


2017

Educational Leadership and Social Justice in the United States

Margaret Grogan

Chapman University, grogan@chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/education_articles

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), and the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grogan, M. (2014). Educational leadership and social justice in the United States. *Bildung und Erziehung*, 67(3): 299-312. doi: 10.7788/bue-2014-0305

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Educational Studies at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Faculty Articles and Research by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

Educational Leadership and Social Justice in the United States

Comments

This article was originally published in *Bildung und Erziehung*, volume 67, issue 3, in 2014. DOI: [10.7788/bue-2014-0305](https://doi.org/10.7788/bue-2014-0305)

Copyright

De Gruyter

Grogan, M. (2014). Educational leadership and social justice in the United States. In *Bildung und Erziehung* 67(3) 299-312.

Margaret Grogan

Educational Leadership and Social Justice in the United States

Summary: Principals and superintendents of public schools are under intense pressure to raise the level of student academic achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001), mandated the reporting of student test scores disaggregated by race, socio-economic status, English language proficiency, and participation in special education. The aim of the legislation was to eliminate the test score gap between middle class white students and under-represented minorities. However, too many recent graduates still demonstrate very weak literacy and numeracy skills. They are not likely to lead fulfilling lives. School leaders have a moral imperative to address this injustice. Research shows that the concept of leadership for social justice has enabled school leaders to think and act in productive ways so that their school communities are more democratic and inclusive. The best hope for social change resides within diverse school communities where students and staff are encouraged to be activists.

Zusammenfassung: Schuldirektoren und Schulräte sind unter großem Druck, den Grad des akademischen Niveaus öffentlicher Schulen zu heben. Das *No Child Left Behind* [„Kein Kind wird zurückgelassen“]-Gesetz von 2001 erzwang die Übermittlung der Testergebnisse von Schülerinnen und Schülern ohne Unterscheidung der Rasse, des sozio-ökonomischen Status, des Sprachvermögens im Englischen und der Teilnahme an besonderen Erziehungs- und Bildungsprogrammen. Das Ziel des Gesetzgebers war es, die Diskrepanz der Testergebnisse zwischen weißen Schülerinnen und Schülern der Mittelklasse und unterrepräsentierten Minderheiten zu eliminieren. Jedoch weisen immer noch zu viele Absolventen der jüngsten Jahrgänge sehr schwache sprachliche und mathematische Fähigkeiten auf. Es ist nicht wahrscheinlich, dass sie ein erfülltes Leben führen werden. Schulleiter/-innen haben eine moralische Verpflichtung, gegen diese Ungerechtigkeit anzugehen. Die Forschung zeigt, dass das „Konzept der *Leadership Education* für soziale Gerechtigkeit“ es Schulleitern und Schulleiterinnen ermöglicht, produktiv auf mehr Demokratie und Inklusivität hin an ihren

Schulgemeinschaften zu denken und zu handeln. Die größte Hoffnung auf sozialen Wandel liegt bei heterogenen Schulgemeinschaften, wo Schüler/-innen und Mitarbeiter/-innen ermutigt werden, Aktivisten zu sein.

1. Introduction

There is a heated debate in the United States right now about leading change in schools and districts. Although there has probably never been a time when educators and/or the public were fully satisfied with public schools in this country, it's safe to say there is now loud criticism of teachers, students, pedagogy, curriculum, and school funding formulas from all quarters. However, more students than ever before are graduating from high school and more students are receiving an education than ever before.¹ Even the percentage of dropout students, ages 16 to 24 without a high school diploma or a General Education Development GED test, equivalent to a high school diploma, has declined from 12 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2012. So what's going on?

Since 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), has mandated the reporting of student test score data disaggregated by race, socio-economic status, English language proficiency, and participation in special education. A school's "report card" is published annually on the school's website and on the state department of education's website. The Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) of students in each public school is calculated within subgroup as well as overall. Schools have been under intense pressure to get 100 percent of their students scoring proficient or better on state tests of reading/language arts and mathematics by 2014. The aim of this federal legislation is to eliminate the achievement gap that exists between white students and most under-represented minorities (URM) (Asian-Americans are often an exception), and between rich and poor students. While laudable in its intent, unfortunately, the unintended consequences of the legislation have been less than positive – particularly for schools that serve a majority of URM students and those in the urban or rural centers serving either or both URM and students in poverty. The students themselves are often seen as the problem. To date, the gap remains as large as it was when the Act was passed into law (ROBELEN 2013). So while it's true to say that the education system in the United States is reaching more of the population and keeping more in school, the big question is to what effect? Schooling cannot be seen as a public

good if a large proportion of students who participate in the schooling cannot reap all the benefits of education. That growing realization is at the core of the contentious debate. This article looks at one way the field of educational leadership is responding to the clamor for change: infusing leadership with a moral purpose to serve well *all* students in schools instead of only those whose wealth and social class privileges them.

