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Educational Leadership and Social Justice: 4.0

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Abstract

Working through tensions, conflicts, and contradictions are everyday realities for practicing educators and educational researchers who struggle to undue social injustices. The aim of this essay looks critically at the dimensions of educational leadership for social justice with respect to (1) educational roles and responsibilities (i.e., leadership practices), (2) theoretical frameworks (i.e., using theories and concepts), and (3) real-world correlates (i.e., the actual effects of injustices). In so doing, the research agenda moves beyond single-axis, single-frame, one-dimensional, or strictly single-problem empirical studies. The intent is not to either define social justice or resolve the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions of everyday realities; rather, it recognizes that whether educators are engaged in practice or research, we need a more holistic and critical awareness of the meanings of social justice that encompasses the dynamics within and beyond schooling.

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Preface

In 2012, Kadir Beycioglu extended an invitation, a challenge really, to all educational leadership researchers as follows:

> Is there anyone who would like to go sailing on a non-linear ship to know, to *explore* and to *do educational administration* and leadership? (Beycioglu, 2012), p.358. Italics in the original)

While often quoted, this invitation has yet to be fully embraced by educational practitioners or researchers. The topic of educational leadership and social justice is a really big idea that cannot be adequately addressed unless we recognize the role of leadership throughout education and the aim of research as connecting the world of ideas, the history ideas, to theoretical frameworks and research designs. Leadership for social justice requires diverse ideas and different ways of knowing as part of a sustained research agenda for collective actions. A prime example of such thinking was expressed by Donald Campbell in 1971 with his call for inserting experimental designs for addressing intractable public policy problems, such as poverty. His call, along with others, have not yet been heard and still await implementation.

A starting point for any analyses or syntheses regarding social justice has been factual differences. The most significant differences on almost any human capital scale are how resources and opportunities are unevenly distributed. There are always questions of whether, when, or how to intervene, or, conversely, to let events or nature take its course (Sowell, 2023). The decisions involve politics, philosophies, as well as education. For educators, addressing differences is part of the everyday. Education and schooling specifically are default positions in

that they represent that which is considered normal for children and adolescents. It is why countries pass compulsory education laws.

With the most extreme injustices, such as wars, famines, and forced migration, schooling is taken away or disrupted. In such instances, the very act of establishing a place called schools and making it safe to attend can be considered a socially just condition. In less extreme cases, where schooling is already a viable option, leadership for social justice turns its attention towards closing social, political, and economic divides. But not always successfully.

As a preface, it is important to note that social justice is viewed differently by different thinkers. One school of thought holds governments primarily responsible for promoting social justice; another school of thought places that responsibility onto individuals themselves regardless of circumstances. The reason why it is important to recognize these two political philosophies is that most schools are publicly supported and run by state governments with school leaders as agents representing the state. My intent here will not be to debate the merits of different political ideologies, but rather to offer a model of educational leadership and social justice that is applicable in diverse – different - settings.

I intend to do so using literature that focuses on multiplicities along different axes. In one sense, the multiplicity comes from intersectional constructs, for example sex and race (Crenshaw, 1989); in another the multiplicity is a matter of reconceptualizing multiple axes operating concurrently. Thus, the prefixes of multi-inter-trans- and- cross should be helpful going forward.

In each instance, I believe our work is best viewed hypothetically. That does not mean we do any work half-heartedly. If we agree that

complexity surrounds social justice and educational leadership, then we need to be sensitive, tentative, and hypothetical as we, test different ideas carefully and frequently inside changing contexts. At the same time, we must remain steadfast so long as the educational and social injustices persist. But seeing our work as hypothetical, incomplete and unfinished requiring experimentation, seems sensible. It is also what makes this work on-going and adventurous. We don't know what we don't know, so going forward is always a matter of problematic outcomes. For these reasons, a hypothetical stance is warranted. Clearly, I am dependent on other thinkers for these insights, namely William James, John Dewey, Michele Foucault, Jean Lyotard, and the famous American Psychological Association scholar/statistician Donald Campbell.

