

Reframing Transformational Leadership for Education and Nation Building in the Caribbean

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Educational leadership has hitherto played a subdued role within the domain of education improvement in the Caribbean. It now needs to assume a more explicit and interventionist role in that domain in order to transform educational delivery, produce better educated and skilled individuals, and place Caribbean citizens at the heart of international competitiveness. A delimitation of improvement to the teacher and local level has curtailed discourses on the critical importance of educational leadership in the arena of education and country-wide amelioration. This article examines the pivotal importance of educational leadership as an integral part of a broader transformational change programme, viz. educational improvement and economic development for nation building opportunities. The article draws on the work from three separate yet related studies, and seeks to reframe the notion of transformational leadership to encompass social justice, diversity, and spiritual values as part of leadership praxis, thus concretizing their applicability to educational leadership in the Caribbean. Traversing scholarship, research and professional practice from the USA, UK, and Caribbean, the article presents a new perspective of transformational educational leadership and innovative strategies to support leadership preparedness, applicable to the Caribbean founded on a moral imperative of social justice, spiritual values, and diversity.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, diversity, social justice, spiritual values, school improvement, Caribbean nation building

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8

Introduction

The changing context of globalization, and an inter-connected world, has altered the very landscape and context within which educational institutions operate. Within the realms of schools, and other educational institutions, there is an increasing need for the improved delivery of education to ensure that nations have effective human capacity, educated and trained citizens to source new international economic opportunities. To achieve this objective the development of transformational leadership of all education institutions is critical – schools through to higher education and their personnel must be players in developing each individual into an effective and economic-contributing citizen. Notwithstanding the increasing complexity and unprecedented change in the range of skills, expertise, and required professional attributes of effective education leadership, many educational professionals are not being adequately prepared to lead transformation and change in diverse contexts (Merryfield, 2000).

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While there has been substantive research on the notion of enhancing leadership competencies for urban education leaders located in “global city” schools in North America and England in particular, there is a paucity of literature and attention pertaining to transformational educational leadership in the Caribbean. Specifically, there has been limited discourse on potential ways in which countries in the Caribbean region may utilize new paradigms of transformational educational leadership as part of broader education public policy debate and reform to secure an amelioration of education delivery, student performativity and 21st century knowledge and skills, leading to the creation of citizens who can compete effectively in the international economic market place. One of the contentions of this article is that within the context of enhancing transformational educational leadership competencies there is a need to revisit contemporary definitions and usage of the term “diversity” and social justice in leadership. There is also a need for a renewed concentration on student achievement, skills, and national objectives to provide the basis viz. economic growth. Further, we contend that in moving towards a stronger, more effective, and expert educational leadership profession, necessitates a nuanced rethinking of the paradigm of transformational leadership. We propose a model of transformational leadership that incorporates the utility of spiritual values as part of leadership praxis.

This article considers the potential ways that educational leadership links to national policy objectives of economic development. The authors explore how a synthesised model of transformational educational leadership, informed by diversity components, social justice, and application of spiritual values, may affect the leadership praxis in the Caribbean region.

The article draws on the results from three separate and related studies (Francis, 2015; Harper, 2015; Smith 2015). The first, a research study focuses on the effects of redefining the term diversity in educational institutions, and in particular how contemporary [re]definitions of diversity have veered away from the original meaning in an effort to become more “inclusive”, which provides a disservice to students, instructors, and administrators (Harper, 2015). The second study consists of an analysis of literature and theory and explores the central importance of educational leadership, its links to student achievement and adds the dimension of ‘success’ to express the need for a particular function of leadership in the Caribbean, which speaks to the notion of nation building (Francis, 2015). The third study explores the notion of a phenomenon of transformational educational leadership informed by critical spirituality and spiritual consciousness that improves understanding of how leadership is enacted, as well as the development of leadership competencies in Caribbean schools (Smith, 2014, 2015). This study offers a range of innovative strategies and approaches to support leadership preparedness and leadership development of educational and senior level leaders.

Against the backdrop of the areas aforementioned, this article delineates a synthesised model of transformational educational leadership, which is underscored by diversity, social justice, and spiritual values.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, applicable to the research inquiry, draws on connected and inter-related bodies of literature from across three domains – (i) diversity, (ii) educational leadership and social justice, and (iii) transformational leadership through spiritual values. The framework informs the conceptualisation of a theoretical model of transformational educational leadership and nation building in the Caribbean.

