

Critical Leadership and Social Justice: Research, Policy and Educational Practice

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As a result of educational policies emanating from issues relating to globalized societies, schooling is becoming increasingly standardized, not only in terms of assessment and evaluation, but also in terms of processes, policies and procedures. Two issues, “zero tolerance” and “full inclusion” policies are discussed as representative of well-intended but exclusionary policies that do little to advance social justice within schools. Truly inclusive educational practices represent a form of social justice that is much needed within the school edifice and focuses on how policy is understood and implemented at the school level, bringing the relationship between school leaders and educational policy into sharp focus. This presentation advocates the de-institutionalizing of “educational factories” in order to gain greater clarity surrounding some of the advantages afforded by creating more socially just schools. The focus is on the perspective of the school leader as the individual who is in a key position to support socially just strategies for inclusive schooling.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, leadership, social justice, research, policy, educational practice

Introduction

This article attempts to view schooling through the lens of social justice and offer some small considerations regarding how the educational system can be made more equitable for all students. The term “schooling” refers to the process of education provided by an educational institution, whereas “education” does not necessarily take place only within schools. As has been suggested by more than one pundit, education has been reduced to schooling that has been reduced to a measurement of outcomes. Now, this is only problematic, if one believes that a fundamental purpose of schooling is to get an education that prepares a student not only for work, but also for life as well. It is the purpose of this article to describe and discuss possible models and strategies that may be adopted in order to assist schools to become places where issues relating to schooling and social justice can be engaged with, explored and enacted.

Traditionally and historically, schools have not been corporatist money-making organizations, churning out quantities of graduates for the sole purpose of providing employers with grist for the treadmill of life. It would be a shame to start, now. Schools have never been particularly good at being businesses and an attempt to overlay a veneer of business rhetoric, discourse and ideology over the existing system of schooling would appear to be more than a contradiction in terms, it would produce an incarnation of schooling that would ultimately reduce schooling to a simulacrum (Lyotard, 1984), a facsimile of education that is nothing more than

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a clever façade. Such incorporation may simply reproduce the inequities that have already existed in society, such as exclusion of minorities or those at risk, the perpetuation of a dominant culture and a continuing and accelerating uneven distribution of wealth, opportunity and social justice. Such incorporation may serve to train an army of workers for employment rather than educating future citizens for a society in which social justice, democracy and emancipation are goals to be striven for.

But why does schooling appear to be teetering on the brink of redefining itself in terms of a more corporate image in today's world than has been the case in past generations? In a word, globalization.

Globalization and Schooling

Globalization is not just about turning services into commodities for trade or about "harmonizing" in a race for the bottom in jobs and social services, it is also about turning the purpose of schools to the values of the market, as shown in the APEC's (Asia Pacific Economic Consortium) education agenda for schools to become more open to business initiatives (Keuhn, 1997). It is also about fostering the idea of a competitive marketplace and training a labor force geared to reaching the economic goals imposed by industry and business groups. As a result, there is a growing pressure to make the perceived needs of business and industry the primary goals of schooling in order to increase profit margins and the accumulation of capital rather than to address imbalances in the lives of minority groups (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993) and individuals through positive social justice initiatives.

But why has this become such an issue in today's world? Due to the proliferation and advancement of technologies that someone's saying has heralded in the postmodern era, time and distance have fallen softly dead, as globalization has overseen a process of amalgamation of disparate world economies in the form of global trading blocs. Due to the ramping up of competition between competing economies, there has been a perceived need on the part of governments worldwide for economies to become ever more vibrant. In fact, corporations exist within the world, which have the ability to not only topple governments, but also make the notion of "country" an obsolete term. Castells (2000) averred that terrorists no longer needed to leave home in order to terrorize, and as a result, immigration laws and processes were becoming anachronistic.

As world cultures, pushed by super-imposed technological imperatives, succumb to homogeneity, as trans-national companies, dependent on constantly expanding markets, gain greater control over government decision-making processes worldwide and as the division between the rich and the poor of the planet widens, it is crucial to reconsider what we expect our students to inherit and become part of (Bates, 2001). It is of vital importance that administrators, teachers, students and other stakeholders in the school system become more involved as designers of our social futures (Barrell, 1997), especially as schools experience ever-increasing diversity and difference (Bates, 2001). Although education is seen as having transformative potential for society through its relation to the "knowledge economy", administrative thinking and action can still be informed by considerations of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation, within the context of concerns over difference, social justice and democratic development. Unfortunately, such ideals are in abeyance as governments succumb to moral and economic panic in the face of globalization (Bates, 2001).

Because it has been long known that schools assist in the replication of dominant culture values (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Cummins, 1995; Wortham, 1995; Young, 1995), if corporations are able to superimpose their own values or the values of the marketplace on the educational system, then in effect, it is the corporations themselves which are assisting, not only in the reproduction of dominant culture values, but also in the creation

and replication of new marketplace values. Differences in associations of ideas and ideologies between educators and their counterparts in the corporate world may indicate that opportunities exist for corporate interests to manipulate school culture, to exert influence over teaching and testing, and to encourage their own brand of dominant culture values (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Boyles, 1998; Winner, 1997; Wortham, 1995). In the worst case, this may serve as a threat to democracy and social justice, if corporate values depend on consumerism and if consumerism becomes linked to citizenship (White, 1999), the shepherding of which has long been thought to be one of the main purposes of schooling.

