

Dimensions of Social Justice Leadership: A Critical Review of Actions, Challenges, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in U.S. Schools

Dimensiones del Liderazgo para la Justicia Social: Una Revisión Crítica de las Acciones, Desafíos, Dilemas y Oportunidades para la Inclusión de los Alumnos con Discapacidad en las Escuelas de Estados Unidos

Dimensões da Liderança para a Justiça Social: Uma Revisão Crítica das Ações, Desafios, Dilemas, e Oportunidades para a Inclusão de Alunos com Deficiência em Escolas de Estados Unidos

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Empirical research has described how school leaders with social justice orientations investigate, understand, and address issues related to marginalization. These studies detail many of the heroic efforts of principals and their dedication, persistence, and skill. Theoretical and empirical writings have often presented social justice leadership as a “cure-all” to inequities rather than politically situated leadership orientation that in its practice is dilemma-laden. This article draws upon previous research on effective leadership as well as highlighting key aspects related to special educational policy in U.S. public schools to cultivate a more in-depth understanding of the practice of social justice leadership for inclusion. This analysis is presented to prompt a more in-depth and practice-oriented discussion, analysis, and understanding of the challenges associated with social justice leadership. Recommendations for future research and a more community-oriented and activist approach to social justice leadership are presented and justified at the conclusion of the article.

Keywords: Social justice, Leadership, Educational policy, Special education.

La investigación empírica ha descrito cómo los líderes escolares con orientaciones hacia la justicia social investigan, comprenden y abordan las cuestiones relacionadas con la marginación. Estos estudios muestran en detalle muchos de los esfuerzos heroicos de los directores, su dedicación, persistencia y habilidad. Escritos de carácter teórico y empírico que, a menudo, presentan el liderazgo para la justicia social como algo capaz de “curar” las desigualdades, en vez de mostrar el liderazgo como una práctica políticamente orientada y cargada de dilemas. Este artículo se basa en investigaciones previas sobre el liderazgo eficaz, y destaca aspectos clave relacionados con la política educativa de las escuelas públicas que fomentan una comprensión más profunda del liderazgo para la justicia social

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ISSN: 2254-3139
www.rinace.net/riejs/

Recibido: 28 de agosto 2014
1ª Evaluación: 20 de octubre 2014
2ª Evaluación: 11 de noviembre 2014
Aceptado: 24 de noviembre 2014

para la inclusión. Este análisis se presenta para provocar una mayor profundidad y discusión orientada a la práctica, el análisis y la comprensión de los retos asociados con el liderazgo para la justicia social. Se presentan y justifican en las conclusiones del artículo algunas recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones y un enfoque más orientado a la comunidad y activista con el liderazgo para la justicia social.

Descriptor: Justicia social, Liderazgo, Política educativa, Educación especial.

A pesquisa empírica descreveu como líderes para a da justiça social investigam, compreender e resolver problemas de marginalização. Esses estudos mostram em detalhes muitos dos esforços heroicos dos líderes, a dedicação, a persistência e habilidade. Escritos de caráter teórico e empírico, muitas vezes exibem líderes capazes de “curar” desigualdades, em vez de mostrar liderança como uma prática politicamente orientada e cheio de dilemas. Este artigo é baseado em pesquisas anteriores sobre a liderança eficaz, e destaca os aspectos fundamentais da política de educação nas escolas públicas que promovam uma compreensão mais profunda da liderança para a justiça social para a inclusão. Essa análise é apresentada para causar maior profundidade e discussão orientada para a prática, análise e compreensão dos desafios associados com a liderança para a justiça social. Nós apresentamos e justificamos as conclusões do artigo algumas recomendações para futuras pesquisas e uma liderança mais voltado para a comunidade e ativista para abordagem de justiça social.

Palavras-chave: Justiça social, Liderança, Política de educação, Educação especial.

Introduction

The practice of social justice leadership in schools that serve high-poverty communities or historically marginalized student groups is of tremendous importance to explore, examine, understand, and further develop within countries and internationally. Research in the United States has primarily investigated school leaders—whether they are principals, assistant principals, or teachers—leading in ways that promote equity, expand inclusive opportunities, increase educational outcomes, and empower marginalized communities (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Wasonga, 2009). The heroic efforts of school leaders are being documented in this emerging literature, as are their expertise, passions, patience, kindness, and stubborn persistence to address deep-rooted problems. Many scholars are also exploring the meaning and nature of social justice leadership through opinion pieces and conceptual papers while others have developed frameworks for preparing social justice-oriented principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders (Brown, 2004, 2006; Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008).

