



appi

ASSOCIAÇÃO PORTUGUESA  
DE PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS

eJournal

Autumn/Winter Edition 2022–2023  
YEAR 5 · 21

ISSN 2184-7525

A photograph of a long, empty school hallway. On both sides of the hallway are rows of red lockers. The floor is a light-colored, polished concrete. At the end of the hallway, there is a set of glass doors leading outside. The lighting is bright, coming from overhead fixtures. The overall atmosphere is quiet and orderly.

# Equity, Equality and Educational Leadership from an American Perspective

Carlos Lindade



In my previous contributions, I have covered a range of digital outlets in hopes of inspiring readers to engage students in agency and ultimately provide new and exciting learning scenarios. Given my recent experience as a US Department of State international scholar at California State University, Chico, this article will depart from the previous topics and consider some of the lessons learned in California and focus on what was shared regarding Educational Leadership by considering issues of equality and equity.

## Equity, Equality and Educational Leadership from an American Perspective

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."  
— John F. Kennedy, former President of the USA

### Introduction

By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, I was honoured to participate in the prestigious U.S. Department of State, Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI) for Secondary Educators programme in the United States. The programme provided direct classroom discussions with American academics, educators, and leaders, as well as interesting insights from the fellow participants, who represented 19 other countries from every corner of the globe. The networking opportunities, the site visits, and cultural activities were eye-opening and life changing. Not only did I acknowledge the differences of the Californian school system, but I also realised that a lot of the struggles we face in the Portuguese public school system: the shortage of qualified teachers, the unequal access to up-to-date educational resources, slow or questionable internet connections... are common issues among both countries. One of my visits took me to Las Plumas High School and allowed the group to meet and talk with its principal, Dr. Lamar Collins, who spoke passionately about issues of equity, equality and the importance of educational leadership. The following sections will try to capture the essence of our discussions.



Dr. Lamar Collins during his tour of Las Plumas High School



Las Plumas High School website

### Equality, Equity... and Reality!

Equality and Equity in Education are consistent topics of teacher training sessions, conference presentations and even social media posts. When discussing such themes, we are often confronted with the following depiction:

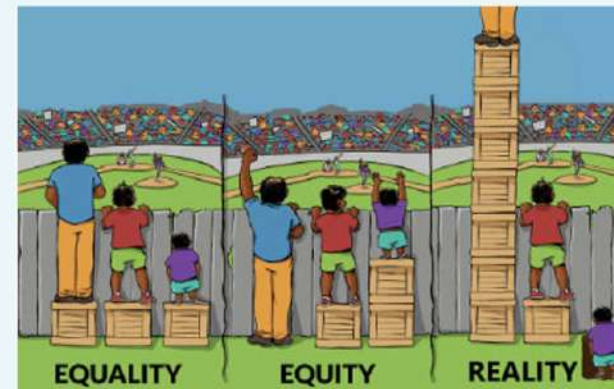


Image credit:

<https://medium.com/collective-power/equity-or-equality-why-it-matters-10593f5d47c>

In the first part, we observe that many people have pushed for equality. Equality means everyone gets the same thing and is treated the same way. In theory, that sounds appropriate. However, in our current reality, it misses the mark. The second part shares equity which is something that the EFL teacher should always strive for (think about the implications of *Decreto-Lei 54/2018* in our schools when it comes to sustaining meaningful learning and promoting inclusion). Some students need more and others need less, but from experience, I know it is no easy task when teaching large groups and multiple levels. The third part attempts to reflect reality. Some students are born with everything they need, some are born with just enough, and some are born so far behind that if we do not help them, they will never catch up.

Having worked in the Portuguese public school system for many years now has made me aware that a small group of teachers find the concept of equity



troublesome because it is perceived as more work for the educator. In fact, common-sense notions have been shared over the years promoting the idea we should give all students the same thing. However, it is extremely important to acknowledge that we do not need to give everyone the same thing... we need to provide opportunities rooted in equity to ultimately provide the same opportunities! On this note, Dr. Collins shared this analogy: if a student is having trouble reading, we give them glasses. If a student is having trouble hearing, we give them a hearing aid. Not all students need glasses and not all students need hearing aids. It is paramount to understand that a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching is unrealistic. Each teaching context, each group and each EFL learner is unique.

The goal in this context is to help learners climb the ladder of Bloom's taxonomy (check the revised version below). By supporting students in developing the ability to operate higher order thinking skills (henceforth HOTS), we are striving to get our pupils to create, to evaluate and to analyse. In the long run, simply remembering and understanding does not prepare a student for a very unpredictable 21st century workplace. By helping students to develop HOTS, we are hopefully preparing them for jobs that do not even exist, yet.

