

***John P. Portelli and Rosemary Campbell-Stephens,
Leading For Equity: The Investing In Diversity
Approach, Toronto, ON, Canada, Edphil Books,
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One of the reasons that many leaders feel disenfranchised from the whole process of leading anymore, is that their essence as leaders is not echoed in the organizations that they lead. They are reduced to being technocrats. Issues of social justice and equity are not central to leadership professional development and practices. These issues are still largely omitted despite the canon of equality legislations that places statutory duties on public authorities including education providers. In the current situation, a narrow set of leadership paradigms for increasingly diverse backgrounds is not sustainable. Promoting leaders in global education and schooling for equity and social justice is a very pressing issue, more than ever before. John P. Portelli and Rosemary Campbell-Stephens take up the challenge of not only demystifying the content and process of current leadership development programmes but to question the underlying principles and the extent to which they engage with the terrain that so many diverse educational leaders have to navigate themselves through.

Portelli and Campbell-Stephens offer a dialogue that was conducted over a series of meetings between the authors of the book, held between December 2007 and March 2008. The original conversations were audio-taped, transcribed and edited. Rather than writing a formal academic article, the authors preferred to investigate the topic at hand through dialogue. Although dialogue has to have a focus and purpose, it nonetheless allow for a freer flow of ideas and a meaningful flexibility, while providing the context for a thorough and genuine inquiry in the give and take of discussion and a variety of issues. The dialogue flows quite naturally and engages the readers in the topics discussed. Portelli, a university professor in Toronto, and Campbell-Stephens, a former school administrator in London and an educational leadership consultant in the U.K. provide a clear understanding of the values and beliefs underlying the 'Investing in Diversity Programme' – a programme developed by

Campbell-Stephens and offered through the London Institute of Education, University of London. This leadership preparation programme has had 1000 teachers complete it in London, doubling the number of Black Headteachers and other senior leaders in some London boroughs. The conversation provided also explores how the values and beliefs of the programme connect to central issues and authors in the literature on leadership, pedagogy, and equity and social justice. The dialogue offers also a strong justification for equity and social justice in leadership, and inspires educators to act on the basis of robust democratic values.

However, in my opinion, this conversation between Portelli and Campbell-Stephens is about much more than the professional development with that unusual name ‘Investing in Diversity’. *‘To give voice, to affirm and validate ourselves, was an act of empowerment for it takes consciousness to inform action to change the world...’*. This conversation redefines the function and purpose of education and schooling and holds up a mirror to the education system in general and its role in perpetuating structural disadvantage and the systematic omission of issues to do with ideology, discrimination, power, equity and the creation and validation of in-groups and out-groups not just in society generally but within the teaching profession itself.

Campbell-Stephens’ lived experiences are the point of departure for this engaging dialogue. In fact there was no need of transposing herself to some other remote environment to carry out her reflections but rather to re-think out her everyday life learning and experimenting with this diverse and exciting novelty. In a different country and continent, Portelli co-directs a Centre for Leadership and Diversity whilst engaging himself in national researches on diversity. In all these ways, cultural literate leadership is not unfamiliar to both authors. By exploring it more systematically in their conversations, the authors meant only to sharpen it, to make it more useful as a thinking tool. Articulating a familiar phenomenon gives us a chance to the authors (and the readers) to challenge their intuitions: to deepen and expand them, to examine and rethink them. In this sense, the conception of leadership diversity is thus neither new nor old for both authors. It has both the eye-opening character of novelty and the familiarity of a lived experience. These two latter ingredients

are stirred together in the course of this book in an ideal 'recipe' to generate narratives and insights into different paradigms of leadership in a diverse world.

Campbell-Stephens sustains that 'narrative' is her way of understanding experience. Her excitement and interest in narrative has its origins in her interest in experience. With narrative as her vintage point, Campbell-Stephens has a point of reference, a life and a ground to stand on for understanding what diversity in leadership is and for imagining how it might be studied and represented in her research texts. People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, re-affirm them, modify them and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Although international studies of school leadership paradigms have been carried out (Hopkins, 2001, 2005), this book offers a different and unique approach since the content is both contextual and particular. The concepts and emerging practical applications of this literature contribution are relevant for the global education system since the issues of diversity are currently the driving forces. This is indeed a critical time for education and for society in general. It is an age of rapid and far reaching changes in a multicultural world. The issues of inclusion, social justice and equity propagated by the narratives in this book are very much in line with actuality.

In charting the genesis and growth of the programme and situating it within the experience black and global majority communities and teachers have had of the schooling system and of the way that system reflects the institutionalised racism in British society, Campbell-Stephens raises critical issues about the mission and purpose of school leadership and the need to grow and develop new leaders and new leadership paradigms. In Part 1 of the book entitled 'Context and History of the Investing in Diversity Programme', Campbell-Stephens explains how the 'Investing in Diversity' (IiD) programme was designated first and foremost to develop black and global majority school leaders and managers and challenge the notion that their under-representation among the ranks of Head Teachers and principals in London Schools had to do with their lack of capacity to perform at that level of seniority or their failure to put themselves forward as candidates for headship. That diversity to have black and global majority leaders in schools was part of a more general

drive to promote diversity in senior management in the workforce of other public authorities such as the police, the health service, local government, the prison service and the civil service.