Recently, scholars have begun to critique the collective body of work on the topic in order to provide greater clarity to the meaning of social justice leadership and to set new directions for research, practice, and principal preparation guidelines (Capper & Young, 2014; Furman, 2012). One major criticism that has emerged is the literature’s limited body of empirical research, mostly in the form of case study research, with each study focusing on only one or two equity issues in a school while ignoring others (Furman, 2012). For example, a study of social justice leadership may focus primarily on students with disabilities and inclusion but ignore the inclusion of English language learners. Second, empirical research has focused almost entirely on the principal while ignoring other stakeholders that may be necessary to creating more equitable schools.

Third, theoretical and empirical writings tend to be present social justice leadership as a “cure-all” or a solution to equity issues rather than a politically situated leadership orientation that can be dilemma-laden and difficult to achieve its aims given the complicated policy context of public education (Capper & Young, 2014). Taken together, these issues do not provide a comprehensive understanding of social justice leadership and its role in creating more equitable school experiences and outcomes for marginalized student groups.

This article draws upon previous empirical research to review effective leadership practices while emphasizing important dilemmas and challenges that have been largely ignored in order to cultivate a nuanced understanding of social justice leadership. Primarily, the inclusion of students with disabilities was emphasized in this article because of inclusion’s connectedness to principles of social justice (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Other social justice leadership and equity issues are weaved through the article, but not fully addressed due to space considerations. This article concludes with the recommendation that theories of social justice leadership must be adapted and revised to include a more distributed and community oriented approach to leadership. The intentions of this article are not to invalidate the practice of social justice leadership or inclusion, disparage the efforts of principals and others who engage in social justice leadership, or to dissuade further research and theoretical writings on the topic. Rather, this article was written to serve as a tool to prompt greater discussion, analysis, and understanding of the challenging equity issues school leaders confront in their daily work and to enhance understandings of how policy context, school resources, student demographics, and community issues complicate the practice of social justice leadership.

1. Literature review

Context and policy are important to understanding the actions, behaviors, and challenges associated with social justice leadership. Deep-rooted challenges exist across the numerous social justice and equity issues confronted in schools. This article begins with an introduction to special education policy in the United States in order to highlight the complex policy context nested above and within schools and districts. Next, definitions and conceptualizations of inclusion are presented to highlight the complexity of inclusion in the public school context and the challenges it poses to school leaders. Then, empirical research focused on social justice leadership and inclusive leadership is examined to highlight effective practices and challenges. Finally, social justice leadership is examined through the social justice principles of recognition and redistribution to highlight the inherent dilemmas of social justice leadership in schools.

1.1. Special education and inclusion

1.1.1. IDEA and marginalization

In the U.S., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) (formerly the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) is the federal policy that mandates all students with disabilities are: identified as a student with a disability; provided with a free and appropriate education and an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) in order to receive an educational benefit; and educated in the least restrictive environment determined by a team of teachers and parents. The law also established disability classification types, an expectation for ongoing progress

monitoring, student disciplinary guidelines, and a system of due process to remedy disagreements between parents and schools. The positive impact of IDEA is undeniable. All students with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, receive a free education, and are now more likely to be educated with their non-disabled peers. IDEA is not without criticism. Many scholars contend IDEA is underfunded, creates rigid labels that marginalize students, and contributes to racial and class-based discrimination of students already inherent in schools and society (Milner, 2010). Researchers in the U.S. have documented disparities in special education identification, placement decisions, and student outcomes for decades (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Blanchett, 2006; Donovan & Cross, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). African American students and students living in poverty are more likely to be identified with an emotional, behavioral, or intellectual disability and more likely to be segregated from their non-disabled peers than White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Many African American students and students in poverty attend urban public school districts that have systematically established segregated, under-resourced, and low-performing systems that marginalize and isolate students (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013; Harry & Klinger, 2006).

