Leadership Perspectives and Influences: A Conversation with Five Leaders in TESOL

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Abstract

This article draws on some of the initial findings of a qualitative research project that seeks to describe and interpret the leadership perspectives, significant events, successes, challenges and relationships that impact the leadership practices of five internationally renowned leaders in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The methodology used in this study is narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Using a convenience sample the study seeks to explore leadership perspectives and identity formation at the level of lived experiences situated in a complex, globalized TESOL context with rapidly changing characteristics. The specific findings include the leadership perspectives and practices of five TESOL leaders; the influences that have shaped their leadership development and how they became leaders in the profession. Data were drawn from electronic interviews and were analysed using an inductive process of identifying similarities and differences across the participants' stories. Drawing on writing techniques of fiction used in narrative inquiry (Richardson, 1990; 1999), the findings are presented as a fictitious panel discussion and are interpreted in a concluding reflection.

 Key words: leadership, TESOL, narrative inquiry

Leadership concepts for TESOL

In recent years there has been an ever-increasing focus on the importance of leadership in TESOL. As evidence of this, consider the various professional development programs offered with an emphasis on leadership in the field since the launch of the TESOL Leadership Development Certificate Program. This paper draws on the initial scholarship in TESOL leadership (Anderson, 2009; 2012; Christison and Murray, 2008; Coombe, McCloskey, Stephenson and Anderson, 2008; Murray, 2005; Pennington and Hoekje, 2010; Stephenson, 2008) and also necessarily draws on leadership perspectives that are of value for the TESOL profession from the extensive leadership literature in other fields with a focus on situational, servant, shared and teacher leadership. In the next section the primary aim is not to define leadership or review previous studies on leadership, but to set up a framework of leadership perspectives used in the analysis of participants' responses and deemed significant for understanding leadership in TESOL.

Leadership in TESOL necessarily operates within a complex, rapidly changing global environment and it requires diverse, strong and innovative leadership skills. The tensions that leaders face on a daily basis in TESOL worldwide place unique pressures on leaders and make it increasingly important that leaders in the field learn from their leadership experiences and continually pay attention to context and the future (Pennington and Hoekje, 2010).

The professional context is also a critical component in shaping leadership identity in TESOL. Similar to Pennington and Hoekje (2010), Murray's (2005) "ecology of leadership" evokes an image of leadership in TESOL that is context sensitive and one which addresses the intercultural nature of TESOL and the challenge of constant flux. A situational leadership approach suggests that there is no one best leadership style for all situations. Rather, TESOL leaders should remain flexible in order to meet the changing needs of context and situation (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993).

Another leadership approach which is clearly compatible with leadership in TESOL is Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership. In this humanistic view of leadership the leader is focussed on service and the needs of others. Its characteristics which are listed by Keith (2010, para. 4) include "listening and understanding; acceptance and empathy; foresight; awareness and perception; persuasion; conceptualization; self-healing; and rebuilding community". For Greenleaf (1970) servant-leaders are leaders who initiate action, are goal-oriented, dream great dreams, communicate well, withdraw and re-orient themselves, and are dependable, trusted, creative, intuitive, and situational (Keith, 2010).

The wider leadership literature distinguishes between leading as the quality of one person, the appointed leader, and leadership as a collective phenomenon where leadership is the responsibility of all (Harris, 2005). According to Nemerowicz and Rosi (1997), the characteristics of shared leadership include seeking a common good; actively participating interdependently in the process of leadership; working to enhance the process and to make it more fulfilling; communicating effectively with an emphasis on conversation; valuing democratic processes, honesty and shared ethics; recognizing that the quality of people's interactions is the distinguishing factor rather than their position; and evaluating leadership by how people are working together. From this perspective successful leaders are those who share leadership, understand relationships, and recognize the importance of reciprocal learning that lead to shared goals and outcomes (Harris, 2005). These effective leadership practices are also evident in the TESOL profession. As Anderson (2009; 2012) comments shared leadership in TESOL is a social

process which empowers individuals to learn together to make their work more meaningful and effective. He advocates five core skills for TESOL teachers to "lead from behind" in order to serve others and is similar to Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership. Such distributed approaches allow for increased opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles and as Stephenson, Dada and Harold (2012) discuss the distribution of leadership can result in team oriented cultures and the development of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). What is significant for TESOL is the realization that leadership is the work of everyone (Lambert, 2002) and that shared and collaborative approaches to solving challenges in TESOL are more effective (Stephenson, 2008).

