

Editorial: Special Issue

Educational Leadership for Social Justice: Policy,

Practice, Community

Nola P. Hill-Berry

University of Technology, Kingston, Jamaica

Carmel Roofe

University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica

Paul Miller

University of Greenwich, London, UK

Introduction

The theme of this special issue 'Educational Leadership for Social Justice: policy, Practice, Community' suggests a call to action. It suggests a call to action for justice in policymaking, how educational leadership is practiced and a call to action for justice in our relationship as stakeholders in an education community. But what is social justice one might ask and therefore what is educational leadership for social justice. The answers to these questions provide the stimulant for the actions that those who are educational leaders need to demonstrate.

Brooks (2008) argues that, 'Justice is both an abstract "big" idea and also a concrete "little" idea' (p. 8) and is understood as a process or a way of "ethical living" in a diverse society' (Furman & Shields, 2003, p. 1358). Social justice then is "where all members of a society, regardless of background or procedural justice, have basic human rights and equal access to the benefits of their society" (Hemphill, 2015, p. 2). Educational leadership for social justice is leadership that ensures fairness in rights and access to the educational benefits of one's society. However, the processes and systems for ensuring fairness are open to various interpretations, are influenced by leaders' conception of social justice and may be seen as complex and contextualized endeavors (Arar, Ogden, & Beycioglu, 2019). Consequently, educational leadership for social justice is a bold undertaking. Educational leadership for social justice assumes that those who are assigned formal leadership roles pay attention to issues of equity and ensure that the power that resides within the social structures of education are more responsive to the rights of citizens (Miller, Roofe, & García Carmona, 2019). As stated by Theoharis (2007), at the heart of educational leadership for social justice are leaders who "... 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 condition" (p. 223). Furthermore, Corbett (1976) notes that in order to do justice one cannot work alone, one needs a community approach. This community approach involves all education stakeholders giving attention to issues of equity and fairness in how policy is designed, how educational leaders practice leadership and the types of partnership relationships that are formed and leveraged among stakeholders to support leading for social justice.

The papers in this special issue lead us to examine a range of issues associated with two broad areas of educational leadership for



social justice; school leadership and higher education. Reflective of issues at the two broad levels of education the papers provide insights into the ways, as educational leaders, we may have intentionally or and unintentionally disadvantaged one another. Consequently, demanding us to intentionally conceptualize and implement systems and procedures to eliminate the ways in which we disadvantage one another in education.

With the expansion of knowledge, the narrowing of cultural borders, the increased use of technology, as noted by Miller's paper in this special issue, governments are requiring more from less; there is an increased need for ways of addressing social justice issues within the social structures of education. Miller's paper with examples from 16 countries further draws our attention to the political complexities involved in addressing social justice issues. These issues within education require social justice actions of inclusion at the policy level. In other words, educational leaders must ask the question, to what extent do educational policies include all members of the society and if not, how can we design policies to facilitate inclusion? Partington's paper raises awareness of the policy implications of market-led Higher Education on addressing issues of inclusion; while Russell and Jarvis' paper raises awareness about what can result if policies are not appropriately designed to facilitate inclusion. Careful attention must therefore be given to how needs are addressed as these issues arise.

While recognizing that policies are important to eliminate social injustice, we note that policies alone will not be enough to change injustices. In order to effectively address social injustices in educational leadership policy and practice must meet. This is why Hughes' paper on mentoring school leaders through cultural conflict is relevant as it gives us insight into the visible actions that need to be undertaken to

ensure social justice leadership. At the same time Conrad, Lee-Pigott and Brown's paper tells us that social justice actions is multifaceted and requires a combination of conceptual processes and actions to eradicate social injustices in education. Similarly, we note that leadership cuts across different levels hence leadership is not just for those leading at the macro level but also includes those leading at the meso and micro levels. Therefore, to say one is a social justice leader is to say that at whatever level you lead, the leader is deliberately thinking about, shows knowledge of, and is acting on issues of social injustices. For those who are educational leaders in the classroom (teachers/lecturers), social justice practice is linked to actions carried out during the teaching and learning process. This is important since Williams' paper on foreign language learning showcases how issues from one level of learning affects the next level of learning. Highlighting challenges experienced in the Foreign Language classroom as a result of issues students take with them from the secondary level of learning Spanish as a foreign language, Williams recommends the use of the communicative approach to teaching Spanish as a foreign language to better equip students with skills of language awareness thereby increasing their communicative competence as members of a global community. Wallder and Browns' paper also reminds us that what we do in the classroom, especially at the higher education levels, have national implications. Hence educators at the tertiary level should strive to be student centered in order to provide the workplace with effective and competent workers armed with 21st century skills.

As demonstrated by the papers in this special issue social justice issues are wide ranging and therefore need deliberate and coordinated efforts to address. Therefore, drawing on Shulman's ideas about Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Mayne suggests that for teachers to



develop the knowledge needed to enact social justice ideals perhaps a model of teacher preparation that provides teachers with Social Justice Pedagogical Content Knowledge is needed to empower teachers to illuminate their voices inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, Hill-Berry's paper closes out this special issue with showcasing distributed leadership as an approach to expanding leadership capabilities and building an academic leadership community as a necessary means for working towards social justice ideals. To this end we encourage other scholars to join us on the journey in conducting research to develop strategies for mitigating social injustices in educational leadership.

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Cite as:

Hill-Berry, N. P., Roofe, C. & Miller, P. (2019). Editorial: Special issue. Educational leadership for social justice: Policy, practice, community. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 4 (3), 461-467. DOI: 10.30828/real/2019.3.1

About the Authors

Nola P. Hill-Berry is a lecturer and Programme Director for the health information management courses of study at the University of Technology, Jamaica. She serves the IEAL-J as Secretary, Director of Branding, and Conference Chair. Nola has special interests in leadership in health information management education and practice.

Email: chuckberry.nhb@gmail.com

Carmel Roofe is a Senior lecturer and programme co-ordinator for the M.Ed and MPhil/PhD programmes in Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education at the University of the West Indies, Mona. She is a former Vice-President of the IEAL-J, and is currently convenor of the Curriculum and Innovation Research Interest Group (RIG) and conference programme Chair.

Email: carmelg.roofe@gmail.com

Paul Miller is Head of the School of Education, University of Greenwich, and professor of educational leadership & social justice. He co-convenes the “Educational Administration & Social Justice” Research Interest Group (RIG) of the Institute for Educational



Administration & Leadership- Jamaica, and the “Race & Educational Leadership” RIG of the British Educational Leadership Management Administration Society (BELMAS). He is also president of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM).

Email: p.w.miller@greenwich.ac.uk