In Part 2, ‘Programme Content and Foundations’, Campbell-Stephens narrates how this approach to promoting diversity amounted to little more than being able to point to *‘different colours of wine gums or Smarties in the box’* as put by the author herself. It presupposed that these black and global majority managers would run the same organizations with the same culture, values and cultural assumptions and the same practices that had been experienced by so many black and global majority staff and service users as indifferent to their concerns and needs at best and discriminatory at worst. Campbell-Stephens explains in Part 2 of this book how the ‘Investing in Diversity Programme’ challenges all this.

In Part 3, ‘Investing in Diversity’, Campbell-Stephens explains how the Leadership Programme encourages the course members to examine the values they bring to teaching and to their leadership function and define how, against the background of their and their communities’ experience of the schooling system, they would reconfigure the leadership challenge so that they are able to make a difference because of who they are and the journey they have made. In a feminist perspective, Campbell-Stephens underlines her strong belief to Portelli that a citizen without a sense of self and a citizen who does not feel engaged and a citizen who keeps on feeling alienated and foreign, is not really a citizen. And that’s what, Campbell-Stephens and Portelli argue, mainstream thinking needs to understand – that there are different ways of conceiving a citizen. Or else, by definition, we’re going to keep reproducing the traditional marginalizations and alienations.

At this point, Campbell-Stephens identifies ‘Servant Leadership’ as the best concept of leadership that underpins the IiD position. Campbell-Stephens elaborates on the concept of ‘Servant Leadership’ which is given little mention in leadership circles and literature. Portelli reaffirms Campbell-Stephens contentions that the model of the heroic, usually one-man super head has no place within a servant leadership model which is more about seeing yourself as a leader within the community as opposed to a leader in one unit of that community called the school. Campbell-Stephens distinguishes very effectively in clear and

simple words the notion of servant leadership form other concepts of leadership as that concept that puts the notion of service before leadership....it prioritizes the people that you serve and their needs. It therefore positions the leaders as servant of those that they serve and it leads to a whole different way of thinking about our position within the community.

The reason for servant leadership, should be (as argued by Campbell-Stephens), among other things, to bring about equity, to bring about balance and to create space for human beings to be 'humans'. In Campbell-Stephens' words, arguments and explanations, I could feel a strong feminist post-structuralist approach that uses theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. Through a concept of discourse, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity by feminist poststructuralists (Weedon, 1997; Braidotti, 2002; Griffiths & Greene, 2003), Campbell-Stephens is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis to explain the workings of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyze the opportunities of resistance to it. In this perspective, Campbell-Stephens decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing power and subjectivity as socially produced in language, as sites of struggle and potential change. In cultural literate leadership, meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language, and language and power are not abstract systems, but are always socially and historically located in discourses. Power, according to Brooks (1997) represents political interests and in consequence is constantly vying for status. Campbell-Stephens (2002) outlines that the site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist.

In their principles and perspectives, Portelli and Campbell-Stephens have a particular concern for representation, power and voice. I consider the intensity of this concern in their dialogue as an important contribution to social justice oriented work. Throughout their research journey dialogue, the participants are particularly interested in the problematic nature of striving for social justice. Griffiths and Greene (2003) argue that it is easy to shy away from social justice work, which, in confronting the problems it raises, may provoke discomfort, 'working for social justice in never cosy....Here is a need to exercise constant

vigilance, together with a continuing willingness to dream the impossible. One way of doing this is regularly to ask some difficult questions about what is being done. This process might usefully be thought of as a self audit, which makes use of not the easy FAQs ('frequently asked questions'), but of QAFs ('questions to ask frequently')' (Griffiths, 2003:59:60).

The idea of QAFs, along with the warning that striving for social justice is never cosy, suggests an urging never to be satisfied, never to become complacent in how one acts in search of social justice. Portelli and Campbell-Stephens seek to resist the cosiness of the language of inclusion here. This suggests that empowerment is not understood as the possibility of the total effacement of power relations but as an ongoing struggle. Campbell Stephens emphasizes that not only should education be about activism but it should be about liberating people. If education is not about providing options and does not enable students to navigate their way through and, in some cases, rise above their circumstance, Campbell-Stephens says outright that it is not education.

In what I consider a feminist poststructuralist view, I read the focus of this book as centred on the 'individual' – on our 'little answers' (Griffiths & Greene, 2003), and on guiding action in service of 'social justice'. The concern is put on action and practice. 'A practical philosophy' is sought, therefore, concerned with 'using practice in shaping the explicit formulations of social justice perspective theories and then in turn using these explicit formulations to see what might best be done.' (Griffiths & Greene, 2003:9).

The search for 'contextual studies', the stories of the people involved and the representations evoked are intended to 'enable' the practitioner and challenge the traditional distinctions made between theory and practice. The reference to 'self-audit cited above, coupled with QAFs suggests a particular approach to improving the professional self in line with the difficulty and conflict that social justice issues pose, which involves constantly questioning and assessing the self in terms of seeking a particular conception of social justice.

