

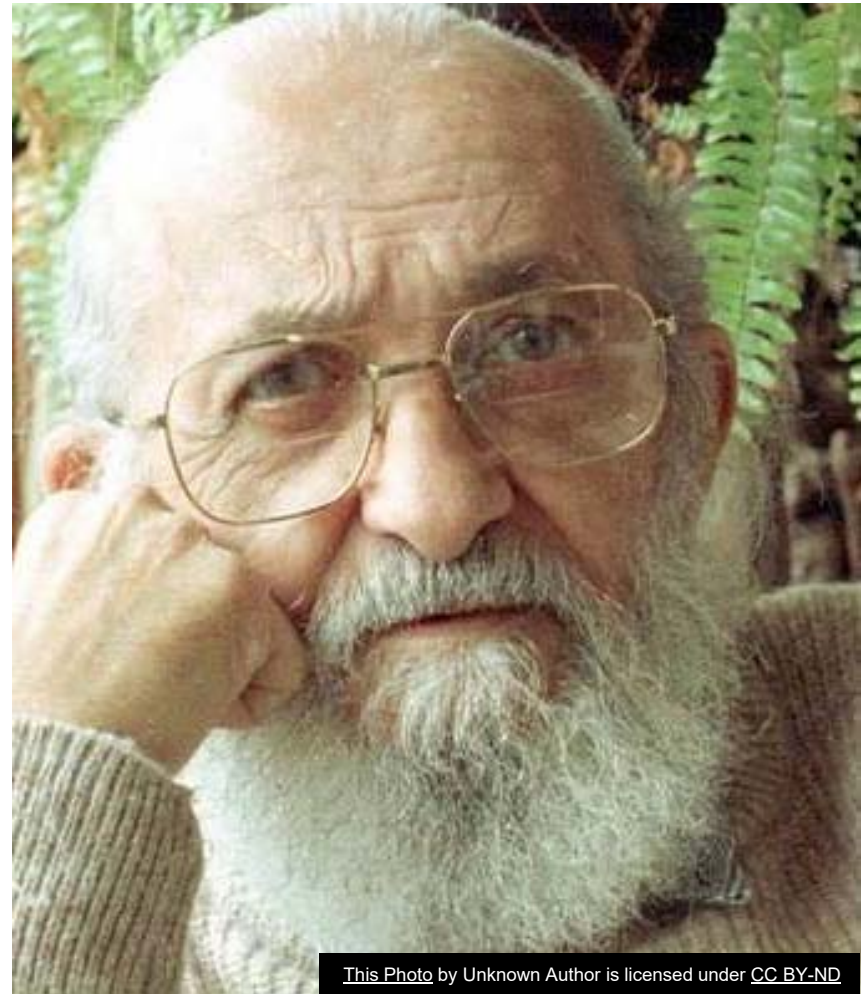
TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Is education transformative?

- Yes, for both individuals and for communities.



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The mess that is Higher Education

The chronic running down of higher education for years, both financially and metaphorically.

Performativity, accountability, managerialism.



