



Education leadership in changing learning environments: A view of the Catholic Social Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Leadership has always been an area of interest, and this cannot be less in education. In this study, the aim was to understand how education leaders safeguard the principles of the Catholic Social Teaching in their learning institutions. Through the review of literature, it is shown that the current direction of industrialization and global exponential population growth are causing anxiety and distress in societies that want to keep the status quo. This behavior is a burden to societal wellbeing, and it is changing people in an unprecedented manner. The behavior challenges leaders at all levels, but more so, the education leaders in their learning institutions. The fear of population growth and knowledge explosion in societies that were less known for influencing global politics has led to the abuse of authority by those in leadership. The fear has also led to subjugation of members of minority groups into conditions that are ethically and morally in conflict with the principles of common good, human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and stewardship. In these principles, education leaders must afford equal opportunities to all racial, cultural, and social groups to learn and to lead.

Keywords: Solidarity; Stewardship; Leadership; Learning institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Education leadership refers to a group of people who are tasked with leading education institutions and improving school management and students' achievement. As stated by Plessis & McDonagh (2021), the leadership manages school culture, improves the stability and quality of the teaching workforce, develops a positive and healthy work environment, and ameliorates student engagement and outcome. What would this education leadership be like if it were based on being rather than on behaving? How can its being or behaving improve leading, recruiting, and retaining staff in culturally and linguistically diverse learning environments? Do the behaviors and actions of these leaders conform to the principles of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and stewardship according to the Catholic Social Teaching (CST)? Do the leaders promote the common good that can lead to societal and world peace? Do these leaders promote diversity in their institutions by recruiting and retaining staff from a diverse background or are

they in a state of apprehension? These are important questions to find answers for. In this study, however, the aim was to understand if education leaders promote leadership diversity in their learning institutions.

Drawing from the work of Msila (2007), the study reports that fear appears to make education leaders less willing to recruit from a diverse racial background. Perhaps, it is important to bear in mind that when education leaders make decisions, they should do so in light of whether these decisions protect, promote, or undermine the dignity of the human person. According to the CST, the behaviors and actions of education leaders should always enhance the principles of solidarity, common good, subsidiarity, and stewardship for the greatest good of all. The CST may be understood as a doctrine that offers a new way of thinking, being, and seeing the world. It stipulates a vision for a just society in which the dignity of all people is recognized, and those who are vulnerable are cared for. The CST includes insight from the Scriptures, as well as understanding from the thinking, reflections, and lived experiences of people throughout the life of the Church (Hill & Capella, 2014).

Our daily interactions with education leaders from different institutions show that there is a lot of apprehension due to fear of exponential human population growth and knowledge explosion in societies that were less known for challenging the status quo and influencing global politics. This state of trepidation challenges human behavior in an unprecedented manner, and it may well propel the society towards self-destruction (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Because of fear, the behavior of education leaders has contributed significantly to how they manage change. In some cases, the fear has led leaders to abuse their authority and subjugate minority groups into conditions that are ethically and morally in conflict with the principles of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and stewardship (Hill & Capella, 2014). It is acknowledged and reported that when education leaders eliminate fear and embrace a diverse education leadership, they create an environment where free interaction occurs between communities of various backgrounds, and in the process, it leads to emergence of quality and unwavering future generations that can spiritually, physically, emotionally, politically, and intellectually integrate (Omar, Noh, Hamzah, & Majid, 2015).

With the view on universal education leadership, and drawing from the work of Msila (2007), citing the Apartheid era, South Africa was at odds in following the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and stewardship. During the apartheid, South Africa did not embrace equality in education leadership that included all racial groups. At that time, education leaders in the country were mainly people of European descent. In addition, education was used as a means of undemocratic social control, to create individuals who were not only short changed but also compartmentalized along racial and cultural lines. These education leaders failed to address the democratic principles based on access, full participation, and equity. It, therefore, appears that the behavior and actions of education leaders who fail to embrace leadership diversity in their institutions hinder the minority groups from flourishing in tandem with their counterparts, leading to the continuation of inequality in the communities.

