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Chapter 5

THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR, BUSINESS MANAGER, AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

It must be stated at the outset that this survey is based almost entirely upon my own experience and observations.

In every organization that works to find its correct relationship with the surrounding community certain functions quite naturally arise. In schools, the primary function is the pedagogical work that takes place between the students and their teachers. This work cannot take place in a vacuum, however. It must be supported by a clear vision of the pedagogy and how that pedagogy can best meet the needs of that particular community. It must be enabled to grow and prosper with the benefit of sound fiscal policies and responsible fiscal management. It must be enhanced by appropriate physical facilities, capable of providing a living environment for the activities of the students and the community. Communication, coordination, resource management, fiscal management, fund raising and friend raising are some of the key elements in the working of a school which require attention. As the school grows more complex with each passing

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year, it soon becomes necessary to consider the question of administrative structure and positions. In many Waldorf Schools, the process of addressing these tasks and responsibilities has led to, among others, the positions of Administrator, Business Manager and Development Officer. This chapter will attempt to explore some aspects of each of these functions. Sample job descriptions can be found in the appendix.

Administrator:

In the preface to his book, **Towards Social Renewal**, Rudolf Steiner writes the following:

"The nature which spiritual life has assumed requires that it constitute a fully autonomous member of the social organism. The administration of education, from which all culture develops, must be turned over to the educators. Economic and political considerations should be entirely excluded from this administration. Each teacher should arrange his or her time so that he can also be an administrator in his field. He should be just as much at home attending to administrative matters as he is in the classroom. No-one should make decisions who is not directly engaged in the educational process. No parliament or congress, nor any individual who was perhaps, once, an educator, is to have anything to say. What is experienced in the teaching process would then flow naturally into the administration. By its very nature such a system would engender competence and objectivity."¹

In recent years, more and more Waldorf schools have created the positions of Administrator, Administrative Chairman, Administrative Coordinator, Administrative Director, and so on. How can this be reconciled with the closely held conviction that Waldorf schools must be "faculty run" which has arisen from study and appreciation of the above excerpt and much more? What happens if this reconciliation is not forthcoming?

There is much in a name, and the school should take great pains to ensure that the community understand what the role of the administrative person is

¹. Rudolf Steiner, **Towards Social Renewal**, Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1977. Translated by Frank Thomas Smith. Page 12.

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in the school. Is it an actual administrator, according to the dictionary: "one who manages or directs," and if so, what is the extent of this direction? Is this position in any way related to a headmaster or a principalship? Care must be taken to inform the school community that the Waldorf schools are not managed "top down," and there is no one person responsible for all decision making. Rather, individuals are appointed to care for aspects of the school's life, and one of those aspects is the administrative work. For this reason, I have always felt the most appropriate title for the administrative position to be Administrative Chairman, for then it is clear that just as the faculty has appointed an individual to watch over and assist the pedagogy and the faculty (Faculty Chairman), so too has it been acknowledged that an individual has assumed responsibility for the administrative function (Administrative Chairman), and that these two, along with others (Board Chairman, College Chairman, High School Chairman, etc.) are working side by side.

Clearly, the administrator must have or establish a living relationship to the spiritual impulses working within the school, and the best way to attain that is by being a practicing Waldorf teacher, in the classroom. The number of class hours is not the important thing — what matters is a strong practical connection to the pedagogical needs of the school's students and faculty. This is only one aspect of what the administrator will have to carry in consciousness, but it is critical to understanding the fabric into which all decisions effecting the school must be woven.

There may be several ways in which the administrator maintains his living connection with the heart of the school. In his essay "**The Riddle of Leadership**," John Gardner writes:

"In a school community, there are other needs for teaching besides those in the classroom. The parents need education in the purpose and methods of their school; there are always beginning teachers who must be helped along; and the need of even more mature teachers for friendly counsel, both as seekers after knowledge and as human beings, never ceases."²

² Rudolf Steiner, **Towards Social Renewal**, Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1977. Translated by Frank Thomas Smith. Page 12.

Engaging in these teaching activities is certainly valid as a way to remain in touch with the pedagogical impulse.

Isn't it obvious that for the school to be truly faculty run, those engaged in the running of it must be truly faculty? Perhaps, but is teaching the only avenue to understanding and furthering the spiritual impulses of the school, and assuming a responsible position side-by-side with ones' colleagues? I think not. There are individuals who through prior connections with the schools as parents or trustees have been able to assume administrative positions in their communities and who have been very successful. They enter the position with an awareness of the unique nature of the Waldorf school, and have an appreciation of the role of the administrator in the school. They are known, and readily accepted.

