Chapter 50
Culturally Responsive Educational Leadership in Cross-Cultural International Contexts

Lorri J. Santamaría
The University of Auckland, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a model for thinking about educational leadership responsive to dynamic multicultural and global societies. Leadership conditions and behaviours associated with the author's experiences in five cross-cultural international research projects across 6 countries (United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, and Canada) are presented as a comparative case-study. A definition for culturally responsive educational leadership is proposed with examples of circumstances under which this type of leadership might occur. This contribution is framed by empirical findings and characteristics identified in previous research. Current findings suggest leadership in cross-cultural international contexts is culturally responsive when grounded in (1) the kaupapa or ethos of participating cultures; (2) shared and distributed power; (3) the collective being more highly regarded than the individual; (4) collective knowledge generation based on strengths individual members bring to 'the table;' (5) reciprocity; and (6) a prevailing spirit of pro-activism.

CULTURAL RESPONSIVITY: AN ASPIRATIONAL NORM

Leadership is a discipline and practice that belongs to every field, area of study and facet of society. There are leaders in law, medicine, health professions, the clergy, and in commerce. Without organizational leadership, every institution would arguably undoubtedly and very miserably fail. In educational contexts and similar service oriented fields, a great leader is one who is able to effectively manage her team while at the same time providing vision, inspiration, and opportunities for empowerment to assist the members of the organization to meet individual and organizational goals. Even the most progressive

leadership contributions by such well-known researchers and scholars as Fullan (2007), Hargreaves and Fink (2004), Spillane (2012) and Leithwood and Poplin (1992); privilege individual leadership 'traits' and values that individuals can acquire in order to improve their practice. This is underscored with the more recent promise of distributed and shared leadership (Robinson, 2011). These perspectives look past or ignore the social, political and unconscious embodied dispositions – or habitus – of leaders (Fitzpatrick & Santamaría, 2015). It is precisely these characteristics and dispositions, or ways of leading, that serve to inform this chapter, which provides a different way of thinking about leadership in transnational contexts for now and the future of education, other service fields (i.e., health, human services), and even more broadly in the 21st century.

This contribution holds promise because it provides an empirical way of contemplating ways in which cultural responsivity can add value to the ways in which we lead in educational contexts and engage research in local and global settings. In other words, this chapter argues that there is great value in leaders being mindful of their personal perspectives and socio-cultural context as well as those contexts of their service communities, when engaged in leadership practices in education.

This author's experiences as a leadership scholar and practitioner lead her to believe that when a leader knows and understands their context (e.g., culturally situated circumstances or setting) and content (e.g., core information, modes of communication) they are able to provide leadership that is responsive to the needs of the educational organization or situation with more authenticity resulting in greater impact (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012; Santamaría & Jean-Marie, 2014; Santamaría, Santamaría, Webber, & Pearson, 2014). To that end, in this chapter key aspects of her leadership journey are described in and through five research projects involving 24 researchers of 17 ethnicities at 15 universities, in 6 countries (see Table 1) over the course of twelve months. The chapter reviews related research and concludes with implications for the academy, related disciplines, and society at large as well as reflections for future research.

LITERATURE FRAMES

Culturally responsive educational leadership. Culturally responsive educational leadership has been discussed and debated as having potential to improve academic experiences and outcomes for systemically underserved learners in public schools (Bishop, 2003; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Khalifa, 2012; Santamaría, 2014). According to Ladson-Billings (1994) education is culturally responsive when it "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by the use of cultural references that impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 222). Ladson-Billings (2001) adds that educational leaders who are culturally responsive also need to be cognizant of the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding academic achievement, the role of educators' ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures and socio-economic standing, and be able to demonstrate what it means to be socio-politically conscious in their settings. Along these lines, one can think about culturally responsive leadership as practices that respond to sociocultural contexts while at the same time seeking to integrate the cultural content of the surrounding teaching and learning community in shaping effective educational environments and spaces where students thrive academically and socially with a sense of well-being for all regardless of ethnic, cultural, or socio-economic background (Ooka Pang, 2005).

Applied critical leadership (ACL). ACL is a subset of culturally responsive leadership grounded in research on educational leadership promoting social justice and equity that considers leadership as both

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