Forum Research Article

Disability Studies and Educational Leadership Preparation: The Moral Imperative

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Abstract: This article details the experience of two instructors of P12 educational leadership programs in two university settings in different states, NY and NJ, as they seek to disrupt ableist thinking among educational leadership candidates. Analysis of data on placement of students with disabilities in New York and New Jersey from the period of 2014 to the present and state Department of Education field memos were used to contextualize their analysis of critical incidents relevant to their teaching experiences. The authors offer a critique of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Continuum as it has been used to segregate students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers and offer suggestions for how educational leadership preparation should include a Disability Studies (DS) framework as a foundation to disrupt these taken for granted practices.

Keywords: Disability Studies; Educational Leadership; Abelism

Introduction

As learning leaders (Fullan, 2011), P12 school leaders must set the tone and vision for schools and communities in order to facilitate high expectations for all students predicated on a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). In addition, P12 school leaders are responsible for developing a school culture that is inclusive and actively attends to ensuring equity, building relationships based on trust, fostering collaboration and teamwork (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Effective instruction for students with disabilities has been a significant dimension of school improvement, and instructional leadership is considered essential for fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of quality educational leadership (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Educational leaders who are invested in creating effective programs for students with disabilities ensure that teaching practices are high quality and grounded in educational research (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Crockett, 2002). The necessity of educational leadership that embraces a commitment to students with disabilities cannot be overemphasized: "When school leaders focus on fundamental instructional issues, demonstrate strong support for special education and provide ongoing professional development, academic outcomes for students with disabilities and others at risk improve" (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004, p. 3).

Yet, P12 leadership preparation programs spend little time focusing on the development of skill sets, knowledge or habits of mind that take into account the rights of students with disabilities to participate and benefit from education alongside their non-disabled peers. In 2015, the Wallace Foundation began funding a series of studies examining the preparation of school and district leaders. Bringing together findings from four reports,

one each by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), The School Superintendents Association (AASA), the American Institutes for Research (AIR), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), the Wallace Foundation issued five key recommendations for university preparation of school leaders focusing on a high-quality curriculum and emphasizing the skills principals most need, such as: the ability to be instructional leaders, opportunities for candidates to practice important job skills, re-examining the field experience for more sustained time period with robust experiences more closely mirroring the actual job, closer relationship between preparation programs and practitioners in the field for relevance (Wallace Foundation, 2016). Yet the report gives scant attention to the need for preparation programs to become deep reflectors on inclusive practice, enhancing skills to analyze data for disparity or attention to addressing issues of equity are mentioned in the report.

Author Positionality

The authors, both former practicing educational leaders and current professors of Educational Leadership programs, are graduates of Disability Studies programs. This research is centered around a Disability Studies framework to interrogate current trends of special education placement and reflect on the ways Educational Leadership preparation programs can address the discontinuity between stated goals for the improvement of results for students with disabilities and the placement of children in separate and segregated settings at alarmingly high rates.

Theoretical Framework

The authors assert that deep analysis of root causes as they pertain to equity issues for students with disabilities and their families requires leaders to take up a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and DisCrit framework for their work. The existing literature on social justice leadership preparation accepts some of the tenets of DSE and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in terms of opposing oppressive discourses and dismantling oppressive structures, but does not yet highlight the core of DSE and DisCrit theory in terms of disrupting the core presumptions of ableism and how ableism and Whiteness intersect and support one another.

In the literature on training social justice leaders, one finds consistent suggestions for necessary skills and attitudes (Capper, Frattura, & Keyes, 2008; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2009). These attributes include democratic participation of all stakeholders, clear vision of equitably including all learners, and systematic analysis of enabling and disabling organizational structures. Whereas students with disabilities are consistently identified as one of the subgroups of students who should be fully included, the central role of ableism per se has not yet been addressed.

More commonly, structural reforms for inclusive classrooms and schools emphasize bringing all types of supports to the students, rather than sending students to other spaces for support. To that end, Frattura and Capper (2007) advocate a system of "integrated comprehensive services" for schools with heterogeneous student populations, with respect to

race, class, disability, and language of origin. One of the clearest indictments of ableist practices and dispositions arises in Frattura and Capper's discussion of including students regarded as disorderly and disordered:

> "Far too often, we hear administrators, administrative students in our certification courses, and teachers tell us that of course they believe and understand the principles of Integrated Comprehensive Services, but there are just some children who do not belong in school. We typically respond with, 'Who gets to draw the line for belonging?'" (Frattura & Capper, 2007, p. 64).

