

LEADERSHIP DISCUSSIONS:
Sergiovanni in Victoria

Welcome

This special edition of *Research eLert* takes a look at the work of Dr Thomas J. Sergiovanni following his recent visit to Australia. Dr Sergiovanni is an internationally recognised writer on educational leadership. His ideas and theories have helped to reshape understanding of how schools can operate successfully and how leaders can lead most effectively.

Dr Sergiovanni's work currently informs the work being undertaken by the Department around effective school leadership and capacity building. The new Principal Performance and Development process, in particular, incorporates Sergiovanni's framework on the five dimensions of leadership - Technical, Human, Educational, Cultural and Symbolic. The framework is being used as a means of exploring and reframing the complex challenges of transformational change and as a basis to design professional learning actions to strengthen more effective leadership practices.

I hope you find this special edition of *Research eLert* interesting and I look forward to any comments and feedback you have via email at research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Dr Dahle Suggett

Deputy Secretary

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Profile of Dr Thomas J. Sergiovanni



'Enabling teachers is an important aspect of value-added leadership; but more important than teacher empowerment, or for that matter than enabling principals or any other specific group, is enabling the school. It is principals, teachers, parents, and students together who will make the difference in the struggle for building quality schools.'

Thomas J. Sergiovanni, excerpt taken from his latest book *Strengthening the Heartbeat*

Thomas Sergiovanni is Lillian Radford Professor of Education and Administration and Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas. He is the author of a number of books, including *Moral Leadership* (1992), *Building Community in Schools* (1994), *Leadership for the Schoolhouse* (1996), *The Lifeworld of Leadership* (2000), *The Principals' Center* (2001), *Leadership: What's in it for Schools?* (2001), *Supervision: A Redefinition* (2002) and most recently, *Strengthening the Heartbeat* (2005).

He received his B.S. degree (1958) in elementary education from the State University of New York, Geneseo; his M.A. degree (1959) in educational administration from Teachers College, Columbia University; and his Ed.D degree (1966), also in educational administration, from the University of Rochester.

From 1958 to 1964, he was an elementary school teacher and science consultant in New York State and taught in the teacher education program at the State University of New York, Buffalo. In 1966, he began nineteen years on the faculty of educational administration at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where he chaired the department for seven years.

At Trinity University, Sergiovanni teaches in the school leadership program and in the five-year teacher education program. He is senior fellow at the Center for Education Leadership and the founding director of the Trinity Principals' Center. A former associate editor of *Educational Administration Quarterly*, he serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* and *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*.

Selected bibliography

The work of Thomas Sergiovanni explores the nature of successful leadership in schools. For Sergiovanni, learning and leadership are intrinsically linked to sustainable school improvement. The following summaries of some of his major publications from the last two decades provide a useful introduction to Sergiovanni's theories about building a strong school community through leadership.

Strengthening the Heartbeat: Leading and Learning Together in Schools

In *Strengthening the Heartbeat*, Sergiovanni demonstrates how a strong heartbeat is a school's best defence against the obstacles leaders face as they seek to improve schools. When leaders are able to strengthen the heartbeat of their school, they become stronger and more resilient. Strengthening the heartbeat of schools requires that we rethink what leadership is, how leadership works, what leadership's relationship is to learning, and why we need to practise both leadership and learning together. These qualities help leaders to share the burdens of leadership with others, to create collaborative cultures, and to be continuous learners. Sergiovanni explains how value-added leadership can empower teachers, build community, and provide competitive advantage. The prevailing strategy of value-added leadership is to rely on a school's existing strengths and to build capacity by developing a collaborative culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, by unveiling people's perceptions and recreating a shared vision about leadership, learning and culture, leaders can provide a coherent context within which leadership in schools can flourish.

T.J. Sergiovanni, 2005, Strengthening the Heartbeat: Leading and Learning Together in Schools, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

[Copies can be purchased through leading educational book stores.](#)

The Lifeworld of Leadership: Creating Culture, Community, and Personal Meaning in Our Schools

By giving meaning to the terms 'lifeworld' and 'systemsworld', Sergiovanni demonstrates what needs to be done to harness the capacity and spirit of local authority in order to achieve school improvement. For Sergiovanni, the lifeworld is the essence of hope and the systemsworld is the means by which to achieve hope. The culture of a school provides the framework for schools to build their character. Sergiovanni explains how the strength of a school's character is intrinsically linked to a school's effectiveness, of which local authority is a necessary ingredient. Community is central to the lifeworld of a school. Sergiovanni explores how the diversity that exists within society challenges notions of community based on shared commitments, ideas and values. In this context, the impact of standards of assessments on the lifeworlds of individual schools and local communities is challenged. Sergiovanni suggests how to craft a schooling system based on layered loyalties and shared accountabilities that builds on local initiatives and concerns without compromising the legitimate concerns and interests of the state and other stakeholders. The book proposes that professional standards of expertise, collegiality and professional norms; cultural shared values, goals, and ideas about pedagogy and relationships; and democratic social contracts and shared commitments to the common good are strategies that should be used to bring about changes to affect the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms.

