Centre for Leadership & Diversity
6th Annual International Conference

Leadership for Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance in Challenging Times

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
252 Bloor St W, Toronto, ON
OCTOBER 16, 2025 (ONLINE)
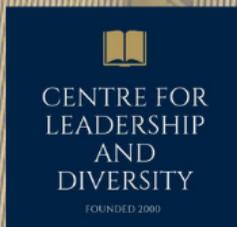**OCTOBER 17 - 18, 2025 (IN-PERSON)**

We are living in challenging times across the globe. There are attacks on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs, and attempts to roll back years of progress towards creating a more just and equitable world, and education systems. This shift has had devastating impact on students, educators, and communities. More than ever before, space must be created where people can come together to support, renew commitments to justice, peace and liberation, share research and ideas, collaborate and co-construct the way forward.

Join the 2025 Centre for Leadership and Diversity's 6th Annual International Conference, a space to engage in critical dialogue, identify actions and imagine new kinds of research, and educational praxis. CLD invites participants to come together and be a part of forging new paths towards the work of educational justice.

We hope to see you in person or online!

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Virtual CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Thursday, October 16, 2025
(All times are Eastern Daylight/Toronto Time)

ABSTRACTS FOR PAPERS ARE AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM

8:45 – 9:00 am	**Main Zoom Room**	**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** Yvonne Chan, Centre for Leadership and Diversity Core Team OISE, University of Toronto **WELCOME ADDRESS** **Prof Ann Lopez, Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity OISE, University of Toronto** **GREETINGS** **Prof Marcelo Vieta** Chair of LHAE, OISE, University of Toronto **CONFERENCE LOGISTICS** Cathy Kim, Centre for Leadership and Diversity Core Team OISE, University of Toronto
Session 1 **9:00 - 10:15am**	**Breakout Room A**	**Chair: Dr. Carly Manion** **Presenters:** **Eunju Choe** **University of Oxford, UK** *"Echoes, Doubts, and Dialogues": Mapping Teacher Identity in IB English A Studies in Language and Literature Classrooms* **Akufuna Mubitana & Sr. Petronella Lubanga** **Zambia Catholic University, Zambia** *Impact of Gender Policies within the Zambian Context: Implications for Boys and Girls* **Sabina Barbato** **Université Côte d'Azur laboratoire line, France** *Exploring Critical Pedagogy and Community-Based Learning Spaces: A Cross-National Study of Emancipatory Educational Practices Inspired by Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and John Dewey for Inclusive Lifelong Education in Piedmont, Italy* **Natasha Boyce** **University of Glasgow, UK**

		A study into how Black girls resist racial inequity through social justice projects
Session 1 **9:00 –** **10:15am**	**Breakout** **Room B**	**Chair: Dr. Debbie McCleary** **Presenters:** **Rayan Katerji** **University of Glasgow, UK** *Leading through Policy Constraints, School Principals as Advocates for Renewal and Resistance* **Motela Ambulaya & Kaira Sunganani** **The Zambia Catholic University, Zambia** *The Role of Parental Leadership and Discipleship and Addressing Youth Delinquency in Chibuluma* **Nova Lauder-Scott, Gillian Francis-McNeil & Rosemary Grady** **University of Strathclyde Institute of Education, UK; University of Edinburgh, UK** *Not Just Leading, But Questioning: Into Headship and the Making of Activist School Leaders* **Alex Baird** **University of Bedfordshire, UK** *Que(e)rying Leadership and Leadership Development in UK Higher Education*
Session 2 **10:20 –** **11:35am**	**Breakout** **Room A**	**Chair: Dr. Asma Ahmed** **Presenters:** **Dinah Ampomah, Dr. Lucy Effeh Attom & Prof Isaac Eshun** **University of Education, Winneba, Ghana** *Factors that motivate female students to seek leadership positions in selected universities in Ghana* **Dr. Enoch Danso Okyere** **University of Education, Winneba, Ghana** *University Council Autonomy as a Catalyst for Higher Education Reform in Ghana* **Dr. Douglas Hutchison, Farasha Bashir & Natasha Aujula** **Glasgow City Council, UK; Highpark Primary School, Glasgow; Camtyne Primary School, Glasgow.** *Glasgow City Council initiatives aimed at achieving better representation at senior leadership level in schools* **Dr. Lucy Effeh Attom & Dr. Ann Lopez** **University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, OISE, University of Toronto** *Leadership Development Among Principals in Ghana*

Session 2 **10:20 –** **11:35am**	**Breakout Room B**	**Chair: Dr. Said Sidani** **Presenters:** **Dr. Deb Outhwaite** **University of Liverpool, UK** *How Global Change is manifesting in the English Education context* **Dr. Augustine Sisagali Lumwanga, Dr. Jive Lubbungu & Henry Kamocha** **Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia** *Leadership for Institutional Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance: A Case of Selected Tertiary Institutions in Zambia* **Tamara Scott McFarlane** **University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica** *Exploring the Lived Curriculum Experience of Second Chance Education Learners through McClusky's Theory of Margin* **Leroy Demone Fearon** **The Mico University College/Association of Graduate Researchers in Education (AGRE), Jamaica** *Youth-Led Resistance and Inclusive Leadership Practices in Jamaican Higher Education: A Study of Student Governance and Advocacy*
Session 3 **11:40 –** **12:55pm**	**Breakout Room A**	**Chair: Dr. Stephanie Tuters** **Presenters:** **Ama Ahema Kwablah & Dr. Lucy Effeh Attom** **University of Education, Winneba, Ghana** *Challenges Faced by Female Leaders in Educational Institution in Tema Metropolis* **Francisca Beroíza--Valenzuela** **Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social, Chile** *Artificial Intelligence and School Leadership: Ethical and Pedagogical Challenges in Writing Instruction* **Rabia Khokhar & Theresa Meikle** **University of Toronto, Niagara University in Vaughan, Ontario, Canada** *I Belong Here: Cultivating Identity Affirming Classrooms* **Prof Rola Koubeissy** **Université de Montréal, Québec, Canada** *Re-Imagining inclusive teaching practices from immigrant students' perspective*

Session 3 **11:40 –** **12:55pm**	**Breakout Room B**	**Chair: Dr. Vidya Shah** **Presenters:** **Ato Rockcliffe** **CKPES - University of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago** *Reimagining Authority: A Qualitative Inquiry into Decolonising Educational Leadership at the University of Trinidad and Tobago* **Dr. Asma Ahmed & Prof Asad Choudhary** **Niagara University in Ontario, Canada** *Current Challenges in Outdoor Learning and Climate Responsibility in Islamic Schools* **Prof Erin Finley** **OCAD University, Ontario, Canada** *Sustainable and Equitable Arts Education in Ontario Long-Term Care: Centering Memory, Creativity, and Climate Responsibility* **Dr. Debbie McCleary, Dr. Carol Doyle-Jones & Dr. Said Sidani** **Niagara University in Ontario; University of Toronto at Mississauga, Ontario, Canada** *Cultivating Allyship: Exploring Faculty Diversity as a Pathway to Inclusive Practices in Teacher Education*
12:55 – **1:25pm**	**LUNCH BREAK**	
Session 4 **1:25 –** **2:40pm**	**Breakout Room A**	**Chair: Dr. Karen Acton** **Presenters:** **Dr. Katrina Struloeff, Dr. Kimberly Sterin & Dr. Kerena Escalante** **University of Pennsylvania, United States; Drexel University School of Education, Pennsylvania, United States; EdTrust** *Mentoring as Acts of Resistance and Reimagining: The Reflective Testimonios of Multiple Generations of Women Leaders in Higher Education* **Fitzroy Thompson** **York University, Ontario, Canada** *Examining Educational Leadership in Community Nursing to Address Pandemic-related Effects on Black Individuals in Low-income neighbors* **Rema Passarelli** **OISE Graduate, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada** *Collective Responsibility in Education* **Prof Katina Pollock & Dr. Donna Swapp**

		University of Western Ontario, Ontario, Canada; University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada *Implicit Work Expectations for Black School Leaders in Ontario*
Session 4 **1:25 –** **2:40pm**	**Breakout Room B**	**Chair: Prof Carol A. Mullen** **Presenters:** **Prof Carol A. Mullen** **Virginia Tech, United States** *School board dynamics of trans student policy amid democratic backsliding* **Paula Smellie** **OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada** *Role of Privilege in Faculty Time Allocation & Performance Evaluation* **Suad Ahmed** **York University, Ontario, Canada** *Through Our Eyes: on the Social and Emotional Lives of Somali Youth* **Dr. Shelly Hopper & Dr. Izzeddin Hawamda** **Community Education Development Association, Manitoba, Canada; Canadian Mennonite University, Manitoba, Canada** *Untitled Belonging: Storytelling as Resistance, Renewal, and Reclamation in Settler-Colonial Education*
Session 5 **2:45 –** **4:00 pm**	**Breakout Room A**	**Chair: Dr. Ann Armstrong** **Presenters:** **Naheed Mukhi** **OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada** *Ethnocultural Parents Taking Charge of the Curriculum: Frameworks and Processes in Early Learning and Child Care Systems that Empower Newcomer Parents to Promote their Home Culture and Home Language* **Elizabeth Okudzeto** **University of Prince Edward Island, Prince Edward Island, Canada** *Women in Higher Educational Leadership - Factors Impacting Career Advancement in Ghana* **Dr. Megan Collyer MacDonald, Kyra Williams & Dr. Katrina Struloeff** **Catalyst, University of Pennsylvania, United States** *Sustaining Leadership as Resistance in Schools: A Continuous Improvement Approach* **Dr. Ann Armstrong** **University of Toronto at Mississauga, Canada** *Learning from the Academic Wheel of Privilege*

Session 5 **2:45 –** **4:00 pm**	**Breakout** **Room B**	**Chair: Dr. Everton Ellis** **Presenters:** **Eun Gi (Cathy) Kim and Yvonne Chan** **OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada** *Inclusion on Whose Terms? Critical Reflections from East Asian Educators in Canadian Higher Education System* **Shunyan Lyu & Bharti Tomar** **Thompson Rivers University, British Columnbia, Canada** *Leadership for Inclusive Renewal: Transformational and Distributed Approaches to Universal Design for Learning in Canadian Higher Education* **Rumana Patel & Dr. Alana Hoare** **Thompson Rivers University, British Columnbia, Canada** *Dear Indian immigrants, Do you have to shift your moral compass to lead?* **Christine Abbot & Dr. Nikki Yee** **University of British Columbia; University of Victoria, Canada** *Centering youth voices for inclusive change and decolonizing possibilities in a secondary school*
4:00 – **4:10pm**	**Afternoon Break**	

Session 6 **4:10 –** **5:40 pm**	**Breakout Room A**	**Chair: Stephen Francis** **Presenters:** **Dr. Everton Ellis & Prof Eddia Solas** **Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada** *Cultural Responsiveness in Science Education: A Case for Learning from the Jamaican National Standards Curriculum for Nova Scotian Students of African Descent* **Prof Kimberley English** **Trent/Fleming School of Nursing, Ontario, Canada** *Resistant Leadership: Reimagining Nursing Education for a Just Healthcare Future* **Ruth-Ann O. Edwards** **The Mico University College/Association of Graduate Researchers in Education (AGRE), Jamaica** *They Left, Now What? An Exploration of The Leadership Styles of Administrators of Five Secondary Schools and its Impact on Teacher Migration* **Dr. Anila Zainub** **HE Solutions** *Immigrant Muslim women in Academia and Socio-Economic Integration* **Dr. Kate McIntosh** *From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Women's Leadership in Higher Education Administration* ***Please exit the breakout room at this point and go to the Main Zoom Room.**
	Breakout Room B	**Chair: Cathy Kim** **Presenters:** **Dr. Paul A. Nalli** **Arizona State University, United States** *Systemic Barriers Have No Borders: Scaling Up Leadership Excellence Using the RAISE Mindset* **Bharti Tomar, Shunyan Lyu & Anshu Ahuja** **Thompson Rivers University, BC, Canada** *Leading for Teacher Empowerment: Resisting Hierarchies through Emotional Intelligence and Distributed Leadership* **Dareen Charafeddine** **OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada** *Equity, Agency, and the Everyday Hustle: Lessons in Resistance from Public School Principals*

