this goal without engaging in significant and successful innovations. At the same time, the success of specific innovations depend not only on how effectively the school leader works through the various stages of the entrepreneurial process, but also on how she approaches important aspects of her practice more generally – such as visioning, risk-taking, marketing, dealing with resources, dealing with human capital, decision-making and problem solving, driving to expand and developing an entrepreneurial culture.

We believe that becoming aware of the entrepreneurial attitudes and practices that can make school leaders more effective at initiating innovations is the first and perhaps most important step. In order to do so, school leaders need to relinquish the common misconception that entrepreneurship is only about starting new businesses and making money, and open up to a broader definition of entrepreneurship. Only after this awareness is achieved, will school leaders be motivated to learn more about how other school leaders have used specific entrepreneurial practices to support their work.

Reading the stories of entrepreneurial school leaders like the one featured in this article, and discussing it with other school leaders, could be very helpful to both appreciate the value of entrepreneurial attitudes and practices for school leaders, and to learn more about specific ones. In order to do more than simply inspire school leaders to be more entrepreneurial, however, these stories need to be sufficiently detailed to enable other school leaders to understand *how* the subject engaged in the entrepreneurial process and other entrepreneurial practices. We also believe that school leaders who have become aware of the value of developing entrepreneurial practices, and have developed a common language to talk about them, can learn a lot from discussing their own understanding and uses of these practices with a group of peers.

As more and more school systems are beginning to recognize the importance of supporting aspiring and new school leaders through targeted professional development, we recommend that the individuals in charge of organizing such professional development take into consideration the ideas identified above. We also encourage other researchers to conduct more case studies of successful school leaders that could help us uncover other useful practices besides those specific to the initiation of innovations.

Conclusions

This case study confirmed that a school leader recognized by her community as effective and transformational achieved her success in part because of the consistent use of a set of attitudes and practices in her everyday practice that could be considered “entrepreneurial”. We believe that the entrepreneurial attitudes and practices identified in this case study may empower other school leaders to become more effective in pursuing their institutional mission, improving the school or school district they lead, and meeting the new challenges today’s schools are facing. Therefore, we encourage both current and aspiring school leaders to become familiar with these practices and to experiment with their use in their everyday work, and those involved in the preparation and continuing development of school leaders to incorporate some aspects of entrepreneurship education in their offerings.

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Appendix A
Kauffman Case Studies of Entrepreneurship in Education
Coding Scheme

1. Primary Subject Life & Professional History
2. Description of Initiative 1
 1. How Developed/Context
 2. Value Added
 3. Emergent Initiatives (that developed out of this)
 4. Success of the Initiative/Outcomes
 5. Sustainability
3. Description of Initiative 2
 1. How Developed/Context
 2. Value Added
 3. Emergent Initiatives (that developed out of this)
 4. Success of the Initiative/Outcomes
 5. Sustainability/Success
4. Description of Initiative 3
 1. How Developed/Context
 2. Value Added
 3. Emergent Initiatives (that developed out of this)
 4. Success of the Initiative/Outcomes
 5. Sustainability/Success
5. Description of Initiative 4
 1. How Developed/Context
 2. Value Added
 3. Emergent Initiatives (that developed out of this)
 4. Success of the Initiative/Outcomes
 5. Sustainability/Success
6. Primary Subject's Entrepreneurial Process
 1. Recognizing/Evaluating Opportunity
 2. Motivation/Personal Benefit
 3. Securing Resources¹
 4. Planning
 5. Implementation
 6. Challenges (at any point in the process)
7. Primary Subject's Characteristics and Practices
 1. Vision/Philosophy
 2. Marketing
 3. Finances
 4. Personnel/Team Building
 5. Risk Assessment
 6. Planning for/Dealing with Growth
 7. Decision-making

¹ N6 will continue to show this as Securing Resources to Launch Initiative

8. Problem Solving
9. Developing an Entrepreneurial Culture
10. Building on Networks/Connections (General Networking)
11. Communication
12. Passion
13. Persistency
8. Collaborators
9. Organizational Characteristics (of Primary Subject's Organizations)
 1. Facilitators
 2. Obstacles/hindrances
10. Other