Foreword

Leadership Education and Development for What?: Civic Imagination for a More Just and Democratic Society

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When institutions assign meaning to individual rights and distribute resources in ways that shape the life chances of people, if appropriately designed they strengthen social justice aims. Yet the natural outcome of how individuals relate to institutions does not automatically align with justice. Communities are in constant struggle to align the arrangement of social institutions to meet standards of justice. This issue of *Educational Considerations* explores how social justice and leadership education contributes to the capacity of students and community to advance and manage competing claims of justice.

The relationship between institutions and the requirement of justice are central to the field of education. Education intersects questions of justice from both internal and external perspectives. From the inward perspective, teaching methods, content, curriculum, and access to quality teaching and learning prepares students with necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions to advance claims of justice in civic and public spaces. From an external perspective, institutions of education inform the opportunities available to individuals, and inform the context in which dimensions of justice are realized. As such, education and civic leaders are forced to consider, at a minimum, how educational institutions relate to equality of opportunity and meet thin understandings of justice as fairness. New perspectives in the fields of educational and civic leadership are increasingly considering how educational institutions, both internally and outwardly, frustrate and/or enable progress toward a more justice society.

There are a range of understandings and approaches to how individuals think, define, and realize dimensions of justice in this special issue. However, there is a critical mass of leadership educators who overlook contested spaces of justice and assert that social justice can be reduced to content and teaching methods. This approach should be viewed as necessary to leadership education, but not sufficient. Our experience suggests this approach does not do enough to prepare students to exercise leadership in spaces in which notions of justice are openly contested.

Social justice and leadership education needs to consider how education content, forms, and programs prepare students to understand issues of justice in spaces of injustice. Instead of advancing modes that exist within one approach or a singular interpretation of justice, social justice and education programs ought to focus on preparing students and community to navigate competing interpretations of justice. We refer to this approach to social justice and leadership education as the capacity-building paradigm. The shift toward a capacity-building paradigm requires students to develop skills, knowledge, and dispositions that create the conditions to manage contested understandings of justice.

We claim that social justice and leadership education is needed. Moving from this assertion, this collection of articles illustrates theories and practical examples of capacity building in social justice and leadership education. This special issue illuminates a path toward a capacity-building paradigm of social justice and leadership education. Each article directly or indirectly points to content, program features, or strategies that are intended to help students and community develop the conceptual instruments, skills, dispositions, and attitudes necessary to manage contestation associated with advancing justice claims.

The capacity-building paradigm has a strong commitment and orientation to cultivate space and convene stakeholder groups to find overlapping consensus around what is required of justice. Often, knowledge creation and mobilization is leveraged to alter the way community thinks about and understands certain issues as they relate to the requirements of justice. However, leadership educators interested in the capacity-building approach face challenges determining how to position conceptions of justice within the approach. However, one of the major sticking points for scholar-practitioners designing and revising educational and civic leadership programs is how best to connect the essential nature of justice to the capacity-building paradigm.

The fields of social justice and leadership education have struggled to find consensus around what "type" of justice should inform curriculum and programming. When thinking

about efforts to assert one conception of justice over another, in the context of civic leadership and social justice education, one should be cautioned by the words of Socrates:

> …it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know, so I am likely to be wiser than he is to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know. (Plato, *Apology*, 21d)

This excerpt is important to the field of leadership for social justice for a few reasons. First, it reminds us to be careful about our own claims of justice and suspicious of individuals prepared to assert absolutist claims of what is required of justice. When exercising leadership for justice, demonstrating a humble respect for the limitations of human understanding seems to be an appropriate starting point. Secondly, the project of *knowing* what is required of justice is inherently a sociopolitical project, which often results in myopic claims of *us* against *them*. The deep reverence often attached to "what is required of justice" demands that we not merely educate students to assert claims of justice, but prepare them to be responsive to associated political contestation that results when engaging questions of justice in a pluralistic society. Yet determining the requirements of justice is inherently a social and public activity. The public nature of determining and experiencing justice points to an underlying curricula, set of skills, knowledge, and attributes that a student of leadership for social justice ought to be prepared to exercise. This special issue is intended to initiate a conversation on how best to deepen the sophistication of a capacity-building paradigm of social justice and leadership education by linking the work to existing theories of justice.

