Language in Leadership: A Dialogic (Re)assessment of the Four Frames Approach for Educational Administrators

Jeremy Dennis
St. Louis Community College

LANGUAGE IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A DIALOGIC (RE)ASSESSMENT OF THE FOUR FRAMES APPROACH FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

Article by Jeremy Dennis

Abstract

Educators have found the theories of Paulo Freire attractive for a variety of reasons. As more scholars in critical pedagogy highlight the interdisciplinary appeal and applicability of Freirean thought, they have attracted the attention of faculty in a wide range of disciplines and interdisciplines, including leadership studies. However, the integration of Freirean concepts with those in leadership theory can be productive and problematic for teacher-leaders. Integration has led to the emergence of transformative practices. It also resulted in the proliferation of conceptual innovations and proposals that, upon closer inspection, reveal how ideas and concepts often compete when they are (mis)appropriated. This article will examine what happens when the Four Frames Approach, developed by Lee G. Bolman and Terry E. Deal, is used as a leadership model for Freire's conceptualization of critical consciousness or conscientization. However, the role of dialogue has been excluded in the model rather than recognized as a key method for managing and democratizing academic organizations. This study will evaluate the role that dialogue plays in conscientization and its increasing importance in leadership theory. Also, it will reveal how dialogic metaphors can serve as conceptual tools that faculty can use to become more successful and conscientious teachers and leaders in higher education.

Introduction

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1990) developed a dialogic system of instruction that offers underprivileged individuals the opportunity to enfranchise themselves through emancipatory education. Freire's pedagogy enables oppressed people to use the knowledge that they gained to break the "culture of silence" that reproduces inequality and injustice. It is the development of critical consciousness or what Freire (1990) called

"conscientization" that allows individuals to assess the political dimensions and social conditions that impact their lives so that they can develop strategies that not only democratize society but also transform it. According to George (2001), conscientization describes "the ability to define, to analyze, to problematize the economic, political, and cultural forces that shape but, according to Freire, do not completely determine" the lives of individuals (p. 93). Freire (1990) claimed that schools tend to be instruments of oppression because they condition the oppressed to their plight instead of making them conscious of it. He criticized the pedagogical techniques and activities in these settings and recognized them as acts of "depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 58). Freire (1990) argued, "This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (p. 58).

Instead of depositing, problem-posing is the method that Freire developed and advocated for educational reform. Freire specifically identified dialogue as an important tool in his pedagogy (George, 2001, p. 93). Freire (1990) wrote, "Problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality" (p. 71). By using language and one's life experiences as educational themes and content, Freire was able to foster the kind of engagement and reflection that promotes critical thinking and strategic action. The interrelationship between reflection and action is known as "praxis" in Freirean thought. "Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed— even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis," argued Freire (1990, p. 75). Freire went on to state, "It [dialogue] is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one man by another" (p. 77). This principle forms the core of Freire's contribution to leadership theory. Leaders must act and manage dialogically. Managing is not only the process of directing and supervising. According to Freire, it is also a process of organizing. Organizing represents a pedagogical process that is inherently collaborative. It requires authority but not authoritarianism. Freire (1990) concluded, "Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize people—they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress" (p. 179).

Interestingly, Giroux (2015) has argued that Freirean leadership principles and management techniques might be more rhetoric than reality for many administrators in higher education. As an authority on Freirean thought, Giroux (2015) claimed that Freire's contributions to education have become conspicuous, especially during times of heightened conservatism. Giroux (2015) said, "many colleges have become dominated by conservative ideologies, hooked on methods, slavishly wedded to instrumentalized accountability measures, and increasingly run by administrators who lack either a broader vision or a critical understanding of education as a force for strengthening the imagination and expanding democratic public life" (p. 152). Moen (2017) suggested that this growth in conservatism, and more specifically its neoliberal policies, may be because leaders lack a systematic model of Freirean concepts that they can use in leadership studies (pp. 22-24). Moen (2017) posited a potential solution to the problem that Giroux presented. He applied Freire's conscientization to four models in leadership

