

Analysis Paper #1

Chapter 2 Leadership Case Analysis

“Leadership Responsive to Early Childhood Education: Not the Least of These”

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CHAPTER 2 LEADERSHIP CASE ANALYSIS

Summary of Chapter 2 Leadership Case

During a routine check-in with teachers at the Mountain View Center for Infants and Young Children, Sophia, the school director, recognized a significant need to confront stereotypical teaching practices after coming across bulletin boards with cut-out pictures of infants in the bodies of Pilgrims and Indians. After viewing the teachers' attempted display of a 'cheerful' and 'collaborative' Thanksgiving feast, Sophia felt it important to re-assess her role in enabling color-blind teaching and racial inequality in the preschool. As a leader, she knew that it was critical for her to understand and acknowledge the teachers' perspectives before she could implement change in current teaching practices.

In analyzing the source of the problem, Sophia learned that although there are children of African American, Asian Pacific Island, Latin, and East Indian descent attending the preschool, teachers at the center, who come from primarily of White and European descent, faced discomfort in addressing topics that involve race, culture, or linguistics. Additionally, the teachers believed that it is unnecessary to teach infants and children social justice topics in the preschool setting. Sophia also discovered that the teachers NAEYC accreditation portfolios lacked evidence of diverse teaching practices and interaction with parents.

To bring light to this pivotal issue, Sophia spoke to the Anti-Defamation League to facilitate professional training and to gain teachers' feedback on the Thanksgiving displays at the preschool. After teachers realized how the images lacked cultural sensitivity to the genocide and colonization that occurred within Native Nations, Sophia facilitated critical conversation to address exclusionary practices at the center such as the use of racial slurs at the playground and the 'brown egg-white egg' experiment. Sophia's leadership practice and call for change urged teachers to see the world through the lens of their students (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2011).

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Applied Critical Leadership in Practice

As the center director, Sophia utilized Applied Critical Leadership by using transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory to advance issues in diversity and to interrupt the status quo. First, she engaged in transformational leadership by identifying her privilege as an Ivy League graduate in the U.S. and how this advantage made her more favored than her non-English speaking relatives with dark-brown skin. She also used her identity as a child of working-class Italian and Australian immigrants to serve as an ally to oppressed groups and to put education at the forefront of her leadership practice. She was not only intentional in developing respectful relationships with families, but she encouraged them to reveal their identity and culture through activities such as the 'I love you' world felt board map.

Next, she engaged in critical pedagogy by identifying the shortcomings of the NAEYC accreditation process and raising critical consciousness of color-blind teaching. She also committed to understanding teachers' apprehension toward social justice topics and aimed to promote a moral and ethical obligation to advance equitable practices in early childhood. To combat willful blindness and racial and cultural stereotypes, she emphasized the need to address racial slurs at the center. By encouraging meaningful dialogue, Sophia motivated her participants to effectively seek out change.

Lastly, Sophia practiced critical race theory by promoting a critical understanding of discrimination and stereotypes happening at the preschool stage. She recognized gaps in knowledge regarding diversity instruction and confronted teachers' implicit biases to create opportunities for multicultural understanding. She developed interest convergence by helping teachers see racism and empowered them to understand critical issues that affect their learners. As a leader, Sophia demonstrated applied critical leadership by reflecting on her privilege,

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listening to the needs of her targeted group, facilitating instruction, and transforming thought processes into action.

Thesis Statement

While Sophia demonstrated leadership that aligned with the principles of the Leadership Challenge Model and Servant Leadership, she did not provide evidence of exploring students' feelings and reactions which is pivotal to successfully demonstrating Emotionally Intelligent Leadership. On one hand, Sophia improved follower motivation, performance, and organizational commitment by using the Leadership Challenge Model and Servant Leadership. On the other hand, she failed to analyze students' perspectives regarding the subject, leaving out an important component of discovering the direct effect of color-blind teaching.

In this Analysis, I will begin by describing how Sophia demonstrated five universal principles that are central to the Leadership Challenge Model. I will then connect Sophia's leadership style with Servant Leadership to demonstrate how she put the people's needs first. Next, I will describe how Sophia's case lacked critical information when it came to exploring students' emotions, a key facet in the theory of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership. I will conclude my essay by describing the strengths and weaknesses of Sophia's leadership style while highlighting her areas of improvement.

