Chapter 2
"Getting Bruised, Hurting, and Dirty" in School Leadership:
Tempering the "Leprosy" of Careerism With a Sense of Calling

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ABSTRACT

Two themes, 1) administrative managerialism and 2) human kinship, are used to theorize an effective approach to educational leadership. The first arises from difficulty in Canada recruiting teachers into school administration. The second emphasizes human kinship, where we speak out of our materiality as an earthling. These themes suggest a leadership profile grounded in valuable experience gained in the practice of teaching. The intent of this chapter is to theorize an approach to leadership that emphasizes a sense of calling toward the public good, where school leaders can engage in the action that nurtures a culture encouraging teachers to be responsibly accountable and students to engage in assiduous study. "Careerists" rarely take time to understand the complexities of a symbolic/cultural approach and the author's claim is that we need to select leaders who understand how to infuse the work of teaching with value, meaning, passion, and purpose.

PROLEGOMENON

A primary objective of this book is to propose school leadership models or styles that can be emulated and applied as a model or framework for the best or better school leadership practice in a particular context or region. All chapters are expected to align themselves with this particular objective. Hence the book's title: *Predictive models for school leadership and practices.*

The purpose of this prolegomenon is to make a prefatory comment about the particular meaning of "predictive" that is at work in this chapter. Typically, "predictive" implies a declaration in advance (if not a promulgation of almost prophetic proportions) that if "x" is done, then "y" will happen. In leadership, this line of thinking tends to induce a sense of strong probability that, if a leader undertakes

certain actions, then those actions will have some very definite and clear positive effects. The tendency is to assume that the prognostication of leadership possibilities is derivable from general laws that hold in all regions of time and space, implying that human organizations are inanimate. This tendency is based on the "unity of science" assumption, that methodologies applied in the natural world can serve in a similar manner to investigate the human world; and on the "science is value-free" assumption, that there is a clear delineation between values and facts, undergirded by the belief that facts are neutral and not socially constructed.

My critique of the "unity of science" assumption is that the social world cannot be understood with the same methodologies as the natural world because social knowledge is made up of changing, ever-modifying, and interpretable facts and therefore bears no resemblance to knowledge of the natural world because social facts are dependent on their context. My critique of the "science is value-free" assumption is that knowledge always has value for someone or for some purpose because it reflects the time or context in which it was created, together with some aspect of the espouser's values, and therefore cannot be seen as neutral. Hence, my contention that any understanding of "predictive" must not ignore the context in which facts are constructed but must take that context seriously into account. Moreover, I maintain that failure to do so often leads one to potentially flawed conclusions, because the social world represents a contradictory and contingent array of humanly constructed interpretations and distortions that cannot be rationally ordered, engineered and managed by a putative value-free science. Thus, rather than indulge in making instrumentally-derived projections on the basis of a set of unchanging laws of the social world that constitutes educational institutions—projections that would likely prove insubstantial and possibly unethical—my approach to predictive suggestion is epistemologically different. I choose to view "predictive" interpretatively from a "lived experience" perspective in order to analyze the ethical challenges that leaders face in attempting to be successful at helping teachers to become empowered, both personally and professionally, in a rich and complex tangle of human values that constitute the institutional policies and conditions of teaching in the frequently politicized organization of schools.

Introduction

This chapter builds on two ostensibly incongruous themes in educational leadership—1) administrative managerialism and 2) human kinship—to theorize an effective approach to educational leadership. The first theme arises from research I conducted a decade ago for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) that found that school districts in Canada were having difficulty recruiting appropriately experienced teachers into school administration at a time when numerous positions were opening up (Grimmett & Echols, 2002). The second enunciates that, although the world is tragic, full of injustices and things that make us angry, against which we have to fight and kick back, our weapons are to be *love, kindness, and beauty* where we speak out of our materiality as humans, establishing a kinship with the Other. I shall pick up on these themes in the exercise of school leadership to suggest an administrative profile that does not exclude the stranger but speaks out of one's "materiality as an earthling" that has gained valuable experience in the context and practice of teaching. Hence, the title, *Getting Bruised, Hurting, and Dirty*. My intent is to theorize a different, more efficacious approach to school leadership, one that emphasizes a sense of calling toward the public good, working toward the betterment of schools. I intend to show that this approach to leadership is potentially more "predictive" of educational efficacy at the school level because it garners the conditions in which leaders *can engage in the kind of action that nurtures a culture that encourages teachers to be responsibly accountable and students to engage*

in assiduous study. Put differently, this chapter constitutes part of my perpetual struggle for meaning, a struggle that questions the being of all we hold sacred, while at the same time manifests a faith that such questioning will lead us to the sacredness of being.[1]

I want to characterize leadership as being all too frequently involved in retrieving messes created by self-absorbed careerists, messes in which one has to deal with self-aggrandizing teachers possessing a strong sense of entitlement that is often complicated by their tremendous inner anxiety. That is because we are now in a postmodern era where we have moved *from the age of enlightenment to the age of entitlement*. I shall refer to Pedersen and Dobbin's (2006) research about legitimacy and identity to suggest that careerists seldom move beyond legitimation to establish the requisite sense of identity that shapes an ethical calling to serve the public interest. Hence, I intend to contrast careerist leaders with leaders who have a calling and will frame it theoretically around the contrasting discourses of "captive theory" (the careerists) and "public trust theory" (the ones with a calling). As such, while this chapter represents a reflection on my long years of experience in leadership, it is, more importantly, a treatise in favor of shaping the priorities of selection committees as they diligently attempt to appoint teachers to school leadership positions. To foreground the argument, let me share the research conducted into the supply and demand of school administrators in Canada.

Millennial Administrator Shortages in Canada

The demographic changes that Echols, Grimmett, and Kitchenham (1999) had found to be affecting the teaching force in British Columbia, Canada at the beginning of the 21st century were later found to be impacting the ranks of administrators in the province (Grimmett & Echols, 2002). The subsequent research found evidence that the nature of school administration had changed dramatically in the previous 10 years and this, together with increased work stress, had contributed to a deeply embedded adversarial relationship between teachers and administrators that was largely responsible for districts having difficulty recruiting highly capable personnel into administrative positions at a time when numerous positions were opening up. Consequently, British Columbia faced an unexpected shortage of administrators, when what the previous research had predicted was a teacher shortage resulting from many baby-boomers retiring all at once. A consequence of this was the difficulty experienced by districts in recruiting administrators.

Difficulty Recruiting School Administrators

The changing nature of school leadership, with its emphasis on managerial tasks and the administration of the collective agreement (i.e., making sure that government control of the curriculum was enacted and increased class size ratios were observed) was seen by districts as being largely responsible for their difficulty in attracting quality people into the ranks of school leadership. The number of applications in metropolitan districts was lower than it had been two or three years earlier, but not significantly so—on average, 40 applications for the position of elementary principal and 50-60 for elementary vice principal, a combination of internal and external applications. But it was the calibre of applicant for both principal and vice-principal positions that they found disappointing. The district staff suggested that there was a lack of depth in both the ranges of applications received and in the specific people they ended up selecting. The collective view was that some of the people going into vice-principal positions could probably use at least two or three more years' experience in the classroom.