studies in order to offer the instrumental framework or structure that he claimed academic leaders do not have in the study of leadership theories, causations, and practices or what some scholars have called leadership epistemology (Bogenschneider, 2016). The four leadership models that Moen (2017) identified for integration are Adaptive Leadership, the Four Frames Approach, Giving Voice to Values, and the Competing Values Framework. Moen (2017) asserted that one can develop a strong rebuttal to neoliberalism using metaphors, methods, and models that are familiar to its advocates, thus creating a common ground for discussions of democratic leadership. However, Moen's (2017) approach produced the opposite result. He deactivated the power of conscientization when he ignored the ways that it is constituted by dialogue. In his explication of conscientization, Moen (2017) excluded dialogism as an essential feature in the pedagogical process that leads to critical consciousness. Instead, he focused more on humanization, the act of becoming more human (pp. 24-25). This will seem ironic to many learning theorists because dialogism provides the theoretical underpinning for conscientization and the activities in each model that Moen (2017) introduced. Very few concepts outside of dialogism—the interrelation of words, language, and texts—can facilitate the practices in each leadership model used by Moen (2017): adapting (p. 25), reframing (p. 29), voicing values (p. 31), and framing competing values (p. 32).

While Moen's interdisciplinary vision is admirable, his theoretical approach presents more problems than it solves for educational administrators. This is an important dilemma to highlight because it appears to confirm the doubts that leading scholars have voiced about the value of leadership education and its effectiveness in preparing academic leaders. Drucker (1969) determined that what is taught under the name of management equates to "wives' tales" and procedures. Livingston (1971) went even further when he claimed that leaders do not learn from formal education what they actually need to know in order to be successful administrators. Academic programs and degrees do not determine effectiveness (pp. 79-81). Rost (1993) supported Burns (1978) when he argued that there is confusion in our understanding of the relationship between leadership and management. For Rost (1993), leadership and management are connected but not necessarily equivalents. He wrote, "The difference is that leadership is an influence relationship and management is an authority relationship" (Rost, 1993, p. 150). Because of the epistemological and theoretical confusion in the field, Kellerman (2010) argued that scholars are not even sure what potential leaders should learn or how to teach them. Like Rost (1993), Kellerman (2010) concluded that leadership should be an interdisciplinary area of study, but she rejected the emphasis on practice more than theory in most leadership programs. As more academics embraced the idea of interdisciplinarity, Birnbaum (2001) warned against adopting "management innovations borrowed from other settings" and applying them without considering their full implications (p. 5)

Purpose and Method

Birnbaum's (2001) assessment is especially prescient in Moen's case. The characterization of conscientization that Moen (2017) provided seems at odds with

Freire's conceptualization, which hindered Moen's ability to integrate conscientization with the four leadership models that he used in his study. Ultimately, this creates a paradox for Moen and raises important questions for leadership educators. Is there a role for dialogue as reflective criticality in our leadership paradigms? If so, what does this look like in theory and practice? These are the kinds of questions that scholars in interdisciplinary studies wrestled with as dialogism and other postmodern ideologies challenge epistemological perspectives that tend to be rooted in reductionism and disciplinarity (Klein, 2001, p. 44). As a leading scholar in interdisciplinary studies, Klein (1990; 2001) acknowledged the proliferation of competing definitions of interdisciplinarity in education. Generally, interdisciplinarity defines the integration of disciplines for a research project or educational program or experience. However, Klein (1990) revealed that many scholars and practitioners who attempt to use interdisciplinarity as an integrative approach do not realize how challenging it can be to combine subjects or concepts in order to explicate complex meanings. Interdisciplinarians have often evoked metaphors as a way to articulate what is difficult to define or characterize (Klein, 1990, pp. 13, 19). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) provided a set of guiding principles for investigating the important role that metaphors play in illuminating the kind of complex conceptual system in leadership studies that Moen tried to create. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) wrote, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (p. 5). As the human conceptual system structures and conditions thoughts and actions, it also helps to form metaphors, which represent the multidimensionality and unpredictability that man uses to define complex systems. These metaphors play a fundamental role in shaping the way that humans understand relationships in organizations and the world. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed that these metaphorical entailments not only interrelate, but they also form a coherent system or network that one can use to make interdisciplinary connections.

