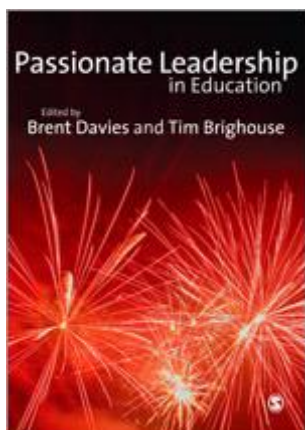


## Book Review



### **Passionate Leadership in Education**

Edited by Brent Davies and Tim Brighouse  
London: Sage Publications (2008).

Paperback £23.99 (ISBN: 9781412948623)

Hardcover £72.00 (ISBN: 9781412948616)

Ebook £29.79 (ISBN: 9780857026958)

Reviewed by **Steve Willoughby**

Brent Davies and Tim Brighouse are editors of the book *Passionate Leadership in Education*. Brent Davies is professor of Leadership Development at Hull University; Tim Brighouse is visiting professor at the Institute of Education, University of London. This book focuses on passionate leadership within education and suggests a necessary movement away from “the accountability culture... oppressive with targets and delivery of a ‘shallow learning’ to a ‘Deeper’ educational purpose and understanding”. In this book there is a move towards an emotional concept of leadership within education and particularly schools. The term ‘emotional leadership’ focuses on the professional stance and personal qualities of leaders rather than an external rationale. Successful Emotional leadership relies on the charisma of the Head teacher or principal.

Brent Davies’ introduction defines passionate leadership as “a passion for social justice; for learning and making a difference”. It goes on to briefly discuss the five sections of the book which include a focus on “core ideas about passionate teachers, leaders and schools” by Tim Brighouse. The second section centres directly on ‘Passionate Leadership’ with chapters from John Novak and Alan Flinham whereas the third section looks at “Research on passionate leadership”, with chapters from Christopher Day and Brent Davies. In the fourth section there is a consideration of “Passionate leadership - schools and teachers”, with chapters by John MacBeath and Andy Hargreaves. The fifth section centres on defining the work of passionate leaders and building a model for passionate leadership, with chapters from Geoff Southworth and Brian Caldwell. The five sections are followed by a conclusion chapter by Brent Davies with the sections allowing the exposition of a range of views on passionate leadership within education

There are a number of international contributors including John Novak who examines “Inviting passionate educational leadership”. Five myths are discussed, discarded and put aside to develop a clear focus on passionate leadership. The initial myth is “Passionate leadership is a good thing,” where the passion may not necessarily support client, professional or community aims; the second, “Passionate leadership is necessary to motivate people”. A third says that “Passionate leadership involves an unwarranted optimism”. The fourth is that “Passionate leadership is based on an authentic sense of certainty”. The final myth claims that “Passionate leadership begins with a positive attraction to something seen as good”. Similar to Novak I suggest that these myths give only a particular view of passionate leadership. For example, a Head-teacher’s view of passionate leadership may not be the same as for other members of staff - or pupils and their parents. Novak goes on in this chapter to discuss a useful theory of

practice to develop effective passionate leadership. Indeed, the terms passion/passionate and leadership are central to the book; for example, seven of the nine contributors use the terms in their chapter headings.

The originality of this book is its spotlight on passionate leadership in education where “the enhancement of human potential” is central. Editors and contributors begin with the premise of passion as the lever to turn belief into reality - vision into action. As an Educational Consultant of many years I agree that school vision requires clear and agreed actions to produce a new positive reality. The freshness and originality of the book gives an opening for those who are interested in developing passionate leadership within education and particularly their school.

I estimate that the impact of this book will be limited to the specialist audience of professional educationalists who are seriously considering leadership, or those who have a senior post in a school such as Head or Deputy Headship. The appeal may go wider but the editors tend to concentrate on those who hold senior posts. Hence the the focus on senior professional's passionate leadership may limit the book clientele; however, the spotlight on passionate leadership may resonate with wider academics and other professionals.

Strengths of the book include a clear position on ‘Passionate Leadership’, a range of contributions that are easy to read and consider and signposts for possible ways forward for leadership within schools. For example, Brian Caldwell talks about research on ‘Enchanted Leadership’ in schools and ways to develop this model. However, for me, a weakness of the book is the preoccupation with passionate leadership coming from the Head Teacher. For instance the Tim Brighouse chapter discusses the views of ten Head Teachers. I understand that the Head teacher and senior management team are central elements of school leadership systems; however, are there not other members of staff who take leadership on roles or tasks passionately and become forceful agents for cultural change within a school? As an Educational Consultant and researcher I have been aware of the wider leadership and influence of individual members of staff and also students within educational establishments.

I believe that the authors have opened a debate about the conceptualisation and practice of passionate leadership within education and particularly schools. It moves us from shallow accountability to a deeper sense of education. This is a starting point for further deliberation about the meaning of education particularly given the current economic and social climate.