

Authentic Leadership in Education

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Abstract

There are various forms of leadership implemented within the school system. This purpose of this paper is to investigate one approach to leadership, the authentic leadership model. Authentic leadership can foster greater collective participation from various stakeholders which promotes honest relationships that further enhance the school climate and culture. Relying heavily on the works of Starratt and Duignan, this paper will highlight the growth of authentic leadership as a field of study as well as explore three characteristic traits of an authentic leader-- autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence. Authentic leadership also relies/depends on one's values. A person's values can drive their decision-making process; therefore, the specific values of an authentic leader will also be discussed. Authentic leadership has been criticized for its focus on values along with varying perceptions of the term "authentic"; however, its benefits/advantages promote authentic leadership as a necessity in today's schools.

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Definitions

Authenticity. Before defining authentic leadership, it is important to understand the meaning behind authenticity. According to Gardner et al. (2005), authenticity “can be defined by as owning one’s personal experiences (values, thoughts, emotions and beliefs) and acting in accordance with one’s true self (expressing what you believe and behaving accordingly)” (pp. 344-345). This concept of authenticity creates the situation for a leader to be true to oneself, meaning that a leader’s actions would typically follow a particular pattern with similar situations. Authenticity is not an absolute, but rather a process “whereby leaders and followers experience growth by becoming more authentic” (Ericksion, 1995, as cited by Gardner et al., 2005, p. 345). In other words, school leaders and group members are constantly working towards more honest and consistent interactions between themselves and others. According to Starratt (2004) authenticity can only be achieved within a group dynamic. It is through these interactions with others that an individual is able to dialogue with others, which allows the individual to evaluate their actions and beliefs against others. These interactions create patterns that one is able to use in order to determine where one stands in the structure of the world.

Authentic Leadership. Authentic leadership is a focus on developing “self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic actions and relationships” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 345). This form of leadership moves beyond the internalized growth, towards authenticity and extends outward so as to include the relationships between followers and stakeholders in the given environment. These interactions are further characterized by trust, mutually set goals, and personal growth amongst all members in the relationship. Many different leadership styles, especially those rooted in positivism, lack strong emphasis on ethics and morality, which results in little direction and guidance from the morality and values that are crucial to human interactions. In contrast,

authentic leadership incorporates these issues of morality and values as its central focus (Woolley et al., 2011, p. 439). Authentic leadership is defined by Brown et al. (2005) “as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making” (p. 120).

Inauthentic Leaders. Inauthentic leaders are the direct opposite of authentic leaders. These leaders are deceptive and manipulative (Thomas & Erakovich, 2013, p. 183). They can display many of the same traits of an authentic leader; however they seek power and position at the expense of subordinates. Under a false mask they manipulate others which allows for the perception of authenticity. While both authentic and inauthentic leaders have a vision and a mission for the organization, the inauthentic leader “cannot be trusted and [is] willing to sacrifice followers for their own purposes” (p. 183). According to Bass and Steidlmer (1999) the inauthentic leader seeks to be idolized versus idealized (as cited by Thomas & Erakovich, 2013, p. 183).

School Leaders. For the purpose of this paper, the term school leader will be used to reference administrators (district level, school principals and vice-principals) in addition to school department heads and lead teachers in specific areas. According to Starratt (2005), school leaders are those people in positions of responsibility who “have to carry the burdens of being proactively responsible for changing those things over which they have some control in order to alleviate disadvantage and promote the deeply human fulfillment of young people” (p. 145).

Followers/Subordinates. Any person who is the responsibility of a school leader. This would include teachers, students, school caretakers, etc...

Respect. For the purpose of this paper, the term respect will be used to reference the interactions between individuals. These interactions should be carried out in such a way that the human dignity of each party is appreciated and acknowledged in a cordial relationship that includes active listening and dialogue between the individuals (Baumann, 2007, p. 12).

Self-awareness. Self-awareness is an individual's conscious knowledge of one's own personal character, inner feelings, personal motives, and desires. Through introspection, the individual gains "greater clarity about their values, identity, and emotions and, in turn, move towards internalized regulatory processes, balanced information processing, transparent relations with [others] and authentic behavior" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 326).