2. The Meaning of Leading for Social Justice

With the NCLB context in mind, it is easy to understand why the field of educational leadership in the United States for the past decade or so has been preoccupied with comprehending how leaders can make a difference in student achievement. Numerous research studies of principals and superintendents have been conducted to try to understand the indirect relationships between leaders, teachers and student learning. Researchers are scrutinizing university programs preparing and developing school and district leaders to help identify ways to intervene in established practices that maintain the status quo. No stone in the canon of literature on educational leadership has been left unturned in the attempt to create and manage schools and districts (private and public) that respond better to the needs of all children and youth in our system. The prevailing mood is one of skepticism. Ineffective and sometimes counterproductive Federal policies, such as the Race to the Top (RTT) grants, have not provided any solutions. Clearly, the data collected over the past twelve years illustrate the lack of progress we've made ensuring that all our students get a good enough education to be fully productive citizens. According to the latest figures, although 35 percent of the nation's eighth graders were testing proficient or above in mathematics and 36 percent were the same in reading, only 14 percent of Black and 21 percent of Hispanic students had reached the proficient or above level in mathematics, and only 17 percent of Black and 22 percent of Hispanic students had reached the same level in reading.² According to the 2012 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey, the United States performed below the international average in both literacy and numeracy out of 24 participating countries. In addition, the U.S. scored second lowest on the problem-solving technology rich environments scale out of 19 participating countries. Suffice it to say there is plenty of fuel for critics of education to argue that our system is not working well.

Though the debate continues to rage over the extent to which new managerialism and the market economy are derailing the public school system, many scholars and practitioners are focusing on the unrealized potential of leadership in schools to bring about lasting change. This project runs parallel to other projects critiquing state and federal education policy. Generally put, leadership in schools refers to the actions, behaviors and attitudes of those in formal leadership roles such as principal and superintendent. According to the literature, there has been some traction in considering this work through the conceptual lens of social justice. The term, social justice leadership, has been defined in many ways, but there is a growing consensus in the literature on educational leadership and social justice that leading for social justice refers to the practice of leadership that is guided by a set of ethical principles including but, not limited to, equity, equality, fairness, diversity and inclusiveness (SHOHO et al. 2005). Most authors refer to social justice when expressing the desire to eliminate marginalization from their settings (THEOHARIS 2007). When talking of the need to fight prejudice and discrimination, authors invoke the notion of social justice to empower groups who have not enjoyed the power and privilege that accrue to white, middle class students in our schools (REED 2008). JERRY STARRATT (1994) wrote that all social arrangements benefit some groups more than others. He encouraged researchers and practitioners to ask: Who benefits most from the educational policies and practices that shape our schools? Answers in the form of hard data reveal the extent to which there is inequality and marginalization in education. “The ethical challenge is to make these social arrangements more responsive to the human and social rights of all the citizens, to enable those affected by social arrangements to have a voice in evaluating the consequences and in altering them in the interests of the common good and of fuller participation and justice for individuals” (ibid., 47). MARSHALL and GERSTL-PEPIN (2005) expand the idea of social justice to include both RAWLS’S (1971) argument for distributive justice and IRIS MARION YOUNG’S (1990) attention to the power of the social structure, which determines the patterns of distribution of material goods—so that achieving social justice depends on both a relational and a distributive perspective.