The most clearly defined strand of justice theories in Western political philosophy considers the role institutions have in distributing power and choice. The main strand of justice theories can be divided into the categories of redistribution, recognition, and human capabilities approaches. The redistribution approach to justice often focuses on how the arrangement and organization of institutions shape access to power and economic resources. Questions of justice understood from the redistributive approach consider how educational institutions influence economic opportunity and resources available to students (Cohen 1979; Dworkin 1987; Nozick 1974; Pogge 1994; Rawls 1970; Raz 1986). One common critique of redistribution theories is that the approach fails to adequately account for unique perspectives associated with various identity groups. Efforts have been made to better position claims of justice from a range of identity groups.

Recognition approaches to justice attempt to consider how structures and policies within institutions marginalize individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, cognitive ability, and physical ability (Althusser 1970; Benhabib 1992; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Scanlon 1998; Young 1990). The key question of justice for the recognition approach is how to gain both informal and formal inclusion in ways policies and practices of institutions allocate rights and resources. In educational institutions, recognition approaches are concerned with how historically marginalized groups are affected by institutional practices and policies. A general critique of recognition approaches is that the framework fails to consider how institutions enable or frustrate human potential in ways not directly associated with identity.

The final major approach to justice found within Western philosophy is the human capabilities approach. The capability approach is concerned with how the interaction between individuals and institutions, either advances or undermines the life chances of people on the basis of their own personal development. The underlying assumption of the capability approach to justice is that a minimal threshold of human development must be met within any justice framework (Alkice 2002; Dworkin 2000; Kaufman 2006; Nuessbaum 2000; Pogge 2002; Sen 2005; 2009). Capability theorists are interested in how access to and interactions with institutions determines the potential of human development. Capability theorists are often critiqued for being overly simplistic. Many understand capability approaches as being only a partial theory of justice. Essentially, it is almost impossible to define minimum thresholds of human capabilities and human flourishing across time, culture, and political structures. Overall, each of these three approaches represents points of contestation internal to how justice is understood and represented in leadership education programs.

These three approaches–redistribution, recognition, and human capabilities–to justice define the scope and boundaries of how leadership for social justice is considered in this issue. Manuscripts in this volume represent not only what it means to educate for justice, but consider the limits of what is possible when attempting to cultivate the capacity of leaders to mobilize knowledge to advance claims of justice.

Leadership for social justice ought to prepare students to manage political contestation associated with defining and considering the requirements of justice in the public sphere. The strength of this issue is that each of the articles highlights theory, programs, and practices that prepare educational and civic leadership students to exercise leadership on behalf of justice. Each of the manuscripts included in the special issue surfaces alignment or tensions within and between each of the three main nodes of justice theories found within Western political philosophy. Suzanne Otte's research, the first manuscript, examines authentic leadership and the Dominican ethos in graduate students' professional lives. This is followed by Kari Kokka's research on social justice mathematics where teachers of K-12 students seek to empower students from low-income and marginalized neighborhoods through intentional mathematics curriculum. The next two articles are self-reflective, with the authors examining their personal stories within the context of social justice. Leona English and Carole Roy, from an adult education perspective, juxtapose their life stories with their vocation as university professors to nurture low-income and working class students to understand how social class affects personal and community progress. This article is complimented by Christine Beaudry's perspective on how community-based learning experiences can help preservice teachers develop

more equitable teaching practices in multicultural contexts. The final article by Brandon Kliewer and Jeff Zacharakis develops a framework for how John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* can be used to create deliberative spaces that can be used to manage competing claims of justice. We realize that as a whole this group of manuscripts does not completely address the complexity of issues tied to social justice and the role of higher education. However, we hope that as a whole this themed issue of *Educational Considerations* advances the progress of this evolving dialogue.

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