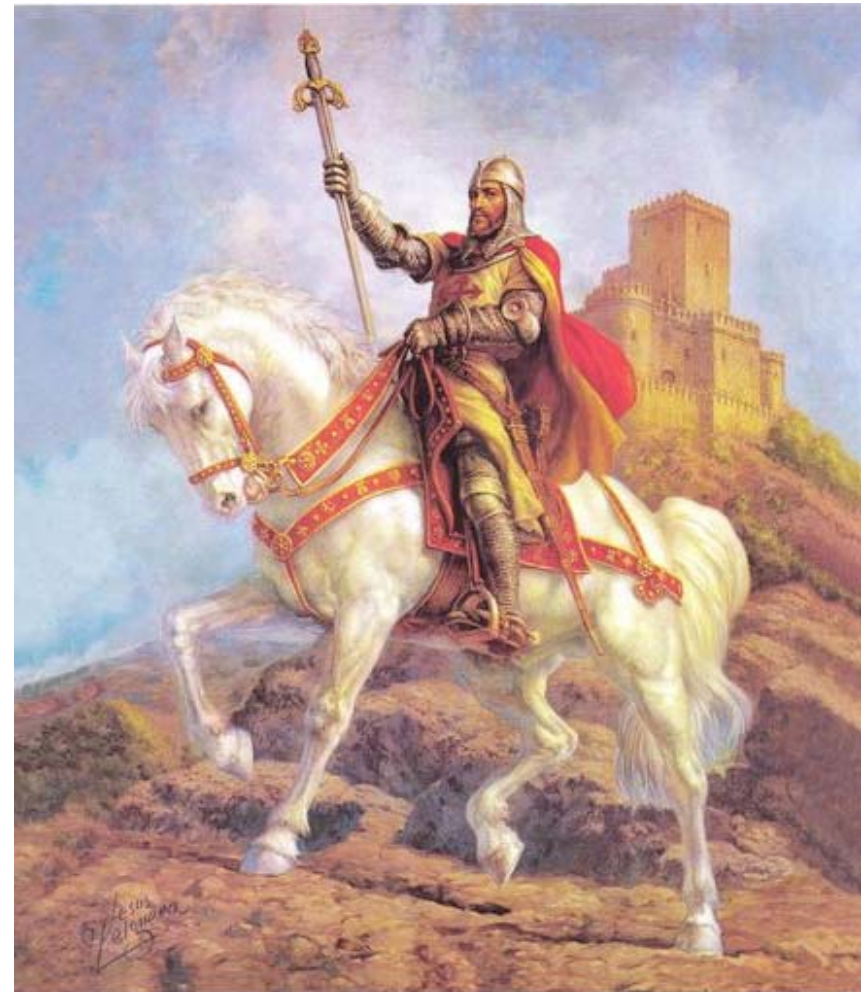
Hero leadership

Leadership – what should it look like?

Traditional ‘hero’ notions of transformational leadership.

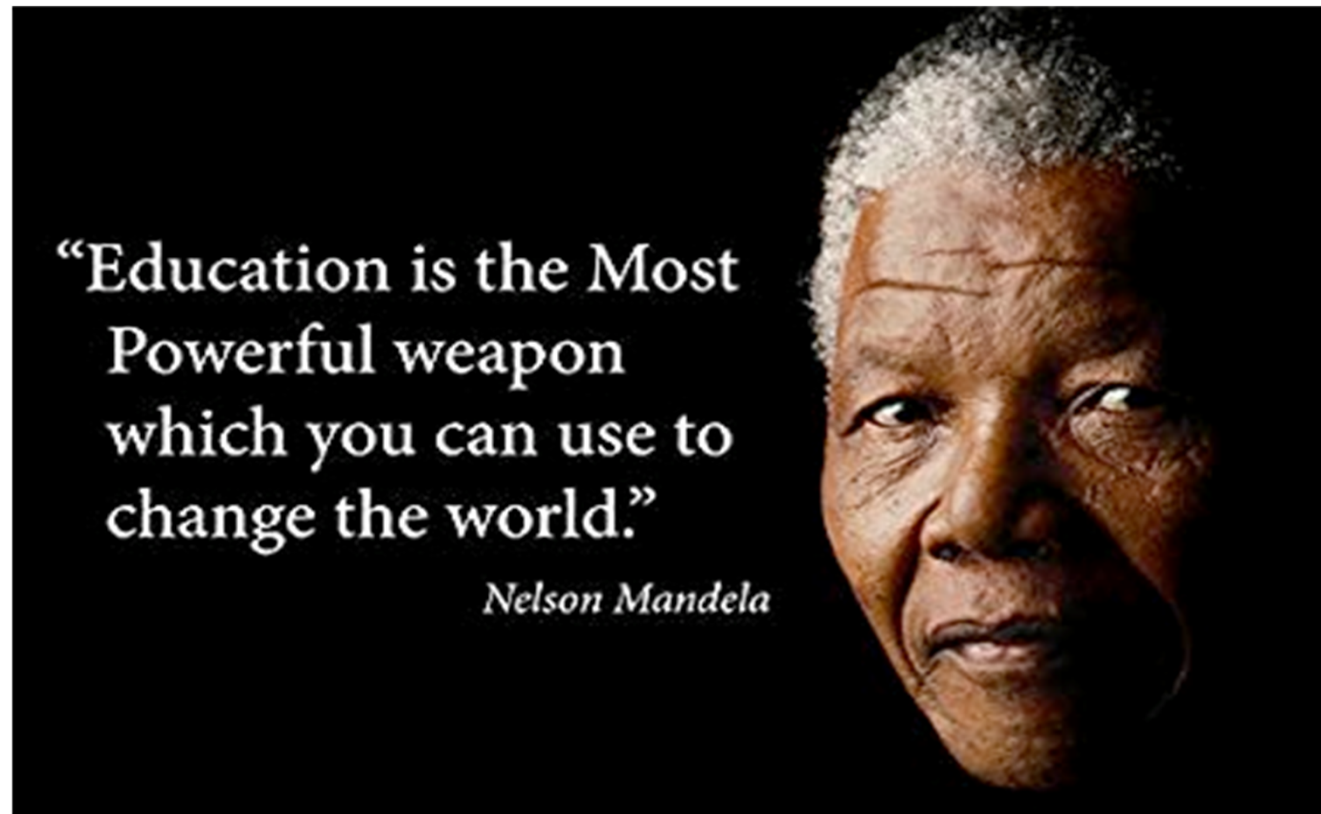
How can we, as leaders, lead this transformation?