Transparency. Transparency is the open sharing of the leader's thoughts and beliefs with those within the educational institution.

Introduction

Leadership can be a burden and a struggle that presents many challenges and rewards for an individual. In a school setting, the significance of leadership and direction is of crucial importance. There are many pathways and approaches to leadership, but it is the assertion of this paper that authentic leadership is the best pathway for school leaders to follow in order to create a vibrant and dynamic atmosphere in which students and colleagues can flourish. Students are the centre of learning in our 21st century world and thus, they should be given the best opportunity to grow and to achieve their greatest potential through strong authentic leaders.

Leadership is a term that is frequently discussed within a school setting, but all too often it is in the form of criticism of the school leader(s) and how they have or haven't handled a specific situation/event. It is the premise of this paper that authentic leadership is the best

approach to move away from the negative dialogue, and promote more mutually beneficial relationships amongst school leaders and their subordinates. The paper will analyze the role of an authentic leader within the school system and explore the characteristics that should be readily apparent to all their subordinates. This paper will also examine the values that should be used by an authentic leader in his/her decision making processes as they lead the school forward.

When making an assertion that one should follow a particular approach to leadership versus another can present a certain boldness and arrogance. The focus of this paper is not to answer all the questions and decisions about the values and implementation of authentic leadership; however a road map that individuals can use to balance their own beliefs and views on morality when determining the common good as it applies to those around a leader. Some of the arguments made in this paper will rely on assumptions of human goodness and desires to improve the human condition.

Creating a Field of Study: The Growth of Authentic Leadership

One of the major struggles with authentic leadership is the lack of a coherent body of literature. Instead, the history and evolution of authentic leadership can be viewed as a collection of *unconnected islands* that eventually evolve into the current field of study (Duignan, 2014, p. 155). These *islands* of intellectual study include the works of John Dewey, Max Weber, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and others. Their studies have helped advance the study of ethics and morality which would later become crucial to the study of authenticity in educational leadership (Duignan, 2014, p. 155). These works provide the foundation for many theories and assumptions that are inherent in this field of study. However, one of the most pivotal moments for the creation

of authentic leadership is the work of T. B. Greenfield¹ which challenged the predominate ideology of positivism. Greenfield (1986) wrote:

because positivistic science cannot derive a value from a fact or even recognize values as real, we have a science of administration which can deal only with facts and which does so by eliminating from its consideration all human passion, weakness, strength, conviction, hope, will, pity, frailty, altruism, courage, vice, and virtue (p. 61).

Greenfield created a change in educational thinking that forced many researchers to consider aspects of their research that should move beyond the realm of purely scientific measurable facts. The questions put forth encouraged others to ask questions about the human element or as Greenfield (1986) described, “the moral dilemma”(p.63) of educational administration. According to Manley-Casimir (2003), “Greenfield restored the focus on the people in organizations, the human agents without whom the organization would have no existence” (p. 260).

Robert Greenleaf (1977) advanced leadership studies from the scientific focus of positivism in *Servant Leadership*. Servant leadership focuses the administrator “on service to others and recognition that the role of organizations is to create people who can build a better tomorrow” (Paris & Peachey, 2012, p. 378). The servant leader, as expressed by Greenleaf,² moves beyond a style of leadership into a way of life that determines every aspect of an administrator’s decision-making processes (p. 378). At the centre of this theory is a focus on humility and self-sacrifice that puts others above the individual self. Authentic leaders, according to Greenleaf, earn the allegiance of others by building trusting relationships (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 206). According to Duignan & Bhindi, “Authentic leaders are aware of their own

¹ Greenfield’s work ranges from the 1970’s onward. I am quoting from a 1986 article which brings together all of the work from the 70’s and early 80’s.