Theory #1 Analysis - The Leadership Challenge Model

Sophia understood that for her to gain credibility as a leader, she must pave the path for her followers to believe in her by modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart, as described in the Leadership Challenge Model. First, Sophia modeled the way by looking at the world through the eyes and ears of others. She aligned her actions as a leader to meet the values and needs of her followers.

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By viewing leadership through a different lens, she aimed to transform into the leader her followers needed. Next, Sophia inspired a shared vision by shedding light on the negative stereotypes children are exposed to in their early years. Through critical conversations about cultural misrepresentations at the center, she gained the attention and commitment of her targeted audience. Moreover, Sophia challenged the process and searched for innovative ways to improve her leadership ability. She reflected on her personal identity and privilege to identify how beneficial treatment towards her might have resulted in injustice towards others in the past. She also confronted injustice in the present by addressing the damaging effects of racial slurs and color-blind teaching.

Furthermore, Sophia saw value in strengthening relationships before assembling others to act. By placing her power aside and aiming to develop rapport with the teachers, she was able to help them recognize their biases and understand their role in culturally relevant practice. She not only encouraged collaboration, but she helped the teachers rise above their personal interests to meet the goals of the group. Through her leadership, teachers began to recognize diversity as a strength while realizing why it is critical to embed multicultural education into teaching practice. Finally, Sophia lifted the spirits of the teaching community by creating a safe space for teachers to openly reflect on their own pedagogy and practice. She strived to ensure that lobbies, work areas, and break rooms are transformed into spaces where teachers can engage in self-reflection and where they can recognize opportunities for growth.

Theory #2 Analysis - Servant Leadership

Aligned with servant leadership, Sophia understood the need to put the people first and act in the best interest of those she serves. Her personal commitment to education shaped her moral imperative and helped her put aside her position of power and self-serving

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motives for the sake of creating opportunities for educational equity. She moved beyond the managerial role to develop her followers' commitment level and to advance values and ethics in the workplace. For example, instead of immediately addressing the teachers after seeing the Thanksgiving bulletin board display or hearing about the brown-egg-white experiment, she paused to reflect and discover the learning gaps in the teaching community to better understand how she can best be of service. She stopped to think before acting, to ensure that she is considerate of both the teachers' viewpoints and the diverse needs of the learners at the school. She made a conscious effort to put the people as her highest priority, knowing that her leadership is only as effective as much as her followers believe it to be.

In addition, Sophia believed social responsibility to be a core tenet in her life's work. She was driven to improve diversity training to promote social justice and education equity. As seen in servant leadership, this requires knowledge of the environment in which leadership unfolds, to best understand how to resolve problems while demonstrating genuine concern for the community. Positioning access to education at the forefront of her practice, Sophia strived to make an allegiance and form strong bonds with the people she aimed to serve. She made efforts to get to know the students attending the center by creating a felt board map of the world and encouraging parents and families to place a card on the country they identify with the most to recognize the different cultures present at the center. This inclusive practice not only promoted cultural awareness but helped align teaching philosophy and practice with the diversified needs of the students attending the school.

Theory #3 Analysis - Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

Although Sophia had students' best interests in mind when reflecting on how to navigate through current challenges at the preschool, the leadership case failed to describe both

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students' perspectives and emotions which are deemed important in Emotionally Intelligent Leadership. After reading the case, it was hard to understand how deeply students were affected by the ongoing negative stereotypes at the school since the case lacked personal testimonials from students. Without identifying the emotions that arose from the disturbing Thanksgiving displays, we are unable to clearly identify the gravity of the situation and how critical it is to change current practices in a time-sensitive manner.

To develop a shared purpose for the benefit of the targeted group, Sophia needed to be emotionally in tune with students to best understand how to resolve conflict and facilitate change. She could have improved her leadership practice by forming a bond with students, not just teachers. From the details of this case, we are not given enough evidence of the negative consequences of color-blind teaching due to the lack of detail of intentional interactions with students. To improve group dynamics, Sophia needed to pay attention to students' personal experiences as suggested in Emotionally Intelligent Leadership.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sophia's actions were influenced by her desire to serve and promote equitable outcomes for her preschool. She strengthened her relationships with teachers to gain their commitment and trust, as well as to advance culturally sensitive teaching practices. Although it was often overwhelming for Sophia to tackle this issue alone, she persisted for she believed it important to continue to have critical conversations in day-to-day interactions. Conversely, while Sophia succeeded in serving the interests of teachers, she could have improved her leadership ability by providing evidence of being attentive to the emotions and personal experiences of the students attending her preschool.

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Reference

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