		Shanae Neal & Dr. Katrina Struloeff **Southern Methodist University; University of Pennsylvania, United States** *From Collaboration to Transformation: Women Education Leaders'* *Perceptions of Communities of Practice* **Krystal Kavita Jagoo & Siva Thangeswary Sivarajah** Intersectional Equity Insights; OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada *Access Intimacy Abuse and Social Justice Oriented Community Activist and* *Academic Spaces* ***Please exit the breakout room at this point and go to the Main Zoom Room.**
5:40 – 6:00 pm	**Main** **Zoom** **Room**	**CLOSING REMARKS** **Eun Gi (Cathy) Kim** **Centre for Leadership and Diversity Conference Planning Team** **OISE, University of Toronto** **Prof Ann Lopez** **Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity** **OISE, University of Toronto**

THANKS

This Conference would not have been possible without the commitment and the collaborative efforts of University of Toronto Graduates & Graduate Students

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ABSTRACTS

Christine Abbot
University of British Columbia
Nikki Yee
University of Victoria, Canada
Centering Youth Voices for Inclusive Change and Decolonizing Possibilities in a Secondary School

Colonialism continues to hinder inclusion in secondary schools. This study explores how youth participation in a northern Canadian secondary school's community of inquiry contributed to inclusive and decolonizing educational change. The community of inquiry brought together youth, educators, Elders, and community partners, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to co-create a relational space for storytelling and shared learning. The stories shared by youth provided a critical perspective and the opportunity for adults to learn from their lived experiences.

We conducted a focus group with youth participants and analyzed their stories using an Indigenous Storywork-informed narrative approach (Archibald, 2008; Archibald et al., 2019; Archibald & Davidson, 2023) as part of a larger dataset that included the school and the broader education system.

Youth shaped inclusion in their school by fostering meaningful relationships and emphasizing the reciprocal value of storytelling. They appreciated feeling heard and learning from diverse perspectives across generations. Youth participants demonstrated a deep understanding of inclusion, recognized the strength in diversity, and offered ideas for whose stories are centered in schools. They noted the tangible changes in their school resulting from the community of inquiry while also acknowledging slower-than-expected progress. Still, they remained hopeful and full of ideas for future changes.

Their stories and experiences in the community of inquiry affirm the importance of engaging those most affected by educational change, particularly youth, in decision-making processes that shape inclusive, relational, and decolonizing futures in education.

Asma Ahmed & Asad Choudhary
Niagara University
Current Challenges in Outdoor Learning and Climate Responsibility in Islamic Schools

Although Islamic schools are striving to decolonize education and teach from an Islamic worldview, they remain hyper-focused on academic achievement. Recently, Islamic school associations in North America have begun addressing the gap between Islamic stewardship and the curriculum taught in schools (ISAC, 2025; CISNA, 2025). One of the attributes explicitly described about Muslims in the Qur'an is that of khalifa—stewards of the Earth. However, due to the influence of neoliberal agendas and colonization, Muslims have lost sight of this primary role. There is an increasing need to intentionally teach and learn about the concept of khalifa (stewardship) on Earth and its connection to climate and outdoor education. We employed a qualitative survey approach to gather data at the Islamic Schools Association of Canada's (ISAC) third conference held in Toronto in 2025. These surveys were self-administered and comprised open-ended questions, allowing participants to respond in their own words. Fifty

individuals completed the Google Form, representing 30 Islamic schools from various regions, including the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa, Windsor, and Calgary. In this study, we aim to shed light on fostering a strong Islamic faith and identity in students with respect to their relationship to the world around them and discuss the benefits and limitations that Islamic schools experience. The data underscore the necessity for more practical, hands-on approaches to outdoor and climate education in the context of the Islamic worldview. Beyond strategies, there is a need to shift teacher and student mindsets from consumers to khalifas so that they can find their own ways to connect with the natural world as a foundation for broader ecological awareness. The findings of this study will guide the programming of Islamic school associations to ensure this subject receives adequate attention and fosters partnerships with community organizations like Green Ummah, promoting ongoing support and capacity building for schools.

Suad Ahmed
York University
Through Our Eyes: On the Social and Emotional Lives of Somali Youth

Drawing on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), critical race, and psychoanalytic thought, my research explores the affective and social dimensions of identity formation among first- and second-generation Somali adolescents. Using narrative interviews and photo-voice, I aim to shed light on the emotional and social dimensions of belonging, displacement, and meaning making — with a focus on how these forces shape Somali youth identity and selfhood. This research builds on my master's work with Somali boys in the Toronto District School Board, where I examined how young Black Muslim boys navigate exclusionary school structures. Now, I turn my attention to identity-making processes more broadly, especially as they intersect with affective states like racial melancholia and ambivalence. In doing so, I aim to challenge deficit-based frameworks that often pathologize Black and Muslim youth and instead highlight their creative and resistant ways of being. This project emerges from my lived experience as a Somali Muslim Canadian woman, my academic training, and a deep commitment to community-based and anti-racist research. Through this work, I aim to better understand how Somali youth in Toronto are negotiating their identities and emotional well-being in the face of displacement, structural violence, and cultural loss.

Motela Ambulaya & Kaira Sunganani
The Zambia Catholic University
The Role of Parental Leadership and Discipleship and Addressing Youth Delinquency in Chibuluma

This study investigates the underlying causes of youth delinquency in peri-urban areas, with a focus on Chibuluma Town, by assessing the influence of parental leadership and discipleship alongside demographic and socio-economic factors. Utilizing primary data from 50 respondents selected via stratified random sampling, and employing regression analysis, the research sought to determine the determinants of delinquent behavior among youth.

Contrary to expectations, social and environmental factors—such as peer influence and social networks—did not show a significant impact. Instead, the findings reveal that parental involvement plays a critical role in mitigating youth delinquency. The presence and active leadership of parents (non biological guardians inclusive) , especially through guidance and engagement, emerged as a dominant influence in reducing delinquent behaviors such as vandalism, theft, substance abuse, truancy, and aggression. Additionally, demographic factors—particularly gender and age—were found to be significant, with older males showing a higher propensity for delinquent activities. Furthermore, the financial stability of families was linked to lower levels of delinquency, underscoring the importance of economic support.

The study concludes that effective parental leadership—characterized by consistent involvement, emotional support, adopting communal parenting strategies common in Africa, and spiritual or moral discipleship—can serve as a protective factor against delinquency.

Recommendations include enhancing parental education through workshops, implementing age-specific interventions, and promoting family-centered support systems.

These findings suggest that restoring strong parental roles and discipleship practices within families could be a key strategy in curbing youth delinquency in peri-urban communities.

Dinah Ampomah, Lucy Effeh Attom & Isaac Eshun
University of Education, Winneba
Factors that Motivate Female Students to Seek Leadership Positions in Selected Universities in Ghana

The study examined factors that motivate female students to seek for leadership positions in selected universities in Ghana. A qualitative research approach using a phenomenological design was employed for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select eighteen participants from four public universities in Ghana for the study. Instruments used for the study were interview guide and Focus Group Discussion guide (FGD). The study relied on primary data. A thematic approach to data analysis was employed for the study. The study revealed that while some participants felt societal norms aligned with specific "feminine" roles, others saw their gender as a source of motivation to break stereotypes. The study further revealed that internal motivations such as personal ambition and a desire for self-improvement are central drivers for women aspiring to leadership roles. It came to light that female student leaders had early exposure to leadership roles by their teachers and mentors which served as a great motivation for them. The study concludes that prior experiences in leadership at early stage serve as spring board for harnessing future leadership opportunities. The study recommends that Teachers and mentors in the Ghana Education Service should help sensitise female students to identify their leadership potential at their early stages in school, to help them identify their capabilities, work towards them, and be assertive in challenging cultural barriers and biases. This will ignite their interest from an early stage and give them exposure to leadership. NGOs such as Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), Plan Ghana and Girls Leadership, Empowerment, Action Programme (Girls LEAP) should help female student leaders to be self-empowered and to be empowered by the student body to aspire for student leadership in the universities and beyond devoid of their feminine nature.

Ann Armstrong
University of Toronto at Mississauga, Canada
Learning from the Academic Wheel of Privilege

The purpose of this paper/presentation is to illustrate how the Wheel of Privilege (IRCC, nd) can be used to personalize students' understanding of privilege, power, and marginalization. The Wheel is especially useful in highlighting academic and other privileges. Its simplicity makes it easy to understand and to diffuse possible defensive responses in discussions of diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI). As we face an extraordinary backlash to DEI at the moment, a facilitated discussion using the Wheel can provide emotional and intellectual pathways to appreciate the power of difference. Some may critique the Wheel as too simple. However, as an educator, I have found it is effective in creating brave spaces for discussion. The proposed session will be interactive and co-created as we will use the Wheel to explore our own sources of privilege and power, and degree of marginalization. Then we will brainstorm actions to address our co-created learnings.

Lucy Effeh Attom
University of Education, Winneba
Ann Lopez
OISE, University of Toronto
Leadership Development Among Principals in Ghana

Educational leadership plays a crucial role in improving the quality and efficiency of education systems worldwide. This study examined the personal leadership growth and professional development needs of heads of Basic and Senior High Schools in Ghana's Central Region. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through interviews with 25 school leaders, 15 from Senior High Schools and 10 from Basic Schools. Thematic procedure was employed to analyse the data. The study found that leadership development among these school heads was primarily informal, shaped through mentorship from former leaders and hands-on experience in administrative roles. These leaders were frequently involved in school decision-making and often drew on traditional leadership values, especially the belief that "unity is strength". Many attributed their motivation to lead to personal traits such as a commitment to excellence, discipline, respect, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving skills. The research also highlighted a significant demand for professional development, particularly in areas like human resource management and financial literacy. Specific training needs included budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, and grant proposal writing. Additionally, there was interest in leadership and administrative training focused on modern themes such as

entrepreneurial leadership, ICT and information literacy, communication, education policy, staff-student interaction, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution. Based on these insights, the study recommends that the Ghana Education Service introduce structured mentorship programs for emerging school leaders. It also suggests integrating traditional leadership values into training programs to ensure they are culturally relevant and context specific. Furthermore, school leaders are encouraged to pursue further training in financial and administrative skills to enhance school management and resource mobilization. These strategies are essential to equipping educational leaders with the tools needed to thrive in a constantly evolving educational landscape.

