

## **Elaboration on the 14 Obligations: Points 13 and 14**

*Point 13: Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone in the system. Don't forget the needs of parents.*

*Point 14: Plan and take action to accomplish the transformation.*

This is the last in a series of blogs that presented a restatement of Dr. W. Edwards Deming's 14 Points for Management as "Obligations of the School Board and Administration." Earlier we introduced the obligations as a model of a healthy environment for work, learning and continuous improvement in a K-12 education setting. Here we will expand and elaborate on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of the following 14 Obligations.

### **Obligations of the School Board and Administration**

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of the entire school system and its services.
2. Adopt the new philosophy. We are in a new economic age.
3. Cease dependence on tests and grades to measure quality.
4. Cease dependence on price alone when selecting the curriculum, texts, equipment and supplies for the system.
5. Improve constantly and forever every process for planning, teaching, learning and service.
6. Institute more thorough, better job-related training.
7. Institute leadership (i.e., management of people).
8. Drive out fear.
9. Break down barriers between groups in the school system.
10. Eliminate the use of goals, targets and slogans to encourage performance.
11. Closely examine the impact of teaching standards and the system of grading student performance.
12. Remove barriers that rob staff and administrators of pride of workmanship and that rob students of the joy of learning. This means, *inter alia*, abolish staff ranking and the system of grading student performance.
13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone in the system. Don't forget the needs of parents.
14. Plan and take action to accomplish the transformation.

**Point 13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone in the system. Don't forget the needs of parents.**

In a business context, Dr. Deming elaborated on the need for continuing education and self-improvement as follows:

“Students in schools of business in America are taught that there is a profession of management; that they are ready to step into top jobs. This is a cruel hoax. Most students have had no experience in production or in sales. To work on the factory floor with pay equal to half what he hoped to get upon receipt of the MBA, just to get the experience, is a horrible thought to an MBA, not the American way of life. As a consequence, he struggles on, unaware of his limitations, or unable to face the need to fill in the gaps. The results are obvious.”<sup>1</sup>

How many graduates of the teachers' college find themselves in the same position as the MBA Deming described? Too often, they emerge from the school of education ill-prepared to be successful in the classroom. In the absence of a vigorous program for staff development and continuing education, teaching staff will struggle on, “unaware of [their] limitations, or unable to face the need to fill in the gaps.”

Point 13 addresses this critical issue in the healthy environment for work and learning. Attention to this point leads to the provision of opportunities and encouragement for people throughout the local school system to keep learning and growing.

Thus, Point 13 is different from Point 6 (“Institute more thorough, better job-related training”). Point 6 referred to training in work (and learning) methods that one should later observe in the person's behavior; whereas Point 13 deals with continuing education and gaining new knowledge – not necessarily new “skills,” methods or techniques. As it relates to parents' needs for education and self-improvement, district leaders may pursue several paths, all interrelated.

First, ongoing efforts to educate the local community about the problems of education lead to a broader understanding of the scope of those problems, as well as greater appreciation for the complexity of education. Second, many districts offer evening courses in adult literacy, parenting skills and other topics. Finally, parents involved in multi-disciplined process improvement project teams (Point 5) and site-based management teams are provided not only training in basic problem-solving and statistical methods (Point 6), but also greater knowledge of the education system and child development in general.

**Point 14. Plan and take action to accomplish the transformation.**

To effectively address this last of the obligations, districts should start by providing education for all in positions of leadership. The initial education should include exposure to Deming's “system of profound knowledge,” with great emphasis on helping those leaders to view the

school system as a system.<sup>2</sup> More specific guidelines for getting started on the transformation will be provided in a future blog. Deming provided the following suggestions (among others) for getting started on the transformation.<sup>3</sup>

- Management in authority will struggle with over every one of the [14 points].... They will agree on their meaning and on the direction to take. They will agree to carry out the new philosophy.
- Management in authority will take pride in their adoption of the new philosophy and in their new responsibilities. They will have the courage to break with tradition, even to the point of exile among their peers.
- Management in authority will explain by seminars and other means to a critical mass of people why change is necessary, and that the change will involve everybody.
- Start as soon as possible to construct with deliberate speed an organization to guide continual improvement of quality....
- Everyone can take part in a team. The aim of a team is to improve the input and the output of any stage [of a process]. A team may well be composed of people from different areas....

Audette and Algozzine paraphrased their understanding of Deming's steps for planning and carrying out the transformation as follows:<sup>4</sup>

1. The school board and superintendent will examine all of the first 13 points, agree on the direction to take, and agree to implement the new philosophy.
2. The school board and superintendent must feel dissatisfaction with past procedures and muster the courage to change them. They must experience a burning desire to transform their management strategies. This argues for more importance being attributed to the election of school board members. There is a need for much more than one-issue candidates.
3. The school board and superintendent must explain to a critical mass of school personnel, students, parents and community participants through presentations, inservice training and other means, why change is necessary and that the change will involve everyone. There must be enough people in the district and in each school who know the *what* and *how* of the transformation.
4. Every job and role in the district is part of a process that can be improved. Everyone belongs to a team and has a part in dealing with one or more of the issues at hand (for example, constancy of purpose or working to improve a specific process).

## Conclusion

The 14 Obligations for the School Board and Administration serve as a manifestation, or a logical extension, of the system of profound knowledge applied to schools and districts. They also provide a model of the healthy environment for work and learning that will be in place after a process of transformation that's guided by leaders with profound knowledge.

As noted several times throughout this series of blogs, the obligations cannot be viewed as a cafeteria plan. They are intricately interwoven and interdependent. That complex relationship between and among the 14 points was obvious in the elaboration on each individual point in the model. One finds it impossible to talk about one of the obligations without at the same time making reference to several others.

Finally, the fourteenth obligation – planning and taking action to accomplish the transformation – must begin with education for all in positions of leadership. It is hoped that this series of blogs on the 14 Obligations will prove to be a good introductory course. A future blog will provide more details for getting started on the transformation at a school or district level. Let's close our series by giving Dr. Deming the last word:

"One is born with a natural inclination to learn. Learning is a source of innovation. One inherits a right to enjoy his work. Good management helps us to nurture and preserve these positive innate attributes of people."<sup>5</sup>

## Notes

Much of the material published in this series of blogs is excerpt from J.F. Leonard, *The New Philosophy for K-12 Education: A Deming Framework for Transforming America's Schools*, ASQ Quality Press, Milwaukee, WI (1996).

<sup>1</sup>W.E. Deming, *Out of the Crisis*, MIT Center for Advanced Educational Services, Cambridge, MA (1993), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>For an introduction to the system of profound knowledge, see the blog titled, "Dr. W. Edwards Deming's System of Profound Knowledge," [www.jimleonardpi.com](http://www.jimleonardpi.com) (Oct 29, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>Deming, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-90.

<sup>4</sup>R. Audette and R. Algozzine, "Free and Appropriate Education for All: Total Quality and the Transformation of Public Education," *Remedial and Special Education*, Vol. 13, No. 6, PRO-ED, Inc., Austin, TX (1992), pp. 8-18.

<sup>5</sup>W.E. Deming, *The New Economics for Industry, Government, Education*, MIT Center for Advanced Educational Services, Cambridge, MA (1993), p. 108.