Many of the characteristics of shared leadership are evident in the concept of teacher leadership also prevalent in the wider leadership literature and another critical component to understanding leadership in TESOL. Typically teacher leader roles have been at three levels – the classroom, the profession and the organization (York-Barr and Duke, 2004) and although not new, the term teacher leadership has been given little attention in the context of TESOL. Teacher leadership is anchored in the belief that all individuals have knowledge and skills that can be shared to enhance individual and collective learning in a school (Stephenson, Dada and Harold, 2012) and this concept of leaders as learners and the importance of valuing learning for all TESOL professionals is affirmed by scholars such as Anderson (2009), Murray (2005) and Stephenson (2008).

A further consideration which is crucial to understanding leadership in TESOL is the way its leaders actually become leaders. Too often, leaders in TESOL find themselves practicing leadership as they 'learn on the job' without formal training, coaching or mentoring (Shannon, 2003). Similarly, Lieberman and Miller (2004) report that many teachers learn to become leaders through trial and error. Bailey (2002) reports that her leadership learning occurred on the job as she practiced interpersonal skills, management and leadership skills, professional communication skills and time management. In fact she states quite emphatically "I don't think I've ever learned so much in my life as I learned while serving as a volunteer leader of TESOL" (2002, p.32).

In this article, through narrative inquiry, it is my aim to share the leadership perspectives, learning, and processes of leadership identity formation from the perspective of five practicing leaders in TESOL. The specific research questions that were used in this paper are:
1.   What are the leadership beliefs, perspectives and practices of the five TESOL leaders?
2.   What influences have shaped the five TESOL leaders?
3.   How did they become leaders in TESOL?

Methodology

Narrative research

Drawing on Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity formation and narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), the lived experiences of five TESOL leaders and the meaning that these leaders attached to what happened in their lives as leaders were explored. Narratives of experiences are an effective means to structure beliefs and practices of leadership into meaningful units and to make sense of the behavior of others (Bakhtin, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). Through storytelling, leaders engage in narrative 'theorizing' which may result in further discovery and shaping of their professional identities resulting in new or different stories (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). Because people live out their

lives in a storied way this study privileges positionality and subjectivity. Relativism rather than absolute truths is at the core of this qualitative approach. A social constructionist perspective is also taken where the changing meaning of events for these TESOL leaders is located in history and culture. The methodology used acknowledges that all personal stories are selective and open to editing and change (Polkinghorne, 1998). As such, in keeping with a narrative inquiry approach, the findings cannot be generalized and should be regarded as representations open to other interpretations and contested meanings.

In contrast to traditional research, narrative research enables the telling of stories of specific events and draws on engaging writing techniques of fiction using "imaginative renderings" such as exaggeration, dramatic recall, and unusual phrasings to meet literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude and interest (Richardson, 1990; 1999), thus making the research more accessible. In this article I chose a fictitious panel discussion format to present the findings because such facilitated dialogues follow a previously agreed framework. The focus in the discussion is on moving individual practice and learning to new levels as individuals challenge their own and each other's thinking, assumptions, values and beliefs. Whilst the findings are clearly not representative, through the use of the participants' stories five TESOL leaders are given a voice, illuminating their lives and leadership experiences.

Sampling

Initially, a purposive sample of 30 male and female leaders, acknowledged for their highly visible international profiles and their broad and rich experiences of leadership in TESOL institutions such as schools, colleges, commercial providers, and professional organizations, was identified and invited to participate in the study. Their selection did not assume that leadership is a senior position or that holding a senior position reflects the achievement of leadership. However, possibly due to the timing of the request (over the summer vacation, 2010) and the length of the electronic interview, this ideal purposive sample of 30 became a convenience sample of five individuals.

Neil Anderson, Anne Burns, Susan Barduhn, Christine Coombe and Peter Grundy graciously accepted the invitation and responded to the leadership interview questions emailed to them. These TESOL leaders have worked across the globe from the USA through to the UK, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Australia. Each participant gave their permission for their name to be used.

Data collection

In the context of participants' lives the participants were invited to share their opinions, perspectives and memories of their own lived leadership experience in TESOL in three stages:
 Stage one: Leadership Perspectives
Stage two: Biographical data on critical events – successes, challenges and relationships
Stage three: Confirmation or revision of lived experiences

Data were collected in the form of participant stories told through email and Skype over a six month period. This form of data collection acknowledges that memory is selective and shaped, and retold in the continuum of one's experience (Muncey, 2005). In stage one and two, in keeping with the discrete story narrative tradition participants initially volunteered discrete stories in response to single open ended questions in an electronic interview. Their responses were typically brief and topically specific.