Previous work (e.g. Duckworth, Lord et al. 2016) has shown that in education there are very few spaces where this work can be done.



Empowerment and Education

e.g. Paulo Freire; Nel Noddings; Jools Page.



Education can be transformative (e.g. Duckworth and Smith)



- Accounts from learners demonstrate that many education courses are pathways to overcoming economic, social, political and cultural marginalisation

Wicked problems - Rittel and Webber 1973

A **wicked problem** is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve.

**A WICKED
PROBLEM**

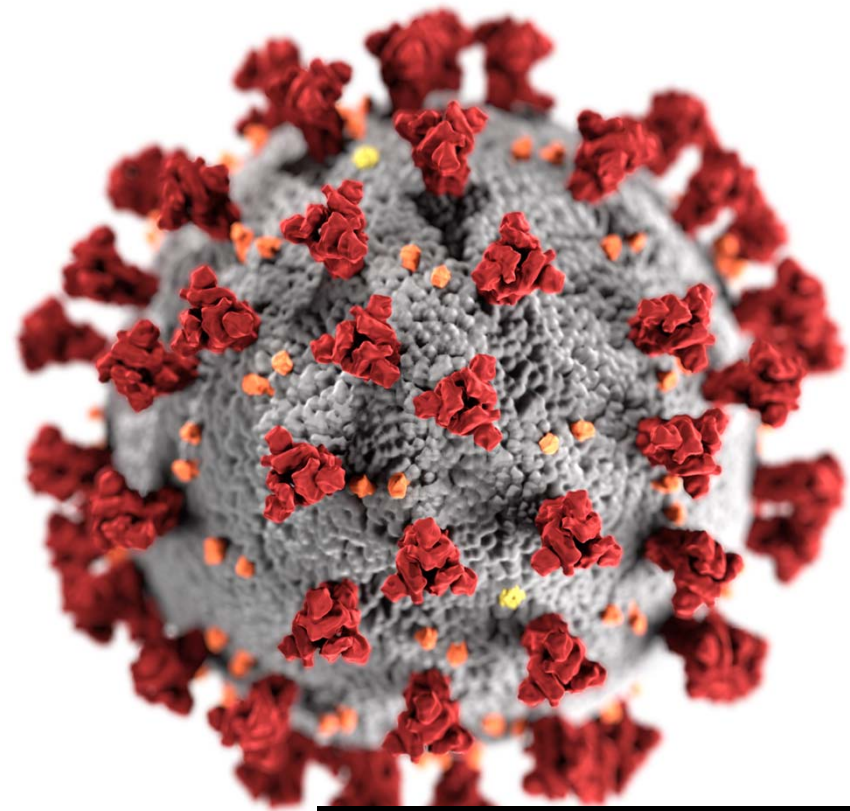
Why?

- incomplete or contradictory knowledge,
- the number of people and opinions involved,
- the large economic burden, and
- the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

HE is an example of a wicked problem. Especially now!

