

Passing the Torch: Emergent Scholars of Canadian School Leadership

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Abstract

The rise and fall of separate departments focused on educational administration has given way to units with other larger and more diverse structures. This less specialised and more diverse setting leads to a question as to who is focused on educational administration in Canada and what types of research and writing are being produced? In answering this question, while linking established and emerging scholars of Canadian educational leadership (Anderson, 2010), this paper shares the ideas around the substance and dissemination of the concept emerging Canadian scholars in school leadership.

The first Department of Educational Administration in Canada started at the University of Alberta over 50 years ago. To my knowledge, the last remaining and distinct Department of Educational Administration is at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Education. The rise and fall of separate departments focused on educational administration has given way to units with other larger and more diverse structures. In this less specialised and diverse setting this leads to a question as to who is focused on educational administration in Canada and what types of research and writing are being produced? Answering this question led to the compilation of an edited book called *The Leadership Compendium: Emerging Scholars of Canadian Educational Leadership* (Anderson, 2010), herein called the Compendium.

This paper shares the ideas around the inception, substance and dissemination of the concept emerging Canadian scholars in school leadership. First I would like to share a little of the history of Educational Administration (and Leadership) in the Canadian context. Second I offer some discussion as to how the established and emerging scholars were linked in generation a list of emerging scholars. The is followed by a discussion of what the emerging scholars are writing about and finally I conclude with some issues and concerns I see in light of this process as well as my own experiences in academia.

The 1980's as a Starting Point for Canadian Scholarship in School Leadership

In 1981, Drs. Stephen Lawton and Richard Townsend from the *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education* (OISE) at the University of Toronto edited a book titled: *What's so Canadian About Canadian Educational Administration?* It was a collection of essays on

the 'Canadian' tradition of school administration. It served two key roles. First, it was used to discuss the influence of the large number of American professors in Canada (of whom Lawton and Townsend were cases in point) and the relative distinctions between US and Canadian scholarship in educational administration. Second, it gave a platform to a number of Canadian based scholars, many of whom were or were to become the preeminent scholars to shape the context of educational 'leadership' for the next generation. While Lawton and Townsend's book, typical of the term educational administration, reflected a broad selection of the writers, they were mostly mainstream, male, and some did hint about the complexity of issues raised when we write and speak of education 'leadership' today. Some of these writers have broadened our understanding of educational administration and enabled our transition from management to leadership. Many in this group created, inspired, or became the current established scholars in Canadian educational leadership. Lawton and Townsend's book reflected the emergence of Canadian scholars from the science of educational management or administration, to the post modern and complex arena reflective of the use of the term, educational leadership.

This initial call to reframe the study of school leadership research, from management to leadership, is apparent in the writing of Thomas Greenfield's contribution to Townsend and Lawton's book: *Who's Asking the Question Depends on What Answer You Get*. As a benchmark in the history of Canadian philosophy and intellectual thinking about school leadership, Thomas Greenfield is arguably a good place to start. In the 1980s to 1990s, Thomas Greenfield shook the academic world with the argument that a science of educational administration was not possible (Greenfield, 1986, 1991). Greenfield challenged the conventional wisdom of mainstream educational and organizational theorists, arguing that an objective or value free model of science for educational administration was neither possible nor desirable as it leans too much into logical positivism which "discourages historical inquiry, and so puts to flight any notion that scholars of administration should know their intellectual origins and the assumptions on which their field rests" (Greenfield, 1986, p. 61). Citing value distinctions and their related assumptions, Greenfield also challenges us about the use of the term 'North America' in Canadian educational research and writing. He clarifies that, "in their patterns of language and culture, Canada and the United States are not North America... research in educational administration Has been too quick to promulgate a universal set of truths about organizations and how they work" (Greenfield, 1975 as cited in Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993, p. 26).

While Greenfield's writing still challenges the world and Canadian scholarship as to how we see educational leadership (Harris, 2003 and Macmillan, 2003) many Canadian (and other) scholars can be seen as rising to the challenge to expand our concept of educational administration as leadership with a critically inspired edge. Greenfield called for the use of critical theory in educational administration as a means to better understand the contextualization of our intellectual roots (Greenfield and Ribbons, 1993). Ironically, even Greenfield is subjected to this test as Beth Young (1994) questioned some of the values and relative truths evident in Greenfield's work. Young

offers *Another Perspective on the Knowledge Base in Canadian Educational Administration* as a feminist response to reframe Greenfield. She also challenges Canadian scholars, “to make visible the Canadian schools and schooling that earlier theorizing had rendered invisible” (p. 364).

