Education in the Balance: Mapping the Global Dynamics of School Leadership
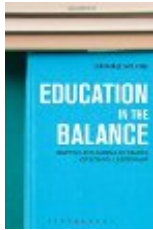
reviewed by Leslie Jones

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Education in the Balance: Mapping the Global Dynamics of School Leadership

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Wilkins presents interesting concepts in *Education in the Balance: Mapping the Global Dynamics of School Leadership* regarding principles of school leadership. Wilkins notes that innovation and greater ownership are needed in leadership. In the introduction, he identifies that *Education in the Balance* connects several related but different fieldseducational policy, globalization, philosophy, the future purpose of schooling, leadership publications, school effectiveness, comparative education, and academic disciplinary writing centered around educational geography.

In the introductory chapter, Wilkins raises the question: Why does the school leadership landscape need remapping? Globalization tends to impact so many aspects of schools and educational processes in their

entirety. It is noted that schools are reflections of society. From this perspective, all of the challenges in society then become challenges for schools. In the literature, the school leaders role is being noted over and over again to be critical to school improvement, management, culture, and functionality.

Wilkins notes in Chapter One that leaders must generate fresh ideas to shape the future. The landscape of those who make decisions in education is shifting. There is the potential for other entities, including those from the state and federal levels, to be involved with decision making for education. Such entities may include international agencies, multinational companies, and multinational consumers.

There are three aspects of education in the balance: we're approaching a tipping point because of the policies that are driven at national and international levels; decisions by school leaders need to be made that balance the competing demands from the private sector and schools; and leaders needs to consider the learning experiences of not only students, but also adult learners and educational professionals like school leaders.

Wilkins notes that Brock stresses how education has domains that are formal and informal. Wilkins suggests that Brock pinpoints the complexities of the educational needs of students, which are often not met appropriately, and suggests a need for education reform.

In Chapter Two, local and global issues are discussed with attention to spatiality as linked to educational policies.

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  LESLIE JONES' experiences in education started as a classroom teacher of Mathematics twenty-four years ago; she has served as an assistant principal and principal. Sixteen years ago, she began teaching at Nicholls State University. She loves teaching; she is presently a Full Professor. She is also an Endowed Research Professor in Education and serving as Dean of the College of Education at Nicholls State University. Her undergraduate education is in mathematics education; her masters degree is in Curriculum & Instruction (both from Nicholls State University,) and she has a doctorate in Educational Administration & Supervision LSU Baton Rouge. Her publications center on the Roles of School Leaders and School Reform. She is pleased to have a chapter published in Eugene Kennedys Raising Test Scores for All Students. She is the primary author of Passing the Leadership Licensure Assessment (1st Edition,) contributing author to - All Children Can Learn: Teaching Children the Under-Resourced Child. She is also primary author of: The Relevance of Instructional Leadership, the 2nd Edition of Passing the Leadership Licensure Assessment, and A Guide to Data Driven Leadership in Modern Schools. She has written numerous articles and present at state and regional conferences annually.

In addition, there are concepts pertinent to leadership that can be compared across different global contexts. There is a detailed discussion of how leaders will view leadership differently based on their perspectives and must understand and respect the spaces occupied by others. Multiple factors then impact learning experiences, which lead to many questions about educational phenomena:

What processes and outcomes are occurring over time?

How are mobilities influencing this development?

How is mooring influencing developments?

How are power relations influencing the developments?

How are places being changed?

How are spaces being changed? Whose spaces?

What networks are instrumental to this development?

What educational opportunities or interests are being limited by these processes?

What rationales or motivations

appear to be influential?

Most educators will agree that there are challenges in education that call for action. In Chapter Four, Wilkins notes that a comprehensive plan must include a humanitarian approach. Siccone (2011) notes that educators know what the best practices are. The challenge often comes with implementation, which somewhat aligns with points in Pfeffer and Suttons (2000) *The Knowing-Doing Gap*. This publication has a focus on all professionals, not just educators, noting the many variables that can hamper professionals from implementing best practices.

The concepts noted by Siccone and Pfeffer and Sutton must be applied as they relate to humanitarian dispositions. For school leaders, it is very important to provide facilitated leadership for teachers. It is equally important to exhibit concern for the wellbeing of whole persons.

In Chapters One through Four, much of the discussion centers around the role of school leaders in their respective school sites and how international entities can have an impact on leadership. In Chapter Five, there is a shift in the role that leaders play as it relates to impacting the educational community beyond the leaders institution. There are benefits when leaders are involved in building relationships between schools, homes, workplaces, and civic organizations.

Epstein is a leading advocate of parental involvement. She, along with her colleagues, has done a great deal of research aligned with the role parents have in improving education. She notes that there are six

kinds of parental involvementparenting, communicating, volunteering, decision-making, learning at home, and getting involved in the community. With each type of parental involvement, there are challenges and redefinitions. Many of the principles that Wilkins notes align with premises from Epsteins work. Wilkins discusses the importance of local support for schools and how education is an aspect of civil society which links parental involvement to schools. Wilkins also discusses education as a commodity, which further aligns with Epsteins work.

Wilkins notes that innovation from school leaders is necessary for the future. Such innovative ideas must also be put into practice. In Chapter Six, the importance of innovation is discussed from the perspective of context-specificity. What is innovative in one school may not be innovative in another. Innovation is a process, and school leaders must have the desire to engage in new manners to do business. School leaders must develop spaces for operation and advocate for such spaces.

There are controversial issues for which leaders must be skillful decision-makers. Wilkins discusses the necessary ingredients for educational leaders to have a stronger professional identity in these contexts.

References

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