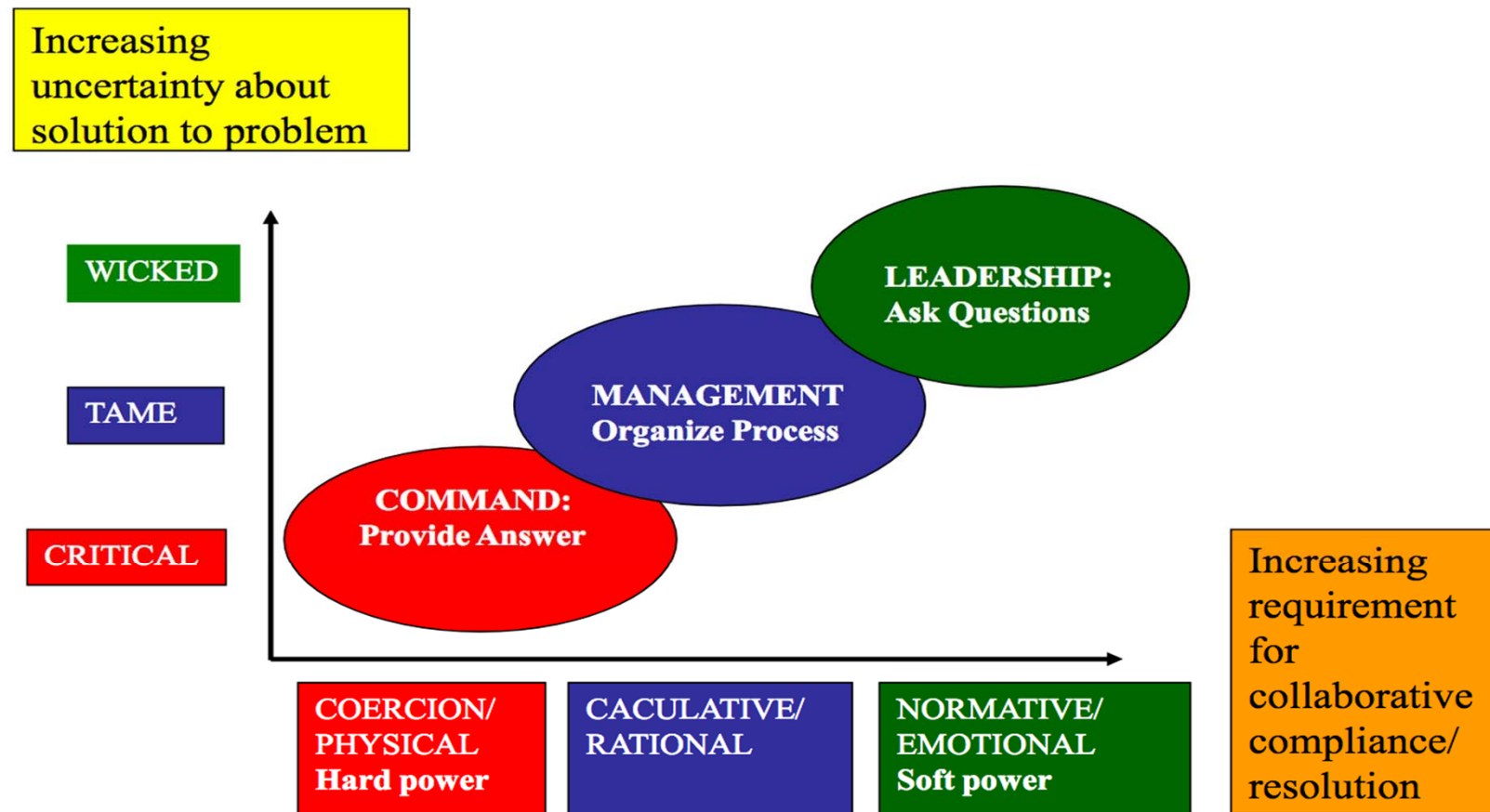
Covid as a wicked problem for leaders

- Constantly changing
- Uncertainty
- Economic implications
- No 'right' answers
- Many interconnected factors and problems
- Lots of people and interest groups involved