Diversity

Over the past two decades the term diversity has taken on several different definitions within the institutional context and become more inclusive. According to Morrison (1992) diversity is not only confusing and controversial it is viewed as an alternative to affirmative action, which has a negative connotation in many institutions because of its association with governmental enactment of quotas. In an effort for organisations to make diversity more appealing, the term is being viewed as nothing more than an appreciation of differences that improve institutional performances (Morrison, 1992). Thomas (2001) describes diversity as a limitless number of similarities and differences that contribute to individuals' uniqueness.

Diversity can also be defined as "a process or a set of actions that typify how an organization and institution responds to diversity" (Maltbia & Power, 2009, p.41). Indeed, diversity can be defined in many ways and there does not appear to be a distinct definition of the term. There was a time when race stood at the forefront of diversity; however, the current context of its original meaning has veered in another direction. Sealey-Ruiz (2010) posits that race and racism are topics that have the unique power to join us together and tear us apart which is endemic and permanent in our society. Although, race may not be mentioned in academic or institutional contexts of diversity slogans, race is deeply embedded in our psyche and eventually spills over into the conversations we have with one another and how we treat each other. The spillage to which Sealey-Ruiz (2010) refers appears to be in line with racial stereotyping in institutions, and may be a contributing factor to the ways in which diversity is now defined. However, in the case of the Caribbean and leadership, there is a pressing need for diversity to hold on and reclaim its 'original' meaning of embracing difference. In so doing, there is recourse to the guiding principles of social justice, spiritual consciousness, and acknowledgment that each person is nurtured and supported to make a contribution to the betterment of community and society overall.

Educational leadership and social justice

Like the term leadership where there is no agreement on its meaning (Bass, 2008; Gamage & Pang 2003; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbeck, 1999; Spillane, 2006), though consensus of the important relationship between leaders and followers (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007; Spillane, 2006), educational leadership (variously referred to as principal leadership and school leadership) is an equally nuanced term (Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2010; Hallinger, 2003; Newman, 2013; Shields, 2004). Those who comprise the cadre of educational leadership, viz. principals (head teachers), vice principals (deputy heads teachers) teachers, senior teachers (Miller, 2013a) not excluding assistant principals/assistant head teachers, have an extensive role portfolio and respond to a myriad of internal and external exigencies. Ultimately it is this group of leaders who are responsible for school effectiveness and student achievement (Shields, 2004; Miller, 2013b). Like the overarching concept of leadership, educational leadership has evolved over time with shifts of leadership enactments reflecting current social 'trends' (Bass, 2008; Coleman, 2005; Grint, 2011; Hallinger, 2003). In fact, social justice is one of the new areas which has recently penetrated educational leadership research. This is reflected in the prominent position it now holds within scholarly conferences (Shields, 2014). An overview of the term is presented in light of the discourse within this article.

The notion of social justice is open to number of interpretations (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Fraser, 1997; Larson & Murthada, 2003; Ryan, 2006) and central to this concept is the exposure and confrontation of any form of marginalisation. Embedded within the notion of

social justice are respect, care and equity. The concept can be analysed from a number of diverse standpoints including race, gender, sexual orientation or disability (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Shoho, Merchant & Lugg, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). Relatedly, diversity as delineated by Daft (2008) is viewed as the “difference among people in terms of dimensions such as age, ethnicity, gender, race or physical ability” (2008, p.333). Coleman & Glover (2010) opine diversity to mean “many and different” (2010, p.6). Therefore, the common thread attaching the notion of social justice to diversity is that abhorrence of marginalisation of any groups and the promotion and acknowledgement of all individuals where their absence is visible or recognised. What is often overlooked, however, are some of the benefits that leaders from ‘diverse groups’ bring to the leader terrain viz. increase in ‘employee engagement, motivation and performance . . . access to a wider talent pool’ (Jones, 2006, p.21) and a greater knowledge resource which ameliorates the quality of decisions taken (Coleman & Glover, 2010).