Lack of information on the part of teachers regarding corporate involvement in education may represent a sort of hegemony (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Giroux, 1983) which may serve to marginalize students who do not have cultural capital similar to their classmates (Livingstone, 1999; Wortham, 1995), and who, therefore, cannot gain access to the dominant culture and who will continue to be a powerless, voiceless and oppressed underclass within the society in which they live (Corson, 1995). As an issue of social justice, which has implications for us all, it is vital that educators, specifically administrators and teachers understand whose interests in educational policies are really serving, as well as who the major beneficiaries of these policies are.

Social Justice and Schooling

As education becomes commodified around the world, students are being forced to become more competitive. As a result, some students may experience greater levels of anxiety, social and physical disorders that can result in student (and teacher) burnout, disengagement and hopelessness, while others, who have the necessary capitals to succeed under such circumstances, thrive. Such circumstances breed an inequitable society that is meritocratic rather than social just.

Social justice is generally considered to relate to the creation of a society based on principles of equity and equality, of understanding and valuing human rights, and recognizes the dignity of every individual. The emergence of concepts relating to social justice occurred mainly in the latter part of the 20th century and serves to distinguish between those who are more privileged in society and those who are not. The authors have long maintained that if the society were truly equitable, all people would be equal. By the same token, if everyone within a given society was truly equal, then there would be no need for such a term as social justice. Unfortunately, such terms and such conditions do exist within societies around the globe, and consequently, "social justice" can devolve to nothing more than a politically correct term that really only identifies those who are excluded, as if those who are marginalized require further marginalization in order for false prophets to introduce personal agendas that the authors refer to as "social justice for me".

Generally speaking, marginalized individuals are excluded through enactment of prejudice in either (or both) of two broad categories: physical attributes or social attributes that essentially disallow them from engaging with and participating in those privileges enjoyed by the societal "haves". As a result, those who are marginalized tend to become more marginalized over time and this can extend from individuals to entire societies. With the issues accompanying encroaching globalization, many underdeveloped countries are finding themselves in servitude to more developed countries.

Because schools represent, to some extent, microcosms of society and because schools are one of the last bastions where large numbers of impressionable children congregate, these institutions are positioned to be able to promote dominant culture values that are being drawn increasingly in line with market place and consumer values. On the obverse side of the coin, schools are also in a position to become more pro-active in terms of

attempting to create a more inclusive society that has, at its core, a valuing of social justice. Although schooling tends to promote dominant culture values, the challenge is for schooling to become pro-active rather than re-active. Our schools need to become ever more inclusive and socially just in order to engage minorities, if we are to survive as a society. As Bauman (2002) noted, we need to sacrifice in order to subscribe. In this case, we need to sacrifice our prejudices in order to belong to a society our children would want to inherit. Consequently, individuals, groups of individuals and minorities must be able to “fit in” without fear of assimilation and destruction to the cultures that they have brought with them and which continue to be a valuable and valued part of their heritage.

There are four generally accepted purposes of education: the acquisition of knowledge, the development of social skills, the attainment of citizenship and civility skills and educating for future employment. Unfortunately, it appears that, in our current society, one of the goals of education is being valorized above the others. Schooling is becoming a primary tool for employment, even though current processes of schooling continue to be strangely at odds with development of skills required for work. The authors believe that this is so, because schooling in general continues to be fairly divergent in its outlook, as if everyone outside the process knows that schooling is primarily used in order for students to become gainfully employed, but those within the system are still struggling with traditional forms of teaching and learning. However, perhaps, this is not an entirely negative thing, as it may help to preserve current forms of schooling in the face of government manipulation.

De-institutionalizing Educational Factories

What follows are suggestions that may help to situate schools as places of learning. Hopefully, these ideas will help forge a middle ground or provide a point of balance in the face encroaching institutionalization on the one hand and time warp that schools find themselves in terms of attempting to apply outdated ideas and processes in an era of increasing demands and conflicting notions about what “good” schooling looks like.

The first concept that appeals to the author is the idea of schools as places of safety for students and educators (Cooper & White, 2004). Building a community is a term that can frequently be heard around schools, but how does one go about this? First of all, the school must commit itself to creating a safe haven for all. This can be agreed upon at a general staff meeting, but it is up to each individual teacher and the administration to keep the profile sharp. Modeling respectful behavior goes a long way in assisting students to feel that they can bring forth issues, engage with learning in a meaningful way, and live and work in a kind and supportive atmosphere. It will not happen overnight but, if teachers and administrators take the time to get to know their students and their students’ needs and wants, and model respectful behavior, educators will be better equipped to deal with interpersonal issues and will be able to plan lessons that take students’ needs into consideration. This is the first step towards differentiated learning.