Administrative Openings

At the same time, it became clear that there would be an extremely strong need for more administrators—especially at the secondary level—over the next five to ten year period. Indeed, I speculated that the recruitment of administrators could become a serious problem across the province. In urban and rural districts, there was already a problem with low numbers of only 10-12 applicants on average for an advertised Administrative Officer[2] position. In metropolitan districts, the number of applications was higher, about 30-40 applicants, but few applicants were deemed to fit the district "profile." Thus, all districts reported that the quality of applicants for administrative positions had become decidedly "thin." One rural district indicated 30 applicants for a position but 18 were from teachers with markedly insufficient experience. All districts reported having difficulty in coming up with a short list of three appropriate candidates for recently advertised positions. Why, then, did experienced teachers not seek out school leadership positions?

Experienced Teachers and School Administration

Huberman's (1989, 1991) study mapped the career stages of teachers. Younger teachers typically have a lot of energy, few responsibilities, and a willingness to work long hours fired by an idealistic view of teaching and professional ambition. Teachers in their mid-careers have much life experience behind them, are more aware of their mortality, and tend to be more focused on establishing a balance between work and their personal lives. Teachers in late-careers tend to disengage. Those who disengaged in a positive manner had steered clear of school-wide innovation. They defined and stuck with their areas of professional (and outside) interests. By contrast, those who disengaged with negativity and disenchantment had been heavily involved in school-wide renewal. Huberman (1991) sums it up thus:

Tending one's private garden, pedagogically speaking, seems to have more payoff in the long haul than land reform, although the latter is perceived as stimulating and enriching while it is happening. (p. 183)

Teachers in British Columbia have gone through a decade of curriculum change. Many have become older but cynical. The adversarial and managerial conditions present in British Columbia schools have evidently taken their toll. We found many experienced teachers for whom continual renewal had led to disenchantment. They questioned why they should be involved in leadership. The few positive teachers we found—those who had "tended their own private garden"—saw no reason to become involved in the "land reform" of administration. In short, experienced teachers had begun not merely to disengage but, more significantly, to *disinvest*.

When questioned about this, the positive, experienced teachers offered two broad reasons. First, they have figured out that, by the time one has worked 60 hours a week and come in for every crisis at the school on the weekend, evenings or during the summer, the hourly pay is not very good:

The administrator's day often begins at 7:00am and doesn't end until 10:00pm. Meetings before school, meetings after school, board directives, central office requests, problems with parents, problems with kids, problems with teachers, and so on. From one thing to the next, non-stop go, dealing with everybody's problems but with little power and certainly no real remuneration when you break down what you earn by the hour. Get a life!

The administrators I knew who did a caring job all ended up exhausted and stressed out. Why would anyone subject themselves to that? Certainly not for the money at any rate!

But by far the biggest deterrents had to do with personal welfare issues and the fact that the job is no longer perceived as attractive any more:

When I entered teaching, I had all sorts of visions—I loved my subject and I loved kids. But the system continually frustrates me as an educator. It no longer provides for teachers who care about their subject or who care about the students. It's bad enough being a teacher but at least I have learned how to work some degrees of freedom. If I were an administrator, I'd have none—no scope for my subject, and expected to act like a police officer with the kids and other teachers!

There was a time when it was possible to be an educational leader as an administrator. But, no longer! And I cannot give up the very purposes that brought me into education in the first place. Life's too short!

Administrators are legislatively no longer teachers and this creates an impression for some teachers that they are "crossing over to the other side," leaving behind their colleagues to become one of "them:"

Administrators relate to teachers as if they are dispensable pawns in the educational game of chess. I find that very distasteful. Why treat the people who do the most important work with disdain? And you ask me why I don't choose to become an administrator? I'm an educator, that's why, and I'm not prepared to give that up.

Educational policy makers have lost their way. They are too busy reacting to media and parental criticism that they have forgotten what education is for. As an administrator, I'd have to forget too, and I'm not prepared to do that!

The increased workload, the low hourly pay, the adversarial conditions, and the managerial nature of the administration all combine to make the job unattractive and potentially harmful to personal health and life-style. Consequently, experienced teachers rarely seek administrative positions; rather, they *disinvest.*

I put a lot of time and effort into the Year 2000 program revision, only to have it all negated by a political decision. Administrators experience that time and time again. I'd be crazy even to think of becoming one. Why should I give policy makers even more opportunities to devalue my contribution as an educator?

Professionally, I have worked long and hard to be where I am today in terms of my knowledge of subject and my pedagogy with kids. I now value the quality of my personal life. Why would I consider putting all that at risk? It would be like starting over, and at what cost!

As Goodson (2001) noted, in postmodern conditions, change has often become an unwelcome and alien imposition for the progressive educator, because individuals increasingly live outside institutionally formed, traditionally expected patterns. Who, then, were applying for positions of school leadership. Unsurprisingly, considerably inexperienced "millennial" teachers were seeking to become administrators.

Inexperienced Teachers Seeking School Administration

The teachers who were considering administrative positions had not disinvested, but neither did they have experience. They did not fit the districts' profile for educational leadership. Districts were seeking teachers who would become "transformative" rather than "transactional" or "traditional" (Burns, 1978), "empowering" rather than "controlling" (Blase & Anderson, 1995). They looked for people who were strongly driven by key sets of personal and professional values to build, implement, and monitor a collective vision by means of feedback from stakeholders inside and outside the organization (Day, 2000). They looked for teachers capable of combining moral purpose with complexity, of appreciating organizations as living systems engaged in knowledge creation (Fullan, 1999).

We found that many of the teachers who were considering administrative positions were not driven by a key set of personal and professional educational ideas and values; rather, their philosophical orientation aligned itself strongly with the managerial nature of administration in postmodern adversarial conditions. At a time when outside pressures are infiltrating and, in some instances, redefining the purposes of public schools, I argued that this trend represented a serious setback for the educative agenda of schools. I also argued at the time that this difficulty and the potential shortage of school administrators in the near future would constitute a serious problem for the school system of Canada. Not only has the decade since proved this projection to be correct, it has also shown it to be understated!

How Can This Trend Be Corrected?

To avoid this situation and its consequences, I suggest it would be important to reconfigure the roles and responsibilities associated with leadership of schools. This would entail moving away from seeing schools as strict hierarchies, wherein principals are leaders and teachers are followers. It would involve re-thinking the work-schedule expectations to make the work more attractive to high-calibre candidates who are committed to fundamental educational values but also wish to have a satisfying personal life. It would be vital that district administrators find viable ways to support and challenge school administrators in a changing social, political, and cultural context, instead of treating them primarily as functionaries of the local collective agreement. I argue that it would also be necessary to focus on nurturing leadership capacity in administrators and teachers, emphasizing vision, purpose, and relationships, not rules, rigid procedures, and mandates; emphasizing covenant, not contract. For me, the desired, covenantal focus was (and still is) on building norms of collegiality, openness, and trust—at the district and school levels. In sum, I consider it crucial that super-ordinate educators actively mentor a cadre of future leaders.