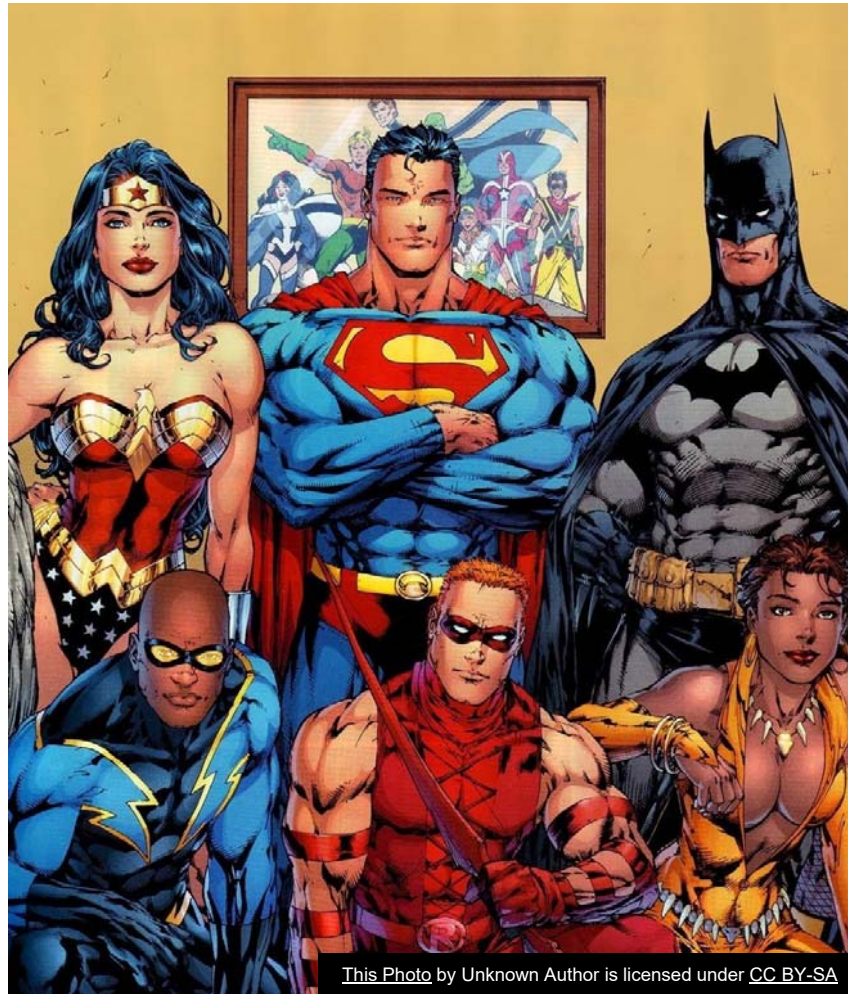


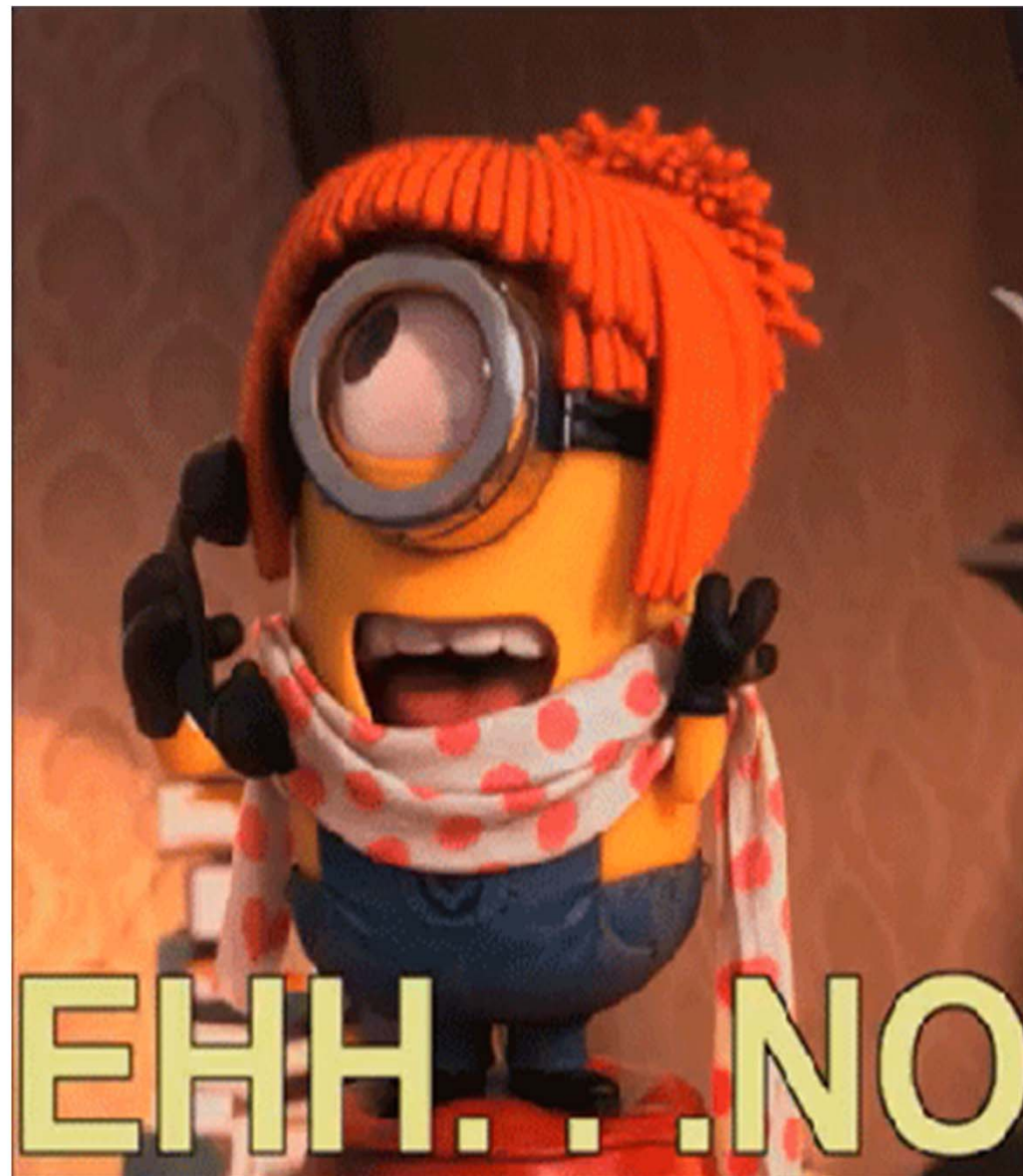
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Keith Grint – wicked problems have clumsy solutions (and leaders)



Hero (?) models of leadership





Feminism

- Education is toxic to female learners
- And to male learners
- Intersecting systems of privilege need to be challenged and confronted



JILL BLACKMORE 2013 - a feminist critical sociological perspective

- Leadership as a conceptual lens through which to problematize the nature, purpose and capacities of educational systems/ organisations to re-think their practices in more socially just ways.



