ABSTRACT: Through long interviews with five outstanding male educational leaders, the authors share their stories and primary lessons on leadership development. The stories portray leadership as being perceived primarily as an evolutionary process characterized by family and teacher nurturance, community and spiritual centeredness, and responsive caring. This study aims, primarily, to share the stories of these exemplary leaders. Secondly, the researcher hopes that the findings and conclusions might contribute to the discussion on how such responsive and effective leaders evolve. The researchers emphasize the celebratory purpose of the study, and caution against generalizations to leadership theory.

Effective school leadership in Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension the Anglo-Caribbean region is seen as a corollary of high academic achievement, positive morale, and where the educational administrators and policy makers judge the institution to be satisfying related laws and policies. There is no shortage of resourcefulness in schools and school leadership in Trinidad. The problem lies in the allocation and management of these resources. According to Conrad & Brown (2003), this situation is further complicated with: the overabundance of rhetoric; paucity of political will; entrenchment of elitism disguised as meritocracy in the provision of services; an overly centralized and restrictive bureaucracy; and the unsupported integration of students with disabilities in regular schools (Shah, 2001; Marge Report, 1989).

The responsiveness of educational leaders, educational and leadership programs to the needs of all students become critical. Educators must maximize resourcefulness, with minimal resources. Exemplary teachers and leaders should be identified, valued, celebrated and portrayed as models. The participants of this study have served at national and Caribbean-wide levels at elementary, special, secondary, central administrative and university levels, and are identified with effective leadership. These five participants have facilitated significant changes within the national system of education, despite debilitating constraints and centralized, disabling bureaucracies.

The organizational model of the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago is based on traditionalist bureaucracy. This model with its colonial roots of “underlying hierarchical order, its emphasis on rank, boundary, and division” (Helgesen, 1990, p. 271) is a handicap to school effectiveness and reform. Despite these odds, some leaders emerge. They care for and inspire, transform, and transcend the challenges of the bureaucracy.

Theoretical Framework

With over 75 years of research and some 350 proposed definitions emerging from this journey, there is yet no clear unequivocal understanding or definition of leadership (Stogdill, 1950). Stogdill had opted to describe leadership as a process, which influences group activities regarding goal setting achievement. Pfeffer (2003) along with Smircich and Morgan (1982) however propose a move away from leadership as a process, to a product-oriented interpretation, where the leader is an identifier of the important; a facilitator of change and consensus. Senge (1990) equates leadership with developing vision and values, servicing by modeling, and teaching through fostering learning for all. Bolman and Deal (1991) describe leadership as a relationship based on shared vision, purpose and values, stressing commitment to passion, trust, flexibility, interpersonal skills and understanding of followers. For Gardner and Lashkin (1995) leadership refers to how one significantly influences the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of a group through “stories” that persuade or exemplify social action in one’s—or the group’s—interests.

The compulsory and involuntary nature of education and the ages of students which make schools particularly vulnerable to the influence of leadership (Senge, 1990). Such influence involves extensive active and responsive interpersonal communication (Crockett, 2002). Effective educational leadership demands just, spontaneous, crisis-oriented decision-making to unpredictable problems, frequent interruptions, and episodic work patterns (Secumski-Kiligian, 1993). Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) refers to such leadership as a pervasive pressure to maintain
harmony and peace, in an ethos of traditionalism, ambiguity and uncertainty.

Leadership as motivation from within

Such leadership and climate—be this formal or informal—are viewed as critical factor in effectively administrating, influencing, and negotiating inherent moral, instructional, political, managerial, and social or interpersonal role demands (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). Bailey (1991) urges a move in this direction, away from the bureaucratic–traditionalist mode. Bailey urges a shift to a more intrinsically motivated transformational style, where one serves as a social architect, facilitator, and coach; as well as servant-leader (Greenleaf, 1980). Sergiovanni (1996) supports this, endorsing the need for recognition of values that call on personal experiences, insight, empowerment, community/ professional and school norms, caring and emotion. Schools and their governance, he posits, represent special systems, primarily because they serve as transitional places between home and the larger society.

