EDA 612: Change Leader Essay

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**This assignment requires you to respond to 2 of the 3 prompts below:**

**Prompt #1**

**In Chapter 1 Fullan argues that *“Practice Drives Theory”.* In other words, it is important for a leader to not just study others’ leadership theories from books, etc…, but rather to use one’s own practice and experience in order to arrive at one’s own theories on effective leadership. For your response, describe insights you have gained into leadership through experience and how these insights have impacted your practice and style as a leader. Include references from *Change Leader* in your response. Your response should be a minimum of 250 words.**

Fullan (2011) states, "What we see time and again is that theory and strategy . . . dominate practice and implementation . . ." It makes sense and perhaps offers a complete integration of practice when theory is understood first, to a certain degree, but the transition into practice would be latent and often impractical in certain contexts. The concept that "practice drives theory" is interesting since it is actually how the brain conceptualizes ideas into application. It is usually thought to be the opposite; however, though it is quite pertinent to eventually understand the why driven by theory, the dynamic relationship between practical experience and theoretical understanding is first understood by procedural knowledge then declarative. Personally, theory is very important to understand the original context and nuances that validate the viability of the theory, but being thrown into impromptu leadership roles that no book or manual can adequately prepare, well, this is part of the game of “fake it till you make it.” This is why reflection and 3rd-party feedback can provide clarity and refinement that drives evaluative practice.

Fullan states,"The source of creative breakthroughs, then, is learning about and from practice, not theory.” However, there needs to be a heightened awareness that the theory is not to be undervalued since the practice is underway. It is fundamental to the integrity of practice and the provision of the fidelity of resources once the leader can truly understand the practice encapsulated in theoretical boundaries dictated by the original experiment prior to generalization. It’s as if the theory hints at the law that drives the event, some form of causal or, at least, correlative marriage.

 **Prompt #2**

**In Chapter 2 Fullan gives several examples of the importance of leaders *“Being Resolute While Also Showing Empathy”*. In two of the examples, he describes leaders who were both resolute and empathic (Isadore Sharp of the Four Seasons Hotel and Arctic Explorer Ernest Shackelton). He also provides an example of a leader who was resolute, but not empathic (Michelle Rhee of the District of Columbia Public Schools). For your response, write about how you demonstrate these two qualities as a leader. In addition, share some of your experiences working with leaders who were both resolute and empathic and/or leaders who lacked one or both of these qualities. Include references from *Change Leader* in your response. Your response should be a minimum of 250 words.**

Michael Fullan states, “Effective change' leaders combine resolute moral purpose with impressive empathy." The complexity between being strong, confident, or resolute and showing empathy seems reminiscent of Machiavelli’s fear or love conundrum. As educational leaders, being resolved suggests firmness, determination, or confidence in adopting protocol, refining curricula adoptions, and unwavering in fiscal allocations. For example, presently there is a significant budget restraint that will require firmness in leadership to make hard decisions affecting personnel and instructional resources. My supervisor is not one for building relationships nor communicating an empathetic tone. This has been very difficult and demoralizing while the budget waits for final numbers and people’s livelihoods weigh in the balance. My supervisor has said quite a few times the stoic phrase, “it’s not personal, it’s business” approach, but, in education, it’s inherently personal. This is the empathetic inclination that some of my fellow administrators seem to lack. It’s perplexing to listen and watch leaders make decisions without beginning the conversation about how it will affect the individual–these same individuals we call “family” from time to time. Personally, it is clear that the education profession requires relationships that are authentic, that are caring when times are complicated.

Fullan emphasizes the importance of resolute leadership in driving meaningful change, stating, "The more ambitious the goals, the more need for strong, unwavering leadership." A clear vision complemented with unwavering commitment seems perfect in a for-profit context; however, as stated, the educational context is fundamentally relationship-driven, requiring a practice to theory that is fundamentally non-authoritarian or insensitive since our quota are the hearts and minds of children and those who serve them. This social-martyrdom of the educator requires a keen and consistent acknowledgement of the full ecology of the learner and the worker. This approach is my base-philosophy in leadership. If I don’t have people’s trust, I have nothing. I might get results, but the intrinsic value has to be nurtured, protected for reciprocity and longevity. I am definitely practicing extra care right now since the budget is a source of contention. Checking in with personnel and and being honest and transparent with numbers that may lead to displacement or termination is a very demoralizing context.

Even if the result is positive or profitable, if the aftermath leaves an untrust or lack of sincerity that does not accommodate the stakeholders on an emotional or healthy psychological level, the culture and climate of the school, often quite abstract, is damaged with difficulty to repair. Culture/climate seems to be such an intangible, but it is concretely felt with hard to identify variables that have led to the negative “vibe’ or “tone” of the school. You can measure these factors in a School Experience Survey that might provide indicators that lead to the overall health of the climate, but these indicators are more effects of the hard to identify causes. Empathetic maintenance will require consistency and incremental trust that will need to be fostered and protected. It is a leader's critical role in building trust, fostering collaboration, and engaging stakeholders in achieving the objective, the vision. Effective leaders should be determined to be resolute in demonstrating empathy, cultivating a culture that actively listens to concerns, acknowledges emotions, and addresses the needs of its constituents.

References

Fullan, M. (2011). Change leader: learning to do what's mattersmost. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.