Participants' responses were further expanded and reshaped as I probed for more information through email. Again the responses were often told as stories dependent on the individual's past and present experiences, values and beliefs.

Data analysis

Each narrative was initially treated as an individual 'case' and these individual cases were then compared and inter-case themes identified in order to showcase some leadership perspectives in TESOL. Following Jones (1985) and Tsui (2007), I began with categories based on my general comprehension of the data and then proceeded to a fuller and more detailed categorization. Initially, the data were sorted chronologically from participants' first leadership experiences to their more recent experiences. Then the data were sorted according to the successes and challenges participants' experienced. For example, the challenges experienced as a TESOL teacher and leader were sorted and the relationships between these challenges were analyzed. I then identified broad categories and their interconnections (Jones, 1985) to identify similarities and differences across the participants' stories.

The critical events that shaped participants' leadership experiences and the key thematic elements that emerged were integrated and presented as a fictitious panel discussion in the sense that the five participants never actually had a conversation with each other. The discussion largely uses direct quotations from the participants in response to my original research questions, however at times I modified participants' words for the purpose of creating a more realistic discussion. The discussion has panel participants exploring their personal leadership journeys and the lessons learned along the way through engaging the other participants and through questions from the panel chair (the author).

In the third stage of the process participants were then invited to read the panel discussion and confirm that it accurately represented their views. They were invited to make suggestions for change. Some minor changes were requested and included a request to introduce the participants alphabetically, using the preferred names of all participants, changing the original location of the conversation and adding some more exemplars to support some points. All of the participants verified that they were comfortable with how the discussion captured their leadership perspectives and gave their informed consent for their names, words and ideas to be included in my article.

In keeping with narrative research, the findings and concluding reflection draw on writing techniques of fiction (Richardson, 1990; 1999) and academic discourse and also on some of the conventions of panel discussion incorporating characteristics such as participant introductions. Citations necessarily found in academic literature are also provided to meet academic conventions.

Findings

This fictitious panel discussion was set in a breakout room at the TESOL Annual Convention as part of the Interest Section on Leadership in TESOL. I placed myself as the panel chair and use some of the research questions originally asked of participants to guide much of the discussion. The critical events that shaped their leadership experiences were shared and the key thematic elements that emerged were woven through the discussion. These include leadership perspectives, the influences on leadership development and practice; and the serendipitous nature of becoming a leader in the field. As the discussion unfolded, in the role of chair, I found myself analyzing, synthesizing and interpreting key

ideas that were emerging from the five leaders' comments and noting the references to the literature. I have included these ideas in brackets as thoughts and connections among the discussion in the form of "Notes to self".

Panel discussion, 10am, Room C108, The Convention Center

There was a buzz of anticipation and excitement as the remaining members of the audience took their seats. Lauren began by welcoming the panel participants and reiterated what an honor it was to have such internationally renowned TESOL leaders together in one room as a part of the Leadership Interest Section breakout. She began by introducing each person.

"Neil Anderson is a professor of Linguistics and English Language at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Professor Anderson served as President of TESOL, Inc. from 2001-2002. He also served on the board of trustees for the International Research Foundation for English Language Education from 2004-2008. He has held two Fulbright Scholarships in Costa Rica and Guatemala", Lauren began.

"Our next participant is Professor Anne Burns. Dr Burns began her career in TESOL working as an English teacher. She set up her own primary and junior high school with another colleague in Mauritius and that school still continues today. Later Anne moved from the UK to Australia and began working in the Adult Migrant English Service, (AMES). In 1990 she joined the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University, and worked in the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR). She held a variety of positions there and in 2000 she became dean of the Division of Linguistics and Psychology. Recently Dr Burns was appointed professor in Language Education at Aston University, and professor of TESOL at the University of New South Wales."

"Susan Barduhn is a professor at the School of International Training (SIT) Graduate Institute in the U.S., where she is also chair of the summer MA TESOL program. She has been involved in English language teaching for more than 30 years as teacher, trainer, supervisor, manager, assessor and consultant; and she has worked for extended periods in several countries. Susan is a past president of IATEFL; the former director of the Language Center, Nairobi and was deputy director of International House, London," Lauren continued.

"And now to Dr Christine Coombe." Lauren gestured to Christine on her right.

"Dr Coombe is the current president of TESOL Inc. With more than 15 years experience of teaching and leading in the Arabian Gulf, Dr Christine Coombe works as an assessment leader and faculty member at Dubai Men's College at the Higher Colleges of Technology. During her time in the Gulf, she has served in various leadership positions on the TESOL Arabia executive council including president and conference chair. She has also served on the IATEFL conference committee and on the TESOL board of directors."

