



## Leadership Case Studies in Education

Northouse, Peter G.; and Lee, Marie E.  
Sage Publications, 2016

Book Review

Tags: administration | case studies | leadership

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Northouse and Lee adopt the definition of leadership put forth by Northouse in his influential textbook *Leadership Theory and Practice*: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (2). The co-authors state that the common goal of educators is “to create a safe place where students can effectively learn and grow” and so it follows that leadership – the process of influence – is central to the educators’ vocation (2). During the past one hundred and fifty years, researchers have offered multiple approaches to understand precisely how leadership works, and Lee and Northouse succinctly summarize various approaches and provide case studies based on actual situations in education to help readers to apply the theoretical concepts. Following their introduction, each of the remaining fifteen chapters in *Leadership Case Studies in Education* presents one theory for understanding leadership along with two case studies, one focused on K-12 and one in higher education.

The first half of the book generally parallels developments in leadership research in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, beginning with theories that hone in on the leader’s characteristics or actions (trait, skills, and behavior) and moving to theories that explain group processes (situational, path-goal, and leader-member exchange). Chapters eight through ten examine more recent descriptions of the qualities of a leader presenting transformational, authentic, and service leadership theories. These are followed by chapters on adaptive leadership, psychodynamic approach to understanding leadership, ethics, and team leadership. The book concludes with case studies that highlight the significance of gender and culture.

The sixteen higher education case studies cover a range of leadership positions. Three of the case studies feature a university president; six present situations faced by administrators or

staff working outside of academic affairs; one is about a student leader; and six focus on faculty. A set of six questions concludes each case study. The first three directly address the case study, while the second set connects the case study to Northouse's text.

Northouse and Lee wrote *Leadership Case Studies in Education* as a companion text to Northouse's *Leadership Theory and Practice*. The case study text offers compact summaries of each leadership theory, which are intended to serve primarily as review of the more thorough presentation and assessment in the main text. For example, in *Theory and Practice*, Northouse devotes thirteen pages to leader-member exchange theory, describing early and later studies, explaining how the theory works, presenting its strengths and limitations, and suggesting possible application. *Case Studies* condenses this to less than three pages.

Northouse and Lee write that their intended audience is "undergraduate and graduate classes in education and educational leadership," (ix) so it is not surprising that its usefulness to this audience may be limited. The case studies draw on real-life situations but are missing discussion and analysis. This may be a useful companion textbook for classes in educational leadership, but without the corresponding textbook *Leadership Case Studies in Education* misses an opportunity to influence readers outside the classroom in the common goal of improving education.

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