The emerging DisCrit literature (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016) explores the ways in which disability is raced and race is disabled in education. DisCrit not only seeks to destabilize ableism and normalcy, but also to recognize how deeply racialized are the conventional definitions of normal and deviant, both in terms of learning behaviors (Mendoza, Paguyo, & Gutiérrez, 2016) and social-emotional behaviors, most often centered on compliance (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). However, none of these works address the particular role of school leaders in these practices. Bornstein has contributed qualitative studies of leaders establishing medicalized discourses of disruptive behavior via Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Bornstein, 2016, 2017). In a similar vein, Bal, et al. (2014) have produced guidance on schoolwide practices for culturally responsive PBIS (CRPBIS) that includes leadership practices as part of schoolwide reform, but does not zero in on leadership per se. Manaseri has contributed a program review analyzing leadership preparation as it aligns to social justice frameworks drawing upon the work of Theoharis (2007).

Methods

According to Johnson and Golombek (2002, p. 6), teacher narratives tell: "stories of teachers' growth within their own professional worlds." By telling their stories, teachers can not only reflect on specific incidents within their teaching world, but also feel a sense of cathartic relief for tensions, feelings and frustrations about teaching. This case study used critical narrative to interrogate our teaching as instructors in educational leadership preparation in an effort to make meaning of our experience and probe the deeper political, cultural and social context in which these experiences are embedded. Drawing upon Tripp (1993), we framed incidents from our teaching as questions which included the following:

- How do we, as teachers in educational leadership preparation programs, prepare candidates to identify and dismantle ableism?

- How does the current practice of placement of students with disabilities along a continuum of least restrictive environments impact future school leaders' understandings of ableism?

Data Sources

This study used three data sources. First, we used first person accounts from our own experience as teachers in educational leadership preparation programs. We met via distance technology every other week beginning the Spring semester of 2017 through the Fall semester of 2017 where we identified as critical friends (Swaffield, 2004) and described our teaching experiences. Our second source of data involved a review of published field memos by the New York State Education Department to school administrators as they pertain to students with disabilities from 2014–present. The third source came from the publicly available statewide data on the Least Restrictive Environment for New York and New Jersey for the same time period. During this period Holly taught at a public university in New York state, while Josh taught at a private Catholic university in New Jersey.

Analysis

Critical incident analysis can help teachers to know more about how they operate, to question their own practice and enable them to develop understanding and increase control of professional judgement. It can enable an individual to reflect on their practice and to explain and justify it.

Thiel (1999) suggests that the reporting of critical incidents (written or spoken) should have at the very least the following four steps:

1. Self-observation—identify significant events that occur in the classroom.

2. Detailed written description of what happened—the incident itself, what led up to it and what followed.

3. Self-awareness—analyze why the incident happened.

4. Self-evaluation—consider how the incident led to a change in understanding of teaching.

We compiled and reviewed our bi-weekly open-ended guided reflections to identify strengths, needs, and areas for program improvement. We also identified responses indicating concerns about the topics, readings or specific teaching activities in which we engaged. We described concerns as expressions ranging from devastation, surprise, to hopeful and drew upon the data sources as described above to contextualize our reactions.

Findings

Critical Incident 1: All Means All

In our instruction of aspiring educational leaders, Josh and Holly have both focused on employing equity frameworks exposing educational leadership candidates to readings from Ferri and Connor (2006), Ladson-Billings (2006), Noguera (2008), and Taylor (2001). Candidates analyzed district policies, processes and practices, engage in deep reflection and

discussion about the presence or absence of belonging, meaningful family engagement, support systems and quality instruction and positive school environments. Candidates looked at available school data and probed 1) what the disaggregated data on academic performance between general education students and students with disabilities meant, and how educational leaders could 2) identify and remove barriers, ensure that comprehensive supports were available, and 3) work to enhance instructional practices and design to be flexible and responsive.

Our critical incident reflection from these teaching activities revolved around the repetitive phrase "all means all". Candidates would use the phrase to anchor their analysis of troubling data, policies or practices, explain their own understanding of issues of concern, or in describes next steps they would take to address such issues. We noted that across our respective programs, candidates were easily able to surface this kind of language as being prevalent in their schools and districts. Candidates in our classes were both able to write and speak about the need for "growth mindsets" in their schools, and the commitment to missions and beliefs to hold "high expectations." Students could extend their thinking and provide examples of professional learning communities where discussions about closing achievement gaps were becoming part of their everyday experience.

