

Educating School Leaders for Social Justice

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Traditional leadership preparation programs and licensure requirements give only token consideration to social justice concerns. This article examines the emerging social justice discourse in the educational administration field and discusses several challenges that must be considered as universities and others attempt to prepare school leaders for social justice critique and activism. Social justice scholarship in educational leadership emphasizes moral values, justice, respect, care, and equity; always in the forefront is a consciousness about the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability on schools and students' learning. School leadership programs face the challenge of preparing new leaders to critically inquire into the structures and norms that result in inequitable schooling for many students and to undertake an advocacy role to influence educational policies to achieve social justice.

Keywords: *leadership; leadership preparation; social justice; licensure standards*

GRAVE CONCERNS EXIST about leadership preparation programs' lack of relevance in preparing school leaders to address the crisis conditions facing many children and schools in this country. As the efficacy of existing preparation programs is questioned, specific concerns also are raised about the extent to which social justice issues are being considered in the development of new approaches and standards for preparing leaders. Although policy makers express a concern for creating more just, equitable schools, new

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standards and licensure requirements do not explicitly encompass social justice concerns (Marshall, 2001; Oliva, 2001).

The prevalence of social justice language in educational settings and scholarship portends a new movement with as many meanings as actors on the scene. This visibility is cause for celebration as well as unease. With popular use, both liberals and conservatives have embraced the term social justice to rationalize similar as well as polar opposite strategies. In the policy arena, educational accountability policies tend to construct the meaning of social justice in narrow market-based terms that attempt to remedy the so-called deficits students from diverse backgrounds bring to school (Marshall & Parker, in press). When policy makers are asked to identify social justice elements in their states, they point to high academic standards and stringent assessment strategies (Cambron-McCabe, in press; Marshall & McCarthy, 2002). Consequently, elimination of the achievement gap between Caucasian students and students of color has become the signifier for the political commitment to fairness and equal educational opportunity. The by-product of this policy discourse of accountability, standards, and quality is safe language that eschews more controversial confrontations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and systemic inequities (Cambron-McCabe, in press). In this climate, school administrators desiring to create inclusive, just schools find themselves constrained by rules, regulations, and state controls (Foster, 2004).

Within a social justice context, school leaders are being called on to take up the role of transformative intellectuals, public intellectuals, or critical intellectuals—that is, individuals who engage in critical analysis of conditions that have perpetuated historical inequities in schools and who work to change institutional structures and culture (Burrello, Lashley, & Beatty, 2001; Dantley & Tillman, in press; Foster, 2004; Giroux, 1997). But traditional leadership preparation programs and licensure requirements give only token consideration to social justice concerns (Marshall, 2004). In this article we examine the emerging social justice discourse in the educational administration field and discuss its implications for reconceptualizing preparation programs for more just schooling. We begin by delineating the multiple dimensions of social justice leadership, particularly noting its broad construction not only as the identification of institutional and societal inequities affecting race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability but also as the assumption of an activist role for school and social change. Next, we explore several issues that are significant in preparing school leaders for social justice critique and activism. We conclude with a discussion of the implications for educational administration faculties and programs.

AN EMERGENT SOCIAL JUSTICE DISCOURSE

Social justice scholarship and conversations have become prominent in leadership journals and conferences. Momentum intensified in the educational administration field in 1999 when 140 scholars convened by Catherine Marshall organized as Leadership for Social Justice. These scholars targeted their research and practice on creating an understanding and capacity to do social justice work. An impressive body of work has amassed during 4 years that gives educational administration programs grounding to articulate more clearly what social justice means and how the field might move these ideas into the practice of leadership.¹

Social justice is informed by multidisciplinary inquiry that struggles to accommodate distinct ontological and epistemological foundations. Tensions arise as some perspectives are validated and others are excluded. In creating a new social justice discourse for leadership, we argue that educational administration scholars must engage in an ongoing critical dialogue drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives. Although structural-functional and positivist research paradigms continue to influence inquiry in educational administration, alternative social justice perspectives have emerged under the banners of multicultural leadership, feminist leadership, critical African American and Latino leadership traditions, and so on (Dantley, 2003; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Lopez, 2003). These critiques move us from merely an examination and naming of inequities to intentional action to make radical, fundamental changes in societal structures, including schools.

