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Book Review.

Educational leadership and management: Developing insights and skills

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the book *Educational leadership and management: Developing insights and skills*, written by Marianne Coleman and Derek Glover (published in 2010 by Open University Press-McGraw Hill, 197 p.). The book addresses the values and skills needed by educational leaders and managers in a changing and dynamic world of education.

KEYWORDS

Book review; Educational leadership; Educational management; Educational leaders.

BOOK REVIEW

Coleman, M. and Glover, D. (2010). *Educational leadership and management: Developing insights and skills*. New York: Open University Press-McGraw Hill.

Significant economic, societal, political and technological changes in the last few decades require us to rethink education management and school leadership. On the eve of the 21st century, Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks (as cited in Davies, 2002, p. 197) stated that there were three main challenges in the management of education systems: “*Building systems of self-managing schools*”, “*focus on learning outcomes*” and “*creating schools for the learning society*”. Since then, there is no doubt that change is faster and challenges become more important. A recent international comparative study showed that although there are some differences between countries, the change in conceptions and practice of school leadership is a global trend and the role of education leaders has become increasingly more complex (Woods et al. 2018).

Educational leadership and management: Developing insights and skills, written by Marianne Coleman and Derek Glover (published in 2010 by Open University Press-McGraw Hill, 197 p.), addresses the values and skills needed by educational leaders and managers in a changing and dynamic world of education.

The book takes its origin from a MA module taught at the Institute of Education, University of London. Therefore, it was written in a didactic style for students and practitioners in field of educational leadership and management. The importance given to the articulation of theory and practice is one of the most prominent features of the book:

The first aim of the authors is to bring together theory and practice in the context of leading and managing adults who work in education. Each chapter focuses on an aspect of leading and managing and goes beyond lists of ‘how to’, to examine some of the deeper theoretical issues that relate to, for example, motivation, decision-making, communication and difference (Coleman and Glover, 2010, p. 2).

In line with the importance given to articulation of theory and practice, the authors placed a special emphasis on reflexive thinking. “In every chapter, readers are invited to reflect on their own practice in light of the discussions” (p. 2). Additionally, the chapters include a scenario drawn from real life and the readers are invited to explore theories and concepts of educational management through the scenarios.

Another highlight of the book is its focus on social justice, equity and cultural diversity. The book aims to “promotes an ethical stance based on values of social justice and equity” (p. 2). The authors underline that this book “differs from other books in the area of educational leadership and management as it is firmly placed in the context of diversity and equity” (p. 1).

Indeed, a recent review of the relevant literature showed that social justice and equity were under-examined in the field of the educational leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

The book consists of eleven chapters. Apart from the two main authors, Marianne Coleman and Derek Glover, two authors contributed to the book: Anne Gold and Megan Crawford who wrote Chapter 2 and Chapter 10, respectively.

Chapter 1, *Leading and managing for diversity and social justice*, focuses on concepts of diversity and social justice in the context of educational management. In this chapter, the authors explore topics such as racism, discrimination, gender equity, ethnic and religious diversity and stereotyping in educational contexts and they suggest that “looking at society through a lens that is not that of the dominant culture can be both exciting and instructive” (p. 8).

Anne Gold is author of the Chapter 2, *Leading with values*. This chapter focuses on “the importance of reflection on values for educational leaders” and “shows how easily values clashes can lead to difficult dilemmas in an educational organization” (p. 39). The author highlights the importance of sharing communal values such as democracy, responsibility, social justice and fairness.

In Chapter 3, the authors, Marianne Coleman and Derek Glover, deals with the communication within the educational organizations:

Effective communication is essential for effective leadership and management. [...] Although communication is a complex process it is one that we take for granted and may assume that we do well. It is a fundamental part of our leadership behavior (p. 46).

Communicating with people in groups is a vital role for leaders in education and elsewhere, but leadership also involves dealing with individuals on a one to one basis. Perhaps the most important dealings of this kind occur in the context of appraisal or performance review. The main communication skills involved in these activities are listening and giving and receiving feedback (p. 49).

In Chapter 4, the authors address “decision-making and the management of conflict” stressing the importance of collegial approach of decision-making, negotiation skills, assertiveness and living with difference.

“Motivation and delegation” are explored in Chapter 5. The authors state that “whatever the nature of the team and the interrelationships between colleagues, successful education depends upon motivation at all levels – as leaders, as followers and as learners” (p. 76) and that “one of the most significant ways in which colleagues can be given self-ideal is through delegation of responsibility” (p. 83).

Chapter 6 focusses on performance management. The authors advocate a collegial and collaborative approach of performance management that may be developmental and enhance motivation of the teachers and the other persons involved in the educational organizations. Otherwise, a more bureaucratic approach of performance management will be limited to accountability and may be seen as judgemental.

The authors deal with team management in Chapter 7 and 8. Through a scenario illustrating teams at work in a school in Malawi, Chapter 7 focuses more on cultural aspects of the group working. The authors suggest that “schools and colleges can be much more effective if people understand team dynamics, know how they can contribute their full potential to their team and understand the leadership culture within which teams operate” (p. 99). In Chapter 8, the authors address the ways of effective and productive meetings with school team. They highlight once again the importance of collaborative and collegial approach: “Organizations which value participation tend to have more open and informal meetings than those within a more hierarchical or authoritarian culture” (p. 113).

“Managing time and stress” is discussed in Chapter 9. For a better time management, the authors recommend three points: “Analyse how you use your time”, “identify time-wasters” and “plan: long, medium and short term” (p. 129). The problems about time management can be one of the sources of stress in educational organizations. The well-being of staff is linked to their work–life balance and also to how educational organization is managed. “Not all stress is negative and leading and managing people is to some extent a matter of ensuring the right level of challenge and support” (p. 143).

Chapter 10, *Developing understanding of emotion and leadership*, was written by Megan Crawford. The author discusses the role of emotion in the educational organizations from a social perspective.

The last chapter is devoted to personal and institutional development:

It [*professional development*] can be at two levels – the personal, whereby one or more staff develop specific skills and understanding (e.g. in the integration of new technology into teaching and learning), and the institutional, offering development objectives for the institution as a whole. (p. 158)

The authors stress that the personal and institutional development require a learning culture and “a learning culture can only really exist where there is mutual understanding and collaboration” (p. 172).

In conclusion, the book, *Educational leadership and management: Developing insights and skills*, is a very helpful and practical resource for students and practitioners to develop leadership skills in education. Based on a rich and analytical literature review, it integrates theory with practice through case studies organized as “scenarios”. In addition, the book places a strong emphasis on values and concepts such as social justice, equity, cultural diversity, mutual understanding, collegiality, democracy, responsibility, fairness, assertiveness and living with difference.

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