Fullan (2001), however, suggested that achieving lasting change was elusive because of the isolation faced by teachers and the competing pressures of the reality of schooling. Ainscow and Sandill’s (2010) article on inclusive leadership in education looked at creating an inclusive, and therefore, a socially just culture within a school that helps eliminate social exclusion stemming from negative responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. These authors believe that education represents a basic human right and is the foundation for a more just society. Unfortunately, many researchers write from a first world perspective while issues exist, to varying degrees, on a world stage. The irony is, of course, that social justice advocates frequently ignore the fact that many children over the world would love an opportunity to merely be able to go

to school. However, within any school,

The development of inclusive practice is not...about adopting new technologies of the sort as described in a fair amount of existing literature... It involves social learning within a given workplace that influences people's actions and the thinking that informs those actions... The implication is that a methodology for developing inclusive practices must take into account social processes of learning that go on within particular contexts. It requires a group of stakeholders within a particular context to look for a common agenda to guide their decisions of practice and, at much the same time, a series of struggles to establish ways of working that enable them to collect and find meaning in different kinds of information. (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010, p. 403)

Ainscow and Sandill (2010, p. 403) conceptualized the school as “a community of practice” and defined as “a social group engaged in the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise”, and was seen by these authors as a way to negotiate meaning through social action. A Turkish study by Angelides, Antoniou, and Charalambous (2010) provided conditions for success in inclusive and socially just education through a case study of a school in Cyprus. In such a school, difference is welcomed as a learning opportunity, rather than as a predicament, a problem to be fearful of or an issue to be dealt with. A socially just school is an ideal to be striven towards and it depends upon attitude, energy and time. When we believe that everyone has been included and that we have met everyone's needs, it is time to begin again, for we have surely ignored someone, or needs have changed, or we have only been partially successful in meeting existing needs. Angelides, Antoniou, and Charalambous (2010) addressed this in terms of inclusive school cultures:

The development of inclusive cultures in schools creates a community which is characterized by safety, acceptance and collaboration. In this type of community, all are valued, and this forms the basis for higher achievement by all students. The principles that emerge out of inclusive cultures guide decisions about policies and the everyday practices of school, so that the learning of all is supported through a continuous process of school development (Angelides, Antoniou, & Charalambous, 2010, p. 322).

Three basic conditions contributed to the success of this school in developing a socially just environment: children felt loved and cared for in the school environment, the school provided opportunities for acceptance, appreciation and success of all children, and also helped provide the parents with support and guidance. This was accomplished through the involvement of teachers and co-teaching within a collaborative culture premised upon love, care, acceptance and involvement of children and the involvement of parents and the community (Angelides et al., 2010). While it is a well-known fact that collaboration between schools and families leads to more inclusive and socially just environments on both sides, it is still a “project in the making” for many schools to become used to the idea that parents are important and necessary members of the school community.

A Perspective for School Leaders

The entry of critical approaches into the leadership arena has provided valuable alternatives for those who are interested in pursuing issues of social justice (Ryan, 1998) through shared power concepts (Capper, 1993), such as emancipatory leadership (Corson, 1998) and critical leadership strategies (Ryan, 1998) which reunite facts with values (Foster, 1986). Key to the understanding of education as an extension of social justice is the view that race, culture and ethnicity (Reyes, Velez, & Pena, 1993), not to mention issues of gender (Sears, 1993) and disabled students (Bishop, Foster, & Jubala, 1993), must be relocated to the heart of democracy. School as a moral institution holds the public school administrator legally, professionally and morally obligated to be responsible for the processes and outcomes of schooling (Greenfield, 1993). Artful leadership must be built on

an aesthetic interest in that of the business mode by pledging itself to the conscious and critical reconstruction of an ever-changing culture (Maxcy, 1998).

Although research does not always develop practical aspects relating to the valuable issues addressed, Specht and Young (2010) outlined a collaborative process in schools that may help children reach their highest personal achievement in all spheres of education: (1) The first days of schools are instrumental in building class climate; (2) Staff should develop positive support structures and behaviors; (3) Students' success is as unique as the individual child; (4) Expectations for students should remain consistent depending on the school context, and consistency is key; (5) Administration should encourage staff to be respectful, caring and compassionate as teachers by providing an environment that emulates those qualities; (6) Engage the entire community, ask students and parents for their input; (7) Recognize the need for socialization as a key part of education, growth and development for all students; (8) Differentiate instruction and engage all students to be challenged in curricular material to feel successful; and (9) Engaged families in the schooling process, be it directly or uniquely to ensure familial support (Specht & Young, 2010). The authors encourage educational leaders and engage the reader in understanding the need for all educational stakeholders to work collaboratively to optimize the classroom environment.

Angelides et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of distributive leadership as a key to inclusive practice and a more socially just education. The authors stated that inclusive leadership should include the collective mentality of the entire community, encourage the diffusion of barriers and demonstrate more inclusive social practices through modeling appropriate behavior. These authors emphasized the value of school culture in creating a school climate supportive of democratic and socially just practices. Six themes—the involvement of teachers, co-teaching, a collaborative school culture, an ethic of caring, acceptance and involvement of children, and the involvement of parents and the community—represent a collaborative effort on the part of the educational leaders, staff and community to foster a supportive educative environment for all. This article demonstrates that effective leadership can develop some of the more human aspects of teaching beyond the usual and necessary instrumentation or instruction. Thus, equity, rather than equality, is the goal of socially just education.