But how do we do that? Not by taking less-qualified candidates into teaching and administration—candidates who may have inappropriate preparation or who may be more committed to the functions of managerialism than to fundamental educational values—merely to preserve the running of schools is. That, for me, is a danger sign. I would implore stakeholder groups to resolve not to fall into this trap. I also entreat policy makers to become proactive in addressing the organizational conditions and culture in which teachers and school administrators do their work and to work actively to recruit and mentor appropriately qualified teachers and administrators whose commitment to fundamental educational values and good practice is beyond question. Because we are living in an "era of distortion [that] challenges the fictitious neutrality and apolitical comfort zones many have used to remain safe in the politically dangerous work of educational leadership" (Cobb & Krownapple, 2017, p. 4), my thesis is that a more efficacious approach to leadership and the selection of appropriate leaders is grounded in the concept of human kinship,

HUMAN KINSHIP

In December 2013, I spoke at a curriculum seminar at the University of British Columbia on the topic: *The Meaning of Curriculum is a Complicated Conversation; The Purpose of Curriculum is to render a Complicated Worldview.* I made reference to David Rakoff, a Canadian writer born in Montreal in 1964 whom I presented as having a complicated worldview. He was against conspicuous consumption, greed, vanity, selfishness, and vapidity, which he criticized mercilessly and wittily. He wrote about pessimism and melancholy: all the other less than pleasant to feel emotions that because they are less than pleasant to feel have been more or less stricken from the public discourse but in fact have their uses and even a certain beauty to them. Rakoff argued that "while these emotions may well be hedonistically less pleasant, they remain necessary and even beautiful at times" (Salazar-Rubio, 2008). Hence, his complicated worldview: shaped by his family history and personal circumstances, he knew that the world is tragic, full of injustices and things that make us angry, against which we have to fight and kick back; but he was clear that our weapons are to be *love, kindness, and beauty*. There's a David Rakoff in me.

I now see a world with an erratic and unstable political landscape. The events of 911 in the USA signalled the beginning of that instability. Political violence was no longer directed against specific and identifiable political personalities (like JFK in 1963) but against institutions symbolizing the economic and military power behind alleged wrongdoings. The Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris (January 7, 2015) registered a modification of that instability. Political violence was directed at a highly visible specimen of mass media, signalling the widespread public sense of power moving away from political players toward centers in information and social media viewed as responsible for public mind-setting and opinion-making. The people engaged in such activities were now the culprits to be punished for causing the attackers' bitterness, rancour, and urge for vengeance. If September 11, 2001 "de-personalized" violence, then the barbarity of the January 7, 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack represents a foreboding harbinger of the "de-institutionalization," individualization, and privatization of the human condition, away from social responsibility and a concern for the public good. That is, in our media-dominated postmodern society, those people (e.g., celebrities, etc.) engaged in constructing and disseminating information have moved to center stage where the drama of human co-existence is played out. At the same time, there is an ongoing diasporaization of the world happening, which results in the distant stranger now becoming our next-door neighbour. This in turn has led to societal problems (witness the difficulties we are having in dealing with refugees). All around the world, we are witnessing a rising tide of anti-democratic sentiment, accompanied by a "massive secession of plebians" to camps located on the opposite extreme of the political spectrum (e.g. Donald Trump, Rodrigo Duterte, the newly elected Phillipine President whose campaign symbol is a fist—intended for lawbreakers, but seemingly also aimed at the oligarchy) which promises to replace discredited high-mindedness with a yet-to-be-tried high-handed autocracy. Whether it is national debates in the USA about White Nationalists being "very fine people," the barrage of executive orders that seek to legitimize contempt, or the far too frequent news stories about students demeaning their peers (Smith, 2017), it is clear that the current climate in North America has given moral licence (Merritt, Effron & Monin, 2010) to opprobrious behavior and scurrilous actions that would have been beyond the pale just two years ago. All this adds up to the fact that we are now living in an imagistic era of distortion comprised of similacra.

It is these tendencies in an unstable world context that I believe educational leaders have to fight not with violence but with weapons of *love, kindness, and beauty*, a belief that sustains my penchant for human kinship that I theorized at my December 13, 2013 talk. Referring to Baumann (1995), I argued that

strangers, those "who do not fit the cognitive, moral, and aesthetic map of the world" (p. 195) will be always with us and that we should approach them neither *anthropophagicly* by *devouring* them and then metabolically transforming them into a tissue indistinguishable from one's own" (p. 201) (Emphasis in original), nor *anthropoemicly by* "*vomiting* the strangers, banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring them from all communication with those inside" (p. 201) (Emphasis in original), which is the action of exclusion that is meant to destroy strangers physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Rather, our approach should be marked by an understanding that "difference is not merely unavoidable, but good, precious, and in need of protection and cultivation" (p. 214), because,

The chance of human togetherness depends on the rights of the stranger and not on the answer to the question [of] who is entitled . . . to decide who the strangers are. (Bauman, 1995, p, 216)

I referred to Lingis' (1994) book, *The Community Of Those Who Have Nothing In Common* to reinforce the idea of embracing difference:

To enter into conversation with another is to lay down one's arms and one's defenses; to throw open the gates of one's own positions; to expose oneself to the other, the outsider; and to lay oneself open to surprises, contestation, and inculpation. It is to risk what one found or produced in common. To enter into conversation is to struggle against the noise, the interference, and the vested interests . . . One enters into conversation in order to become an Other for the other. (Lingis, 1994, p. 87)

Human kinship, I argued, comes when we eschew speaking with a representative voice, where we are merely using the voice we have constructed in the rational community. By contrast, in the community without community, we have to find a voice in a situation where we have nothing in common. For example, what can one say in the presence of someone who is dying? If we revert to our representative voice, what comes out often sounds hollow and fatuous:

What is it that speaks in these terminal . . . situations? Not the ego as a rational mind, as a representative of universal reason that possesses the a priori categories and the a priori forms of the rational organization of sensory impressions. What speaks is someone in his or her materiality as an earthling. (Lingis, 1994, p. 117) (Emphasis added)

When we open ourselves up to the other, to a stranger, to those who reside in a community with nothing in common, we find ourselves very exposed. Rather than living in a

Community that produces something in common, that establishes truth and that now establishes a technological universe of simulacra, but excludes the savages, the mystics, the psychotics—excludes their utterances and their bodies, excluding them in its own space (p. 13)

The alien suffering does not extend at a viewing distance, but [now] afflicts my sensibility immediately. It is felt in my eyes . . . It is felt in my hands . . . It is felt in my voice. (Lingis, 1994, p. 30)

Here, I want to pick up the theme of using the weapons of *love, kindness, and beauty* in the exercise of educational leadership in a manner that does not exclude the stranger (the savages, the mystics, the

psychotics) but speaks out of my "materiality as an earthling." Hence, the theme of *Getting Bruised, Hurting, and Dirty* that comes from the writings of someone else I have come to admire.