One further point by way of a preface: I am striving here to re-create educational leadership for social justice as intimately personal work wherein the researchers and participants in communities see themselves in the theories, methods, and findings. Additionally, the hypothesized model has to be viewed as meeting educationally-valid criteria for its specific context. The appeal of this hypothesized model is that it allows researchers to choose where to begin – which injustice to address - and how to proceed methodologically. The challenge, however, is that it does not end with any single study focused on one organizational role, one responsibility, one framework or even one problem. As Argyris and Schon wrote in 1974, the learning (as well as our doing) has to be publicly tested by others as it proceeds forward. I am hopeful that in this way, the diverse ironies and limitations identified in the literatures on educational leadership for social justice by Capper & Young (2014) can be incorporated into a synthesis (e.g., a meta-analysis) or new research agenda.

So, like Beycioglu, I am extending an invitation as a challenge. I am aware that I have not eloquently connected all the dots along the four hypothesized dimensions of educational leadership and social justice. The assumption which drives this challenge, however, is a recognition that researchers working by themselves on small-scale empirical studies will never be able to connect the dots because we are dependent upon others for learning. Working individually, our tentative findings are often reported in published journals as conclusions when they are not conclusive. Therefore, the task is to engage in a collective "revise and resubmit" process as part of a new research agenda with respect to educational leadership and social justice.

Social Justice as a Complex Set of Theories, Practices, and Methods

This essay is meant to continue some important conversations already published in the literatures on educational leadership for social justice. The guiding assumption is that whatever findings have been reported, peer-reviewed, published, and cited are all still in process, still hypotheticals (Dewey, 1916a), still fragments and partial truths (Bogotch & Roy, 1997), still limited (Capper & Young, 2014) and very much unfinished. I believe Beycioglu (2012) understood this state of the art as he encouraged researchers to be fearless, knowing that what is likely to happen comes with uncertain consequences for both researchers and their participants. This is challenging work and not to be approached as "business-as-usual."

To begin, I will ask that during the time it takes to read this essay, please try to put aside or bracket any inclinations for arriving a fixed *definition* of educational leadership for social justice? We cannot rush important ideas and actions. If our findings are hypothetical, then they must be subjected to more critical analyses and further experimental

testing. But even I write this I am aware of the fast-pace of school life and the need to meet deadlines. How do we balance that reality with careful study? I am also aware that how each of us choose to live our lives as educators (practitioners and researchers) is influenced by our personal histories. So, the first challenge is to align as closely as possible our personal histories with the realities that come with our professional responsibilities. The former is what makes us passionate about the work we do; the latter, when done well, brings us satisfaction from the work and our relationships at work. There are times, however, when these two dynamics are not aligned and we find ourselves in situations in which the decisions we have to make are more about compliance with fidelity than about our choosing to do the right thing. Educational leadership and social justice take us to a different place; it gives us purpose, a compass, and meanings.

For theoretical support, I have relied upon K. Crenshaw (1989) who introduced the notion of intersectionality in order to move our understandings of both the law and multidimensional constructs (e.g., race and sex as social justice) so that their meanings can be re-conceptualized as equitable relationships (e.g., characterized by the prefixes: multi- inter- trans-cross). Crenshaw explicitly advised us to avoid single-axis frameworks when studying marginalized, disadvantaged, underprivileged, and/or colonized populations. In 1996, Nancy Fraser further advanced how to think about social justice arguing that we needed to move beyond any single group's identity – even our own - so that the meaning of social justice would (a) disrupt persistent injustices for everyone, everywhere, and (b) recognize "others" not just psychologically, but also structurally. She labelled these structural recognitions as "participatory parity." Then, in 2004, Lois Weiss and Michelle Fine developed a theory of method called

"critical bifocality" by which they, too, explained the reciprocal influences of individual actions and organizational structures. In other words, structures create individual thoughts and actions while, at the same time, the individual's thoughts and actions reproduce and/or resist those very structures within specific economic and political contexts. These three independent seminal thinkers set the stage for us to re-think educational leadership and social justice as theory, practice, and method not through definitions or measures, but as social relationships in organizational and societal contexts.