Social justice scholarship in educational leadership exhibits some broad, common themes. Scholars emphasize moral values, justice, respect, care, and equity; always in the forefront is a consciousness about the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability on schools and students' learning (Dantley & Tillman, in press).² Foster's (1986) early work in critical theory echoes through this emerging social justice discourse. The crucial questions for Foster involved what ends are being pursued, whom do they benefit, and whom do they harm. The unmasking of the distortions around us, however, was only the beginning of his critique. He maintained that leadership must be critically educative: "It can not only look at the conditions in which we live, but it also must decide how to change them" (Foster, 1986, p. 185). This call for activism to challenge entrenched institutional structures reproduced by the dominant culture unites a number of other scholars (Bogotch, 2002; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Grogan, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003; Marshall, 2004).

In deepening and expanding the social justice discourse, some educational leadership scholars argue that race and racism in society must become

a central and integral aspect of the leadership knowledge base (Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995; Lopez, 2003; Parker, Deyhle, & Villanas, 1999). When race is included in preparation programs, typically the emphasis focuses on a surface level of inequitable treatment as opposed to probing the pervasive and systemic nature of racism in society (Donmoyer et al., 1995; Lopez, 2003). Critiques of race too often lead to “decontextualized and deracialized political theory of conflict, yielding a sanitized view of racial politics in the United States” (Lopez, 2003, p. 77) that produces racially neutral understandings of policies and schools. New legal scholarship in critical race theory (CRT) directs attention to the invisibility of racism and through counternarratives portrays racial realities rather than the dominant privileged stories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lopez, 2003; Parker et al., 1999). This scholarship adds an important dimension to the social justice discourse; CRT stresses that laws alone will not alter racism and that the values and knowledge underpinning a racially neutral construction of democracy work to maintain racism.

Other contested terrain with implications for a social justice discourse includes gender and sexual orientation. Today’s battles in statehouses over gay marriages point to the deeply contentious issues in this arena. News reports highlight how devastating the violence and harassment can be for queer students in public schools. Courts grapple with defining rights in the absence of specific constitutional language. Lugg (2003) reminded the educational administration field that protecting students and educators from harassment because of gender or sexual orientation, although important, is not social justice. Drawing on queer legal theory, she attempted to illuminate legal and regulatory systems that privilege and enforce heterosexuality and other forms of oppression. Again, school leaders and scholars are urged to take an activist stance in making deep structural issues around gender and sexual orientation explicit as they work to change them.

The emerging social justice discourse calls on school leaders to question the assumptions that drive school policies and practices to create more equitable schooling. To meet this challenge, school leadership programs must prepare new leaders to critically inquire into the taken-for-granted structures and norms that often pose insurmountable barriers for many students’ academic success.

ISSUES AFFECTING LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

From our perspective, four broad issues must be carefully considered in any serious attempt to reconceptualize what it means to lead with a concern

for social justice in today's schools. School conditions reveal that expectations for leaders have shifted substantially, but we continue to prepare administrators for traditional roles in traditional school settings (see Hess & Kelly, 2005, this issue). At this juncture, educational administration scholars can help shape radically new roles and expectations for school leaders; inequitable practices and conditions demand fundamental changes in the ways we think about school reform and leadership. Reform issues around the standards movement, selection of leaders, student achievement gap, and privatization of education may simply reinforce and tighten the present system that marginalizes many students and educators.

The Standards Movement

Standards-based reforms create new challenges regarding both the assessment of leadership preparation programs and the alignment of these programs with social justice commitments. The standards movement, accompanied by high-stakes testing, affects virtually every level of education from K-12 schooling to teacher and administrator preparation. The standards drive the curriculum, and standards-based tests are used as prerequisites to grade promotion, high school graduation, and teacher and administrator licensure. This movement has evoked substantial controversy. Some view these reforms as the best strategy to ensure that no child is left behind (see Paige, 2003). They contend that equal educational opportunities will be realized if schools are held accountable for all students achieving the standards, but others argue that these developments are hindering the creation of vibrant and intellectually challenging education programs at all levels (see Gronn, 2002). These critics assert that standards-based school reforms have replaced efforts to achieve diverse student populations.

