

# *Preface*

## **WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT ABOUT**

This is not a traditional or theoretical book about leadership. As you know, the bookshelves are already full of every imaginable kind of book on leadership: transformational leadership, moral leadership, participatory leadership, and many others. Please understand, I am not critical of the existing literature on school leadership, and yes, we have much to learn from these models. But during my many years as a school principal and superintendent, and now a professor responsible for preparing effective school leaders, it is my observation and belief that effective school leadership does not often match what we espouse in preparation programs. I have also observed that preparing effective school leaders is not generally as complex or complicated as we posit.

I must admit that much of my position is based on the recent book of Joseph Badaracco (2002), *Leading Quietly*. As sometimes happens, we run across the writing of a great author, and we think, "That's exactly what I have been trying to say." This has been the case with my exposure to *Leading Quietly*. Though Badaracco talks about leadership in the corporate world, I argue that the same is true in situations requiring effective school leadership. Badaracco helped me understand that true leadership is not grand or heroic: It occurs in small steps by people guided by humility, practicality, and common sense. They have the ability to look well below what we see on the surface.

Though I present in Chapter 2 a review of leadership theory, this book is not grounded in organizational theory.

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Rather, I present a conceptual framework *based* on organizational theory, emphasizing the importance of school leaders resisting the temptation to focus on just what we see on the surface and instead explore and investigate much further below the surface to get at the issues (and children) who are so often neglected or at best, only partially served.

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