In this discussion, Lakoff and Johnson's principles will be used as a theoretical paradigm in order to reassess Moen's appropriation of conscientization as a conceptual tool in leadership studies. Instead of analyzing all four models, the author focuses specifically on the Four Frames Approach, created by Bolman and Deal (2017), because it is the model considered most commonly used in leadership development programs for academic administrators, according to Lindahl (2013). Moen's use of Freire's term serves as an example of the kinds of practices that Freire criticized and Bolman and Deal invalidated. This illustration was made explicit when Moen excluded dialogue as the democratizing and integrative agent in the pedagogical process that defines conscientization. To revise Moen's omission, dialogism must be reintroduced as an important theoretical idea in Freire's work and, more recently, in leadership studies. Lastly, this study will reveal how dialogic concepts can help faculty to become more successful and conscientious administrators in higher education.

Leadership Models and Conscientization

In his article, Moen (2017) claimed that educational leaders who are interested in combatting neoliberalism benefit from the integration of conscientization and four

leadership models: Adaptive Leadership, the Four Frames Approach, Giving Voice to Values, and the Competing Values Framework. One can lead using conscientization as a model of resistance, but Moen (2017) argued that one often lacks leadership paradigms that clarify and codify the appropriate methods (p. 23). Moen (2017) wrote, "What is not present is a systematic model of conscientization for use in Leadership Studies, not as a movement, but as an individual in a position of authority leading followers from the perspective of Leadership Studies" (p. 23). It could prove to be true that educators do not have much research on how one implements a leadership model through conscientization. But this is probably because many administrators are not sure why they would need this kind of model in the first place. In an attempt to break new epistemological ground, Moen (2017) identified the leadership models that he claimed are systematic approaches that focus on stages and procedures that academic leaders can use for more strategic planning for conscientization. Outside of its being an "interesting real world endeavor," readers are left wondering what criteria Moen used to determine how the four models were selected (p. 23). For Moen (2017), integration provides the kind of common discourse needed for discussing the development of alternatives to neoliberalism. He implied that conversation would also be instrumental in the building of a more democratic society and the establishment of strategies that create a higher level of consciousness and humanization. Moen (2017) wrote, "Those who participate in conversations need to speak the same language" (p. 24).

This is where Moen's argument starts to run into trouble. He created models that promoted ethical practices, conversation, and a common discourse, yet he used a Freirean concept that is inherently dialogic without acknowledging the role of language in its conceptualization. In emphasizing conscientization as humanization, Moen (2017) focused more on what Rost (1993) viewed as an element of leadership rather than the essentials of the process. In Rost's estimate, the postindustrial world has required that leaders and managers learn how to build dialogic relationships (pp. 109-115, 182). Moen's work contradicted this assessment. Moen (2017) highlighted the role of the leader-investigator in his description of conscientization, and he failed to recognize or explicate the dialogic pedagogy that causes conscientization to manifest. From Moen's perspective, the leader-investigator guides people through conscientization. Conscientization helps people to develop self-actualization and a critical understanding of their social realities. This transformation will lead to a more critical consciousness and the agency needed to transfigure one's identity and social reality. Moen (2017) argued,

By becoming more active in the exploration of one's life themes, termed *thematics* by Freire, critical awareness of reality is deepened. In determining what those thematics are, people take possession of their reality. Subjects concern themselves with links between themes, which are posed as problems inside their historical-cultural contexts. (p. 24)

