

Rosemary Papa · Fenwick W. English
Editors

Educational Leaders Without Borders

Rising to Global Challenges to Educate All

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Rosemary Papa
Northern Arizona University
Sedona, AZ
USA

Fenwick W. English
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC
USA

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Chapter 1

The Educational Leader Without Borders: The Conceptual Frame

Rosemary Papa

Abstract This chapter examines the roles of the *educational leader without borders (ELWB)* and the connections these leaders have to humanity in the lives of children and their families through the schooling process. The relationship between social justice complexities and global schooling practices that define education as a basic human right are explored through the field of education, as well, the social science perspective offered by Nancy Fraser's three dimensional lenses of economic, cultural and political that leads to participatory parity as social justice. Ten vignettes written by thirteen scholars from a variety of global schooling experiences document children's stories written in authentic contextual settings from Nigeria, Thailand, Iraq, Haiti, Native American Tribes, American Latinos and U.S. poverty among school age children. These vignettes portray the human conditions of schooling world-wide that the *educational leader without borders* must learn.

Keywords Educational leader without borders • Nation/state/global • Economic dimension • Cultural dimension • Political dimension • Participatory parity • Ethical leadership • The 'isms' • Flagstaff seminar • Flagstaff seminar scholar

*For the individual, education is the path to achievement and fulfillment;
For the Nation, it is a path to a society that is not only free but civilized; and,
For the world, it is the path to peace—for it is education that places reason over force.*
Former U.S. President Lyndon Johnson
No Author 2012, October 22, p. 33.

R. Papa (✉)
Northern Arizona University, 25 Creek Rock Circle, Sedona, AZ 86351, USA
e-mail: Rosemary.papa@nau.edu

How Educators Shape the Context for a New Kind of Educational Leader: Four Recognitions

Cultures formally perpetuate themselves through the construction of schools. By definition schools are culturally centered socially constructed places that embrace, reflect and perpetuate a closed system of deeply held beliefs. With the rise of the nation state global schools have gradually become the embodiment of the dominant political and cultural vision and values approved by the apparatus of the nation state. As nation states compete for global economic dominance schools have become one of the means to realize that goal. Put bluntly, schools are the instruments of the aims and ambitions of the nation state.

The first recognition of an *educational leader without borders* is to come to the realization that the goals of nation state global dominance are: (1) not always compatible with the pursuit of becoming more fully human and humane as individuals; and (2) some problems of schooling fall between the borders of all nation states and are not solvable by any one nation state by itself. To explain these two positions more fully requires an explication of the context in which a new kind of educational leader is framed.

A second recognition of an *educational leader without borders* is the universal element of the ethics both for the common good and by the individual on behalf of all humanity. Social justice relies on how the *educational leader without borders* acts as a socially just leader that accepts care of others. There are ways to measure this from both the common good citizen and the individual citizen: the law test, is there a law that endorses or prevents this action?; the harm test, whom benefits and whom is harmed?; the newspaper test, is one embarrassed by an expose?; the child test, can you explain your actions to your children?; and, the smell test, which is exactly as it sounds, how smelly is your action?

A third parameter is an *educational leader without borders* is one who not only understands but lives as a member of an ethical humane community—a community which wants to know what is right and good—that organizes itself in accordance with democratic standards and ideals not only because they are good in themselves, but because they are prerequisites for the application of intelligence to inquiry.

A fourth parameter is an *educational leader without borders* is found today in what I call ‘sustaining actions,’ those decisions/actions and their relationship to the power of the nation state global which may be harmful to humanity that are easily obfuscated by rationalizing decisions (Josephson 2002) described as:

- If it’s necessary, it’s ethical
- The false necessity trap
- If it’s legal and permissible, it’s proper
- It’s just part of the job
- It’s all for a good cause
- I was just doing it for you
- I’m just fighting fire with fire

- It doesn't hurt anyone
- Everyone's doing it
- It's ok if I don't gain personally
- I've got it coming
- I can still be objective

The ethics of how the *educational leader without borders* is responsive to the global needs of children is displayed in Exhibit 1 depicting the Fraser lens and the Neo-Liberal reality. One contextual frame in this ethical humane archetype for identification of the need for a new kind of educational leader is that of Fraser (2007) whose research lies at the intersection of feminism, social justice and the politics of identity construction. Her theory of democratic social justice is shown in relationship to the dominance of neoliberalism globally.

On the left of the Exhibit 1 are the major characteristics of the theory of justice (Rawls 1971) which is part and parcel of the fabric of *educational leaders without borders*. This theory rests on the centrality of the individual and happiness of that human being as the essential goal of education and hence of schooling.