The intersection of race and poverty are important variables associated with the marginalization of students with disabilities because these variables influence the educational policies, curriculum, expectations for, and experiences of students. Historical, social, cultural, and economic features of U.S. society have created systems that benefit White students at the expense of other racial/ethnic groups with repercussions for African American students and other non-White race/ethnicities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Dutro (2010) argues that curriculum should “allow children to see themselves, access experiences that differ from their own, and foster talk about issues of equity and social justice” (p.257). Yet, some teachers don’t value engaging students with culturally relevant curricula or learning experiences (Milner, 2010) and maintain deficit perspectives of children because of their racial or economic backgrounds. Given this context it is not surprising that researchers have discovered that many educators respond more severely to similar student behavior issues in schools that primarily serve African American and Hispanic students in comparison to schools that primarily serve White students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Milner, 2010).

The impact of racial and class-based discrimination creates significant barriers for marginalized student populations that contribute to the inappropriate identification and segregation of students in special education programs. The long-term outcomes of this system helps to explain disproportionate achievement, suspension, expulsion and dropout rates, and the maintenance of a special education to prison pipeline for poor and minority children (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007). These circumstances justify a linkage between social justice leadership and inclusion.

1.1.2. Clarifying and defining inclusion

Inclusion often equates to confusion in public schools. The word inclusion does not exist in IDEA and is rarely used in case law although many legal and educational scholars have attempted to make a connection between inclusion in education and the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that overturned the separate but equal doctrine. The legal impetus for inclusion is broadly described in the least restrictive environment (LRE) component of IDEA and states: “Each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with

disabilities for special education and related services” (§ 300.114). In other words, the inclusion of all students in the general education classroom is not mandated by IDEA because school districts are required to ensure a variety of placement options exist that range from highly segregated to fully inclusive general education classrooms.

Many education scholars hold contrasting views on inclusion and how students with disabilities should be educated. As a result, a continuum of inclusion definitions exist ranging from fully inclusive for all students regardless of the nature and severity of the disability to definitions that assume full inclusion is somewhat unrealistic in the immediate future due to the lack of coherence across educational policies, school district structures that segregate students, and school cultures and staff capacity. Some inclusion definitions recognize how student groups have been marginalized and how special education policies can further contribute to their marginalization. For example, Katzman (2007) defined inclusion as “an educational philosophy that calls for schools to educate all learners including students with disabilities in high-quality, age-appropriate general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools” (p.129). Slee (2007) defined inclusion as “not the adaptation or refinement of special education. It is a fundamental rejection of special education’s and regular education’s claims to be inclusive. Inclusion demands that we address the politics of exclusion and representation” (p.164). Udvari-Solner and Kluth (1997) expanded on the politics of exclusion:

Inclusive schooling propels a critique of contemporary school culture and thus, encourages practitioners to reinvent what can be and should be to realize more humane, just and democratic learning communities. Inequities in treatment and educational opportunity are brought to the forefront, thereby fostering attention to human rights, respect for difference and value of diversity. (p. 142).

Inclusion definitions of what schools should be like under optimal conditions are often difficult to reconcile when considering the imperfect and challenging conditions that most public schools operate under. Schools often lack the resources, training, community consensus, district support, and expertise necessary to make such drastic shifts in thinking and administering education. These challenging conditions tend to be more extreme in schools that serve high proportions of African American and Hispanic students. These imperfect conditions have tempered other definitions of inclusion. Osgood (2005) described inclusion as “more of an ideal than an idea, one to which schools should continually aspire but also one that remains unobtainable in the foreseeable future” (p.200). DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013) argued “scholars must recognize the inclusion of all students may not be immediately obtainable during transitional reform periods because inclusive reforms often confront obstacles that cannot be remedied in the short-term” (p.8).

This article does not take a particular stance on how inclusion should be defined beyond the following remarks. Primarily, it should not be assumed that any type of leadership action that transitions students with disabilities into the general education classroom is equal or just. Physically moving bodies into the same room as other students is not synonymous with inclusion because placing a student with a disability into the general education classroom does not mean they will be included in all the social, emotional, and academic experiences. In certain instances, students with disabilities are placed in inclusive classrooms for compliance reasons or to comply with parent demands, but remain isolated because they are unable to access curriculum, teacher support, and other valuable opportunities and experiences. Students with disabilities are truly included when they have equitable access to curriculum, resources, opportunities, and can

meaningfully benefit from those opportunities. Accordingly, schools are inclusive when school leaders engage in social justice leadership actions that transform the values, beliefs, culture, and capacity of the entire school community.