Standards-based reforms for school leaders focus on the standards developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The ISLLC standards address the school leader's role in connection with developing a shared vision of learning; sustaining a school culture conducive to learning; ensuring appropriate management of school operations and resources; facilitating collaboration with families to respond to diverse needs; acting with integrity and fairness; and responding to the schools' political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. As of 2004, about four-fifths of the states had adopted the ISLLC standards for administrative licensure or had developed their own standards based on ISLLC.

Standards for school leaders have been proposed by various professional organizations and government agencies over time, but the current standards movement, based on the ISLLC model, differs in several respects. First, these standards focus attention on the centrality of student learning as each begins

with the notation that school administrators are school leaders who promote success for all students (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Second, there has been surprising agreement among educators and policy makers on the validity of the ISLLC standards. Many state policy makers view ISLLC and other standards-based reforms as the solution to problems associated with school leadership and university preparation programs (Marshall & McCarthy, 2002). National and state criteria for the accreditation of educational leadership preparation programs, including the *Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership* of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), reflect the ISLLC standards. In fact, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), which includes representatives from all national practitioner organizations focusing on school leadership, has merged its standards with ISLLC and NCATE for use in accrediting leadership preparation programs. The major thrust of this consolidation is for leadership preparation program accreditation and administrative licensure to be based on performance measures in line with the ISLLC standards (Cibulka, 2004; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2000). By 2004, ELCC had reviewed 178 educational leadership programs, of which 137 (77%) achieved “national recognition” status (Cibulka, 2004, p. 3).

Despite the consensus among policy makers regarding the merits of standards-based education reforms, this movement also has critics (Bracey, 2000; Merrow, 2001). The very act of creating standards, noted Gronn (2002), is an inherently biased process in which preference is given to a particular perspective and other points of view are silenced. The ISLLC standards have not been universally embraced in the field of educational administration (English, 2000; Furman, 2000; Maxcy, 2000). Specifically, questions have been raised about whether the standards give sufficient attention to social justice issues such as diversity and whether they represent a negative reduction toward a single correct method (English, 2004).

Standards, of course, lack significant meaning without valid mechanisms to determine that the standards have been met. The assessments used to determine that standards are satisfied, however, do not necessarily produce fair results whether for K-12 students or for teacher and administrator licensure. For example, studies indicate that African Americans score an average of one standard deviation below Caucasian on teacher licensure tests (Hedges & Nowell, 1998; Mitchell, Robinson, Plake, & Knowles, 2001). Similarly, slightly more than 40% of the Caucasian applicants receive certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, whereas only about 11% of African American applicants are successful (Bond, 1998). These data have dramatic implications for the racial composition of pub-

lic school personnel in our nation. At a time when student bodies are becoming increasingly diverse, the opposite trend may occur among public educators, partially as a result of assessment tests used as a prerequisite to licensure.

A standards-driven paper-and-pencil test is the most popular strategy used to assess that school leaders meet the ISLLC standards. Thirteen states condition administrative licensure on the passage of the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), a performance-based assessment developed by the Education Testing Service (ETS). A number of other states are considering the adoption of the SLLA. This instrument consists of a set of vignettes to which individuals respond. The test is then evaluated by a national group of trained assessors based on predetermined criteria. In some states professional standards boards link accreditation of leadership preparation programs to how well their students perform on the SLLA. Thus, the stakes are extremely high for everyone involved.

In the near future, across most states, the successful passage of SLLA may very well become a prerequisite to administrative licensure, an exit examination in university preparation programs, and/or a criterion for program accreditation. If so, the ETS instrument will greatly influence the content and components of school leadership preparation programs. Universities will be forced to align their admissions process and curriculum with the high-stakes test. This does not necessarily mean that preparation programs will be narrowed or negatively affected if we are certain that SLLA measures what is considered essential for moral leaders who can guide schools toward becoming humane, challenging, learning-centered communities (McCarthy, 2002b).