The problem

Leaders (predominantly white and male) who have been advantaged by the unequal social relations of gender in organizations have not in the past had to deal with the emotions of others.

Being in a formal position of power in hierarchical organizations of the twentieth century did not require them to empathize or 'fraternize' with those in subordinate positions as part of their work.

The problem.....

But now,
emotions are
central to
leadership,
empathy and
interaction with
others.

The 21st C Learner is . . .



Feminist approach



- Feminists have long held that emotions are part of the human condition and not a pathology (e.g see Duckworth, Lord et al 2016).
- Critical organizational and feminist theory sees organizations as emotional economies in which individuals have varied emotional investments embodied in their gendered and racialized professional identities, and within unequal structures of power
- This is key to understanding the nature of organizational change.

A new approach



- The focus should be on how privilege is gained and retained by dominant perspectives and groups.
- Feminist pedagogical work in education realizes the value of the knowledge brought from life experience, encourages relational approaches and promotes student voice.



HOW DOES LEADERSHIP LINK IN?

Leadership is a relational practice built on trust and respect and not just what individual leaders do or how they make decisions utilizing their ‘emotional intelligence’ or disseminating knowledge.

What should leadership be like?



Leadership might be conceptualised as being about knowing and working towards a shared purpose in a principled manner.



If there is to be greater diversity in and of leadership, this shared purpose should be informed by social justice principles of recognition, redistribution and representation.



That's pretty difficult!

Some theory

Nel Noddings

demonstrates the significance of caring and relationship both as an educational goal, and as a fundamental aspect of education.



The student is infinitely more
important than the subject matter.

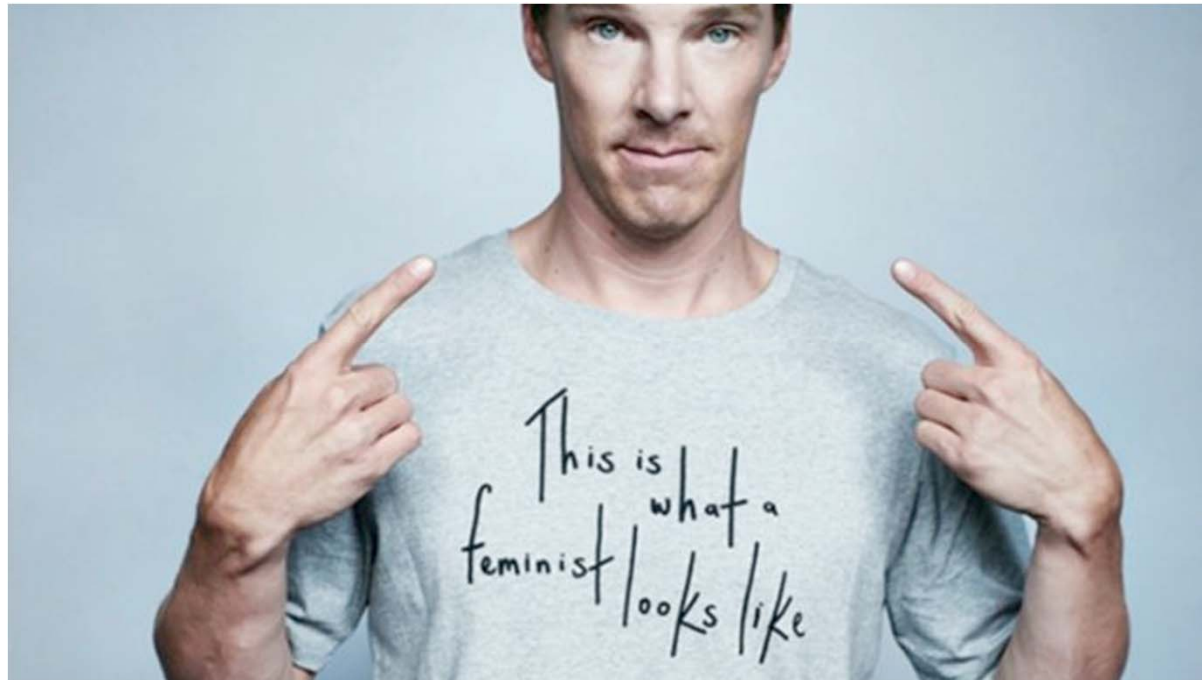
— Nel Noddings —

AZ QUOTES

What about men?