Anyone who thinks that Pope Francis is just a benign old gentleman robed in white who will spend all his time kissing babies and blessing the faithful followers is in for a big shock. On July 23, 2014, he issued the following document, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (The Joy of the Gospel) in which he stated most forcefully:

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security . . . I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends up by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures.

More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us, "Give them something to eat." (Pope Francis, 2014). http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pope-francis-calls-for-fewer-rules-more-mercy-in-mission-statement-1.2441043 (p. 1).

This document represents Francis' attempt to stamp his way of thinking about the church and its role in society in a radically different manner from that of his predecessor. He calls for a clear change of emphasis and different priorities that are already beginning to have an impact on how the Vatican leadership functions. As David Perlich reported on June 23, 2014:

In his first address to the Vatican's diplomatic corps trainees, Francis, pulled no punches. "Careerism," he said, "is leprosy! Leprosy!"

Very undiplomatic language. Very Francis, it seems.

In the first year of his pontificate, the new Pope spent most of his public time moving the Church away from questions of doctrine, and reaching out to the faithful.

Casual, warm and ready to wade into a crowd, Francis has the kind of charisma that TV cameras love, and secular politicians can only envy.

But, behind the scenes he's a man on a different mission — ready to crack open the Vatican's curial government.

Under the smiling man from Argentina, heads have rolled and titles, perks and positions vanished. Careerist clerics, including members of the diplomatic corps, are just waiting for the axe to fall. (Perlich, June 23, 2014). http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pope-francis-strides-onto-the-global-stage-1.2682572 (p. 4).

Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach. (Pope Francis, July 23, 2014). http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pope-francis-calls-for-fewer-rules-more-mercy-in-mission-statement-1.2441043 (p. 1).

As I reflect on my years in educational leadership, I find myself surprisingly thinking along similar lines to Pope Francis. I say surprisingly because I am not a Catholic and I disagree quite vehemently with his intractable stance on women and abortion. Yet his clarion-call for the Church to be more engaged with humanity on the streets instead of being absorbed in clinging unhealthily to its own sense of security, locked in a web of obsessions and procedures, resonates with the way I regard the actions of some people in school administration. Far from responding to a call to nourish and invisibly repair the minds and intellectual work of their colleagues (Grimmett, 2012, 2013), they appear to have become enmeshed within structures that give them a false sense of security, within rules and procedures that they enforce harshly, and within habits designed to make them politically Teflon-safe. In short, they embody a self-absorbed preoccupation with their own career, what Pope Francis refers to as the "leprosy of careerism," rather than a calling to help their colleagues to be productive and successful in their intellectual endeavors. Whereas the former entails a ruthless and sometimes vaunting gasconade, the latter requires honesty, probity, dependability, and integrity. How then do leaders temper the insidious trap of careerism with a sense of calling for the work they do?

Some Personal Details

In 2010 I retired from the Faculty of Education (approximately 50 faculty members) of a leading Canadian comprehensive (but also research intensive) university where I had served in the Dean's Office for one full term. I was invited (and personally drawn) to move back (I had been in a tenured position there between 1983 and 1990) to a major research-intensive university in Canada to take up the Headship of a Department that was, by all reports, imploding but is now in 2017, according to a recent external review, thriving and flourishing. In the 21 years I have been in and out of university administration, I have learned a lot about educational leadership and want to argue that it must be regarded as a seasonal calling and not a career. In fact, I am very strongly against administration being used as a career step, because such self-absorbed persons create a lot of messes that pragmatic idealists have to sort out and heal.

Accordingly, I propose some theorizing of how abject careerism can be tempered by a sense of calling to serve the public interest and nurture the public good.

THEORETICAL FRAME

I invoke Pedersen and Dobbin's (2006) grappling with how organizations and networks establish their legitimacy and identity to show just how difficult and complex it is for educational leaders to achieve a credible sense of their calling to serve the public interest in the context of an increasingly intrusive neo-liberalist "audit" culture. I also invoke the discourses of "public interest" theory and "capture" theory to show how the current neo-liberalist policy context has begun to undermine public interest discourse with its lionizing of "capture" theorizing.

Legitimation and Identity

Neo-liberalist economic rationalist pressure has changed how universities function. It has produced a policy context that makes university leaders susceptible to academic drift as a result of mimetic isomorphism. Mimetic isomorphism creates tensions for university leaders who, in seeking to adopt the

values of neo-liberalist economic rationalist policy, sometimes forget their ontological roots as professors. Their challenge is to establish contiguity both with the orientation and traditions of leadership in a large corporation such as a university has now become, and with the specific values and practices of the professorial field of scholarship and teaching they represent. In doing the former, they establish their legitimacy within the university hierarchy; in doing the latter, they establish a credible identity with their professorial colleagues. Pedersen and Dobbin (2006) amplify this notion in the following way: "organizations [educational leaders] create legitimacy by adopting recognizable forms and create identity by touting their uniqueness [as teachers]" (p. 898). Put differently, "the formation of identity through uniqueness and the construction of legitimation through uniformity" (Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006, p. 901) is a dual process constituting a recognized organization or network (in this case, educational leadership) that is both authentic and legitimate. I want to argue that self-absorbed careerists become so caught up in the construction of their legitimation through uniformity that they eventually struggle to go beyond legitimation to forge their identity as leaders of professors. As a consequence, they have exceeding difficulty dealing with self-aggrandizing and strong-minded professors who possess both a resolute sense of entitlement and a deep-seated sense of disquiet and trepidation about who they are and how they are performing. Leaders who can handle these difficult characters and situations view their leadership role as a calling, a calling to enhance the public good because they are engaged in a public trust. Such leaders also have a strong sense of their own identity, a sense that enables them to resist pressures that seemingly insist that they bow to or conform to school system hierarchy dictates, teachers' whims and/or culturally embedded, inexplicable but historical practices. *How then do school administrators establish their legitimacy in what has become a corporatist environment in a manner that enables them to tout their uniqueness as instructional leaders?*

