Editorial

Effective Educational Leadership in a Changing World

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Leadership expert John Maxwell (2016) often says that Leadership is influence---nothing more, nothing less. In his book Leadership for the Twenty-First Century, Professor Joseph Rost (1993) reviews the changing definitions of leadership over seven centuries and concludes that the through-line is leadership is an influence relationship.

As a public-school Principal in Bermuda for nine years, I used my influence to enhance my relationship with my students and thus improve students' performance and academic achievements. For example, I vividly recall meeting with two teachers to discuss preparing our M3 or third year Middle School students to sit the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Exams in Mathematics and English. Typically, students take these particular exams during their second year in high school. One teacher was not familiar with the exams or curriculum, and the other teacher had not prepared students for the exams in more than 10 years. Based on my professional relationship with teachers, as well as my reputation for engaging in unconventional practices, they were prepared to take on the challenge. For instance, to reinvigorate the Design & Technology Department, again due to relationships, I rallied the entire Sandys Secondary Middle School family (teachers, students, parents, and administrators) to assist in constructing the School Float for the 24th of May Parade. The school had not constructed a float since its days as a senior school.

While leadership requires the ability to influence others and build relationships, effective leaders need additional skills. In today's ever-changing global society, to be an effective Educational Leader in Bermuda, one must be able to keep stakeholders engaged, make decisions that are in the best interest of students, and use effective 21st Century leadership approaches, such as those posited by Maxwell (2019) and Kruse (2019). Additionally, as practices and procedures in education continue to change, it is vitally important that school leaders operate in the spirit of transparency, collaboration, and cooperation. Furthermore, teachers, students, parents, and community members must be included in decision-making when everyone is impacted.

Both Maxwell (2019) and Kruse (2019) state that an effective school leader must lead with love. Research and our own experiences indicate that while leadership based on fear may be the norm, and can seem motivating, it actually crushes creativity and shuts down communication. Fear contributes to stress and job attrition.

Kruse further posits that a lack of workplace leadership contributes to 70 percent of employees not being engaged at work. This author suggests a real world approach to leadership that encourages autonomy among team members and increases focus and accountability. He offers 10 Principles of leadership:

- Close Your Open-Door Policy to foster the autonomy and empowerment of team members and increase the amount of time you spend on deep work.

- Shut off Your Smartphone to improve safety and focus among team members and leadership alike.

- Have No Rules to shift your focus from enforcement to hiring, values, and guardrails---all of which in turn yield greater accountability and engagement.

- Be Likable Not Liked to ensure there is just enough separation for you to make tough decisions and to give candid feedback.

- Lead with Love to remind others that you don't need to like someone in order to care about them deeply. Caring drives engagement and loyalty.

- Crowd Your Calendar to reflect the reality that every minute wasted is a minute that can't be spent coaching team members or working on your most important tasks.

- Play Favorites to enable individuals to leverage their strengths and also gives you the flexibility to retain top performers.

- Reveal Everything (Even Salaries) to enable team members to move fast, adapt to change, and make wise decisions. This reduces their need to knock on your door with 'got a minute' questions.

- Show Weakness is to contribute to a culture of psychological safety.

- Leadership Is Not a Choice reminds you that there are no time-outs in leadership; stay in your office or walk around; say good morning or keep your head down; maintain your values or ignore them---you are always leading.

Kruse's principles may sound counterintuitive relative to conventional management practice but, in actuality, they encourage good leadership and desirable outcomes. The notion that there are 'no time outs' in leadership is particularly important in Bermuda where relationships are key and leaders are well-known. From shopping at a local grocery store to attending Cup Match, as a Principal, I was mindful of the impact of my words and behaviour. In Bermuda, I knew it was vitally important for me to always give my best.

As parents, teachers, and community members continue to depend on the successful operation of our schools, Principals must lead with purposeful intent. They must be forward-thinking individuals who lead with integrity. Finally, Principals' courage and resolve, as well as strength of character, should be on display daily, ensuring success for all students, as well as empowering teachers to facilitate effective learning opportunities for students

References

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