Moving away from stereotypical notions of feminism.

Noddings insists that men too, can take caring as the basis for moral action.



Paulo Freire and love

“The act of love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. (Freire 1997)



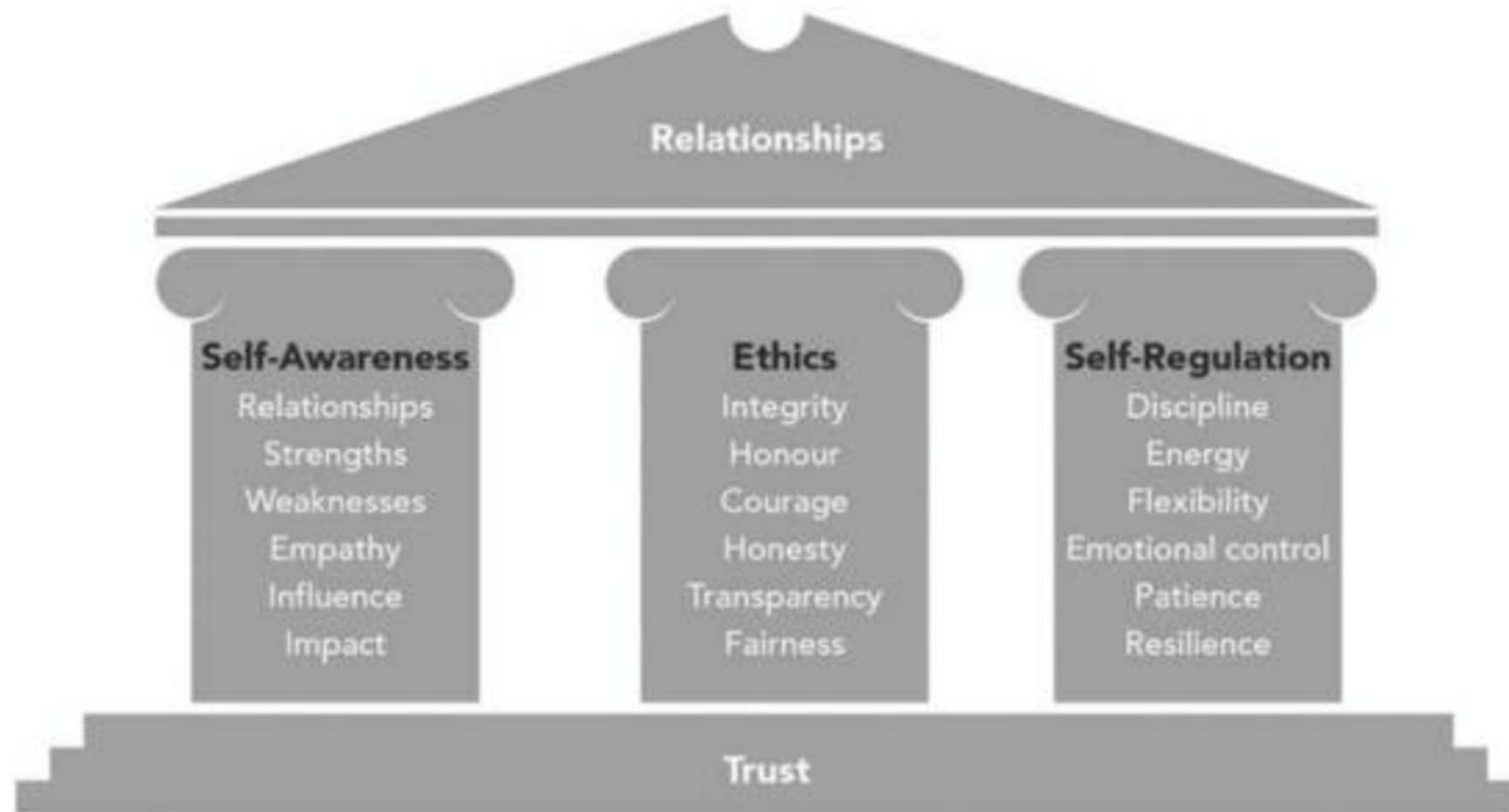
Jools Page, 2001

“The experience of ‘pedagogical loving’ requires deep motivational displacement and involves developing deep, sustaining, respectful and reciprocal relationships”



Authentic leadership - Beddoes-Jones & Swailes, 2015

3 pillars of authentic leadership – Self awareness, Ethics and Self regulation



O'Leary, Smith et al 2019

Reconceptualising leadership so that teaching and learning is the focal point must incorporate substantial ownership of methods/strategies, authority and ultimate responsibility to be devolved to staff.