It seems that the most difficulties arise when a Waldorf school tries to hire a "professional administrator" from outside the circle of the school. Usually, this comes as the result of some segment of the community feeling that it is time to "get professional," and even if this is not directly said, it is felt by the faculty to imply weakness or failure. There is often the feeling that the school is a business, and needs professional management as such. It is important to acknowledge that the school has many business-like aspects, but fundamentally it is not a business. It is a cultural/spiritual institution, working, with the energy of teachers, parents, and other community members, to provide an unencumbered environment for the education of children. For those who worry that this is inefficient, Rudolf Steiner offered the following, again in the preface to **Towards Social Renewal**:

"Of course, one could object that such a self-governing spiritual life would also not attain to perfection. But we cannot expect perfection; we can only strive toward the best possible situation. The capabilities which the child develops can best be transmitted to the community if his education is the exclusive responsibility of those whose judgment rests on a spiritual foundation. To what extent a child should be taught one thing or another can only be correctly determined within a free cultural community. How such determinations are to be made binding is also a matter for this community. The state and the economy would be able to absorb vigor from such a community, which is not

attainable when the organization of cultural institutions is based on political or economic standards.”

"This book will necessarily arouse many prejudices, especially if the consequences of its thesis are considered. What is the source of these prejudices? We recognize their antisocial nature when we perceive that they originate in the unconscious belief that teachers are impractical people who cannot be trusted to assume practical responsibilities on their own. It is assumed that all organization must be carried out by those who are engaged in practical matters, and educators should act according to the terms of reference determined for them.

This assumption ignores the fact that it is just when teachers are **not** permitted to determine their own functions that they tend to become impractical and remote from reality. As long as the so-called experts determine the terms of reference according to which they must function, they will never be able to turn out practical individuals who are equipped for life by their education. The current anti-social state of affairs is the result of individuals entering society who lack social sensitivity because of their education. Socially sensitive individuals can only develop within an educational system which is conducted and administered by other socially sensitive individuals." ³.

This implies that the ideal source to find individuals who could serve the school well in the administrative functions would be from within the school's faculty. Rudolf Steiner wanted the teachers involved in the administration of the school for precisely the reason that it would help them to be better teachers! We are experiencing a growing tendency in the Waldorf movement to try to protect the teachers from everything except their teaching. Perhaps instead of adding more administrative staff, we should be concentrating on adding more teachers, so the loads could be managed, and each teacher could make their reasonable contribution to the administrative needs. However, we must use caution and remember that an appointment to an administrative position should also be based upon a recognition of capacities. Just as the school would not ask a teacher lacking musical ability to teach choir, it should not ask the impossible of colleagues in the administrative realm, either.

³.Op cit, pages 13-14.

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The administrator, therefore, should be first and foremost an educator, steeped in Waldorf pedagogy and committed to the spiritual development of himself and those around him. He also needs a good heavy dose of common sense and the ability to work with people!

What is he actually to do? What is the task at hand? This can be divided into two quite different functions, and this an area where much difficulty and misunderstanding can arise. These two functions are administration and management. The administrator must handle each, and often with different temperaments!

First, the administrator is called upon to "minister to" the school. This implies a school-centered consciousness, where the task is to listen, filter, sort out information, make suggestions to be responded to by others, act as a conduit for information and the impulses of others. In short, to bear witness to the life of the school and help to make it visible to others. The administrator becomes a sense organ for the school, and informs the school about its inner and outer environment. This is made possible by the fact that the administrator is involved with so many diverse groups within the school community and attends many meetings. This is the "selfless" function, and the task is one of vision, imagination, exploring next steps in the growth and development of the school; enabling the school to move forward. A key task here is that of communications. The administrator must be able to share that which he sees with all constituents of the school community - faculty, board and parents. He should be able to function as an information bridge between board and faculty — an important reason why he must be fully involved in the work of each! He cannot be perceived as the agent of any one constituency, but instead as there working to further the school as a whole.

One of the greatest challenges to the Waldorf school administrator is the fact that he/she does in fact have responsibilities to both the Board and the faculty. The ability to look beyond this, and not to get stuck on the concept of "having two bosses" is crucial for success in this position. It is simply a fact of life that a new form is being worked with, and old models will not be of support.