"Finally allow me to introduce our last participant, Mr Peter Grundy. Mr Grundy began his teaching career in the 1960s when, in his own words, "revolution was on the streets as well as in the air," and since then has taught in schools in the UK and Germany, in initial teacher training and in higher education in the UK and Hong Kong. He retired from full-time employment at the University of

Durham in 2002, where he had taught Linguistics and EAP since 1979. He is a past president of IATEFL and currently chairs the wider membership advisory committee," Lauren said.

Peter smiled graciously at the audience as Lauren moved on to explain the way the discussion would be structured.

"I will ask participants to respond to the questions already sent to them in advance. As in many panel discussions, it is up to the participant to decide if they wish to make a contribution to that topic area. It is not my expectation that all participants will, in fact, respond to every question, although naturally, responses from all of you are welcome," Lauren explained.

"Well …if there are no questions let's begin then with your brief **definitions of leadership**?" Lauren invited.

I suppose leadership has to do with having responsibility over and above that for the job for which one's competent," Peter began.

"For me leadership is a set of skills, qualities and experience that are used in service to a group of people, project, idea or organization," Susan said. "The key word is service. I value teams and collaboration (Note to self: So Susan's ideas clearly link to Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership, Anderson's (2012) and Lave and Wenger's (1990) team oriented work). I am willing to advocate for teachers' and students' needs. I value feedback systems and regularly collect feedback from teachers and students, both during and at the end of a program to inform future planning. I try to act on feedback immediately but if I cannot, I like to explain why. I recognize when someone comes up with good ideas, and try to use my position, skills, energy and enthusiasm to pursue those ideas."

"I think it was St. Francis of Assisi who said 'for it is in giving that we receive,' Christine offered. This is also primarily my view on providing service to others both from a personal and professional perspective (Note to self: This is another service oriented perspective (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993). I feel extremely lucky that I was able to get a great education and have always felt that it was my duty to share some of that education with those less fortunate."

"I think one of the key questions facing our profession is how we can convince all teachers that they are leaders," said Neil (Note to self: This supports the perspectives of Harris (2005) and Lambert (2002) that leadership is the responsibility of all). "I agree that leadership is service and I define leadership as the skill set used by capable individuals, regardless of their position, to help bring out the very best in others. The skill set is comprised of eight essential abilities: the willingness to work with others to set a group vision and goals and work well with others to achieve the vision and goals; the ability to use time effectively; a desire to contribute in positive ways to a meeting; the ability to communicate effectively; the insight to recognize an individual's strengths; the foresight to focus on solutions instead of problems; the ability to mentor others, and a willingness to continue to learn and develop as a leader. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler (1996) stress that "leadership is an act of balancing competing wills" (p. 5). Each of the skills are key areas that compete in the leadership balancing act. This skill set should be developed by all English language teachers. One does not need to be in a titled leadership role to develop this skill set. The more teachers who have this skill set, the more positive leadership experiences we will all have."

"What do you think Anne?" Lauren asked.

"Lao Tse, the sixth century Chinese philosopher once said that 'a leader is one who serves' (cited in Bethel, p. 16). For me leadership is not a question of being out there in front and assuming people will come along with you, or that decisions from the top will automatically be accepted. It's more a philosophy of how leaders work with others and how their actions influence others (Note to self: this is yet another leadership as service perspective (Greeleaf, 1970) and resonates with Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) characteristics of shared leadership) . Leaders need to roll up their sleeves and be prepared to do the things they recommend that others do. I've always thought too that good leaders trust their colleagues to do a good job and don't micro-manage how they do it – they get out of their way! One of the most important attributes of a leader in my opinion is to listen and to have the patience to listen to others and acknowledge and respect their point of view, even when one may not agree with what is said, or even when what is being said is critical of the leader (Note to self: this is Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) characteristic of effective communication). It's also important for leaders to give others the bigger picture viewpoint, so that thoughts, reactions and feelings can be located in the wider context of what is valuable for an organization or field (Note to self : this is another example of Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) characteristics). The kinds of phrases I find non-productive, unnecessarily bureaucratic or backward looking include 'these are the reasons this won't work,' 'you need to fill in ten forms to start doing that,' 'we've always done it like that!' I am task-oriented and like to get things done and produce good quality results. I believe that rapid and constant change can de-stabilize people. Instead I prefer an approach where incremental steps are taken towards improving what already works well. Similarly to Susan, getting feedback is also important to me and it is this feedback on my leadership style that has really helped me to understand the way I would like to work with others (Note to self: this supports Anderson's (2009; 2012) perspective that leadership is a social process)."