Raffo and Gunter (2008) described a variety of leadership frameworks that encouraged a socially just school environment to flourish. The researchers examine plausible policy and procedures of social inclusion and discuss the importance of engaging staff in developing a socially inclusive and just environment. The authors examine functional and socially critical perspectives in implementing school policy that addresses economic and cultural diversity. Delivery, localization, and democratizing are three highlighted policy initiatives. Raffo and Gunter (2008) further noted that implementation of policy was equally as much a process of carrying out government policy, as it was an effort to reduce social exclusion in our schools. Through creating examples or engaging in theory, this article encourages school leaders and educators to examine their practices and to become more cognizant of their own educational practices regarding social justice.

At Issue: “Zero Tolerance” Policies

Unfortunately, disciplinary policies in our schools have begun to shift toward treating children in ways that closely resemble a version of the adult criminal justice system (Daniel & Bondy, 2008). We seem to have adopted a “legalistic” view of school management that puts children in an untenable position. This move is exemplified in a very controversial and not very well debated topic known as the “zero tolerance” policy. This policy, implemented in schools over the past number of years to address a perceived increase in violence and to

provide a safe environment for our children, has received mixed reviews from many different school boards throughout Canada and the United States. However, we are merely symbolically and practically replicating an unloving society as we teach our children to design a single set of guidelines to be used for all types of unacceptable behaviors ranging from verbal threats and physical violence to dress code violations. This procrusteanization of policy serves the “factory” model of education very well. Some of the major difficulties associated with this policy are the fairness of its delivery. While most school administrators continue to strive for firm, fair and consistent discipline applied with good common sense, unfortunately in some highly publicized cases, “common sense” may be missing from the equation. “Zero tolerance” policies typically represent a kind of “triage” model that has a nice ring to it. Such policies have not been proven to effectively reduce youth violence and serve only to temporarily displace the issue by returning it to the larger society (Jull, 2000).

The use of “zero tolerance” policies to prevent, reduce and respond to violent behavior in schools is neither reasonable nor responsible, as it does not create a safer school environment or teach appropriate behavioral skills. A major shortcoming of such policies is that it treats both minor and major infractions in much the same way (McAndrews, 2001). According to Daniel and Bondy (2008), such disciplinary policies must not criminalize our youth but should rather engage them in a problem-solving process where students learn how their behavior has affected others and how they can better deal with interpersonal issues in the future. Given our current efforts to manage change and control our school environment, we seem to have defaulted to using a model that is strikingly similar to that being used in penitentiaries. Even such penal terms, such as “lock down” and “color codes” have been implemented in schools. However, there is no penitentiary in the world that is truly rehabilitary, as they all use various forms of symbolic or concrete incarceration. With the importation of such a paradigm firmly in place, how socially just can our schools really be? A “zero tolerance” policy constrains administrators, simply because it does not allow for recognition of differences or individual situations (Ableser, 2002). While a “zero tolerance” policy is intended to maintain a strict policy of safety for its students, and accordingly, Merrow (2001) suggested that physical, emotional and intellectual safeties were necessary to maintain a socially responsible school, such “inclusive” policies required standard operating procedures for all offenders, even if it was the first offense. As a result, written policies tend to become iron clad and this may not serve the best interests of students, particularly those of special needs children. Consequently, if the policy is not for the benefit of all students, then it is not a good policy (Cooper & White, 2004). This relates to the equity versus equality issue, because “zero tolerance” policies offer up a standardization argument in that all students are treated equally, whether they are all the same or not, and we know that they are not.

Merrow (2001) realized that the focus on physical aspects of safety, while important, was largely misplaced, as it was more important to concentrate on such issues as student reassurance, information and support. Given this dilemma, it may become necessary for parents to develop better ways of coping with frightening and aggressive situations. Educational stakeholders can accomplish this through allowing children and youth to express their feelings, modeling tolerance and understanding, providing extra attention and physical contact and answering questions with simple and accurate information. In sum, Merrow (2001) suggested that school safety, whether physical, emotional or intellectual, was “common sense”. Ableser (2002) concurred that a “zero tolerance” policy was neither reasonable, responsible nor rationale simply, because its lack of flexibility in ignoring individual circumstances neither creates safer schools nor teaches fundamental skills of a democratic education.