Rusch and Wilbur (2007) articulated three inter-connected aspects of organizational isomorphism; namely, mimetic, coercive, and normative. Mimetic isomorphism describes the tendency of organizations or networks to recreate the "forms and norms of recognized organizations in their field to gain legitimacy" (p. 303). Coercive isomorphism characterizes the pressure applied to and within organizations that are threatened by de-legitimatization. And normative isomorphism is a response to the mimetic and coercive forms through the re-fashioning of cultural norms that govern professional expectations and practice. Morphew and Huisman (2002) argue that the pressures of isomorphism tend to make universities (and hence school administrators) similar over time, because the less prestigious ones will mimic the prestigious ones. Thus, in a time of dwindling funding from the public purse and the concomitant budgetary difficulties, the pressure on leaders to engage in mimetic isomorphism around corporatist policy and action is intense. Sometimes, leaders abjure a consultative approach under duress (coercive isomorphism) because it is the only way to gain legitimacy with the central administration. When school administrators act in this way, they are enacting leadership by injunction as a recognized form and rewarded endeavor to strengthen their district legitimacy. But, in the process, they forget to tout their distinctiveness that comes from their ontological calling to serve the public interest. I want to argue that the dual process of legitimacy creation and identity formation requires leaders to re-invent any undertaking of regulation into an action that recognizes the distinctiveness of their calling to serve the public interest. This can only be done through the cultural transformation that normative isomorphism represents. This typically happens when leaders discuss and enact directive prescription in a manner that re-interprets and integrates its processes with the goals, values, traditions, and history of a calling to serve the public good. This re-interpretation represents a "practice of remembering" that is an act of

meaning construction within traditions; it is also an act of identity negotiation within "imagined communities" (Feldman & Feldman, 2006, p. 874).

Much of this difficulty for educational leaders is created by the fact that the discourse of public interest has been largely discredited by the discourse of capture theory that suggests that administrative incumbents (or bodies involved in regulation) essentially capture the process to serve their own self interests. Both public interest theory and capture theory have their origins in theories of economic regulation. Stigler (1971) broke new ground with his economic theory of regulation that essentially argued for capture theory. Posner (1974) provided a response to this and became the first theoretician to attribute the rationale of economic regulation to a theory based on the concept of public interest.

Public Interest Theory

Public interest theory holds that minimum standards are a function of the technical expectations of the profession and that regulation seeks the protection and benefit of the public at large. In other words, professional regulation protects the public from unqualified and incompetent practitioners. Based on the work of Bonbright (1961), Davis (1958/1970), and Friendly (1962), Posner (1974) framed the rationale of economic regulation around a theory based on the concept of public interest. His argument was that regulation is supplied in response to public demand for the correction of inefficient or inequitable market practices. He based it on two premises: that markets are fragile and apt to act inefficiently and inequitably, i.e., prone to failure; and that regulation bears no transaction costs. Thus, Posner introduced the idea that regulation "is an honest but frequently an unsuccessful attempt to promote the public interest" (p. 339).

One of the difficulties with this theory of public interest is that it assumes a link between perceived public interest and legislative action, when there are no apparent mechanisms for discerning what constitutes the "public interest" and translating it into policy. It was precisely this problem that gave rise to an alternate conception of regulation as "capture theory".

Capture Theory

Capture theory holds that regulatory bodies come to be captured (usually, but not always, for economic and political purposes) by the professions they regulate, leading to attempts to increase economic benefits by restricting supply. Hence, regulation does not protect the public at large but only the interests of the groups it regulates. Building on the work of Buchanan and Tullock (1962), Downs (1957), and Olson (1965), Stigler (1971) articulated a theory of economic regulation that became the basis for capture theory. The fundamental claim is that regulation—in this case, economic—serves the private interests of politically effective groups. The theory follows certain economic premises: that people always seek to advance their self-interest and that they act rationally in doing so.

Consequently, in economic terms, capture theory presents a vehement contestation of the view that regulation is about public interest. Instead, it puts forward the view that regulation is a process by which interest groups seek to promote their own private interests. In political terms, these interest groups are seen as playing a most important role in the formation of public policy (Truman, 1951). That is, over time regulatory bodies come to be dominated by the industries they regulate (Ziegler, 1964) in such a manner that these interest groups are potentially able to distort and frustrate the purposes of regulation.

Stigler's (1971) capture view has gained some acceptance in the latter stages of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. Researchers in medicine (Krol and Svorny, 1993; Svorny, 2004),

optometry (Haas-Wilson, 1986), and dentistry (Shepard, 1978; Kleiner & Kudrle, 2000) have all supported the argument that licensing and regulation increase costs to clients without necessarily improving the quality of professional service. Capture theory, then, began to emerge as an alternate and somewhat potent explanation for how professional regulation has evolved. Hence, Taylor (2006) argued, in her study of licensing in speech–language pathology and audiology, that regulation, and in particular licensure, was designed to benefit only the professional and the profession itself, and not the client or society.

Applying Public Interest/Capture Theory to Leadership

For regulation, read administration. The dominant eclipse of public interest theory by capture theory would suggest that school administrators take such positions solely for personal gain. What has brought about the abjuration of public interest discourse in favor of capture theory? My contention is that it has a lot to do with the *Zeitgeist* of the last 30 years or so that has deeply affected the macro-policy context in which schools now function. The neo-liberalist policy context has created academic drift as school districts diversify programs to generate the necessary income it takes to sustain their operation. The discrediting of public interest theory, together with the elevation of capture theory, is now taken to indicate that school district personnel are more concerned about their own economic and professional interests than they are about the public interest or the public good. My argument here is that this drift is also manifesting itself in the kind of person who applies for and is often chosen to work in school administration. That is, they work more toward their own selfish interests than toward a conception of the common good. The former I refer to as "careerists", the latter I refer to as having a vocational calling to serve the collectively forged public interest of the school and society.

In addition, the neo-liberalist policy context permits a form of postmodern doublespeak, i.e., the rhetorical mouthing of public interest discourse while simultaneously establishing the dominance (through hidden political initiatives) of the capture view of regulation (administration). I argue that the dominance of the latter over the former paves the way for the political re-framing of school administration according to corporatist standards. I also maintain that careerists indulge themselves in this counter-productive doublespeak as a way of ensuring their legitimacy and survival. For example, if one is ever concerned by how the increases in effort and time spent on core tasks in leadership work are overshadowed by increases in effort and time devoted to accounting for task work or erecting monitoring systems, or by accountability systems (e.g., league tables, etc.), which fail to account for practitioners' mediation of policy and practice, then let me introduce you to Lyotard's (1984) law of contradiction. This law of contradiction arises between intensification as an increase in the volume of first order activities—e.g., direct engagement with students, curriculum development, etc.—required by the demands of accountability, and the costs in terms of time and energy of second order activities that constitute the work of performance monitoring. If Lyotard's characterization is correct (and I think it is), then one can see how contradictions in education policy can produce conditions under which careerism is able to flourish. This happens because we now live and work in a postmodern era of rapid technological, social, and cultural change that is not only having a huge impact on education but also is continually producing policy conflicts (e.g., equity versus excellence; autonomy versus control; work-life balance versus work intensification, etc.). The dominance of the capture theory thinking over the discourse of public interest in policy action paves the way for the political re-framing of education issues, for example, in terms of economic constraint instead of social imperative, or in terms of standardized outcomes instead of differentiated individual achievement. *How then do we ensure that, in educational leadership, a sense of vocational calling trumps careerism, and not the other way round?*

THEORIZING THE PRIORITIZING OF VOCATIONAL CALLING

Over Careerism in Educational Leadership

Let me introduce, then, a theoretical basis on which school administrators can act as educational leaders in these situations to transform careerism into a positive vocational force.

