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Leadership for flourishing in educational contexts: Canadian  
Scholars. IDBN 978-1-77338-285-2, Softcover, 340 pages.**

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## Book Review: Leadership for Flourishing

Kutsyuruba, B., Cherkowski, S., & Walker, K. (2021). *Leadership for flourishing in educational contexts*. Canadian Scholars. ISBN 9781773382852, Paperback, 340 pages.

Christina Belcher, PhD, Emeritus Professor, Redeemer University

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Leadership across many social levels and educational contexts is a topic of burgeoning interest for educators. Although this topic is not new, it is once again becoming an area of academic discussion on many campuses of Higher Education (Schwartz & Belcher, 2017).

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*Leadership is a formidable topic. However, the two books reviewed in this issue make the reader feel less like homework (hard work) and more like chocolate (creamy satisfaction). Both invite the reader into a warm, congenial space of inquiry and collegiality. It is hard to choose one text reading on which to comment on the topic of leadership, hence, I have two unique and helpful reads, both of which approach the topic in differing ways while illuminating the landscape of need across educational institutions.*

*Although both books in this issue of the ICCTE journal are central to good leadership, one is more useful to young teachers new to education across their emerging educational experience, providing an overview of institutional leadership in many forms. The second text source in this issue, reviewed by Dr. Lisa Devall-Martin, is more geared to seasoned administrators, principals, or teachers who currently hold a leadership role in institutional education.*

I come to this with a cup half full of over years of educational experience, beginning in 1969, within Public, Christian, and Tertiary educational

landscapes across 3 continents. When I first became a teacher, the profession was noted for the character of the teacher. Now, we are more noted for our technological expertise, or lack thereof. However, this too shall pass. Times change, but the heart of education is still focused on humans and their relationships within a learning environment. That is both encouraging and hopeful.

The compact and enriching text, *Leadership for Flourishing in Educational Contexts* is divided into three sections: *Stories of School Level Flourishing*, *Stories of Personal Professional Flourishing* and *Stories of the Impacts and Influences of Positive Leadership*.

The scope and context for each division cross elementary, high school, and university participants. Someone new to leadership in any educational context can find something relative to their own environment and needs. A notable cross-section of cultural contexts envelops public, Catholic, Christian, and university school settings.

Section one, *Stories of School Level Flourishing*, draws attention to approaches that notice flourishing. This is a unique way to have educational practitioners identify how they may connect to flourishing in their own contexts. Approaches are often overlooked unless they are deliberately sought.

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**Dr. Christina Belcher, Emeritus Full Professor, PhD, Redeemer University, Canada**

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Section two, *Stories of Personal Professional Flourishing*, provides insight on what it means to flourish through reflection and professional learning. Teacher education puts a great deal of importance on reflective practice, but seeing this as a way of life in the profession is very helpful to those new to the field of education.

Section three, *Stories of The Impacts and Influences of Positive Leadership*, offers a range of positive leadership stories from a variety of locations, grades and stages of teaching experience.

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*Teaching can be a lonely venture for those new to the teaching environment, and mentors, be they in person or in the pages of a book, are catalysts to being and becoming good teachers. What makes this text especially valuable is its focus on human relationships in the form of character, values, integrity, and hope. The values and character of school leaders in any level of leadership frames and infuses how they communicate with and demonstrate value towards those they lead. Founded on what was once termed worldview principles, this posture resonates at the heart of teaching Christianly.*

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There is no room for leadership hubris within these pages. Although many texts stress the 'administrative' skills of leaders, this text stresses the awareness of having a positive purpose, passion, presence, and a sense of play for work/life balance to be a powerful contributor in keeping the wellbeing and happiness of a community a major focus for leading. The research within its chapters reinforces the ideal that living with ambiguity while also challenging a way to see things 'anew' opens doors to transformative education for all.

Another thing I appreciated about this text was its ecological perspective on goodness, values, and human flourishing. Education is a social enterprise. Human flourishing as a concept has been a buzz-word during the last decade in educational circles, as it encounters the aspects of what it means to be human within an educational context (Smith, 2009; Norsworthy, 2007). All of these texts pivot on the integrity and values of the intentional teacher; an educator with a purpose to lead in order that the individual lives of the community can be altered in positive ways. Neil Postman (1995), a cultural critic, and Parker Palmer (1998), mentors from the page during my higher educational career, demonstrate an acute awareness of the power of an education being soul-central.

Postman (1995) states:

There are many learnings that are little else but a mechanical skill ... but to become a different person because of something you have learned – to appropriate an insight, a concept, a vision, so that your world is altered – that is a different matter. For that to happen, you need a reason. (pp. 3, 4)

Teaching involves more than simply filling craniums. Palmer (1998) notes the role of the teacher as being central to students during their education: "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). This is also applicable to those in leadership. Leadership is key. As goes the leader, so goes the school. Everything old becomes new again.

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*Through case studies, this text demonstrates how members of an educational, institutional community can acquire an authentic sense of purpose, place, belonging and worth that empowers those who teach.*

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It is a worthwhile companion to bring us back to the awareness of and gratitude for the mentors on the printed pages of our past, and the resurgence of what is good for our future.

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