3. Social Justice in the Practice of Educational Leadership

In the United States, school principals and district superintendents have the most power of decision making within the local system. Although it is understood that teachers have the most influence on student achievement, the scope of their power is limited mainly to the classroom. Thus, individuals holding formal leadership positions are considered to be the most accountable for the justice or injustice of school policies and practices. Principals and superintendents often argue that their actions are constrained by federal and state education policy, but there is great opportunity for local decision making to implement policy and shape practice in ways that minimize or enhance adverse effects on groups of students. Indeed, local control is one of the major distinguishing features of the way schools are organized in the U. S. Districts are comprised of several school buildings depending on the location and density of population. Small districts govern two or three schools, but large ones serve thousands of students.³ Each district is governed by a school board, elected or appointed according to law, which is responsible for implementing state and federal policy and determining local policy. School boards appoint superintendents who appoint principals. Budgets, administrator and teacher contracts, salary schedules, school size etc. are local decisions. In states where there is collective bargaining, districts negotiate with teachers' unions. State policies govern curriculum standards, testing, but not teaching methods. "State legislatures generally retain authority but defer to localities to generate local funds and to work out details of implementing policies and delivering services" (MARSHALL/GERSTL-PEPIN 2005, 127).

Studies of principals and superintendents have helped researchers understand what leaders mean when they describe how social justice influences their decision-making. In the early 2000s, as social justice came to be associated with school and district leadership, researchers noted that leaders for social justice were often members of under-represented groups and were, therefore, inspired to serve their particular communities better. Several studies identified principals whose perspectives on what they were doing in their roles as principals to address issues of social justice began to shape a picture of such leadership. MERCHANT/SOHO (2010) studied social justice principals who had had personal experiences of marginalization in their own lives. These experiences helped the principals to develop a strong commitment to ensuring others in their schools had better opportunities. RADD (2008) found that some leaders for social justice used particular theories, such as critical race theory or gender theory or versions of Marxist thought to guide their thinking. Armed with an understanding of how the system in

place marginalized the group they were most interested in, these principals strove to make changes in school practices at least to improve the lives of the target group. Similarly, REED (2008) discovered a number of leaders whose passion for ending discrimination of the African-American population kept them focused. But after studying several individuals, and realizing a growth in her own consciousness of discrimination against those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer, REED advocated for an expanded view of social justice – one that encompasses all kinds of discrimination. Likewise, RADD found the most effective of the social justice leaders in her study “aimed to eliminate all forms of oppression, including the impacts of racism, poverty, homophobia, and sexism among others” (RADD 2008, 281).

Several scholars wrote of the pushback many principals received as they forged ahead with their work. Because of resistance to their efforts, principals in THEOHARIS’s (2008) research experienced physical and mental struggles as they enacted an equity-oriented agenda in their schools. They restructured their schools to better serve all populations including eliminating tracking for mathematics, pull-out programs for special education students, and for English language learners. Also with a clear focus on designing heterogeneous learning environments, FRATTURA and CAPPER (2007) described school leaders who created an integrated service approach to their schools. For leaders in these settings, social justice entailed refusing to segregate learners in any specialized programs. In other schools, approaches that enabled principals to deal effectively with marginalization included forming communities of practice across the wider school community (SCANLAN 2013). In this study, principals brought teachers, parents, staff and other community members together to enhance the learning of all students. Similarly, WASONGA (2009) recorded several principal practices that emphasized community: shared decision making, advocacy, attending to relationships and exercising social control with purpose. Together with teachers and community members, principals determined priorities that focused on student learning inclusive of everyone served in the school. Another study, with a particular focus on indigenous communities, also emphasized the principal’s role in generating collective action to bring about social justice that is culturally respectful (BENHAM/MURAKAMI 2014). Also in BENHAM and MURAKAMI’s research, echoing several other studies, the importance of social identity appears in discussions of the principals and their work. For example, KOSE’s (2007) study found that social justice principals promoted two closely interwoven strands of professional development for their teachers in order to bring about

meaningful change in their schools. The professional development focused on subject matter expertise and on social identity development. The latter encouraged personal diversity awareness, affirming diversity and increasing cultural capital for marginalized students. There was particular attention paid to race and ethnicity in all schools studied.

Thus, through concrete examples of leadership activities, research has begun to flesh out how conceptions of social justice can influence principals' daily work. Ironically, in the absence of the much despised NCLB, we would never have had permission to address inequities grounded in race, ethnicity, language, disability, sexuality and so on. And while there are few statistical measures available of how these approaches have resulted in increased student achievement or well-being, there is now a compelling moral impetus for attention to marginalization. However, beyond the individual example, how do we encourage the majority of school leaders to embrace social justice?