The learning institutions are becoming complex because of cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic diversities. With this complexity, there arises the need to enhance and improve the capabilities of the education leaders to manage the change. For an effective change to occur, the education leaders, who include the principals, deputy principals, middle managers, and administrators, must have adequate knowledge of cultural, racial, religious, language, and social diversity or be given appropriate training on these matters so that they are able to identify strong and weak points in leading change (Dina, 2013). Presently, among nations with diverse racial, language, and religious backgrounds, it appears that Bangladesh has confronted well the vexed questions that influence its diverse heritage and cultural ethos, and this may well lead to a better education leadership (Roy, Huq, & Rob, 2020). One of the challenges involves the national

objectives to instill shared civic values through education and to address mounting intergroup tensions to bring a change for a better. To bridge the change requires that the school leaders be diverse or are directed to recruit a workforce from a diverse racial and linguistic backgrounds. When the leaders recruit from a diverse repertoire, they can remove barriers that would otherwise hinder the success of the minority groups (DuFour, 2004), and in the process, they support the principles of common good, solidarity, stewardship, and subsidiarity.

The principle of common good is a collection of social conditions that make it possible for each social group and all of their individual members to achieve their potential. It means that each social group must consider the rights and aspirations of other groups and the wellbeing of the whole human family. As such, the rights and duties of individuals and groups are harmonized under the common good because God intended the goods of creation for the use of all (Gruijters, 2016). Everyone has the right to access the goods of creation to meet his or her needs, and education leaders must not become the obstacles to this process. The doctrine of the common good emphasizes that human beings are connected with each other, regardless of race, language, and/or religion. Because people are intelligent and have free will, they have the right and duty to participate in the decisions that most directly affect them. They are to actively shape their own destiny rather than accepting the decisions of others (Gruijters, 2016).

Solidarity in education is very urgent and mandatory in the learning institutions. It has a remarkable effect of avoiding exclusion of minority groups from participation in the society and prevent homogenic dominance based on race, language, or religion (Torres, 2015). According to Lissovoy & Brown (2013), education leaders have not been sufficiently attentive to the shape and extent of racism as a global ordering of social life. In the past, countries like South Africa had used whiteness as the basis of ordering of human beings, as well as a system of material and cultural oppression (Vos, Kithikii, & Pagnucco, 2008). On this basis, several key principles that guide solidarity and important implications of the principles for teaching should focus on teachers from the minority and energize the majority to participate in antiracist activism. This action can bring about solidarity that guarantees equality, empathy, trust, and dialogue, making plans and decisions together, listening to and learning from each other, and challenging, comforting, bearing with, and forgiving each other (Vos, Kithikii, & Pagnucco, 2008).

In the last few decades, stewardship has become one of the dominant terms used to describe goals, principles, and actions that aim to achieve sustainability in natural resource management, contribute to conservation priorities, and curb environmental degradation, which now threatens societal wellbeing (Fouche, 2011). However, even within the environmental context, the definition and interpretation of stewardship vary greatly in its scale and application. In education leadership, stewardship involves principles and actions that aim to improve sustainable educational learning outcomes and resilience in the education systems at various levels (Barendse, Roux, Currie, Wilson, & Fabricius, 2016). The principle suggests that the job of education leadership is to make it easier and safer for others to find their own best ways of doing things (Hyatt & Burnside, 1982). When people act at their best, they can accomplish enormous tasks and reach their goals and that of the organization quickly and easily. The principle of stewardship focuses on three concepts and skills: human interactions, effective job skills, and determining what ought to be done. The model has five interrelated processes that guide the actions of effective and efficient education leaders, and these are assessment, appointment, allocation, agency, and accountability (Hyatt & Burnside, 1982).

When education leaders act as stewards, they can designate responsibilities to different people to perform. The leaders have the autonomy to allocate available human, financial, physical, and time resources across the institutions. Wise education leaders, who follow the principles of stewardship give others the opportunity to exert autonomy, creativity, and initiatives to carry out their responsibilities (Hyatt & Burnside, 1982). Today, most education

leaders are not adequately prepared to deal with ethical and moral issues that support the principle of stewardship in their learning institutions, and this is a big concern in leading change (Barendse, Roux, Currie, Wilson, & Fabricius, 2016). It, therefore, requires that teacher education, as important as it is, attends to ethical issues. Presently, leadership preparation programs do not seem to equip leaders well with knowledge and dispositions to make moral choices, judgments, and decisions that can provide high quality education for all. This behavior may be associated with the impending moral decay in the societies, resulting to low adherence to stewardship. Because of moral decay, teaching and leading must be guided by ethical standards that can provide high quality educational opportunities to all, ensure the acquisition of knowledge and skills so that education leaders become productive citizens, exposed to critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to maintain and improve democratic principles (Sileo, Sileo, & Pierce, 2017).

