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A Comparative Book Review

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative review of the books, *Value-added leadership* by Sergiovanni (1990) and ‘*The school leaders our children deserve*’ by Theoharis (2009). It brings forth common threads that run along the two and renames them as emerging themes. Common themes found are: optimism, determination, shared decision-making, professional attitude, sense of responsibility, untiring endeavours, motivation, capacity building, holistic development view, academic excellence, and leadership domains. The leadership styles found in both books mirror each other in terms of their emphasis on the human component of leadership. This paper further discusses the significance of themes in leadership and puts forward recommendations for future research and for the implementation of the suggested leadership styles in the schools.

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1. Introduction

Leadership is complex (Fullan, 2001), decisive, and essential for the success or failure of any organization. Educational institutions are no exception to that. Educators have been suggesting and proposing different leadership styles for many decades. As a result, on the continuum of leadership styles, from autocratic leadership educational researchers have reached to leadership for social justice. Though it is logical to expect minimum difference between various styles on this continuum, many of them focus on same main ideas in leadership. *Social justice leadership* by Theoharis (2009) and *Value-added leadership* by Sergiovanni (1990) could be an example of those leadership styles. Shared focus of two or more styles may have significant implications for educational leadership. Therefore, this paper presents a comparative book review of *Value-added leadership* (Sergiovanni, 1990) and *The school leaders our children deserve* (Theoharis, 2009). It starts from the short summary of the *Value-added leadership*, followed by some details of the content of the book. It describes *The school leaders our children deserve* in a similar way. It then discusses the common emerging themes in both concepts and draws some conclusions.

2. Value-added Leadership

In *Value-added leadership*, Sergiovanni (1990) proposes a Value-added leadership for extraordinary performance in schools. This book can be considered as a comprehensive, concise, and portable encyclopaedia of value-added leadership. It develops the ideas on examples from the real world of business and education. Thus, the ideas appear to be more practical and realistic. The coherence and fluency in the presentation of the core idea (value-added leadership) grabs the attention of the reader. Sergiovanni focuses on the way leadership is enacted in the school context and says, "Leadership is a very powerful force that can deeply influence the drive and commitments of teachers and students much more than the use of authority and management controls" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p.10). Sergiovanni's understanding of value-added leadership is:

A covenant is a binding and solemn agreement by principals, teachers, parents, and students to honor certain values, goals and beliefs; to make certain commitments to each other; and to do or keep from doing specific things. It is the compact that provides the school with a sense of direction, on the one hand, and an opportunity to find meaning in school life, on the other. Value-added leaders bring to the school a vision but focus on the building of a shared covenant. The two together comprise the leadership dimension of purposing. (p.20)

In the beginning of the book, Sergiovanni highlights some issues in American schools and then sets the stage for value-added leadership. He argues that, "value-added leadership can help restore the spirit of 'Gambare!' in our school and society itself" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p.5). By 'Gambare' he means persistence. However, "the restoration of prominence in our school system will require that some of the spirit, drive, commitment, and sense of moral responsiveness that brought about such prominence in the first place be recaptured. Value-added leadership can help in this effort" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p.8). His seemingly unconditional trust in the value-added leadership rests in his belief that, "It has the capacity to renew the American spirit and to set us back on the track to success once again" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p.8).

In the second part of the book Sergiovanni provides readers with a basic framework for value-added leadership. The framework comprises nine value-added dimensions, which include: leadership, extraordinary performance investment, providing symbols and enhancing meaning, purposing, enabling teachers and the school, building an accountability system, intrinsic motivation, collegiality, and leadership by outrage. He explains each dimension in detail and compares them with the similar aspects of value-leadership. He concludes that value-added leadership is more human, practical, and moral than value-leadership. To strengthen the moral idea he has given a clear distinction between congeniality and collegiality. He argues that congeniality is more about "the climate of inter-personal relationships in an enterprise. When this climate is friendly, agreeable, and sympathetic, congeniality is high. Though congeniality is pleasant and often desirable, it is not independently linked to better performance and quality schooling" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 23). Conversely, "collegiality has to do with the extent to which teachers and principals share a common work value, engaged in specific conversation about their work, and help each other engage in the work of the school" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 24). Furthermore, Sergiovanni compares the concept of value-added leadership to planning in reverse, which stresses the building of human capacity, from skills to relationships between them, for improving schools' performance. He concludes, "Planning in reverse is consistent to

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