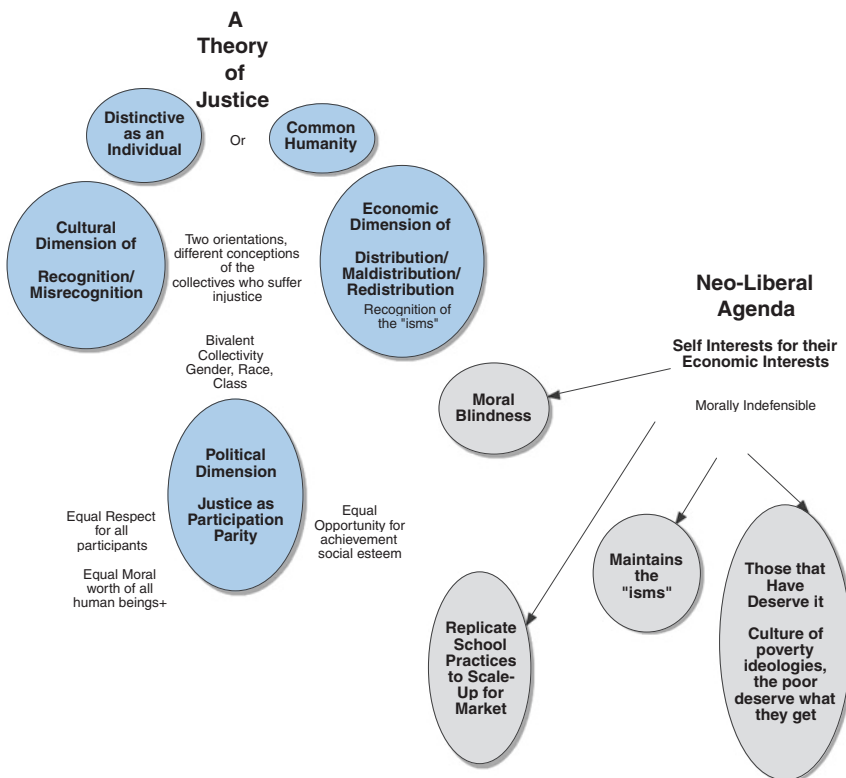


Exhibit 1 Fraser's democratic social justice and the neo-liberal agenda

When the cultural and economic dimensions are utilized in absence of the political dimension, the ‘isms’ are supported to the detriment of humanity (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, ageism, etc.). The political dimension factors in the human collective which I refer to as the ‘isms:’ justice as participatory parity must be included. Equal respect for all and equal moral worth of all human beings is the ethical archetype all nation state global peoples must embrace to ensure the lack of fairness, the lack of opportunity for achievement and social esteem for all humanity is addressed.

In contrast, the dominate vision of schooling is today connected to the neo-liberalism which is now part of official government policy and practiced in much of the Western world. The Neo-Liberal agenda is focused on a moral blindness, and ensures the ever-growing chasm of the ‘have and have not.’ The economic driver is how to make education a ‘business’ that can be easily replicated and scaled up for market expansion. The cultural driver espouses that those that ‘have it, deserve it’ and those in poverty reside there because they choose to.

We all struggle to comprehend why the world’s twenty-first century population continues to suffer from the effects of poverty and illiteracy, as well, the terrorism of the IS-Islamic State, Boko Haram, the racism of Ferguson, Missouri, etc., the realities of ensuring all children go to school and the type of schooling available is paramount to address.

The next three sections are abridged (by this author) to show the evolving nature of what is titled (Papa and English 2014; 2012) the *Flagstaff Seminar Monograph: Framing an International Imaginative Identity*. These sections conclude with the Current Vignettes of the Global Challenges for Educational Leaders Without Borders. Some figures have been updated (footnoted) throughout these sections.

Who Is the *Educational Leader Without Borders*?

Our view is that education should be universal, enlightening and liberating. *Education should draw out of humans the potentialities of a progressive humanity which is inclusive and respectful of difference.* In this we can see at once how different the purpose of schooling would or should be if re-conceptualized. Such a stance shifts the fulcrum between the school and the state by asking a set of different questions: instead of asking how can schools become universally available to all children, a better ‘fit’ of all students into them, to one which asks, ‘what are students being fitted into’ and ‘why’ as well as who benefits most from such schools?

We believe that when educational leaders are emboldened to step out of the school/state nexus that they become true ‘leaders without borders.’ This distinction may be the most fundamental line of demarcation of the concept. *We believe that humanity belongs to no one but itself.* Education is not a means to somebody’s end, including the state, but education is the end unto itself. Education so

conceived is the most open-ended process of development and democracy possible. A ‘leader without a border’ is someone who can be objective about their own role in a state system of education. It would be someone who can examine the school/state nexus and ask questions about the ends desired by the state and whether or not such ends are good for all.