What I describe dimension by dimension in this essay will be viewed as hypothetical, but also as deliberately ambitious and provocative. I am asking "what if," thought experiment questions, so as to insert multi-inter-trans-cross relationships into research as theory, methods, and practices. I have incorporated real-world events/problems into the model to ground our work in research questions that are broader than technical questions needing answers. The latter is important, but it is not socially just work. Rather, these managerial concerns are the ordinary (Jansen, 2008), the normal, domesticated standardization combined as the grammar of schooling (Carlson, 1965; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Therefore, whenever an educator at any level chooses a non-linear approach, it must be as a hypothetical and situational, for it challenges the *status quo.*

Beycioglu's quote at the beginning called research an exploration. Too often, such a call is mistaken for explaining organizational dynamics and seeking consensus for decision-making. But what if the exploration looks to uncover what has been ignored, hidden, forgotten, and/or deleted by current policies and practices? What if, as according to Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984),

> *`consensus' like the `social totality' is outmoded. Justice can only be built around the recognition of the variety that exists in language games, and consensus is localized to players of particular language games (p.66).*

Asking what if questions can take us beyond rational strategic thinking in that if forces us to consider different opinions, curiosities, contradictions, and judgments. How then do we make our differences explicit as assumptions, values, questions, and methods? How do we honor who we are, our identity, but keep open possibilities for others who are different? Again, even as we start a research project from our own topic of interest, identity, a specific context, or problem (e.g., racism, sexism, etc.), how do we become more inclusive of others?

In sum, we come to social justice, personally and professionally, with our desires to make a difference in teaching and leading for ourselves and others. As a social construct, we must join – socially - with others. We remain free to know, explore, and act in ways that reflect our personal philosophies, values, and beliefs and to pursue this individually as well as in communities (Bogotch, 2002, Capper & Young, 2014, Furman & Shields, 2005). But that should not be the endgame of education, social justice, or leadership. Our professional obligations are to recognize and welcome this variety of language games and associations (Bogotch 2023, Wittgenstein, 1953) or else we remain trapped inside endless searches for fixed and exact definitions (e.g., a totality, a consensus).

Is Philosophy a Distraction or Is it Useful for Educational Leadership Researchers?

I choose to look to the discipline of philosophy for interesting questions and provocative thoughts. It is what leads me to see things

differently, in unexpected ways, as discoveries and surprises. Philosophy, *for me*, is a critical method; it suggests ways of being, knowing, and doing. Philosophers, of course, provide definitive answers, but their understandings – methods - are not always straightforward or obvious. They bring us into complex and confusing worlds. Sometimes, they will offer prescriptive solutions, but most times not. I think educational leadership researchers and practitioners should adopt their own philosophical dispositions, but I also understand the environmental pressures (see Meyer & Rowan, 1977) to be data-driven, decisive, firm, and positive.

That said, the choice of which philosophers to read and cite matters. I am always perplexed when educational leadership theorists/researchers writing about social justice turn directly to a systems' theorist, John Rawls, as a primary source. By the time Rawls actually arrived at the term *social* justice by way of his *Theory of Justice* (1971), he had written that it was all "unhappily abstract" (p 179- 216)[1]. Social justice is practical, not abstract.

Social justice begins with concrete experiences:

> *social justice is what faces you in the morning. It is awaking in a house with adequate water supply, cooking facilities, and sanitation. It is the ability to nourish your children and send them to school where education not only equips them for employment but reinforces their knowledge and understanding of their cultural inheritance. It is the prospect of genuine employment and good health, a life of choices and opportunities, from discrimination (Dodson, 1993, n.p.)*

[1] This unhappy abstraction may have contributed to why Frederick Hayek (1976) believed that any definition of justice – as a general rule – falls apart (p. xi).

