

*Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage*

**Leadership for Change in Teacher Education: Voices of Canadian Deans of Education**

Edited by Susan Elliott-Johns

Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2015, 115 pages

ISBN: 978-94-6209-930-2 (paperback)

**Reviewed by / Revu par**

Lisa J. Starr

McGill University

Susan Elliott-Johns has curated an important pan-Canadian perspective on the future of teacher education from those charged with leading the way, the deans of education. The 14 voices of deans in this edited volume are representative of a cross section of educational institutions from Pacific to Atlantic, north to south, and large to small. While each chapter is distinctly reflective of the institutional and provincial landscapes, the voices are joined by common threads that illuminate the complex role of the dean, stress the importance and necessity of educational change in facilitating the learning needs of Canadian students, and remind readers of the complex nature of educational work. Readers from faculties of education will inevitably see their own deans, and the leadership they provide, in a new light as a result of insights provided by the contributors. The content facilitated by Elliott-Johns not only reminds the reader of the complex and changing nature of education, but more importantly, provides a depth of description that explains the nuances of the leadership happening in Canadian teacher education.

By illuminating the complex role of the dean, readers are provided with an emic or insider view of the intersections of leadership deans are accountable to and responsible

for. In Chapter 2, Fiona Blaikie from Brock University highlights the changing role of the dean as intermediary between university and ministries of education. Her discussion sheds light on the complex funding and financial realities facing faculties of education as they respond to the ethical dilemmas of a saturated Canadian teaching market conflicting with universities struggling to generate operating revenue through maximum enrolment. Karen Roland in Chapter 12 echoes the challenges in Ontario. She provides insight into the consensus building undertaken at the University of Windsor as they negotiated the landmark changes in Ontario. In Chapter 9, David Mandzuk likens the dean's struggle to walking a tightrope between the needs of external stakeholders like teachers' associations and government, the senior management of the university, and faculty members. While walking that tightrope, the dean must find ways to bring the interests of different parties to positively and productively bear on teacher preparation. In Chapter 12, Jacqueline Muldoon, in similarly stressing the importance of building partnerships within and external to faculties of education, emphasizes collaborative or shared leadership as necessary to a partnership model.

In Chapter 4, Heather E. Duncan stresses the importance of a philosophical approach to leadership in an era where education must address student-centred and inquiry-based learning, collaboration as well as critical and creative thinking, and problem solving. To facilitate change, trust, and stability within her own institution, Duncan advocates for a leadership style akin to a relational approach where context and relationships are central to establishing the sense of community necessary to creating change (Komives, Lucas, & McMahan, 2013). Similarly, in Chapter 7, Jane E. Lewis, referencing spheres of influence, stresses that building relationships is essential to the resilience and renewal required by the change that deans are tasked with leading. In Chapter 11, James McNinch from the University of Regina echoes this sentiment by advocating program changes that humanize teacher education and emphasize Indigenous ways of knowing.

Rosetta Khalideen in Chapter 6 calls for the rethinking of educational practices that emphasize new and innovative ways of teaching. While acknowledging education reform as no easy feat given competing agendas and inflexible policies, Khalideen places the dean at the center of leading towards an educational paradigm that, like Duncan, emphasizes "creativity, equity, responsibility of learners, teacher autonomy and collaboration" (p. 45). In Chapter 7, Jane E. Lewis provides a perspective grounded in the

Maritimes but one echoed in earlier chapters. Pre-service teachers are being confronted with the daunting task of having to reinvent an education paradigm; one that includes addressing the potential sustainability and viability of the earth. In Chapter 8, Kris Magnusson debunks technology as the answer to educational reform by emphasizing the need for new attitudes, ideas, and practices in places of learning that go deeper than the digital. He advocates for integrated practicum experiences, flexible learning environments, the evolution of the traditional timetable system, and reliance on results of learning as opposed to the minutiae like credit hours and course titles.

Throughout the book, an undercurrent emphasizing the importance of change in education permeates the thoughts and ideas put forth by the contributors. In Chapter 1, Deborah Bartlette outlines her role in leading the advancement for understanding and valuing First Nations culture in teacher education. Bartlette describes how the teacher education program at Yukon College is advancing the importance of education for economic participation. In Chapter 11, McNinch similarly talks about the importance of education that leads to economic growth in society but does so with caution in the face of neoliberal agendas. In Chapter 3, Laurent Camarata, Martine Cavanagh, and Yvette D'Entremont respond to the challenge of creating quality teacher education programs that respond to the complexity of linguistic minority contexts. Camarata, Cavanagh, and D'Entremont take up the notion of change in their discussion of French Immersion and French as a first language instruction at the Campus Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta. Like Bartlette, Camarata, Cavanagh, and D'Entremont, Ken W. McCluskey at the University of Winnipeg focuses on the distinct learning needs of those in urban inner-city environments by mobilizing teacher education for social justice. The at-risk youth often served by his program have unique learning needs that require a nuanced approach that emphasizes the dispositions of caring teachers more than characteristics of good teaching. The guiding principles McCluskey identifies are being kind, taking time to play a meaningful role in someone's life, striving to understand, letting students help, and recasting reality to nurture strengths instead of highlighting weaknesses.

Further grounding the idea of change in education, in Chapter 5, Kimberly Franklin reminds readers that the pursuit of change is done so in a move away from the techno-rational towards improving practice through mindful approaches to teacher education that emphasize humility and gratitude. Early in Chapter 5, Khalideen acknowledges the deep bureaucratic challenge in facilitating "complex and chaotic change" (p. 43).

Similarly, in referring to the urgency of a change agenda, Lewis identifies teacher education as specifically needing to be in front of a “lead-for change agenda” (p. 49). Lewis issues a call to arms of sorts, reminding the reader that the transformation of teacher education requires the empowerment of pre-service teachers to become “knowledgeable, inquisitive learners and reflective, moral decision makers” (p. 51). While educational reform is notoriously slow, the importance of a paradigm shift is as urgent now as it ever has been. Chapter 8’s Magnusson suggests caution in the face of such urgency by reminding readers that we need more than the rhetoric of technology or change in our responses. He offers a framework of core technologies that include relational technology, cultural technology, career technology, core teaching technology, and the technology of impact assessment as a means to support future directions for pre-service and possibly in-service education. In Chapter 14, Ann Sherman returns the reader to an important question, what do we really know about what makes teacher education programs successful? She outlines the intentional emphasis on taking a reflective stance as necessary to break free of preconceptions and assumptions about teaching. Though she is speaking about the learning advocated for students in her program, I cannot help but wonder if we as teacher educators would benefit from a similar turn to the reflective. Elliott-Johns closes the book by advocating for preparation and support for deans as well as further research that explores the multifaceted, complex role of Canadian deans.

Individuals interested in the future of teacher education will find this edited book offers timely insights into the challenges of leading education. Each chapter reveals details about the unique contexts, challenges, and solutions being taken up in Canadian teacher education. Within the chapters is a noticeable tone of hope and optimism for the direction that teacher education is heading and serves as a rallying cry for individuals interested in leadership.

## References

Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2013). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.