Alex Baird
University of Bedfordshire, UK
Que(e)rying Leadership and Leadership Development in UK Higher Education

LGBTQ+ leadership is often overlooked (Ferry, 2017; Lumby and Moorosi, 2022) and consequently, so has leadership development provision. LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes have the potential to inspire LGBTQ+ talent, help alleviate the challenges these individuals face throughout their leadership journeys (Fassinger et al., 2010; McCay, 2024; Ebrey and Haworth, 2025), and support individuals in driving positive change in their organisation. My research accessed the first LGBTQ+ leadership development programme in UK HE and involved repeated interviews with 16 attendees and field notes of programme days. I came to understand the research post-qualitative, recognising the blurred lines around what conventionally might be seen as a case study, the entanglement of my investment in the programme, my growing relationships with attendees, and their evolving connections with one another. Through reflexive thematic analysis and thinking with queer theory I identified three themes: 1. The distinctiveness and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership; 2. The portrayal, solidarity and collaboration of trailblazers; 3. The possibility, precarity and rupture of queer space. Follow-up research involved focus groups with ten attendees to gather longitudinal perspectives and co-design the subsequent programme. Appreciative Inquiry is a form of participatory action research that supports reflection and action. Cooperrider (2008) identifies five stages to the appreciative inquiry cycle: define, discover, dream, design, and destiny. The follow-up research invited attendees to be co-constructors in the 'dream' and 'design' stages. I am now a research partner on two LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes. The first is based in Scotland and is designed for those working in the public and third sectors. The second is the subsequent LGBTQ+ leadership development programme in UK HE, which I've helped to co-design. Recognising the power of the programme's space for individual and collective reflection and resistance, I've designed two creative art-based workshops to support attendees' self-awareness and expression and LGBTQ+ leadership research, which I will explain and share.

Sabina Barbato
Université Côte d'Azur laboratoire line
Exploring Critical Pedagogy and Community-Based Learning Spaces: A Cross-National Study of Emancipatory Educational Practices Inspired by Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and John Dewey for Inclusive Lifelong Education in Piedmont, Italy

This study investigates how principles of critical pedagogy, rooted in the emancipatory visions of Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux and enriched by John Dewey's pragmatic approach to community education, can inform the development of inclusive, community-based lifelong learning spaces. The project aims to design and analyze an educational model that fosters social and cultural emancipation, particularly for marginalized groups, through participatory, democratic, and dialogical practices.

The research adopts a qualitative methodological framework grounded in critical theory and participatory inquiry. Two multifunctional community centres in the Piedmont region of Italy serve as the primary sites for this study. Data is gathered through in-depth interviews with educators, learners, community members, and administrative staff, as well as participant observation and the analysis of institutional documents. Workshops and focus groups further enrich the collaborative exploration of shared challenges and transformative practices.

Preliminary findings suggest that applying Freire's concepts of conscientização (critical consciousness) and dialogical action within these community settings supports the development of collective agency and empowers participants to challenge structural inequities. Giroux's notion of educators as transformative intellectuals provides an interpretive lens to understand how local practitioners enact resistance and renewal within increasingly precarious educational and social systems. Dewey's emphasis on experience and democracy in education complements these insights, highlighting the significance of co-constructed learning spaces that respond to the real-life contexts of diverse learners.

The research points to the significance of such community-based models in resisting regressive political trends that threaten diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives globally. It demonstrates how educational leadership rooted in critical pedagogy can sustain and renew commitments to justice, solidarity, and participatory democracy. By documenting these practices and analyzing their impact, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational resistance, providing practical insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to foster resilient and equitable learning environments in challenging times.

Francisca Beroíza-Valenzuela
Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social, Chile
Artificial Intelligence and School Leadership: Ethical and Pedagogical Challenges in Writing Instruction

This study examines how school leadership shapes the pedagogical integration of generative artificial intelligence tools in writing instruction within Chilean secondary education. In a global context marked by the rapid expansion of digital technologies in classrooms, this research critically explores the ethical, pedagogical, and equity-related challenges emerging from the use of tools like ChatGPT in under-resourced school settings.

The main objective is to understand how institutional leadership decisions enable, limit, or transform teaching practices related to AI and how these decisions affect students' access and meaningful engagement with such tools. The study uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, combining classroom observations in three subjects (Language Arts, English, and Biology), documentary analysis of national education policies, and text mining of field notes.

Data were collected in a public secondary school located in a working-class neighborhood in Santiago, Chile. Six 90-minute sessions were observed involving 18 eleventh-grade students. Findings reveal that while teachers show openness to AI use, its implementation is fragmented, dependent on students' own devices and data plans, and shaped by the lack of institutional guidance. School leadership emerges as a pivotal factor: its active or passive stance determines whether AI is used critically and inclusively or in a narrow, unequal manner.

The study highlights the need for educational leadership that is both context-sensitive and ethically informed—leadership that moves beyond technocratic adoption and fosters pedagogical imagination. Instead of approaching AI as a technical inevitability, the paper advocates for a situated, justice-oriented approach to educational innovation—one that centers equity, critical reflection, and students' right to learn in dignified and inclusive ways.

By foregrounding the ethical and contextual dimensions of school leadership in the integration of AI, this study contributes to reimagining future-oriented educational leadership models that are grounded in justice, criticality, and inclusive pedagogical innovation.

Natasha Boyce
University of Glasgow, UK
A Study Into How Black Girls Resist Racial Inequity Through Social Justice Projects

Introduction/Overview
Awareness of the racialised and gendered violence experienced by Black girls in UK schools has heightened since the case of Child Q (Begum, 2023; John, 2022; Thompson, 2024). This case revealed how misogynoir shapes the ways Black girls experience schooling in the UK (Iyere & Akel, 2023, p.18).

Purpose of study/project objectives
This study aims to illuminate how Black girls demonstrate their acumen as political agitators with the agency to organise, enact leadership and influence school environments. Including their stories in schools is not only relevant but also a document of their resistance and counter hegemonic actions.

Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry

This is a conceptual study, driven by research questions aimed at illuminating how Black girls are experiencing and resisting racism in schools, and, most importantly, how they make sense of racial justice initiatives or strategies. Qualitative research methods are most appropriate since the objective is to investigate lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data will be collected through the multimethod use of focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). The participants will be Black African, Black Caribbean, or Black mixed girls aged 16 – 22.

Results and/or substantiated conclusions

This study will trouble strategies aimed at harnessing the political energy within young people to advance educational reform in a socially just way. Most importantly, situating Black girls as epistemological producers of knowledge is active anti-racism, as legitimising Blackness as a respected authority is crucial to dismantling hegemonic ideology.

Significance of the research or project

Much of the scholarship interrogating the experiences of Black girls in education is located in U.S literature (Annamma et al., 2019; Apugo et al., 2023; Butler, 2018; Kohli et al., 2017). The significance of this project is in its focus on synthesising findings from the UK within the scholarship from the US to broaden the field of knowledge.

Dareen Charafeddin
OISE, University of Toronto
Equity, Agency, and the Everyday Hustle: Lessons in Resistance from Public School Principals

This study explores how public and independent school principals in the Greater Toronto Area understand and enact an Entrepreneurial Leadership Mindset (ELM) in their roles. While the original intent was to examine how flatter hierarchies in independent schools support creativity and innovation, the findings reveal a compelling counter-narrative: public school principals, often working within rigid, bureaucratic systems, demonstrate remarkable resistance, risk-taking, and social justice leadership despite limited autonomy and institutional constraints.

Using a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve principals, six from public schools and six from independent schools. Data was analyzed thematically to compare how ELM and autonomy are understood and practiced across both contexts. While independent school principals displayed a uniform and structured interpretation of ELM, often tied to innovation and business functions, public school principals offered more varied and personal definitions. Many associated ELM with advocacy, equity, and creative problem-solving rather than business-oriented goals.

A key finding is that public school principals frequently express entrepreneurial leadership through acts of resistance. They navigate institutional red tape, budget limitations, and hierarchical policies to advocate for marginalized students and implement meaningful change. These principals are driven by professional integrity and a deep commitment to equity, even when it means challenging authority or putting themselves at risk. In contrast, independent school principals benefit from trust-based autonomy, allowing for more fluid implementation of innovative practices without the same level of systemic pushback.

The study highlights how public school principals cultivate agency in restrictive environments, often "hustling" for professional development and resources, while developing personalized leadership strategies to carve out space for decision-making. Their actions embody a form of grassroots entrepreneurialism, characterized by risk-taking, creative problem solving and resourcefulness, and is deeply tied to social justice and student-centered leadership.

These findings invite a reconsideration of how entrepreneurial leadership is recognized and supported across school systems. Rather than viewing public school principals as constrained actors, this research positions them as courageous leaders innovating within, and sometimes against, the system, offering critical lessons on resilience, equity-driven leadership, and the power of resistance in hierarchical structures.

Eunju Choe
University of Oxford, UK

"Echoes, Doubts, and Dialogues": Mapping Teacher Identity in IB English A Studies in Language and Literature Classrooms

Building on my master's research, which examined how Canadian pre-service teachers engaged with Indigenous life-narrative picture books to initiate critical conversations around residential schools and Truth and Reconciliation, this paper expands the inquiry to international contexts. In particular, it explores how teachers in the International Baccalaureate (IB) English A Studies in Language and Literature program navigate emotional hesitancy and self-doubt when addressing unfamiliar and culturally sensitive narratives. My earlier findings (Choe, 2023) revealed that despite a strong commitment to social justice, many pre-service teachers struggled to engage with these texts critically, often shifting their attention toward managing potential student responses instead of reflecting on their own emotional reactions or positionalities.

My current doctoral study takes up these tensions within the broader global challenge of equity in education. Drawing on Freire and Macedo's (2014) vision of education as dialogic and transformative, Smith's (2021) exploration of decolonising methodologies through relationality and reflexivity, and Pinar's (2009) concept of currere as autobiographical self-encounter, I frame teacher identity and practice as deeply tied to critical self-reflection. Methodologically, I employ "teacher journey mapping," inspired by Strong-Wilson's (2021) memory-mapping technique, to trace how IB educators in Canada and Singapore negotiate moments of discomfort and resistance when using literature to foster intercultural awareness and critical literacy.

Rather than interpreting teachers' emotional responses as unprofessional, this research positions them as essential to transformative educational practice. Literature—whether global novels, graphic narratives, or life writing—becomes a site where educators perform necessary "memory work" (Strong-Wilson, 2021), challenge dominant historical knowledge systems, and model the critical empathy they seek to foster in students. This study proposes that teacher vulnerability and self-inquiry are not obstacles to equity but necessary elements of ethical teaching.

In a global educational landscape shaped by varied sociopolitical contexts, this paper offers a grounded and hopeful contribution to critical pedagogy, decolonisation, and the practical pursuit of equity in education. I conclude that the work of educational justice begins not only in what teachers teach but in how they confront and transform themselves.

Ruth-Ann O. Edwards
The Mico University College/Association of Graduate Researchers in Education (AGRE), Jamaica

They Left, Now What? An Exploration of The Leadership Styles of Administrators of Five Secondary Schools and its Impact on Teacher Migration

This study investigates the leadership styles of administrators of five secondary schools in Kingston, Jamaica and its impact on teacher migration. Leadership within educational institutions, plays a pivotal role in shaping the work environment, influencing teacher satisfaction, and consequently affecting teacher retention. In the context of Jamaica, a country battling teacher migration, understanding the dynamics of leadership styles becomes crucial.

This research employs a qualitative approach, where interviews and questionnaires will be used to gather data from 15 teachers that have left these 5 institutions. Leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire approaches, are assessed, and their correlation with the teacher migration pattern explored. The study aims to identify the specific leadership styles used at these secondary schools and to determine the association with factors driving teachers to seek opportunities elsewhere, whether locally or internationally.