*"Conscious of time here, let's move on to the question of **the influences on your leadership practices**?" Lauren queried.*

"I'd like to add something though, if I may?" Anne requested. "Based on my own experiences future leaders will need good skills in understanding the key and most pressing issues in their fields (that is keeping their ear to the ground and listening to their constituency), developing future directions based on the insights gained from listening and consulting with participants, connecting with and lobbying political leaders and educational policy makers, managing available resources more cost-efficiently and with an orientation towards environmental pressures, and above all outstanding interpersonal skills. I feel very strongly that if you can't relate well to people and have them work with you, it's impossible to be a good leader (Note to self: this again supports Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) shared leadership characteristics)."

Peter then commented on the various types of leadership and management.

"There is flat management, hierarchical management, aggressive management, jargonized management, and so on. Having worked in different countries, I think some imported leadership styles go down well and others can create problems. Usually, any disruption of the understood way of structuring things will be felt good by those who benefit (whether in the hierarchy or the lowerarchy) and bad by those who don't. So leadership is situational (Note to self: this links with Hersey and Blanchard, 1993)

and leaders can only change things if they are clever. Leadership only really works if it is consensual. For me, leadership skills are developed on the job and come about by thinking hard about people and the situation, and remembering that in a sense the leader is only there, and certainly only leading effectively, because others agree to it. I see leadership as institutionalized to some degree so that almost everyone will succeed as a leader in the right institution and almost everyone will fail in the wrong one."

"At the moment I am based in the U.S. Compared to other countries where I've lived, leaders are less hierarchical, more consultative." Susan offered. "Although bullying from managers is not uncommon, it is considered inappropriate. Leaders are expected to be responsive to the needs of the employees. And TESOL leadership is too often a consequence of someone who is good at teaching being promoted, but they are often not given training in the new and necessary skills to be an educational administrator. A responsible administration will identify those whose experience lends them insight to the real needs of students and teachers, and then follow up with appropriate training and mentoring."

Neil added "I think that leaders also need to be very much aware of the conditions in which they lead. All institutions of learning have their own individual cultures. The culture of my home institution at Brigham Young University is quite different from the culture at other institutions. Even institutions within the same country can face very different cultural issues."

*"So **what particular circumstances, leaders or leadership approaches have most influenced your leadership practice**?" Lauren asked.*

Peter smiled, "Well, I really don't like uniforms and badges of office. No seriously, I think you can get people to do a job by telling them what it is that you expect them to do, but usually they'll only do it minimally. To get everyone to do great work, they have to be in an environment where leadership is shared and they set their own targets and are trusted to get on with it. Some people will fail, but most will achieve far more than in the "this-is-your-job" culture. I think sharing ideas is obviously important. Respecting those who are younger or older than ourselves or who look different or whose experience has got them to a different position, and so on."

"Yes, I'm most influenced by leaders who adopt a mentoring approach," Anne added. "In my experience, they open up opportunities for you that take you beyond your current comfort zone (for me, for example, being asked to edit a journal when I was a very early career researcher). Then, they give you support to do the job at just the right time, but make themselves available as soon as they can for input and advice when you need it. The rest of the time they get out of your way and show you they have confidence in you to do a good job. These kinds of leaders are also generous in not taking credit for work that others have done or being threatened by talented people they have around them".

"To be honest," Peter said, "I try to use mentors as a last resort. I kind of skim read the files handed to me when I became IATEFL president, and tried not to be too influenced by them. But then I wouldn't have wanted to become president (or director of a summer school) if I hadn't had lots of ordinary experience of the set-up already. Mentoring, by definition, is for people who don't know enough to do a job. I prefer the system in which you get asked questions on a need to know basis if you're a person who might mentor."

"Mmm…I'm not so sure," Neil said. "I mean I have been significantly influenced by learning about TESOL's past leaders. For me they were role models of strong leadership and I have benefited from these role models. More recently I have been influenced by five TESOL presidents: Donald Freeman, Denise Murray, Mary Ann Christison, Kathleen Bailey, and David Nunan. These five individuals have served as mentors of leadership. As I have watched their exemplary leadership, I have learned to develop my own leadership skills. Each of these leaders has extended personal invitations to me to enhance my skills and take on new leadership roles. As I have benefitted from mentors, I recognize that I must serve as a mentor for others. Therefore as I have been actively involved in TESOL leadership roles, I have tried to identify, encourage and support others who can serve as leaders. My point is that we can each benefit from mentors and from being a mentor."