When revisiting Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one will gain another view of the role of themes. Freire (1990) revealed how these themes mirror intertextuality—which is a metaphor for the interconnectedness of texts and dialogue. Themes are not disconnected or static. Freire (1990) claimed that they are generative, unfolding again

and again (pp. 91-92). Readers also learned more about the relationship between the individual and the leader in the process of conscientization. Freire (1990) clearly determined that the method of the leader is dialogic. Freire (1990) wrote, "The correct method lies in dialogue. The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own conscientizacao" (p. 54). Oppressed individuals cannot be liberated without pedagogical action. Many leaders used the methods and techniques of the oppressor, which is the banking concept of education described earlier. Freire wrote that the banking concept silences more than it empowers individuals (p. 58). Knowledge is deposited into individuals instead of being socially constructed through dialogic relations such as those between students and teachers and those between followers and leaders. Freire (1990) said, "If it is in speaking their word that men, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which men achieve significance as men. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity" (p. 77).

Dialogue and the Four Frames Approach

In "Dialogic Spaces: Adult Education Projects and Social Engagement," Rule (2004) reviewed the role of dialogue in Western thought, and he noted the contributions that Freire made in altering our understanding of language as a social force. According to Rule (2004), the term *dialogue* originated in Greece: *dia* means two and logos could mean word, reason, argument, or discourse. The meanings come together to signify conversations or discourse between two or more people. Rule (2004) claimed that

it [dialogue] also has a connotation of difference (*dia* as 'apart'): the two or more who partake in dialogue are separate and distinct as individual beings, as speakers and as thinkers, but the conversation brings them together and fashions a unity of process through their joint engagement. (p. 320).

Rule (2004) argued that dialogue is a process of unfolding and sense-making through the medium of language, and relationships are impossible without it (p. 320). Freire's work in education adds support to this assessment of dialogue. Rule (2004) wrote that Freire saw dialogue as a tool that fosters the kinds of interconnected relationships that transform one's orientation and understanding of the world (p. 323).

Unlike the dialogic philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), Freire's work specifically focused on the use of dialogue for political action. Rule (2004) claimed that "Freire links dialogue, and the changed consciousness that arises from it, to an explicit political agenda of liberation from oppression" (p. 323). As an intellectual living in Russia during a time of political repression, Bakhtin used literature and culture to express many of his most important contributions to dialogic thought. Rule (2004) helped readers to see the similarities between Freire's and Bakhtin's concepts of dialogue. Both thinkers recognized dialogue as open-ended, and both suggested that speaking allows humans to transform themselves and the world. However, there is a major distinction worth noting. Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogue actually underscores and expands Freire's applications beyond politics and education. Rule (2004) claimed, "Bakhtin's concept of

dialogue cuts across the disciplinary boundaries of philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics and literature" (p. 322).

As a Bakhtin scholar, Holquist (1990) argued that "dialogue" is the key feature and metaphor in Bakhtinian philosophy or what he calls *dialogism*. Not only does dialogism underwrite the Western tradition, but it also serves as a meditation on the nature of creation at all levels. It signifies the way that language effectuates existence itself. In Bakhtinian thought, the self is considered dialogic and dialogue allows humans to "author" their lives through their dialogues with other humans. In other words, people discovered who they are by talking to other people. Humans must share their existence. To silence dialogue is to jeopardize the existence of all humans, according to Bakhtin (Holquist, 1990, pp. 23, 28, 33). Echoing Freire, Bakhtin (1981) said, "the word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (p. 294). Forcing language to adapt to our different needs can be a complicated process, but "consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 295). In his assessment of dialogic processes and relations, Bakhtin indicated that dialogism behaves like an open system of connections (Holquist, 1990, pp. 16, 29). Bakhtin (1986) wrote, "These relations are profoundly unique and cannot be reduced to logical, linguistic, psychological, mechanical, or any other natural relations" (p. 124). Furthermore, the nature of dialogue as the web-like material that creates unity out of differences may be best described by Holquist (1990). He claimed,

The mutuality of differences makes dialogue Bakhtin's master concept, for it is present in exchanges at all levels—between words in language, people in society, organisms in ecosystems, and even between processes in the natural world. What keeps so comprehensive a view from being reductive is its simultaneous recognition that dialogue is carried on at each level by different means. (Holquist, 1990, p. 41)