But Rawls confuses justice with social justice. His descriptions of ideal states of affairs may, of course, be applied conceptually to aspects of education, but even as a heuristic, his distributive principles of fairness and differences never approach educational strategies or social interactions. Moreover, Rawls assumes that those who negotiate his social contract are fully rational and *already educated.* Rawls never understood that in order for rational beings to negotiate, they have to first be educated. Education lays the foundations for a socially just society before, during, and after any social contract. How could Rawls know this? He didn't, for he admits that all of his sources on [adult] learning and education came from secondary sources (p. 411).

Therefore, in terms of choosing a starting point in philosophy, we should look to Iris Marion Young (1991), who asserted in *Justice and the Politics of Difference:*

> *"[E]ducation is primarily a process taking place in a complex context of social relations." (p. 26).*

Young understood both context and practices. Philosophy helps us ask questions pertaining to living well. If true, we must choose those philosophies who can engage educators in the *doing* of education. This means, *for me*, that social justice begins first in the everyday world of educational practices, not as an abstraction. It is "social." But the term "social" by itself is neutral; meaning that not all social relationships or social processes are positive, good, or educational. Therefore, we have to be selective so that the social does not lead to wars, pollutions, famine, destructions. We need factual evidence that the social is doing good works for communities/humanity. As educators, we believe that education can play a positive role in creating real opportunities for vulnerable peoples by disrupting systemic injustices! But what guides us in this right direction? Following Hannah Arendt (1963/94), social

justice can represent a higher-purpose theory (p. 253), while social injustices can and have become "terribly and terrifyingly normal (p. 276). Without guarantees in educational processes, however, the Sisyphean challenge in educational leadership is to tilt the supports – the moral levers of power - in favor of that which promotes the socially just while limiting the barriers to these just/equitable/inclusive outcomes. It calls for careful and rigorous research.

In practice, social justice moves seamlessly from educational plans to policies and practices (Kemmis, 1995). It is what I have previously referred to as contextual (Bogotch, 2002). That is, "Educational plans, policies, and practices are always framed by contexts which stretch from the intimacy and immediacy of local circumstances to reach and intersect with broader social frames, nationally and internationally, communally and globally. They are the products of struggle, and they give rise to still further struggles for better education for a better world (pp. 144-145).

Parenthesis: American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference Symposium, April 2018

At AERA, I had organized a symposium titled *Mapping Leadership for Social Justice: Innovations, Applications, and Syntheses.* The invited speakers were noted scholars who had written extensively on social justice and educational leadership, Jeffrey Brooks, Anthony Normore, and Jane Wilkinson on the possibilities of a *metatheory;* Carolyn Shields on the *promise* of their being one social justice framework; Khaula Murtadha and Colleen Larson on d*emocratic ethics* within social justice; Colleen Capper and Michelle Young on the previously referenced *ironies and limitations* of social justice. Unfortunately, neither Capper nor Young could be present. As Chair and Discussants, I had invited

Terrance Green, Muhammad Khalifa, and Terah Venzant Chambers to offer critiques.

After the presenters summarized their views on leadership for social justice, the first discussant said, "We have to talk specifically about what it means to be white. That is, we need more specific research terms so that we can specifically locate ways in which this visceral cycle of oppression keeps rearing its head." Other questions followed this question statement: "How can we connect with what communities want from us? How do communities view us? Whom are we serving?" "How do we do no harm?"

Each of the panelists was then given time to respond to these contextual questions if they chose to. Carolyn Shields talked about being in Brunei, where issues of injustice focused on health care inequities; Jane Wilkinson spoke about young refugees and their families and the shocking policies in her homeland of Australia. She located these injustices inside the privileges of white policymakers. Jeffrey Brooks criticized the efficacy of leadership theories "flying blindly" in the direction of problems. However, with the effects of "whitewashing" the situations around the problems, both the theories and solutions are rendered useless and violent. Anthony Normore looked to disrupt orthodoxy by developing more critically reflective identities that could think pluralistically and culturally.

