

Pedagogy Matters: Episode 17 Transcript

Well, hello and welcome to the latest episode of the Leadership Matters Podcast.

My name is Valerie Jackman and

I'm leadership lead at CDN.

The purpose of this miniseries is to explore leadership from different perspectives.

What can we learn from the past?

What's required for the future and from where can we draw inspiration today I am delighted to be joined by Janet Whitley, collective leadership lead at Scottish Government.

Janet is an experienced public service

leader who has undertaken a range

of roles that have enabled her to

directly influence the future shape and

strategic direction of organizations.

She thrives on the challenge of instigating

and delivering organizational development,

finding ways to place people and communities

at the heart of collective leadership work.

Over the next 30 minutes,

Janet and I are going to be chatting

about the work of collective

leadership Scotland and how leaders

in the Fe sector may become involved.

So Janet,

I've been fortunate enough to be

involved in a number of project and

developmental activities offered

by collective leadership,

but for the benefit of the listeners,

what exactly is collective

Leadership Scotland?

Thanks for that,

Valerie and thank you for your introduction,

and I think collectively to ship

for Scotland is really drawing very

much upon the Christie report,

which is as we're all recognizing is now

10 years old and which really put the ideas of collaboration and participation right at the center of what we need to do in terms of our public services. With a strong emphasis on communities and how we can work together to improve those outcomes for communities. So the work of collective leadership.

Again, when the Christie report came out back in in 2011 and it's been a a gradual evolution since that time, working very deliberately with partners and colleagues and organisations right across public services, seeking to develop ways of offering development that can help our partners and our colleagues in the practice of collaboration and collective leadership.

So that's that was our origins and the works developed.

Over time,
to have a really clear strategy
over the last couple of years,
which is absolutely recognizing
that working and leading in
the times that we're in,
particularly when we're thinking
about the complex societal issues
that that many of us are working on.

It's absolutely clear that none
of us can solve those on her own.

There's an absolute requirement
to think about bringing partners and
colleagues together around these issues,
and collective leadership offers a
range of practices to support the
development of that collective leadership
to address complex societal issues.

OK,

that that's a.

That's a lovely description,

and if we're to dig down a little bit more

so you're seeing a range of practices,

what kind of practices?

Yes,

I think the practice of leadership

builds on a range of different sorts

of theories which underpin them.

But you're right to draw attention

to the practices,

because for me,

that's actually what

makes very accessible and

very distinctive. What we're offering

through collective leadership.

So there's five key elements in terms

of what we think of in terms of.

The core components of collective leadership.

The first is about practices

that support to self reflection,

and I think you know,

many of us today are experiencing the rapid,

demanding piece of work.

I'm actually taking the time to pause,

to reflect, to have its stillness,

however small,

can make an enormous difference

between being able to think through

maybe a different approach,

or to engage with a partner.

In a different kind of week,

so that would be the first component

building in self reflection building in

that that opportunity to pause and Mr

practices like journaling or or you know,

I guess different different ways of

thinking of building in mindfulness

practice or lots of different things.

But it's all about creating that

pause creating that that stillness

that allow us to be truly present

in the work that we do.

The second is is about,

I suppose understanding that we're
working in complex living systems and
thinking about the practice of leadership
as it applies to complex living systems.

So it's not about our kind of,

UM,

linear approach.

Accepting that a hierarchical and
linear approach is unlikely to provide
us with the solutions when we're
thinking about complex societal issues,
and so embracing ways of working which.

Recognize that they were
working with with uncertainty.

We're working with not knowing in
lots of different sorts of ways
we're working with with some,

I suppose,

a practice that offers us a recognition
that there's not a linear path to
get to an end point is that that

probably requires a different mindset,
so it kind of practiced about working
in complexity and what that might mean.

The third element is about our working
with curiosity and an inquiring stance.

So coming into the situation
losing that sense of being you,
perhaps a hierarchical leader
who has to have the answer.

And recognizing that again,
just keep coming back to to the fact
that we're thinking about really
wicked complex societal issues.