1.2. Inclusive schools and social justice leadership

1.2.1. Inclusive schools and effective leadership

Although the concept of inclusion is difficult to define, inclusive schools tend to (a) welcome all students and families; (b) have faculty and staff that embrace inclusive values and accept teaching all students as part of their job; (c) have formal structures in which groups of teachers utilize formal and informal data to track student progress, analyze data, problem solve academic or behavioral challenges, and develop action plans with interventions and goals; (d) efficiently and flexibly utilize human capital and other resources; and (e) provide high-quality professional development for skills associated with co-teaching, co-planning, and meeting the diverse needs of all students (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; DeMatthews, 2015; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Waldron, McLeskey, & Redd, 2011; Youngs, 2007). Effective school leadership practices contribute to these characteristics. Table 1 details research findings that connect effective school leadership practices to the development of an inclusive school.

Table 1. Effective leadership practices and inclusive schools

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS	EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE
School environment that is welcoming to all	Principals welcome teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to meaningfully engage in the school. Principals also model inclusive values by encouraging democratic decision-making, open forums, and inviting marginalized families to the school (Griffith, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011)
Faculty embrace inclusion and accept teaching all students	Principals influence student achievement by setting directions and expectations for faculty and staff. They help to establish goals, shared understandings, and a school culture that is motivated to perform at high levels (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013; Jacobson, 2011; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Pazey & Cole, 2013)
Structures to track student progress, analyze data, problem-solve, and develop plans	Principals draw upon instructional leadership and distributed leadership practices to establish teacher teams that collect, analyze, and develop action plans based on student data (DeMatthews, 2015; May & Supovitz, 2011; Neumerski, 2013; Robinson, 2010; Stoll et al., 2006)
Efficient and flexible use of resources	Principals pay close attention to the organizational features of their schools and modify, adapt, or develop systems that meet the needs of all students. (Hornig & Loeb, 2010; Nanus, 1992; Odden, 2011; Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2011)
High-quality professional development	Principals ensure teachers have access to high-quality learning opportunities (Hallinger, Lee, & Ko, 2014; Neumerski, 2013) and offer: “...intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing appropriate models of best practices and beliefs considered fundamental to the organization” (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 9).

Note: prepared by the author.

The characteristics of inclusive schools are associated with effective leadership actions, but implementing inclusion brings complexity that requires collaboration and a

distribution of leadership and tasks that will be discussed in greater detail at the conclusion of this article. The complexities of creating a more inclusive school involves three broad areas: technical/legal, pedagogical/curricular, and collaborative. Technical and legal complexities are related to federal, state, and district policies and require that principals and teachers understand these issues, follow appropriate procedures, and maintain compliance expectations (DeMatthews, 2015). Examples of technical challenges include redeveloping the school budget to hire an additional special education teacher to increase student access to a special education teacher while in the general education classroom or revising bell schedules, course schedules, and student caseloads to provide the necessary time for co-teaching and co-planning. These challenges are more extensive in locales where federal, state, and district special education policies are not aligned or do not promote or incentivize inclusive education programs. Legal complexity is consistent when attempting to create more inclusive schools and can be associated with the development of a student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The development of the IEP is guided by federal, state, and district policies and laws that require:

- A multidisciplinary team meeting of teachers, diagnosticians, parents, and student if appropriate;
- A number of written descriptions that describe a student's present levels of performance, learning goals, proposed supports and services, progress monitoring tools, and appropriate classroom environment;
- Meetings are conducted and documents are completed within pre-determined time periods; and
- Parents are provided with their right to due process when they disagree with the school district.

Effectively serving all students in an inclusive setting requires tremendous skill and expertise associated with pedagogy and assessment, skills and expertise most staff might not have at the onset of the reform (Friend et al., 2010). School leaders must ensure they can enhance teacher capacity in a number of areas including, but not limited to, developing and co-teaching lessons that meet the needs of all learners; managing behavioral, social, and emotional challenges associated with a student's disability; providing and interpreting assessments to identify and describe students' present levels of performance; managing and coordinating paraprofessionals and other instructional or behavioral support staff; utilizing assistive technology and specialized resources and intervention models; and establishing communities of inquiry and practice to effectively problem solve and create new interventions (Billingsley, 2007; Boscardin, 2007; Pazey & Cole, 2013). When school leaders and teachers do not have these skills and levels of expertise they will not be able to effectively include all students.