However, we noted that "all means all" could also work as a bromide, as self-congratulatory rhetoric that assumed educators' best intentions were sufficient evidence of meaningful change. Class discussions of school vision statements were frequently the occasions for surfacing these sentiments. National standards have highlighted the need for leaders to hold a clear vision for their schools, to generate consensus from all stakeholders on that vision, and to use it as a basis for strategic planning and assessment (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Our leadership candidates were quite comfortable with school and district vision statements that touted either success for all students, or enabling all students to reach their fullest potential. They regarded these visions as common sense.

Through critical theory analyses of popular views of education (Kumashiro, 2008), they came to understand that such popular tropes often rationalize oppressive systems. Thus, in contrast to their comfort with vague but positive vision statements, they were initially stymied by more explicit—and potentially disruptive—visions of school equity such as "eliminating class, race, gender and disability as predictors of academic and co-curricular success." They grappled first with the concept that such a vision committed them to ignoring difference, or guaranteeing identical outcomes for all students. As they worked through CRT and DSE analyses of these equity goals, they came to understand that the real pledge was to break the link between students' identities and their success.

As instructors, our reflection on these classroom discussions and review of written work where students could identify, nearly universally, the motto of "all means all" as the belief system necessary to create equitable experiences for P12 students with disabilities provided us with a sense of hope. We were further encouraged—and we use "encouraged"

advisedly in the sense of gaining and spreading courage—by our P12 leadership candidates' growing sense of the need not only for optimism, but also for mettle and resolve when crafting a truly inclusive vision.

Critical Incident 2: Allies, Advocates and Accomplices

Grounding our leadership preparation in DSE analysis disrupts not only conventional tropes about disability, but just as crucially, disrupts conventional tropes about alterity and subjectivity in our educators. Our P12 leadership candidates were teachers aspiring to leadership, with varying prior experience with special education. With or without that specific job experience, they very frequently approached their work from the stance of helper. In Josh's case teaching in a Franciscan University, the students frequently extended that role even further to the kind of charity and mission work associated with Catholicism. To be sure, both Holly and Josh have encountered secular versions of those roles teaching in public and secular universities as well.

Similar to the way that DSE and DisCrit theory helped us to deconstruct dynamics of exclusion and inclusion, we used DSE and DisCrit to explore first the history of ableist othering discourses. We intentionally worked through extensive historical surveys that mapped out the roots of charitable discourses in Abrahamic religions (Shapiro, 1999). With those analyses in hand, we moved on to challenge conventional tropes of pity and altruism that powerfully informed our leadership candidates' commitment, and yet objectified people with disabilities and denied their agency. The emotional and cognitive dissonance we engendered with those lessons was intentional, and a powerful pedagogical opportunity to reconstitute leadership as empowering people who have been marginalized, rather than providing them with educational alms. In this light, leadership students interrogated their own positions of privilege and discourses that disempowered students. Hence, the notion of being an ally took on an empowering dimension found in Freirean pedagogy.

Another important lesson from history has complicated the discussion of inclusion as a civil right. We explored Baynton's (2001) analysis of contemporary social movements that tacitly accepted ableist normativity as the criterion for belonging. In this regard, we analyzed how self-determination could be problematic from a DSE perspective. For example, where marginalized and oppressed people have advocated for inclusion because they were "just as normal" as the dominant group, this demand has implicitly accepted the power structure as currently constituted. Hence, we expected our leadership candidates to have the dispositions and skills to advocate for including all students simply because the students were there, not because of the degree to which they approximated the school's definitions of normalcy.

Critical Incident 3: Memos as Mottos or Movement?

Concurrent to analysis of the critical incident 1 and 2, we reviewed publically available state data on the placement of students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment and field memos from NYS Department of Education that serves as regulatory guidance to school districts for the interpretation of policy and reform efforts.