² It is important to note that although Greenleaf is credited with the creation of servant leadership, its roots run much deeper to include the teaching of many religions and leaders. “Many scholars model Jesus Christ’s teachings to his disciples as the ultimate example of servant leadership” (Paris & Peachey, 2-12, p. 379).

limitations, are tolerant of imperfection in others, and help others learn, grow, mature and succeed” (p. 206). The fundamental assessment of a servant leader can be explored in the questions: do those around them grow as an individual? Did they become “healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to see leadership as service” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 13 as cited by Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 206)?

Building on the work of Greenfield and Greenleaf, Henderson & Hoy (1982) began to measure aspects of authentic leadership. In their study, they looked at the perception of principal authenticity from the perspective of teachers (Duignan, 2014). Their study concluded that “the authentic leader is viewed as one who treats subordinates with respect and demonstrates a consistency of expressions and actions, while the inauthentic leader is perceived as dealing with subordinates as if they were things” (Henderson & Hoy, 1982, p. 5 as cited by Duignan, 2014, p. 156). This perception is vital in linking the importance of maintaining a healthy school climate. Leaders who are perceived as authentic, are able to more effectively bring together staff and students and move them towards a professional climate which promotes learning and respect. According to Fullan (2002), “if relationships improve, schools get better. If relationships remain the same or get worse...leaders are able to build relationships because they are aware of their own emotional make-up and are sensitive and inspiring to others” (p. 18).

Authentic leadership, as a field of study, took another step forward with C. Hodgkinson’s book *The Philosophy of Leadership* (1983). Hodgkinson (1983) argues that administrative leadership is a philosophy-in-action. In other words, all “leadership is intrinsically valuational” (Hodgkinson, 1983, p. 202 as cited by Duignan, 2014, p. 157). Leadership has to be grounded in values in order to give the leader a direction from which to lead the organization. Hodgkinson (1991) further argues that education has “an idealistic and humanistic quality which renders it

distinctive and special among the occupations and callings” (p. 23 as cited by Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 202) which makes it vitally important to be grounded in values that promotes the human spirit. Hodgkinson (1991) refers to the human spirit as “truth, beauty, goodness, justice, happiness, and self-fulfilment” (p. 17 as cited by Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 202). Education should not be viewed as the learning of facts and ideas; it should be viewed as inspiring others to search out the truth as to what it means to be human. This belief should be present in both leaders and learners.

C. Taylor (1991) further pushed the idea of authentic leadership when he proposed that the ideal of authenticity is when a moral force is motivating the individual (Duignan, 2014, p. 157). Taylor (1991) argues “we should not be afraid of the effort required to develop an understanding of the higher good. Morality and the good require a re-centering of our focus from the primacy of survival to the transcendent good” (Meynell, 2011, p. 205). This argument is a call to move beyond the small details that seem to drag down individuals and rather encourage them to become more concerned about the bigger picture and the impact of one’s behaviour on those around them. Taylor’s (1991) arguments call for a closer relationship with those around us in order to facilitate a stronger perception of our own identity because “the genesis of the human mind is [...] not ‘monological’, not something each accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical” (Taylor, 1991, p. 33 as cited by Duignan, 2014, p. 157). According to Duignan & Bhindi (1997), “the quality of the relationships greatly influences everything else that happens in organizations, including the quality of leadership” (p. 201). The interactions between the leader and the group creates “*interrelationships, interdependency and mutuality of interests*” which has the ability to create the effective relationships that drives the organization (p. 201).

Building on the connections between individuals as stated in the previous paragraph, R. Terry (1993) further added to Taylor's (1991) arguments by concluding that relationships should be authentic and be grounded in actions (Duignan, 2014, p. 158). Terry (1993) states "authenticity informs and directs action, action grounds authenticity in life. Without authenticity, action drifts. Without action, authenticity remains idle conjecture and wishful thinking" (p. 138 as cited by Duignan, 2014, p. 158). Leaders should be perceived as being action/risk takers within an educational organization, than being perceived as being weak and a push over.

