

TEACHING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA

*Author:
James Paulson, Ph.D.*

ABSTRACT

In November of last year, the Oxford Dictionary announced that their word of the year for 2016 would be Post -Truth. Recent events in America, with the unexpected election of Donald Trump, in the UK, with its vote to leave the European Union, and in continental Europe with the rise of far-right political parties such as France's National Front, have given rise to new terms in popular culture and commentary to describe or explain these events. Terms such as alternative facts, fake news, and post-truth have entered everyday discourse at an astonishing level.

While serious examinations of the concept of Post-Truth have begun to appear in the literature and in courses and seminars at some universities, what has not been explored is its effect on educational leaders and on those who teach educational leadership. Indeed, as educators, what post-truth represents are things we do not want to see in our students or colleagues - intemperate behavior, a lack of interest in accuracy or facts, including making up one's own facts, and a willful and proud lack of intellectual curiosity; all being rewarded with power and influence. As teachers of educational leadership, our job is to encourage our students to be the most thoughtful, self-aware, insightful, and courageous leaders possible, while all around us those attributes are constantly and consistently being devalued.

This paper examines the implications of this so-called post-truth era on educational leaders and those that teach them. I address the charge leveled by some commentators that a preoccupation with post-structural and postmodern thought in western faculties of education has made us unintentionally complicit in the rise of falsehoods being disguised as truth. Finally, I explore ways that we can refute the misinformation that leads to inaccurate beliefs, and mitigate their consequences.