Preliminary findings suggest a significant correlation between certain leadership styles and increased teacher migration. Schools with transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational and supportive leaders, exhibit higher teacher satisfaction and lower migration rates. Conversely, laissez-faire leadership, marked by a lack of direction and involvement, correlates with higher teacher dissatisfaction and an increased likelihood of migration.
Understanding these dynamics can inform policy decisions and administrative practices aimed at enhancing leadership in Jamaican secondary schools, ultimately contributing to the retention of qualified educators and the overall improvement of the education system.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Leadership, Administrators

Everton Ellis & Eddia Solas
Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada
Cultural Responsiveness in Science Education: A Case for Learning from the Jamaican National Standards Curriculum for Nova Scotian Students of African Descent

This paper examines the Jamaican National Standards Curriculum (NSC) in science as a potential model for developing culturally relevant pedagogies for Black students in Nova Scotia. The underachievement of Black students in Canadian schools has been a persistent concern in provinces such as Ontario and Nova Scotia, and many argue that the curriculum and pedagogical approaches are not culturally responsive to the needs and experiences of these students. This has resulted in a call from the Black communities in these provinces for an education system which meets the needs of their children. One of the problems identified in addressing the problem is a shortage of models for educators of what these pedagogies should look like for students of African heritage.

Drawing on a review of existing literature, this paper will explore the historical and cultural contexts that shape the Jamaican school curriculum in science and provide an analysis of the extent to which the Jamaican NSC aligns with culturally responsive pedagogies. It will also identify key principles that could inform the development of similar approaches for Black students in Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada. The paper will explore any emphasis on experiential learning, student-centered approaches, and the integration of local knowledge, which could be adapted and incorporated into Nova Scotian science education to better reflect the cultural contexts and experiences of students of African heritage.

The paper will conclude with a call to action for educators and policymakers to consider the potential of the Jamaican school curriculum as a model for developing culturally relevant pedagogies in Nova Scotia. By embracing and valuing diverse cultural perspectives, Nova Scotian schools can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments that support the success and well-being of all students, including those from African Nova Scotian communities. This paper is significant as it responds to a key recommendation from the 1994 Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) Report, which called for the development of culturally responsive educational approaches to better meet the learning needs of students of African Nova Scotian heritage.

Kimberley English
Trent/Fleming School of Nursing, Ontario, Canada
Resistant Leadership: Reimagining Nursing Education for a Just Healthcare Future

Leadership in nursing education is at a critical juncture, where renewal, sustenance, and resistance converge to challenge traditional paradigms and advance educational justice. This paper examines leadership as a form of resistance within the context of nursing education, positioning it as a transformative force that confronts entrenched inequities and advocates for systemic change in healthcare environments. Leadership as resistance is conceptualized not merely as opposition to change, but as an intentional, proactive stance against practices and structures that perpetuate injustice and marginalization within nursing education and clinical practice.

Central to this approach is the pursuit of educational justice, which demands equitable access to resources, unbiased assessment, and the cultivation of inclusive learning environments that recognize and respond to the diverse needs of nursing students. Educational justice in nursing extends beyond fairness in classroom and clinical evaluations; it encompasses the dismantling of discriminatory practices, the promotion of student empowerment, and the fostering of professional identities grounded in social responsibility and advocacy. By embedding critical pedagogies and social justice frameworks into nursing curricula, educators can equip students with the skills and consciousness necessary to identify, resist, and reform inequitable healthcare practices.

The impact of educational justice on current healthcare environments is profound. Nursing graduates who have experienced justice-oriented education are more likely to engage in advocacy, address social determinants of health, and contribute to reducing health disparities. These leaders are prepared to challenge the status quo, support marginalized populations, and drive organizational change that aligns with the ethical imperatives of the nursing profession.

This abstract calls for a reimagining of leadership in nursing education as an act of resistance—one that sustains the values of equity and justice, renews the commitment to social responsibility, and ultimately transforms healthcare systems into more just and inclusive ones. Through this lens, leadership becomes a catalyst for enduring change, fostering environments where both students and patients can thrive.

Leroy Demone Fearon
The Mico University College/Association of Graduate Researchers in Education (AGRE), Jamaica

Youth-Led Resistance and Inclusive Leadership Practices in Jamaican Higher Education: A Study of Student Governance and Advocacy

In an era marked by global challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), student leadership emerged as a powerful force for resistance and renewal within higher education. This study explored how student leaders in Jamaican universities shaped more inclusive and socially just academic environments through advocacy, programming, and engagement. Grounded in the theme of "Leadership for Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance in Challenging Times," the research highlighted the proactive role of youth in countering marginalization and fostering belonging on campus.

Using a qualitative case study design, the study purposively sampled 10 elected student leaders from two Jamaican universities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, as well as document analysis of student-led initiatives and relevant institutional policies. The research examined the strategies employed by student leaders to address pressing issues such as gender equity, mental health awareness, economic hardship, and inclusion. It also explored the barriers they encountered, including administrative resistance, entrenched cultural norms, and limited resources.

Findings revealed that student leadership functioned not only as a platform for representation but also as a vital site of resistance, where young people reimagined institutional values, practices, and priorities. Through collaborative action and creative campus-based interventions, student leaders contributed meaningfully to sustaining DEI efforts within their institutions, despite ongoing national and global challenges.

This study added to the discourse on youth agency, educational justice, and transformative leadership by positioning Jamaican student leaders as key agents of inclusive change in higher education.

Key words: Student leadership, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Resistance, Youth Agency

Erin Finley
OCAD University

Sustainable and Equitable Arts Education in Ontario Long-Term Care: Centering Memory, Creativity, and Climate Responsibility

My presentation will explore "Project Elinor", my memory-art project for older adults in long-term care (LTC) facilities. At a time when systemic inequities in education and health care continue to disproportionately affect marginalized populations, this project centres older adults—especially those with cognitive and physical impairments—as knowledge holders, memory keepers, and creators.

Working within LTC settings, my project facilitates accessible, inclusive, intergenerational art-making experiences that prioritize access and the preservation of personal and collective memory. Through workshops, collaborative exhibitions, and reflective storytelling, the project acts as a form of resistance to ageism, ableism, and the erasure of lived experience. In doing so, it invites us to rethink whose stories are centered in arts education and whose voices are left out of traditional educational paradigms.

My presentation, which will include a live drawing activity I will co-create with the conference audience, will present findings from over a year of participatory engagement, sharing stories, images, and outcomes from the project. It also critically reflects on the role of educators and artists as facilitators of justice-oriented pedagogy in alternative spaces for teaching and learning.

By making visible the creative capacities and contributions of older adults, my memory-art project invites educators, researchers, caregivers, and community members to consider how art can serve as a tool for fostering dialogue and building communities around joyful collective resistance.

Shelly Hopper
Community Education Development Association
Izzeddin Hawamda
Canadian Mennonite University

Untitled Belonging: Storytelling as Resistance, Renewal, and Reclamation in Settler-Colonial Education

This storytelling-based session explores how personal and cultural narratives—those of a Palestinian refugee and a Métis educator—act as tools of resistance, renewal, and reclamation within settler-colonial education systems. Our shared objective is

to reflect on how storytelling can disrupt systemic erasure, affirm fragmented identities, and offer new pathways toward liberatory educational practices.

Using lived experience as a primary mode of inquiry, we engage in critical storytelling rooted in community knowledge, land-based wisdom, and the teachings of our ancestors. Our method foregrounds dialogue and relationship as key pedagogical tools, drawing from critical Indigenous and diasporic pedagogies that center embodiment, memory, and voice. Through story, we examine how our identities have been shaped by displacement, dispossession, and systemic silencing—and how, through storytelling, we resist these forces.

Our data sources include personal and intergenerational narratives, cultural memory, and the tensions we navigate daily within colonial institutions. From the smell of olive trees under siege to the memory of wild sage in ceremony, our stories speak to the emotional, political, and spiritual dimensions of working within systems not built for us. In naming and reclaiming these experiences, we create openings for deeper understanding and transformation.

We offer not definitive results but emergent insights: that storytelling can be a leadership practice, a pedagogical act, and a form of collective healing. We show how refugee and Indigenous experiences intersect in ways that expose contradictions—between home and exile, silence and voice, forgetting and remembering—and call us to hold complexity with care and courage.

This work contributes to broader efforts to reimagine educational spaces that do not demand assimilation but instead honor relationality, justice, and truth. It invites educators to reflect on how their own stories might become sources of resistance and renewal. Together, we consider how co-creating new narratives can shape more just futures in education—futures rooted in responsibility, solidarity, and belonging.

Dr. Douglas Hutchison
Executive Director of Education, Glasgow City Council
Farasha Bashir
Depute Head Teacher, Highpark Primary School, Glasgow
Natasha Aujula
Depute Head Teacher, Camtyne Primary School, Glasgow
I Belong Here: Cultivating Identity Affirming Classrooms

Purpose: The purpose of the project is to overcome barriers to black and minority ethnic teachers being appointed to senior promoted posts in schools. Around 26% of Glasgow's children have English as an additional language yet none of our head teachers comes from any background other than white British / Irish.

Methods: Glasgow City Council teachers in promoted posts are not representative of the children, young people and communities in our schools. In order to increase the number of teachers from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds in promoted posts, education services ringfenced 5 temporary promoted posts at principal teacher level for 23 months for BME teachers. The programme has been running for 4 years. In addition, a programme for BME teachers called BAME Support Into Leadership (BSIL) is now in its second year and is aimed at a wider group of BME colleagues to support their leadership journey. The programme involves four taught sessions over the school year and a school based project to develop leadership skills.

Data Sources: Qualitative data from evaluation carried out after each cohort of BAME PTs is the main source of data. In addition, data is available from evaluation of the first BISL programme. Quantitative data on the number of BME staff in promoted posts compared to the diversity among our children and young people is used and remains the driver for continuing both of these programmes.

Results: Evaluations are very positive from those involved in the programmes. There has been a slight increase in the number of participants gaining senior promoted posts in schools, mainly in primary schools. Some of the BAME PT Cohort have secured permanent posts as principal teachers.

Significance of the project: Initiatives aimed at increasing representation in senior promoted posts are contested. Criticism has come from some unexpected sources claiming the initiative is contrary to equalities legislation. In addition, campaigners for greater representation in the workforce criticise the initiatives as too little and tokenism. The project is small scale but aims to take action and live with criticism rather than do nothing.

Krystal Kavita Jagoo
Intersectional Equity Insights
Siva Thangeswary Sivarajah
OISE, University of Toronto

Access Intimacy Abuse and Social Justice Oriented Community Activist and Academic Spaces

This presentation explores access intimacy abuse within social justice organizing and academic communities. Conceptualized in response to the growing weaponization of "access intimacy," as coined by Mia Mingus in 2011, to describe deep, mutual care around access needs, access intimacy abuse is when someone else is perceived to "get" one's individual unique access needs, but weaponizes that "access intimacy" to exploit that person, who perceives their abuser as "safe," based on shared experiences of oppression, expected to inform their values.

Drawing on Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn Brown's (2017) powerful "Letter to Activists," this presentation holds space for a necessary and vulnerable truth-telling, that activist and academic spaces often reproduce colonial structures of power, ableism, misogynoir, etc. under the banner of collective liberation. Brown's letter is both a love letter and a rupture, naming the exhaustion, betrayal, and rage felt by disabled, multiply marginalized people called into movements, only to be tokenized, drained, and discarded; trust is gained with social justice language and shared experiences of oppression to enact intercommunity violence.

We attend specifically to how Black, Indigenous, brown, femme and feminized people, especially those who are disabled, poor, working class, and/or parenting, are disproportionately expected to not only provide access, emotional labor, and support in ways that replicate the very oppressions social justice spaces claim to resist (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2017), but are often subjected to access intimacy abuse. As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2017) writes, "The thing about being a working class or poor and/or disabled and/or parenting and/or Black, Indigenous or brown femme [feminized] is that people are going to ask you to do stuff for them." This quote underscores the structural and embodied tolls of access intimacy abuse as an under-theorized form of racialized and gendered labour.