R. Starratt (1993) further encouraged leaders to pursue action and values as part of their leadership methodology. When trying to expose the inherent cynicism towards the managerial approach of many leaders, Starratt (1993) stated "the cure rests with human beings deciding to recapture their life-world as a humanly fulfilling journey" (p. 84 as cited by Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 208). This statement attempts to reconceptualise the relationship between leaders and subordinates into one that is caring and respectful and that promotes equal respect and honesty between all members in an organization. Starratt (1993) further argues that authenticity in leadership "is desperately needed. It must be ... grounded in the sober understandings and memories gained at such a cost in human lives and suffering" (p. 136 as cited by Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 208). Leaders should have feelings and should be connected to those with whom they are supposed to be leading. Leadership, according to Starratt (1993), should be able to see its failures and shortcomings and be grounded in a reality of responsiveness to those within an organization (p. 208). An authentic leader should recognize their inabilities and find mechanisms and individuals who can help overcome any challenge the leader may have.

Evaluation of Values and Morality through Inquiry

School leaders should develop procedures and practices that encourage value and moral inquiry to become a more authentic leader. An authentic leader would use moral inquiry to seek values and ethical attitudes that would guide them in their decision making process. According to George Sher (1992) the values that a leader exemplifies should be a “character trait that is for some important reason desirable or worth having” (as cited by Carr & Stuetel, 2005, p. 4). Therefore a leader should take careful consideration of which personal characteristics they wish to portray as representative of their leadership/personality or themselves. These values upheld/chosen by the leader also need to be viewed by the majority as desirable traits within an individual (Carr & Stuetel, 2005, p. 5).

A school leader has to develop a dialogue with the various stakeholders/constituents in their school that moves beyond the immediate here and now and focuses on transcending to “standards of decency and justice which are not immovably tied to a set of purely local customs and prejudices” (Carr, 2000, p. 196). This is not an easy task and should not be taken lightly. In their dialogical interactions with others, school leaders should try to focus on the larger pictures of what is right, rather than relying on the historical arguments of how things have been done in the past. The school leader must be “equipped with resources for the principled justification of their conduct” (Carr, 1999, p. 42). This would imply that the school leader has thought about and given considerations to all sides of a value before actively implementing a value into everyday practice of guiding decisions and social interactions within a school community. This type of dialogical practice would require a heavy investment in time and mental capital of the school leader, but once sufficiently employed, this practice would produce a greater perception of authenticity with colleagues and subordinates. Subordinates would be able to recognise a

pattern and structure to the school leader's decisions and actions therefore create more authentic relationships within the school.

Characteristics of an Authentic Leader

Educators and educational administrators live in a world where decisions and actions can have generational impacts. Every day decisions are made regarding programming, enrichment, suspensions, expulsions, etc... that have long lasting consequences for the individual affected by the decisions of the school leader. Thus, it is imperative that they make careful and thoughtful decisions when creating the educational environment in their schools. According to R. Starratt (1993), school leaders should have three qualities that further promote the world around them and lead them towards moral decision-making qualities: "autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence" (Starratt, 2003, p. 137).

Autonomy

School leaders should be autonomous. This means owning oneself and being true to your real self (Starratt, 2003). It does not mean acting alone and separating from your community and society, because it is important that individual's socialize with others as part of our human condition. Autonomous means taking "responsibility for what one does" (Starratt, 2003, p. 138). Starratt (1993) describes autonomous as not only standing by one's decisions and accepting the consequences of those decisions, but also as being a part of the solution to problems encountered. School leaders should be freethinkers who are part of the community in which they find themselves. Duignan (2014) refers to the importance of a leader having connections and interactions with individuals in a system as complex as an educational institution. These leaders need to be autonomous unto themselves, but must also be part of the larger system. This means

that school leaders need to be free to make decisions, yet realize those decisions are part of a larger educational system that is being analyzed and studied by the outside public. If a school leader is not confident to make decisions, then stalling and stagnation of leadership occurs when decisions are not made. Subordinates begin to lose faith in the ability of their leader, and the system is weakened with cynicism.