Susan agreed, "Yes, for me leadership support has very often come from friends and colleagues. I have had many opportunities, both because I love to grab onto new challenges, and because my skills and talents have been recognized. I also had an aunt and uncle who were influential in many ways."

She then commented specifically on the support and leadership mentoring of Adrian Underhill at various stages in her career.

Christine had also been influenced by a number of individuals in her quest for professional success.

"Well, for some reason that I cannot explain I have always been driven to succeed. As a young woman there were all the influences at university – so many professors who instilled in me a love of teaching and inspired me to start my career abroad. Fast forward a bit to my time in the Gulf, perhaps the most significant event for me in my development as a leader was my involvement with TESOL Arabia (TA) because it was with TA that I acquired and honed most of the skills in my leadership arsenal. The most significant has been my involvement with organizing events. This experience was largely responsible for my being elected convention chair for Tampa. My role models for this were the past convention chairs who were always ready to provide advice and support when things got difficult. Similarly, in my quest to be TESOL President, several people were very supportive of my nomination. As far as being a professional in TESOL, I am greatly inspired by the work of Kathi Bailey, David Nunan, Tom Farrell, Tim Murphey, Andy Curtis and JD Brown. All of these individuals have served TESOL and are familiar and successful in both ESL and EFL contexts."

*"So turning to **the nature of your beginnings in leadership**?" Lauren probed.*

Christine began, "As a young woman, I achieved great success in athletics in high school which led to a university scholarship. An illness in my early years in university took away any opportunities I might have had in athletics and so I transferred my energies to academics. I feel that this 'taste' of success motivated me to be driven in other areas as I got older. Some very significant events in my life include being the only person in my family to have a college education, graduating with a PhD before I turned 30 and being elected TESOL President in 2010."

Christine paused, took a sip of water and continued, "I really believe I have acquired leadership skills through the observation of both good and poor leaders. Although I have never had any formal coursework or graduate study in leadership skills, it has always been a keen interest (Note to self:

this supports Shannon's (2003) view that practicing leadership is how leaders learn leadership). I just want to succeed and this is what has driven me. Maybe it was because my parents were extremely supportive of me throughout my youth and university career. They regularly expressed their pride in me and that was a motivator for me to do more. I also believe that being active both personally and professionally makes me more productive. In fact, one of my mantras is 'the more you do, the more you can do.' In 2006 when I was thinking about running for TESOL President, I embarked on the study of what a good leader is and from this study came an edited book on leadership skills for EL teachers (Note to self: see Coombe, McCloskey, Stephenson and Anderson, 2008). The research for that volume gave me a good background in what is needed to be a successful teacher leader."

"Yes, you are certainly a true exemplar of that mantra, Christine," Neil smiled. "The event that opened up professional leadership opportunities for me was an invitation from Mary Ann Christison to serve as her associate chair (Note to self: this is another example of opportunities to learn leadership on the job (Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003) and through trial and error (Liebermann and Miller (2004). Following my professional service in this task, Mary Ann, along with other TESOL leaders, encouraged me to run for election to the board. I ran in 1996 and was elected to serve as the chair of the 1998 TESOL convention. Serving in that position was one of the most rewarding leadership opportunities I had enjoyed up to that point in my career. I determined after this positive experience that I wanted to run for TESOL president. I was on the ballot in 1999 but I lost the election. I ran again the next year and won. I must credit my wife and family for their support and encouragement to run for election and to take on leadership responsibilities. Without their support I would not have been able to carry out the tasks."

"It was a bit similar for me" said Anne. "I mean I didn't set out to be a 'leader' or have advanced plans about where my career should go. Basically I was just very interested in and fascinated by the field I found myself teaching in, realized that I didn't know enough about it and wanted to learn more through further studies and teaching experiences. Once I started finding out more about theory, research and practice in the TESOL field I wanted to go on and I loved the intellectual stimulation as well as the opportunities and challenges of putting theories into practice (or not!). As I worked in various places, I feel I've been very fortunate indeed to have opportunities put in my way by great mentors who sort of 'tapped me on the shoulder' and gave me opportunities to participate or pushed me to go beyond what I was currently doing. I was also really fortunate throughout the 1990s to work at NCELTR. In the 1990s it became one of the leading centers internationally for research, teacher education, library resources, and publications. I had wonderful, high achieving and generous colleagues there who developed a great team. I learned a lot about leadership from that team and also benefitted tremendously from the fact that the team worked closely with adult ESL teachers from all over Australia (Note to self: this also resonates with the concepts of leadership learning on the job (Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003). That combination of participants was very unusual at that time and looking back I was very lucky to be in such a positive and unique situation."