In this context “relationships between educators and students are characterized as being in loco parentis teachers and administrators are in “a collective practice that resembles a shared stewardship” (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. xii). Kanter (1993) argues that “Empowerment, a vital component of transformational leadership, must rest fundamentally on . . . flattening the hierarchy” (p. 276), to develop better, more autonomous and powerful leaders. Transformational leadership thus represents a contemporary, progressive, less hierarchical, and widely accepted leadership model. One must also be knowledgeable, caring, authentic, committed to advocacy; and able to dynamically structure meaning, recognize purposes, celebrate culture, and honor all in the community of learners (Crockett, 2002; Fuchs, 1999).

Sergiovanni (1996) distinguishes education leadership from other administrative models for the following reasons: (a) the unique moral character of the work environment; (b) autonomous, educated, and permanent workforce; and (c) both the regularity and unpredictability of variables affecting the school milieu. Leaders with positive attitudes tend to value diversity, and are more likely to support programs targeting individualization of instruction or intervention; and to recognize the principals’ central leadership role. Sergiovanni (1996) and Beck (1994) among others appeal for a leadership that epitomizes an ethic of “caring.” This is characterized by acts done out of love and natural inclination (Noddings, 1995), with the goal of helping each student optimally actualize socially and academically. This process warrants a responsive leadership (Crockett, 2002).

Research on the constructs of an “ethic of care” and leadership styles are associated positively with educational reform (Pazey, 1995). The ethic of care offers a new morality of leadership involving reflective practice about purpose, values and beliefs (Sergiovanni, 1993). They alter customary roles through decentralized decision making, broadening of power, authority and accountability bases (Elmore & Fuhrman, 1994); and enhance inter and intrapersonal relationships, a key supportive factor in positive teacher-leadership (Zinn, 1997). Caring leadership also contributes to authenticity, positive intentionality, spirituality and sensibility (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). These are pertinent in terms of productivity, quality of life, and related constituents (Duignan & Bhindi).

Witherell and Noddings (1991) posit that building, sharing, and exploring stories are the primary vehicles for teaching caring. Kohn (1991) proposes that the place where caring dispositions will best be learned is where leader and peer interaction is intense and regular, and where learning is evident. Leaders need to make and take time to talk and listen to their subordinates and colleagues, and to attend to their needs. They need to encourage the development of constancy and continuity through shared rituals, routines, and interpretations. When educational leadership is characterized by care for others, participants as educators, parents, or clients will see and reach beyond themselves. Lipsitz (1995) warns, without caring, “individual human beings cannot thrive, communities will become violent battlegrounds, the democratic experiment must ultimately fail, and the planet will not be able to support life” (p.665).
An ethos of care and concern for others serves as a spirit that eclipses self-centeredness and subversion (Brendtro, et al., 1990).

Spiritual connections

Such leadership is neither magical nor inherited. It is a continuing learning process in which there are lessons to be learned (Senge, 1990). However, some researchers posit that one’s philosophical base or sense of morality infuses the various elements that undergird leadership. This higher calling . . . this superior source . . . illustrates moral awareness, which is considered fundamental to leadership (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

Morality is a non-partisan sensitivity to deep and enduring meaning and interconnectedness to something greater than the self (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). It is akin to spirituality and not analogous to religion. Spirituality reflects a more transcendental awareness; an attitude or way of life that recognizes what we might call spirit but without the institutional affiliation (Noddings, 1995). Spirituality exudes the presence of a relationship with a higher power or being that affects the way in which we conceptualize and interact with the world (Fry, 2003). Spirituality is described
as the source of one’s search for meaning in life and a sense of connectedness with the world (Zinnbauer, Pegament, & Scott, 1999). Spirituality has also been referred to as a “meaning system” by Solomon and Hunter (2002) in that it asks the question: What is my purpose and role for my students?

