

Book Review

Michael T. Buchanan (ed.), *Leadership and Religious Schools: International Perspectives and Challenges*. Bloomsbury Academic, New York, 2013, pp. 224, ISBN 978-1-4411-7297-6 (hbk).

Leaders in religious schools need to lead the educational agenda of their school whilst fostering the identity and culture of their religious tradition, and not just as an add-on but as an integrated part of their school's mission. This is the underlying assumption of this volume *Leadership and Religious Schools*. Michael Buchanan is a senior lecturer at Australian Catholic University, and as editor has drawn together eleven Australian and international writers, from Muslim, Jewish and Christian (mainly Roman Catholic) backgrounds, to contribute eleven chapters on themes and case studies of religious school leadership.

The writers communicate a high view of education and school leadership, and particularly the importance of a distinctly religious school leadership. Buchanan argues school leaders are centrally important in helping transform schools to be places of quality student learning. He explains religious school leaders exercise six dimensions of effective leadership—religious, faith, spiritual, ministerial, educational and curriculum leadership. A Principal may add staff to complement different aspects of these areas, but also needs to understand the different spheres him or herself. The other contributors to the volume explore different aspects of these dimensions, starting with two chapters of values-based perspectives.

Adrian-Mario Gellel explores some challenges of globalization through education anchored in Christian anthropology. The Reformation brought an affirmation of ordinary life and the importance of authenticity and being true to one's self. Christian tradition and more recent international movements for human rights assert the universal right of mass education, but this should not just be for utilitarian economic reasons but because of a high view of the human person and dignity. This is an example of a value religious schools need proudly to hold on to, and also share with the broader sector.

Mario O. D'Souza stresses the importance of human identity and argues we should not let multicultural diversity miniaturise the citizen and fragment society, but that religious school leaders can and ought to encourage religious identities and relate them to citizenship and the common good. A globalised education can be linked to social justice and environmental concern. It also links to realising the common good, an idea associated with Thomistic philosophy that remains relevant in culturally pluralistic and diverse contexts. Religious school leaders can articulate what the common good is from their perspective, and also expound how it serves others outside their tradition.

There are three case studies of leaders working within local socio-cultural-political environments. Petro du Preez discusses education in human rights and in encouraging students to draw on the riches of their religious tradition, at least for fostering respect and sensitisation for others and as well for some social activism.

Pauline Kollantai and Yaacov Yablon explore how peace education can function in multifaith contexts, not just to avoid conflict but to foster cultures of peace. Kollantai discusses schools as inclusive learning communities in Bosnia, with an optimistic view of their capacity to move beyond ethno-national-religious fundamentalism. Yablon encourages scaffolded contact between members of conflicting Jewish and Muslim student groups in Israel.

The final four chapters explore general issues of leadership. Julian Stern analyses inclusion and exclusion among students, the exclusion and loneliness a leader can feel, and how healthy aloneness or solitude can be helpful for reflection and self-knowledge.

Shane Lavery tells how service learning can help foster service leadership for pre-service teachers. In a helpful taxonomy, Lavery asserts servant leadership is an important element for religious school leaders alongside the transactional, transformational and instructional leadership they exercise. Through analysis of student reflections and supervisor evaluations, he evaluates the effectiveness of the service-learning program at a Catholic School of Education. Service learning is a model that could also be used for in-service training and development. But at whatever stage, service learning requires structured opportunity for reflection and not just space for volunteerism.

Kath Engebretson details Taylor's position on secularisation and argues teachers need to accommodate and critique it. In this, she suggests we can learn from Matteo Ricci's inculturation of the gospel in China as he linked Confucian culture with Christianity and respected Chinese ancestral rites rather than writing them off as incompatible with Christian faith. She advocates the practice of 'faithful presence within' rather than being defensive about or antagonistic towards secular culture.

Finally Mushin Caonbolat, Ismail Albayrak and Kath Engebretson discuss the vision of Muslim educational scholar Fethullah Gulen and the characteristics of his Hizmet (Service) schools: honesty, sincerity, love of humanity, service, accepting difference, enculturation and interreligious dialogue. Gulen advocates deep learning that will 'give brightness to the mind and a wing to the soul' (p. 189) by integrating spirituality with intellectual development, mind with heart and science alongside religion. These schools encourage dialogue and tolerance, and prioritise strong relationships with parents and community groups.

This reviewer would have been interested in also reading contributions from educationalists of Protestant Christian and other religious perspectives. There was some reference to spiritual leadership and the importance of solitude, but I would have been fascinated to read reflections on the place of religious practices and disciplines in teacher and student formation. I would also have been interested to see discussion of the place of the nexus between schools and their sponsoring religious communities including local congregations—an important part of broader community connections and stakeholder relationships for religious school leaders. Perhaps these are topics for other chapters or articles.

Nevertheless, this is a useful volume for school leaders or researchers and those interested in best practice of school leadership, especially from a religious and international perspective.

Darren Cronshaw

Australian College of Ministries, Sydney College of Divinity