Connectedness

School leaders should be concerned with being connected to their environment. According to Starratt (2003), this relationship with the environment also includes “accepting the responsibilities implicit in the relationship” (p. 138). By making these connections leaders, are able to make decisions that will better serve the organization of which they are a part. Within the context of these relationships, Starratt (2003) implies that to be social living agents, individuals must live in a culture. With that acceptance comes a responsibility towards the moral and cultural codes “that are expressed and negotiated” (p.138) through individual interactions. Nichols & Erakovich (2013) describes authentic leaders as those who are able to use their behaviours to influence and encourage others through “intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration in an ethical manner” (p. 183). Duignan (2014) carries this argument further when he refers to this connectedness as influence fields (p. 164). Influence fields are described by Duignan (2014) as individuals who are influenced by other individuals in a reciprocal relationship that is further influenced by the environment in which the individual operates. The type of system is dynamic and messy, and “authentic leaders recognize, accept, even embrace [the] messiness and respond by encouraging and nurturing a ‘collective professional ethic of responsibility’ from all key stakeholders so as to maximise opportunities” (Duignan, 2014, p.

164). Within this dynamic it is important that leaders must conduct their own behaviours in such a way so as to inspire followers (Brown et al., 2005).

Extending on this idea of connectedness, M. Fullan (2008) argues for learning communities in schools which greatly enhances the relationships amongst all the stakeholders in the system. Fullan (2008) encourages school leaders to develop collaborative cultures that encourage dialogue and mutual respect within the school system. Leaders who encourage this are able to create mutual sharing cultures that promote the growth of the school as an educational institution. As expressed by Fullan (2003), “it takes capacity to build capacity” (p. 7). These learning communities can best be achieved when a leader is well-grounded with a moral purpose (Fullan, 2003, p. 19) and “Authentic leaders believe deeply in people and their abilities to make ordinary things into great things” (Starratt, 2004, p. 71).

Transcendence

Starratt refers to transcendence as “what leads us to turn our life toward someone or toward something greater than or beyond ourselves” (p. 138). This could be viewed as wanting to achieve excellence in whatever one does, or it can be perceived as following an ideal or principle that promotes the growth of the human condition (p. 138). Leithwood & Jantzi (2006) encourages school leaders to emphasize emotion and values when “fostering capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals” (p. 204). Within the context of transcendence this would imply encouraging subordinates to see the bigger picture and encouraging them to increase their capacities and commitments to producing a stronger, more vibrant school.

Fullan (2008) points out that school leaders should be concerned about their legacy in an educational institution. This legacy should not be created from “building great monuments or by naming their successor” (Fullan, 2008, p. 20) but rather should be created from the individual actions that create happiness within the school (p. 20). This concern for a memorable legacy can be achieved when one chooses to focus towards a larger group or communal goal rather than emphasizing one’s own self-promotion and glory. This idea can also be used to reinforce the argument for connectedness. Leaders who work to build “mutually affirming relationships with others” and add to the positive culture of the school climate are able to create an atmosphere that fosters growth (Starrat, 2004, p.71).

Values of an Authentic Leader

Self-awareness

It is very important for a school leader to place a major emphasis on self-awareness. According to Gardner (2005) this “personal insight of the leader” is one of the key factors that determines whether or not a school leader is authentic (p. 347). School leaders should also develop a “personality in which a continuous tendency for introspection and investigation of their inner world and feelings” (Pavlovic, 2015, p. 319). This would imply that school leaders spend time reflecting on how they feel and on what motivates their decision making process. Gardner et al. (2005) further state “gaining self-awareness means working to understand how one derives and makes meaning of the world around us based on introspective self-reflective, testing of our own [beliefs]³” (p. 347). This focus allows the school leader to remain grounded with their core personality; it allows them to remain constant during times of stress and distraction, and

³ Gardner et al. uses the terms “hypotheses and self-schema”

thus present themselves constantly and consistently to the world in which they work. Fullan (2003) also emphasises the importance of school leaders having to be the lead learners (p. 20). At the school level, this means that a principal should also focus on their own professional learning as a way of keeping informed on best practice and also as a way of leading by example.