This presentation invites activists and scholars to invest in disability justice to interrogate how access intimacy abuse is weaponized against those already made hyper-visible through care work and invisibilized in institutional power structures. We invite participants to denounce access intimacy abuse, and commit to access intimacy as a relational, reciprocal practice, rooted in accountability, consent, and collective survivance (Vizenor, 2008).

Rayan Katerji
University of Glasgow, UK

Leading Through Policy Constraints: School Principals as Advocates for Renewal and Resistance in Centralized Educational Systems

This paper presents findings from an ongoing doctoral research study investigating how school principals in the Arab region enact leadership through policy advocacy within centralized, top-down educational systems. Set against a backdrop of constrained governance, opaque policy structures, and bureaucratic marginalization, the study explores how principals, particularly those involved in a regional school-based improvement initiative, exercise agency to renew their institutions and resist restrictive policy environments. These school leaders, empowered through capacity-building programs, developed the competencies and commitment to act as localized change agents. Three research aims guide the study: (1)to examine how school principals interpret and understand national education policies; (2)to identify the strategies they use to navigate, adapt to, or influence policy in support of their school agendas; and (3)to explore the enablers and constraints shaping their engagement in advocacy efforts. It adopts an interpretivist qualitative design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus groups with eight principals from Lebanon, Jordan, and Kuwait, across public and private sectors. Document analysis of national policy texts contextualizes the policy environment in which school leaders operate. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and content mapping (Bowen, 2009). The study draws on theories of policy enactment and implementation (Spillane, Coburn, Braun & Ball), crafting coherence framework (Honig, 2006), and Good's (2019, 2023) conceptualization of practitioner advocacy. Preliminary findings indicate that school principals demonstrate a strong policy agency. They engage in situated policy interpretation, selective compliance, and creative adaptation strategies, including quiet defiance and micropolitical maneuvering. Principals engage in unsung or quiet advocacy, developing internal school policies,

mobilizing resources, and modeling best practices to influence local systems. They also engage in informal negotiations, cultivate relationships with ministry officials, opportunistically participate in formal structures, and form strategic community partnerships. While trust, credibility, and personal capital enable their efforts, structural barriers such as marginalization, burnout, and bureaucratic opacity continue to limit their policy influence. The study illustrates how school leaders embody quiet resistance through relational, strategic, and contextually sensitive actions. It calls for reimagining policy processes in the Arab region, positioning school leadership as a lever for sustainable, locally grounded educational reform.

Rabia Khokhar
University of Toronto
Theresa Meikle
Niagara University in Vaughan, Ontario
I Belong Here: Cultivating Identity Affirming Classrooms

As a South Asian and Muslim student growing up in Toronto, Rabia often felt like she did not belong in her school spaces which included the curriculum, interactions and 'common' references. It sometimes felt like Rabia was sitting on the sidelines of her school experiences, 'looking in' and never feeling a sense of belonging and representation. This impacted her sense of connection and engagement. Although she did not have the 'language' to understand or articulate this experience as a student, the feeling stayed with her in her mind and heart.

As an immigrant to Canada at the age of eleven, Theresa felt like an outsider at school and in her new community. Her accent made her a target of ridicule by other students and while she had once been a confident and capable student she became hesitant to participate or speak in class. She did not ask questions or volunteer answers. Eventually, to ease her discomfort and to "fit in", Theresa adopted a Canadian accent at school and only spoke with her native accent with her family. This experience shaped her sense of identity throughout her life as Theresa has always been very proud of her Scottish / Irish heritage and equally proud to be a Canadian citizen.

As two educators deeply committed to equity work, we share similarities and differences in our lived experiences. Yet our experiences have inspired us to use our positional power to strive to create change specifically in terms of creating learning spaces that foster belonging for students of all identities and lived experiences. In our presentation, we will bring together our lived experiences through the methodology of duo-ethnography and share practical strategies for educators to bring the concept of belonging from theory to practice.

Eun Gi (Cathy) Kim & Yvonne Chan
OISE, University of Toronto
Inclusion on Whose Terms? Critical Reflections from East Asian Educators in Canadian Higher Education System

While Canadian academic culture often promotes the language of diversity and inclusion, we question the conditional nature of this "acceptance." Our experiences point to an acceptance with caveats, one that welcomes cultural difference only insofar as it adheres to accepted frameworks of dominant cultural discourse (Stein, 2020). These unspoken norms not only marginalize alternative knowledge systems but also obscure the structural inequities embedded in the system. In this presentation, we critically reflect on how such tensions have shaped our pedagogical choices and impacted our experiences as both students and educators.
We draw on the lived experiences of two East Asian educators navigating Canadian higher education, a space still deeply shaped by colonial legacies and Western-centered pedagogies. Using duoethnography as our method of inquiry, we draw on our personal narratives as racialized student researchers with formative experiences in East Asian schooling systems—where memorization, discipline, and teacher-centred instruction dominate—and critically reflect on the epistemic dissonance encountered in Canadian institutions. Duoethnography is particularly well-suited to this study, as it invites co-researchers to explore different perspectives as a site of critical inquiry and knowledge construction through relational and dialogic reflection (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). We reflect on the profound cultural and epistemological shifts upon entering a system that privileges participation, critical thinking, and individual expression.
We argue that adapting to Western institutions involves more than acquiring new academic skills, as it entails ongoing emotional labour and complex processes of identity negotiation. Through this dialogic inquiry, we illustrate how our pedagogical practices have been shaped in response to these tensions, and how we have learned to navigate, challenge, and sometimes resist institutional norms.

We argue that reimagining inclusion in higher education requires moving beyond performative gestures toward pedagogical spaces that affirm epistemic diversity, embrace multilingual and multicultural practices, and support more equitable modes of participation (Bhandal, 2023). Our reflections aim to contribute to broader efforts to decolonize the academic culture and offer insights for educators and institutions committed to creating more genuinely inclusive and responsive learning environments.

Rola Koubeissy
Université de Montréal
Re-Imagining inclusive Teaching Practices From Immigrant Students' Perspective

This presentation is based on a research project examining the intersecting points of view of teachers and newly arrived immigrant students in Quebec regarding pedagogical practices that promote their sociocultural and academic inclusion (Koubeissy et al., SSHRC-2023-2025). Data collection methods included comprehensive interviews (Kaufmann, 2007), classroom observations (Merriam, 1988), and semi-structured interviews (Fortin, 2010), conducted in three primary classes across different schools in Quebec. The participants included three teachers and seven newly arrived immigrant students. The goal was to analyze practices that foster students' sociocultural and academic inclusion by considering the intersecting perspectives of both students and teachers. In this regard, student voice research (SVR) is increasingly recognized and prioritized by researchers across disciplines (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Sudarsan et al., 2022). However, this approach remains controversial (Espinosa, 2022), particularly with regard to the participation of students from immigrant backgrounds (Due et al., 2013). Building on this, the presentation examines how both teachers and students perceive inclusive practices within and beyond the classroom. It also explores how the voices of these students can be amplified and meaningfully integrated to inform teaching practices as well as research critical methodologies. The results indicate that the factors fostering inclusion often differ between students and teachers. A critical reflection is thus important in order to redefine the concept of inclusion from the perspective of immigrant students. In conclusion, we will discuss the importance of prioritizing decolonial methodological approaches (Smith, 2021) that are more attuned to students' lived experiences.

Ama Ahema Kwablah & Dr. Lucy Effeh Attom
University of Education, Winneba
Challenges Faced by Female Leaders in Educational Institution in Tema Metropolis

This research explored the challenges encountered by female leaders in educational institutions within the Tema Metropolitan Area, as well as the support systems accessible to them. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study purposively selected 30 female leaders with a minimum of two years of leadership experience for interviews. The findings revealed several challenges, including the demands of multifaceted roles, gender bias and stereotypes, limited opportunities for advancement, and difficulties in balancing personal and professional responsibilities. The study also found that these female leaders coped by building support networks, seeking mentorship, and advocating for systemic change. Support systems identified included diversity programmes, mentorship initiatives, and professional development opportunities. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, through the Ghana Education Service and other stakeholders in education, promote gender equity in leadership, implement formal mentorship programmes, and advocate for relevant policy changes. Ultimately, this study enhances understanding of the lived experiences of female educational leaders and offers practical insights into how their professional development and success can be effectively supported.

Nova Lauder-Scott
University of Strathclyde Institute of Education, UK
Gillian Francis-McNeil
University of Strathclyde Institute of Education, UK
Rosemary Grady
University of Edinburgh, UK
Not Just Leading, But Questioning: Into Headship and the Making of Activist School Leaders

Into Headship is Scotland's national programme for Scotland's aspirant head teachers. The programme was developed through a partnership between the national agency, universities, and local authorities (districts), and is accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. It is coordinated by the National Design Group, which is chaired by Education Scotland and includes programme coordinators from the seven participating universities, as well as representatives from local authorities

This presentation—produced and delivered by members of the National Design Group—aims to share key aspects of the Into Headship programme in relation to the theme of critical praxis, with an international audience. In particular, it explores how the programme conceptualises and cultivates leadership as critical praxis by:

1. Supporting school leaders to meaningfully integrate theory and practice as a tool for leadership.
2. Enhancing participants' critical thinking skills to interrogate educational leadership theory, and to better understand the relationships between policy and practice.

We exemplify how the programme creates liminal spaces to help participants develop a confident, critical stance—enabling them to question and challenge the "taken-for-granted" policy expectations that characterise the complex landscapes school leaders must navigate.

The presentation also addresses the challenges involved in these efforts and shares the reflections they have prompted within the National Design Group, particularly in relation to developing leadership capacity across the education system.

Drawing on real examples from the programme, we demonstrate how Into Headship supports the development of leaders who are ethically grounded, politically literate, socially aware, secure in their professional identity, confident in expressing their voice and adept at relational leadership, in addition to being operationally competent. We highlight how the deliberate design of the programme resists technocratic approaches to leadership and instead embraces complexity, values-based inquiry, and critical dialogue.

In sharing real examples from across the programme, we invite delegates to consider how national leadership programmes can act as sites of professional resistance, intellectual freedom, and social transformation. We assert that to meet the challenges of our time, headship preparation must move beyond compliance-driven models and nurture bold, critically informed leaders equipped to lead meaningful change in education.

Augustine Sisagali Lumwanga, Jive Lubbungu & Henry Kamocha
Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

Leadership for Institutional Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance: A Case of Selected Tertiary Institutions in Zambia

In the face of political, economic, and social challenges, leadership within tertiary institutions plays a critical role in steering organizational resilience and transformation. This study explores how leadership functions as a mechanism for institutional renewal, sustenance, and resistance in selected tertiary institutions of learning in Zambia. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with academic leaders, administrators, and faculty members across three institutions. The study applies transformative and adaptive leadership theories as analytical lenses to understand how leaders respond to systemic pressures while maintaining institutional integrity and advancing educational goals. Findings reveal that effective leadership in these contexts is characterized by strategic adaptability, inclusive decision-making, and the capacity to resist external pressures that threaten institutional autonomy and academic standards. Leaders also foster renewal by investing in capacity development, curriculum innovation, and community engagement. However, challenges such as limited funding, political interference, and staff attrition continue to hinder sustainability efforts. The study concludes that leadership in tertiary education must be both visionary and contextually grounded to sustain institutions during periods of uncertainty. Recommendations include strengthening leadership training, promoting shared governance, and advocating for policies that safeguard academic freedom and institutional independence. This research contributes to the growing discourse on leadership in African higher education and offers practical insights for institutional resilience in similar contexts.