Yet, many critics are concerned that current assessment instruments, like SLLA, do not give individuals the opportunity to demonstrate some important leadership behaviors such as tolerance, creativity, vision, and commitment to social justice (Bracey, 2000). Merrow (2001) declared that “bad tests, used to make high-stakes decisions, are the enemy of good (i.e., high) standards” (p. 653). In short, assuming the standards are appropriate (which continues to be debated), if the tests that assess whether they are met are poorly written, biased, or not aligned with the intent of the standards, the process will not be effective. Fears are voiced that reliance on SLLA and similar tests to judge both individuals and leadership preparation programs could take educational leadership preparation in detrimental directions and impede efforts to increase diversity among our public school educators (English, 2000, 2004).

Nonetheless, the standards movement, and its direct link to high-stakes testing, is the dominant strategy to improve the quality of education at the

present time. Indeed, high-stakes assessments of students, teachers, and school leaders currently are being used to judge the value of pre-K-12 schools and their school personnel, issue school rankings and report cards, determine which schools must provide their students other educational options, and make personnel decisions. Foster (2004) has urged scholars to problematize this metanarrative that is defining the story of how and why schools exist in terms of global competitiveness and economic dominance. School leaders and those preparing them must create counternarratives that emphasize social justice and provide a space for local initiatives and for re-inventing democratic processes (Foster, 2004).

Selection of Leaders

Who will lead schools may be one of the most critical challenges and one of the most important opportunities to influence social justice. Marshall (2004) characterized the current turnover in school administrators as “never a better time” to prepare new leaders for social justice (p. 10). She noted that by 2010 numerous surveys show that the profession will essentially be repopulated. This raises questions about who will fill the positions, what they will do, and how will they do it?

Faced with a short supply of qualified administrator candidates in the pipeline in many school systems as well as an interest in recruiting more minority and women applicants, states are exploring a range of strategies such as removing barriers for noneducators and recent retirees to assume these roles, establishing administrative internship programs for teachers, redesigning administrative positions, providing financial and other incentives, and recruiting administrators from other states. Florida, for example, has omitted the credentialing process for school administrators (see Herrington & Wills, 2005, this issue). California has considered a bill to expedite the credentialing process. The California fast-track program proposes to enable individuals to demonstrate their administrative skills through rigorous testing rather than by completing extensive university coursework. Little is known, however, about whether such expedited programs adequately prepare future administrators to identify systemic inequities and engage in their eradication (see Hess & Kelly, 2005, this issue).

Some school districts are establishing partnerships with universities to develop collaborative training programs for aspiring principals to increase the pool of qualified candidates and to ensure a stronger practitioner voice in the nature of the preparation (see Goldring & Sims, 2005, this issue). Often collaboration not only involves joint development of the courses and experiences but also shared delivery of the courses (see Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, & Koff, 2005). Such efforts offer the potential to con-

front embedded injustices that may exist in specific school sites. Collecting and analyzing data related to a particular school and school district enables educators to actually do equity-focused work (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004). These collaborative programs, however, are not numerous and are found primarily in urban areas.

Central to the question of who will lead is what do we mean by leadership? If we accept that a school leader's role is developing and maintaining a clear focus on a core purpose embedded in student learning and that the leader engages directly in the improvement of teaching and learning, it is reasonable to posit that expertise in instructional practices and curriculum content must be central in our selection of leaders. Aggressive and intentional recruitment of teachers who possess demonstrated high-quality instructional skills can expand the candidate pool for administrative positions and provide greater potential for increasing the number of women and administrators of color in leadership positions.

Elmore (2000) asserted, "If public schools survive, leaders will look very different from the way they presently look, both in who leads and what these leaders do" (p. 3). The present ferment over this new conception of leadership provides an opportunity to reconsider within a social justice discourse what it means to lead in schools where student learning, rather than the management of daily operations, is the heart of the work. Thus far we have only tinkered around the edges of this dilemma by attempting to incorporate elements of instructional leadership into the traditional principal role. What if we start with inventing new roles directed at student learning (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2002)? This would help us avoid the trap of responding to these new challenges with old approaches and traditional roles. Buchen (2000) has argued that it is time to give up on "trying to save or keep intact roles and institutions that no longer are fluid, aspirational, and future driven" (p. 35). If we desire to create learning organizations "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990, p. 3), radical action is required.

