

Helping Eagles Fly:
A Living Theory Approach
to
Student and Young Adult Leadership Development

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ABSTRACT

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Christopher Glavey

This thesis offers an explanatory account of my living theory of educational leadership in fostering and sustaining student and young adult leadership processes in educational and community settings. Grounded in my research to address my concern for the marginalisation and voicelessness of young people in schools and within their local communities, I explain how I have developed educational processes to help them to develop their leadership abilities and provided them with opportunities to express these abilities in contributing to a good social order in educational and community settings. My practice is rooted in my respect for the uniqueness, the ‘natality’ (Arendt, 1958) of each person, and their capacity to contribute to a just and inclusive social order, and my thesis accounts for how I have attempted to live these values throughout my daily work.

Conceptualising my work as *praxis*, and drawing on Groome’s (1991) concept of *shared praxis*, I demonstrate how I have nurtured communities of shared praxis as sites for educative and social transformation. I explain how I have developed a living theory of educational leadership appropriate to encouraging the growth of such communities and I define my understanding of spirituality and liminality as these have contributed to my emerging epistemology of practice.

The significance of my research is grounded in my contribution to the education of social formations through enabling students and young people to develop their leadership capacity, become co-creators of their own living theories of practice and, through membership of communities of shared praxis, give congruent and value-driven expressions of leadership by contributing to a good social order through an ethic of care for the marginalised and disadvantaged of society. I use my Christian values, summarised in Micah 6:8, as my capacity to walk sincerely, truthfully and justly with my God, as my living epistemological and ontological standards of judgement in testing my claims to have developed a living theory of educational leadership.