It's not a model of leadership
that applies to every single issue,
but for those sorts of issues.

Recognizing that.

Coming in with with some thoughtful
questions and an openness in terms
of what what other people might
might offer into those questions

is is most likely to to allow us to

make progress around the issues.

So I kind of inquiring stance would

mean we wouldn't have a foregone

conclusion in our minds about what's

going to come out of our particular

meeting or a particular conversation

that we're genuinely listening to

contributions from other partners

and colleagues, and that we.

We have an openness to what comes

from those diverse perspectives so

that that kind of model that we use

within that is action inquiry and

and that really allows us to think

about carefully phrased questions

to delve more deeply into what

the possibilities are.

With a range of partners

and to try stuff out.

It's it's about, you know,

I guess trying things and

learning from that as well.

4th Aspect is about relational practices.

So, so recognizing this is about

human relations in a group,

it's about again listening with

depth and intent surfacing the

diversity of views with with

the weeds that we ask questions,

building relationships,

and recognizing the importance of that,

and so with that that kind

of whole relational strand,

and also recognizing that in

any group that's working on

an you know an issue would be.

Our management group or at your

Community planning partnership.

Whatever the group,

how that functions as a whole array

of human relations dimensions as well.

So just having awareness about all of those relational different aspects.

And then finally the final practice is about just recognizing that we're working with emergence and so having a comfort and developing a comfort with working with emergence and finding ways to take action in uncertainty.

And think about different ways of knowing.

For example,

different practices that allow us to perhaps not just think intellectually about what the the the possibilities are, but to use different ways of knowing and working with what we have.

So that's possibly quite a

long winded answer,

but that would be in a nutshell,

what I would say collective leadership is,

well, do you know that's so lovely?

Because I have been involved with

collectively different for number of years,

and I have never.

Before I heard it distilled

down into those five key points,

and I know that because

of my own involvement.

I mean I would say that that the learning

my own learning through collective

leadership has been most the most

significant learning that I've ever done.

You know,

looking at the different

programs that you've offered.

So that's a beautiful insight.

And thank you so much.

Can you give us an example of maybe one of

the projects that you've that you've done?

Yes, I'm really happy to share

something with you family.

I guess what comes to mind was

quickly for me is some work

that we're doing at present.

So a program of work with local

UM groupings of senior leaders

from police and local government.

So at the moment we're working with

two different localities and it's

really an opportunity to work with.

I suppose a blend of the theories and

models and inputs around collective

leadership and what we mean by that.

Really,

really importantly,

offering support in the practices of,

you know the sorts of things that

we've just been talking about.

And supporting colleagues in a group

to work around a real complex issue

that they are actually working on

in their work in that locality,

and so that's really key element

of what we've tended to do with

collective leadership is to recognize

that the learning is most likely

to have the greatest potency.

If it's based on actual real work.

So I don't mean I kind of project

that's that's invented. I mean,

the actual work that people are doing.

Yeah, and so this work with police.

Local government has associates at the moment

were working in two different localities,

and so there's there's senior leaders

from the police and from the local

government come in in that locality

in both instances and sometimes

some other organisations as well.

Learning together and then

practicing together over.

I guess some initial program input and

some supported action inquiry groups

to begin to explore the work together,

I think, UM.

What's been really interesting about that work is, you know, gets very quickly a recognition of how different even some of these things that we might make quite sound quite simple when we see them how different and countercultural they can feel when you're coming out of a very different environment, but also how quickly our group can really gel.

And at present it's it's offered online so offered in an online environment how quickly.

The commonality of experience and and the ability to really open up to a new way of doing things can can occur is is, you know, it is quite incredible.

So even after the first session, a full day session,

we would always come in bed.

A reflective questions and in bed

inquiry and in the work that we're doing

we already had participants coming back.

Having gone back to their teams and

come back a few few weeks later

talking about how their teams in

notice they were different how they

were pausing how they were reflecting,

more how they were holding their team,

means meetings in a different kind of way,

how they were holding themselves

back from coming in with answers.

