

# *Turnaround Leadership*

DEANS OF COLOR  
AS CHANGE AGENTS

EDITED BY *Olga M. Welch*



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PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern  
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# *Turnaround Leadership*

# BLACK STUDIES & critical thinking

Rochelle Brock and Richard Gregory Johnson III  
*Executive Editors*

Vol. 20

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In an earlier publication, I suggested that leading a School of Education could be compared to "walking on a trampoline." Indeed, as I reflect on the unpredictable topography I've encountered during my six-year tenure as Dean of the School of Education at Duquesne University, I realize how much I owe to those professional colleagues in the University, in the field of education and in the political, civic, and community organizations in Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania, and nationally, with whom I've been privileged to work. I acknowledge their influence on my own leadership development as well as their support in my role as dean. It is that influence that contributed to my explorations of issues and challenges confronted by leaders who seek to implement change initiatives, particularly in higher education contexts. In these explorations, I further acknowledge with profound appreciation the sustained cooperation and collaboration of the administrators, faculty, and staff in the School of Education at Duquesne, as together we work with students to build a School of Education that actualizes social justice within a Tradition of Caring aimed at transforming the lives of children and youth in schools.

Thus, framed by my own practice and the contributions of those I've already mentioned, this book represents my attempt to reflect on the nature of "leading for change," using as a conceptual framework, "turnaround leadership." More importantly, however, this book seeks to provide an opportunity for those colleagues whose practice and "ways of knowing" have not been included in the literature on "change" and "leadership" in higher education. They are deans of color who serve in either Predominantly White Institutions or Historically Black Colleges and Universities with the designation of Research 1 or Research-Intensive. They were all hired after national searches and each was, and in some cases, still is, expected to be a "change agent" within their respective academic contexts. I am indebted to each of them for their professionalism, openness, and willingness to contribute their particular perspectives on leading schools and colleges of education in change initiatives to this volume.

Equally important to this work were the contributions of Dr. Mary Futrell, Dr. Michael C. Dantley, and Dr. Earl T. Braxton. Dr. Futrell served for 16 years as the successful Dean of the School of Education at George Washington University. Additionally, she is recognized nationally and internationally as a scholar on curriculum and policy issues in K-12 and higher education, with a reputation and experience that uniquely qualified her to provide the context for a book on change from the perspective of "deans of color" in the Preface to this volume.

Dr. Michael C. Dantley, an internationally recognized scholar on the role of "spirituality" in administration, presents an Afterword in which he dis-

cusses how spirituality influences the enactment of higher education leadership. Dr. Earl T. Braxton, founder and CEO of Edge Associates, Inc., is a recognized authority on organizations and organizational systems. Among his clients are the World Bank and The Hague. He regularly consults with university administrators nationally, and from 1997 to 1998, he facilitated faculty discussions in the School of Education at Duquesne University as it designed the school's Leading Teacher Preparation program.

Finally, no book can be complete without dependable and skilled research support. I am indebted to Ms. Sarah Kearney, doctoral student in School Psychology, who provided the data analysis and prepared the final version of the publication. Her careful attention to detail and genuine interest in the project were invaluable to the successful conclusion of this work.

# PREFACE

*Mary Futrell*

*Turnaround Leadership: Deans of Color as Change Agents* is a case-study analysis of six men and women of color who have served or are serving as leaders of schools of education throughout the United States. Being an educational leader is a challenging, demanding responsibility at all times, but especially during this period of transformation within our education system.

For almost half a century, America's education system has been undergoing significant change at all levels. Initially, most efforts to reform our education system focused on elementary and secondary schools. However, increasingly within the last two decades, more and more emphasis has been placed on schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) to be more accountable for the quality of education American students receive.

These reform efforts in turn have placed the spotlight on the leaders of higher education institutions, especially those within schools of education, to be more accountable in their roles for preparing citizens for the future and the challenges they will face. Those leaders are increasingly being called upon to more clearly define the vision and mission they believe will transform how educators (i.e., teachers, counselors, and administrators) are prepared to respond to questions about the future, such as why and how we should educate in the United States. In other words, how can colleges of education more effectively assure that Americans have the educational foundation they need to ensure our country's leadership role in the world? That vision must help our nation address challenges, including the following:

- The continued growth and diversification of student enrollments within our K–12 schools; enrollments are expected to reach 59 million by 2015—80% of the new students will be minorities and/or poor.
- Enrollments at the higher education level are expected to reach 19 million by 2015, but it is projected that the United States will need 40 million college graduates by 2025 if the United States, as a nation, is to remain competitive in this increasingly global society (*ibid*). Again, 80% of those new college students will come from minority or poor families.
- Eighty-five percent of the fastest growing jobs will require workers to have some post-secondary education (Inside Higher Education, 2008). A high school diploma is no longer sufficient.
- By 2020, over half of all high school courses will be taught online. Today, two-thirds of all states have at least one virtual school (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008), and more will be established every year, thus redefining what is meant by schooling and education.
- Within the next five to seven years, it is projected that 55% of all K–12 teachers will be eligible for retirement. If these teachers do decide to retire, it will amount to approximately 1.7 million teachers leaving the classroom—all of whom will need to be replaced. Further, even more teachers will have to be prepared to teach the projected increased student enrollment (National Education Association, 2010).



- Simultaneously, there is already an education staffing dilemma which urgently needs to be addressed. While our student enrollments are diversifying rapidly (projected that by 2020, 40% of all students will come from racial or ethnic minority families), the number of teachers who are identified as being minorities is declining precipitously (National Education Association, 2010). Currently, only 5% of all teachers are minorities, and fewer minorities are entering and remaining in the teaching profession (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education statistics, 2006–2007).

The success of our education system today and in the future will be contingent upon the ability of our schools of education to better recruit and prepare the educators who will staff our schools and meet the needs of our changing society. Concomitantly, as America's primary provider of educators, schools of education will need leaders who understand these seismic changes and have the intellectual and philosophical capacity and experiential ability to help define the vision that will ensure that we not only have a national but a world-class system of education. We need leaders who have the capacity to help Americans understand the need to develop citizens for our nation-state as well as participate more fully in our global society.

To ensure that we do have the capacity of leadership to achieve these goals, America must be prepared and willing to open the door of leadership at all levels of education, especially within schools of education to more women and minorities, as well as traditional educational leaders. Although some progress has been made, most educational leadership positions are still predominantly occupied by males, reflecting the continuing serious gender imbalance within the profession. This, however, is not a new issue; rather, it is a "wicked problem" that has continually plagued our education system since its inception as well as our society in general. Unfortunately, this incongruence between how leadership positions have traditionally been filled and the vacuum of women leaders continues as we begin the 21st century. Higher education is heavily dominated by males, including "institutions of color."

Further, where there are female leaders, particularly women of color, their ability to fulfill duties and responsibilities are still challenged on the grounds of gender and whether they are simultaneously "capable" of providing the leadership required and enduring the personal and professional pressures of leadership. For instance, when I first began to move into leadership roles, I recall being told that "women leaders have to be twice as good as their male counterparts to persuade people that they are capable of getting the job done." That is no less true now than it was for previous generations of women seeking to become leaders. Unfortunately, even today, women leaders have to prove they are effective, visionary leaders.

While a few have successfully walked through the door of opportunity to be leaders in higher education, that door is still only slightly open. For example, there are approximately 1,450 schools of education in America, and yet, minority women serve as the dean at only a handful of those schools.

Therefore, in addition to the experiences of male deans of color, this book shares the stories of four women and their experiences as deans—women who have successfully led their schools during this intense period of academic, organizational, and economic transformation. These women—Fayneese Miller, Leslie Fenwick, Renee Middleton, and Olga Welch—led the transformative process which has resulted in their schools being more responsive to the demographic and knowledge-based global challenges we face as a nation. Hopefully, sharing their experiences—whether as the dean at a predominantly white institution or a Historically Black University, whether at a single or multi-campus university, or whether or not at Research Intensive university—will help other women better understand the complexity of the roles and responsibilities of being a leader within higher education. The four deans have demonstrated their ability to effectively manage their schools as well as lead them in more clearly defining their vision of the future. Equally important, each demonstrated her ability to successfully persuade faculty and university administrators to support (financially and otherwise) efforts to implement the vision, and thus, to reform their schools. Their vision was not designed simply to change but to transform their schools, and thus, enhance the quality of knowledge, skills, and experiences that will define their graduates.

As deans, each has forged their leadership wisdom, skills, and experiences over the years; each has also successfully maintained a strong sense of who they are as individuals (Isaac, 2007). While perhaps tending to be more collaborative in working with their colleagues, these women demonstrated that they could also make the tough decisions to keep their institutions moving forward. At the same time, each has reached out to other women, especially women of color, to serve as their mentors and role models to strive to be leaders, especially within the higher education community. By sharing their expertise and experiences, including the battles and challenges each has endured, these women are helping to create a new, stronger genre of women leaders in education and all other professional areas. Their experiences transforming the decanal position and the image of women as leaders will encourage more minority women in particular to seek leadership roles. They will also educate their male counterparts in the reality that women, as well as men, have the capacity and capability to be outstanding leaders.