Facing Cancer

Beginning in 2012, my personal circumstances have provided me a unique opportunity to learn a good deal about cancer. Each cancer tumor has its own context. Each context is different. Some cancer tumors, because of their context, are treated by chemotherapy. Other cancer tumors, because they do not respond in females to hormones, are treated not by chemotherapy but only by radiation. Yet, with other tumors where the context is so different and the cancer so aggressive, the treatment involves chemotherapy, radiation, surgery and the works. And the scourge for women is that breast cancer is becoming more and more prolific as time goes on. But this is the aspect I have found so indelibly impressive. Within each cancer context, a tumor normally and surprisingly comprises both cancerous and immune cells. The latter are there to battle the former. However, in some tumor contexts, these immune cells lose their way and become deceived. Thus, instead of fighting the growth cells that are cancerous, they become dysfunctional and actually, and mystifyingly, work to help them grow. Cancer researchers do not know how or why this happens and the one thing they are trying to fathom is how to get the immune cells to revert to their original immunological function.

I think this is analogous to leadership in schools. I am not here suggesting that careerism is a cancer; rather, I am suggesting that we need to find a key that unlocks the positive power of careerism to revert it to its original function of serving the calling of leadership. When careerism trumps vocational calling, we have dysfunctional schools, making our work in educational organizations extremely difficult and tempting us to think the system is broken. But when careerism is turned around to enact the calling of leadership to serve the public good, we find that teachers are responsibly accountable and students engage in rigorous study. How, then, do we fathom how we can address this situation so that we can right the potential imbalance in the system. *Specifically, how do leaders in schools engage in the kind of action that nurtures a culture that encourages teachers to be responsibly accountable and students to engage in assiduous study?*

Premise

I want to argue in this chapter that most attempts at school re-structuring, particularly those relating to educational leadership, have failed because they do not take account of how the principles, policies and practices on which the re-structuring is based frequently become co-opted and reframed by the micro-politics that exist in the local organizational setting of schools. I want to examine this situation in order to suggest that educational leadership in school settings necessitates symbolic and cultural forms of leadership that use policy-making and legal-rational power to *infuse the work of research and teaching with value, meaning, passion, and purpose*. Leaders are indeed invested with power. But it is power *for*, not power *over*. And the purpose of power *for* is to infuse the work of teachers with value-added

meaning. Such forms of leadership relate closely with the development of an organizational culture that binds and bonds people together in professionally productive ways to promote conditions for students to study assiduously.

Making Teachers' Work Significant

Exercising leadership as infusing the work of teachers with value, meaning, passion, and purpose will engage educational leaders in examining the role that myths or stories play in the units we inhabit. Understanding how the school is storied is a very powerful way of leading. For instance, when one goes into an educational unit, as I did nearly eight years ago, particularly units that have had all sorts of inter-colleague acrimonious difficulties, there are always deeply-held stories that influence how people judge situations and hold a key to understanding what possibly determines their actions. A leader's job is not only to understand those stories, but also to engage in a process called "re-mystification." That is, what leaders have to do is to engage teachers and students in discussions about the mission, vision, and the purpose that are at the heart of any unit's culture. Not only do the mission, vision, and purpose define success—but also, and much more importantly, they define the unit's significance. In today's world, we are frequently measured by our successes. I want to suggest a different way in which we need to be accountable. We need to be accountable for what is *significant* in what we do.

Let me give you an example. Educators teaching in a multicultural context make thousands of different curriculum and pedagogical decisions on a daily basis. And I am suggesting that how they actually deal with the multitudinous contextual variables they face in these situations is, for me, one of the significant aspects of what teachers do in educating today's youth. We need to focus on how in the public system (where there is no selection, teachers must deal with students of all levels of aptitude and ability) we actually see a school's vision and purposes being worked out. This is a more rigorous and honest way of holding ourselves accountable by looking closely at the significance of what we do and, in so doing, examining the significance of the role of the school in society. For instance, in Canada, we would look closely at the ways in which the policies of official bilingualism and multiculturalism get played out through our schools, which is an essential aspect of their significance to our country's culture. It seems to me that this form of accountability is much more important than how students potentially represent their knowledge on standardized tests.

Another aspect of examining the significance of what we do is to look at the relationships that teachers have with the various and diverse student groups in their classrooms, and the way in which they take their content and transform it to teach engaging concepts about, for instance, issues of social justice, issues of oppression, and issues of historical significance that affect our lives in today's world. This will involve leaders in encouraging teachers to work pedagogically in an inter-disciplinary way that does not neglect the rigours of the disciplines but uses discipline-based understandings to study real-world issues as cross-disciplinary problems.

My point here is that the work of teaching takes on significance when teachers go beyond instructing mere subject matter content to recognize the significance they achieve when they use that content to introduce students to the richness of the world in all its aspects. The significance of such work is that teachers are opening up students' eyes to an enlarged vista on the world, which suddenly becomes a very exciting place for them. And it becomes exciting because their teachers have infused their work with value, passion and purpose; which they tend to do when they have leaders who know how to encourage such an approach. Put differently, they have come to understand the complex and delicate relationship that exists between values, beliefs, assumptions, and professional norms.

The Relationship Between Values, Beliefs, Assumptions, and Professional Norms

When educational leaders focus on infusing the work of teachers with value, passion and purpose, they begin to grapple with questions about the values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that are extant in the school organization. They examine the role that myths and historical artifacts have played, and continue to play, in the school. They grapple with the mission and purpose that resides at the heart of the school's culture. They question what constitutes success and, more importantly, what defines the school's significance.

Schein's (2010) book, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, set out to transform the abstract concept of culture into a tool that leaders could use first to map and then to shape the dynamics of organization and change. He defined culture in terms of the norms, values, behavior patterns, rituals, and traditions that pervade an organization as it grapples with how to adapt to external forces and to integrate its various component parts internally. As such, culture provides a form of structural stability because of its implied institutional patterns and integration that arise from the accumulated learning over time from shared myths and historical artifacts. It plays a vital role in the derivation and constitution of the organization's mission and purpose, which in turn determines how teachers define success and, more importantly, how they define the significance of their work. Culture is a hidden but powerful feature of an organization that educational leaders ignore at their cost. Either they understand its power, becoming acutely attuned to the way values, beliefs, sentiments, and norms covertly define what is acceptable professional behavior, or their misfortunate obliviousness results in their leadership being seriously undermined by its subtle force. My contention in this chapter is that careerists rarely take the requisite time to understand and become attuned to the important force of a unit's culture.

