

Part 1- Summarizing the Case

Sophia is the director of the Mountain View Center for Infants and Young Children (MVCIYC) in California. Sophia strives to create a community that provides inclusive education for all, focusing on educational equity and social justice for all of the students. She is the daughter of working-class Italian and Australian immigrants and a graduate of Ivy League schools; growing up on the East Coast she realized the privilege she possessed for “looking white” in America. After experiencing being treated differently because of the color of her skin, she realized that her privilege causes injustice for other people. Being an educational leader, Sophia is dedicated to creating change for her community at MVCIYC.

MVCIYC is a University Center with 120 enrolled students. These students are children of the faculty and students at the university, they are also children from the neighborhood. Mountain View students are mostly White from mainstream backgrounds but there are also students who are African American, Asian Pacific Island, Latino of Mexican Descent, and children of East Indian Descent. The twenty female teachers who work at MVCIYC were hired to reflect the diversity of the school community, but overall the majority of the teaching staff is White.

Sophia came to the conclusion that the teachers at MVCIYC do not feel the need to change their teaching practice to include the diverse needs of the school community. The majority of the teachers under her leadership feel uncomfortable addressing issues of racial, cultural, linguistic, or other diversity and believe it is a parent’s responsibility to value and teach this at home. On top of this, Sophia realized that the teachers created insensitive bulletin boards, insisted on “colorblind” teaching, created ignorant science experiments, and overheard racial

slurs on the playground. After realizing this was happening under her leadership, Sophia knew that she had to change her leadership practice.

Part 2- Summarizing the Santamarías' Analysis

Santamaría and Santamaría believe that Sophia demonstrates applied critical leadership at MVCIYC. Applied critical leadership is an umbrella term composed of transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory combined together. Firstly, Sophia demonstrates transformational leadership by using her own privilege to notice educational inequalities within her school community. She has experience and education on the topic of social justice, and she dedicates her work to creating a just environment for every student. Sophia looks through different lenses to see different perspectives and to spot inequalities that are overlooked by her faculty. Secondly, Sophia demonstrates critical pedagogy by focusing on moral and ethical decisions within her school. Sophia noticed that there were issues regarding social justice and equity for the students and families during the daily school experience. Instead of ignoring these issues, Sophia brainstorms and finds answers that could create change. Sophia researched and discovered outside sources that will help educate the teachers so she can help find solutions for the oppressed people within her community. Sophia focused on restructuring the teachers' ideas and beliefs to create change. Lastly, Sophia demonstrated critical race theory by challenging her teachers' beliefs about race and educational inequity. After reflecting, Sophia created opportunities for disrupting the injustice. She contacted the local Anti-Defamation League and invited them to come educate her staff. This training discussed and educated about critical conversations relating to race and other topics. In result, Sophia was able to create an environment that encourages critical conversations that discuss critical issues. Sophia is

dedicated to making changes at her school. However, it is not an easy thing to do, and sometimes people under this type of leadership do not always agree and adapt.

Part 3- Analyzing the Case Using Additional Leadership Theory

If you apply the Transformational Leadership Theory and the Adaptive Leadership Theory, Sophia looks like an effective leader. Through the Relational Leadership Model Theory, however, we start to see her shortcomings. Transformational Leadership is described as, “a mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents, the type of leadership that can produce social change” (Dugan, 2017, p. 183). Sophia demonstrates Transformational Leadership by exemplifying the four transformational factors. The first factor is Idealized Influence, when leaders act as role models, act consistently, and demonstrate ethical courage. From the case study, Sophia proved to model the appropriate behavior. An example is when she provided her staff with bulletin board examples that were all inclusive and showcased different races, languages, and cultures. Sophia acted consistently when she identified inequity in her community. She would stop, think, and act; then deliberately follow up with courageous conversation. She demonstrated ethical courage by pointing out the blind spots and created an environment for critical conversations. The next transformational factor is Inspirational Motivation, Sophia demonstrated this by providing meaning and challenge to her teachers’ daily practice. She challenged her staff by identifying the issue within their teaching practices and educating with new knowledge. The next factor is Intellectual Stimulation, Sophia did this by questioning, reframing problems, and approaching ideas and beliefs with new perspectives. She provided her staff with education and a safe environment for critical conversations. She also offered new insights and perspectives from outside sources. The last factor is Individualized Consideration, Sophia offered mentoring, coaching, and educational

opportunities for her staff. She created two-way communication by creating environments that were safe places for critical conversation. In result, some of her teachers did not transform into better educators, rather she ran into roadblocks that prohibited change. Grounded in her moral and ethical values, Sophia stayed committed to investing in her follower development.

