

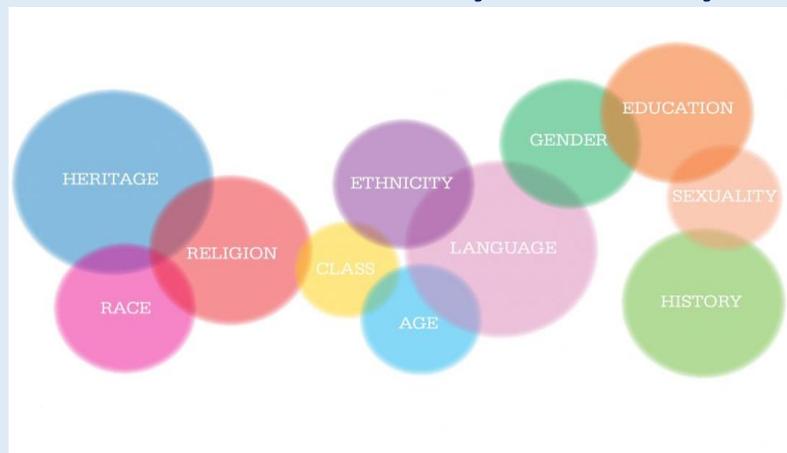
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Reframing Women's Leadership by Telling New Stories: Interconnecting Intersectionality Discourse and Quality of Life Approach

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Overview

This paper presents a theoretical analysis of reframing women's Leadership by telling new stories in interconnecting *Intersectionality Discourse* and *Quality of Life Approach*. The goal of the paper is to initiate a discussion of the new mindset needed by educational leaders as ethical agents for diversity, social justice and quality of life in the 21st Century society.



1. Living in a **VUCA** World

Recent decades have seen a huge change in the conditions of the social world. Whereas the 'modern' world was constructed and perceived as offering a relatively stable living environment, it is today described as VUCA: **volatile**, **uncertain**, **complex** and **ambiguous**.



1. Living in a **VUCA** World

With the end of the Cold War, this global change has altered **individual lives** as well as **organizations** and also gave way to neoliberalism and new public management as new political economic norms, which were often used to legitimize the redesign of state educational bureaucracies. This has also changed the idea of organizations (as e.g. schools and universities) and the self-understanding and daily work of educational leaders.



2. Intersectionality Theory and Educational Leadership

- The premise of **intersectionality theory** is that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structured power.
- There are two compelling reasons to consider **intersectionality theory** for studying leadership: a) intersectionality aims to reveal the multiple identities of social actors exposing the connections between those points, b) it suggests that analysis of complex social situations should not reduce understanding to a singular category.

2. Intersectionality Theory and Educational Leadership

- The origins of **intersectionality** can be traced back to early social movements, during the 1960s and 1970s, which analyzed inequities within political, social, and economic structures, including education, employment, and the legal system (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Combahee River Collective, 1981; Harlan, 1957; Shoben, 1980).
- Despite the use of **intersectionality** across various social science fields, it remains underused in educational leadership literature focused on understanding and critiquing inequities in PreK–12 schooling (Capper & Young, 2014).

2. Intersectionality Theory and Educational Leadership

The core ideas of **intersectionality** can be applied in educational leadership:

- First, its emphasis on the experiences of social groups, social structures, and social oppressions challenges methodological individualism with analysis of individual–organizational relationships and practices (Evers & Lakomski, 2013).
- Second, intersectionality also supports critique and researcher reflexivity on how education and education research is transformed by ways of relating, knowing, being, and leading.

2. Intersectionality Theory and Educational Leadership

- In a subset of articles, researchers challenged the person-centric notion of **leadership with a hybrid conception of leader/leadership/leading supported by intersectionality**. They most consistently undermined a person-centric framing of problems and solutions around a single “leader,” and instead treated leading as an expression of power (i.e., agency) related to the value of relationality and communality rather than individualism (Alston, 2005; Nicholson & Maniates, 2015) involving individual and collaborative efforts (Capper, 2015), and modeled or advocated for a contextualized sociopolitical consciousness (García & Byrne-Jiménez, 2016; López, 2016).

3. Quality of Life Approach

- The social and scientific paradigmatic change related to the emergence of **quality of life (QoL)** and sustainability topics represents one of the megatrends of our modern society. The impact and applicability of such trends has multiple dimensions and covers a number of societal aspects. What is the future of organizations in the light of QoL movement? Which kind of organizations do we need in the post-industrial and knowledge era?
- In 2007, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the OECD and the WWF hosted a conference titled "**Beyond GDP**". The conference was attended by over 650 policy makers, experts and social activists and aimed to criticize the use of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) as an economic indicator of the wealth of nations, and to advocate for a society better able to foster and measure wellbeing and quality of life (QoL).

3. Quality of Life Approach

- The “**QoL Initiatives**” are a heterogenic and informal movements of scholars and transnational institutions who aim at developing new theories, policies and indicators about quality of life as well as supporting implementation of best practices in the field.
- The most influential ones include: the Quality of Life approach (Nussbaum and Sen 1993), Subjective Wellbeing (Kahneman et al. 2003), the EU’s Quality of Life in Europe (2009), the OECD’s Better Life Initiative (2013), the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015), the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al. 2016).

3. Quality of Life Approach

- Let us consider just one of them: the **Better Life Index** developed within the Better Life Initiative by OECD (2013). This index marks a crucial change in theoretical assumptions of what means for a nation to be wealth, how to measure it, what kind of indicators should be considered when investigating quality of life. This index includes, among more standard indicators such as jobs, income, education and health, also less common indicators such as work-life balance, civic engagement, community, environment and life satisfaction, which is a very phenomenological topic.