While the panelists and discussants' comments could be said to overlap into partial agreements and disagreements, on the whole, everyone's concerns stayed locally in place as strongly held ideological positions. It was assumed that as educational leadership researchers, we would continue to design theoretical and empirical studies going forward. But what I took away was that for there to be agreement on social justice, researchers needed to see themselves in the theories,

concepts, or contextual examples presented. It was as if the notion of recognition as a key aspect of social justice (Fraser, 2014) came alive in the symposium. That said, the intimacy and immediacy of social justice as contextualized remained separate and apart from the different meanings given to educational leadership and social justice.

Extending Diverse and Inclusive Frameworks into Leadership for Social Justice

The leadership challenge, therefore, is to "see one's self" inside the social justice theory. For example, in analyzing data from two school districts in Ontario, Bogotch and Kervin (2019) noted how the actions of welcoming Syrian newcomers had elicited two recurring themes: perceived gifts and being neighbors: specifically, the codes "becoming neighbors" and "bringing gifts" to their communities in Ontario. Instead of seeing immigration policies, structures, and practices around "welcoming" as unidirectional and unidimensional, that is, moving from a developed nation's school system to those vulnerable and forcibly displaced refugees, the actual dynamics of welcoming were fluid and reciprocal. But in order to make sense of this reciprocity, the meaning of educational relationships themselves has to move from "subject/object" (i.e., Canadian citizens welcoming Syrian newcomers) to Canadians and Syrians as being the gift of good neighbors. The "and/more" explanation is what Wittgenstein, Foucault, Fraser, and Crenshaw all had in their minds, that is, moving beyond a single individual or group identity to a collective social vision.

As we conduct research, the logical extensions of these philosophical ideas means that we moving beyond single units of analyses, single disciplines, single lines of inquiry, and unidimensional definitions. Metaphorically and graphically, this calls for research to go beyond a

single axis (Fraser, 1989) to disrupt inequities and become inclusive of marginalized and colonized populations.

According to Capper and Young (2014), studying leadership for social justice up to now has been a continuous series of self-inflicted conceptual and methodological limitations by which we have imposed arbitrary borders to our research, resulting in singular, fragmented, incomplete, and reductive answers/solutions/interventions as findings. Our next step would be, therefore, to expand intellectually, morally, and politically using multi-inter-trans and cross-analyses/syntheses with respect to research on leadership for social justice. This also means that our research methods should be *with,* not *on* or *for,* participants (Arar et al., 2024; Schoorman, 2014). Participants' contexts, values, preferences, and beliefs have to be re-centered in all of our educational responses/interventions.

First Detour: Process is not a Parenthesis

By definition, "any process must be designed to highlight relationships, connections, and interdependencies in the phenomenon of interest" (Weick, 1989, p. 517). As such, all processes take time to unfold; implementation happens in stages (Fullan, 1993). In education, processes do not necessarily go according to the lesson plan or an organizing framework. Learning, along with research, is messy (Odell, 2023) taking effort and time, varying from individual to individual/group to group. This dynamic, understandably, frustrates educators stuck on efficiency or benchmarks. Sometimes to keep lessons on track, teachers will say, "That's not what we are talking about now" or leaders will say, "We all need to be on the same page." I call these phrases *parenthesis;* they are used to delimit both student's and adult's learning processes, when viewed as digressions. Yet, social justice is not about "business as usual" or following a script; rather, it

is deliberate interruption, for example, seeing a mathematical problem of the natural distribution of water resources around the globe. Pedagogically to promote critical thinking in students and adults, there have to be creative spaces. Not all curricular policies allow for such spacing as pacing charts more and more dictate national/state directed instruction. Connecting student learning to real-world issues is a beyond-school, intersectional challenge. Social justice conceptually requires bridges for connecting lived experiences, concerns, organizational roles, values and beliefs to the different experiences, concerns, roles, values, and beliefs of others (Boske, 2011; Weiss & Fine, 2004). Hence, the need for *conceptualizing social justice pluralistically, collaboratively, and relationally* – not just in words alone, but through deliberate actions – in practice and in research (Bogotch, 2023).