Reflective of Young, an entire generation of Canadian scholars has followed or expanded the Greenfield legacy and are producing significant contributions to the Canadian, United States, and world community. It is in the work of Greenfield and Young that we see examples of how the previous generation of scholars are linked to the established Canadian scholars that occupy the regional, national, and international scene. Again we see the increasing complexity and depth of intellectual rigor in the application of research and writing, in what most now call educational leadership, coming through in the writing of a new generation of scholars.

Linking the Established and Emerging School Leadership Scholars in Canada

The identification of an *emerging scholar* was linked to a nomination from an *established scholar*. To identify the (post Greenfield) established, Canadian focused, school leadership scholars, a simple, purposeful and informative strategy was used. First, I searched university Faculty of Education websites with the help of colleagues. Second, I looked at the membership list of the Canadian Association for Studies in Educational Administration (CASEA) in consultation with another colleague, an established Canadian scholar in school leadership, who worked across Canada, who is also active in CASEA and knows the field very well.

The combination of sources produced a list of almost 40 established scholars. As a group, they reflect a broad national and international cross section of scholars whose research and writing was rooted in Canadian scholarship. A limitation of this process may be that I have omitted some notable persons, a very small number chose not to participate, and others may not be active in CASEA, or not apparent on their university websites. But first let's look at a starting point in the discussion of Canadian educational administration and leadership.

Somewhat of a surprise was the outwardly positive and encouraging reaction from this group. Each established scholar was asked a simple question: who have you worked with that you feel will be influential in shaping school leadership in Canada for the next generation; in other words, who are the 'emerging' scholars in Canadian school leadership?

Who Are The Emergent School Leadership Scholars in Canada?

Each of the above established scholars nominated emergent scholars and agreed to assist them in preparing a paper for the Compendium, all were open reviewers and a few as co-authors, as well as agreeing to write a page or two introducing the emerging scholar. In this way there is a link between the efforts of Townsend and Lawton (1981),

the post Greenfield generation of established scholars, and the emerging scholars as the primary contributing writers in this Compendium. While I did not get all emergent scholars, I did get a list which is significant and spans the country. In two cases the emergent scholars were outside of Canada, either studying or working. The emergent Canadian scholars who were nominated and agreed to participate are:

Mike Corbett (Acadia University) by Dr. Carol Harris
 Jacqueline Ottmann (University of Calgary) by Dr. Charles Webber
 Bonnie Stelmach (University of Saskatchewan) by Dr. Rosemary Foster
 Paul Newton (University of Alberta) by Dr. Keith Walker
 Dave Burgess (University of Saskatchewan) by Dr. Larry Sackney
 G.B. Henderson (Royal Roads University formerly a School Administrator in Regina, Saskatchewan) by Dr. Rod Dolmage
 Shawn Northfield (University of Nottingham, UK) by Drs. Meyer & Macmillan
 Claire IsaBelle (University of Ottawa) by Dr. Claire Lapointe
 Ken Brien (University of New Brunswick) by Dr. Barbara Gill
 Rolene Betts (University of New Brunswick) by Dr. Barbara Gill
 Roseline Garon (University of Montreal) by Dr. Claire Lapointe
 Elizabeth Costa (University of Prince Edward Island) by Dr. Gerry Hopkirk
 Doug Furey (Memorial University of Newfoundland) by Dr. Jean Brown
 Michèle Schmidt (Simon Fraser University) by Dr. Andy Hargreaves
 Robert White (St. Francis Xavier University) by Dr. Andy Hargreaves
 Denise Armstrong (Brock University) by Dr. Paul Begley
 Erica Mohan (University of British Columbia) by Dr. Carolyn Shields
 Catherine Hands (University of San Diego) by Dr. Paul Begley

The Emerging Scholar Selection, Writing, and Peer Review Process

The nominated candidates were invited to submit a scholarly paper reflective of their research and future directions. Each paper was subjected to a mentor peer review of the emergent scholars' writing by the established scholar, as well as, a blind peer review by a panel of two reviewers for each contribution.

What Are the Emergent Scholars Writing About?