A New York State Education Department special education field memo (DeLorenzo, 2015) states "Students with disabilities have a fundamental right to receive their special education supports in a classroom and setting that, to the maximum extent appropriate, includes students without disabilities. Under federal law, the presumption is that students with disabilities will attend the same schools they would have attended if they did not have disabilities and that removal or restriction from their regular schools and classrooms can only occur for reasons related to the student's disability when the student's individualized education program (IEP) cannot be satisfactorily implemented in that setting, even with the use of supplementary aids and services." The memo went on to state that in New York State (NYS), data showed that far too many students with disabilities were removed from their general education classes and schools in comparison with other states, and although gains had been made, nearly two decades of reform efforts still indicated that this is a significant area of concern.

Included in this memo to administrators was an update that the NYS Board of Regents discussed "federal law and policy relating to placements of students in the least restrictive environment (LRE); research findings that support inclusion of students with disabilities; historical initiatives of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to ensure students with disabilities are in the LRE; data results at the federal, State, regional and school district level relating to LRE, for both preschool and school age students with disabilities; and a proposed policy to improve LRE placements and results for students with disabilities" (NYSED, 2015).

Data on the Least Restrictive Environment

An analysis of NY statewide data from 2014–15 showed 31.4 percent of NYS' preschool students with disabilities were placed in a separate class, separate school or residential school. When the 2014–15 preschool-only data (i.e., removing the five-year-olds from the statistical analysis) was disaggregated by Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) regions in New York state and New York City (NYC), there were significant regional variations:

● NYC placed 46.6 percent of their preschool children in separate schools and settings;

● School districts representing seven BOCES regions placed between 38 and 22 percent of their preschool children in separate schools and settings;

● School districts representing 13 regions placed between 13.1 and 22 percent of preschool students in separate schools and settings;

● School districts representing seven BOCES regions placed between four and 13.1 percent of preschool students in separate schools and settings; and

● School districts representing 10 BOCES regions placed less than four percent of their preschool students in separate schools and settings.

In the same period, New Jersey provided services for Pre-K students slightly more inclusively than New York did. For students with disabilities ages 3-5, 51.8% received most of their special education and related services in their regular early childhood program. By contrast, 36.6% of students this age with disabilities attended a special education program that was either a separate class or separate program (NJDOE, 2015).

LRE Placements of School Age Students with Disabilities (Ages 6-2)

When compared to 2013-14 national data, NY and NJ served lower percentages of their students, ages 6-21, in regular education classes for 80 percent or more of the school day and significantly higher percentages in regular classes for less than 40 percent of the day and in separate schools.

Table 1 shows statewide data for placements of students with disabilities, ages 6-21.

Table 1: LRE Placement of School Age Students in New York and New Jersey 2013–14

	Placed in Regular Education >80%/day	Placed in Regular Education 40-79%/day	Placed in Regular Education Classes <40%/day	Placed in separate schools, residential placements, or homebound instruction
New York	57.8%	11.7%	19.8%	6.1%
New Jersey	44.3%	26.7%	16.1%	7.5%

(New Jersey Department of Education, 2015b; New York State Education Department, 2017)

New York's 2014–15 statewide LRE data disaggregated by race/ethnicity shows:

- Comparable percentages of students across all race/ethnic groups were placed in general education classes for 80 percent or more of the school day.

- Disproportionately higher combined rates of separate class and separate setting placements for students who were Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders and Asian, compared to students who were White, multi-racial or Hispanic/Latino.

- Disaggregated by disability category, data showed the highest combined rates of placement in separate classes and separate settings for students with emotional disturbance, autism, deafness, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities and deaf-blindness.

New Jersey's data disaggregated by race/ethnicity showed that the trend toward more segregated placement was pronounced for non-White students (New Jersey Department of Education, 2015b).

- Whereas 58% of White students with disabilities ages 6-21 were in regular education classes 80+ percent per day, only 45% of Latino and 46% of African American students with disabilities were placed in the general education setting. Placements for Asian, Native American, and Native Hawaiian students fell roughly in the middle at 50-53%.

- By contrast, 12% of White students were in the most segregated placements, spending less than 40% of the school day in regular education classes. Twenty-two percent of Latino students, and 24% of African American students were in these most segregated placements. Again, other students of color fell roughly in the middle, at 16-20% of these placements.

- The racialized trend apparently reversed for placements in separate schools, residential facilities, and homebound or hospitalized instruction. Here, 3.62% of White students were in those placements, compared to 1.55% for Latino students, and 1.87% for African Americans.