From a social justice perspective, the greatest challenge for the educational administration field may be to shift its mental model of what it means to be a school leader rather than a school administrator. Usdan (2002) has posed several questions that are helpful in reframing the roles and responsibilities of school leaders:

If the criteria for success have changed in terms of our expectations of school administrators, how can we meaningfully reshape the substance and role of preparatory pro-

grams? If principals and superintendents are to be assessed on the basis of their ability to raise test scores, how can the jobs be constructively and realistically reconfigured? For example, could successful teachers begin to serve as instructional leaders enabling principals to discharge their important customary responsibilities as leaders who work with parents and the community on political and management issues that certainly cannot be ignored in schools? Is it time to rethink the assumption that one individual can or should handle such diverse administrative responsibilities? (p. 302)

Clearly, this reconceptualization of who will lead and what they will do reaches far beyond university administrator preparation programs to teacher preparation, school communities, and state policy makers as teachers' roles are also redefined. Goodlad (1990) has asserted that a critical moral dimension of schooling requires teachers as well as principals to provide responsible moral stewardship of schools. That is, if student learning and the school site are pivotal points for renewal, teachers play a central role in creating and sustaining school-wide change, not simply improving efforts in their own classrooms. This reconceptualization of roles involves more than improving current practice; it requires rethinking those practices and taking action to implement new ones within a more just, democratic context. Accordingly, it represents a significant shift regarding who will fill leadership roles and what they will do in those roles.

The Achievement Gap

The focus on educational accountability has revealed the startlingly large performance gap between African American, Latino, and economically disadvantaged students and Caucasian students, particularly from middle- and upper-income families. For example, Haycock (2001) has noted that African American and Latino students' mean 12th-grade math and reading skills are comparable to those of Caucasian eighth graders. Substantial differences exist among groups not only in achievement but also in completion of high school and college. And, these gaps are wider than they were a decade ago (Fuller, 1998). Haycock has maintained that the gaps exist because "we take the students who have less to begin with and then systematically give them less in school" (p. 8). The differences show up in the curriculum taught, the resources spent, how teachers are assigned, and achievement expected.

Despite its critics, the school accountability movement has focused attention on the widening achievement gap among students and related equity concerns. It is no longer possible to conceal through aggregate data reports what we have known all along—achievement patterns vary markedly among different groups of students. The inability of schools to close this gap prompted Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). The Act

tightens the assessment side of schooling and provides options for children stuck in failing schools. Under intense pressure from both the federal and state levels, school leaders are struggling with substantive and strategic approaches to achieve equity for poor and minority children.

Marshall (2001) noted in her North Carolina study of administrative licensure that state officials see the closing of the achievement gap as the way to address social justice. Some research has shown that illuminating the achievement gap is an important step in challenging the so-called deficit-thinking of school leaders by clearly showing that all children are not being served well (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes Scribner, 1999; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).³ But critics assert that simply disaggregating test scores by race and class will not ensure a better education for poor and minority children. McNeil (2000), for example, cautioned that the intense emphasis on the achievement gap may actually worsen the current inequities for minority students as schools focus on test results and narrow educational opportunities. Anderson (2004) echoed this perspective, noting that if equity is locally lodged in classrooms and schools “we may end up legitimating the larger persistent social inequities [thereby] distracting attention and energy from the larger political movements needed to bring about real social change” (p. 255).

Confounding the social justice issues related to student achievement is a recent report showing that school districts educating the largest number of poor and minority children receive less state and local money than school districts educating the least number of poor and minority children (Orlofsky, 2002). At a time when it is imperative to provide a rigorous curriculum, quality teachers, intense professional development, and more instructional time, many school districts do not have adequate resources to meet the higher standards. The funding gap represents a major state-policy issue that cannot be separated from the efforts to close the achievement gap in school districts facing the greatest disparities (Dantley & Cambron-McCabe, 2001; Rusch, 2001).