According Lindstedt (2017), more scholars have applied a dialogic approach for understanding conceptual framing because it provides an alternative way to theorize about organizations and the larger culture. Lindstedt (2017) claimed that theorists now acknowledge that dialogism constitutes and conditions knowledge production. Instead of thinking primarily through the metaphor of frames, educators can also explore the ways in which language influences them and all discursive relationships. As a recursive process, dialogism has required educators to consider the dialectal nature in meaning-making and the shifting interpretations that framing constantly exhibits. For Lindstedt (2017), discourse is always interacting and reproducing new meanings and perspectives. Therefore, conflicts and commonalities are essential to epistemological processes. This plurality interconnects dominant and marginal elements in society in ways that foster the kind of social engagement and potentialities that Moen (2017) and social movement scholars have claimed that society needs. While many educators see framing as a strategy that can be used to make sense of one's environments, Lindstedt (2017) said that social movement scholars also view it as a form of negotiation. Lindstedt (2017) identified the major criticisms that social movement scholars have

against framing conceptualizations. One of them was a lack of clear definitions. The definition of culture was found to be problematic by Lindstedt (2017), just as Moen's interpretation of conscientization proves to be troublesome here.

Moen's use of *conscientization* and its integration with the four frames model does not support what Lindstedt (2017) viewed as the dialogic turn in the study of framing. In choosing to focus on humanization instead of dialogism in his application of conscientization, Moen (2017) struggled to develop and articulate the kind of leadership paradigm that he said is needed in higher education. His unorthodox descriptions of Bolman and Deal's four frames became even more unclear when he integrated Freire's concept. Moen (2017) claimed that Bolman and Deal examined "organizations through four frames: structural, political, human resources, and symbolic…. Considering how conscientization can occur through all parts of an organization can better equip a leader-investigator to create organization change for humanization" (p. 29). Moen (2017) said that the structural frame can be used to track humanization, particularly for marginalized members of an organization. The political frame provides an opportunity to discuss the ways that power is negotiated in organizations.

The human resources frame furthers the goal of conscientization by allowing workers the chance to discuss issues, goals, and solutions. Finally, conscientization in the symbolic frame requires a focus on humanization and the creation of a culture that combats oppression (pp. 29-31). Ultimately, Moen's lack of detail leaves the reader with more questions than answers. What if he had focused on dialogism as a metaphorical approach to the four frames? Lindstedt (2017) might agree that the results would be more promising. A dialogic approach presupposed the importance of connections and patterns in helping one to understand meaning-making in a world that is increasingly interconnected and complex. This appears to be the perspective that Bolman and Deal (2017) had in mind when they wrote, "The dialogue between public and private, domestic and multinational organizations has become increasingly important. Because of their generic application, the four frames offer an ecumenical language for the exchange" (p. xi).

In *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, Bolman and Deal (2017) explored organizations through "a coherent set of ideas or beliefs forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what's going on in the world around you" (p. 43). As stated earlier, the frames that Bolman and Deal developed are structural, human resources, political, and cultural. Their respective metaphors are factories, families, jungles, and temples/carnivals/theaters. Bolman and Deal (2017) wrote, "In describing frames, we deliberately mix metaphors, referring to them as windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, prisms, and perspectives, because all these images capture part of the idea we want to convey" (p. 23). Frames are also described as mindsets, schema, and paradigms. The authors used them to make their work more accessible and to represent a "set of ideas and assumptions—that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate a particular territory" (p. 12). In general, the structural frame focuses on the rational scope of tasks, the architecture of an organization and its units, rules, and policies. In the human resources frame, one

focuses on understanding people and their strengths and temperament within a group and the larger organization. The political frame emphasizes the impact of competing interests and values in an organization and the ways that power permeates and influences various relationships in it. The symbolic frame focuses on the role that meaning, culture, and stories played in an organization in order to create a sense of cohesion, identity, and purpose among the entire staff. These four frames created images of impactful leaders and managers as architects, servants, advocates, and prophets. One negotiated these frames through a process Bolman and Deal called *reframing.*