The principle of subsidiarity suggests that the responsibility of governance of an institution be placed as close as possible to the grassroots (Ayala, Bautista, Pajaro, Raquino, & Watts, 2016). The people or groups most directly affected by a decision, or a policy should have a key decision-making role. They should only be interfered with in order to support them in cases of need, and to help coordinate their activities with the activities of the rest of society with a view of the common good. Because they are intelligent and have free will, they have the right and duty to participate in those decisions that most directly affect them. They are to actively shape their own destiny rather than accepting the decisions of others (Hill & Capella, 2014). It appears that some education leaders do not reflect this principle well enough to provide optimal conditions for leading change.

METHOD

The study was conducted by carrying out a thematic search of literature on CST published in scientific journals and church documents. In particular, the principles of human dignity, the common good, solidarity, stewardship, and subsidiarity were reviewed. These words were used to search for articles on the subject using Google search engine, Google scholar, Elsevier, ERIC, Tayler & Francis online, SAGE, and other databases. Further search for articles on education leadership in the Catholic context was carried out in the same way. A total of 100 full articles were retrieved and reviewed. Most of the articles provided comprehensive descriptions of leadership in general. The themes reviewed across the articles include education leadership and the link between this leadership and the CST. The articles that did not provide enough information about education leadership in the context of the CST were excluded. Out of the articles reviewed, five provided comprehensive description of how the CST influences education leadership. The articles used in the study are referred to in the study. In the study, the principles of human dignity, solidarity and stewardship were aligned to how they influence the practice of leadership in the learning institutions. The findings were supplemented with how the education leaders recruit and retain employees in diverse racial, linguistic, and religious settings in their learning institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The study has established that majority of education leaders appear to lack the understanding of the concept of spirituality in leading change in their workplaces (Meng, 2016). Spirituality is defined as the aspect of one's being that gives rise to the possibility of self-transcendence and deepening connectedness with all things in the universe. According to Fry & Kriger (2016), spirituality involves deepening awareness that leads to cultivation of inner practices such as contemplation, prayer, and meditation, which serve to refine individual and social identity so as to include others. Being spiritual means that the thoughts that create the illusion of separateness, the illusion that there is you and a separate 'other' are removed. The lack of spirituality makes education leaders fail to embody the principles of common good, human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and stewardship, and therefore, they fail to recruit and retain a diverse education workforce in their learning institutions. There also appears to be lack of leadership that is based on oneness and constant reconciliation of apparent opposites, lack of leadership based on love, service, and presence in the now, lack of leadership based on being aware of the individual psyche or self in its relation to others, lack of leadership based on social construction of reality, and lack of leadership based on leader traits and behaviors that are appropriate to the context (Fry, 2003). The absence of these leadership qualities and characteristics makes education leaders less representative of the reality in their learning institutions. The principles of CST and the traits of leadership that can enhance the principles are shown on Table 1.

Table 1
The Principles of the Catholic Social Teaching and the traits that education leaders can possess to enhance the principles for all to thrive and succeed.

Traits of Catholic Social Teaching	What education leaders can do to enhance the principles
Common good (Barendse, Roux, Currie, Wilson, & Fabricius, 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education leaders have to believe that all the goods and services available are for the good of all, regardless of race, language, or religion. • Education leaders have to believe that they are agents of transformation for the good of all members in the society. • Education leaders have to consider the rights and aspirations of all social groups and the wellbeing of the whole human family.
Human dignity (Grujters, 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education leaders have to believe that all the people are equal in thoughts and knowledge. • Education leaders have to believe that everyone is worthy of respect and equal treatment
Solidarity (Torres, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education leaders have to recruit leaders from diverse communities to manage the affairs of the learning institutions regardless of race, language, or religion. • Education leaders have to work together without fear or favor. • Education leaders have to form new leaders because we are responsible for each other. • Education leaders have to provide equal opportunities for all regardless of race, language, or religion
Subsidiarity (Ayala,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The education leaders have to share leadership opportunities

Traits of Catholic Social Teaching	What education leaders can do to enhance the principles
Bautista, Pajaro, Raquino, & Watts, 2016) Stewardship (Fouche, 2011)	with the people to whom the service is intended. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education leaders have to commit themselves to working for change so that everyone can reach his or her potential. • Education leaders have to care about the wellbeing of the community to which the service is intended. • Education leaders have to allow development of leadership in the community where the service is located.
Spirituality (Fry & Kriger, 2009; Meng, 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education leaders have to influence the vision and goals of their institutions for all to thrive and succeed in the society. • Education leaders have to provide meaning and value of education to all beyond race, language, or religion diversities. • Education leaders have to be empathetic, forgiving, honest, kind, trusting, ethical, and patient. • Education leaders choose relationships where one has faith and relies on the character, ability, strength, and truthfulness of others. • Education leaders must not be burdened by failed expectations, gossips, jealousy, hatred, or revenge. Instead, education leaders choose to forgive through acceptance and gratitude. • Education leaders must have the courage and firmness of mind, mental and moral strength that can prevail in the face of extreme difficulty, opposition, threat, danger, hardship, and fear. • Education leaders have to be humble, modest, courteous, and without false pride. • Education leaders must not be jealous, rude, or arrogant, and they do not set themselves above others.