The positive connections between leadership and spirituality has been extensively investigated and established. Researchers include but are not limited to, Fleischman’s ‘vocational’ and ‘social membership’ aspects (1994); Fairholm’s ‘servant-leader/follower/organization triad’ (1998); Giacolone and Jurkiewicz’s ‘interconnectedness and interplay in organization, team, and individual values’ (2003); Kurth’s ‘spiritual practice dimensions’ (2003); and Pfeffer’s ‘workplace practices that sustain values’ (2003). It is within this context of leadership as motivation, as transactional, transformative and transcendental (Sanders, Hopkins, & Geroy, 2003) that this study shares the primary lessons of these five educational leaders. We look at their development, commitment to education and determination to make a difference.

Methodology

This qualitative inquiry uses life history and the topical interviewing approach aimed at generating insights but not generalizing about them (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviews are semi-structured and in-depth and similar to with biographical interviews and personal stories (Reinharz, 1992). The researchers and interviewers become learners, and strive to get participants to describe their stories in as much detail as they are comfortable with. Further questions were introduced to provide clarity and understanding. What is important, ethical, complete and accurate remain the responsibilities of the researchers (Rubin & Rubin). This method of data collection decreases the researcher-participant “distance” and maintains the distinctive voices of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). The narratives were coded, content analyzed and emergent themes and stories were analyzed using the Constant Comparative Model (Guba & Lincoln).

This approach to analysis combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of constructs observed. Phenomena are identified, recorded, and classified; then are systematically and continuously compared across categories, and common themes. Relationships between constructs and interviews are also identified and explored. This process continues throughout data collection, coding, and analysis processes. By continuously feeding back into the process of category coding and analysis, the discovery of new topics as well as new relationships are facilitated.

The guiding questions are based on our objective of sharing the experiences and life stories of participants as they apply to educational leadership. The questions are: (1) What do the testimonies of these participants reveal about their evolution as educational leaders? (2) What are some of the experiences and perceptions that characterize these participants as educational leaders? (3) What are the ways these leaders believe we can foster the development of educational leadership.

Identification and selection of participants

The criteria used in the selection process were very specific. The individuals had to have been educators with a national reputation for excellence through their advocacy, innovation, referent knowledge, and unquestionable contribution to the improvement of the quality of education at a national level.

This study follows and relates to a doctoral study completed in 1999, which shared the oral histories of four exemplary women educational leaders. For that study one of the primary researchers had held a meeting with principals and senior educators of regular and special education schools. From that meeting, a list of potential exemplary educational leaders was developed, which included men and women. The participants of this study represent some of the men who comprised the list. Four of the five participants of this study are among the top four ranked at the initial meeting. The fifth participant was ranked seventh, but selected since the fifth ranked person was unavailable for interviewing and the sixth person’s interview was never completed. The researchers of this study do not intend to imply that these participants are the only worthy educational leaders who have contributed at a national level. However, these individuals meet the criteria established for inclusion in this study. We have changed names to protect their identities.

Introducing the exemplars

Elgrin and Ronaldo represent the special education fraternity. Elgrin served at national and regional levels of teaching and leadership, within state systems and local community sectors. He is highly respected for his knowledge, and has an enormous amount of information and ideas on education and special education within the Caribbean region. Ronaldo has served as an alternate school principal, advocate, innovator, and leader among special educators. He continues to serve the community as a college professor.
Avron, Kellison, and Ramesh are illustrative of educational leaders within the regular education sector. Avron and Kellison are college professors. Kellison’s special area of interest is in education and policy development, whereas Avron is committed to a model of teacher education that addresses reflective practice, critical inquiry, national identity and personal liberation. Ramesh is a primary school principal and regional leader of the principal’s association.

For purposes of this paper, we present the results in two parts: (i) the major elements that these participants use to construct leadership and (ii) the emergent “stories” that underpin their experiences.

Characterizing Leadership

Participants indicated their understanding of what leadership meant within the educational context. There were four emergent elements common to all: leadership as –developmental, -advocacy, -caring and responsiveness, and - sense of responsibility.