An emergent, sometimes divergent, pattern was anticipated and indeed emerged. This allowed the writing to be placed into loosely associated groups as applicable. The collection and design is very much a grounded or emergent process reflective of a deliberate effort by me to 'not' contain or constrain this writing under pre-determined themes. As such, the diversity of themes within the individual nature of the researchers, reflect a complex web of relationships which is expressed in ideas that will often cross the threshold of each section. My desire was that the writing reflect the overarching theme of the Compendium which is to find and share the works of emergent scholars on Canadian school-based research relevant to school-based leadership. Topics included

are leadership, leadership in the context of diversity, globalization, school stakeholder involvement and partnerships, and issues of technology. There are five loosely connected areas which seem to capture the essence of the direction for the emergent scholars. These five 'themes' and a description of the writing are outlined below:

Section-Theme 1: Changing realms for school administrators: The first paper in theme 1 is written by Michèle Schmidt (Simon Fraser University). Michèle writes about the mixture of accountability and marketization issues related to principals as they lead in the context of globalization. The second paper is written by Jacqueline Ottmann (University of Calgary). She is one of a significant and growing group of emerging First Nations scholars. In her paper she discusses a First Nation person's perspective on leadership. The third paper is written by Elizabeth Costa (University of Prince Edward Island and the University of New Brunswick). She outlines the school reform process in Prince Edward Island and the challenges faced by teacher and school leaders. Ending theme 1 section is a paper written by Paul Newton. Paul wrote his paper from his 'principal's chair' having taking up the principalship after completing a PhD, an interesting twist in an academic life as he discusses the theory/ practice divide.

Section-Theme 2: The emerging role of the vice- principal: This is a theme which is easy to delineate in the context of leadership scholarship as it is distinctive and specific role of the vice principal. In the *Compendium* there are three scholars writing in this area. The first paper is co-authored by Shawn Northfield (Nottingham University, UK) with Robert Macmillan and Matthew J. Meyer. Shawn reveals the development of trust relationships between principals and vice principals related to the successful (or not) succession of principals and the critically important role that a vice principal plays in supporting the success (or failure) of a new principal. The second paper is authored by Ken Brien (University of New Brunswick) highlights the intersection of issues surrounding the often legally ambiguous and role-centric duties of the vice principal. The last paper along this theme, the vice principalship, is by Denise Armstrong (Brock University) who was nominated to the *Compendium* by Paul Begley. Denise discusses the complexities and contrasts faced by new vice principals as they become immersed into their new role.

Section-Theme 3: Teacher development and resiliency: There are three papers focusing on teacher education and sustainability (resiliency) in schools. The first paper by Rolene Betts (Department of Education) uses hermeneutical phenomenology to deepen our understanding of the plight and learning experiences of Long Term Supply (LTS) teachers as new teachers in New Brunswick. This paper seems all the more pertinent given the cancellation of New Brunswick's Beginning Teaching Education Program on 2008. The second paper is written by Mike Corbett (Acadia University). Mike's paper is an example of those that cross the threshold as it could have been easily placed in another section. The first half of the paper discusses how the conventional style of leadership is challenged in the pursuit of social justice. The second part of the paper brings the issue to teacher education and this supports its place in theme 3. The third and last paper in theme 3 is written by Roseline Garon (University of Montreal). Her participation brings to the *Compendium* a side of

Francophone scholarship that many Anglophone scholars do not get to read. Roseline takes us in the direction of a more thorough understanding of resiliency factors for teachers with specific reference to the influences for school administrators and researchers.

Section-Theme 4: Expanding the boundaries of school development: This section contains four papers in which the authors seek to expand the traditional boundaries of school devolvment as it relates to influence within and beyond the school. The first paper is written by Catherine Hands (University of San Diego, US). Catherine writes about the many roles principals assume in the development of community partnerships to enrich student learning opportunities. This section's second paper is written by Bonnie Stelmach (University of Saskatchewan). Bonnie deals with the illusive role of parents and students in school improvement planning. She gives voice to a group who, while often referenced, are not as often consulted in meaningful ways regarding their role in the school improvement process. The third paper in this section is a critique of Saskatchewan's School^{Plus} community schools initiative. In this paper G.B. Henderson (Royal Roads University) uses Complexity Theory to frame his discussion. The fourth and final paper is written by Robert White (Saint Francis Xavier University). In this paper Robert shares a case study revealing the multiple and interactive influences involved in the dynamics of a working partnership between a school and a commercial enterprise.

Section-Theme 5: Moving forward and the ramifications for school leaders: The final Theme is shared through five papers drawing on matters related to educational leadership. The first paper is written by Douglas Furey (Memorial University). Doug writes about organizational change to K-12 programs using distance education as transformational leadership. The second paper is co-authored with Claire IsaBelle (University of Ottawa) as first author with H       Fournier (The Institute for Information Technology National Research Council Canada-New Brunswick), **Fran       Desjardins, and Phyllis Dalley** (University of Ottawa). A unique contribution to the Compendium as this paper was first written in French and then translated into English. Claire's paper provides Anglophone scholars with another the opportunity to access Francophone scholarship. Claire and her colleagues discuss the results of a large study of Francophone school administrators and their "Ethnolinguistic vitalization practices" in Francophone schools. Theme 5's third paper was written by Erica Mohan (University of British Columbia). Erica discusses the changing face of Canadian schools in terms of multicultural inclusivity. The concluding paper with the moving forward theme written by Dave Burgess (University of Saskatchewan) aptly looks at the emerging trends which may impact our practice and the theoretical direction for educational leadership in the future.