Discussion

Leading education institutions is a product of subtle, but largely invisible inner feelings, thoughts, state, and intuitions. Because of the current direction of industrialization and global exponential population growth, some education leaders are becoming apprehensive than ever before. These concerns, coupled with knowledge explosion in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, are creating anxiety and distress in societies that have traditionally maintained the status quo (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Because of the fundamental collective human silence to confront the inhumane behavior, there are unbearable human conditions in some learning institutions. For example, there is a lack of equitable recruitment and retention of employees from a diverse background in many educational institutions in some countries, and no one seems to take notice. This behavior challenges leaders at all levels, but more so, the education leaders in their learning institutions.

In the earlier days, education leaders had led the institutions based on fear driven principles. They were successful in controlling a large population by bureaucratic means. At that time, individuals had no other choices than to serve with an organizational commitment and virtually no ‘feel good’ factor with regard to their work. Eventually, this led to low self-esteem, low enthusiasm, and powerlessness. There was no scope for open dialogue to address the issues that were bothering the employees, which ultimately led to severe lack of trust in the institutions, and therefore, dwindling commitment (Fry, 2003). Current education institutions and leaders are

living in a dynamic environment, where fear led bureaucracy is no longer useful. This is the time to be authentic in both thinking and actions, and the education leaders have to take the lead (Sweet, 2022). This is the time of true leadership, driven by love and the spirit of service.

The dawn of new century is, however, emerging with exponentially accelerating force that focuses on global societal and organizational change (Frisk, Apelgren, & Sandoff, 2021). This force calls for a more holistic leadership that integrates the fundamental arenas that define the essence of human existence—the body, the mind, the heart, and the spirit (Fry, 2003). This ideal human condition is echoed by Maxwell in his book, *The 5 Levels of Leadership*, which describes different levels that a leader is likely to occupy during his or her personal best leadership journey. These levels are: 1. Position, 2. Permission, 3. Production, 4. People Development, and 5. The Pinnacle (Maxwell, 2011). The accelerating force of global societal and organizational change and level 4 that leaders occupy appear to fit well in the current discourse and how education leaders could safeguard the principles of common good, human dignity, solidarity, stewardship, and subsidiarity according to the CST in their learning institutions. In the level 4, good leaders invest their time, energy, money, and thinking into developing new leaders. To do so, the leaders recruit people with the right knowledge and mind from a diverse racial and social backgrounds. The leaders position the new leaders into their right places (Maxwell, 2011).

When education leaders recruit and develop new leaders, individuals can reach their potential, and in the process, transform their decisions into good actions. In the level 4 of leadership, leaders multiply leaders. This process creates a momentum, which produces new trends in leadership. The process of creating new leaders is needed in education leadership. Although it is a difficult undertaking to create more leaders from a diverse background, especially for the people who are stuck in colonial mindset, it is a must do action. If this action is effected, the change can revolutionize the education system, and as Maxwell suggested, it will give the human race a brighter future (Maxwell, 2011), where hope, common good, human dignity, solidarity, and stewardship will make their true meaning and impact.

The Catholic tradition of distributive justice is complex, and it is part of a larger philosophy known as social justice, which involves Christ's self-imposed duty of care towards all of humankind. Specifically, the Catholic tradition of distributive justice recognizes the need to distribute the largeness of society so that all can enjoy the minimum of goods necessary for living a decent life (Hill & Capella, 2014). Consistent with the principles of the CST and distributive justice, education leaders must find ways to foster a correct understanding of the human person by creating favorable conditions and abundant opportunities for recruitment, employment, and retention, provide for the wellbeing and defend the poor (Hill & Capella, 2014).