Disaggregated by disability category rather than by race/ethnicity, the highest rates of placement in separate classes and facilities were for multiple disabilities (2.6%), autism (2.0%), emotional disturbance (1.0%), and other health impairment (0.9%) (New Jersey Department of Education, 2015b).

2014–15 NYS data disaggregated by age showed that the percentages of students placed in separate classes and separate settings increased by age (New York State Education Department, 2017). (This age breakdown was not available for NJ.)

- Ages 6–11: 4.1 percent

- Ages 12–13: 5.0 percent

- Ages 14–17: 7.2 percent

- Ages 18–21: 21.6 percent

The reflection on the state data and guidance memos provided significant context to us as instructors. We saw that state level practices regarding the "continuum of placement" endorsed segregated settings that were contrary to the regulatory guidance and stated mission and beliefs from the state office. In our work with the leadership candidates, analyzing these data was a powerful mirror of the disconnect we probed with them between what their ability to verbalize an "all means all" mission, while still failing to envision their role as leaders as those who will act to disrupt ableist policies, practices and structures.

Equity Audits and Restructuring Exercises

In a similar vein, our courses highlighted the use of equity audits (Capper & Young, 2015; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004) and inclusive restructuring (Capper et al., 2008). Students reviewed the techniques in theory and in practice (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cosier, & Dempf-Aldrich, 2011; Ithaca City School District, 2017), and engaged in limited versions for their own schools. The equity audits often led to action research projects for the administrative internship, during which leadership candidates attempted small scale structural reform such as leading pilots of co-teaching.

However, it was the DSE focus that brought home the central idea that ableism is the controlling ideology in all the systems the candidates explored through those techniques. For example, whereas Capper and Young (2015) focus on equity audits as a central technique for leading diverse schools, they do not employ a DSE analysis that explains why inequities are justified by meritocracy, or why segregation and racially disproportionate classification are commonly rationalized in ableist language. For that, Josh exposed candidates to Brantlinger (2006), Davis (2006), and Ferri and Connor (2006). Here, they were able to expose the logic behind "fixing" students, both in the sense of remediating their deficits and in the sense of bonding a deficit identity to those students in the first place. Holly has used the NYS Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities (New York State Department of Education Office of Special Education, 2015). Developed with stakeholders, the Blueprint sought to ensure that students with disabilities had the opportunities to benefit from high quality instruction, to reach the same standards as all students, and to leave school prepared to successfully transition to post school learning, living and employment. Candidates used the document's seven core principles (self-advocacy, families as meaningful partners, access to the general education curriculum, multi-tiered systems of support, evidence-based strategies, high quality inclusive programing, and instruction in career planning) to audit their own district's efforts toward providing these components in the structures, processes, practices and procedures. Using Lake and Billingsley (2000), candidates then contemplated the role of leaders to remove barriers and better reconcile potentially discrepant views that may exist between school professionals and families of students with disabilities as they pertained to meeting the needs of the child or viewing the child's abilities.

Josh found that education leadership candidates struggled with those analyses because they disrupted the candidates' belief in the ostensible function of the special education system to be helpful and therapeutic. However, once they were able to distinguish intent from impact, they had a well-informed determination to be agents of change. By contrast, without the DSE conceptual framework, they were stymied and overwhelmed by data on disproportionality. Holly found that some candidates could recognize and relate to these analyses particularly if they had personal connections as a parent of a child with a disability, or as an ally to a family navigating these challenges. However, many candidates rated their district's efforts as well under way toward meeting the Blueprint principles during their audit and struggled to identify possible ways that deficit thinking, or biases may impact their audit process.

Discussion

Three key themes emerged when looking at the data from a Disability Studies perspective, as outlined here. First, we have identified a need for deeper analysis in a Disability Studies conceptual framework. Second, emerging from that conceptual framework, leadership preparation programs should highlight the disconnect between policy and the existing state of inclusive education (or indeed, the lack thereof). Finally, we recognize that leadership preparation programs have a moral imperative to deeply embed this conceptual framework, analysis, and skill development in their pedagogy.

The Need for Deep Analysis

Leadership standards indicate the need for both skills and dispositions (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). We find that a DSE conceptual framework provides necessary depth in both areas, a depth that it is otherwise lacking. At the level of skill development, we highlight data analysis and structural reform here. For dispositions, we see the need to have candidates analyze the familiar tropes surrounding disability.

