Book review

Doris Schedlitzki and Gareth Edwards, *Studying Leadership: Traditional and Critical Approaches* (Sage, London, UK, 2014) 368 pp.

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This book represents an attempt to enhance modular study of leadership by introducing models, theories and themes, highlighting critical assumptions and engaging in key debates. It is written by Doris Schedlitzki and Gareth Edwards, two dedicated leadership scholars, well known to *Leadership and the Humanities* readers from their research and contribution to the field of leadership. As explained in the introduction, the book is grounded in the authors' interest in provoking critical thinking in the study of leadership. Their aim is not only to present leadership, but also to recognise different theoretical, methodological and geographical positions. In doing so, the readers are introduced to a clear message: to study leadership critically and apply their thinking in practice. The target audience for the book is leadership students and leadership educators. At the end of this review, I will consider how successful the authors have been in conveying their aims to these groups. With these aims in mind, the book is organised in three parts around the following themes: traditional approaches to leadership, current issues in leadership and critical issues in leadership. The book concludes with six case studies, which the authors advise reading beforehand. Their rationale is that the cases will trigger thinking about leadership in practice. Following this pedagogical rationale, the authors include additional features throughout each chapter, such as diagrams, summary tables and critical thinking boxes to focus readers' attention on specific issues. Furthermore, they include vignettes from the case studies to invite practical thinking about leadership theories and models. At the end of each chapter, the authors include a comprehensive summary, self-test and case study questions, as well as recommendations for supplementary readings.

Turning to the book's contents, the first part begins with a discussion about the links between leadership and management. The essence of this discussion is to uncover what sets the two concepts apart, how they are similar and how they can be perceived in organisational contexts. The notion of change is examined against both concepts to discuss how it can be understood and dealt with in both leadership and management domains. Chapter 2 looks at leadership traits, personality, skills, styles and intelligence, and highlights the strong persona of the leader in traditional studies. These are reviewed against hierarchical levels of leaders' work, within the great scope of leadership research. In chapter 3, early contingency theories are reviewed to introduce followers and the environment, in the discussion about leadership. The theories presented are reviewed against their effectiveness, popularity, weaknesses and strengths. The first part ends with chapter 4, on charismatic and transformational leadership,

which reviews the development of the concept and examines its significance through the detailed analysis of the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM).

The second part of the book shifts the focus away from the individual leader and offers current debates around leadership. Chapter 5 presents leadership as a contextual phenomenon, introducing the notion of socially constructed leadership. Against this background, power and effectiveness are reconsidered and essentially contested with the local and temporal context. In this respect, chapter 6 introduces fellowship from psychoanalytic and relational perspectives. In comparison to the first part, relationships here are not one-way from leader to followers, but are multi-directional. In chapter 7, power is explored further, and specifically the asymmetry perceived and prescribed in the leader–follower relationship. Chapter 8 deals with two themes that flow from one another. The first is that of strategic leadership, while the second concerns leading change in organisations. The second theme in particular introduces organisational and leadership becoming, which are the focus of chapter 9. With the conceptual basis of organisational becoming, chapter 9 explores distributed leadership, linking with the notions of community and culture. The authors here offer the ‘leaderful moment’ methodology as a way of discovering distributed leadership. Next, chapter 10 looks at leadership as a phenomenon within culture, thereby defining the notion of culture and proposing different cultures that relate to leadership studies. From these, a discussion about worldly leadership is presented to highlight the significance of recognising others in leadership relationships. The second part ends with chapter 11, offering insight about leadership learning and development, with the authors raising concerns about training evaluation and relevance to modern organisational happenings.

The third part of the book comprises an outline of recent trends in the leadership domain. Chapter 12 sets the scene by discussing gender and diversity, looking particularly at challenges female leaders face and the barriers established in the wider domain of diversity and inclusivity. Chapter 13 seeks to answer what leadership is for, by exploring effectiveness against ethics. This juxtaposition brings to the surface narcissism and toxicity, to highlight the relational and contextual nature of leadership. Chapter 14 introduces language and identity as critical for understanding and practising leadership. Making links with the previous chapter, national language is reviewed as well as language-specific representations of leadership. The final chapter acquaints the readers with the field of aesthetics as a fruitful means for sense-making leadership. Notably, supplementing traditional knowledge with sensory knowledge enables a connection of mind and body, which according to the authors is critical for leadership practice. The book’s main text ends with an epilogue containing a discussion about the future of leadership studies. It comprises two parts: the first includes personal thoughts and opinions from leadership scholars, and the second includes the authors’ personal reflections. Specifically, the epilogue reviews the major developments discussed throughout the book and highlights a balanced approach to leadership studies. According to the authors, this approach requires a processual lens, sensitivity to context and an appropriate epistemological stance that will account for the multi-faceted phenomenon of leadership.

Altogether, critically reviewing the book, one immediate observation is the breadth of theories it covers. The authors offer a plethora of views about leadership, which also contrast with each other. This is truly beneficial for students as it enables them to grasp the complexity surrounding leadership. However, this might at times be overwhelming for students at early stages of familiarity with the field, as the level of discussion tends to be sophisticated. To this end, the authors offer the pedagogical features as a means

to ease complexity. Indeed, these tools serve a good purpose by focusing students' attention and by restating key themes explored in the respective chapters. In addition to this, the pedagogical tools are most helpful to educators, representing an effective communication platform. Reviewing the book against its aims, it successfully introduces the complex field of leadership from a multitude of perspectives. For students, the book is an efficient introduction to the main topics and dilemmas in leadership. For educators, it is a guide that will initiate the conversation with students about leadership without imposing a particular perspective or agenda. One final remark about the book would be that its style lends itself to a flexible exploration by the readers. That is, students can follow up themes of interest by following paths of further reading, while educators can emphasise particular areas according to their aims. This is an invaluable feature of the book since it lays out the groundwork and allows readers to navigate themselves comfortably, making their own critical conclusions and taking forward the ideas that are most relevant to their pursuits.

Bringing this review to a conclusion, this book fulfils the authors' intentions of offering a map for studying leadership. With regard to its audience, students will find it a comforting companion to exploring leadership, and will be particularly drawn to its pedagogical features. Leadership educators will enjoy a comprehensive and multi-perspectived book with effective pedagogical tools to stimulate their students' thinking. Both audiences will be pleased by the writing style and the rapport the book maintains throughout, making it a worthwhile addition to their book collections.