4. Conceptualizing Social Justice Leadership to Build Capacity for Future Change

GAIL FURMAN's (2012) in-depth review of this literature on the practices of educational leaders described as social justice leaders contributes a much-needed conceptual framework for social justice leaders as a praxis. She identifies five dimensions of praxis: the personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic and ecological. In so doing, she places emphasis on the notion that both reflection and action (praxis) is required to be effective. Leaders who espouse social justice principles but who consistently fail to enact change that reflects such principles are not yet social justice leaders. Just as leaders whose willingness to change their schools' practices and policies without a clear ethical sense of why the work is needed will not make the kind of changes that address issues of marginalization.

In short, leaders who simply 'reform' schools in response to pressures to raise test scores are likely to adopt new practices that are as flawed as the previous ones. Worse still, students can become further marginalized or pushed out of schools where teachers and leaders do not really understand what marginalization is or how it is caused. And yet, even leaders with the best knowledge of and commitment to principles of social justice will face dilemmas when the needs of different groups conflict with each other and when resources are finite. The key is a

commitment to act. Several scholars have recognized that partial success is better than none (DEMATTHEWS/MAWHINNEY 2014; RADD 2008; THEOHARIS 2007).

But we cannot rely only on those school leaders whose lived experiences prompt them personally to make change. In order for marginalized groups to gain a better education in our public school system, capacity within schools and districts needs to be developed and maintained. Like FURMAN (2012), many argue that leadership preparation and development programs must be designed explicitly to encourage all leaders to embrace a social justice perspective if they do not already do so, and to provide leaders with concrete advice and suggestions for how to enact these beliefs effectively. But leaders have to be prepared to do even more than become reform agents. Some have called this being a “civil rights worker” (SCHEURICH/SKRLA 2003). This label elevates the work and places it on a par with the kind of activism that characterized the civil rights movement in the United States. When it is understood that an inadequate public school system offers a rigorous education to only a portion of the population, it is clear that the rights of the others have been abridged. The goal of such leadership preparation and development, then, is to increase the expertise and consciousness of leaders so that they learn to recognize inequities across the board, not only in groups they are familiar with. Moreover, leaders need particular knowledge and skills to keep them focused on raising academic achievement as well as promoting the social and emotional well-being of all their students. Most important is that all students are taught to become critically aware citizens fully engaged in the democratic process (SHIELDS 2004). A recognition that individuals’ social identity influences their learning is at the heart of these discussions. Thus, leaders’ and aspiring leaders are encouraged first to understand their own social identity, and then to learn how others’ social identity is formed historically, economically and politically.

FURMAN (2012) argues for drawing on the work of FREIRE (2002) to emphasize how important it is that serious intellectually informed reflection accompanies activism. Only with deep knowledge of the way social, political and economic forces have oppressed groups can attempts to redress such wrongs have any success. Operating at both the intrapersonal and the extrapersonal levels, leadership for social justice praxis involves “... self-knowledge, critical self-reflection, ...[and] ... knowing and understanding systemic social justice issues, reflecting on these issues, and taking action to address them” (FURMAN 2012, 203). Principals’ and superintendents’ transformative learning (BROWN 2006; SHIELDS 2011) must precede action.

This learning is thought of as a necessary though not sufficient condition for leaders to take any action in their schools or districts or to influence others' to make changes. BROWN (2006) found that pre-service leaders who participated in ongoing discourse about justice and equity gradually gained rich understandings of their own biases and perspectives that helped to limit their meaning making of others' circumstances. Drawing on MEZIROW (1998), BROWN's students began to realize the extent of their own agency and how they might work for collective change in their schools. But the raising of consciousness is a three-part process. First, pre-service and in-service principals and superintendents' views of the world must become more critically aware, then, they must help to cultivate a similar level of understanding in their teachers and other school staff, and finally, for real effect to take place, students must develop a consciousness of their own marginalization (MCKENZIE et al. 2008).

A synonym for social justice leadership, transformative leadership has taken root in the discourse of educational leadership in the U. S. According to BLACKMORE (2011), the term "calls upon a range of disciplinary fields – such as sociology, history, cultural studies, and psychology – and multiple perspectives within each field – feminist, critical, indigenous, and post-colonial" (BLACKMORE 2011, 26). Decisions and actions made in such schools are based on the moral dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility (SHIELDS 2011). Rather than preparing leaders to think in terms of technical strategies and short-term solutions, it is necessary to build capacity to embrace long-term questions of justice and democracy. The next generation will need alternative political and social concepts that contribute to the flourishing of all humankind. "A just society is one which provides conditions of possibility for all its citizens to achieve, through the recognition of difference and establishing redistributive policies within a democratic framework" (BLACKMORE 2011, 26). Transformative leaders work towards fulfilling the goals of liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity and excellence (SHIELDS 2011). Once this capacity for social justice has been developed, the school becomes the site of rich and ongoing dialogue amongst students, teachers and administrators that keeps probing the life chances of students being educated in an imperfect system. Each student is encouraged to critically assess her or his opportunities in the real world defined by the local and global societies to which each belongs. Although leaders in schools today are constrained by the emphasis on high-stakes testing and narrowly construed notions of achievement, the desire for fundamental social, political and economic change and the tools by which to help bring about change must be