Portelli makes a very important contribution to the dialogue on the issue when he puts into reflection the fact that currently leadership and social justice are not natural followers; nor are leadership and democracy. The extent to which leadership meshes with social

justice or democracy depends, Portelli claims, on the way in which leadership is conceived, that is, in the way that relationships are envisioned among members of institutions, and in the ends to which leadership activities are directed. In a changing challenging world, leadership literature requires Portelli's questioning and Campbell-Stephens' 'empowering' perspective. Leadership professional development should be very much interested in this discourse aimed to create the 'spaces' through leadership practices to 'see' differently, 'to break through the crust' (Greene & Griffiths, 2003).

These authors are arguing that the alternative to fixities, to reification, is seeing differently, by all means available. To continue to struggle for all this, for liberation in leadership, for social justice, is to continue to struggle to protect the spaces where people can come, to be. I consider the connections which relate leadership to feminism and social justice oriented work, as very important and original contributions. The book contributes less a theory or a set of theories but more a perspective, a lens, a handle on the domain of school leadership and its ideas, a way of acting and speaking. It is less a belief literature or factual writing, it is more a serious project of identification with real consequences. As someone in pursuit of a project, the authors originate their own undertakings, launch their own beginnings and articulate their own perceptions, ideas and purposes. Leadership is seen as a construction and the authors deconstruct the multiple meanings leadership developments have taken on or been given over time. The authors warn that the unquestioned concepts of leadership dealing with power, authority and control have been long avoided and clouded with age. We are being urged to rethink, to think differently: to use our imagination again.

That is why it would have been helpful for Campbell-Stephens to respond more fully to Portelli's comment about the challenges facing educators who claim to be educating with the aim of bringing about social justice and equity. If we are to develop and embed new leadership paradigms and empower leaders, teachers and students to act with 'moral purpose', we need to be particularly interested in altered conceptualizations of power relations in an era of change. The notion of 'becoming' developed most particularly in Rosi Braidotti's work can offer important insights to the development of this book's perspectives. Braidotti can elaborate Campbell Stephens insights by arguing that the point is not to know

who we are, but rather what, at last, we want to become, how to present mutations, changes and transformations, ‘rather than Being in the classical modes’ (Braidotti, 2002:24).

‘Becoming’ is defined by Braidotti (2002) as a question of undoing the structures of domination by careful, patient revisitations, re-adjustments and micro-changes. The feminist philosopher describes the process of ‘becoming’ as a long apprenticeship to minute transformation, through endless repetitions, that will replace the illusion of a royal road to the revolution or of one single point of resistance, and assert instead the constant flows of met(r)amorphoses (Braidotti, 2002:45). The implication of Braidotti’s ‘philosophy of becoming’ to leadership theory is that rather than one group or class being subservient to or beholden to another because of trait or status, relationships (very typical of feminist theorizing) prevail instead such that all members are able to arrive at new self understandings that empower them to ‘reduce their suffering by creating another way of life that is more fulfilling’ (Braidotti, 2006:204). What Braidotti proposes is a well articulated agenda (not without its limitations) of how those who are exploited can arrive at new levels of collective self understanding as a basis for action. The notion of becoming translated by Braidotti (1994:25) as ‘the will to know, the desire to say, the desire to speak, to think and to represent’ can liberate the educational leader from the ‘strings’ that tie her to one paradigm of leadership without giving her space to think, to explore, to take initiative, to act and to move in a wider frame.

In a wider perspective, the notion of leadership pursued in this dialogue, can be further developed by a ‘transformative’ perspective that rests on the assumption that, through assisting School Leaders to understand themselves and their world, it becomes possible for them to engage in the radical changes necessary for them to overcome the oppressive conditions that characterize work patterns and school relationships. Rather than knowledge being a means by which those in dominant positions acquire power and exert control over others, it becomes a means through which other people or themselves (or both) are able to arrive at self-understanding and self-awareness of the conditions that disable them. Knowledge becomes the means by which leaders come to identify their social and institutional constraints, and work at changing them. This book is working towards transforming the dominant and controlling concept of ‘patriarchal’ leadership discussed in

Part 1 of this book, to an empowering concept of leadership that flourishes in a democratic and socially just educational environments conducive to growth.

Very much in line with actuality, the Portelli/Campbell-Stephens conversation is a ‘must read’ for School Leaders, teachers, policy makers and particularly, parents and students. For social justice, we need children who grow up to have the attitudes or dispositions to speak up, act up and contribute rather than get their perspectives smoothed out in consensual agreements. That is, we need children and adults with confidence and ability to make their voices heard, however those voices are expressed (one may ask: with no limits at all? What if one vices sexist or racist remarks?). Voices that contribute to social action need not only speak in rational prose. We need children and adults to ‘release their imagination’ in order to release the imagination of others; to participate in a dialectic of freedom; to be themselves, together with others, and to create public spaces in which to exercise power in the world. The result would be radically indeterminate.

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