Shunyan Lyu & Bharti Tomar
Thompson Rivers University

Leadership for Inclusive Renewal: Transformational and Distributed Approaches to Universal Design for Learning in Canadian Higher Education

In challenging times, Canadian post-secondary institutions are seeking leadership approaches that can renew and sustain inclusive educational practices. This conceptual analysis examines how transformational and distributed leadership intersect with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to promote ethical, inclusive, and sustainable teaching practices in higher education. Transformational leadership's moral vision and focus on "ethical activism"—leaders' commitment to critique inequities, care, and professionalism—align with UDL's goal of addressing diverse learner needs. Meanwhile, distributed leadership provides the collaborative, flattened decision-making needed to implement UDL across an institution. Drawing on social identity theory and social exchange theory, the analysis illustrates how leaders foster a shared sense of purpose and trust that drive faculty engagement in UDL initiatives. Research indicates that blending transformational vision with shared leadership strengthens

faculty commitment and organizational effectiveness. Transformational leadership is frequently linked to inclusive education outcomes, as it helps reform institutional culture and enhance teacher efficacy for all learners, while distributed models empower educators at all levels to participate in change.

This paper outlines solution-oriented strategies for "leadership for renewal." Institutional case studies and dialogues suggest senior leaders should embed UDL into policy and everyday processes, model UDL principles in their practice, and support UDL champions to build campus-wide buy-in. Equally, establishing cross-functional committees and professional development opportunities encourages shared ownership of inclusive teaching innovation. By fostering an environment of trust, recognition, and collaboration, leaders can mitigate resistance and sustain faculty engagement in equity-focused pedagogies. This literature-based inquiry has implications for leadership development and policy, advocating that training programs integrate inclusive leadership competencies and that universities adopt structural supports and ethical leadership frameworks to institutionalize UDL and navigate persistent challenges in equity, inclusion, and faculty engagement. In doing so, transformational and distributed leadership together serve as catalysts for renewal, sustenance, and resistance by challenging inequities through more inclusive and resilient educational practices.

Megan Collyer MacDonald, Kyra Williams & Katrina Struloeff
Catalyst, University of Pennsylvania
Sustaining Leadership as Resistance in Schools: A Continuous Improvement Approach

Purpose
Schools need leaders who can resist oppressive and marginalizing status quo systems to address the complex challenges facing educational institutions, yet bureaucratic structures and norms complicate the practice of resistance-oriented leadership. Due to system complexity, bold, context-ignorant changes are prone to unintended consequences. To foster effective educational change that resists perpetuation of the status quo, leaders must support processes that navigate contextual factors and cultivate a culture of collaborative problem-solving.

Our collaboration with school and district leaders enables meaningful engagement in continuous improvement to support leaders engaged in resistance. We have introduced improvement science methodology, provided coaching to build capacity to incorporate improvement practices, and created space for shared learning in regular community meetings. We will present an overview of our design for improvement methodology and its potential for sustaining resistance that is responsive to local contexts, and share insights from research with our network's members.

Methods and data sources
This study blends Sharing Circle and focus group methodologies (Hunt & Young, 2021) to facilitate interactive, co-facilitated sessions that incorporate structured activities and open dialogue. Participants contribute their experiences as learners and implementers of continuous improvement practices, fostering collaborative knowledge building, while co-creating artifacts that reflect their understanding of change-oriented leadership within their educational contexts and envision how these resources might be applied in the future. These artifacts serve to: (1) support collaborative knowledge building and (2) provide insight into continuous improvement as a source of resistance to the status quo.

Results
The underway study will likely reveal emerging themes related to the extent in which continuous improvement models were successfully leveraged to support leaders in resisting status quo practices and outcomes across educational contexts.

Significance
Improvement science and its methodology help uncover and spread promising practices while considering context. By prioritizing system understanding and user-centered changes, this approach fosters collaborative learning (Biag, 2019). Its short-cycle inquiry model balances daily improvements with long-term change (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). By focusing on "what works, for whom, and under what conditions," it surfaces sustainable practices to address educational challenges and resist problematic systems and structures (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 140).

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Debbie McCleary
Niagara University in Ontario
Carol Doyle-Jones &
Niagara University in Ontario
Said Sidani
University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada
Cultivating Allyship: Exploring Faculty Diversity as a Pathway to Inclusive Practices in Teacher Education

This presentation explores a collaborative inquiry into how faculty diversity within a College of Education fosters allyship, communication, and professional growth. The research investigates what allyship looks like among faculty with diverse racial, cultural, and lived experiences, and how it takes shape in everyday practice. Situated within the sub-theme Demystifying Equity Discourses and Practices, this study examines how diversity among faculty supports equity, inclusive pedagogy, and meaningful collaboration.

The primary objective is to explore how diverse faculty composition enhances understanding of equity and fosters practices of mutual support. Specifically, the project asks: What does allyship look like among a diverse faculty, and how does it happen? Drawing from literature on allyship, faculty diversity, and inclusive leadership (Shields, 2010; Banks, 2008; Kezar & Gehrke, 2015), the study identifies strategies that promote engagement and collective learning (O'Reilly & Lambert, 2016; Sleeter, 2011). It seeks to uncover the behaviors and practices that define allyship in academic spaces and how they contribute to a more inclusive environment for faculty and students alike.

The methodology is grounded in qualitative inquiry, specifically collaborative ethnography, which involves researchers working together to co-construct meaning and interpret lived experiences. This approach emphasizes shared authority and mutual reflection, aligning with the study's focus on faculty allyship and equity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using reflective dialogue, narrative accounts, and thematic coding, the study explores how faculty navigate difference, challenge assumptions, and build solidarity through intentional practice.

Preliminary findings suggest that communication grounded in active listening, vulnerability, and cultural humility helps faculty address complex dynamics related to race, power, and identity (Sue, 2010). The study also highlights the importance of institutional cultures that affirm diverse perspectives and prioritize equity-centered dialogue in creating spaces where allyship can flourish (Hollander, 2001).

By centering faculty voices, this research contributes to ongoing conversations about equity in higher education and provides actionable strategies for building allyship across difference. The presentation emphasizes that leveraging faculty diversity is essential for preparing educators to thrive in multicultural school environments.

Tamara Scott McFarlane
University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica
Exploring the Lived Curriculum Experience of Second Chance Education Learners through McClusky's Theory of Margin

In the context of global educational transformation, second-chance education (SCE) has emerged as a strategic tool for addressing exclusion and inequality in higher education. SCE programs aim to re-engage individuals, particularly mature

students, who had their formal education interrupted due to social, financial, or personal barriers. Despite the increasing emphasis on lifelong learning and inclusive education, the specific experiences of mature students in SCE pathways remain underexplored. Using McClusky's Theory of Margin as the primary analytical lens, this study will explore how adult learners navigate the demands of life while pursuing second-chance education programmes. McClusky's theory posits that adult learners function by creating a balance between their load (the cumulative demands of life such as work, family, and health) and power (resources like motivation, social support, and institutional assistance). Successful learning outcomes are achieved when individuals have a positive margin, that is, their power outweighs their load. By applying this theory, the research aims to examine how mature learners balance these forces in their pursuit of academic success and personal growth. This ethnographic case study will examine the lived experiences of 10 adult learners who are engaged in second chance education programmes at ta community college in Jamaica. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically, with McClusky's framework guiding the interpretation of findings. The anticipated outcomes include a deeper understanding of the interplay between life challenges and educational persistence among mature students. The study expects to identify key barriers and enablers within institutional and personal contexts, offering practical insights into how power can be enhanced to support adult learners. It also aims to contribute to the limited empirical application of McClusky's Theory of Margin in higher education literature. Additionally, the findings will support decisions by the institution's administration to design responsive second chance education programmes that facilitate equitable access and lifelong learning. The findings will also be relevant for policymakers, educators, and institutions committed to fostering resilience, retention, and success among non-traditional student populations. Keywords: adult learners, McClusky's Theory, second chance education, lifelong learning

Kate McIntosh
From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Women's Leadership in Higher Education Administration

This presentation draws on my doctoral research exploring the career journeys of female presidents and vice presidents within Ontario's college system, with a particular focus on leadership during times of crisis. While gender parity is nearing at the executive level in these institutions, little is known about what propels women into—and sustains them in—these senior roles. This narrative inquiry study fills that gap by centering the voices and lived experiences of 23 women leaders who have navigated the complexities of higher education leadership.

Using Liberal Feminism and Social Cognitive Career Theory as a conceptual framework, the research identifies four overarching themes—support, connection, courage, and resilience—as pivotal to participants' career progression. These themes provide both insight and inspiration: from the role of mentorship and sponsorship to the importance of authenticity and strategic risk-taking. In particular, the women's reflections reveal how these leadership qualities are uniquely suited to navigating moments of uncertainty and institutional change.

This session will share key findings from the study, including eight career success strategies for aspiring female leaders and four actionable implications for higher education institutions aiming to better support and retain women in leadership. Attendees will walk away with practical insights on how to build more inclusive, flexible, and supportive pathways to senior leadership.

By examining women's leadership through the lens of real-life success stories, this presentation challenges deficit-based narratives and instead highlights what is working—and how we can scale it. This work not only advances our understanding of gender and leadership in higher education – and why women are particularly suitable candidates for college presidential positions – but also offers a timely roadmap for cultivating effective, resilient leadership in a post-crisis world.

Akufuna Mubitana & Sr. Petronella Lubanga
Zambia Catholic University
Impact of Gender Policies within the Zambian Context: Implications for Boys and Girls

There continues to be a gap in achieving gender equity in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the global scale this region is ranked 6th, having achieved a gender parity score of 68.0% comprising 36 economies (The World Economic Forum, 2025). While there have been improvements made in Zambia on closing the gender gap, more work needs to be done. Gender gaps persist in various domains such as education, healthcare, and security, etc. Additionally, violence against women and negative traditional practices like female genital mutilation and child marriages have continued to hinder women's overall development. These gaps are also influenced by legal systems, societal norms, and discriminatory policies (Broccolini, et al, 2024). Since the 1990's, the Zambian Government together with other relevant stakeholders have implemented deliberate policies in various sectors of the

economy to promote access to resources and opportunities by men and women, boys and girls. (National Gender Policy, 2023). It is increasingly important to examine the impact of these policies on young people.

With a focus on the educational sector and drawing on the extant literature, the purpose of this presentation is to examine the impact of gender policies on girls and boys; Identify gender gaps and weaknesses; examine alignment of policies with international commitments; and offer recommendations for more inclusive policy frameworks. Undergirded by Human Capital Theory of Gender Inequality and Social Justice Theory as the theoretical frameworks, this presentation hopes examine the role of research in selected areas in Zambia such as the Copperbelt, with learners, educators, and community leaders to add to this field of study.