We're in.

In normal circumstances,

they would come straight straight in

with answers and so just it might

sound like quite small changes,

but I suppose what we're interested

in is that those personal reflections.

And then the ripple effects and

how the change in her manager is
or a leisurely in a particular
situation and how they're behaving
with their team can immediately
throw up different possibilities in
terms of what might happen around
the issue that they're working on,
and so that I guess it feels very
real to me because I'm hearing each
of the sessions I'm hearing the very
life accounts from the leaders who
participating in the program of what
is happening differently for them.
In their view,
work and so that's very reassuring,
in a way that that we are on to
something that makes a difference,
and it can make a difference quite
quickly with some quite small changes,
but also absolutely recognizing that
that that's working against the culture.

And I don't know what you value,
but at present it feels as if the
piece of work and the the kind of
rapid expectations that surround us
in much of her work of Rich reached a
kind of dumb.

You know the heightened level that that
that I don't never experienced before,
so I think it would always feel
countercultural to do some of these things,
but actually know it.

Probably even more so than ever before,
and so, I guess, just recognizing
that some of these small changes,
building in some of the practices
can start to illustrate quite quickly
to groups of leaders that there's
something there's something in this
and it can make a real difference
for them and for their teams,
and their potential for their way to work.

Yes, I I think that's just

so necessary for now.

For these times, you know we,

we hear about Luca times or complex times,

but.

As you say,

we we are working in this kind of

heightened sense where we need or

we we feel we need answers and

solutions quicker all the time.

But what you're saying is,

if we're taking the time to

actually listen and explore,

we can come to much and much

more meaningful solutions.

I've got that right.

Yes, no, I think that's exactly right.

Valerie, in terms of, and I suppose,

just that.

That kind of,

UM?

The freeing effect of allowing some timing seems to be experienced by and I guess the the work with police and local government is one example, but you're right to signal the role of facilitation as well, because that's always seemed really, really important in the work that we've been doing, so I suppose it's a recognition that making these sorts of changes in a piece of work.

Can be incredibly difficult and still having some really skilled facilitation to work alongside a leadership group or or you know, group that's working on an issue can be the game changer in terms of actually holding the space holding, uh, my guess that that kind of

awareness of some of the models

and and and the approaches that

are most likely to be helpful.

Yeah,

I'm trying to really hold back

from the tendency to revert to

the way that we've always done.

Things, yeah,

just we know if we keep on

doing things that we yeah yeah.

We we all know the phrase I think and

what we're looking for now is is better.

It comes actually and the opportunity

to to really appreciate that that

for some of these issues they've

been such long standing issues.

My dogs barking.

Is that gonna ruin the distance?

Not at all. Not at all.

If it wasn't here as it was going to be

minor, somebody elses, so that's lovely.

These sorts of longstanding issues.

There can be a feeling of

hopelessness as well,

so so I guess that kind of sense.

Well, we've tried this,

so we've tried that and

nothing seems to work.

And and you,

the figures are going in

entirely the opposite direction.

So what often?

I think we experiences is our recognition.

Actually,

we need to try something different.

The there's nothing.

Or not, for that seems to be offering.

Route so if it means starting

off a bit more slowly.

I mean what I always think is that

actually by by going more slowly,

the chances are you'll get more

quickly to a better outcome.

In basement in in per reflection

engagement is far more likely to get to.

You are more fitting, UM,

set of progress and you know more

fitting outcome than something

that's just been kind of rapidly.

UM, thought out because somebody

was on a really, really,

really tight time skill.

Yeah, so tell me if if leaders

from the college sector,

then we're interested in becoming involved.

Well, how, how would it could it benefit?

Then what could they potentially bring

up and how would they get involved?

I think there's lots of different ways.

Valerie and I also recognize that

there will be lots of different

kinds of people who are leaders in

in your current network as well,

and there might be different things it would.

You know they would enjoy doing

more than others.