Bolman and Deal (2017) said, "The essence of this process is matching situational cues with a well-learned mental framework" (p. 12). Reframing requires leaders to improve their ability to shift and blend perspectives in order to see situations through different lenses as a way to develop alternative diagnoses and strategies (p. 12). Reframing will challenge one to move beyond reductive and operational thinking about complex problems in organizations and the world. Often counterintuitive, it also requires leaders and managers to be able to construct multiple stories or scenarios in much the same way an author writes a scene in a book or play. Thinking in terms of frames is essentially an interpretive process that is akin to artistry, according to Bolman and Deal (2017). As artists and analysts, good leaders and managers must be cognizant of larger organizational values and the greater purposes of their ideas and decisions. "Our basic premise," wrote Bolman and Deal (2017), "is that a primary cause of managerial failure is faulty thinking rooted in inadequate ideas" (p. 23). Frames can serve as conceptual tools that help teacher-leaders to assess situations accurately. They generated the kinds of scripts that can guide one through these circumstances. When frames are used as tools, Bolman and Deal (2017) claimed that it turned one into a "playful theorists who can see organizations through a complex prism" (p. 422).

Lindahl (2013) claimed that Bolman and Deal's frames are the most cited as a set of lenses for analyzing educational institutions. Lindahl (2013) wrote, "Bolman and Deal advocated that all organizational analysis, including educational planning, should consider all four frames in deciding a course of action" (p. 59). This advice is geared toward academic leaders and managers who are held responsible for increasingly complex organizational structures. Bolman and Gallos (2011) claimed that academic administrators need this kind of conceptual training in order to respond to complexity. They assessed key studies that reveal that there is a lack of leadership preparation across all administrative ranks and institutions in higher education (p. 8). Gunsalus (2006) confirmed this point. She said that colleges and universities face a leadership shortage. When officials at learning institutions do find people for leadership roles, particularly those coming from the faculty ranks, they often find that faculty do not have professional training in leadership or management.

Gunsalus (2006) wrote, "One of the most puzzling aspects of higher education is that its front-line leaders are almost always selected for qualities other than an ability to run complex organizations" (p. 1). Yet, this is the kind of skill that Siemens (2005) and Barabási (2002) said is needed in the digital age. They would agree that educators must

learn to see and to think in terms of frames, but they have to go beyond that. Barabási (2002) and Siemens (2005) argued that educators must learn to see and to theorize in terms of the networks that are always around them. Barabási (2002) contended that it is impossible to find frames and models that capture all of the complexities in the world. Scientists are trying to find less complicated ways to explain complex phenomena (p. 16). Scholars in leadership studies have tried to do the same with metaphors and dialogism.

For example, Holman and Thorpe (2003) argued that the linguistic turn in leadership studies challenges the dominant image of the manager as a scientist with that of the author (also see Dennings, 2011; Gabriel, 2000). This change makes language the central focus and key phenomenon that leaders and managers must consider in their development. For Holman and Thorpe (2003), "language is not, therefore, just a system of representation used to exchange information. Rather, language is predominantly performative, productive and formative. In other words, language does things, it makes things happen and it gives form to reality" (p. 6). Shotter (1993) imagined language as a constant flow of social activity. Influenced by the ideas of Bakhtin (1981) and the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962), Shotter (1993) claimed that our thoughts frame and organize reality "in a moment-by-moment, back-and-forth, formative or developmental process" in order to help one complete life activities and solve problems (p. 46). Words are considered psychological tools that humans use to mediate the various networks that they encounter every day. Words can never be completely isolated or ahistorical. Rather, words are networked by a stream of dialogic relations that add to the flow of conversations always already in progress (p. 52). Therefore, good leaders and managers must be good communicators and good listeners in order to negotiate the complex interactions and discursive networks within an organization. This will require teacher-leaders to be practical, collaborative, and democratic. Also, Shotter (1993) argued that those in administrative positions have to learn how to organize and assemble language in an intelligible way to make sense of the world and the people around them. Ultimately, it is through language that teacher-leaders learn to manage and lead organizations. Shotter and Cunliffe (2003) called this process *practical authoring.*