Naheed Mukhi
OISE, University of Toronto
Ethnocultural Parents Taking Charge of the Curriculum: Frameworks and Processes in Early Learning and Child Care Systems that Empower Newcomer Parents to Promote their Home Culture and Home Language

In December 2022, the Journeys Through Early Learning and Childcare in Edmonton Report (De Vos et al., 2022) described the experiences of parents from racialized communities who were newcomers to Canada within the early learning and childcare (ELCC) sector. Findings revealed that these parents experienced ELCC that was unresponsive to the cultural needs and lived experiences of newcomer families, leading to them feeling undervalued and excluded. To address this need, a framework and a pilot early years curriculum were conceptualized and developed by parents from Filipino, Chinese and Vietnamese communities in Edmonton, inspired by the conceptual framework of Community Cultural wealth. Yosso (2005)'s Community Cultural wealth refers to an array of a community's cultural knowledge, history, skills, memory, and linguistic abilities. These are drawn upon by communities to survive, adapt, and identify themselves in landed countries. This strength-based lens counteracts the narrative of dominant and hegemonic pedagogical practices in classrooms by including songs and stories to promote the home culture and home languages of the students in the classroom. This session will explore the processes and the outcomes of co-developing a strengths-based framework and early childhood education pedagogies by ethnocultural and newcomer communities in Edmonton to promote their home languages and home cultures. The projects discussed will highlight how immigrant and refugee parents are seen as knowledgeable and co-contributors to the curriculum that their children are exposed to and are learning from. This aligns with what Tuck (2011) suggests as ways of celebrating the strengths of the community in curriculum design, which centers on 'quiet thought and beliefs of communities', making the generational knowledge of the elders and other community members available, and using home languages to express ideas' (p. 36). The hope is that by celebrating communities and bringing their strengths and knowledge to the forefront, classroom spaces become 'enrich (ed)' spaces of reflective dialogues and intersectional analyses' (Sabzalian, 2018, p. 366).

Carol A. Mullen
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
School Board Dynamics of Trans Student Policy Amid Democratic Backsliding

Purpose
Seeking to study school board dynamics of trans student policy, we encountered roadblocks, having to change direction. Our aim and research salvaging are acts of leadership resistance.
Signed into law in 2020, the Democrat-originated 2021 Model Policies required the VDOE to develop policies across divisions. However, affording protections to trans students was met with political divisiveness in communities (Equality Virginia, 2022). Republican Governor Youngkin (2022–2026) rescinded the law (VDOE, 2023). We drew upon frame theory to determine how decisions are made and enacted by policymakers (Huguet et al., 2021).
Methods
To learn about board dynamics impacting trans student policies in Virginia, USA, we asked: What is involved in policy decisions concerning the equitable treatment of trans students? What influences boards' adoption of equity policies?
Roadblock: A Weak Response From Divisions
With ethics approval (2023), we sought permission from 11 divisions to interview school board members, assuring anonymity. Only three divisions agreed. A major setback.
Roadblock: Initial Agreements Were Rescinded

Consenting divisions (16 board members) were emailed; 1 was interviewed. Seven agreed then withdrew, probably perceiving risks in their elected capacity. To contribute knowledge about trans policy, itself under surveillance, we generated an alternate data plan.

Data Sources

Procuring available recordings of local board meetings from 3 divisions (2021–2023), we coded 18.5 hours of policy conversation. Transcription coding ensued manually line-by-line, resulting in 31 codes, 3,119 quotations, and 6,122 code assignments.

Results

In a national climate hostile toward trans and non-binary gender identities, we were able to discern themes: (a) values and beliefs impacted policy decision-making; (b) stakeholder trust and board–division relationships affected policy adoption; (c) a policy's legal status influenced board adoption; (d) scenarios shaped policy direction in real-world contexts; and (e) decision-maker profiles informed policymaking.

Significance

Anti-LGBTQ+ education laws have escalated in the U.S. (Peele, 2023). Australia, Canada, Denmark, South Africa, and the UK's transgender student rights are more robust (Asher & Lyric, 2023). Examining progress with trans rights may inform perspectives on gender-expansive, affirming life-worlds. How might preparation programs more fully empower leaders as policy actors capable of sustaining educational justice amid democratic backsliding?

Paul A. Nalli
Arizona State University
Systemic Barriers Have No Borders: Scaling Up Leadership Excellence Using the RAISE Mindset

This action research introduces an innovative construct entitled R.A.I.S.E. (Representation, Amplification of Assets, Inspiration, Support, and Empowerment and Engagement) to scale up leadership excellence in Ontario education systems. Equity—often referred to as the "E-word"—has become a contentious and volatile political hotbed across ideological lines. R.A.I.S.E. attempts to shift the emphasis away from polarized discourse by approaching equity at the core of teaching and learning: the student and the family. It poses scaffolded reflective questions designed to connect with every student and family based on individual assets, strengths, passions, and interests—centering connection before correction and direction to meet individual needs.

This study explores extending R.A.I.S.E. beyond its initial use in a single school to examine its application in school systems where open dialogue about equity remains constrained. With permission, the R.A.I.S.E. protocol was provided to school districts in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) for self-directed rollout, with the understanding that a member of the senior leadership team would serve as a confidential participant in the study. Through purposive sampling, a qualitative, semi-structured group interview and a premortem exercise were conducted with system superintendents from GTHA school districts to determine the application and possibilities of the R.A.I.S.E. tool.

The qualitative study incorporated two coding cycles. The first involved in-vivo and descriptive coding, while the second utilized pattern coding. During the group interview, participants responded to semi-structured questions regarding implementation strategies and possible barriers or limitations to R.A.I.S.E. They also discussed whether the tool served as a conversation catalyst, enabling them to approach, navigate, and sustain equity-centered dialogue within systems and among stakeholders. The premortem exercise invited participants to imagine the tool's successes and failures for the 2024–25 school year. Based on these projections, participants reflected on the potential of R.A.I.S.E. to support progress toward transformational change by moving equity from theory to action in classrooms, schools, and systems. Findings revealed systemic barriers that influenced implementation and offered implications for further research.

Shanae Neal
Southern Methodist University
Katrina Struloeff
University of Pennsylvania
From Collaboration to Transformation: Women Education Leaders' Perceptions of Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (COPs) provide vital spaces for individuals to connect with similarly situated peers, reflect on challenges, and share experiences. Through these supportive networks, members often gain confidence, mentorship, and a sense of belonging. As such, the purpose of our qualitative study is to explore how women in leadership in education

administration view COPs in helping them grow personally and professionally. To guide our inquiry, we asked the following research questions: 1) How do women leaders perceive the value of women affinity spaces and communities of practice in their professional and personal growth? 2) How can communities of practice serve as transformative spaces for individuals with shared identities to collectively re-remember and re-story their experiences and narratives? 3) In what ways can communities of practice foster a sense of belonging, well-being, and career advancement for women leaders in education?

To begin, we examined an existing women leader COP and provided potential participants with details about the study through an in-person presentation followed by reminder emails. We then collected qualitative data from participants in the form of observation notes of three monthly meetings, interviews with volunteers (n = 6), and artifacts submitted by participants to reflect their practices or experiences within the COP. We are in the process of engaging in inductive coding practices to analyze the data, with two members of the research team reviewing and coding each piece of data. During our two rounds of coding, we will use open and in vivo coding to prioritize the participants' language and preserve the richness of their experiences and perspectives. We expect to find that the COP provides a safe and trusting environment where participants can exchange ideas, openly share doubts and challenges with those who understand their unique positionalities; collaboratively solve problems; and build supportive relationships that empower women leaders to sustain their passion for leadership. By amplifying women's voices in educational leadership and providing professional development opportunities to help them advance and thrive within leadership roles, COPs are powerful vehicles that center the humanity of women and promote continuous improvement.

Elizabeth Okudzeto
University of Prince Edward Island
Women in Higher Educational Leadership - Factors Impacting Career Advancement in Ghana

This study investigates the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within Ghanaian higher education settings. It explores how institutional policies, organisational structures, and socio-cultural expectations shape women's career trajectories, and what factors enable or hinder their progression into leadership positions. A qualitative narrative inquiry approach was employed within an interpretivist paradigm, allowing for in-depth exploration of women's leadership journeys and the broader systems that influence them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine women leaders across five Ghanaian higher education institutions. Participants included vice chancellors, deans, directors, registrars, and heads of department. Narrative thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns, insights and themes, while maintaining the richness of each individual narrative. (Butina, 2015).

Findings reveal that women's advancement into leadership is often a gradual process shaped by early leadership exposure, professional resilience, and the strategic use of institutional opportunities. While some participants benefited from supportive colleagues and merit-based systems, others encountered deeply rooted barriers such as gender stereotypes, limited mentoring, and the dual burden of academic and domestic responsibilities. Many particpants described tensions between traditional expectations of women and the traits associated with effective leadership, reflecting the explanatory power of Role Incongruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These tensions influenced both how women were perceived and how they navigated their careers—sometimes resisting dominant norms, and at other times adapting strategically. Institutional Theory further informed the analysis by highlighting how formal structures and informal cultural norms intersect to sustain gender inequality in academic leadership (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2001). Perspectives on gender equity policies varied, with some participants calling for reform and others insisting on merit-based progression.

The study sheds light on the structural and cultural dynamics that affect women's leadership in higher education in Ghana. By amplifying women's lived experiences, it provides actionable insights for institutions seeking to develop gender-inclusive leadership policies and cultures. While rooted in Ghana, the findings have broader relevance across sub-Saharan Africa and contribute to global efforts to achieve gender equity in higher education.

Enoch Danso Okyere
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana
University Council Autonomy as a Catalyst for Higher Education Reform in Ghana

This study examines the dynamics of university council independence in Ghana's public universities, prompted by proposed legislative reforms that increase government oversight. Using an exploratory qualitative design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 key informants, including government, faculty members, non-faculty members and student representatives from Ghana's five oldest public universities. Thematic and document analysis revealed that government influence, through regulatory constraints, financial control, and appointment powers, restricts council autonomy. The study advocates for policy reforms to limit government roles to oversight, fostering greater independence to enhance institutional efficiency and academic

innovation. These findings contribute to the global discourse on higher education governance, emphasising the need for balanced autonomy and accountability.

Deb Outhwaite
University of Liverpool, UK
How Global Change is Manifesting in the English Education Context

This paper is a run through of the changes that have taken place at each stage of education over the last five years post-Covid. The aim is to highlight what is happening in the English education sector for the international audience and show the impact of the Covid pandemic and austerity in what has been termed the polycrises in education (Bradbury and Moss, 2025). The author has practitioner experience in early years, primary, secondary, FE and HE - and wants to give exemplars from each part of the English education system to show the increasing nature of the wider polarisation and division across the education systems in the UK. With her leadership knowledge of the context she will draw attention to how good things are happening despite the current system not because of it. This presentation will use already published, publicly accessible data sources, and in part the results and conclusions will come from OECD and PISA data. The objective of the presentation is to provide a current understanding of the challenges facing the wider UK system exemplified through education.

Rema Passarelli
OISE Graduate
Collective Responsibility in Education

This research is based on Knowledge Building, Collective Responsibility, and Teacher Leadership. The objectives are centered on collaboration and inclusivity in educational decision making. Data is derived from qualitative research with fourteen interviews. Teachers reported a desire to be actively involved in school decisions and to collaborate with administrators. The support and work provided by staff members, teachers, and leaders strengthened the quality of decision-making. This research is significant in demonstrating that shared leadership is more effective, well received amongst educators, and mirrored in Ontario policy memoranda.

Rumana Patel & Dr. Alana Hoare
Thompson Rivers University, BC
Dear Indian Immigrants, Do You Have To Shift Your Moral Compass To Lead?

