

Reading 5.3 Summary (Davies, 2002)

Davies, B. (2002). Rethinking schools and school leadership for the twenty-first century: changes and challenges. *The International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(4), 196-206.

Susan Henry & Barbara Gomez

Abstract

- School leaders encounter two problems when considering the changes that face education and the challenge of leading schools into a successful future:
 - Little time for reflection and school-based leadership solutions, as leaders get caught up with the urgent agenda due to increasing accountability.
 - Need to think differently and challenge current orthodoxy (considerable shift required in traditional patterns of decision making). (p. 196)
- Davies outlines six changes & six challenges that school leaders face whilst seeking new approaches in enhancing the educational opportunities and success of all their students. (p. 196)

Six changes school leaders face:

1. Changing economic and societal contexts.

Schools now need to provide the social capital for their students as well as the intellectual, due to breakdown in traditional family groupings, the decline of religious practice and increased consumerism (p. 197).

2. Changing educational reform.

Reduced ability in schools to control its own affairs, too over prescribed by government agencies. Need to ensure education is broadening and not a narrowing process. Want deep and profound learning, not shallow learning (p.197).

3. The changing 'educational business'.

Schools seem to be becoming more of an organiser of services, rather than a services provider. (p. 198) There is a need to adjust the funding criteria for school funding, to ensure equity. (p. 199)

4. The changing tensions between autonomy and recentralisation.

Schools are forced into compliance regardless of their actual opinions, schools have less control of the education process due to government influence. Premature and externally imposed visions can blind us to effective improvement strategies (p. 199) (Fullan, 1993).

5. The changing impact of technology.

ICT has been the most powerful change in education in the last 30 years. Danger is that technology will widen the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have not's. Schools need to become learning centres providing technology access and support outside the traditional school day and school year. (p. 201).

6. The changing use and misuse of information.

Moral dilemma regarding the misuse of test results. Information about a child needs to be used to alter what is being taught or how it is being taught to improve the child's performance. Need 'assessment for learning' instead of 'assessment of learning'. 'Focus on deep learning and not just superficial performance results' (p. 201) (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 14)

Six challenges school leaders face:

1. The challenge of leading with a moral purpose.

Moral leadership is central, due to increasing secularism and materialism. Moral leadership provides a framework for action. (p. 201). Leaders need to have the courage to build moral communities by sustaining moral leadership in their schools and rebuild social capital (p. 202).

2. The challenge of leading the reengineering process.

The key is to concentrate on reengineering organisational processes and not structures. Focus on learning processes. Balance external demands with the paramount need to reorganise schools around learning processes. (p. 202).

3. The challenge of leading the development of organisational core competencies.

Deal with the urgent without forgetting to deal with the longer term important developments. Develop a set of generic core competencies so that when a new challenge appears the school can draw on these competencies to build its own solution. Define the core competencies which exist in the school and those that need developing (p.203).

4. The challenge of leading strategic intent not just strategic planning.

Knowing where you want to go but not knowing how to get there (p. 203). Achieving sustainable transformation by shifting organisational culture and setting intents (p. 204)

5. The challenge of leading a success culture.

Students having higher self-esteem and self-worth, parents and community having greater engagement and the school and teachers having higher expectations of their students. Need to celebrate success. Is part of continuous school improvement (p. 205).

6. The challenge of leading and managing: achieving the balance.

Need to be both good leaders and good managers. Need to establish and maintain the basics of good curriculum design, good teaching and learning strategies and safe, caring environments. Important to reassess and redirect schools to be successful in the future. Need to envisage new strategies and approaches and not just replicating where we have been before. (p. 205).

IN CONCLUSION

Leading the Catholic School

Sustainable Leadership requires the leader to be open to change;

- with flexible, creative and adaptable practices in seeking new ways forward for the future,

- with integrity to remain focused on the core business of learning,
- with strategic intent, and moral purpose a learning culture is created, and
- with social networks to enable the sustainability of success for all.