In considering a paradigm of social justice educational leadership, Larson and Murtadha (2003) remind us that the main components of social justice were borne out of a movement that sought to question the traditional view of leadership. Dantley and Tillman (2006) assert that leadership for social justice analyses the circumstances that propagate injustice within society. One of the foci of this leadership is an examination of the practices and leadership power enactments, which recreate inequity for some groups as well as pursuing interventionist action to demonstrate commitment to social justice. Bailey and Charles (2010) contend that it is imperative to explore how male and female role assignment is reproduced and that this must take place at a macro level. It is, therefore, pertinent for all leaders to use the principles underlying leadership for social justice for self-examination, reflection and ‘regulation’. Shields (2004) articulates the need for moral discourse, importance of breaking silence, and acknowledging difference in schools, to be incorporated in the approach adopted by leaders (educational and national policy makers) when re-evaluating their own leadership. Ergo, social injustice within educational leadership structures, viz. intra leadership praxis, must be addressed as it may compromise the quality of leadership enactments, stymie the effectiveness of economic development and change and ultimately transformational leadership in the Caribbean. The starting point for social justice must commence with leaders who expound the virtue of that justice which is underscored by the spiritual value of “practice what you preach”.

Transformational leadership through spiritual values

Northouse (2013) defines transformational leadership as a process that changes and transforms individuals. It is concerned with values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. An assessment and understanding of follower’s motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings are all essential prerequisites of the transformational leadership phenomena (Northouse, 2013). The change agenda marshaled by the transformational [educational] leader is one that not only challenges the status quo, but also extends to and is evidenced by a transformed change and improved conditions (Livingston, 2013). This is pertinent to educational leadership in the US, UK, and Caribbean, as the ultimate aim is to make a seismic change to the countries of the region, and the ability of schools and other education institutions to successfully prepare their student communities as global citizens. This cannot occur without leaders being willing to engage in fresh and innovate paradigms of educational leadership. Transformational leadership through spiritual values and practice is considered an appropriate approach. Fry (2003) defines spiritual leadership as: “*the values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to intrinsically motivate*

one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p.694-695).

These aforementioned attributes of effective leadership are almost synonymous with the attributes of the transformational educational leadership phenomenon. Dantley (2010) also draws parallel associations between transformational leadership and spiritual leadership within the context of educational leadership. Further, in considering transformational educational leadership through spiritual values forms a race-conscious perspective, Dantley (2005) wrote: "*the transformative [transformational] educational leader, grounded in African American spirituality and critical theory will examine carefully the dissonance between what presently happens in schools that perpetuates the status quo and what could happen in schools that would bring about marked change in these institutions" (p.14).*

Smith (2014) further explores the nature of transformational leadership through spiritual values and practice as an attribute of effective leadership and particularly in defining race-conscious, culturally relevant paradigms of leadership, and adds to the body of scholarship in this domain of leadership (Dantley, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2010; Fry, 2003; Reave, 2005; Tisdell, 2003). In so doing, Smith (2014) provides a paradigm of leadership that is applicable to transformational leadership as described and understood by male African-Caribbean heritage secondary school leaders. Looking at the phenomena of transformational leadership through spiritual values and practice more broadly adds a fresh layer onto the landscape of educational leadership.

Methods

The conceptual contribution and inquiry within this article present a new perspective on the praxis of transformational educational leadership, diversity, social justice, and spiritual values, and how combined they are applicable to the Caribbean, as key elements in nation building. The empirical studies that informed each of the authors' respective studies were conducted within a qualitative tradition, with the use of secondary quantitative statistical data, and policy briefs, as appropriate, for triangulation purposes.

The first study, titled *The Effects of Redefining Diversity in Education* (Harper, 2015) draws on previously conducted research (Harper, 2013). This study [study one] focused on the effects of redefining the term diversity in education. The study explored how diversity has veered away from its original meaning in an effort to become more "inclusive" for higher educational institutions, and the need for transformational leaders to address this as an emerging issue. In essence, the term diversity has been diluted and used as a revolutionary vehicle for further exclusion. The study examines various institutional terms attributed to redefining diversity. It then takes a deeper look into statistical data, which illustrates a continuing disparity amongst African American employment despite the existence of advanced degrees.

The second study, titled *Inclusive Educational Leadership for Success* (Francis, 2015) consists of an analysis of literature and makes a significant contribution to the paucity of literature and attention pertaining to educational leadership in the Caribbean and particularly in Jamaica. This study explores some of the critical factors, including social justice, which stymie educational leadership capacity and by consequence educational improvement, the key to the amelioration of a skilled and educated workforce which is able to produce economic growth and stimulate national building. The study proposes redefined educational leadership praxis. A conceptual methodological approach was adopted through a review of academic literature and national educational documents of the Caribbean countries.