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The second major function of the administrator is management. This is where responsibility is assumed for those tasks mandated by the faculty and the Board. Decisions must be made, deadlines must be met, and action must be taken. This is the arena of executing policies, and seeing that the work is done. Typically, the areas of primary responsibility are the non-teaching staff and their tasks, the maintenance of the physical plant, and the school finances, including the development and fund raising programs. It could be said that the essential nature of the work is "resource management." Please refer to the sample job descriptions in the appendix for more detail.

The art of being a Waldorf school administrator lies in finding the proper balance between listening and acting, responding and initiating, holding back and taking charge. He must find the proper relationship to every new challenge that comes his way, and he must find it out of his own imagination, precisely as the teacher must meet every new situation with a child, without prejudice or preconceived answers. By working in such a way, the administrator will be providing leadership of the best possible kind for the school community. He will not be perceived as heavy handed or insensitive, nor will he be labeled ineffective or titular, but rather he will inspire confidence within the school community.

Business Manager:

As stated earlier, the Waldorf school, while not essentially a business, does have numerous business aspects, all of which need careful attention if the school is to succeed. In the beginning stage of the school's development, these things are often managed by the Trustees, with the assistance of a bookkeeper and the involved interest of an experienced faculty member. The healthy development and increasing complexity of the school's operations will challenge the community to find the appropriate form of operation, and, for better financial management, many schools have implemented the specific position of business manager.

It needs to be emphasized again that each school must find the constellation of administrative and staff positions which are appropriate to that particular school. It would not be healthy to create positions simply because some other school has them. The vision that lives in a particular school — which must be articulated by that school — the biography of a particular school, and the abilities of

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involved community members, will lead to particular and distinct administrative organization. The functions, however, exist in all schools, and must be attended to, whether it is by a finance committee, a board treasurer, an administrator in concert with a bookkeeper, a faculty finance liaison, or a business manager.

What are those functions? Essentially, insuring that the school's finances are being managed responsibly, that the financial policies are being faithfully executed, and that the school is fiscally responsible to the wider community — including federal, state and local agencies.

The business manager plays an essential role in the formation and implementation of the school's annual budgets. He is the one with the most intimate and immediate knowledge of the successes and failures in the fiscal plan, and can suggest corrections and refinements as the year proceeds and in the preparation of the upcoming budget. He bears the responsibility for providing the board and faculty with accurate and timely information about how the finances are unfolding, through monthly and/or quarterly reports. He must ensure that all continuous obligations incurred by the school are being met, such as payrolls, payroll tax deposits, insurance premiums, payable bills of all sorts; and, he must ensure that those obligated to the school are meeting their commitments, such as tuition payments, fees for day care, fundraising pledges, and so on. In short, he must be watchful of the income and outflow of funds.

In addition to current financial activity, the business manager needs to plan and act for the long-term financial health of the school. This entails such activities as building an investment portfolio, with which to manage the schools more liquid assets, and the management of the retirement fund for faculty and staff. It also means ensuring that the school is carrying adequate coverage on a number of insurance policies — on everything from general liability to school buses. The business manager bears responsibility for making sure that the fiscal policies of the school are visible and understood by all concerned, by making sure that the faculty handbook is up to date, and that the information given to parents is accurate and clear. For faculty and staff, what are the policies regarding sick leave, severance pay, reimbursements, and so on. For the parents, what are policies regarding tuition cycles, late payments, failure to pay, discounts for prepayments, and so on. The business manager is often the first to

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know when a new policy is needed, or an old one needs revision, and will suggest possible revisions to the faculty and/or board.

While all Waldorf schools are non-profit and tax exempt, this by no means absolves them of the responsibility to file tax returns on state and federal levels. The business manager, in cooperation with the school's accountant, will be very involved in the process of filing these documents. It is advisable for all schools to undergo a financial audit at least every three years, and many schools do this every year. This can be a long, difficult, expensive process if the record keeping is not immaculate (even if it is correct!), and the business manager will assume responsibility for the preparation of the audit materials for the accounting firm.

The business manager will also be the school representative to the school's bank, and this relationship must not be taken too lightly. Much can depend upon the confidence of and in individuals in this relationship.

The accuracy and availability of financial information is extremely important to the success of the school. Everything from responsible, understandable grant requests to that of tax returns to the ability to plan next year's budget well depends upon good data, managed in a warm, trustworthy manner. The management of the school's fiscal life, in a professional manner consistent with the vision and purpose of the school, is critical to the school's ability to provide its services to the community.