In the face of the growing social inequality in the nation, how do we link educational equity and social equity? What skills do leaders need to engage the school and the community in confronting social justice issues? How do we avoid the trap of confusing gains in test scores with substantive educational improvement?

Privatization of Education

Schools naturally are a place where values and ideas are transmitted to youth. The original intent of the American common school was to ensure

an educated citizenry and to inculcate democratic values in its students. Although the promise of the common school has not been fully realized, political rhetoric has maintained a national commitment to safeguarding the collective welfare of our children through public education. In reality, however, the trend toward privatizing education poses a significant threat to the fulfillment of public education's promise. This recent shift toward privatization presents noteworthy challenges for schools, their leaders, and those preparing school leaders, and it has important social justice implications. Bauman (1996) has contended that greater consumer control of education entails a reduced governmental role in providing services and "a belief in efficiency and individuality over equity and community" (p. 627). Commenting that schools increasingly are seen as a private rather than public good, Giroux (2003) observed that schools, therefore, "are concerned less with demands of equity, justice, and social citizenship than with the imperatives of the marketplace, skill-based learning, and the needs of the individual" (p. 76).

Educational-choice strategies range from purely public models (e.g., theme-based magnet programs that remain public schools) to purely private models (e.g., state-supported vouchers available for private-school tuition). Regardless of the approach, each of these choice options has significant implications for the values and ideas that our schools transmit to students. School leaders and those preparing them need to understand these implications and be involved in policy discussions about strategies to open education to the marketplace.

Recent federal initiatives show increased support for a marketplace model of education, including public support for private schools. The federal government's current emphasis on providing educational options for families in the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) is based on the premise that competition, including private options, can improve educational opportunities and ultimately the academic performance of all children. Indeed, \$77 million in the Bush administration's discretionary fund, which does not have to be approved by Congress, is channeled toward organizations that champion private education, including homeschooling (Morrow, 2004).

States have also shown an increased interest in providing greater education options for parents, particularly low-income parents, through various marketplace models of schooling. Murphy (1999) has argued that consumer-based control of education can be viewed as a logical next stage in the evolution of school governance. With confidence in public-sector educational monopolies dwindling, the public pressure for opening education to the marketplace is increasing (see Boyd & Miretzky, 2003; Hill, 2002; Lewis, 1993; Richards, Shore, & Sawicky, 1996). The marketplace is viewed by some as

the only way to provide options for the poor that the rich traditionally have enjoyed. In fact, school-choice initiatives in some locales have created strange bedfellows in that conservative citizen groups have joined forces with parents of color to support efforts to open education to the marketplace.

Despite mounting public interest, critics of marketplace models of education argue that consumer choices should not drive the educational enterprise. More specifically, some fear that the privatization of education will hinder efforts to diversify and democratize American schools (Fowler, 1991). Because families will select schools with staff members and students who look like them and think as they do, this will decrease diversity within schools. Giroux (2003) has further argued that the corporatized model of education “cancels out the democratic ideals and practices of civil society by either devaluing or absorbing them within the logic of the market” (p. 79).

Substantial current attention focuses on various voucher proposals under which families would receive a state voucher of a designated amount per child that can be redeemed at a public or private school of their choice.⁴ States may be reluctant to adopt voucher plans to fund all education because students currently supported by their families in private schools or home education programs would receive state support under a general voucher program. However, targeted voucher plans, focusing on disadvantaged students or those attending deficient public schools, are likely to increase and are currently being considered in about half of the states.

Unlike states' hesitation to adopt comprehensive voucher systems to fund education, most have enthusiastically enacted charter school legislation during the past few years. In 1992 only two states—Minnesota and California—had passed charter school legislation, but by December, 2003, charter school legislation had been passed in 40 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico (Education Commission of the States, 2002; U.S. Charter Schools, 2003). Charter school laws vary greatly across states, but most relax state regulations for schools that are granted charters by state or local education agencies or state universities. Most charter school laws place a cap on the number of charters that will be awarded, and some place restrictions on the types of entities that can apply (e.g., nonsectarian and nonprofit groups).

Private companies presently manage about 10% of the charter schools nationally, and several virtual or online charter schools have been established. Critics of corporate involvement in schools contend that some important features of the school program, including the values and desires of the local community, may be neglected with so much riding on the companies' reaching their target objectives (McCarthy, 2002a).

