Am I a champion of gender equality? Using poetry to discover your ethical leader voice as a force for positive change toward UNSDG5

Keywords: ethical leadership, reflexive learning, poetic engagement, SDG5, gender equality

Rationale

Systemic change toward achieving the UN SDG5 requires disentangling the bias that reifies systems of gender inequality (Villesèche et al., 2021), and enacting ethical leadership through socio-relational outcomes (Villesèche & Sinani, 2023). How to best develop ethical leadership, however, remains enigmatic (Buskirk et al., 2015). This PDW heeds calls to develop leadership through artistic means (Edwards & O'Reagan, 2019), to support leaders' finding their voice and modelling the way to change (Kouzes & Posner, 2012), and to facilitate reflexive learning to activate moral sensitivity (Hedberg, 2017; Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Waddock, 2010). Reflection, a useful tool for professional development, nevertheless, can get stuck in the rational-cognitive realm. Hence, poetic engagement is used to access cognitive processes of more emotional depth (Morgan, 2016; Armitage, 2015). Engaging with poetry opens a unique space for exploring identity and values; gives voice to feelings, perceptions and genuine concerns; and fosters human connection which has the potential to support moral reasoning and moral action.

The purpose of this PDW is to facilitate a unique creative experience through which participants can discover their ethical voice in relation to gender systems and reach a 'stance' toward change (Antonacopoulou et al., 2023).

Proposed schedule

0'-15': Introductions. The convenors introduce themselves and facilitate an ice-breaker activity.

15'-20': Stream of consciousness writing. A brief introduction to the technique.

20'-50': Reflective activities. Prompts grounded in the conceptual frameworks guide participants' tapping into creative-emotional thinking.

50'-70': Debriefing. Convenors facilitate the reflexive learning process via discussion grounded in Acker's (2006) inequality regimes and theories of ethical leadership (e.g. responsible, servant and self-leadership). Space for personal reflection and dialogue in small groups.

70'-80': Found poetry. A brief introduction to the technique.

80'-95': Poetry writing. Participants use found poetry technique to enable emotive analysis of their ethical leadership values through developing their own poems.

95'-110' Taking stock. To promote synthesis and learning, participants share their experience in dialogue (pairs) for deeper exploration, discovery, and enhancement of their ethical leadership voice.

110'-120' Winding up. Full group debriefing and closing thoughts.

Target audience and outcomes

The workshop forms part of a research project around poetic engagement and ethical leadership development. We welcome all participants and see the workshop as particularly relevant to academics and practitioners who currently hold or aspire to leadership roles. To ensure participant diversity we hope to have delegates sign up upon acceptance. No previous knowledge/experience of the techniques is needed.

We expect participants will be:

- keen to improve their transformative practice and engage with ethical aspects of gender inequality;
- interested in poetry, curious about artistic approaches to personal development;
- open to dialogue around the challenges of developing moral action toward achieving SDG5.

Participants will leave the workshop with:

- a piece of poetry they have composed themselves and
- a sense of accomplishment and personal growth.

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