The third study, entitled *Transformational educational leadership through spiritual values and practice* (Smith, 2015), draws on previous substantive research examining the nature of experiences and leadership approaches of men of African-Caribbean heritage in a headteacher (principal) or senior leadership position in English secondary schools, who had largely succeeded in their professional careers (Smith, 2012). For this study [study three], eight participants, male secondary school leaders of African-Caribbean heritage located in London schools were identified through the use of purposive, criterion sampling. The research which was conducted as a life history narrative study used in-depth phenomenological interviews and provides evidence that for the majority of participating male African-Caribbean heritage secondary school leaders, leadership is motivated by a sense of a spiritual-centred moral purpose and commitment to providing an equitable education to students, families, and communities (Smith, 2012, 2015).

Findings

The composite results emerging from the three individual studies (Francis, 2015; Harper, 2015; Smith, 2015) offer a range of innovative strategies and approaches to support leadership preparedness and leadership development in Caribbean schools through to higher education institutions.

Diversity – education

In addition to the “unspeakable” race factor, education is another component of the diversity evolution. Educational attainment and work experience may have contributed to the slogan of what is considered “highly qualified.” This term appears to apply heavily on marginalized individuals. In Bacchus’s (2004) study he interviewed 200 participants and found that one of the top inhibitors of becoming a corporate executive in America was racial stereotyping (46% of the participants experienced), and the notion of white males looking to maintain the status quo, to which 68% of the participants agreed. Other factors included the lack of advanced education, homicide rates, and general health disparities (Bacchus, 2004; Jones, 1994). In terms of advanced education there appears to be a misguided stereotype. In Bacchus’s (2004) study the African American males held a greater number of advanced degrees than their Caucasian counterparts. This analysis was also evident in a random sample of white males in corporate America (Marquis, 2002). This is relevant to primary and secondary education because African American and Caribbean school leaders are advocates of social change and prepare students to be competitive individuals in the future work environment, particularly so for students of African descent, and those from low socioeconomic communities. It is evident that individuals from these marginalized communities face an uphill battle upon exiting the academy.

To illustrate, the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2011) revealed that 40% of all education doctorates in America are obtained by African Americans yet very few of them occupy upper administrative roles in higher educational institutions. In Harper (2013) the majority of the participants (community college chancellors) agreed that the lack of diversity at their institutions in top tier executive positions was due to personnel practices (based on preconceived negative stereotypes). There was a time in which a commitment and focus on the term diversity was used to combat racial and gender discrimination in education. However, the focus on particular terms appears to have shifted. In Maltbia and Power’s (2009) book, *A Leaders Guide to Leveraging Diversity: Strategic Learning Capabilities for Breakthrough Performance*, a table with award winning institutions and organisations acknowledged for their commitment to diversity displays

this shift. Bank of America (a corporate organisation) and Cornell University (an educational institution) are two notable organisations cited, one being an exemplar. Their respective ‘definitions’ of diversity, taken from Maltbia & Power (2009, p. 43) are as follows:

- *Bank of America* - Above all, we are about people. A philosophy of inclusion drives our organization every day and helps us win in a diverse, global marketplace.
- *Cornell University* - Open Doors, Open Hearts, and Open Minds. Cornell University’s enduring commitment to inclusion and opportunity, which is rooted in the shared democratic values envisioned by its founders. We honor this legacy of diversity and inclusion and welcome all individuals, including those from groups that have been historically marginalized and previously excluded from equal access to opportunity.

The above entry for Bank of America is a prime example of how diversity is being [re]defined in many organisational and institutional contexts, proffered as an “award winning” exemplar of organisational commitment to diversity. Cornell University is more indicative of tackling the issues of race and other marginalised variables. Conversely, Cornell’s is not the norm slogan in many institutions. In the majority of examples cited in Maltbia & Power (2009), race and gender rarely display at the forefront of the organisations or institutions commitment to diversity. The comparison between an educational institution and an organisations diversity slogan are important factors for preparing our students. Transformational leaders in a sense must transform with the times and introduce students to the realities that await them outside of “school gates”. Furthermore, in the Caribbean, it is important to reclaim the term diversity as instrumental to social justice, spiritually conscious, transformational leadership, and to actively seek to reverse the negative effects of exclusionary practices that unfairly limit the leadership opportunities available to female educationalists, relatively to their often less experienced male counterparts.