Developmental

All participants portray their leadership attributes as developmental. They link this evolutionary process directly to their childhood experiences and the responsibilities they were given. All participants identify their parents as primary models. Elgrin and Ramesh single out their fathers as their earliest models. For Elgrin, his evolution was set in specific phases of his life; as a preschooler, in elementary school, in high school, in teachers college, as a teacher and ongoing.

Leadership is not the course you take in college…or the position that you gain because of your formal education. It is not something you are given before or after birth…some gold spoon that says your dad was a leader so you are now being given the dose of leadership. It [Educational leadership] is about who you are as a responder to the lessons of growing up [long pause] over time . . . years.

Avron, Ronaldo, and Kellison assert that their style of leadership has being shaped by mothers and mother-figures. Ronaldo speaks of his mother who although very short as very tall in organizational skills, enthusiasm, and creativity. Within an hour, she will come up with innovations to problems that involved collaboration and brainstorming. This could range from deciding what to cook to completing homework, to planning how we would deal with an irate father with an inadequate paycheck on a steamy Friday. We were quite poor and often had to settle for “lime bud” tea or curried green papaya.

All five participants recognize the roles played by family models and “wonderful educators” who were tough, and did what they thought was “for your own good.” Many of their behaviors might now be deemed repressive even abusive. Avron considers the importance of the bond developed with early exemplars and the recognition of a relationship between followers and leaders.

As a child growing up you understand that bond and you don’t want to break that bond. It is not that you are vying for the love of your parents to the denial of your other siblings . . . but whatever mother asks you to do, [you] try to do it. Now if you are in a big family, sometimes the resources are not there to give everybody everything. So it was like “Ok, who we should take on this trip to Port of Spain or to San Fernando? Well we cannot take Henry because he did not do so and so as we asked him too.” It looked as if I was being favored whereas most times I was being rewarded for being a good follower.

A sense of advocacy

The concept of leaders as advocates was another important characteristic. Ronaldo and Elgrin portray their development as leaders who had with an early sense of responsibility and advocacy on behalf of others. Ronaldo, the first of seven to a working class father and semi-literate mother remembers “learning how to cook, wash, tidy the house and take care of” his siblings by the time he was 11 years. He also had to defend his mother against his father. For Elgrin, also the first of seven, in a more privileged home his watchword was “service”. He sees his education in leadership and educational leadership as an ongoing journey in the service of others.
I remember as a child my father sending me home to polish the shoes of the older people because they can't bend. We had to go and sweep their yards [or] . . . to bring water to fill their barrels. On some Sundays he asked me to visit and read the newspaper for them. I had to write letters for my father . . . [who] was not a lettered man. When his friends wanted to write, I [was] the person.

Ramesh describes his early childhood “of dire poverty” when as children of a farmer they suffered for many things except books and food. His biggest lesson he identified as on advocacy and love for all.

My big lesson on advocacy, which also connects to my love for all my children [students], my school and community, starts with one teacher. He said ... “Tell your father I want to see him.” When my father came, he [my father] said, “I know why you called me sir. It is because my two children are the only two children who do not take lessons in your class.” He took the offensive. He continued: “The truth is that I cannot pay for the lessons.”

Well, Mr. H [the teacher] gave him a very stern look and lecture. ‘I did not call to talk money Mr. R. I called to let you know that you have two very promising children. All I want you to do is to send them to class. Let’s not talk money here.’ Now he [the teacher] was a man of African descent. That “story” stayed in my mind all through primary, secondary school, and teachers college. It used to haunt me. It was always on my mind that someone from another race stood up for my betterment. How can I show this affection that was given to me?

Kellison credits his family and “key mother figures” with instilling in him his sense of responsibility and advocacy. One of five, with one sister, he identifies his mother and grandmother as his earliest “teachers”, mentors, and advocates.

When I look back, at that, they [grandmother and mother] had every reason to be people who were discontented, upset, quarreling about life, regretting things . . . because nothing was going [good] for them. Yet, I have never met people who were more contented, very reflective, thoughtful. [They] would share any and everything that they got. You grew up with that as the normal way of living.

