Chapter 9: Leadership Is an Affair of the Heart

This final chapter acknowledges that there is more to a leader than research and data, programs and goals, facts and figures (p. 193). DuFour and Marzano explore the relationship and cultural development side of leadership as they note that all leaders who are concerned about results and improving achievement engage others through emotional attachment. The difference is a leader managing a building with global goals and systems, structures and goals while Sergiovanni (2007) notes that:

When we talk about the stuff of culture, the essence of values and beliefs, the expression of needs, purposes, and desires of people, and about the sources of deep satisfaction in the form of meaning and significance, we are talking about the lifeworld of schools and of parents, teachers, and students. (p. 148)

The lifeworld is the most crucial aspect to leadership as we are leading people and nurturing lives. Numerous researchers are cited spanning 20 years where the importance of culture is emphasized and the social-emotional side of leadership is identified by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee as the “most important act of leadership” (as cited in DuFour and Marzano, 2011, p. 193). Quick case study overviews are provided revealing multiple leaders and stories of their successes when culture was the focus, and recognizing the importance of connecting to people was fundamental.

Dale’s Cone of Learning or the Learning Pyramid however misconstrued (Benjes-Small, 2014); speculates that learning and retention will improve with increased engagement. This is more appropriately reinforced in terms of universal design for learning research and is something that all teachers can attest. Whatever the cone may have been or be, it tells us that we will remember far more based on levels of active involvement from receiving to participating and doing. I would suggest that another level needs to be added for improved leaning through active emotional engagement. This is not an amazing revelation. It simply reaffirms what DuFour and Marzano (2011) are challenging leaders to be with their concluding words, if I may be so bold:

Don’t ask if you are leading. You are. Don’t ask if you will make a difference. You will. The question is, “What kind of leader will you be, and what kind of difference will you make?” Will you approach your work as a calling or a job? Will you love those you serve or demean them? Will you translate your convictions into purposeful action and challenging goals or settle for the nobleness of your good intentions? Will you continue to learn how to be more effective, or will you be satisfied that you know enough? … Will you constantly remind those your hope to influence of the significance of the work they do and challenge
them to do it well, or will you settle for mediocrity? … May you choose to be a servant leader, and in making that choice, may you develop the capacity of those you serve to carry on your legacy by becoming servant leaders themselves. (208)

I couldn’t have said it better myself.