Diversity and Transformation

Diversity tends to begin or stop short with human resource hiring practices and is often based on consistent stereotyping. The discourse on diversity within educational establishments and institutions is often one that is centered on the nuances, liberal extension, and application of the term “diversity”. It is incumbent on transformational leaders, as organisational change and thought leaders, to counter attempts to dilute the term diversity, and rather persuade the organisations and institutions they lead to, what Sealey-Ruiz (2010) refers to as, unpack their cultural knapsack - an imaginary backpack individuals carry around with them that illustrates their uniqueness indicative of their cultures. One of these intractable problems amongst others resides within the praxis of educational leadership, the topic to which we now turn.

Educational Leadership in the Caribbean

Student achievement continues to be a key preoccupation of educational leaders and the scholarly contributions to the debate pertaining to the correlation between leadership and student achievement are extensive, varied and enduring (Gaziel, 2007; Leithwood, Anderson, Mascall & Strauss, 2010; Taylor, 2010; Van de Grift, 1990; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004;). In the Caribbean, student outcomes have received increased trans-regional focus. However, underscoring this focus are common objectives which transcend the aforementioned countries

national policies. There is an emphasis on building a robust quality education system, skilled work force, 'innovative people', a fair, caring, cohesive society, and human capital all of which are directed toward ensuring economic growth and hence marking national success (Beepat, 2013; MOE, 2009; MPHE, 2009; MOE, 2012; PIJ, 2009; World Bank, 2013). The solidification of (educational) leadership capacity is identified as vital not only to educational improvement enabling student achievement (Beepat, 2013; MOE, 2012), but also to the edification of an internationally skills-ready citizenry recognized as a crucial contributory factor to economic growth (World Bank, 2013).

Educational leadership, therefore, needs to have a much broader reach in the Caribbean context. It must move beyond the school gates and align with the national priorities in order to produce educational improvement, as well as a more skilled, educated, and knowledgeable workforce, who will be the catalyst for economic growth. Newman (2013) reminds us that policy dictates what will have an effect on the school leadership praxis. Miller (2013b) observes an obsession by legislators, academics and the general public with leadership. The role of educational leadership cannot be overlooked and any blockage, in terms of retrograde aspects of that leadership, must receive attention in the quest for nation-wide transformation. Educational leadership is emblematic of national success.

One of the features of the education system throughout the Caribbean region is that it is a female-dominated profession, namely from early years to the tertiary sector (Bailey, 2003; Miller, 2013a): in Jamaica, 89% of teaching work force is female (PIJ, 2013). Despite the preponderance of females in the education system and their concomitant stronger educational outcomes, women are over represented in lower status roles and endure higher levels of unemployment (Bailey, 2003; Bailey & Charles, 2010). Within the domain of educational leadership women are well represented, but there is a disproportionate higher level of men in leadership positions (Bailey, 2003; Miller, 2013a). Consequently, a tranche of qualified female professionals are excluded from the decision-making process at leadership level and 'talent loss' is being experienced (Bailey, 2003; Livingston, 2013). Miller (2013b) points out that drawing on the expertise of individuals within a school can enhance leadership capacity and effectiveness and particularly this is applicable to female personnel.

Centralisation is another feature of the education system in the Caribbean and impinges on every stratum of educational delivery and education leadership. Evidence reveals a correlation between the quality of education and the level of independence that a school has to respond to the needs of those in the local milieu (World Bank, 2013), viz., centralisation stymies quality education. Further, centralisation results in principal and policy maker level decision-making (Beepat, 2013) and a lack of autonomy for schools (World Bank, 2013). Centralisation in the Caribbean currently permits the exclusion of well-qualified staff from contributing their expertise to influence the quality of education provided.

Gaps in accountability measures are nestled within this centralised education structure and in the case of Jamaica these gaps were identified by Caribbean Policy Research Institute, CaPRI (2009), as a reduced level of stakeholder involvement in educational delivery; lack of surveillance of student performance, teacher performance, standards and underutilisation of leadership hegemony. Resultantly, accountability systems were implemented in Jamaica in 2012 (MOE, 2012). However, in the inspection round of 2013, over 40% of the 205 schools inspected in Jamaica were judged to be unsatisfactory in terms of leadership and management with poor accountability being cited as an issue with respect to principals and school boards (NIE, 2013). Poor accountability is a barrier to creating educational institutions which take responsibility for

the standards of their establishments and the outcomes of the children that they serve. The net of accountability must be widened and centralisation deconstructed to capture critical leadership potential to transform education and produce well-skilled individuals.