I mean,

there's a number of programs that we offer.

We offer introductory workshops

around collective leadership,

and they're available every month,

and then we offer some workshops around

the practices of collective leadership,

and they're also available every month now,

and we've got a global.

We just ship campfire.

Come online mini festival coming up

on the 1st and 2nd of September.

So with all of these sorts of events

and activities and programs that we

offer that entirely open you deliberately,

entirely open.

But you know these would be some of

the general opportunities for our

colleagues in the college sector

to come along and get involved.

And in terms of the the UM

leadership camp fires, for example,

there's an opportunity to work.

West colleagues, internationally,

they've they've arisen from international

collaborations from colleagues in New

Zealand and in the US and and I guess,

a lot of interesting themes

internationally about collective

leadership and an opportunity to

come together in in the idea of our

campfire conversation around those.

So that might be a particular example.

But over the year we have a lot

of those sorts of opportunities.

So in the spring next year we'll have.

Our another festival of

collective leadership,

which again will be an

opportunity for attending,
participating and hosting a
whole range of different events
around collective leadership.

What people have tried, what we know,
what people have learned,
and sharing examples,
sharing experiences so those would
be a couple of possibilities and
that would be immediately available.

But I would also say is within our team,
in in collective leadership.

We're always curious.

About exploring the strategic
interventions that we can offer and
that we can make with particular
sectors or in particular geographies
where there's an appetite to
do something and we are.

There's an appetite.

You have to be supported

perhaps than some learning,
so that would be another route that would
always be open if there were a group of
college leaders who wanted, you know,
fuller explanation of what we can offer.
Or you know if there was working around a
particular issue or a particular locality.
Then we would always be interested in
exploring what the possibilities are,
and then finally another thing to
perhaps just mention is our facilitation
and leadership development programs.
So that's an in depth in normal
times residential program at present,
and online and full week long program,
which is really going below the
surface in terms of perhaps the the
human relations aspects as well as
all of the different practices.
Around collective leadership,
really recognizing that there's

a role of facilitator,

but there's also a role in terms

of being a facilitative leader,

and that both things can come together.

So that's a further program that

that we offer,

and the next one of those is in November,

but the details are all available

on our website, Valerie,

but I think I would always be

open for our conversation as my

colleagues in the practice team.

If there was anything in particular that

that that it was of interest to explore.

Arthur,

and well I I have I'm there are so many

things there for me that I can see and.

Would be hugely beneficial for

our Fe sector or college sector.

And there's also what our leaders in the

college sector might bring in terms of

their own experience and your knowledge,

and it's connecting to that bigger system.

And as you see, the bigger system isn't

just out with a particular sector.

Now we have to work globally.

And as you say, what you're offering does,

it has that kind of reach that

you're reaching out and sensing it.

What else is there?

So you're saying everything

that you've described?

This now is under website,

so people can go and start to explore

and they can even contact you directly.

Campaign, yes,

that's right.

And and through social media

as well we we tend to provide

links for for what we're up to.

If you want to follow us on Twitter,

you can follow collective leadership,

and that's often a good route to just keep up

to date with anything new that's come out.

But we just try and always make sure

that the website is up to date with with

everything that we're doing as well.

Yeah, well,

that's wonderful.

Thank you so much for sharing that

for giving us an insight as to what

collective leadership for Scotland is,

what it,

what it does,

how how it works and and what you have to

offer to to the sector to the Fe sector.

It's always great to see some further

colleagues starting to get involved,

and I suppose the purpose behind

these sorts of events is is

absolutely as you're describing.

It's not. About a min.

True collective leadership.

Since it's not about us having all
the answers, it's about recognizing
that everyone who participates
has likely got some learning to
offer and something to share.

So it's a very reciprocal kind
of arrangement. OK, Janice,
thank you again for your time today.

I can't believe how quickly
that time has gone and.

Very grateful for what you've
shared with us today tonight.

Thank you very much for the opportunity,
Valerie, thank you, thank you.

Mostly about.