This study explores the ethical leadership paradigms of Indian immigrant professionals in Canada and compares them with their counterparts in India, with a specific focus on how acculturation influences ethical reasoning and leadership practice. The research responds to the need for more culturally inclusive leadership models that reflect the experiences of immigrant leaders navigating cross-cultural environments. Grounded in acculturation theory and informed by the recently conceptualized Bird's Eye View Model of leadership ethics, the study employs a qualitative research design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and reflective dialogue with five Indian leaders working in India and five Indian immigrant leaders working in leadership roles in Canada. These interviews examined how participants' approach and resolve different ethical dilemmas faced as a leader. The data were analyzed using thematic coding guided by the Multiple Ethical Paradigms Framework, which includes ethics of justice, care, community, profession, critique, self-care, discomfort, and St'at'imc Matriarchal leadership ethics. Key findings reveal that Indian immigrant leaders experience significant shifts in their ethical approaches as they navigate the Canadian cultural and institutional landscape. While participants retained core values such as collectivism, respect for hierarchy, and community-centered ethics, they also adapted to emphasize transparency, procedural fairness, and individual autonomy, values more dominant in Canadian organizational culture. This ethical blending underscores the dynamic nature of leadership ethics in multicultural settings. The study offers valuable contributions to cross-cultural leadership research, highlighting the importance of cultural adaptation in ethical decision-making. It also points to the limitations of universal leadership models that overlook diverse moral perspectives. Practical implications include strategies for immigrant leaders seeking to balance cultural retention with adaptation, and recommendations for Canadian institutions seeking to cultivate inclusive and culturally responsive

leadership environments. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of cultural awareness in ethical leadership development and supports broader efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in global professional environments.

Katina Pollock
University of Western Ontario
Donna Swapp
University of Regina
Implicit Work Expectations for Black School Leaders in Ontario

Findings from a transnational study funded by a Spencer Foundation Racial Equity Research Grant indicate a need for structural, decolonizing change for school leadership in Canada (British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario), Grenada, and Jamaica. Utilizing 31 interviews from Ontario we interrogate the hidden expectations around Black principals' work. The study mobilizes Dei's (2016) decolonizing, anti-racist framework to critically investigate how colonially entrenched inequities play out in the work of school leaders, seeking to expose, disrupt, and transform enduring colonial understandings, structures, and ways of knowing relative to educational leadership that entrench Eurocentrism and whiteness in knowledge production and knowledge validation and subjugate Black voices and experiences. As Botha et al. (2021) asserted, the privileging of non-dominant knowledges works to "open up the possibility of interrogating and dismantling the hegemony of the Western knowledge tradition" (p. 50). We define racial inequity as issues that impede access and opportunities for Black school principals' full participation in their work (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Davies & Armstrong, 2012). Our results demonstrate specific nuances in the nature of Black school leaders' work that is not recognized in colonialistic leadership frameworks, job descriptions, or professional learning. Black school leaders in Ontario experience implicit expectations around the types of work they are expected to take on as part of their role. Participants indicated feeling expected to take on increased Human Resources work, handle all discipline connected to Black students, and spearhead all anti-racism and equity initiatives and deal with everything equity and diversity-related at their schools, even if that is not their area of speciality. This hidden work provides a rationale for why Black Ontario school leaders spend more time in formal meetings than their non-White colleagues and spend more time in meetings at the school board office (Pollock et al., forthcoming). As such, these expectations lead to increased workload that is not codified or explicitly stated in the job description. This is significant because Ontario's current principal performance appraisal process, leadership framework, and professional learning opportunities do not take the work differences that Black school leaders experience into account, meaning they are being failed by the system.

Ato Rockcliffe
CKPES - University of Trinidad and Tobago
Reimagining Authority: A Qualitative Inquiry into Decolonising Educational Leadership at the University of Trinidad and Tobago

Note: This study is in process; hence, no results are reported in the abstract. The study will be completed by July. I hope my abstract will still be considered.

This qualitative study explores how educational leadership at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) can be decolonised through the experiences and perspectives of Programme Leaders. The research draws on postcolonial and decolonial theoretical frameworks to understand how colonial legacies continue to shape leadership structures, practices, and ideologies within a Caribbean tertiary institution. Semi-structured interviews with Programme Leaders will offer insights into their leadership philosophies, institutional constraints, and possibilities for transformation. The study aims to contribute to theory and praxis by foregrounding locally situated, culturally responsive, and socially just models of academic leadership in the postcolonial Caribbean.

Paula Smellie
OISE, University of Toronto
Role of Privilege in Faculty Time Allocation & Performance Evaluation

Purpose
Academic staff across Ontario's universities are required to participate in annual performance reviews based upon time allocation models. These processes are rarely subjected to rigorous review. A lack of critical reflection on organizational processes is well-documented in the literature (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) and reinforces systemic barriers embedded within

those processes (Acker, 2006). This paper builds on the work of Amis et al. (2020) and Acker (2006) that describe how organizational practices reproduce inequality, and the work of Ray (2019) that describes the influence of privilege on organizational processes. This paper focuses on describing perceptions of time allocation and performance evaluations through the lens of privilege to examine how gender, institutional norms around academic work, and other aspects of privilege are embedded in these processes.

Methods & Data
The study employed a multiple-case study design (Merriam, 1985) involving a purposive sample of eight tenure-stream faculty and two administrators (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenological interview techniques were utilized (Seidman, 2012) to clarify how participants made sense of time allocation and performance evaluation processes. Analysis involved implementation of Woodcock's (2016) Listening Guide and Tesch's Eight Steps as outlined in Creswell and Creswell (2018) for multiple rounds of coding, theme identification, and making connections between data and theory.

Preliminary Findings
Preliminary findings indicate that academic staff perceive a range of inequalities as endemic to time allocation and performance evaluation processes. Most agree that a consistent and clear model is needed for organizing and evaluating academic work, but have different ideas about how that might be achieved. Further analysis will explore how underlying issues related to gender, career stage, and field of study influence these perspectives.

Significance and Implications
If time and evaluation processes are influenced by gender, field of study, or other aspects of privilege, how can diverse academic staff succeed? Universities face significant pressure to align processes with principles of equity and inclusion. Understanding how academic staff make sense of these processes may enrich the existing literature on inequalities in academic careers and inform the development of quality assurance programs for performance evaluation and other processes typically excluded from such reviews.

Katrina Struloeff,
University of Pennsylvania
Kimberly Sterin
Drexel University School of Education, Pennsylvania
Kerena Escalante
EdTrust

Mentoring as Acts of Resistance and Reimagining: The Reflective Testimonios of Multiple Generations of Women Leaders in Higher Education

This study investigates the role of intergenerational mentorship as a deliberate countermeasure against neoliberal and racial capitalist norms within higher education. Aligned with the conference theme, "Leadership for Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance in Challenging Times," this project aims to demonstrate how an intentional mentorship collective fosters resilience and redefines leadership paradigms for women with intersecting marginalized identities. Methods employed include collective testimonios, a political methodology rooted in Chicana and Latina feminist traditions, facilitating storytelling as a means of resistance and transformation. Data sources comprise weekly virtual mentoring community sessions spanning three months, individual reflective journaling based on co-created prompts, and collaborative discussions. The journaling prompts focused on embodied practices, barriers faced within academia, and how mentoring aids in transitioning from persistence to thriving. Analysis involved initial and secondary coding of journals, identifying emergent themes. Results substantiate that intentionality, rooted in strategic decision-making akin to a chess game, alongside collective community support serves as a mental safety net, sustaining individual goals and well-being. Findings also reveal that participants actively reimagine leadership within higher education, challenging normative practices and creating alternative, inclusive spaces. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding how mentorship across identities can promote collective transformation, democratizing leadership and fostering justice-oriented practices. This work highlights the necessity of de-centering traditional hierarchies and investing in relational sustainability to empower women leaders in challenging times, thereby contributing to the renewal and sustenance of diverse, equitable educational ecosystems.

Fitzroy Thompson
York University
Examining Educational Leadership in Community Nursing to Address Pandemic-related Effects on Black Individuals in Low-income Neighbors

Educational leadership plays a pivotal role in preparing public health nurses (PHNs) for effective community practice, particularly in addressing pandemic-related impacts, such as COVID-19, on Black people. For members of this population living in low-income neighbourhoods, the issue can become even more urgent if PHNs are not equipped with the necessary skills required to address the social determinants of health (SDoH) and how they impact these community members. In a post-COVID-19 era when diversity, equity, and inclusion programs are being eroded, educational leadership can ensure that PHNs are better prepared to continue addressing the negative pandemic-related impacts on Black neighbourhoods and dismantle systemic biases, thereby increasing their quality of life (QOL).

Drawing on findings from a scoping review that examines the reported impact of COVID-19 on Black people in Toronto, this presentation highlights the significance of educational leadership in community nursing practice for Black people. Grounded in the SDoH framework provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the scoping review employed Falk-Rafael's Critical Caring Theory (CCT) to emphasize the interconnectedness of individual well-being in nursing practice, promoting advocacy, empowerment, well-being, and social justice. The presentation uses findings from the review, which point to the disproportionately higher rates of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and mortality among Black people in low-income neighbourhoods, to explore ways in which educational leadership can alleviate some of these impacts. The presentation concludes with key recommendations that can help mitigate the impacts of future pandemics on Black people through educational leadership, highlighting how diversity, equity, and inclusion programs can strengthen these recommendations. The author identifies avenues for further research in this area to gain deeper insight into the topic.

Bharti Tomar, Shunyan Lyu & Anshu Ahuja
Thompson Rivers University
Leading for Teacher Empowerment: Resisting Hierarchies through Emotional Intelligence and Distributed Leadership

In an era where educational systems increasingly marginalize teacher voices through hierarchical, top-down control, this paper advocates for leadership practices that resist such disempowerment and sustain teacher agency. Drawing from personal teaching experiences in India and existing educational leadership research, this literature review examines how leadership practices grounded in empathy, collaboration, and emotional intelligence can counteract teacher burnout, disengagement, and disempowerment. This inquiry emerged from reflective practice undertaken during a course on educational leadership, combined with lived teaching experiences in India. It draws on key leadership theories supported by a critical review of key literature to analyze the impact of leadership approaches on teacher autonomy, job satisfaction, and student outcomes. Data sources include scholarly research on emotional intelligence and distributed leadership, alongside my own reflections. Findings show that emotionally intelligent leaders who lead with empathy, relational trust, and self-awareness can create space for teacher well-being, collaboration, and professional renewal. Distributed leadership further disrupts oppressive hierarchies by inviting teachers into authentic decision-making, allowing them to reclaim agency over pedagogy, assessment, and school governance. This holds significance in today's challenging educational climate, where resistance to equitable practices persists. The findings offer actionable insights for educational leaders seeking to create inclusive, empowering environments that nurture both teachers and students in times of systemic challenge. It calls on educational leaders to actively renew their commitment to justice by adopting leadership practices that liberate, rather than control, those at the heart of education: teachers.

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HE Solutions
Immigrant Muslim women in Academia and Socio-Economic Integration

In this presentation, I argue that academia is an institutional space of socio-economic immigrant integration for immigrant Muslim women, thereby it must do more to value immigrant inclusivity, representation, and respect. This work draws insights from my previous research on high skilled immigrant integration of Muslims in Canada (Zainub, 2023) and the current research literature on Muslim women in academia (Baksh, 2024; Ibrahim, 2023) to draw parallels between findings on challenges for immigrant

integration. The literature shows that Muslim women in academia face numerous professional challenges and social barriers, specifically gendered Islamophobia. It argues that the foundational aspects of educational institutions are rooted in epistemic coloniality. This work offers an intersectional analysis of race, gender, and religious identity, showing the increase in racism and Islamophobia towards visibly identifiable Muslim women such as those who wear the Hijab. It shows that such lived experiences generate discouragement and feelings of fear, isolation, stress, and anxiety (Alizai, 2021; Anwar, 2020). Thus, this presentation highlights that within the context of global issues in migration and anti-Muslim sentiment, it is important to study the lived experiences of Muslim immigrant women in academia as an immigrant integration issue analysed through the decolonial perspective of race, gender, and religious identity (Mignolo, 2012).

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