The exclusion of women from educational leadership roles and professional groups from participating in building that leadership capacity via centralisation and reduced accountability is both an equity and social justice issue. It permits the reproduction of inequity, and stymies creativity and a leadership praxis fully attuned to national priorities.

Transformation leadership through spiritual values and practice

Transformational leadership and effective collaboration are integral to successful educational [school] leadership (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). This is particularly true in the exercise of a paradigm of transformational educational leadership through the use of spiritual values and practices, as enacted by leaders of African descent, located in the US, UK, Caribbean, and across the diaspora (Smith, 2014). There is some evidence to suggest that for these leaders, leadership praxis is motivated by the sense of a need to support one's community, be that geographically located or culturally and ethnically congruent, in order to make a difference (Smith, 2012, 2014). This communal aspect of leadership, and particularly within the notion of transformational leadership, is synonymous with the African proverb, and ideology that "it takes a village to raise a child" (as cited in Beckford & Leluke, 2013, p.162). Leadership that is bounded by a strong correlation between cultural and ethnic identity of senior educational leader and the student and wider communities that they serve is further evidenced as most supportive and effective. This signals the potential strength of a transformational change agenda in support of nation building within a global economy context that is directed by expert educational professionals through a reframed paradigm of transformational leadership that incorporates notions of diversity, social justice, and spiritual values.

Faith and Spirituality

The concept of spirituality is very distinct to and differs from religion in that "religion is an institutionalized space where spirituality may be nurtured and celebrated" (Dantley, 2010, p.214). This is an important distinction in understanding the notion of spirituality in leadership and as part of transformational educational leadership.

Faith as an attribute of spirituality - a belief in God or Supreme Being, was identified in study three (Smith, 2012, 2015) as a culturally prominent component and enabling influence in the pursuit of leadership ambitions and leadership praxis by the participating eight male educational leaders of African-Caribbean heritage in London Secondary schools. When asked to describe the key sources of support and encouragement throughout their professional journey most of the participating leaders spoke of the utilisation of faith-based attributes to support and facilitate their personal career pathways and leadership ambitions, with almost one-third of all respondents identifying faith and a belief in God as a key influencing factor.

- *I have a strong faith in God. Not that I would say I was a practising Christian but within myself it is something that I can draw on. (Participant 6)*

One school leader, participant 1, spoke specifically about the role that faith played in his approach to leadership and leadership praxis.

- *If you are going to take time out and think about a supreme being or something like that you need to take time out in your life to do that. Get into a program, going to church or something. (Participant 1)*

The research also provides evidence that participating male African-Caribbean heritage secondary school leaders are intentional in their approach to leadership and leadership praxis. For the majority, leadership is motivated by a sense of a spiritual-centered moral purpose and social justice mandate. These leaders demonstrate a commitment to narrowing the educational opportunity gap through providing an equitable education to students, families, and communities from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Smith, 2012, 2014, 2015).

Significance of the Research

The adage “it takes a village to raise a child” is particularly salient in exploring educational leadership dimensions appropriate for the countries in the Caribbean. Leadership is strongest and most effective through the efforts of many and not the few. This leadership is developed to create a fairer and more inclusive society that provides meaningful opportunities for every individual citizen to have the chance to contribute to the success of society and economic growth of the nation.

This article is significant because it contends that reframing transformational leadership to tackle systemic issues within the education system and leadership itself can deliver educational improvement necessary for economic growth and nation building in the Caribbean. Additionally, the research highlights important implications for the field of education in so far as it: contributes to the discourse surrounding transformational leadership effectiveness; challenges the “inclusive” re-definition of diversity; re-centers the criticality of social justice for all as a moral imperative; enhances the understanding of spiritual values, its applicability, and implementation in education; and offers strategies to deliver Caribbean nation building.

Conclusion

Educational leaders need to willingly respond to the call “*Whom shall I send?*” They are well positioned to become key architects in the formulation and enactment of a vision of transformational leadership for education and nation building in the Caribbean. By incorporating notions of diversity, social justice, and spiritual values within their own leadership praxis, these transformational educational leaders exhibit confidence in their ability, as well as that of their leadership teams, schools and countries to meet high expectations, and to utter a positive affirmative response, “*Here am I. Send me!*”

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