‘Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof’

How far are these international concepts?

Professor Fenwick English, University of North Carolina, USA

Professor Angela Thody, University of Lincoln, UK
Lincoln University Centre for Education Research & Development
Doctoral Programmes
Emeritus Professor Angela Thody

MYTH, RITUAL, LITURGICAL DRAMA

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New area for exploration in our discipline

IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

MYTH

RITUAL

LITURGICAL DRAMA
WHY TRY THESE NEW LENSES FOR EDUCATION LEADERSHIP?

TO CREATE AWARENESS THAT

• SOME OF OUR IDEAS ARE MYTHS

• RITUAL AND LITURGY MAY BE IMPORTANT STABILISING FACTORS, RE-ESTABLISHING THAT EDUCATION IS ‘SACRED’, HENCE VALUED

• MYTHS AND RITUALS CAN BE CONSCIOUSLY CREATED – ANOTHER FUNCTION FOR LEADERS

• EDUCATION LEADERS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO PERFORM LITURGY MORE EFFECTIVELY TO ENHANCE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

• EDUCATION LEADERSHIP HAS A HISTORY – AS DOES EDUCATION – AND GENERATIONS LINK THROUGH THIS TO GIVE CONTINUITY AND WORTH

• SCIENTIFIC RATIONALITY NO LONGER HAS A MONOPOLY
Rituals/myth/liturgical drama cater to ‘romantic antiquarianism’


This enables ordinary human beings [to] authorize their world and give their social identity (place) legitimacy

WHY TRY TO PRODUCE A UNIVERSAL COSMOGONY?

Chance comparisons and curiosity started this off

Definitions came readily as generalisable

Current globalisation of ‘solutions’ in education contrasted with beliefs that myths/ritual/liturgical drama is very context bound (e.g. folk dance and music)

To help us understand these topics through providing more cases to analyse and to see if the theory holds good in all cases
BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: MYTHS

ADD AN EXAMPLE OF YOUR OWN

- EXPLANATIONS OF THE INEXPLICABLE
  Why some leaders succeed when others in similar circumstances don’t – charismatic leadership

- ATTITUDES AND VALUES WHICH OFFER MEANING TO HUMAN EXISTENCE
  Green leadership will save us from climate change

- DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP
  Generally believed to be the best way

- REPRESENTATIONS OF REALITY THAT MAY NOT BE REAL
  Myth making is human nature
  League tables

- NOT BASED ON ‘SCIENTIFIC’ EVIDENCE
  Fiction that may have some basis in fact

Peer review (or citation matrices) are the best way to judge research leadership
BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: RITUALS

often repeated, self-evident, symbolic actions, that are always interactive and corporeal, sometimes accompanied by texts and formulas, aimed at the transfer of values in the individual or the group, and of which the form and content are always culture, context and time bound, so that the involvement in the reality that is presented in the ritual remains a dynamic given

(Wepener ‘Researching rituals: on the use of participatory action research in liturgical studies’. Unpublished paper, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, SA. www.academic.sun.ac.za. April 5th 2008, p.2)

Examples (formal): graduation and commencement ceremonies meeting agendas, appointment interviews
(informal): workplace management rituals/customary plays
as in ‘I always deal with my emails at the beginning of each day’
MYTH, RITUAL, LITURGICAL DRAMA

BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: RITUALS

OBJECTIVES OF FOLLOWING FORMAL RITUAL

PLACATE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS
(I.E SUPPORT THE STATUS QUO)
Morris dances to placate the climate gods to ensure a good harvest
Graduation ceremonies to placate the gods of public expectations and ensure that universities retain good PR

OBJECTIVES OF INVENTING INFORMAL RITUAL

Stress relief
Establishing certainties
Enhancing communication
Undermining the status quo
Creating a doctoral newsletter
A school principal who drops into the staff room
BORROWED (TRANS MUTED) DEFINITIONS: RITUALS

SO SUGGEST ONE REPETITIVE, APPARENTLY SYMBOLIC, INTERACTIVE RITUAL FROM YOUR OWN ORGANISATION.

CONSIDER BEHAVIOURS THAT ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH TRANSMITTING VALUES EITHER CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY.

YOUR RITUAL MAY BE FORMAL OR INFORMAL, SUPPORTIVE OR SUBVERSIVE, INVARIANT (STABILITY THROUGH REPETITION OF THE SAME FORM) VARIANT (ADAPTED BY EACH GENERATION OR INDIVIDUAL)
BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: LITURGICAL DRAMA

PERFORMANCE OF RITUAL, DERIVED FROM MYTH AS AN ART FORM

AIM IS FOR LEADERS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT LEARNING IS HALLOWED

EXAMPLES: PRIZE-GIVINGS; THESIS VIVAS; DISCIPLINING STAFF AND STUDENTS.

AS PERFORMANCE IT’S ACTING – AND THAT IMPROVES WITH PRACTICE AND REHEARSAL, COSTUME, STAGING…SO LET’S TRY GRADUATING.
PERFORMANCE IS PART OF LEADERSHIP – THERE IS A NEED TO BE DRAMATIC, LARGER THAN LIFE, TO KEEP THE FAITH WITH WHAT EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS HELD TO BE IN THE PUBLIC (AND STUDENTS’) MINDS.

So now it’s time to start the music, it’s time to light the lights…

*Each group to select (and perform) one ritual and report a myth. We’ll then consider the significance, value and performance and whether or not they are transferable to other cultures.*

Note: please leave a copy of the myths and rituals you have already identified with Angela. Send her any more you come across as your return to work.
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