Development Director:

As more and more schools realize the need to supplement their finances with gift income, for both operating and capital needs, the number of development officers in our schools has grown by leaps and bounds. Fortunate is the school that recognizes this eventuality before it becomes an emergency, because then the necessary groundwork can be laid before an actual appeal is required, greatly enhancing the possibility of success. A development officer who is put in the position of immediately having to generate gift income, without time to do the necessary groundwork, will have difficulty. He will initially only be able to do fundraising, not development, and there is a difference, even though they do go hand in hand.

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The role of the development director is gloriously complex while being at the same time utterly simple: he must raise money; and in doing so, he must first raise friends. This is the difference between fundraising and development — the fundraiser, usually a special event or a one-time occasion, does not seek to develop a lasting, future-oriented relationship with the donor. The focus is on the financial support. In development, the focus is on the relationship, which may, or may not, lead to financial support in the future. It is not by chance that so many of the development officers in Waldorf schools are also responsible for public relations and even advertising, because much of their effort is in informing the community about the schools. This effort is not only for enrollment purposes, but also for general friend raising.

A good analogy for the development director is a gardener. He must very gently and carefully sow any number of seeds, then periodically water and cultivate, until ultimately it becomes possible to gather in the harvest. Provided the weather doesn't destroy his crop! We all know how devastating a school crisis in confidence, of one sort or another, can be.

Development officers, first and foremost, are advocates for the school. They must be articulate about the goals and objectives of the school, not only pedagogically, but also organizationally — site development plans, construction priorities, financial priorities - so that they can respond to the parents and the public. This implies a detailed working knowledge of the school, and the most successful development officers are those who are included in the working of the board and faculty, and not just the work of the development committee. It also implies that the school actually has a long-range plan, and knows what the needs it will be facing are, and how these needs will be prioritized. Common are the development people who have had to struggle for this information. In his book **Designs For Fund-Raising**, Harold J. Seymour states the following:

"Getting down to the specifics, the purpose of any development office at whatever kind of institution should be simply to develop support by service and gifts. The direct role in the area in fund-raising itself is to promote all three legs of the fund-raising tripod — occasional capital campaigns, consistent annual giving by all elements of the constituency, and the promotion of deferred giving through bequests and living trusts. The indirect role in the area of public relations — because it is development's very life

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blood — is to sustain a critical awareness and a lively concern for the ways in which the institution deals with the arts and graces of appreciation, hospitality, responses to suggestions and criticisms, and all the other major processes of dealing with its constituency — past, present and future. Whatever the size or nature of the institution, purpose should never aim for less than this or attempt to do much more."⁴.

This sums up, very well indeed, the focus for the work of the development office. However, what, exactly, is the school's constituency? This must include all past and present families, all friends of the school, all local businesses who do business with the school, and the local community. It is necessary for the development office to maintain a connection with each of these constituents — usually through mailings and news releases and on-campus events. One of the key constituent groups in need of such on-going maintenance is the alumnae. Keeping in touch with them is a major element in the friend raising efforts of the development office, and clearly demonstrates the long-term nature of this activity. Again, fortunate is the school that has maintained and updated its mailing lists since the beginning!

The development director must be able to inspire a cadre of volunteers, for the work cannot be accomplished by one person alone. Indeed, the whole community should feel that development is their concern, and that everything they say and do is reflective of the school community, especially with respect to public relations and advertising.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the role of the development director is with the following quotation from John D. Rockefeller, Jr.:

"Some people have a less keen sense of their duty and responsibility than others. With them a little urging may be helpful. But with most people a convincing presentation of the facts and the need is far more effective. When a solicitor comes to you and lays on your heart the responsibility that rests so heavily on his; when his earnestness gives convincing evidence of how seriously

4. Harold J. Seymour, **Designs for Fund-Raising**, Fund Raising Institute, Ambler, PA. 1988. Pages 116-117.

interested he is; when he makes it clear that he knows you are no less anxious to do your duty in the matter than he is, that you are just as conscientious, that he feels sure all you need is to realize the importance of the enterprise and the urgency of the need in order to lead you to your full share in the meeting of it, — he has made you his friend and has brought you to think of giving not as a duty but a privilege."⁵.

Conclusion:

In every successful Waldorf school, close attention is being paid to matters of communication, coordination, resource management, fiscal management, friend raising and fund raising. How the schools organize these efforts may result in any number of different combinations of positions with any number of titles, but the bottom line is that the capable handling of the tasks and duties of administrator, business manager, and development director are essential to the well being of the school.

5. Ibid., Appendix, Page 198.