Exploring their own systems and comparing those systems to others is a common practice for aspiring leaders in preparation programs. A DSE analysis surfaces the systemic dynamics resulting in LRE data. As Skilton-Sylvester and Slesaransky-Poe write, "The emphasis on students being placed in the Least Restrictive Environment, by definition, makes the student's placement seem like the most important aspect of inclusion when it is, in fact, the minimum" (2009, p. 33). Each school district should review, discuss and develop plans to address their data, by district and schools and disaggregated by disability category, race/ethnicity, gender and age. Data on LRE is publicly reported each year in NY (New York State Education Department, 2017).

We find that DSE analyses of LRE data and equity audit data (Skrla et al., 2004) deepen leadership candidates' understanding of systematic forces that contribute to excessive segregation via special education programming. Deconstructing the hegemonic concepts of normalcy (Davis, 2006) and a continuum of disability and services (Taylor, 2001) unsettles the leadership candidates' acceptance of such data. More particularly, it replaces the notion that the students are somehow broken and in need of fixing, and replaces it with the understanding that the system that fixes them—both by attempting to cure them and by cementing their deficit identities (Brantlinger, 2006)—is what needs to change.

Likewise, we find that analyzing the historic discourses of segregation, eugenics, and charity (Shapiro, 1999) leads to powerful discussions on leadership dispositions on equity and inclusion (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). As noted in the "all means all" incident, the attitudes and assumptions that inform inclusion are often superficial rhetoric. Deeper analysis draws leadership candidates to examine ableist assumptions about empowerment, support, and the concomitant duties of educators. Critical theory thereby encourages aspiring leaders to press beyond good intentions, and to take their colleagues to

the uncomfortable but necessary courageous conversations that unpack institutional oppression. Furthermore, to that end, borrowing protocols on confronting institutional racism (Singleton & Linton, 2006) prove to be even further deepened when joined to DSE and DisCrit analysis that exposes the intersections of racism and ableism in which ableism functions as the polite, acceptable rationale for institutional racism.

Disconnect Between Policy and Problems

Typically, researchers cite a disconnect between policy and practice. However, our review showed that policy in New York state as a response to improving the results for students with disabilities has not addressed some fundamental problems of beliefs and mindset. Recent efforts to improve results for students with disabilities had been codified in the Blueprint for Improved Results for Special Education (New York State Department of Education Office of Special Education, 2015) which outlined seven key principles for reform efforts, including: increased attention to advocacy, support through multi-tiered systems of support, parent and family engagement, specially designed instruction with emphasis on providing access to the general education curriculum, research-based instructional and teaching strategies, high quality inclusive programs and activities, and career pathways. Each principle was further described as what evidence of effective practice looks like.

However, the Blueprint provided only a very brief overview with little reference to the need to address underlying issues of low expectations. Furthermore, nowhere were implicit bias nor historical prejudice toward individuals with disabilities addressed. The policy document offered a false sense of the state of education of students with disabilities. It did not reflect the urgency required to address high rates of segregation and low rates of proficiency, high rates of disproportionality in discipline and suspension, or low rates of graduation and post-secondary attendance. In fact, no principle in this document focused on addressing the adult factors in the construction of the current environment.

The Role of Leadership Preparation

Educational Leadership Preparation programs must prepare aspiring school and district leaders to do critical DSE work as an issue of social justice and equity for all students. Far too many educational leadership preparation programs pay scant attention to students with disabilities as a civil rights issue. Lacking a Disability Studies perspective on this work is a barrier to school and district leader effectiveness and will further compromise the promise of higher achievement for all students.

We argue further that DSE and DisCrit perspectives in leadership preparation invites candidates to dismantle ableism as a central rationale for institutional racism. In our estimation, this is critical to interrupt the discourses in which special education rationales appear to be scientific (Bornstein, 2015, 2017; Brantlinger, 2006). Such discourses contribute to marginalizing culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter, 2012). Hence, leaders who will foster inclusive environments need DSE and DisCrit to eliminate those barriers.

Conclusion

During our leadership instruction, we have come to regard these moments of deconstructing comfortable tropes about ability, disability, and race, as some of the most generative points of all. We recognize that leadership preparation programs have incorporated numerous similar deconstructions of racism and ableism (not to mention sexism and heteronormativity) separately. We are excited by the creative and incisive possibilities that lie ahead as our colleagues in social justice-oriented educational leadership programs adopt the moral imperative of an intersectional approach.

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