Practical authoring makes reframing a part of a dialogic practice that leaders and managers can use to construct new organizational realities. It is also a relational process where one develops intelligible formulations out of chaos and stasis. Shotter and Cunliffe (2003) wrote that "authorship is a way of being-in-relation-to others/self/surrounding and that managers must contest and negotiate who they are in responsive dialogue" (p. 21). As a metaphor and tool, practical authoring uses communication and collaboration to manage interactions and to create the conditions for a shared vision and a sense of agency among staff. As a practical author, the administrator will always have to negotiate different realities and frames in order to develop a common discourse among constituents. Good administrators must also be able to integrate and frame multiple realities and discourses in order to innovate. In doing so, they will create new ways of relating and thinking in an organization (p. 22). Shotter and Cunliffe (2003) argued that viewing the manager as a practical author

rather than a scientist can improve the cultural climate in work environments. Practical authoring places the focus on opportunities rather than problems. In an organization, results are obtained by exploiting opportunities and not simply solving problems. Practical authors understand the importance of finding the right things to do and not simply doing the right things (Drucker, 2006; Livingston, 1971, p. 83).

More importantly, practical authors created the shared values, discourses, and circumstances that fostered the kind of transparency, ethical action, and humanization that Moen (2017) envisioned. According to Shotter and Cunliffe (2003), a dialogic perspective may be even more valuable because "it draws attention to how we relate with each other ethically." They claimed that "practical authorship brings issues of social accountability and morality to the fore by emphasising the nature of our being-in-relation-to-others" (p. 30). Concerns about values and ethics in our organizational discourse do not vanish just because they may be overshadowed by economic goals. Shotter and Cunliffe (2003) argued,

a crucial aspect of ethical discourse is reflexive dialogical practice… [and] engaging in dialogue to explore how our own actions and conversational practices may create and be sustained by particular ways of relating and by implicit or explicit power relationships. (p. 32)

When managers are trained as practical authors, they can better recognize that they are responsible for creating an ethical discourse and establishing environments and frameworks that acknowledge and include different voices and perspectives. The shared experiences that grow out of these dialogues will help to create the "morally textured landscape of opportunities" for collaborative action and change in our organizations, its members, and society (pp. 32-34)

Conclusion

This theoretical overview has presented evidence that indicates dialogism can help leaders and managers in higher education to develop the conceptual skills needed to negotiate complexity in educational administration. This insight is especially significant for those teacher-leaders and mid-level administrators who must navigate the schizophrenic space between the classroom and the conference room. This discussion indicates that they can benefit from understanding and using dialogism as a "root metaphor" that bridges the gap between learning theory and leadership theory. A root metaphor often functions as a philosophy or world view that frames discourse and action (Botha, 2009, p. 432). Dialogism is the kind of perspective that Kerr (2001) recommended teacher-leaders embrace and activate as a way to develop their skills as "constructive mediators" of complexity. As a noted innovator in higher education, Kerr (2001) said that constructive mediation is the essence of the role of the academic administrator, particularly for presidents and provosts (pp. 26-30). According to Giroux (1992), this is also the essence of teaching, which is the main business of higher education. Like leading and managing, teaching is a form of mediation between differences. Giroux (1992) claimed, "we can't be good mediators unless we are aware of

what the referents of the mediation we engage in are.... We can't get away with invoking rules and procedures that cut across contexts" (p. 17). Academic leaders and managers must negotiate contexts and alter their procedures accordingly. In doing so, they will recognize that conceptual tools such as framing, authoring, and constructive mediation rest on one basic dialogic principle: Language is the metaphor, medium, and method that gives life to the disciplines and the organizational structure in all academic institutions. It may not solve all of the problems that one will encounter as an academic administrator in the future, but it is always a key feature in the conversations and solutions that develop and hopefully benefit the students that higher education must serve.

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