Mapping A New Research Agenda: Educational Leadership for Social Justice 4.0

Pijanowski and Brady (2020) recently concluded that social justice is

> *multidisciplinary and multi-action nature', and further that 'simply dividing complex constructs like education evenly or equitably falls short of acknowledging how various oppressive systems heavily influenced the design of those same educational goods and how systemic oppression has affected the ways in which people access education' (p. 4).*

If what is being proposed asserts that multiple dimensions have to be addressed – whether sequentially and/or concurrently – then we cannot rely only on ourselves. We are all interdependent upon one another and, for this reason, our research, too, needs to interdependent, encompassing ourselves and others, as neighbors and gifts across diverse political and cultural identities. If we stay with our

tribes, our clans, our peoples, then we cannot learn to co-exist across time and space with others who are different so as to address real-world issues. This will be extremely difficult, conceptually and methodologically. According to Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2022),

> *…organizations become competitive and use comparisons to create distances rather than alliances with other organizations. This is a product of many connected practices and the result of specialization and professionalization… (p. 429).*

Gilmore further explains that differences and disagreements do not necessarily transcend into solutions. Discussions and debates can be hostile based on narrow ideological, disciplinary, theoretical, and conceptual differences among "disparate actors" (Gilmore, 2022, p. 430). In today's culture wars inside and beyond the academy[2], "divisive concepts" (Eckes & Chestnut, 2023) dominate political discourses, forcing us in educational leadership to rethink social justice strategies for research and action. In hostile settings, where I live in Florida, this means not using the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, or social justice. How, then, do we bring explicit societal injustices into educational leadership for social justice discourses as conceptual frameworks and research methods? In such settings, ideologies, not facts or data or truth matter (Schoorman, personal communication, 2023). How then do we bring intersections as first suggested by Crenshaw (1989) and Fraser (1996) into our research?

[2] While the following tweeted message was in no way hostile, it does demonstrate the reflective defensiveness when suggesting an "additional" problem: "Are you suggesting that discussions of refugee oppression, the global marginalization of cishet women or the ways in which policy enaction reifies power dynamics … are not relevant (or irrelevant) to the [culture wars] in Florida (Unnamed educational leadership journal editor tweet response, July, 15, 2023).

Working with communities of difference is more inclusive. It is also more difficult in today's dominant specialized research disciplines and paradigms. While social injustices are felt personally by specific individuals and groups, our educational leadership for social justice has be targeted and expansive as it intersects with other historical and contemporary injustices. The four hypothesized dimensions do not ask researchers to forego her/his/their specific interests, conceptual frameworks, or passions. Rather, by making a commitment to ourselves and others, we would continue along that pathway until we come into alliances with other researchers from other disciplines. At first, this may translate more into a version of parallel play; but, hopefully over time, it evolves into intersectional -multi-inter-trans-cross- research studies. In the long term, such work would move the field of educational leadership from publishing works that confirm again and again what we already know. The four dimensions outlined below are:

- The Primacy of Practice
- Educational Research in and out of Communities
- Educators as Citizens of the World
- In Time and Across Space

Dimension 1 – As Practitioners, The Primacy of Practice

If we agree that as practitioners, the legitimate concern focuses on specific, often technical, knowledge and skills, then this is logically and chronologically where the practice-research processes most often begin. Yet, if the assumptions behind social justice described above as multi-inter-trans-cross make sense, then the focus on one specific role (e.g., the principalship) or one organizational level (e.g., the classroom,

the whole school, etc.) comes with both limitations and delimitations which should be predictable from the beginning of the study. In so doing, we have mastered the art of "kicking the can down the road," calling for further research in other settings without a plan for how.