Many learning institutions are managed by education leaders who, although they profess the religious faith, they do not possess the required knowledge of it. Furthermore, the actions of these leaders are not driven by the spirit, as described in Luke 4:18. The lack of understanding of the CST and the absence of spirituality require that education leaders are provided with the utmost teaching of the church, knowing that there are influences of the secular environment that are heavily weighing on them. In addition, there are issues of difference, otherness, and 'you do not belong to us' (Ackermann D. M., 2006). How well can education leaders live across these differences? When education leaders think of difference and otherness in their learning institutions, it immediately becomes a problem of language. Different from who and other than what? Such a belief or thinking suggests that there is a central point of reference which is the norm and those who do not conform to the norm are different or the other (Ackermann D. M., 2006). This thinking should not be permitted into the learning institutions. The problem of difference and otherness has conditioned some education leaders to make decisions on

recruitment and retention that favor those who look like them or are from them. It is emphasized that the difference and otherness should not divide the people of God, but rather, should bind them as one. As the scripture says, God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27). What is the race or color of God?

The challenges that education leadership and its subsidiary organizations face today are, perhaps, different than they were fifty years ago. Today, there are several forces that make the good efforts of education leadership to dwindle. These forces include, inward focused cultures, paralyzing bureaucracy, parochial politics, low level of trust, arrogant attitudes, and protectionism attitude due to fear of the unknown (Kotter, 2006), dwindling spirituality, increasing secularization of human services, and the collapse of Christian faith and values in most societies. In addition, the current trends in global economy are creating more hazards and opportunities for everyone, and therefore, the education leaders, now than ever, need to make improvements in their engagement, employment, and retention of leaders from a diverse racial and language backgrounds. This effort will allow education institutions, not only to compete well and prosper, but also to survive in the uncertain times. The responsibility of education leaders is, therefore, to recruit from a diverse racial background, produce more leaders from this background, motivate the new leaders to deliver their best by creating a conducive environment of work, and rewarding them appropriately (Meng, 2016).

The spirit of service in education leaders has numerous conceptions but lacks clarity in construct definitions. To fill the need, in his seminal work, Fry (2003) introduced the concept of an intrinsic motivation model with spirituality in leadership. In this model, intrinsic motivation of self and followers occurs through values, attitudes, and behaviors. And as Kriger & Seng (2005) argued, the commitment of the employees is largely influenced by the leader's spirituality. Today, a leader's spirituality affects the vision and behavior of the employees and influences their commitment to the organization.

Modern theories of leadership emphasize the importance of vision, motivation, humanizing leadership (Khilji, 2021) and value-based control of clan and culture. The value-driven clan control emphasizes the importance of the role of employees in the rapidly changing environment. The key elements of modern leadership involve cooperation, consideration, agreement, fairness, and social equality (Zulfqar, Valcke, Quraishi, & Devos, 2021). This means that education leaders have to be autonomous, take initiatives for improvement, be creative, take risks, learn from the fluidic situation, and emerge with new objectives and strategies to suit the overall growth of their institutions (Meng, 2016). In this dynamic educational environment, profitability, realization of values, vision, and collective institutional responsibility to society and stakeholders accord a measure of a leaders' effectiveness (Fry & Kriger, 2009). This means that spirituality, ethical values, and acceptable leaders' behaviors are important in the recruitment and retention of a diverse education leadership (Meng, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The current direction of industrialization, global exponential population growth, and knowledge explosion in countries that were less known for influencing global politics is causing anxiety and distress to people in societies that want to keep the status quo. This behavior challenges leaders at all levels, but more so, the education leaders in their learning institutions. Because of fear, some education leaders have intentionally ignored the principles of human dignity, common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, and stewardship. Instead, they have used their positions to deprive some sections of the human family from flourishing and achieving their potential. This action of the education leaders requires a paradigm shift in leadership

perspective. Education leaders must show valor and become the agents of change for the better in their learning institutions. The leaders must transform the institutions, provide equity and equality in employment from diverse racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Such an action will create respect for human dignity and allows solidarity to take root in the community. It is envisioned that with the current trend of education across the continents, knowledge economy will become the dominant trademark in the practice of leadership, and with it, comes the need for cultural and racial diversity. Education leaders must, therefore, remove barriers of equality in their institutions and embrace the spirit of solidarity and stewardship for the greatest common good.

Because human beings are intelligent and have free will, they have the right and duty to participate in all decisions that directly affect them. They are to actively shape their own destiny rather than accepting the decisions of others. The right to participate belongs, not only to individuals, but also to groups and communities. Therefore, education leaders must provide the platform in their institutions for all to lead and flourish by being supportive of recruitment and retention of leaders from a diverse social background, regardless of race, language, or religion. In this way, education leaders will have supported the principles of common good, human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and stewardship. Based on the results of this study, more research needs to be carried out on how education leaders influence success of all students from diverse racial, linguistic, and religious backgrounds in their learning institutions.

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