That said, the stories shared by both the male and female deans in this book reflect efforts to continue the struggle for educational rights, but they also reflect the ongoing struggle for the equal rights of women to open wider the doors of opportunity and to walk through them as they climb the leadership ladder. If we, as a nation, are to maximize our intellectual and human capacity to maintain successfully our position as a global leader, we will need to utilize the talents, expertise, experiences, and ideas of all of our citizens, especially women. Thus, the message is very clear. Just as transforming our schools of education to prepare more effective educators and human development specialists for the 21st century is critical, transformation of the composition, structure, and power of the current leadership paradigm within higher education must also be paramount to effect reform. Our mission should be to recruit and retain the best leaders, not based upon past traditions, but based upon demonstrated forward thinking leadership ability—whether female or male. Our students, the teaching profession, and the nation need of colleges and schools of education leaders who can envision the future and have the audacity to be on the front line, leading efforts to ensure that the system of education, including the teaching profession, is transformed so that every American is educationally prepared for the challenges of the future.

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# **BLACK** **STUDIES** **& critical thinking**

ROCHELLE BROCK &  
RICHARD GREGGORY JOHNSON III,  
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# CHAPTER 1

## Falling Down the Rabbit Hole

*Olga M. Welch*

Excerpt from “Alice in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll:

*Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do; once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, ‘and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversation?’*

*So she was considering in her own mind...whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a white Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her...When the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it...just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit hole under the hedge.*

*In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again. (Carroll, L. (1865) *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, reissued in 2008. London: Penguin Group).*

In many ways, leading an educational organization today is like “falling down a rabbit hole.” Like Alice, one falls and falls, bouncing up and down, turning over and over, not at all sure whether the prospect of a new professional adventure quite outweighs the chaotic “ups and downs” that inevitably attend any new and unfamiliar enterprise. This uncertainty is particularly acute in higher education, where an ever-shifting landscape of challenges and opportunities confronts academic leaders in general, and deans of schools and colleges of education, in particular.

It is this very shifting landscape that makes leadership for change such a complex enterprise. Indeed, Fullan (2001) suggests that the double-edge nature of change requires leadership for problems that defy easy answers. He notes that these problems are “complex, rife with paradoxes and dilemmas” (p. 2).

Ironically, Fullan (2001) also states that because a culture of change consists of great rapidity and non-linearity on the one hand, and equally great potential for creative breakthroughs on the other, organizations may seek the wrong kind of leadership (p. 31). He quotes R. Heifetz (1994), who warns that in a crisis, the tendency is to look for someone with answers, decisions, strength, and a map of the future, someone who can make hard problems look simple (Heifetz, 1994, cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 3). Instead, Heifetz sug-

gests that it is not “saviors” who are needed but rather leadership that challenges organizations to face problems for which easy answers and painless solutions do not exist and for which new ways of learning must be employed, suggesting that an alternative image of leadership requires mobilizing people to tackle tough problems. “Leadership then, is not mobilizing others to solve problems we already know how to solve, but to help them confront problems that have never been successfully addressed” (Heifetz, 1994, cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 3).

This is certainly the case in higher education, where both calls for change and resistance to it present an all too familiar dichotomy for administrators, especially deans of colleges and schools of education.

In this book, I focus attention on these deans as “agents of change,” using as the conceptual framework “turnaround leadership in higher education” (Fullan & Scott, 2009). Drawing on this framework, case studies of six deans of color are presented. These deans were asked to discuss how they enacted the role of “change agent” in their respective contexts, describing the issues, approaches, challenges, and barriers they encountered, as well as the outcomes they achieved and the next stages of the process they identified. While each dean chose to speak to this task differently, their chapters provide a vehicle for interrogating the framework of “turnaround leadership.”