Research on leadership for social justice is meant to challenge normative categories of good teaching and good managing, both of which, as best practices, have tended to reinforce the *status quo*. For practice, as Dewey taught us, must go beyond mastering craft knowledge (moving from apprentice to master) and extend to newly reconstructed knowledge (Bogotch, 2002) through trial and error systematically studied as research collaborative projects[3].

When these practices are depicted graphically, for example, along the horizontal x-axis, we can measure indicators that promote, support, and resource the technical core of our work inside schools. Likewise, we can plot on the other side of the hypothesized x-axis, the barriers, both real and hypothesized to achieving equitable opportunities for students and quality pedagogical and leadership practice. Dimension one, therefore, is the study of educational leadership for social justice practices in concert with other researchers studying multi-roles and organizational levels.

Dimension 2 – As Educational Researchers: In and Out of Communities

Moving to the hypothesized vertical y-axis begins initially with leadership researchers choosing a particular conceptual framework. Some researchers choose their frameworks from particular social science disciplines; other researchers take a more normative or value-

[3] Weick, K (1989) refers to this as disciplined imagination (as an alternative to methodological validation)

centered approach; still others focus on a sociological group or setting. The point is that researchers begin their work inside one particular space.

Moving from one conceptual framework empirical studies to multiple frameworks as inter-cross conceptual frameworks represents a major paradigm shift in the way we conduct research from a single disciplinary perspective (Kuhn, 1962). Multiple frameworks – for example, democracy, multiculturalism, critical theory, equality/equity, accountability, Whiteness, critical race theory, cultural wealth, culturally relevant leadership, ethno-humanistic leadership, etc. are all being published separately as stand-alone analyses. But intersectionality calls for multiple approaches (Crenshaw, 1989) and postmodern conditions call for studying fragments in relationships to one another.

We know what we have obtained from decades of single axis studies. Why not operationalize multiplicities, pluralities, associations, relationships, family resemblances, conjunctions, and prepositions?

Dimension 3 – As Citizens of the World

With dimension three comes yet a new research question: How do practitioner roles and responsibilities intersect with researchers' choices of conceptual frameworks in a complex world? What level of critical awareness should we be asking of both practitioners and researchers? The question is not about going outside of these roles, but rather having knowledge of world events that influence school curriculum, pedagogies, and leadership. Gert Biesta (2011, 2021) has been asking educators about their responsibility, responsiveness with respect to democracy and citizenship. But does leadership for social justice ask questions beyond critical awareness? Does it ask educators

to reflect, react, and/or to engage in solving the world's problems? Biesta asks educators to go beyond the borders of learning in schools to venturing into world affair as subjects of their own lives. In Drago-Severson et al.'s (2023) view, knowing as self-authoring takes being an educator to be synonymous with becoming responsible adults with the full rights and privileges of citizenship.

Real-world issues enter the schoolhouse doors, whether it be the relationships between student achievement and community health care, earning a living wage, food insecurity, ending gun violence, sexual orientations, censorship, creating safe spaces for students who are different, and/or building sustainable environments, etc. When we delimit our research to what we already know and do not connect education to societal problems, then we diminish the role of education and educators in society.

Real-world issues of social justice also are people's everyday realities: With respect to understanding social justice as experiences – those within and beyond school –

Dimension 4: As Beings In Time and Across Space

The theoretical and political position behind dimension four is the belief that social justice is both necessary and contingent with respect to all educational practices; that is, social justice as a normative commitment can never be guaranteed or sustained without continuous efforts, including work within difficult – even in undemocratic circumstances. Further, social justice must be differentiated from best practices in that it is a deliberate intervention to disrupt "business as usual" or normative categories even when those categories have been defined as good teaching and good administrative practices. Such work takes time, more time than is often given to the conduct of any

one empirical study. The work of leadership for social justice does not follow the rhythm of proposing, writing, and publishing as productivity measures. Research demands a slow and careful pace not aligned with many professorial incentives.