School leaders, those preparing them, and policy makers need to understand the values guiding various models to privatize education because cur-

rent decisions in this regard will affect the next generation of students and beyond. Consumer-driven education, with its focus on individual choice and advancement, differs greatly from government-run common school that focuses on promoting the nation's general welfare. Moreover, these privatization strategies have important social justice implications for education as individual schools will become more homogeneous because they are designed to appeal to only a portion of the market. This could have a negative impact on efforts to promote diversity and respect for those with different backgrounds and beliefs. Clearly, each of these choice-based models provides a vision for our educational system; these competing visions must be questioned and carefully examined.

School leaders will face very different educational environments and challenges in the age of school privatization. Leadership preparation programs need to explore the potential for the school privatization movement to alter the purposes and basic structure of schooling in our nation. If school privatization becomes dominant, the change in the nature of education in our nation could be as momentous as the common school movement in the 1800s.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL LEADERS

As our field debates how school leaders should be prepared, attention often focuses primarily on the effectiveness and efficiency of schools. This narrow conversation results in the identification of specific skills and performances that potential administrators must exhibit—frequently ignoring knowledge that cannot be quantified. We are not contesting the importance of technical expertise; however, failure to prepare administrators to engage in difficult work that requires a shift in values, attitudes, and behaviors within the school community severely limits their ability to address fundamental social justice issues. Giroux (1993) has urged educational leadership faculty to create “a new language capable of asking new questions and generating more critical practices” (p. 37). He has noted that “such a language would have to reformulate traditional notions of authority, ethics, power, culture, and pedagogy” (p. 37). The emerging social justice discourse provides a means to create this language and to focus directly on concerns about equity, student achievement, diversity, privilege, and social responsibility.

For educational leadership preparation programs to promote a social justice orientation, they must develop in their students what McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) have called *practiced reflexivity*, where individuals consciously take responsibility for their actions—recognizing that all actions

have an impact on the community. McKenzie and Scheurich further have noted that the school leader's job requires a constant, vigilant critical perspective that always asks the questions

What are we doing? Why are we doing it? What do we value? Why do we value what we do? How are our values evident or not evident in our practice? How is what we're doing affecting all students? Is what we're doing privileging one group over another? Is what we're doing working for all students, why or why not? Are our practices transparent? Is our leadership transparent? (p. 3)

Such critical discourse calls for preparation experiences that are very different from traditional university programs. Pounder, Reitzug, and Young (2002) noted that this means that leaders must be provided with new analytical skills, knowledge, and dispositions to promote social justice in schools. Among their recommendations they suggested a range of ideas: participating in field-based inquiry focused on oppression and discrimination, analyzing empirical data regarding racism in schools, examining stereotypes related to oppression, facilitating the creation of a rigorous and inclusive curriculum, and developing socially just practices among all individuals within the school community.

The social justice leadership discourse means that administrative preparation programs must encourage future school leaders to think very differently about organizational structures and leadership roles. Instead of continuing with incremental reforms that simply add more layers to existing structures, it is imperative to reconstruct roles and relationships at the school level around a vibrant core purpose focused on social justice and directed at improving student learning. This cannot be accomplished without concentrated expertise in teaching and learning. School leaders must possess high-quality instructional skills, be able to support the learning of both students and adults in the school, raise critical issues concerning equity and privilege, and be able to provide leadership for collective responsibility for school improvement. A growing number of leadership preparation programs are attempting to meet these challenges with coursework and teaching strategies directed at educating leaders to do social justice work (see Hafner, *in press*, for a rich discussion of teaching strategies, programs, and resources).