In pursuing questions about values, beliefs, and assumptions, educational leaders who are sensitively attuned to a unit's culture also assume that they are dealing with people who are self-motivated and professional. Yet even self-motivated and professionally responsible people have to be governed. But they cannot be governed by fiat; leaders cannot successfully govern teachers in an enabling culture by unilaterally laying down explicit expectations or rules for their behavior. Responsible and self-motivated teachers are governed by professional norms. Norms are unwritten laws of practice that build over time in an institution to govern professional action. When norms emerge within a unit, professional expectations around practice then flow not from the leader's decree but from a principle-based policy context that is perceived as the co-construction of the present community's interaction with the school's history and culture.

How does this happen? How do professional and cultural norms emerge in a school?

Theorizing the Emergence of Professional Norms

If we are to understand how norms are formed, then we need to look closely at the kind of sentiments that people hold about some of the interactions they have with their colleagues around specific activities. In 1995, I characterized this process by associating it with restructuring and reconceptualization:

Back in 1950, George Homans documented how changes in activity structures produce ripple effects throughout the human group. These changes affect the nature of the interactions that take place, which, in turn, influences the sentiments that people derive from their work. And these sentiments typically take

on a normative force, governing what people may or may not do. Using today's language, Homans would have said that restructuring inevitably leads to some form of reconceptualization. In other words, even blunt forms of restructuring (the kind that is used euphemistically to describe corporate-style firings) provokes people to think about their work in different, though not always innovative, ways. Although it is possible to restructure in an adventitious and ultimately dysfunctional manner, the process nevertheless brings about some form of rethinking. The question thus becomes not one of whether restructuring occurs without reconceptualization but whether the kind of reconceptualization that restructuring precipitates is appropriately rigorous and purposeful. (Grimmett, 1995, p. 204)

This puts a different slant on what educational leaders are attempting to achieve. In undertaking to renew and restructure an educational program, such leaders with a calling to serve the public interest would structure a process to bring about a reconceptualization derived from a careful examination of the program's principles and assumptions that undergirded its emerging practice. In so doing, the process would enable participants to address the crucial relationship between assumptions and professional norms.

So why do leaders when they begin a position first meet informally with each member on an individual basis? Is it to create a good impression? Partially. But far more important is that it gives them an opportunity to trace the professional normative context in which they are expected to give leadership. Frequently, leaders map the context well but then commit a very common mistake. They come across a professional norm governing the practice of teachers in their school that they find undesirable and in need of change. Mistakenly, they then decide to send out a directive about the considered unacceptable professional behavior, stating strongly that this practice will cease and desist. Let me illustrate. In the early 1970s, I was a teacher in a school in which a new principal discovered that many of us teachers were coming in at 7:00 am in the morning and staying at school until about 6:00 or 7:00 pm in the evening, while a few others were arriving just before the bell at 8:30 am, and when the bell went at 3:30 pm, they were disappearing very quickly. He understood the disgruntlement of those of us who chafed at the lack of professional commitment (a tendency to "coast" to retirement) on the part of some of our older colleagues, so he decided to act. He sent out an administrative memorandum stating that this professional practice was unacceptable in his school; moreover, he added that, in future, all teachers must be present in school at least 30 minutes before the first bell and must not leave school until 30 minutes after the final afternoon bell. Guess what happened! Everyone (myself included) began arriving at 8:00 am and leaving at 4:00 pm, whereas previously most of us had been arriving far earlier and staying much later. The principal had meant well. He wanted to challenge and change the professional norm by addressing it directly but in the process of creating what he thought of as a floor for professional practice, he created a ceiling. Before, he had about 80 percent of his teachers who were working phenomenally long hours and doing magnificently productive work. Yet, because he attempted to hit the norm head on, his action produced the opposite effect. And one of the things that I have learned over the many years I've been in education (I started my first job teaching in 1967) is that if you make the mistake of hitting an unacceptable norm head on, it has the opposite effect to what you desire. That is because the people who are working extremely hard and typically comply with appropriate norms are struck by fear when leaders unilaterally define acceptable professional practice, and those for whom the desired change is required always find ways of getting around a dictate from above.

How then can educational leaders change unacceptable norms without unwittingly producing the opposite effect of reinforcing them? As in pedagogy where, for teachers, "frontal attacks are even more wasteful in learning than in war" (Dewey, 1997, p. 169), leaders need to understand the folly of hitting

the norm head on, because it frequently guarantees the opposite effect. The key is to come at changing the norms *indirectly*. This approach takes time; but it is a case of where going slower amounts to making faster progress, as distinct from "more haste, less speed." First, leaders change the activities. This produces different interactions among the personnel involved. The close connection between activities and human interaction is key here. The changed activity affects the nature of the interactions. That is the beginning of the ripple effect throughout the human group that Homans (1950) theorized. Leaders continually nurture the environment in which teachers do their work so that the changed human interactions around different activities have a positive effect on the sentiments that they derive from and about their work. And these sentiments typically take on a normative force over time, governing what people may or may not do as professionals. The aim, of course, is to produce positive sentiments among teachers about their work and the school environment that eventually over time become norms that constrain their professional action. It is a slow but steady process, typically taking about at least two to three years to change the normative context of a school.

Another way of nurturing a more appropriate normative context in schools is to practice what the late Ted Aoki (2005/1986) called "public pedagogy." In my own institutional context, I took over a fractious department eight years ago and set out to turn it into one of the best academic units of its kind in North America. But I could not state it so directly because, coming as a statement from the Head, it would lack the normative power to be convincing and compel appropriate action. I had to come at it indirectly. Hence, I tell stories, stories that are embedded in myths and poetry that open up generative discussion about what is important. An example of this comes from my practice of sending an encouraging email to all members on the first day of every term. Recently, I sent the following email on January 1, 2012:

Colleagues,

Happy New Year to you all!

Although some of us were back at work yesterday, today represents the first day of classes for this new term and I want to welcome you back and to wish you all a most productive and fulfilling year in 2012. As a unit, we will be engaging this term in setting strategic direction for the department for the next four years or so. But, although the official rhetoric calls that process "strategic planning," I would prefer us to think of it as engaging in a complicated conversation (as befits a department of curriculum and pedagogy) about examining the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy's past to consider our future as we mobilize the present. I'll be sharing specific details of the process in ten days or so but I want you to understand that the intention is not to make this an add-on activity; rather, we will use an hour in each of the three department meetings (January, February, and March) to begin that conversation. The aim is to produce a sketch of possibilities that could serve as a framework for a retreat in May that would enable us to deliberate on our priorities and direction for the next four years or so. As I said, more details will follow in about ten days.