"I don't think I've ever asked for a leadership post but have always been asked to take something on," Peter said. "Usually, you're asked to take something on because they can't find anyone else – this is to some extent a compliment but mostly reflects the fact that most people are too nice to want to be leaders or too honest to be likely to do the job well. I don't think this is the way it works in politics. By nature I side with the underdog and have very little time for leaders. Inevitably one finds oneself in a leadership role from time to time in life, both at work and in one's family relationships. Professionally, I've been fortunate enough to be able to avoid most leadership roles in a long and

undistinguished career which began in 1968 when I got my first full-time post in a school. The few leadership experiences I've had include directing summer schools; being head of an English department in my fifth year of teaching; being deputy principal and acting principal; chairing the research committee in a large university department, being elected deputy dean of my faculty, which I did for three years before taking early retirement. (Had I not retired, I would in all probability have been elected dean, but the vice-chancellor, who knew a thing or two about leadership, would no doubt have seen to it that I didn't take up the post)," says Peter smiling and continued "and being IATEFL president (Note to self: this again supports Bailey (2002) and Shannon's (2003) views that much leadership learning occurs on the job rather than through formal training)."

Lauren turned to Susan and gestured.

Susan said "Yes, well I've always been someone who is asked to take on extra responsibilities and positions of leadership. My brothers and I were raised by a single working mother, and as the only girl I was expected to manage the household (a sign of the times!). In school I held elected office and ran committees. I started teaching English in Colombia when only 18. I was identified early for administrative and teacher development roles. At the age of 29 I was given the tremendous opportunity to go to Kenya and create a language school. It was an immediate success and I remained the director for eight years. It is still going strong! After that I moved to London to International House and was soon promoted to deputy director. I remained with IH for ten years before going freelance – trainer, trainer of trainers, consultant, assessor, school inspector, supervisor, conference organizer, president of IATEFL. After four years of this, I found myself longing for daily interaction with a team of dedicated colleagues, and was delighted to accept a faculty position at the SIT Graduate Institute, where I am now professor and chair of the Summer MA in TESOL program. I still travel extensively, lecturing, training and supervising educators, and speaking at conferences…"(Note to self: this example also supports Bailey (2002) and Liebermann and Miller's (2004) views that teachers learn to become leaders through trial and error on the job).

Concluding Reflections, 10.55am in Room C108, The Convention Center

The following concluding reflections draw together my interpretation of the findings and are organized around the three key research areas and the strongest trends emerging: the leadership perspectives and practices of the five TESOL leaders; the influences that have shaped their leadership development and how they became leaders in the profession.

Firstly, it is apparent that the participants' different experiences have shaped their beliefs, perspectives and practices. For example, the majority of the participants see leadership as service to others resonating with servant leadership perspectives (Greenleaf, 1970) . For all participants the conversation indicates that their leadership style is service oriented and in keeping with Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership, mentoring significantly influences the majority of the TESOL leaders. Christine states "for it is in giving that we receive." In keeping with Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership, mentoring significantly influences the majority of the TESOL leaders. Christine and Susan noted the significance of leadership mentoring at various stages in their careers. Anne states that she was "most influenced by leaders who adopt a mentoring approach." Similarly Neil was "greatly influenced by… TESOL presidents: these …individuals… served as mentors of leadership." As Neil observed them he "learned to develop [his] own leadership skills." However, Peter disagreed. "Mentoring, by definition, is for people who don't

know enough to do a job. I prefer the system in which you get asked questions on a need to know basis if you're a person who might mentor."

As I reflect on the influences that have shaped the five TESOL leaders, I note that the participants also practice shared leadership in various ways across the globe to work with and influence others, building relationships based on mutual respect and learning (Leiberman and Miller, 2004). The importance of giving people leadership opportunities and trusting them to do their best work highlights that these TESOL leaders view leadership as the responsibility of everyone and the professional work of all (Anderson, 2009; 2012; Lambert, 2002). Each leader states their belief in maximizing their own potential as well as that of others and of situations. From this perspective, people are viewed as active participants working together in the process of leadership. As such, it is the quality of their interactions that distinguishes these TESOL leaders, and they clearly evaluate leadership by how people work together. The combined perspectives of all the participants in the panel discussion are aligned with all of Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) characteristics: seeking a common good; actively participating interdependently in the process of leadership; working to enhance the process and to make it more fulfilling; communicating effectively with an emphasis on conversation; valuing democratic processes, honesty and shared ethics; recognizing that the quality of people's interactions is the distinguishing factor rather than their position; and evaluating leadership by how people are working together.