Educational leaders without borders require school leaders who are culturally proficient and who can approach cultural objectivity and personal bias to the greatest extent possible. The goal of greater democracy and equality has to provide a fuller range of opportunities that render availability for all. Secondly, we have to confront any idea of a ‘zero sum game’ in which what one set of students acquires must be taken from other students’ opportunities. This dilemma is a particularly potent source of pushback from parents who may see efforts to equalize the advantages of schooling as jeopardizing their own and their children’s social or cultural advantage. Not everyone will be happy with equalizing opportunity. But we see much of the pushback met with the idea of eliminating time served [traditional length of day and year for schools] as the benchmark of schooling and as a means to enable the rapid advancement of all students ‘in the shortest time possible.’

And as part of the pedagogic process, we see *educational leaders without borders* as individuals who work to create a more socially just world society where inherited advantage is not reinforced and the wealth gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have not’s’ expanded as it is today (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).

Educational leaders without borders means that such education leaders question and stand outside while working inside, and look again at how schools work to perpetuate injustice, social division and reinforce social hierarchy. *We see schools as a leveraging institutional force for greater equality and opportunity than they are in many of the wealthier more privileged Western nations.* If one accepts this goal as a desirable definition of an *educational leader without borders*, then we ought to anticipate the kind of objections and resistance to which it will be subjected.

A Proposed Initial Demarcation of the Challenges for Educational Leaders Without Borders

A common global denominator for every country is underserved children. A total of 67 million primary school-age children were out of school in 2008 (UNICEF 2011). The number of children in poverty is one billion, every 2nd child (Barnett 1998). Even in a relatively prosperous nation such as the U.S., the Department of Education reported, “1,065,794 homeless kids were enrolled in schools in the 2010–2011 school year” (Huff Post 2012, June, 28, p. 1). Since the start of the recession in 2007 this was a 57 % increase in homeless kids. Additionally, the digital divide for the ‘haves’ and ‘have not’s’ exasperates the poverty when tied to the reality that “the internet is responsible for 21 % of economic growth in developed

nations (Alexander 2012) (In 2015, this figure has risen to 1.3 million homeless children and teens in the U.S.).¹

There are several movements occurring on a global platform, Education for All (EFA) and the Global Initiative on Out-of-School-All Children in School by 2015 (UNICEF 2011), both of which are UNESCO and UNICEF initiatives. The EFA movement “is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults” (Education for All 2012–1995, p. 1). Efforts to enroll children in school began with the EFA at an international meeting at Dakar in 2000, calling upon governments to address the “out-of-school children and to ensure equity in education” (p. 1). This led to UNICEF (2011) with UNESCO to launch a global initiative on Out-of-School Children in 2010 setting a goal of “universal primary education by 2015” (p. 1). As of 2015, this goal was not met.²

Of critical concern is the fact that schooling is a cultural process whereby each nation defines and promulgates a specific cultural view to be imposed on some or all of its children. The main feature of the political process is that it is essentially arbitrary and the culture or cultures eventually included in the schooling process assume a privileged position over all other possibilities or alternatives which could have been selected. The process of selection is most often political and value laden.

And it seems nearly universal that those who control the schooling process use it to their advantage and to enhance, preserve and protect their own social position. The hierarchical nature of most societies ensures that those whose culture is most aligned with that of the school and its values will, in the words of Bourdieu and Passeron (1979; 1964) ‘inherit’ the benefits of the schooling process. Those student populations whose cultural orientation is less aligned or oppositional may find schooling to be abrasive, hostile, demeaning and alienating. Their reaction may range from passive resignation to active resistance to eventually leaving the school altogether. The statistics worldwide provide stark evidence of who benefits most and least from the forms of schooling which have been adopted by national states. It is not an accident that they cleave along lines of the values and perspectives of the dominant cultural outlook of those who control the schools.

At the heart of this conversation the most critical relationship involves that of the school state/nation globally. And at the heart of this conversation is the matter

¹See <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2014/0923/Record-number-of-homeless-children-enrolled-in-US-public-schools-video> September 23, 2014.

²New UIS data show that 58 million children roughly between the ages of 6 and 11 years are out of school, with barely any change since 2007. According to the new paper released by the UIS and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, around 43 % of those out of school—or 15 million girls and 10 million boys—will probably never set foot in a classroom if current trends continue.

The lack of progress is largely due to high population growth in sub-Saharan Africa, now home to more than 30 million out-of-school children. Most of these children will never start school and those who do are at risk of dropping out. Across the region, more than one in three children who started school in 2012 will leave before reaching the last grade of primary, according to UIS data. June 26, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/reaching-oosc.aspx>.