**Active in caring.**

Common to all participants was the concept of leadership as caring. They assert that to be an educational leader, one must possess an innate responsiveness to the needs of others. It is in response to needs that one demonstrates caring. Thus caring is active, not passive, and is an essential element of their emergence as leaders.

Elgrin describes caring as a natural attribute, which is associated with one's experiences and philosophy. He describes caring as a lifelong behavior characterized by empathy, concern for fairness and the other person's well-being, and a readiness for advocacy. “If you ever care for another, it means you would have been dared to and would have dared too.”

Elgrin sees two key elements to responsive and caring leadership. One is discernment. The other is the facilitation of realistic experiences that differentiate yet combine the provision of care and caring practice. A caring professional is one who “would seek to help others through a relationship.” He laments the implications of having teachers who:

Switch off and switch on their care. They have a role and responsibility to perform and they do what they are supposed to do, what I call a pseudo caring. When they are off duty, that care is gone. It’s switched off. My feeling is that your [ethic of] care has to be constant. You have to be that kind of person.

Avron conceptualizes educational leadership as essentially a human and humane social relationship that makes use “of all affective instincts and energies” and where the care is not only the ends, but also the means to a better education and society. Such leadership aims at “maintaining and sharing a vision” within a continuously “changing context.”

Persons responsible for educational change--including teachers--should embrace a relationship characterized by compassion for the followers. Once you are teaching you have to care for followers-- teachers or students.

Avron affirms that caring is evidence of a relationship.

We embrace those who are potential models [caring leaders]. What is good, what is wise, what is genuine, what is true . . . we embrace all these models for they are trying to obtain a better humanity. Besides that, being genuine,
being authentic develops trust and a readiness to take risks . . . to be vulnerable ... to care for. If you are in teaching and you think that you don't care, the best thing to do is to get out of teaching.

Emergent Stories

The stories of these participants reveal connectedness to community, to “other” and the role of family, as key themes in stories as educational leaders.

Community connectedness

Connectedness to the community, which might also be identified as “community connectedness” refers to a sense of belonging to a primary group. These “primary” groups of our participants might include the extended family, the school, the neighborhood, or any specific advocacy or supportive entity. The concept of community connectedness is a common thread running through almost all their perceptions of themselves as leaders. Elgrin speaks of leadership as “visioning for the community.” This concept is closely linked to Ronaldo’s “sense of mission”, Kellison’s “responsive service” and Avron’s “centered leadership.” Ramesh describes his leadership as “giving back with interest to the community”.

In these settings, where nurturing and responsibility were modeled, a sense of commitment, discipline, and a readiness to serve others seem to have emerged. The home is a micro-community and this, along with the broader community; provides experiences where all participants emerge with testimonies of the influence of communities, as person or context, upon their sense of leadership. The relationship is symbiotic - the participants benefited from the lived experiences, and in return, the community benefits from the participants’ willingness to give back, to serve and adopt the mantle of leadership. Each participant recognizes a relationship--a symbiotic one--between leadership and followership. The latter need not always agree with the leader but might share the common goal or mission.

Avron and Ramesh demonstrate their respect for and value of their followers through attentive listening. As they assert, it is important to be accessible, and be considerate and accommodating of divergent views, and be willing to collaborate in the interests of the institutional goals and persons served.

Ramesh sees the followership as the spoken and unspoken partnership and opts for a casual but slightly distant style during the workday. He stresses however that “We always make sure that at the end of the term [semester] there are considerable more fun times among faculty as a whole group rather than stressful times” He also emphasizes the role of communication.

I am very particular how I speak to my staff. In fact, I make it my business to really know each member. I know and respect their many moods. I know when and how to talk with each person.

All participants epitomize a concern for leaders and followers, and the overall nourishment of the community.

The end-product was that I was seeing children in my school community progressing significantly… there was a change in intellectual attainment, behavior and attitude. More importantly was the attitude of parents. There was a gradual change in attitude of the parents, not only to me, but [also] to other teachers. I let parents know that they are important stakeholders in the school climate … they form an integral part of the school and its programs.