Visionary, courageous leadership that challenges inspection regimes and opts for long-term, bottom-up, integrated growth pays off.

Change in culture – high expectations, ambition, growth mindset, aspiration, motivation must equally drive teachers, learners and senior managers.

Communicating the message of having high standards /expectations pays off.

Financial pressures resulting from enhanced marketisation/commodification must be challenged collectively, proposing policy alternatives with a united voice.

What is education for?

Education systems sometimes seem too focused on education as a means to individual achievement/success, rather than as a **public service whose function is to benefit all of society by helping people realise their potential.**



Identity as central to education

- We need space to think, do and be – in other words, for our identities.
- Some of my previous work has shown that teachers and lecturers do have a concern for social justice and also for the bigger moral questions – their reflexivity is key.



George, 2007, p23

Do you know what your life and your leadership are all about, and when you are being true to yourself? True North is the internal compass that guides you successfully through life. It represents who you are as a human being at your deepest level [. . .] your truth is derived from your life story, and only you can determine what it should be [. . .]. When you are aligned with who you are, you find coherence between your life story and your leadership.

O'Leary, Smith et al 2019



Leadership approaches to improving teaching and learning need to actively involve those that teach – and those who learn?



Education providers should construct improvements to teaching and learning as a long-term narrative that unfolds incrementally



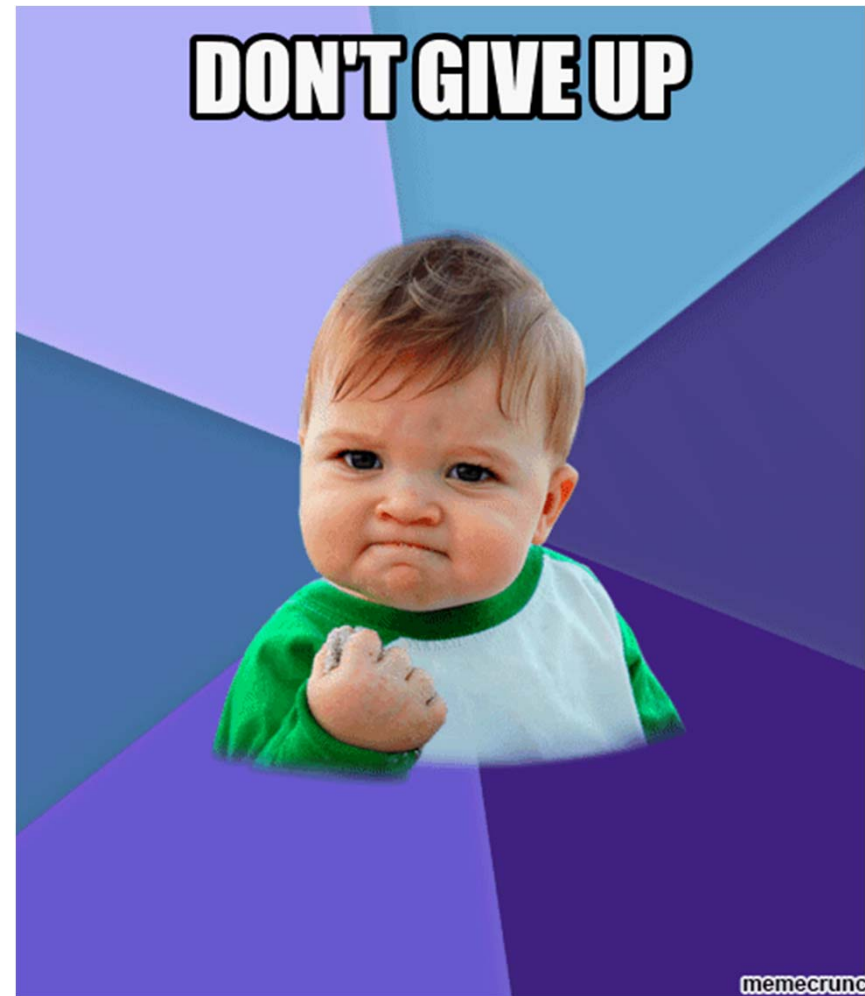
Improving teaching and learning is about creating an environment in which collegial interaction can flourish.



This is what authentic leadership is like – and it leads to transformative experiences

Finally

- So, we are doing good stuff both in leading and in teaching in HE.
- Stay real, stay authentic.
- Don't give up – lobby for research, funding and recognition.



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