Serving and leading in schools
A discussion of leadership models and how Australian school communities can benefit

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> *You no longer have the right to choose whom, when and how you serve*

History portrays leaders as people of great power, charisma and prestige. Winston Churchill or George Washington could easily exemplify these types of traits. Servants, on the other hand, are portrayed as obsequious, obedient and lacking in initiative. In recent times, a new style of leadership has emerged that appears at first to be contradictory. It is characterised by elements of listening rather than commanding, empathy rather than stoicism, awareness rather than ignorance and persuasion rather than force. Robert Greenleaf, the pioneer of servant leadership, describes this style of leadership as one where serving comes first and where you strive to meet the needs of others before your own (Greenleaf, 1977 cited in Frick & Spears, 1996).

Spears (1995, cited in Kelly, 2006) summarised servant leadership by suggesting that servant leaders enhance the personal growth of organisation members and improve the organisation through many factors such as teamwork, shared decision making, and ethical, caring behaviour. In 1998, Spears went on to identify ten characteristics of servant leadership; these can be seen in Table 1.

Another model, first developed by Depree in 1993, described leadership as servanthood. In this case, leadership means giving up your own rights (Sharpe 2000). The characteristics of servanthood are shown in Table 1.

One can see there is some overlap between the two sets of characteristics, moreover, there are obvious links to both the heart of Christianity and Christian leadership.

While the servant leadership model described by Greenleaf and Spears is a useful model, the servanthood model has been derived from the Biblical understanding of leadership, which encapsulates the idea that you no longer have the right to choose whom, when and how you serve (Foster, 1978 cited in Bradley, 1999). In Luke 22:42 we find an example of Jesus demonstrating the most extreme model of servanthood in His attitude, "not my will, but yours be done" and in His subsequent trial and crucifixion (Bradley, 1994 cited in Bradley, 1999).

Servanthood appears to transcend the concept of organisational servant leadership to encompass eternal servanthood to the leadership of God, thus requiring a higher commitment factor. However, the comparison is not clear-cut. Due to different interpretations of Greenleaf's work, there is considerable difficulty in defining servant leadership (Bradley 1999). While Greenleaf was not overt in his spiritual approach to servant leadership, it can be shown that his servant leadership principles are based on Biblical concepts (Flaniken, 2006; Hanna, 2006). In addition, Tucker (2006) suggests that servant leadership is the Christian leadership model of choice and that Greenleaf's idea of a servant leader who serves first has a divine example through Jesus Christ. Although it may appear that Greenleaf's model of servant leadership is less Christian in its orientation, both models can be shown to support Biblical principles, making them relevant to a discussion on Christian leadership.

Table 1: The characteristics of servant leadership and servanthood

Servant leadership Spears (1998, cited in Crippen, 2005)	Servanthood Depree (1993, cited in Sharpe, 2000)
good listener	integrity
empathetic	vulnerability
healer	discernment
keen sense of awareness	awareness of the human spirit
persuasive	courage
able to conceptualise	sense of humour
foresight	intellectual energy and curiosity
steward	respect for the future
committed to the growth of others	regard for the present
community builder	understanding of the past
	predictability
	breadth
	comfort with ambiguity
	presence

Schools as centres of serving leadership

The "virtuous" school is where people go beyond the call of duty, serving becomes the norm and is self-actualising (Sergiovanni, 1992 cited in Edwards, 1996). This serving transposes itself into the classroom and provides authentic modeling for students. In a school where administrative "ministering" occurs, a culture of service then envelopes the actions of all those in attendance, becoming self-perpetuating and reciprocating. The total package of parents, students, teachers and administrators all belonging to the "community of serving" enhances the richness of the service they give to each other and builds a dynamic fabric into the culture of the school.

Irrespective of whether you prefer servant leadership or servanthood, there is no doubt that schools are places where leadership is taught.

> Many teachers…have sufficient latitude in dealing with students that they could, on their own, help nurture the servant leader potential, which I believe, is latent to some degree in almost every young person. Could not many respected teachers speak those few words that might change the course of life, or give it new purpose? (Greenleaf 1977, p. 5)

The ultimate achievement of a serving school culture is having students involved in the community of servants as they embrace the value of serving and are able serve (Edwards, 1996). A significant correlation has been shown to exist between servant leadership of principals, school climate and student achievement (Kelly, 2006). Furthermore, when student leadership is expressive of servanthood, learning and academic performance are enhanced due to quality interpersonal processes (Edwards, 1996 cited in Kefford, 2001). When you look at it from a student outcomes perspective, there seems to be very good reasons for schools to promote leadership based on servanthood.

This type of culture relies on the relationships of the individuals at all levels and creates a sense of connectedness that is deep, overt and authentic. In the truest sense of the word, a family is formed, a collaborative community where serving becomes a natural by-product of relationships (Hill, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1996, cited in Kefford, 2001).

When a school community becomes purposeful in its approach to relationships and to building a serving community, it transforms the school from a "secular workplace to a sacred enterprise". (Sergiovanni, 1992 cited in Edwards, 1996). However, serving and relationship development that becomes an imposed experience rather than a natural process of community building can diminish the authenticity of this "sacred enterprise" (Hill, 1996).

Implications for Christian schools

A teacher has a unique opportunity to impact on the development of character and values in a student. While these concepts are generally not taught, they are "caught" by students through association with the teacher (Anderson, 1996). In Australia, "values education" has recently gained a prominence not enjoyed for many years via the introduction of a Federal Government initiative encouraging schools to promote values in their school communities (The National Framework, 2005).

The next step, I believe, is to examine the impact of leadership programs where values teaching is overt and explicit. There is a desperate need to understand what constitutes true leadership and to develop those attitudes, skills and characteristics in young people (Hawkes, 2005).

I believe that the ultimate leadership model is to be found in a leadership style that is based on serving. Positive correlations between participation in leadership programs and educational and personal development of the students were found in leadership programs in universities and colleges in America (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2001 cited in Tilstra, 2008).

Based on several previous studies, a framework for leadership programs has been developed. Exemplary leadership programs should have four common elements. These are:
- Theory and practice.
- Experiential education—this can take a number of forms, such as internships, campus leadership positions or community volunteering.
- Service learning—this appears to be the most effective type of experiential education.
- Guided and mandatory self-reflection.
- Additional contributing elements include: faculty involvement, student collaboration, development of critical thinking, character growth, ethical practice, vicarious learning and a multidisciplinary approach (Cress, et al., 2001 cited in Tilstra, 2008).

There are some obvious similarities between this framework for leadership programs and the servant leadership and servanthood models introduced in this discussion. Common elements include service, community, collaboration, and personal growth in character, ethics and critical thinking. Students that engage in these opportunities experience growth in personal and social values, motivation, academic achievement, civic responsibility, leadership skills, multicultural awareness, and understanding of leadership theories (Kinsley & McPherson, 1995, cited in Millar & Rieger, 2002; Tilstra, 2001). These types of outcomes transcend the classroom and develop learning, serving and leading communities.

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From my experience and after recent visits to schools with comprehensive embedded leadership programs, servant leadership and servanthood principles can be used in the development of programs.

The servant model of leadership is not new. The greatest example of this leadership style was Jesus Christ, yet educators face a challenge in trying to emulate this leadership style and develop it in their students. If we are to "be the change we want to see" (Ghandi), we need to start developing leaders whose potential to lead is derived from their capacity to serve. TEACH

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