3. Quality of Life Approach

- If we agree that “what we measure is what counts, and what counts is what we measure” (Costanza et al. 2014), then we must admit that the recent creation of this index, alongside many others, and the growth of QoL movements reveal a surprising new attention towards topics which in the past were considered either irrelevant or too qualitative to be measured and included in statistical analysis.

4. Organizational Education for promoting Organizational Change

- Organizational education can play a crucial role in the process of mindset change by supporting organizations in becoming active and ethical agents for social change in the direction of quality of life and sustainability.
- Organizational Education explores organizational behavior, especially organizational learning and change, from an educational perspective with regard to human development.
- Compared to other (sub-)disciplines that study organizations, such as organizational psychology, organizational sociology or business administration studies, organizational education explicitly and critically reflects on the normative roots and aspects of learning, such as the goals of learning, and raises awareness of confrontational, contradictory and dysfunctional phenomena.

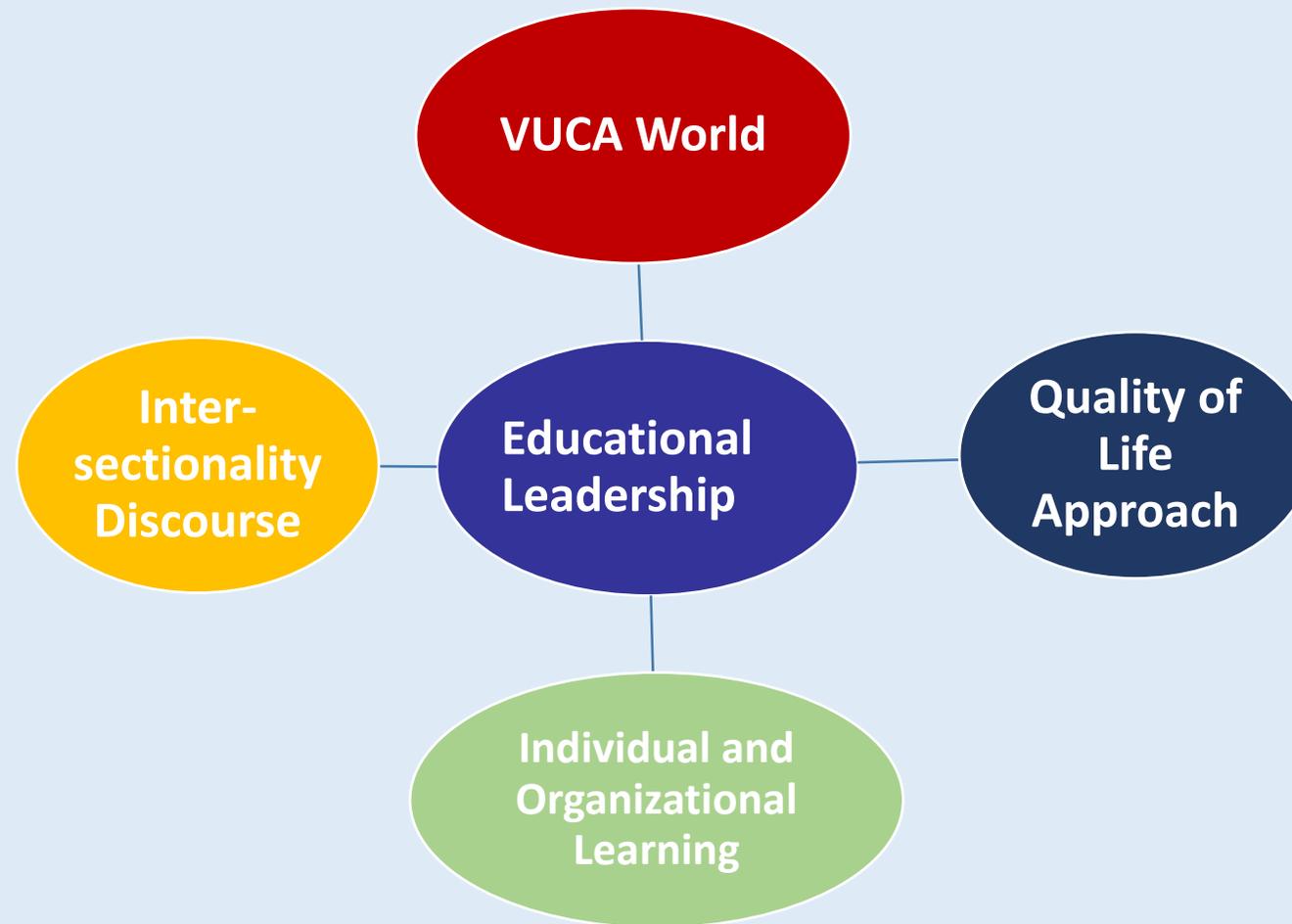
4. Organizational Education for promoting Organizational Change

- In accordance with the epistemological approach to education, organizational education looks not only at the structural constitution of organizations, but also at their processual and cultural aspects.
- Thus, theories of culture and practice can be employed as reference points in organizational education, so that organizational learning is seen in terms of the processes of cultural practices. In addition, attitudes, emotionality and atmosphere in organizations are regarded as core objects for research in organizational education



Organizational education research places particular emphasis on the **humanization** and **sustainability** of organizations.

5. Future Perspectives for Organizational Change and Educational Leadership



5. Future Perspectives for Organizational Change and Educational Leadership

Questions for further discussion:

- ➔ What is the future of organizations in the light of Intersectionality Discourse and Quality of Life Movement?
- ➔ Which kind of organizations (e.g. schools, universities) do we need in a changing world of tomorrow?
- ➔ What does all this mean for the ways in which we see women's leadership in education?

The paper argues that there is a need of reframing women's leadership by **telling new individual and organizational stories.**

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