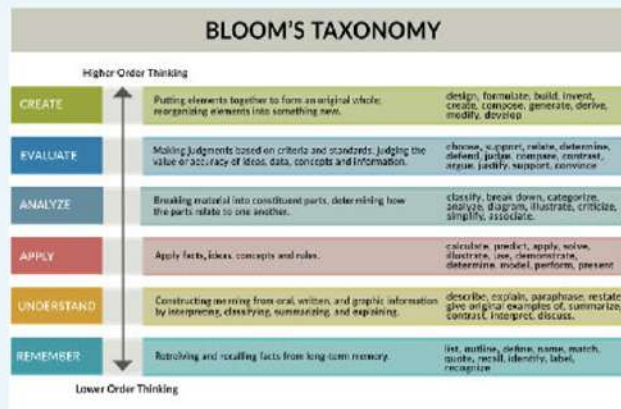


Image credit:  
<https://sites.google.com/site/cepseveryoneengaged/bloom-s-taxonomy>

## Leadership

During our visit to Las Plumas High School, Dr. Collins shared 3 quotes on leadership by noted leaders:

Peter Drucker: "The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers."

Bill Gates: "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others."

John Maxwell: "Leadership is influence — nothing more, nothing less."

However, he shared that his favourite quote on this topic was by Colin Powell (who was a four-star general chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security advisor and Secretary of State). Powell said: "Leadership is all about people. It is

not about organizations. It is not about plans. It is not about strategies. It is all about people—motivating people to get the job done. **You have to be people centred.**" Dr. Collin's take on leadership is all about knowing his staff, knowing very well the learners that attend Las Plumas and creating the right environment. He argues that if we put a seed in the proper environment and give it the proper resources and nutrition, that seed will grow. As educational leaders and role models for our learners, it is our duty to create the proper learning environment conducive to student growth and development. Ultimately, providing support results. Therefore, Las Plumas provides the necessary resources for students who want to go on to College or University and complete some form of higher education while also offering alternative education with proper facilities for welding or mechanics for those students who want to start working as soon as they graduate. These alternative workshops are not funded by the Federal or State Government. The school heavily depends on the donations of the community and local partners, which speaks volumes for the work done in this High School.

In Las Plumas, and in many American schools, leadership is not a position, it's a mentality. As a reader, you may be thinking 'I'm not the head of the foreign language department; I'm not working directly with the principle; I'm just a teacher, I have very little power.' But that is the wrong mentality. You may not have the title of leader but if you influence your students, you are a leader. That is why Dr. Collins prefers teams of leaders vs teams of followers. The efforts of a team of leaders pooled together yields multiplicative results.

Do start moving towards this mentality, Dr. Collins ran an activity with the group, something you can try too. He gave us 10 minutes to write down our guiding principles as educators (he asked us to write 3 or 4). These guiding principles refer to what someone can expect from you every day. He told us this was important because if we are given a new position within our school, or eventually go to a new organization, it is easier to lead because we can share our principles and let the other staff members and students know what they can expect from you. These are the things you can be held accountable for professionally since our principles are deeply rooted professional commitments.

Finally, Dr. Collins challenged us to think further about leadership and consider the type of leader we would like to be. He shared 5 levels of leadership based on John Maxwell's work:



Image credit:  
<https://medium.com/leadership-advantage/raise-your-level-of-influence-63774d015cbd>



Unfortunately, after he presented the pyramid, we had run out of time and had to continue our trip and meet another educator (but we were all craving to listen to more on educational leadership). If you scan the following QR code, you can read more about this pyramid:

5 levels of leadership by John Maxwell



[https://padlet.com/carlos\\_lindade/cfvvgg60kxhnw21pm](https://padlet.com/carlos_lindade/cfvvgg60kxhnw21pm)

## Final thoughts

By returning to the previously presented depiction on Equality, Equity and Reality, what we should truly strive for is... Liberation! This is the ultimate goal:

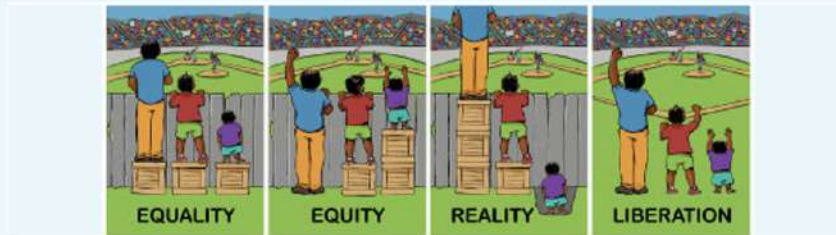


Image credit:

<https://medium.com/collective-power/equity-or-equality-why-it-matters-f0593f5d47c>

As Educators, we should always try to equip students with what they need to succeed and eliminate barriers that prevent them from accepting the resources they need to succeed. Perhaps we do not need to work more, but we need to work better!

While the (SUSI) for Secondary Educators program allowed me to connect to authentic experiences in U.S. culture and society and specifically learn more about US history and the American way of life (at least the Californian way), it also inspired me to be a better educator, a better teacher trainer and above all, a better global citizen.

Nevertheless, many months after this experience, I am still struggling to fully answer this question: what equity-based reforms do we need in Portugal to give better access to all students? Maybe we can think about this together on Padlet:

*If you would like to read more about these endeavours in California, feel free to reach out and I will happily share more about this experience. These are some photos I took during my visit to Las Plumas High School.*



One of the main hallways of Las Plumas High School



Outside the main building of Las Plumas High School



Custom Plumas High logo made by a student in the welding facilities



Classroom dedicated to automobile restoration.