Authentic Relationships

An authentic leader should have a strong focus on authentic relationships. According to Goleman et al. (2002) "relationship skills account for nearly three times as much impact on organizational performance as analytical skills do" (as cited in Reeves, 2006, p. 39). Authentic relationships can best be exercised within educational settings between staff, with students, and with parents and guardians of students (Starratt, 2004, pp. 76-80). According to Starratt (2008), one of the best areas for a leader to practice authentic relationships is in their daily interactions with students. Knowing a student's name and hobbies or where that student lives allows the student to feel a sense of belonging and caring within the school. This encourages students to buy into any initiatives and goals that the school leader is trying to implement. Starratt (2008) also highlights the importance of teachers in cultivating authentic relationships with students. By being real with each child, the teacher invites the student into a relationship that helps to promote the dignity and worth of each individual student. According to Fullan (2003), school leaders are the key people responsible for "developing relational trust, both in demonstrating it herself or himself and in fostering a culture of trusted relationships" (p. 43). There are three primary areas for authentic relationships:

1. Transparency. According to Kramer (2011), a leader must set an example for the group.

Kramer (2011) encourages leaders to ask the following questions: "What example am I

setting, am I demonstrating a balanced life to my team, are my actions in line with my beliefs and values?” (p. 93). Transparency is closely tied to self-awareness and many of the same questions can be asked when a leader is personally reflecting on their inner beliefs and ideas. Freeman and Stewart (2006) further extend on the idea of transparency when they highlight that too many leaders have laminated value cards in their wallets, but do not actively live those values within their organization. It is important for the actions of the leader to replicate the values and actions that the institution encourages (Tanner et al. 2010, p. 226). According to one study, individuals interviewed identified as being more strongly influenced by leaders who show high amounts of transparency within their work environment (Brown & Trevino, 2006, p. 600). This transparency was identified through characteristics such as caring, honesty, fairness and accountability of the leaders. An extension of transparency for a school leader should be a dedication to authentic knowledge. This implies that a school leader “understands that knowledge is a dialogue between the intelligences of learners and the intelligences found in the natural, social, and cultural worlds” (Starratt, 2004, p. 76). This approach requires that the school learner has tremendous respect for learning and the different ways students can learn.

2. **Respect.** A school leader should develop the respect of those around him or her and should also respect those with whom he or she works. Leaders who are able to follow this approach conduct themselves with “honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and care” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). This type of school leader is able to assume leadership as a legitimate and credible role model that encourages the ensuing point of follower development (p. 120). These school leaders are able to listen carefully to others while encouraging the school mission and goals in a mutually transactional approach (Starratt,

2004). The steady work of taking the time to focus on individuals helps authentic leaders to communicate their commitment to those around them (Loader, 1997, as cited by Starratt, 2003, p. 79). Within the context of respect, it is also important for school leaders to show humility in what they do. A school leader should keep his or herself grounded with their fellow colleagues, and not make their position of authority a major dividing point (Kramer, 2011, p. 60). This humility also ties back to a leader's self-awareness, and should be included in practices of reflection. Starratt (2004) insists that a school leader gives "both the human respect and the civil respect that are the due of his or her colleagues" (p. 79).

3. **Focus on Follower Development.** According to a study by Cottrill, Lopez & Hoffman (2014), authentic leaders contribute to employee perceptions of inclusion. This would imply that leaders should be opening and encouraging so as to make subordinates feel connected to the group. According to Avolio & Gardner (2005), the leader and the follower roles are developed over time as their relationship becomes more authentic; "As followers internalize values and beliefs espoused by the leader their conception of what constitutes their actual and possible selves are expected to change and develop over time" (p. 327). For this to happen, the leader should develop a focus on role modeling to others within the organization. These leaders are able to give effective examples for "followers through their observations and social learning from the leader" (Hannah et al., 2011, p. 563). This, in turn, allows the follower to learn who they are, and to become more transparent with the leader in a reciprocal process (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This is closely linked to Greenleaf's servant leadership model. Langlois (2011) adds to this point by encouraging leaders and subordinates to share the construction of values within the

working place as a way of fostering strong commitment and coherence within an organization. The school leader continues to build his or her team by encouraging subordinates “to become responsible and to define success, not merely in terms of results but also in terms of the way in which one goes about obtaining these results” (p. 43).