The next theory that proves Sophia is an effective leader is the Adaptive Leadership Theory. Adaptive Leadership is described as, “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Dugan, 2017, p. 248). There are three key features within Adaptive Leadership; Authority Considerations, Technical and Adaptive Problem Solving, and Holding Environments. Within Authority Considerations, there are informal and formal authorities, I view Sophia as a formal authority because it is clear that she has the power and the right to direct others because of her role as director. Sophia chose to use the power she possesses to educate and leverage her followers; she educated and encouraged critical conversations that will increase the likelihood that the teachers will adapt. The next feature is Technical and Adaptive Problem Solving, technical problems are problems that can be easily resolved through authoritative responses. Adaptive challenges are problems and solutions that are unclear and require learning. Sophia’s case seems technical and adaptive, in which the problem is clear, but the solution is not clear and requires new learning. The problem is that the teachers do not recognize the need for changing their teaching practices, but the solution to this is not clear. Sophia tried to tackle this problem by modeling correct behavior, education, and critical conversations. The last feature is Holding Environments, which are “spaces formed by a network of relationships within which people can tackle tough, sometimes divisive questions without flying apart” (Dugan, 2017, p. 251). Sophia focused on creating safe environments within her school community that encouraged critical conversations about the issues within their school. These conversations and

environments can result in discomfort, but trust and cohesion hold these safe spaces together. Sophia is dedicated to challenging her teachers' practices within these holding environments. Sophia is challenged with teachers that do not value diversity and social justice within their community, because of this she is motivated to tackle tough challenges as a leader of MVCIYC. Sophia adapted her leadership style to support and mobilize her followers.

I start to see Sophia's shortcomings when using the Relational Leadership Model. The Relational Leadership Model focuses on relationships and argues that relationships are the key to effective leadership. The case study does not discuss the relationship between Sophia and her teachers but from the evidence of the case, it seems like the relationships were not particularly strong. The Relational Leadership Model is comprised of five core components; Purposeful, Inclusive, Empowering, Ethical, and Process Oriented. The Purposeful component is when leaders "commit to goals through collaborative approaches that identify common ground and a shared vision that can be clearly communicated to motivate collective action" (Dugan, 2017, p. 223). From the case it is evident that there was not a shared vision, rather Sophia believed in her own vision to create change at her school. The goal of creating a just environment was Sophia's goal and the teachers were not involved until the training started to happen. The Inclusive component is when leaders "engage the complexity of diverse perspectives, experiences, and social identities with a desire to understand, goal to expand equity, and willingness to involve external stakeholders" (Dugan, 2017, p. 224). Sophia's goal was to include multiple perspectives while creating a more just environment for her community, but from the case it states that Sophia made a lot of decisions on her own, for example contacting the Anti-Defamation League and inviting them to the school. The teachers did not share their diverse perspectives until the training began, Sophia should have created relationships with the teachers and then decided on

goals together. The next component is Empowering, which is described as encouraging other's involvement to lessen barriers and develop a complex understanding of power dynamics which cultivates trust. From the case, Sophia was trying to encourage critical conversations and safe spaces that increase collaboration, but from the case Sophia ran into roadblocks when she noticed that the majority of her teachers are unable to realize and share their shortcomings and are slow to change their practice. It seems like the relationship between Sophia and the teachers were not strong enough to create a safe place where critical conversations are shared. Maybe the teachers did not feel empowered to do so. The next component is Ethical, which is when group standards are focused on ethical and moral values that guide decision making and behaviors. Sophia was dedicated to her ethical and moral values that inspires her leadership, but these are not shared values of her staff. Sophia was using her beliefs to guide change, but her teachers continued to fail to acknowledge their biases and privilege, in turn Sophia questioned her own leadership. The last component is Process Oriented, which focuses on relational collaboration to "construct the processes of creating the group, developing and maintaining cohesion, and acting collaboratively to achieve mission driven goals" (Dugan, 2017, p. 224). From the case, there were multiple times when Sophia felt overwhelmed and alone, teachers were not on board and continued their color-blind teaching. Sophia has ethical and moral goals, ideas, and beliefs but they are not shared among her staff. Sophia was making change on her own without the collaboration of her teachers. There was no cohesion between Sophia and her staff which prohibits change from happening.

According to the Transformational Leadership Theory and the Adaptive Leadership Theory, Sophia is an effective leader. The Relational Leadership model proves some of Sophia's

shortcomings. If Sophia focused on building trusting relationships first and then collaboration, Sophia would be an all-around effective leader.

Works Cited

Dugan, J. (2017). *Leadership Theory Cultivating Critical Perspectives*. *Jossey-Bass*.

Santamaría, L. & Santamaría A. (2011). *Applied Critical Leadership in Education: Choosing Change*. *Routledge*.