Leadership for social justice is a longitudinal process or processes of challenging normative categories so that researchers can reconstruct or find that which is good/educative, and differentiate it from what Dewey called mis-educative practices (1938). As practice, therefore, leadership for social justice cannot be known *a priori*, that is, independent from our actions and the consequences of our actions. As such, we – participants first, and researchers second - *come to know* the consequences of social justice interventions. As researchers, we, therefore, validate *post hoc* the partial effects of leadership on social justice as we progress to see more-do more as a continuing research project. Leadership for social justice is grounded on actions and effects: only then do we begin again.

By centering social justice within specific places, its meanings reflect both the diversity of space contextually. Therefore, what can be socially just in one context may or may not overlap with how social justice is conceptualized – spoken and acted upon - at another time or in a different place, making social justice always a culturally relevant construct [4].

[4] After reading Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) text *Decolonizing Methodologies* (pp. 52-59) on the different perceptions of Western and indigenous views of time and space, dimension 4 needs to be read critically. That is, with respect to space, even the drawing of maps needs to be cognizant of what is "outside," beyond the recognized borders. Words such as empty, uninhabited, unoccupied, background and hinterlands can make invisible what is outside. With respect to time or more specifically "points in time," that which is primitive or labeled "prehistory" in contrast to Western history which denotes the start of modernism/rationalism and

Not a Conclusion.

If definitive and concrete answers are not the legitimate objectives of this hypothesized leadership for social justice model, what then might be the outcomes of a reconceptualization of educational leadership for social justice as something radically different? To begin, one objective for educational leadership for social justice would be that it is conceptualized as intimately personal capturing identities, while seeking to be inclusive and valid for others. It would ask of us how to meet the needs of our communities, but not exclusively.

Education encompasses all learning. Nothing is off the table in asking educational questions. The challenge is to move toward an "and/more" synthesis rather than conducting the many small-scale stand-alone studies capturing partial aspects of variables of interest. The hypothesized multi-dimensional model asks the field of educational leadership to aim higher, think bigger, and be more aggressive - theoretically and methodologically. These questions are not about assimilating new knowledge, new categories, or even new methods into already existing frameworks. The frameworks and methods themselves must be challenged.

That said, the hypothesized multi-dimensional model being proposed asks international researchers from different perspectives to come together, not in agreement, but as diverse researchers searching for new educational leadership ideas and practices. This will require working through tensions and contradictions and keeping the lines of communication open. Over time, the findings are analyzed, validated,

the classifications of science, creates a hierarchy of knowledge that ignores indigenous knowledges.

and synthesized; and, every so often, ideas will jump together (Gould, 2003) and click into place.

By embracing differences, particularities, and diverse cultural contexts, the "and-more synthesis" would become a curriculum of total experiences enacted through research and pedagogies. The result would not be to bring order, consensus, or cohesion to leadership for social justice, but rather to reside within dissensus, everyday tensions, on-going dilemmas, wicked problems, paradoxes, and contradictions. These are the unchartered waters that Professor Beycioglu wished for us.

Hence, the reason why this section cannot be framed as a set of conclusive remarks should be obvious. We are beginning again. And as we begin again, we take on new synergies and multiplier effects to disrupt the *status quo*. But without any social science research guarantees, the power dynamics within and beyond our educational institutions could instead lead us towards more systemic injustices. Hence, a paradigm shift is necessary to move educational leadership from incremental reformist reforms (Gilmore, 2022) to educational leadership for social justice. The narratives surrounding leadership for social justice need radical re-constructions.

No one essay or any one empirical research study will connect all the dots surrounding the intersectional topic of leadership for social justice (Capper & Young 2014). But that's precisely what I am calling for here: going beyond the study of one role, one responsibility, one organizational level, one problem, one conceptual framework, one real world issue, one point in time, and in one specific space. Seeing how the pathways to leadership for social justice encompasses more than single-axis studies is our next research agenda. Unless and until educational leadership researchers dedicate themselves collectively to

a comprehensive agenda as opposed to publishing individual projects documenting humanitarian works, we as a field of study will not bring about necessary changes within or beyond schools.

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