engendered within the current curriculum. Leaders for social justice embrace the notion that the ultimate purpose of education is to arrive at a transformed society. As BLACKMORE points out: “Transformative ... leadership is political in both its intent and practice” (BLACKMORE 2011, 34).

Once the importance of capacity building has been understood, the most effective way for transformative leaders to stimulate the necessary critical dialogues is to build a school community that is firmly and proudly embedded in the local community. Despite the rhetoric, it is still rare for community voices to play an important role in school or district affairs. As MARSHALL and GERSTL-PEPIN (2005) found in their review of district politics, customary patterns of interaction between school boards and community power structures maintain existing forms of privilege. Only certain segments of the community participate habitually in the various school forums, on advisory boards, and task forces that help shape local educational policy. Those whose socio-economic status, class, level of education, ethnicity, race, and/or ability to speak English puts them on the periphery usually remain silent. However, when school and district leaders are prepared to share power and privilege, and when they open up the school community to the kind of deliberative democratic processes that allow for real dissent, then students, teachers and community stakeholders begin to glimpse the possibilities of a transformative society. But it is not enough to merely invite marginalized others to participate in such dialogues, they must be given a seat at the decision making table and the power to set the agenda (SMITH 2009). FURMAN (2012) argues that the deep listening skills, cross-cultural communications competences, and capacities to facilitate dialogue that are developed in the interpersonal dimension of social justice leadership are highly relevant in the communal dimension. Social justice praxis emerges from such experiences. Students should be able to critique the democratic practices in their own settings in order to be able to create more inclusive, respectful processes as they go forward. For a truly democratic education, students must be given opportunities to cultivate deliberative capacities in school so that they can participate fully in governance as adults. AMY GUTMANN advocates “an increase in the willingness and ability of students to *reason and argue about politics, collectively and critically, respectful of their reasonable differences ...*” (GUTMANN 1993, 6; italics in the original). What better way to provide students with opportunities to practice these ideals than to involve them in authentic community-based structures that play a legitimate role in shaping school policy and

practice. In the best case, then, social justice leaders both create the diverse forums and find ways for students (teachers and staff) to participate.

For students to become social justice activists themselves, not only do they need a rigorous, critical curriculum of studies that situates their lives historically, culturally, economically, politically and socially within their own and global communities, but they also need models of transformative practice. DANTLEY advocates for school leaders “to become grassroots activists or organic intellectuals for the progressive reconstruction of schools” (DANTLEY 2007, 160). Therefore, the extent to which school leaders demonstrate their faith in the deliberative democratic processes informed by a critical awareness of power and privilege, is the extent to which others in the school community are likely to embrace the idea of transformation of society. A critical imagination goes only so far without concrete examples of action.

5. Aspiring to a Just Society

MARTHA NUSSBAUM (2013) writes about “societies aspiring to justice” (p. 9). This seems like a timely comment in recognition of our failures to reach the kind of social, economic and political equality dreamed of by such statesmen as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Though a mature, liberal democracy, the United States appears instead to be moving along a trajectory that exacerbates the gulf between rich and poor. Education (both elementary and secondary, and post-secondary) is being used as a whipping boy on both sides of the aisle – with less than positive outcomes according to the statistics mentioned earlier. Indeed, education historian DIANE RAVITCH, quoted in an article by VALERIE STRAUSS (2014), offers a very bleak assessment of what is happening at the present time. RAVITCH fears that the new Common Core Standards will only worsen conditions for teachers and students in schools. “Never have public schools been as subject to upheaval, assault, and chaos as they are today. ... schools need stability, not constant turnover and change. Yet for the past dozen years, ill-advised federal and state policies have rained down on students, teachers, principals, and schools” (STRAUSS 2014, 1).