The interdependent nature of education requires all segments of the educational enterprise—local schools, state licensure boards, higher education, professional associations—to collaborate in the preparation of a new type of school leader who is strongly committed to achieving social justice, one who draws on wide-ranging fields including educational leadership, curriculum, instruction, learning theory, communication, political theory, cultural

studies, early childhood education, and systems theory. A challenge at the forefront of the papers commissioned by the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation is the assertion that substantive change in leadership preparation requires collaboration among all segments of the schooling enterprise (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). New structures are needed to enable this deliberation. The disconnect among the groups that influence or are responsible for school leadership impedes thoughtful reconsideration of leadership preparation. At both state and federal levels, processes must be established to facilitate conversations leading to reconceptualizing leadership for social justice. At the state level, departments of education could begin the work by serving as conveners of such sessions. From ongoing dialogue, a broader vision could be forged for creating new leadership roles for social justice and the requisite preparation and licensure requirements.

At the preparation level, recognition of the inextricable link between practitioners and the academy signals the need for close collaboration in the design and delivery of leadership programs. This is particularly important because school leaders generally find the academy irrelevant to their work (Cambron-McCabe & Cunningham, 2002; Hess & Kelly, 2005, this issue). For the most part, the formal preparation of preservice administrators resides in the academy with minimal input from practice. These programs are developed and taught primarily by professors under the strong influence of state licensure requirements. A few districts, particularly urban districts, are forging new partnerships with higher education faculty to jointly design alternative preparation programs that meet their special needs. We think this form of collaboration can be paramount in redefining leadership roles if it is framed around an emphasis on social justice using a school district's own context. This could provide a means to develop the new analytical skills Pounder et al. (2002) identified.

Furthermore, higher education faculty must model the kinds of organizations they expect their graduates to create. This challenges faculty to reflect on their pedagogy and program content to determine if their efforts represent the social justice questions and actions that they urge practitioners to embrace. Modeling becomes particularly important in the context of the tremendous struggle school leaders confront in reforming their practice. Too often, the academy is viewed as incapable of altering its own programs and as having little potential for informing school reform. Kottkamp (2002) has cautioned that "the largest problem in changing our programs, making them more effective, lies in changing ourselves" (p. 3). Faculty cannot teach about creating and leading socially just schools with credibility if they are not mod-

eling these principles in their own departments, which includes working with practitioners on the front lines to reform schools.

Perhaps it is most important for professors to undertake an advocacy role in influencing educational policy to achieve social justice (Cambron-McCabe & Cunningham, 2002). School leaders and those preparing them will need to be creative and proactive to address current challenges, drawing on the past as well as multiple disciplines for new perspectives to shift their thinking. Blaming school problems on children's characteristics, lack of resources, politics, societal conditions, and myriad other issues simply incapacitates our efforts to achieve substantive transformation of schools. Instead of simply responding to criticisms and calls for change, school leaders need to influence the direction of education in our nation. If graduates of educational administration programs are expected to take on new roles, faculty must be active participants in the political arena when state policies affect social justice issues; mentoring from a distance does not prepare educational leaders for this difficult work.

Social justice discourse in educational leadership is being defined by its inclusiveness and activism. Through a language of critique, public intellectuals are shaping a new discourse with profound implications for social justice and the education of school leaders. This new language may move us closer to Foster's (1986) dream of educating leaders "to develop, challenge, and liberate human souls" (p. 18).

NOTES

1. Numerous presentations have been made at annual meetings of the American Education Research Association, National Council for Professors of Educational Administration, and University Council of Educational Administration. A forthcoming book, *Leadership for Social Justice: Making It Happen* (Marshall and Oliva, in press), has been created as a textbook for leadership preparation programs. Also, special issues of the *Journal of School Leadership and Educational Administration Quarterly* have been devoted to the social justice challenges facing educational administration.

2. See Furman and Gruenewald (2004) for an ecological critique of the current social justice discourse. They have argued that social justice must also consider the link between social and ecological systems and the impact on the future of humans, nonhumans, and habitats globally.

3. Deficit-thinking posits that students' academic failure results from the deficiencies they bring to school (i.e., poor, dysfunctional family, etc.). Consequently, this thinking leads to assignment in low-level classes, identification as special education, harsher discipline, and dropping out.

4. The Supreme Court found no federal constitutional barrier to voucher programs—under which state vouchers can be redeemed at public or private schools—including religious schools (*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 2002). However, such programs still may abridge stronger anti-establishment provisions in the constitutions of 36 states (see *Davey v. Locke*, 2004).

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