In discussing suspensions from school as remedial practices, Ableser (2002) felt that “zero tolerance” policies created a false sense of security, because suspension merely displaced the problem from our schools to the society in general, negating valuable opportunities for the development of appropriate behaviors and validating a cycle of failure culminating in higher drop-out rates. As such, “zero tolerance” policies represent an effort to apply a morality of authority that demands respect and fear. In this sense, it is fascist in that it fails to provide students with the ability to think critically about authority relating to democratic moralism (Ableser, 2002), and as such, it is anti-democratic. The positive correlation between suspensions and future drop-out rates implies that these students are marginalized by the very system that has promised to protect them. Issues of fairness come into question when we talk about extreme consequences of discipline that have little to do with school safety or the improvement of student behavior. Skiba (2000) suggested that we needed more graduated policies that matched offenses with consequences, as each new outbreak in school violence appeared to yield increasingly severe punishment in terms of school discipline. In short, we appear to be creating new problems in dealing with existing issues. As it stands currently, “zero tolerance” policies serve to recreate the very symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) that they are employed to eradicate.

In fact, Jull (2000) suggested that teachers were directed to implement, support and enforce school codes of conduct whether they agreed with them or not, representing a symbolic violence against teachers. If left unexamined, teachers may, themselves, become perpetrators even while considering themselves to be upholders of the tenets of social justice. “Zero tolerance” policies represent a type of binary thinking, and as such, they do not recognize subtleties, but rely on equality of consequence without considering equity of intent. Equity must come first in order to achieve true equality. More consideration needs to be directed towards the individual social contexts of conflict and uneven distribution of social power relations that are part of each schools social climate (Jull, 2000, p. 5).

Circumstances leading to suspension of students need to be investigated on an individual basis. The intent of the student who is accused of violation is an area of concern that is often ignored. Alternatives to suspension may be considered to suit the violation. If and when students are suspended for serious incidents, they may be automatically referred to outside counseling and law enforcement agencies. Suspension should be used sparingly and with extreme caution. Less serious violations may be dealt with in conjunction with peer mentoring programs in order to develop and maintain lines of communication within and outside of the school environment. Curwin and Mendler (1999, p. 119) suggested that ““zero tolerance” is another example of the road to hell paved with good intentions”. While “zero tolerance” policies send a powerful message to students, staff and parents whose violent and aggressive behavior is not acceptable in schools, it also succeeds in clouding important distinctions between victim and aggressor, thus making equity, and therefore, socially just schools increasingly elusive.

At Issue: “Inclusive” Education

Increasing diversity of school aged population in tandem with demands for educational reform and accountability pose enormous challenges for school leaders on a worldwide basis. Inclusive education was originally considered as an approach to educating children with disabilities within regular school settings. Internationally, however, it is being increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity among all learners. In fact, inclusive education has emerged in many school districts as the norm rather than the exception and the expectation rather than the ideal, and has been mandated in a growing number

of locations. Consequently, it no longer is debated on whether or not inclusion should occur, but rather on how to implement it.

In a somewhat dated article that is almost a foreshadowing of current leadership issues, Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker (1996) noted the importance of leaders implementing a strong mission statement coupled with an enduring vision that was founded upon the possibility of success for all students, sharing leadership, offering flexible time schedules, establishing problem-solving teams and providing additional opportunities for teacher professional development. Needless to say, administrators play a crucial role in the development of a school climate supportive of inclusion. Ample literature already exists aimed at providing school leaders with frameworks, strategies and best practices to promote socially just schools. Much ink has also been spent on providing leaders with a variety of approaches to integrate children with exceptionalities into current school structures. However, “Scholars in educational administration have only addressed issues of marginalization for a comparatively short period of time” (Ryan, 2010, p. 358). Ryan (2006, p. 14) contended, “If leadership is to be truly inclusive, it must promote the ideals of inclusion, democracy and social justice more generally”. While this may be difficult to disagree with, the notion of what constitutes inclusivity must be carefully examined. Theoharis (2008, p. 5) stated that leaders espousing social justice ideals “advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions”, and seek to not only identify them, but also to eliminate them from within their school contexts.

The term “inclusion” is an interesting word in its own right. It is often construed, in educational jargon, to refer exclusively to special education. Thus, its connotation, how the term is used, differs from its denotation, what the word actually means. Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) expanded the meaning of inclusion to embrace all marginalized students—not just special education. For the authors of this piece, inclusion is taken to refer to inclusivity in its general sense and thus may be twinned with notions of social justice and equity. Armed with a broader understanding of what it means to be inclusive, school leaders advocate for all marginalized groups within their school community. This broader definition for inclusion helps to eliminate social exclusion in response to diversity (Rice, 2006).

Ryan (2010) suggested that it was often challenging to promote social justice, equity and inclusion in school settings due to the fact that administrators were held legally responsible for the implementation of policies, practices and procedures that may intentionally or unintentionally counteract social justice ideals. Such well-meaning administrators may also face significant resistance from members of their school communities (Ryan, 2010), including parents, corporations and even the students themselves. In order to succeed, therefore, administrators “will have to find ways to counter practices that work against their initiatives” (p. 357). One way to accomplish this, according to Ryan (2010), is through the use of three politically charged components: knowing one’s political environment, using one’s knowledge to employ social justice approaches and monitoring one’s actions. For example, according to Ryan, administrators can begin by developing an understanding of values and priorities held by key individuals within one’s political environment in order to meld social justice agendas with board priorities and initiatives. Political strategies, such as “developing and establishing relationships, persuading others, persisting, planning, experimenting, being up front, keeping others off-balance, playing ignorant, ignoring, working the system and quietly advocating” (Ryan, 2010, p. 366) can allow individual contexts, experience and personal beliefs and value systems to influence choices. Finally, monitoring and evaluating one’s context will allow for the employment of different

tactics in different situations. However, a caveat is that one must not only act fairly and justly, but also must be seen to do so, simply because, at the end of the day, relationships of trust cannot be established and maintained upon acts of manipulation, despotism and patronage.