Therefore, to fulfill an aspiration to a more just society is precisely why school leaders must make continual efforts to emphasize social justice in their daily interactions. The institution

of public education is not currently capable of living up to its promise. Of course, it is unreasonable to suppose that even one or two hundred principals can build enough capacity to bring about fundamental social change. The political landscape within which schools are embedded is far too complex and too removed from the acts of individuals no matter how well intentioned they are. Nevertheless, principals and superintendents do set the tone for the education that is valued in their buildings and districts. Their strong leadership in matters of thought and moral purpose is necessary, if not sufficient, to help create a more just society in the future. Moreover, principals, superintendents, teachers and parents also have voices to sway votes and influence legislatures – and, more to the point, at 18, students have the power and the responsibility to use their political clout. That is where capacity building can have most effect. But, to expect or hope the impetus for change will come from young adults depends on the kind of education offered to their local communities. Political emotions are born and nurtured (or not) in each school context, the best of which are those cognizant of their historical and cultural situatedness. NUSSBAUM argues that one of the main tasks for the political cultivation of emotion is “to engender and sustain strong commitment to worthy projects that require effort and sacrifice – such as social redistribution, the full inclusion of previously excluded or marginalized groups, the protection of the environment [and so on, M. G.]” (NUSSBAUM 2013, 3).

Without doubt, there are ample opportunities within schools to develop the kind of political emotions that will get us further toward a just society. The content of the curriculum notwithstanding, leaders can ensure that critical pedagogies are employed and that teachers are supported in all their attempts to reach students and engage them in raising consciousness. School life includes not only that which pertains to the classroom but also to the extracurricular activities, to the social and arts-based opportunities provided to members of the school community through decisions made at the local level. As already mentioned, a commitment to social justice permeates everything principals and superintendents are involved in. But, with an eye to influencing the future, school leaders must be deliberate about how they can provide an arena in which “the shaping of politically appropriate sympathy will take place, and in which inappropriate forms of hatred, disgust, and shame will be discouraged” (ibid., 124). In accordance with our values of free speech, and free association, the school must also provide many occasions for vigorous criticism and debate. “A vigilant critical culture is, indeed, a key to the stability of liberal values” (ibid., 124). NUSSBAUM asserts that young people need more than

critically informed conceptions of how their societies have arrived at where they are if they are to be motivated to strive for more justice than currently exists. To maintain and improve the institutions we have already created to meet the goals of true equality and human dignity, the cultivation of emotions attached to political ideals can provide the necessary motivation. When school communities are formed and developed as places where real people interact compassionately with each other, where marginalization is not tolerated, members of the community will become ‘circles of concern.’ If students learn to care about others within this circle, the desire to fight for justice becomes personal and particular. But NUSSBAUM (2013) also cautions us against the uneven emotion of favoring the individual cause over the common cause. A balance must be struck between wanting the best for our own group and upholding fairness for all. And what better places to wrestle with these tensions than within school communities?

In the end, hope for the future lies in exposing the injustices that currently exist and refusing to accept the status quo. Our biggest impediments to change, along with the negative emotions of hatred, disgust and shame, are complacency and passivity. Drawing on the power of education, school and district leaders can either maintain such damaging attitudes or they can actively work together with their communities to transform society. Their legacy to the next generation requires nothing less of them.

Notes

1 According to NCES figures (2013) 3.1 million students received high school diplomas from public schools in 2009/10. Total public school enrollment reached 49.5 million in 2010/11 and enrollment 9-12 is projected to continue to rise until 21/22.

2 NAEP results (2013) retrieved April 20, 2014 from http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups

3 New York City is the largest district in the country serving 1.1 million students in 1,700 schools. Retrieved April 21, 2014 from <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/default.htm>.

References

Benham, M./Murakami, E. T. (2014): Engaging in educational leadership. In: Grogan, M. (ed.): Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership (3rd ed.). San Francisco, 148–165.

Blackmore, J. (2011): Leadership in pursuit of purpose: Social, economic and political transformation. In: Shields, C. M. (ed.): Transformative leadership: A reader. New York, 21–36.