Valued by all the participants, community-connectedness has been linked to positively to academic achievement. The research indicates that this could be positive or negative depending on the contextual variables that are most prevalent. The community provides the reinforcement of messages about resilience, perseverance and “hard work”, the value of education, social and racial identity (Duncan, 1994; Demo & Hughes, 1990; McAdoo, 1985; Ogbu, 1981). We note however that disentangling the interrelated influences of family and community remains elusive. In the case of these participants, four of them from lower-end working class parents, their communities provided a stable, small context that proved immensely supportive.

The role of family and other mentors

The stories of the participants reveal the enormous influences of mothers, grandmothers and other “mother figures” on the evolution of the participants as leaders. We also note all participants of this study were from large families.

Ramesh and Kellison place special emphasis on the role of mentorship in their evolution. They attribute most of their
accomplishments to the blessings and the advice received from family members and fellow professionals.
Throughout these stories, the roles of mentors—regardless of their gender—were valued, even though it is evident that for most of the participants, women and mother figures were their primary mentors. For Ramesh, teachers consistently served as mentors and leaders in his schooling.

If I have nine [mentors] - seven or eight of them are either my teachers when I was a child or principals when I became a man. I don’t consider mentoring to be a professional development thing only for adults but a personal development thing too. There was always someone watching my back even when I might have wanted to be left alone… I remember a couple of them well. This lady used to simply call me up ‘Son you can do better than this. This is not your quality work here. I know you to be someone who writes better than this. You go back and do this over the way that I know you can do it’. These things stay with me.

Kellison singles out his grandmother, along with an elementary school teacher, a principal and a high school teacher as his most influential mentors. His “star” however is his grandmother, who consistently challenged him to synthesize his schoolwork.

My grandmother was the kind of person who did not understand everything that was going on in school, but she would ask you and you would have to tell her. She would say ‘what did you all do in school today?’ And I would say ‘Geometry’ and try to get rid of her. But she would say, ‘What is geometry?’ Or when I tell her ‘Well…we did Pythagoras, she would say, ‘What is that? Bring it to me let me see.’ So, I am in school and they [the teachers] are teaching, and I am thinking, “How am I going to summarize or explain this to my grandmother when I get home!” She was a very, very quiet little lady, but very influential and smart.

Parenting and mentorship within the family played a critical part in the lives of all the participants. For the most part, parenting emerged as the responsibility of the mother or extended mother (grandma). Fatherhood seemed mostly invisible. Elgrin initially celebrated his father’s lessons on discipline and volunteerism and the fact that his dad ‘minded’ him but later on revealed that his father’s style did not prove nurturing enough for him as a child. This juxtaposition of roles where Dad provided care and mother was caring was not atypical of stereotypical Afro-Caribbean families (Cervannes, 2001). Ramesh’s relationship with his father remained positive; his dad being exemplar and nurturer, in no way diminishing his relationship with his mother. This pattern is not inconsistent with Indo-Caribbean family life, characterized by the idealized joint and extended family, male headship, female deference to male authority and Hindu beliefs and practices (Cervannes). Nevertheless, among all participants, parents and parent-figures held high expectations for their son’s development and emphasized the importance of education and success to the family and community. The most common descriptors for the parents who facilitated their persistence as learners included that they [the parents] were authoritarian (Luster & McAdoo, 1996) very engaged in their schooling process, and had very active extended families, which might include “godmothers” and neighbors or life long friends of their parents who were often described as “Aunties or Uncles.”

We note however that three of the participants—Avron, Kellison, and Ronaldo—identified mother figures as their primary exemplars both as academic and leadership models. This recognition of “mother figures” was despite the fact that only Avron’s mother was “educated” and a teacher. These three participants also shared deep respect for women and a readiness to identify positively with feminist issues provided that they are not “anti-all men” [Ronaldo]. There is no blame designated to the mothers who often led if not “fathered” them, nor was any blame attributed to the fathers who they felt might have been more evident in their growing experiences. There is an assumption that femininity and womanism (Collins, 1996) were the tools used by their mothers to assert themselves in the cause of the family.