T.J. Sergiovanni, 2000, The Lifeworld of Leadership: Creating Culture, Community, and Personal Meaning in Our Schools, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

[Copies can be purchased through leading educational book stores.](#)

Leadership for the Schoolhouse: How is it Different? Why is it Important?

By tracing the origins of traditional theories of leadership generally applied in the school, Sergiovanni debunks the popular notion that leadership theories can be imported from the corporate realm into schools. Rather he suggests that schools need to develop their own theories and practices about leadership that suit the culture of their individual schools. The image he proposes is that of leadership as pedagogy whereby both leaders and the school community strive for higher levels of commitment, effort and accountability. He argues that teacher development is central to a school's success. This development will be found when a

school's culture reflects a community committed to learning and inquiry. Sergiovanni provides a framework of ideas, together with examples, that teachers can use to help create a unique approach to leadership that can be adopted and applied to their school.

T.J. Sergiovanni, 1996, Leadership for the Schoolhouse: How is it Different? Why is it Important?, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

[Copies can be purchased through leading educational book stores.](#)

Building Community in Schools

For Sergiovanni, community is the most important factor in successful whole school transformation. This focus on community is universal, and its loss in contemporary culture has tragic consequences for many young people. Schools therefore play an important role in society by providing an alternative to the 'wild' communities that young people form in the absence of an 'authentic' community that they belong to. School leaders are integral to this process of creating and nurturing authentic community in schools. They do this by shifting their leadership practices so that they lead by 'being'; that is, through serving, following, and inviting others in the school community to share in the burdens of leadership. Schools can then become 'communities of mind', with shared ideas, ideals and purposes. In these kinds of communities, high quality relationships between all community members reflect the kinds of emotions also found in families, neighborhoods and other social organisations – the kind of communities that Sergiovanni fears are under threat. This book contains a number of case studies of schools that have successfully built communities of place, mind and kinship, and that have thus created extraordinary outcomes for their students. He also provides strategies for building community at both the conceptual and the practical day-to-day levels, both of which are essential for developing the kinds of communities that can lead to whole school transformation.

T.J. Sergiovanni, 1994, Building Community in Schools, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

[Copies can be purchased through leading educational book stores.](#)

Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement

Moral Leadership challenges traditional views of leadership as only consisting of forceful, top down direction, and argues that leadership needs to be reconceptualised in a way that 'accounts not only for the hand of leadership, but also for the head and heart'. In other words, leadership involves understanding that dimensions of human behaviour such as emotions, values, and connections with other people are powerful sources of motivation. Leadership, then, is about engaging others on these levels, and thus fostering a sense of collegiality among all the members of a school. These ideas of leadership cannot replace traditional leadership, but must be thought of as an expansion of the good management that is traditionally understood to constitute good leadership. Sergiovanni argues that by expanding leadership to encompass the human dimension through a public declaration of values and purpose, schools can be transformed into communities where teachers are self-managers and professionalism is held up as an ideal. When teachers and administrators are motivated by emotion and social bonds, guided by a professional ideal, and feel they are truly part of a community, the guiding principle is no longer 'what is rewarded gets done', but 'what is good gets done'.

T.J. Sergiovanni, 1992, Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

[Copies can be purchased through leading educational book stores.](#)

Reflections and Action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

- Which pieces of Sergiovanni's work would be worth tabling for professional reading in my workplace? How will I facilitate this?
- What are we currently doing that supports the research of Sergiovanni? Do we have strategies in place that would be worth sharing via the *Research eLert*?
- What new knowledge have I gained in the area of leadership? How can this learning be used to inform and support school/organizational transformation?
- What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?

Contributions and Feedback

- Do you know a leading educator, researcher or a research paper that would be worth including in *Research eLert*?
- Are you currently undertaking education research that you would like to share with our readers?
- Is there a particular topic or theme you would like *Research eLert* to cover?
- Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?
- Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve *Research eLert*?

If you answered yes to any of the above – then we'd love to hear from you.

Please forward your information, suggestions or comments to: research@edumail.vic.gov.au