- Brown, K. M. (2006): Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. In: *Educational Administration*, 42(5), 700–745.
- Dantley, M. E. (2007): Re-radicalizing the consciousness in educational leadership: The critically spiritual imperative toward keeping the promise. In: Carlson, D./Gause, C. P. (ed.): *Keeping the promise*. New York, 159–176.
- DeMatthews, D./Mawhinney, H. (January, 2014). Social justice leadership and inclusion: Exploring challenges in an urban district struggling to address inequities. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Retrieved April 25, from <http://eaq.sagepub.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/content/early/2014/02/05/0013161X13514440.full.pdf+html>
- Frattura, E./Capper, C. (2007): *Leadership for social justice in practice: Integrated comprehensive services for all learners*. Thousand Oaks. CA.
- Freire, P. (2002): *Pedagogy of the oppressed (30th anniversary edition)* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.) New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970)
- Furman, G. (2012): Social justice leadership as praxis: Developing capacities through preparation programs. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48 (2), 191–229.
- Gutmann, A. (1993): Democracy and democratic education. In: *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 12, 1–9.
- Kose, B. (2007). Principal leadership for social justice: Uncovering the content of teacher professional development. In: *Journal for School Leadership*, 3, 276-312.
- Marshall, C./Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2005): *Re-framing educational politics for social justice*. Boston.
- McKenzie, K. B. et al. (2008): From the field: A proposal for educating leaders for social justice. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(1), 111–138.
- Merchant, B. M./Shoho, A. R. (2010): Bridge people: Civic and educational leaders for social justice. In: Marshall, C./Oliva, M. (Ed.): *Leadership for social justice* (2nd ed.). Boston, 120–138.
- Mezirow, J. (1998): On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48(3), 185-198.
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2013): Literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology rich environments among U.S. adults. http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/country_specific-material.htm. Retrieved April 20, 2014.
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2013): National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups .Retrieved April 20, 2014.
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2013): Public high school graduation rates. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp. Retrieved April 20, 2014.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2013): *Political emotions: Why love matters for justice*. Cambridge, MA.
- Radd, S. (2008). Looking for social justice: Competing perspectives as methodological instrument in a study of school leaders for social justice. In: *Journal of School Leadership*, 18,,268-286.
- Rawls, J. (1971): *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Reed, L. (2008): An expansion of a scholar’s social justice perspective: A meeting at the crossroads. In: *Journal of School Leadership*, 18, 200–223.

- Robelen, E. (2013): NAEP report: A closer Look at trends in the achievement gap. Education Week. http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/06/naep_report_a_closer_look_at_the_achievement_gap.html. Retrieved April 20, 2014.
- Scanlan, M. (2013). A learning architecture: How school leaders can design for learning social justice. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(2), 348-391
- Scheurich, J. J./Skrla, L. (2003): *Leadership for equity and excellence: Creating high achievement classrooms, schools and districts*. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Shields, C. (2004): Dialogic leadership for social justice: Overcoming pathologies of silence. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(1), 111–134.
- Shields, C. M. (2011): Transformative leadership: An introduction. In: Shields, C. M. (ed.): *Transformative leadership: A reader*. New York, 1–20.
- Shoho, A. R./Merchant, B. M./Lugg, C. A. (2005): Social justice: Seeking a common language. In: English, F. W. (ed.): *The Sage handbook of educational leadership: Advances in theory, research and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA, 47–67.
- Smith, D. G. (2009): *Diversity's promise for higher education*. Baltimore, MD.
- Starratt, R. J. (1994): *Building an ethical school*. New York.
- Strauss, V. (2014): Everything you need to know about Common Core – Ravitch. In: *The Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/01/18/everything-you-need-to-know-about-common-core-ravitch/>. Retrieved April 27, 2014.
- Theoharis, G. (2007): Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Towards a theory of social justice leadership. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 221–258.
- Wasonga, T. A. (2009): Leadership practices for social justice, democratic community, and learning: School principals' perspectives. In: *Journal of School Leadership*, 19, 200–224.
- Young, I. M. (1990): *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Biography

Margaret Grogan is currently Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University, California. Originally from Australia, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ancient History and Japanese Language from the University of Queensland. She taught high school in Australia, and was a teacher and an administrator at an international school in Japan where she lived for 17 years. After graduating from Washington State University with a PhD in Educational Administration, she taught at the University of Virginia and at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She researches women in leadership, gender and education, the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership, and leadership for social justice. Her most recent book is *Women and Educational Leadership* (with Charol Shakeshaft) 2011.

Address: Margaret Grogan, Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy, School of Educational Studies, Claremont Graduate University, 150 East Tenth St., Claremont, CA 91711, USA