Group Photo with Dr. Lamar Collins

## References

### Equity or Equality? Why It Matters

<https://medium.com/collective-power/equity-or-equality-why-it-matters-f0593f5d47c> (accessed February 6th, 2023).

### The 5 Levels of Leadership

<https://www.johnmaxwell.com/blog/the-5-levels-of-leadership/> (accessed February 6th, 2023).

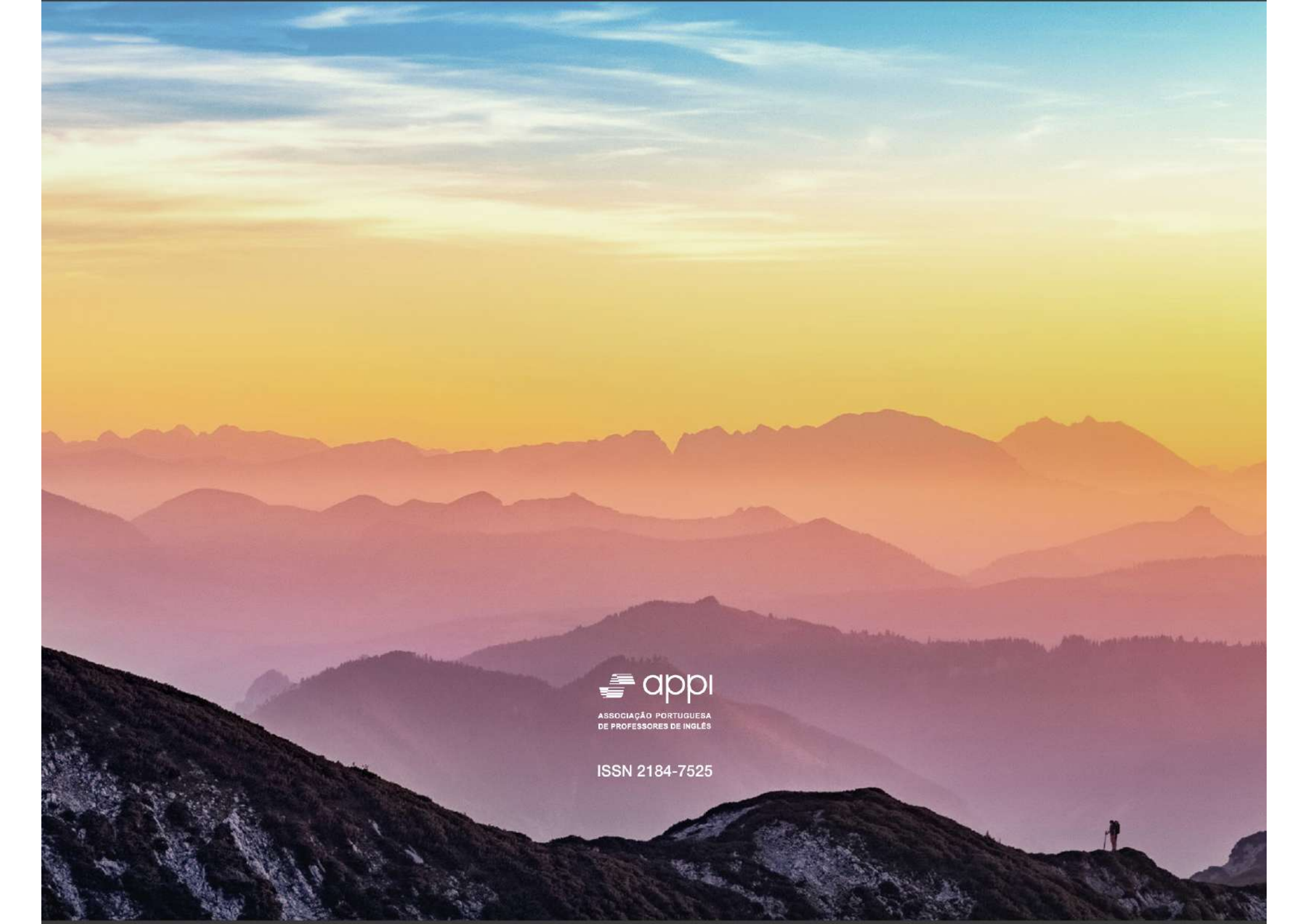
### Bloom's Taxonomy

<https://sites.google.com/site/cepseveryoneengaged/bloom-s-taxonomy> (accessed February 6th, 2023)

Carlos Lindade is a Portuguese Canadian ELT professional who has been heavily involved in teacher training and writing course material for Portuguese EFL students (U Dare 9, 2015; Stars 4, 2016). He holds a PhD in Advanced English Studies from the University of Vigo and is currently lecturing at the University of Porto (Portugal).







ASSOCIAÇÃO PORTUGUESA  
DE PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS

ISSN 2184-7525