With an effort to create “systemic, sustained and differentiated professional development for social justice”, Kose (2007) recommended three categories of professional development: professional development for whole staff, professional development for specific groups within a staff and professional development based on specific needs of individual teachers. In order to bring “suburban and urban students together, cultivating individual talents and needs, and developing students as global citizens and environmental stewards in an interdisciplinary school”, Kose (2007, p. 4) maintained that all professional development, such as differentiating instruction, diversity discussions and critiquing curricula through a multicultural lens, should be focused on achieving these goals. Teachers require opportunities to meet as core teams, subject area teams, and mentor groups to focus on curricular requirements and on acquiring knowledge and creating PD (professional development) activities for individual and groups (Kose, 2007). This works in conjunction with a school-wide focus on disrupting current marginalizing conditions in the school. Such a framework allows for teacher 1 to learn at three different levels: school-wide learning, group planning and individual professional development needs. This organizational framework constituted of diverse groupings allows teachers to implement programs at their discretion and promotes “sustained and systemic professional learning” (Kose, 2007, p. 3). Theoharis (2010) exemplified this approach in an article describing the strategies employed by six social justice leaders to counteract school structures that marginalized, segregated and impeded achievement, a deprofessionalized teaching staff, a school climate that needed to be more welcome for marginalized families and low student achievement.

While full inclusion has the benefit of allowing all students to receive the same level of education by eliminating pull-out programs and “special” classrooms, it may not serve the purposes of students who cannot benefit from being mainstreamed into regular classes. These students may be physically incorporated into regular classes, but the quality of their education may suffer as a result of not having access to specialized equipment and/or instruction. While it is agreed that mainstreaming students allow the marginalized students who would ordinarily be segregated in smaller instructional groupings to learn more about the mainstream culture of the regular classrooms and that “regular” students can benefit enormously from learning about students with specific and general disabilities, the key word becomes “balance”. Any policy that requires all students to fit into a particular mold without consideration given to unique characteristics is not a policy that tends to operate in all students’ favor. As such, it is a policy that tends to exclude and marginalize, even as it draws students together.

The Inclusion as a Form of Social Justice

Salisbury (2006) posited that although administrators and schools may differ in their definitions and stages of progression toward fully inclusive and socially just programming, similarities could be found in administrative qualities that are conducive for promoting these practices. These include committing to social justice, nurturing the staff’s attitude and core beliefs to embrace diversity, using language that supports the inclusion philosophy and soliciting support from parents and community. Salisbury notes that the principal is a key in developing inclusive and socially just schooling. Subsequently, three administrative tasks as identified by Riehl (2000) include being supportive of creating inclusive schools: encouraging new understandings of

diversity, nurturing inclusive schools cultures and building relationships between schools and communities can help promote a more inclusive atmosphere for students, staff and the surrounding community.

Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) maintained that much could be done prior to an administration succession event. Viewpoints on necessary attributes in order for leaders to successfully foster inclusive and socially just environments, prior to instructing prospective administrators assuming leadership roles, include common understandings that smooth the journey to a more inclusive school, such as developing a global theoretical understanding of inclusion, having a vision, and believing in the power to create, develop and maintain changes reflective of positive socially just policies.

Another suggestion for supporting inclusive socially just schooling is for the leader to maintain vision of what a truly socially just school looks like. This is an ideal for which to strive. When we believe that all perspectives, voices and ways of being have been included, it is time to begin again to ensure that no one has been left out and that all concerns are not only being heard and listened to, but also attended to. In the words of MacEwan (2007, p. 92), "... the moment when it seems most plain is the moment when you must begin again".

Community support is also an important attribute of inclusive schooling. Salisbury (2006, p. 71) stated, "The most frequently mentioned barrier identified by respondents was the negative attitude of teachers and parents". Of course, the task here is to change negative attitudes into more accepting attitudes. This is a daunting task for anyone, seasoned and novice school leaders alike. However, the prize is well worth winning. Riehl (2000) advised principals to coordinate services among stakeholders and for the school to become the focal point of the inclusion movement.

Schools are viewed as the most logical choice to be the anchor or hub of services, since children interact with schools on a continuous basis and problems can be detected and addressed as they arise (Riehl, 2000, p. 67).

Riehl (2000, p. 59) also raised some unsettling issues, including how principals "reproduce, sometimes unwittingly, conditions of hierarchy and oppression, in particular by fostering compliant thinking rather than critical reflection". Managerial types of leadership tend to foster this, whereas many other types of leadership—for example, emancipatory, distributive and critical, to identify just a few styles of leadership—hold inclusion central to their system of values. Further to this, Riehl (2000) introduced another troubling notion that, if school leaders truly became aware of how much marginalization exists within any given school system which the system is actually causing, they would choose not to work there.