In the meantime, you may take time to read one of Tolstoy's stories entitled "Three Questions." This is a story that I use to keep myself grounded and present (but not presentist) in the important work we do as educators. It goes as follows:

One day a king decides that, henceforth, he would never fail at anything if only he could get an answer to three questions: What are the most important things to do in life? When is the right time to undertake them? and Who are the right (and wrong) people to deal with in so doing? He promised a large reward to any person who could provide him answers. But the learned people who came to him from far and wide offered conflicting advice, which confused and annoyed the king and so he heeded none of it. Instead, he disguised himself as a peasant and went into the woods to visit an old hermit renowned for his insight. He found the hermit digging a garden. Noticing the man's frailty and fatigue, the king took over the digging. He dug for hours. All the while the hermit said nothing in reply to his questions. Suddenly, just as the sun was setting, an injured man staggered out of the forest. He had been stabbed in the stomach. The king tended his wound and carried him into the hermit's hut. After settling him in, the tired king fell deep asleep. The next morning he awoke to find the now healing stranger gazing at him intently. The man confessed he had been lying in ambush to kill the king for injuries to his family the king's men had inflicted years before. The man had waited and waited in the woods, but the king never returned from the hermit. When he went looking for him, he stumbled on the king's soldiers, who recognized him and wounded him before he got away. The man begged for reconciliation, which the king was happy to grant. Finally, before taking his leave, the king once more asked the hermit his three questions. The hermit, bent over while sowing seeds, looked up at him. "You have already been answered," he said calmly. The king was dumbfounded. The hermit continued:

Had you not taken pity on my weakness yesterday and dug these beds for me, instead of turning back alone, that fellow would have assaulted you, and you would have regretted not staying with me. There-fore, the most important time was when you were digging the beds; I was the most important man; and the most important pursuit was to do good to me. And later when the man came running to us, the most important time was when you were taking care of him, for if you had not bound up his wound, he would have died without having made peace with you; therefore he was the most important man, and what you did for him was the most important deed. Remember then: there is only one important time—Now. And it is important because it is the only time we have dominion over ourselves; and the most important man [sic] is he [sic] with whom you are, for no one can know whether or not he will ever have dealings with any other man [sic]; and the most important pursuit is to do good to him [sic], since it is for that purpose alone that man [sic] was sent into this life (Grimmett, 1997, pp. 460-461) (Emphasis in original).

I would only add that to enjoy the "now" fully, we have to appreciate how our past has formed us. My hope is that we can now engage in a complicated conversation as a form of respectful dialogue that examines our past as a department to arrive at an understanding of which things we need to conserve and which ones we need to move beyond as we embrace the uncharted terrain of the future together.

I wish you all a happy new year.

Peter

The purpose of educational leaders practicing public pedagogy is to nurture a positive normative context by symbolically embedding messages of significance and hope in poetry and story. The above message was about the need to be very clear about what we are doing as a community and why the work that we do is important. The subtext is that, when we understand the importance of our work and do it

well, we excel in a manner that makes others sit up and take notice. But it also notes the requirement for us to understand how the past has shaped us, and not to see historical lore as something to be denied, but something to be investigated and brought into the present and sometimes re-storied. In some rare but specific instances, we may have to re-mystify the history, particularly when members have been at each other's throats, as it were, and not known how to act with rigorous and respectful collegiality. Thus, this cultural form of leadership aims supportively to motivate and inspire teachers by enunciating the kind of symbolic messages that provoke questioning and discussion about the normative context and priorities governing the work of educational units. In this way, leaders are signaling the importance of the school's cultural roots, while continually infusing value, purpose, meaning, and direction into the work of teaching.

A further example of public pedagogy I have practiced in nurturing an enabling culture comes from sharing a poem by Dante. The poem reflects the darkness experienced by Dante:

Just halfway through this journey of our life

I re-awoke to find myself inside

A dark wood, way off course, the right road lost.

How difficult a task it is to tell

What this wild, harsh. Forbidding wood was like

The merest thought of which brings back my fear;

For only death exceeds its bitterness.

But I found goodness there. (Dante, 1888, Canto 1, 1-8)

Despite the dark experience, Dante found goodness there. I have used the poem to generate discussion about having an experience like being trapped in a dark wood, where one feels particularly vulnerable and exposed, facing a challenge toward which one does not warm but nevertheless has to dig deep in one's inner resources to overcome and move on. This specific form of public pedagogy is particularly suited to schools that have become somewhat de-stabilized, whose culture is dysfunctional and potentially toxic. It enables them to face the darkness they are experiencing as a group while also challenging them to plumb the depths of their problems to articulate how they "found goodness there," how they have been able to transform a difficult situation into a gift.

I have faced this over the last six years in my personal circumstances. Since August 2012, I have been severely tested by the unexpected onset of cancer in my soul mate. But I am now at the point where I can see that even cancer is a gift, because nothing sharpens your priorities than the knowledge of how evanescent life actually is. And leaders must live in the moment, as well as strategize for the future. Moreover, the decisions that leaders make are always in the moment. We always have to take account of the past, and project in a strategic way for the future. But we must always be present in the moment. Sometimes the moments we experience in leadership are very difficult. But an educational leader who practices symbolic, cultural leadership will find ways of transforming immense difficulties into gifts,

into opportunities. How one deals with values, beliefs, norms, rituals, ceremonies, organizational history, stories, organizational lore, informal networks and organizational symbols is absolutely paramount in its importance because decisions around these key factors often determine the success and, more importantly, the significance of educational leadership.

CONCLUSION

In the practice of symbolic, cultural leadership, educational leaders thus need to welcome uncomfortable associates, conflict and diversity, because then the conditions would be in place for creative breakthroughs in complex, turbulent times. In following this approach, they would not be given to micro-management but would establish a system of people-based learning that is framed by some key values/priorities and loose structures, and would both trust the process and continually monitor it. In this way, they would be expected to forge connectedness of purpose, people, ideas, and understandings (Fullan, 1999), to attack incoherence (Bryk et al, 1998), and work hard at connectedness within diversity and difference because they know that fragmentation, overload, and incoherence are endemic problems in a postmodern age.

Recently, I came across this poem by Ken Gire about a dream dancer that sums up what I have been saying about leaders who attempt to temper their careerist tendencies with a calling to serve the public interest:

Stop then

from the staid and somber line.

Move out in dancing

into dreams so daring;

without them you will settle for the road

that wanders by and winds to nowhere.

Dream Dancer *(Gire, 1996, p. 154).*

In 2008, I was crossing a divided highway in Australia with an American colleague who had lived there for some time. As we got to the median, I looked right and began to step out. Abruptly, my colleague grabbed me, hauling me back to the median, just in time for a car that was speeding from the left to miss me. I was looking the wrong way! Those of us involved in educational leadership need to look another way. We need to turn careerism on its head by making it subservient to vocation. We need to use our policy-making to *infuse the work of teachers with value, meaning, passion, and purpose* by nurturing an organizational culture of strong professional norms that binds and bonds people together in pedagogically productive ways. Those of us involved in being and/or selecting educational leaders need to eschew careerism and move out into visions of school life so daring that, without them, we will settle for the uninspiringly staid road that wanders by and winds to nowhere!

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ENDNOTES

[1]   See Grimmett (2017) where I question the relevance of curriculum theory to the practice of teacher education.

[2]   The 1988 BC School Act removed principals and vice-principals from the teachers' union, naming them "Administrative Officers," legally no longer professional colleagues with teachers but formally in charge of them.