Teacher collaboration can be difficult in schools because most teachers have been isolated, work with limited supervision, and possess a high degree of autonomy. Yet, inclusive schools require that collaboration is ongoing and meaningful because effective co-taught lessons require teachers to consider grade level curriculum and a range of methods for differentiating and adapting instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners (Friend et al., 2010). Teachers should also be reflective of their lesson, review informal and formal assessment data, and hold discussions about re-teaching skills

students were unable to master. Collaboration is also vital with other stakeholders, including parents, because many special education-related challenges (e.g. due process complaints, decisions about student supports and services, challenging student behaviors) can be more efficiently and effectively solved when there is trust between parents and the school.

1.2.2. Social justice leadership

The empirical research focused on social justice leadership has primarily highlighted the principal as the primary change agent, although community engagement, shared decision making, and democratic leadership are often mentioned (Furman, 2012). This section will focus on the principal as the key actor or catalyst to social justice work in schools. The methods principals utilize to create inclusive schools vary based on their personal beliefs, school culture, and district policies.

Principals with social justice orientations recognize inequities that are often concealed amongst the other issues associated with the daily administration of a school because they dig deep into school policy, issues, budget, and culture with a critical eye for injustice. Social justice leadership is about recognizing the inequities in society and schools, bringing stakeholders together, and taking action (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Each school has different challenges, contexts, and human dynamics that makes defining social justice leadership difficult, but its practice generally involves: (a) interrogating school policies, cultures, and community expectations; (b) identifying oppressive and unjust practices; (c) employing democratic processes to engage marginalized communities, faculty, and staff; and (d) substituting unjust practices with equitable and culturally appropriate ones (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009).

A prevalent theme in the literature is the “action-oriented” nature of social justice leadership (Furman, 2012), which includes a heightened sense of awareness to issues of oppression, exclusion, and marginalization (Brooks & Miles, 2006). This awareness has been described as the “conscious commitment to recognizing ... choosing to remove blinders and recognize the multiple needs of the children and families” (Lopez et al., 2010, p. 69). School leaders with social justice orientations have deep-rooted personal values and beliefs that allow them to confront tremendous resistance and persist in the short- and long-term (Jansen, 2006; Jean-Marie, 2008). Furthermore, these leaders recognize the importance of all stakeholders in change processes because equity-oriented change can be so difficult. Vital to the practice of social justice leadership is a school leader’s communication skills, emotional awareness, and ability to build meaningful and long-lasting relationships. The practice of social justice leadership becomes about connecting groups of people together (Brooks et al., 2007) while fostering collaboration, democratic dialogue (Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002), and shared decision-making processes (Wasonga, 2009). Special attention is given to personal and professional relationships as well as opportunities to increase stakeholders’ sense of ownership over decisions associated with the school. Theoharis (2007) found that principals resisted “the historic disconnect between marginalized families and schools ... to create welcoming school climates and also reached out to the community and in particular to disenfranchised families (p. 237).

With the support of community and a wide array of stakeholders, social justice leaders recognize they have the ability to restructure school resources to develop inclusive

programming, maximize resources and staff expertise, or grow programs that foster collaboration and culturally relevant pedagogies. Social justice leaders become visible actors who mediate conflicts, champion ideas, and raise important concerns (Scanlan, 2013; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). They challenge others to think about issues of social justice and question the status quo, and in doing so become activists working for change.

1.3. Technical challenges and contradictions to social justice leadership

Although the empirical literature focused on social justice leadership has described many of the personal orientations, actions, and practices that contribute to the development of more socially just schools, this literature has done little to capture the tensions and challenges that arise (Capper & Young, 2014; Furman, 2012). Social justice theorists have only begun to question and explore the challenges and dilemmas of school leadership by theorizing on how principles of social justice can be at odds with each other especially when considering the various and intersecting interests of student populations or the tensions associated with academic achievement and inclusivity.

Recent research has started to uncover some of the challenges, dilemmas, and pressures principals confront when they attempt to create more inclusive schools (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). In part, these dilemmas exist because principals seek fast-paced change or take on too many responsibilities without building school capacity. These ideas will be further addressed in the next section. When principals are engaged in social justice leadership efforts they tend to confront resistance with significant consequences on their social justice agenda. These forms of resistance come from within the school, immediate community, district, and beyond (Capper & Young, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Instances of resistance include the momentum of changing a status quo culture, obstructive staff views, privileged parental expectations, bureaucratic red tape and regulations, limited resources, and harmful state and federal regulations. These forms of resistance can take a great personal toll on principals and force them to reckon with their own self-esteem and senses of discouragement. Other studies focused on inclusive reforms found similar challenges. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) found resistance from general education teachers and vocal/privileged families. DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) documented contradictory district policies that created social justice dilemmas, including issues with ongoing enrollment, budget, community, and student behavior created dilemmas for principals that did not always allow for a socially just outcome for all students. DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) concluded that:

The fact that persistent historical and structural marginalization not only exists but is pervasive in education underscores the fact that eliminating inequities is an ongoing struggle rather than a singular battle fought and won over the course of the school year. In reality, principals leading for social justice experience the physical, mental, and emotional ups and downs of the work, press on while engaging in ongoing battles inside and outside of the school, and learn new lessons based on past experiences. Principals that continue to engage in social justice work are truly heroic but at times imperfect, especially while leading under immensely challenging conditions. (p. 32).

Challenges to social justice leadership can extend beyond the bureaucratic, technical, or change oriented struggles that are the bread and butter of school leadership (Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2006). Social justice leadership work can be sorted into two principles: redistribution and recognition. The principle of recognition is about defending the identity of marginalized groups with the purpose of reimagining

mainstream conceptualizations or stereotypes of marginalized groups not traditionally viewed as communities of value. The principle of redistribution is concerned with economically defined groups struggling to end exploitation for the purpose of achieving redistribution (Fraser, 1997). North (2006) argues that the principles of redistribution and recognition create contradictions for practitioners seeking to create more socially just schools because these two principles can conflict. For example, North (2006) described a fictional but plausible example of a school funding reform that provided equal funds to each school (an example of redistribution), which in turn, diluted a school that served a marginalized community ability to procure additional resources for the development and implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum (an example of recognition). These kinds of conflicts are common in the daily work of school leaders as they seek to establish more inclusive schools.

School leaders often confront dilemmas when attempting to create more inclusive schools because inclusion simultaneously incorporates principles of redistribution and recognition, but also because schools have finite resources and tend to serve various marginalized student groups with different interests. These conflicts have not been sufficiently described in the literature. Despite the paucity of research, dilemmas to social justice leadership can be easily hypothesized when considering the challenges of inclusion. School context, academic or behavioral challenges associated with specific disabilities, school budget, and parental decision-making complicate social justice leadership work and can pose serious dilemmas for school leaders.

School context is important because the various student groups, their identities, and needs shape how resources and recognition needs to be shifted to promote equity. Social justice leadership requires that principals recognize and address the historical marginalized racial/ethnic groups, English language learners, students with various disability types and needs, students in poverty, and students who are part of the LGBT community. It has been eloquently argued that social justice leadership must be about becoming experts on, the range of student differences and their intersections... they do not have the option of choosing which student differences they will succeed with and which students of difference they will ignore in doing so (Capper & Young, 2014).

Yet, in practice, these groups compete because schools have limited resources, time, and expertise to address countless groups and issues.

Academic or behavioral challenges associated with certain disability types also create conflict for inclusive schools. The special needs of students can require a great deal of assistance, expertise, and support from teachers and classroom aides (Durlak et al., 2011; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Oliver & Reschly, 2010). As previously noted, teachers and administrators often lack training to work with diverse student populations. Thus, in a fully inclusive classroom, particular students with more significant needs might disadvantage other student groups, as students with the most need will receive increased attention and resources while others may be left behind. Some scholars might claim this depiction or argument is unethical and unwarranted. Such claims have a degree of validity, but purist assertions for immediate and full inclusion ignore the serious needs and challenges certain students bring with them to school each day and the feelings school leaders confront as they try to strike balances between supporting a student with intensive needs, supporting all students, and putting teachers in situations they are able to succeed and feel successful.

School budget is another challenge to social justice leadership because multiple equity issues are present in most schools across a range of student groups and identities (Capper & Young, 2014; Furman, 2012). Recognition and redistribution can be in direct conflict considering that inclusion must apply to all students and extend beyond disability to differences associated with language, race/ethnicity, income level, and sexuality. In some instances, particularly with language, for inclusion to work well teachers need training and may need additional staff to work in co-taught classrooms. Obviously, principals cannot hire positions that don't exist in their school budget so choices must be made between an extra ELL teacher and an extra special education teacher. Who will benefit and who will remain marginalized rests in the balance of these decisions.