**Authenticity, moral and spiritual awareness**

All five participants stress the importance of being genuine and trustworthy. They link genuineness with some dimension of morality. Whereas there is no thick description of morality, spirituality, or religion in the story s of the men, three of them—Elgrin, Avron, and Ramesh—are all very active in their respective churches and related community organizations.

These indicators—the participants’ value of service and attitude towards the community of individuals and a higher calling—illustrate moral awareness and spirituality, which is considered fundamental to transformational, caring, authentic leadership (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997; Gilligan, 1982). Morality is not analogous with religion, but is more akin to spirituality and a non-partisan sensitivity to deep and enduring meaning and interconnectedness to something greater than the self (Duignan & Bhindi). Spirituality attests to a readiness to goodness, through helping others and
concern for relationships and communication (Gilligan).

Caring is portrayed as an important construct in the evolution and evidence of spirituality. Caring is associated with one’s mission, experiences, and connectedness to the divine. Caring was referred to in the construct as “critical”, a “lifelong process” synonymous with a concern for another person’s feelings and having a responsibility for his/her optimum growth, and related to motherhood which was stressed not as just limited to the role of childbearing.

The participants shared concerns about the apparent decline of caring and spirituality in the contemporary world, and the tendency by some to see caring as a feminine attribute. The participants hoped that caring leaders would be identified and accepted as models and that career counseling and discussion about the need for caring leadership and caring professional practice might encourage more young people, particularly men, to enter the field of education.

Conclusions

This study presents influential stories in the lives of five educators accepted and celebrated within their communities as exceptional educational leaders. The results reveal much they have in common. They are all products of large families, experienced early assumption of responsibilities, have a strong sense of community, benefited from modeling other exemplars and formal or informal mentors, recognize spirituality and authenticity as having contributed to their growth, and emphasize a respect for their followers. Two common threads emerge as their recommendations to facilitate the effective leadership that schools need: (1) more selective recruitment and (2) leadership preparation.

Recognizing that none of the participants were trained as leaders but assumed leadership, it is not surprising that the emphasis is on character, and recruitment policy and practice.

It is instructive, that while the participants place much emphasis on the personal character of the leader, they do not minimize the importance of leadership preparation.

Furthermore, it is an endorsement of Avron’s observation that “you learn to be a leader by following the models of those whose leadership you accept” and Elgrin’s notion that leadership is about responsiveness to needs of others and “a lesson of growing up . . . over time . . . years.”

The participants urge teacher and educational leadership preparation that nurtures an ethic of care and a resolve to act in the interests of the community and country. Leader preparation then accommodate extensive and diverse experiences to facilitate an appreciation for diversity of needs and learning styles, service to communities, and collaborative practices. Participants proposed a range of assignments from activities that take teacher-candidates to the community as stewards to the establishment of mentorship programs that help teacher candidates recognize teaching and learning as collaborative processes. These suggestions speaks directly to reform of the teacher selection process, the assessment policies and practice of national and regional training institutions, and the hiring policies of the government and school boards. (See George & Quamina-Aiyejina, 2002).

References


**Author Notes**

Dennis A. Conrad, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education at the State University of New York - Potsdam. His research interests include educational leadership and inclusive settings, Caribbean Studies and education, and learner diversity and differences. He also serves as a Board Member of the Eastern Education Research Association.
Launcelot I. Brown is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Foundations and Leadership at Duquesne University. His research interests focuses on the Caribbean and addresses the role of school leadership and other organizational and wider systemic factors that impact the effectiveness level of the school. He is an Associate Editor for the journal Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice and the Co-chair of the AERA SIG Research Focus on Education in the Caribbean and Africa.

Jean B. Crockett, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida. Her research interests address administrative issues at the interface of special and general education with a particular focus on policies and practices that foster the learning and well-being of students with disabilities. She is the special education editor for the Journal of Law and Education.