A genuine commitment to diversity would require administrators to attend to the fundamental inequities of schooling, to disavow the institutions which they purportedly lead and to work towards larger projects of social and institutional transformation (Riehl, 2000, p. 58).

However, for those who are committed to truly inclusive practices, this is viewed as an opportunity. Issues with the educational system marginalizing students are often the result of policies delivered by non-practitioners who, incidentally, rarely avail themselves of current research on educational matters. In counterpoint, Harlan Cleveland (1989; as cited in Grauer, 1989) suggested that one must begin somewhere and advise us to "think globally, act locally". Thus, by influencing and shaping our fully inclusive schools rather than by advocating for "full inclusion", are we not already working towards developing lasting change of a more socially just nature?

Teachers who have little background in inclusive practices require not only opportunities to learn effective instruction methods to meet the needs of all students, but also the time to discuss their results of their efforts. Unfortunately, according to A. Edmunds, Macmillan, Specht, Nowicki, and G. Edmunds (2009), not all principals have a complete understanding of inclusive practices, themselves, and their active participation is

essential in assisting them in discovering strengths and weaknesses related to inclusive practices that exist within their own schools. In short, we need to concentrate on leadership as well as teaching. Oluwole (2009) chronicled one principal's struggle between continuing with full inclusion at his school and doing what is best for a particular student. Ultimately, as a result of a legal and ethical dilemma, the principal tendered his resignation, because the inclusive education program was benefiting the special needs population in his school less than the thoughtful accommodations that were already in place. Ironically, the so-called inclusive education program was less inclusive than the program it replaced. Experiences, such as these beg the question of how effective "full" inclusion is, as it may not work in every instance. In short, full inclusion as it is frequently practiced has its own set of limitations. One may begin to forge a way forward by questioning one's own beliefs and to constantly reaffirm our own beliefs by questioning our own assumptions.

Furthermore, as educators, we strive to practice what we preach. While this is increasingly important as an administrator, often times, our leaders experience conflicts that result in contradictions and conflicts in the treatment not only of students, but also of staff members. This brings to light the idea that we must question ourselves throughout our careers and change and adapt our beliefs as different situations arise. As for students' and staff's change, we need to learn to adapt them without compromising our own beliefs.

Given this point of view, Edmunds et al. (2009) noted the importance of the principal's role in developing and maintaining an inclusive school environment. To this end, the assessment of professional development needs is of major importance for principals. Through the use of action research methodology, principals can become more aware of conditions necessary for the support and sustenance of inclusive practices within their schools. Such an endeavor begins with careful scrutiny of current relevant literature. Principals must have access to the most current information about inclusive practices, as it is they who are ultimately responsible for implementing truly inclusive practices, policies and procedures within their schools. Once the administrators are knowledgeable concerning inclusive practices, professional development opportunities can be implemented in order to address all aspects of inclusion.

However, principal knowledge of inclusion is not a satisfactory prerequisite on its own, as teachers and support staff must also "buy in" to a more inclusive model. Because teachers and support staff often feel inadequately prepared, it is critical that principals address the needs of teachers and support staff within their schools. Otherwise, by avoiding proper professional development, there are risks that teachers' "perceptions of inclusion will swing from positive to negative as their frustration with its implementation grows" (Edmunds et al., 2009, p. 18), because avoiding such necessary professional development fosters a climate of resistance to change (Rice, 2006).

As noted by Angelides et al. (2010), special education teachers can become a resource to classroom teachers and educational assistants by providing knowledge on inclusive practices. Such specific, timely and appropriate professional development establishes "harmonious and synchronized interactions of all school staff" (Edmunds et al., 2009, p. 19). Thus, the special education teacher, in collaboration with classroom teachers, can instigate positive social change within their sphere of influence by involving teachers in co-teaching and by providing examples of what an inclusive culture looks, feels and sounds like. Rice (2006) referred to the special education teacher as the "cornerstone" to developing a collegial climate throughout the school, and as such, represented an example of distributed leadership.

Distributed or shared leadership represents an important factor in the development of socially just school environments, as principals can utilize the expertise of teachers with exemplary knowledge and skills in

inclusive practices. Simply put, on their own, schools “cannot build capacity sustainability or plan for succession without seeing opportunities for leadership being dispersed through the school community” (Angelides et al., 2010, p. 320). Thus, with proper and appropriate professional development, a more inclusive context should evolve within the staff (Rice, 2006), as the result of the development of a common language and knowledge of inclusive practices.