As the reader can attest there is much to celebrate in the active research and dissemination of scholarship for educational leadership in the Canadian context. As a Newfoundlander whose sense of identity is well entrenched, I continue to seek that sense of a Canadian identity. Having lived in 6 provinces and travelled to all of them, I

believe that much of what you see above shares that Canadian essence which is hard to pin down as we seek a sense of national identity. In concluding this discussion of Canadian leadership scholarship, I will share my concerns and hopes as I discuss the context of what is Canadian about the Canadian educational leadership.

Conclusion: What is so Canadian about Educational Leadership in 2010?

In this section I will discuss some concerns related to my experiences as framed on three operational (largely experiential) levels and as well as a result of reflecting on some of the *Compendium* papers in asking and answering the question: what is so Canadian about Canadian education administration and leadership today?

The Canadian scholarly community in educational administration, as Greenfield (1981) and Young (1994) advocated, has been moving forward in advancing research and writing both at home and internationally. Another generation of scholars is emerging. The question remains: what is so Canadian about Canadian educational leadership? The answer is, in part, an obvious recognition that, with support from the initial stimulus of the *Greenfield debates*, Canadian educational administration scholarship has broadened into a more inclusive and comprehensive field more indicative of the term educational leadership. The answer is also, in part, reflected in the significant efforts by the Canadian Association for Studies in Educational Administration (CASEA) and similar groups to build a Pan-Canadian sense of a scholarly community.

Townsend and Lawton (1981) questioned the feasibility a Pan-Canadian scholarly group given the Canadian communities relative smaller sizes within North America. This significant gain is limited; however, as I believe the answer to my question is still laden with concerns along what I see as three related 'operational-experiential' perspectives. It is within these perspectives that I have growing concerns about the challenges to our distinctive contributions to the field of educational leadership. These perspectives are based largely on my personal and professional experiences which I group as: 1) university training and work, 2) international development, and 3) responses from colleagues and publishers about the 'feasibility' of this Canadian leadership compendium.

University training and work: As a student having studied at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) and then as a professor at three Canadian universities (Saskatchewan, Calgary, and now New Brunswick), I am challenged to see distinctively Canadian perspectives in the midst of the use of US references and materials. To our credit, our universities, international development agencies, and publishing mediums are more prevalent than at any time in our history and, I argue, are second to none. Each Canadian university has a core of scholars in educational administration and its postmodern extension of educational leadership. Greenfield (1986) may have heralded the demise of the science of educational management and administration but, as noted in Young's feminist critique of his work, even he was not fully aware of the complexity and richness of what is now the study of

educational leadership (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). Thus, Canadian scholarship is rich in variety and texture as reflected in this leadership compendium, but is it intellectually distinctive to our society? Is there a Canadian society to reflect? Are we seeking this knowledge?

Perhaps reflective of the post 1980's 'free trade' economic trends, I am somewhat dismayed by the seemingly dominant 'North-South alignment' of our institutions and our researchers. Emerging writers in the West, Central, and East do not seem aware of each other's writing or research. Are our graduate students finding Canadian scholarship outside their own university community? In my teaching and reading I see too many graduate students and scholars who, contrary to Greenfield's reproach on the use of the term North America, accept that saying North American and using almost all sources from the United States is contextually and intellectually valid in the Canadian context—it is not.

In the case of this Compendium there are many examples of a tendency to 'source out' an issue using US sources which may not be the best choice contextually. For example, in one instance, in an earlier version of a paper the author references a racist comment made by a school administrator in Alabama as a "case in point" in the discussion (Anderson, 2010). This illustration may have been applicable in raw emotional and intellectual understanding of the topic of racism, but my question in a discussion of the context of Canadian schools is that surely there is a Canadian principal who said something equally as inane? If 'we' are to better serve issues of race and inclusivity in a Canadian context and not over exploit the miseries of others, maybe Alabama should be spared in this instance. Perhaps a reference to Sylvia Hamilton's film: *The Little Black School House* which deals with segregated schooling in Canada would be a better source. As Canadian scholars, we must make this effort, if we are to reflect the reality as it exists in our context.