Such an interrogation is particularly cogent, given the positions of these deans of color as leaders of colleges or schools of education in a variety of educational settings. Moreover, Fullan and Scott (2009) note:

The data base (for the framework of turnaround leadership) comes from three main sources: first, from the direct study of quality learning processes and outcomes, second, from leading and studying change within our own universities and in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions in several countries, and third, from our review of the change literature in the public and private sectors as well as our own theories of action. (See Fullan, 2001, 2008; Scott, 1999; all cited in Fullan & Scott (2009), p. xii)

In the subsequent paragraph, they talk about the foundational database of their direct study of turnaround leadership, that is, the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) report, *Learning Leaders in Times of Change* (Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008). The report draws on the interactive input of 513 academic leaders (presidents, vice presidents, provosts or deputy vice-chancellors, deans, department heads, and directors of learning and teaching units) from 20 Australian universities who responded to a leadership survey. Fullan and Scott (2009) also drew on the 600 additional senior university staff who participated in workshops and discussions conducted in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United

States during 2007 and 2008 to review the results of the survey and the implications. "The ALTC Study identified the capabilities that characterize effective academic leaders in a range of roles and produced resources to develop and monitor their leadership capabilities" (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. xiii). It identified that the core focus for leadership in the current, highly volatile operating context of universities has to be placed on achieving effective change management and implementation.

The conceptual framework of the "Learning Leaders Study Partnership" between the University of Western Sydney and the Australian Council for Educational Research, funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, builds on a parallel study of effective leadership undertaken in 2003 (Scott, 2003) and applies a refined version of two conceptual frameworks tested in that study, one concerning leadership capability and the other concerning learning leadership (Fullan & Scott, 2009, pp. 105-106). These frameworks emerged from the data analysis described earlier, which centered on examining the "insider's experience of academic leadership." Specifically, the researchers sought to capture the insider's view of academic leadership in universities by asking experienced leaders in different roles, including the deanship, to identify an analogy for their work (Scott et al., 2008, p. 50).

In addition, Fullan and Scott (2009) have more than three decades of active engagement in designing, delivering, and studying turnaround projects in schools and in postsecondary and higher education. Therefore, their paradigm of "turnaround leadership" has been built on real-world experiences that emerged as a result of collaborations with hundreds of practitioners around the world. From these collaborations, they have gleaned key lessons about leadership and change.

Using as its foundation an "insider's view" of how deans implement change, this book seeks to analyze these change initiatives using the framework of "turnaround leadership." As with the framework, the selection of deans of color was also deliberate. Despite the extensive literature on change in a variety of organizational contexts, including higher education, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies, data specifically drawn from "deans of color," either male or female, do not appear. Therefore, this book identifies a gap in the extant literature on change and collects data from current and former deans on their implementation of change initiatives within a variety of higher education contexts. The contributors represent deans who came to the role from a range of professional backgrounds and experiences that informed their approaches to and implementation of the change initiatives they discuss. In all cases, the dean was the first "dean of color" in the



college/school/institution/system's history. The experience of being the inaugural leader in any context brings with it a host of both opportunities and challenges, not the least of which is the close appraisal given to the link between the leader's performance and the responsibilities associated with the role he or she occupies. This is certainly the case when males of color and females of color enter roles that traditionally have been held by white males or females.

### *Building a Change-Capable Culture*

According to Fullan and Scott (2009), building a change-capable culture requires an understanding of certain foundational principles, predicated on the following key messages:

- Change is a complex learning (and unlearning) process for everyone concerned, it is not a one-time event.
- Context counts. An overly bureaucratic operating system, a relentless round of meetings with no outcome, staff who are unresponsive or uninterested can all prevent a desired change from working in practice.
- (One) needs to operate on evidence not on anecdote.
- The focus needs to be on determining the quality of results, that is, the quality of outcomes and impact, not just the quality of outputs.
- The more (the leader) can be proactive rather than reactive the better.
- Change does not just happen; it must be deftly led by people who understand and base their actions of the above lessons. (pp. 74–75)

Further, they identify seven key elements of a change-capable institution, including (a) direction and engagement, (b) capacity building with a focus on results, (c) supportive infrastructure and leadership, (d) the management of distracters, (e) continuous evaluation, (f) inquiry, and (g) two-way communication.

Yet, to effect change in large systems, it is not enough to be aware of the foundational messages or even to have an institution that possesses the seven key elements, described earlier. Fullan and Scott (2009) found the following:

*Having good ideas for building a change-capable culture and advocating a new approach to strategic change and quality improvement will not make change happen in daily practice. Such changes don't just happen, especially in university cultures which have many autonomous and isolated parts. Leadership—ever-widening circles of leadership—is absolutely critical to grappling with the forces of change and non-change. ...The specific quality of this leadership will literally determine which institutions survive and thrive in the context of the external and internal forces now bombarding universities. (pp. 92-93)*