Neil advocates for shared and teacher leadership suggesting that "all teachers are leaders" (Anderson, 2009). He states "leadership is a skill set used … to help bring out the very best in others… This skill set should be developed by all English language teachers." He is a facilitator in support of the development of the language teachers he works with and sees himself as a partner in the leadership development of his colleagues. Peter also advocates shared and teacher leadership perspectives stating that leadership doesn't work if it isn't shared. He believes that "to get everyone to do great work, they have to be in an environment where leadership is shared and they set their own targets and are trusted to get on with it." He suggests that "almost everyone will succeed as a leader in the right institution and almost everyone will fail in the wrong one."

There is also significant evidence of shared leadership in Anne's comments. Similarly to Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) characteristics she states that leadership is "a philosophy of how leaders work with others …to listen to others and acknowledge and respect their point of view, even when one may not agree…" Anne states emphatically "I feel very strongly that if you can't relate well to people and have them work with you, it's impossible to be a good leader." Anne clearly is people-oriented. She aims to encourage and inspire and has given people the confidence to do things or to try something new. Empathy is very important to Anne and she seeks as much input and feedback as possible: "Getting feedback is important …and [it] has really helped me to understand the way I would like to work with others."

Another commonality is that they all base their leadership approaches on the situations that they find themselves albeit in slightly different ways (Murray, 2005; Pennington & Hoekje, 2010). Anne's perspective resonates with Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) situational leadership because she states "It's …important … to give… the bigger picture …, so that thoughts, reactions and feelings can be located in the wider context." Similarly for Neil, "leaders also need to be … aware of the conditions in which they lead. All institutions of learning have their own individual cultures… institutions within the same country can face very different cultural issues." Also for Peter Grundy "…leadership is situational and leaders can only change things if they are clever." For Peter, leadership skills are not only situational but are learned on the job (see Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003) – they "come about by thinking hard about people and the situation".

The third and final reflection I have today concerns how the participants became leaders in TESOL. Although the contexts and the specific learning paths of the five TESOL leaders differed, it is clear that they all possess a "leadership intelligence" that encompasses a belief that we can all lead; a focus on service; a sharing of leadership; a focus on situational perspectives; fearlessness and courage to 'give it a try'; and stepping up when opportunities arose either through mentors who recognized "something" in them or as a result of serendipity.   They are all committed TESOL professionals who have decided to take action and/or who have accepted invitations to do so in various ways that involve taking on increasingly greater leadership responsibilities and juggling those responsibilities accordingly. Susan notes that leadership in TESOL "is too often a consequence of someone who is good at teaching being promoted, but they are often not given training in the new and necessary skills to be an educational administrator" (see Shannon, 2003). For Christine, Neil, Anne and Susan leadership learning occurs often through being mentored, observing role models and mentoring others. For all participants, leadership learning is about learning on the job, rather than participating in the leadership courses on offer (Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003).

A clear commonality across each of the leadership cases is that these TESOL leaders are recognized in some capacity by others. They have been "extended personal invitations to enhance [their] skills" or "tapped on the shoulder", or "[asked to take] on extra responsibilities" or because they "love to grab onto new challenges, or because [their] skills and talents have been recognized" or in Christine's case they were "driven to succeed", they rose to the occasion and led well.

 This panel discussion was interesting and thought provoking. These five TESOL leaders demonstrate care, commitment, concern and the courage to have the difficult conversations necessary to grasp leadership opportunities necessary for continual learning and improvement in the TESOL profession. As we heard today here at the TESOL Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, the participants illuminate ways for other future leaders in TESOL to develop such as taking advantage of the leadership opportunities that come their way; practicing shared, service oriented leadership and fostering leadership development opportunities for others.

11.15am, Room C108, Panel Discussion Closure, The Convention Center

There is a need for more research in the area of leadership in TESOL, in its various forms. Future TESOL leaders would also value more practical, hands-on advice about how to be an effective leader in the field. I can only hope to sit one day and actually participate in a real panel, where we are all present in the same room, discussing critical questions for leadership in TESOL. My sincere thanks to all for this leadership learning opportunity.

About the author:

Lauren Stephenson holds a Ph.D. in educational leadership and organizational learning from the University of Sydney, Australia. She is currently an Associate Professor in the College of Education at Zayed University, United Arab Emirates. Dr Stephenson is an experienced educator with a background in English language teaching, teacher education, professional development and educational leadership. She has published and presented papers in the areas of educational leadership, teacher professional learning, organizational learning, teacher education, collaborative research and English language education

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