Soodak (2003) identified and discussed a number of strategies creating and managing classroom communities supportive of diversity, inclusion and social justice. Because inclusion is based on notions of belonging, membership and acceptance in relation to creating inclusive classroom communities, true inclusion occurs when a child assumes the right to belong and obtain the same opportunities, rights and privileges as other children. However, this right can be undermined when membership is made conditional, contingent upon students’ behavior, or academic readiness or performance. Collaboration among teachers and families that result in promoting activities that encourage co-operation rather than competition, classroom rituals that involve all students, classroom discussions about friendship and belonging, and classroom rules with an emphasis on respect help model inclusive practice that emphasize socially just behaviors. Positive behavioral supports, including problem-solving approaches to issues of discipline rather than exclusionary (and thus, incompatible) discipline practices, are also viewed as the most effective disciplinary strategies in inclusive settings. An inclusive administrator must consider how to assist teachers in creating a sense of community in an inclusive classroom and promoting positive behavior in all students, as well as safe and responsive learning environments that are supportive of all students. Administrators must ensure explicit and fair expectations for all students and the appropriate accommodations are in place to support this. Additional strategies for administrators include creating inclusive professional learning communities through collaboration and finding elusive time for teacher collaboration (Soodak, 2003).

McLeskey and Waldron (2002) stated that inclusive schools were superior to less inclusive schools, as students tended to achieve at least well or better than previously. Additionally, many social benefits accrued as these classrooms meet with widespread support. The authors point to the necessity of support from both the administrator and teaching staff, the importance of encouraging schools to make their own decisions regarding inclusivity rather than a blanket policy model, the value of whole school systemic transformational change (as opposed to policy addenda) and that the process of developing an inclusive school is an ongoing endeavor.

However, as with all change, resistance is to be expected. Resistance to change is not only a common feature of evolutionary strategies, it is an important feature simply, because it represents a dissenting perspective. Without the “voice from the margins”, many important ideas may be ignored (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002) and is also indicative of inclusive practice “in the making”.

Inclusive leadership is quickly gaining traction in schools and school systems in any area where significant diversity exists. Since every student is unique in his/her own way, it can be argued that diversity exists in every educational landscape, and therefore, inclusive leadership is and will become one of the most important issues faced administrators. Such inclusive leaders adopt and live a set of values—including self-esteem, respect for others, values beyond self-interest and restraint in the exercise of power—that place relationships at the focal point of educational policies, practices and procedures. Those values define schooling in ways that standardized test scores can never do. Such responsibility for inclusive leadership in creating supportive and inclusive schools will need to be found not only within the school’s administration team, but also among teachers, parents and support staff members (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). All staff members, and indeed, all

stakeholders including the students themselves, must strive in concert to meet the needs of every student.

Conclusions

Sharing leadership is inclusive by its very nature (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). Therefore, truly inclusive schools, by their very nature, are democratic. A truly inclusive school provides an excellent example of democracy in action. Such a school would also hear, listen to and act upon students' voices and concerns (Portelli & Vibert, 2001).

Unfortunately, due to the exigencies of globalization, schools and their leaders are being held more and more accountable to test scores for their school populations. As standardized testing gain increasing value, disadvantaged, minority and disenfranchised groups suffer. In some schools, minority and disabled students are exonerated from taking standardized tests, but even this serves to marginalize them in the face of other students. There are fewer and fewer avenues available for such students to be involved, included and accepted.

As many studies suggested, it is important to distribute leadership not only among administrators, but also among teachers as well. School leaders can benefit immensely from listening to the voices of students, by motivating staff members and by becoming more aware of the communities within which our students are living. Once these conditions are met, truly inclusive and socially just education and leadership can help all students achieve success in terms of each student's personal best. This represents the "trickle-down effect", where all educational stakeholders can feel supported by their educational community and conversely, they can begin to support others.

"Full inclusion" and "zero tolerance" policies represent two post-modern puzzles that serve to exclude children who are mainstreamed into regular classrooms, even when they may not be capable of being fully integrated. By supporting flawed policies, such as zero tolerance and notions of full inclusion regardless of the student's ability to subscribe to the mainstream, educators are not serving the student, but are responding to convenient policy measures that support order and control—policies which do little to further citizenship and socialization skills among our future leaders and populace. This is an unattractive alternative that may only serve to reproduce the "inmate ethic" and can serve to increase dropout rates and increased crime among disenfranchised youth who have not been successful within a system in which they feel that they neither belong to nor are supported by.

It takes approximately seven years for policies to become routinized, so as to become a part of the matrix that is essentially invisible within the school's culture. Consequently, inclusive leaders, principals especially, must become better prepared to face the challenge of doing such important social justice work. Inclusive leaders may benefit from gaining greater clarity around the vision that is for inclusion, as it exists within their schools and how this is situated within a more global perspective.

Just because a student is experiencing out of school suspension or is sitting at the back of the room, mimicking what others are engaged in does not equal inclusion, but exemplifies its opposite. The mantra "inclusion only as necessary" is a tricky, if catchy, saying, because what is meant by the term "inclusion", remains clear to someone but vague to others. In all cases, what we mean when we speak of inclusion must always be defined, so as to differentiate between "full inclusion" and inclusion for socially just schooling. As in all other matters, common sense, uncommon though it may be, should serve as a guide, particularly if we hope that our students will grow into the kinds of caring, inclusive and socially just people that we hope they will become.

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