Another and more general example is reflective of this tendency; another author cites leadership using a reference to the United States Congress (Anderson, 2010). And my view is again—Why the US Congress? Is there not a Canadian senate committee, member of parliament, or provincial representative that made similar statements which serve this interest? I wonder in the future about the many references from Canadian sources which will celebrate the end of Bush's presidency and the rise of Obama, while ignoring the rich complexity and distinctions between Stephen Harper and Michael Ignatieff. It is in this way that we cause many positive and negative aspects of our community to disappear while reinforcing a largely US centric world view. In a few exceptional cases, Canadian sources are being used, but largely due to their success in the American and international markets. Hence, Canadian scholars seem to have to do an 'end run' outside of Canada and then back into the Canadian community to bridge our internal gaps in publication and dissemination.

International development: As a trainer of school leaders and teachers in Canadian funded international development work, the bulk of material used tended to be American

with scant few Canadian sources. It is not that there is anything wrong with these American sources, or the work we did, but unless Canadian sources were specifically referenced by a team member we would go 'by default' to a data set that was largely American. As Canadians, our 'default' source seemed to be too readily reflective of US based sources; a tendency which, in my opinion, reflects two key things: 1) the global influence of American commercial interests supporting such materials in the marketing and production, and 2) the relative ease of access to these materials. The blending of Canadian materials within that global American system and our immersion in this milieu distorts and hinders relative access to Canadian materials. Canadians, as evident in this compendium, have significant things to say (and are saying it), but much of this is more relevant to our context than the US materials to which we too often defer. The overuse of US materials is part of a message as our shrinking distinctiveness which seems to be blurred in an ever increasing default to sources that are largely reflective of US global interests.

Publishing and dissemination: In an attempt to feature emerging Canadian scholars in this Compendium, it was a surprise to me that the first concern raised in a research forum presentation in Calgary on this topic was a question from a senior professor as to whether there was a "market within Canada" to support it? My naive response was that the purpose of this Compendium is to seek out emerging Canadian scholars and share their work, and that furthermore, as a country with a healthy size scholarly community, surely such an idea was feasible. The depth of this concern was driven home to me in a subsequent discussion about publishing the Compendium with a Canadian publishing house: the publisher questioned me about whether the Compendium could be made more attractive to an American audience. When I stressed that this book is an unapologetic attempt to showcase emerging Canadian scholarship, the publisher then led me into a discussion of possible grant sources. This compendium has found its way to publication, but like many other sources of Canadian scholarship that are 'out there', can scholars, practioners, and graduate students actually find it?

Finally a question to challenge us all: are we clearly identifying our work in a distinctive manner or are we 'blending in' with the larger North American market? Are we, contrary to Greenfield's assertion, running the risk of ignoring our intellectual roots and origins as we construct and propagate another reality? The answer to this ongoing concern seems to be that we are writing more. There is no shortage of research and writing. The deeper question is to whom are we 'marketing' our philosophical renderings ? Who is our audience really?

I believe we are falling prey to a tendency to erase the 'Canadian-ness' in our texts, as we try to appeal to the "North American" market (not the Global Village) which is a source of misrepresentation of ourselves. We are, in some cases, deliberately hiding our distinctiveness. Having said this, I need to be clear; we have many similarities to Americans. We have much to learn and share with them. We are also very different. This duality and distinction was evident in the work of Townsend and Lawton (1981) and is also evident in this Compendium. Finally, given that much of our knowledge and

writing is value-laden (Hodgkinson, 1991), we must remember that if we do not assert our identity in the context of our values, then whose identity and values are we asserting? I think I have found part of the answer.

The Last Words Are the Wisdom of Saul

And for those who come after, here is another part: John Ralston Saul recently released his book *A Fair Country: Telling truths about Canada*. In this discussion of Canadians, Saul suggests that the sense of who we are has been decontextualized into a French-English-North American narrative which masks our distinctive Canadian character. He states that “We are not a civilization of British or French or European inspiration . . . We never have been” (Saul, 2008, cover page). He argues that we derive our sense of ourselves and our related values from the blending of Aboriginal and newer peoples. Whether readers agree or disagree, his assertion that Canada is “far more Aboriginal than European” and should be considered a ‘*Métis nation*’ is intriguing. This reflects much of what I believe but have not been able to articulate in such a clear and distinctive manner. It also has ramifications for scholars in Canada, thus, I give thanks to JR Saul for his wisdom and look forward to future insights into the truth of who we really are.

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