Transparency, respect, and focus on follower development, direct school leaders towards what Duignan calls “dynamic influence fields” (Duignan, 2014, p. 164). The school leader should focus on the connections between relationships and amplify those actions or influences that promote the growth and positive actions within the school environment, while conversely restrain those actions or influences that hinder the school environment.

Moral Courage

According to Sekerka & Bagozzi (2007), moral courage is “the ability to use principles to do what is good for others, regardless of threat to self, as a matter of practice” (as cited by Hannah et al., 2011, p. 577). Moral courage for a school leader is a critical factor in determining the actions and directions that will be taken within the school. A leader with moral courage will be willing to take the risks that are needed to improve the school. According to Freeman & Stewart (2006), “it is not about the leader as an individual, it is about something bigger – the goals and dreams of the organization” (p. 4). This implies that the leader is able to recognize the value of the success of the organization over his or her personal ego. Fullan (2008) provides an example of how moral courage can be applied in the real world of educational thought and discipline. Fullan (2008) encourages school leaders to become system leaders, people who work to improve the overall progress of a school district or regional area of schools. At first it would appear that this is a self-serving, self-promotional motivation; however, it falls under the

example of moral courage because it allows a leader to make decisions and provide direction that in the end can “help improve other schools” as a collective effort (Fullan, 2008, p. 56).

Criticisms of Authentic Leadership

One of the criticisms of authentic leadership has focused on the definition of being authentic. When one hears ‘be true to oneself’ they can sometimes make the wrong comparison of what makes an authentic leader, some criticisms along this line of thinking have included comparisons to Hitler, Osama Bin Laden and other harmful individuals “in the sense that they were consistently themselves” (Starratt, 2004, p. 70). Duignan and Bhindi (1997) refer to these individuals as following the flawed self which focuses on the darker side of human nature. These individuals demonstrate their values and beliefs in negative actions, which can bring about harm to individuals, groups or organizations. However, authentic leadership does not include using immoral actions to attain one’s moral goals (Starratt, 2004). According to Starratt (2004) it is important for an authentic leader to “act with the good of others in view” (p. 71). Although the criticism is legitimate in that it focuses on the negative nature of being true to oneself, it does not fully embrace the nature of what an authentic leader is supposed to represent.

Another criticism of authentic leadership is its focus on values. According to Freeman & Auster (2011), most individuals have a hard time defining or stating their values. Because of this, many critics argue that it is impossible to define a system of leadership that is completely focused on values. According to Hartman (1988) most of our values are not concrete identifiable objects; therefore, “unanswerable questions arise about whether we really hold this or that value... nobody is completely rational” (as cited by Freeman & Auster, 2011, p. 17). Because of

this ambiguity and the struggle for scientific study to measure the effects of values on the workplace, some individuals struggle to see the benefit of authentic leadership.

Other researchers have trouble with authentic leadership as a field of study because of it's a relatively new approach to studying leadership. According to Walumbwa et al. (2008) many researchers take fault with its "early stages of conceptual development" (p. 93). However, it has already been pointed out earlier in this paper that although the research in the field is relatively new, it is tied to many longstanding researchers in other fields of scientific and philosophical inquiry.

Conclusion

Authenticity within school leadership positions are needed. Integrity and people of passion are required to move schools forward in a progressive nature. This movement cannot be done alone; it must be done through the development of new leaders who take responsibility for their own influences within the school environment. Leaders need to connect and to have the moral courage to do what is right for the students and staff within their buildings. Although authentic leadership has some challenges and criticisms, those problems are much smaller than the strength and progressive nature that authentic leadership brings to the learning organization. According to Duignan (2014), "Authentic leaders help create the type of organizational cultures that value professional collaboration and collective responsibility in order to achieve high quality outcomes" (p. 166).

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