Finally, principles of redistribution and recognition can be at odds when working with parents. Conflicts between parents and the school can arise when schools seek to create more inclusive classrooms. Parents of students without disabilities may fear their children will have fewer opportunities to learn and be supported in an inclusive classroom (Ferraioli & Harris, 2011; Glazzard, 2011). In these instances, parents should use their powers of persuasion to engage such parents, but also remain steadfast in their school's mission and vision of serving all students. However, parents of students with disabilities may also be against the inclusion of their children. Parents with children in high-needs urban districts or other districts may have fought long and hard to ensure their children gained access to the special education supports and services they need (Harry & Klingner, 2014; Wellner, 2012). Parents may have even seen noticeable positive results since their children entered into special education programs. Moreover, the long fights parents may have had with districts and teachers could instill mistrust between parents and school personnel. Consequently, parents may be against inclusion if they view inclusion as "taking away" supports and services. The solution to the parent challenges is building trust, but trust can take time and some wounds were generated over long periods of time and will take time to heal. In these situations, school leaders confront a dilemma: If they recognize these parents as a marginalized community group and respect their wishes, they will be unable to provide inclusion for some students in the short-term and possibly the long-term because the segregation of a small group of students can be extremely inefficient and costly in an inclusive school since special education teachers would have to be pulled from co-taught inclusive classrooms to segregated classrooms.

2. Addressing challenges and proposing solutions

The idea of social justice leadership is powerful and inspiring, but current research and prescriptive writings have not generated suitable solutions to the persistent and deep-rooted equity problems in schools. In part, empirical research seems to suggest that quick equity-oriented turnarounds are possible when heroic principals thrust schools to better serve all students. Two flaws are inherent in this assumption. First, as noted previously, the challenges to creating a more socially just school are immense and take time to overcome. They are deep-rooted in history and present numerous dilemmas for leaders. A lack of policy coherence, budget, time, training, and the sheer number of equity issues makes social justice leadership an almost impossible task. The deck is stacked against principals and this work. Moreover, heroic principals that can create dynamic change in short time periods are not the norm and most likely never will be. In

addition, numerous studies have documented the quick decline in school improvement when heroic principals or leaders leave (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012).

Second, even heroic school leaders cannot single-handedly overcome certain leadership challenges or dilemmas associated with the recognition and redistribution principles of social justice. Each dilemma is a problem that extends beyond the principal's skill, command, and time commitments. Many of the problems are associated with larger problems in education policy, district structures, and community relationships that extend far beyond the school's walls or community. For such problems, creating a more equitable school is not directly linked to a principal's expertise, communication skills, or personal values. Rather, the solution exists outside of the scope of the principalship and school and should prompt principals to be a part of political and policy-related advocacy work at all levels of education policy. Principals should not assume they are leaders of such advocacy work considering the numerous job responsibilities assigned to them. Instead, leading for social justice should mean acting as a catalyst for advocacy work within a community.

The dilemmas of social justice leadership should implore equity-minded principals to engage in certain actions and beliefs, but these principals must recognize they cannot do everything. Social justice leadership should be re-envisioned as a school-wide and community-wide endeavor. Principals engage in social justice leadership (e.g., use their knowledge, skills, and expertise) to support the development of a school and community social movement that can further promote the needs of schools and diverse student groups. In part, this work should resemble distributed models of leadership (Gronn, 2009; Heikka, Waniganayake, & Hujala, 2013) with the primary focus on building capacity, leadership, and ownership throughout the school community and all equity issues that impact students and families. The dilemmas of social justice work are almost too great to overcome, except when schools and communities are fully engaged together, when they are well-organized and prepared to advocate for all students, when all educators are prepared to collectively problem solve school-wide or singular problems, and when parents, central office administrators, community organizations, and businesses have identified common interests and work together to collectively address or adapt policy, budget, and other technical problems.

Promoting inclusion and equity are noble and necessary goals for principals, but when leadership is concentrated in the hands of one heroic leader, a few administrators, or when communities are disengaged from decision-making, social justice leadership will only generate superficial and short-term change. It is no surprise that the field of educational leadership has taken such an interest in principals engaging in social justice leadership, but the scope of research, preparation frameworks, and other theoretical writings must focus more broadly on school and community leadership. The cliché, "It takes a village to raise a child" must be evident in the underpinnings of educational policy, principal leadership, and the community if social justice is to take place and take root. When educators, scholars, and policymakers seek to empower communities, schools can be radically transformed into inclusive, caring, and equity-oriented environments that contribute to the academic, social, and emotional growth of our children.

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