

PSYCHODYNAMICS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

By



Dr. Francis Veye fms, PhD

ABSTRACT

In recent times, leadership has been touted as a key determinant of organizational performance. Ideas on effective leadership are fronted in conferences, workshops, webinars and lecture halls. The ideological *agora* is awash in theories of and approaches to leadership that are presented as magic wands for effective leadership. Yet, in spite of the sea of ink spilled on the leadership discourse, societies continue to reel under the burden of poor leadership. There is a marked leadership deficit in the world today as global leaders spend their energies pushing sectarian interests that risk tearing the global community asunder.

This book argues that unless leaders pay attention to the ‘inner theatre’ – the psychological script on the basis of which they act – all the leadership discourse will amount to nothing more than sound and fury signifying nothing. The psychodynamic framework of leadership invites leaders to take the road less travelled, the journey toward the interior, in order to discover the unconscious desires and fears that orient their attitude and motivate their action as persons and as leaders. The book applies psychodynamics to educational leadership. It argues that school leaders have the primary responsibility to lead staff and students

toward their own interiority, for any voyage of discovery has to culminate in the discovery of the self. The book tackles concrete problems facing principals in schools today: lack of motivation on the part of teachers and support staff, negative ethnicity, religious discrimination, lack of human and financial resources, political interference, moonlighting and disruptive psychological contracts, among many others. On the basis of psychodynamics and various leadership theories, the book offers suggestions as to how these challenges can be addressed. The book also observes that leadership is inextricably understood and exercised within a cultural matrix. It is important, therefore, to inculcate educational leadership. Further, the school community is also identified as a strategic institution for advancing the cause of environmental stewardship. Practical suggestions to that effect are also proffered.



Graduation Photos AIU 17th October 2019, Florida, USA.

PSYCHODYNAMICS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Dr. Francis Verve fms, PhD

PRÉCIS OF THE BOOK

Dr. Verve, author of *Psychodynamics in School Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities*, has distinguished himself as a relevant and inspirational scholar by doing cutting-edge research in the new frontier of the challenging educational area of leadership in schools. Today, there is much discussion on quality

leadership and transformative administration for excellent teaching and learning in institutions of education. However, there are many leadership gaps and deficiencies in our schools. Such deficiencies create a disconnect between life in schools and life on the ground. There is need to address such issues of leadership in schools for the common good. Renewal and transformation of leadership in any organisation, including a school, is fundamental to the realisation of its mission. Isocrates (436-388 BC) noted long ago that educational leadership is a great tool for connecting the truth and discipline to the real life of the past, the present and future of humanity.

As countries in Africa and beyond strive to revisit education policies and systems so as to motivate teachers and to provide holistic care to the students, quality school leadership is high on educational policy and implementation agendas. *Psychodynamics in School Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities* offers a practical contribution to addressing the key challenges of educational leadership as stipulated by Patristic Education. Leadership in schools today often experiences the following ‘tensions’: (i) Religion versus materialism; (ii) Divine Wisdom versus secular knowledge; (iii) Vocation versus professional/career; (iv) Spiritual values versus exterior framework; (v) Common good versus individual rights; (vi) Loving care versus constitutional rules; (vii) Integrity versus corruption (viii) Rhetoric versus reality; (ix) Shepherding service versus economic prosperity; (x) Long-term versus short-term perspectives; (xi) Witness versus structures; (xii) Divine destiny versus world destiny.

Focusing on transformative leadership and school improvement, much of the research, conversation and literature on the subject stresses the need for clear, effective and strong leadership and management in schools. This mission of transformative leadership in schools can succeed in realizing holistic development in Africa

and beyond if it considers Divine Wisdom and ethical values as the basis of its vision, ethos and mission.

The book is comprised of a preamble and nine chapters. In the preamble the author sets the tone by defining leadership and highlighting its importance in educational institutions. Chapter 1 unravels the psychodynamic framework of leadership, articulating key concepts such as the inner theatre, the motivational need systems, and leader-follower relation. Using this framework, the author impresses upon the reader that a significant number of problems faced by institutions originate from these three areas. Self-knowledge is therefore a key ingredient to a healthy leader-follower relationship.

Chapter 2 presents leadership approaches, theories and styles. Among the theories are the following: instructional, transformational, distributed, entrepreneurial, and servant-leadership. Leadership styles include autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. Verve shows how, depending on the leader's discernment, each one of them can be applied to the educational leadership context.

In chapter 3, the reader is taken through the contours of the historical evolution of educational leadership, from the Greek education system all the way to the 21st century. In this chapter, the reader will encounter the Greek *paidonomos*, the English monitorial system, and the German *Volksschule*. The attentive reader will discern in this rich historical tapestry exemplifications of the various theories and styles of leadership presented in the preceding chapter.

The fourth chapter opens the application part of the book and addresses the thorny but poignant issue of staff motivation and performance management. Building on the motivational need systems of the psychodynamics framework, the author discusses

the importance of staff motivation and suggests various ways of keeping teachers and support staff enthusiastic about their job. The author observes that appraisal is an act of systematic evaluation of the performance of employees in order to understand their abilities for further development. It is an undisputable fact that each employee is “unique and unrepeatable.” The uniqueness of each individual should be taken into consideration when it comes to staff professional development. Their natural giftedness, talents, and natural abilities are assets that need to be nurtured and utilized appropriately. The writer has introduced Johari Window as an approach that can aid the appraisal process.



On the left is Dr. Francis Verve framed by Dr. Franklin Valcin, President and Academic Dean, AIU.

Chapter 5 tackles various challenges and controversies besetting educational institutions. Political and community interference, lack of resources (both human and financial), negative ethnicity, and teachers' moonlighting are among the key challenges. For

each challenge or controversy, the book investigates possible causes and proffers a solution.

In chapter 6, the question of environmental stewardship is expertly addressed, making reference to philosophical and psychological factors underlying the current antagonistic relationship between the human community and the rest of creation. The book argues that it is incumbent upon educational leaders to initiate and support processes that transform the way human beings relate to the environment.

Leadership is understood differently in different cultures. The interplay between culture and leadership is discussed in chapter 7. Drawing upon global cultural research, the author presents various cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions make the complex phenomenon of culture more observable and measurable. Educational leaders are called upon to be aware of these different perspectives so as to exercise their leadership roles more effectively.

Chapter 8 tackles the complex question of globalisation. The author notes that the current trend of globalisation consists in information flowing from the developed world to the developing world. Africans travel to the West to obtain first-class education. Thus, the current version of globalisation practically amounts to Westernisation. To reverse this trend, educational leaders in the developing world are invited, among other things, to create and strengthen research institutions so that world-class research information can also come from the developing world.

The last chapter offers twelve pointed practical recommendations. It also functions as a synthesis of the preceding chapters. In Asian traditions, the number nine is regarded as a symbol of completeness and perfection. Buddha, the Enlightened One, was

also believed to possess nine virtues. It is my hope that these nine chapters will greatly enlighten the reader.

Rev. Prof. Clement Majawa

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), 2020

