

Women Educational Leaders in an Age of Accountability

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Abstract : This paper presentation summarizes the findings and implications of research on the plight and practices of women educational leaders in public school systems and in one university. The authors, both women university administrators, are also scholars and researchers of education. The research project on which this paper presentation is based proposed to examine how women educational leaders imagined, experienced, and carried out their leadership roles in the context of a growing local and global accountability-based performativity discourse which is reshaping educational work especially for women, we argue, in both public school and post-secondary sites. The research employed critical ethnographic interviews with 20 women educational leaders in P-12 school systems and three women university level educational leaders. Data were collected on women educational leaders' perceptions of the effects of accountability and performativity discourses on the nature of their work. Specifically, leaders were asked to speak to whether they experienced a growth in managerial work as a consequence of increased accountability demands; how they experienced their work changing as a consequence of accountability and performativity demands; how these changes impacted the central values they enacted in their work as women educational leaders changes; and how they responded to/negotiated/accommodated changes in the nature of their work developing as a consequence of accountability and performativity frameworks. Findings from the research data and analyses confirm and extend recent scholarly work on the gendered nature of performativity and accountability discourses and frameworks, and their differential effects across differing genders. The oral presentation we propose here focusses on those findings in terms of similarities for women educational leaders across different educational contexts.

Keywords : women in educational leadership, gender and educational performativity, accountability and women leaders, gender and educational leadership

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