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Social justice leadership: implications for roles and responsibilities of school administrators

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Abstract

Social justice is an issue widely debated in the literature. In particular, the roles and responsibilities of school administrators and teachers to ensure social justice in education have been discussed intensively. These discussions have led to emerging of social justice leadership as a new type of leadership and working on. The main purpose of this article is to make an analysis of social justice and social justice leadership based on the literature and to review roles and responsibilities of school administrators related to social justice leadership. Firstly a broad definition of the concept of social justice has been done. Secondly the concept of social justice leadership has been examined and this new type of leadership and its relationships with other types of leadership have been analyzed. Finally the roles and responsibilities of school administrators related to social justice leadership for creation socially just schools have been discussed.

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1. Introduction

World-wide economic and social developments have changed lifestyle and social structures of all nations dramatically. Concepts such as freedom, democracy and human rights have come into prominence in this era and inequities and interpersonal factors that give rise to inequalities have diversified. The idea of providing equality in inequalities has revealed the concept of social justice.

The necessity of ensuring social justice in education and other areas of life is not a new issue in terms of humanity. Laws and social contracts about rights and freedoms, and even some belief systems, give importance the issue and emphasize as a fundamental principle. However, a social effort is necessary to put into practice and ensure social justice. Furthermore, the management of institutions has a great importance to achieve the ideal of social justice.

Sergiovanni (1992) argues that if there is a power imbalance in somewhere, we should be talking about ethics there. This approach underlies concepts of moral and ethical leadership in schools. Furthermore, social justice should be discussed in any environment where there are economic and social inequalities among people. We need to consider social justice problems since schools are human-centered social institutions. Therefore, administration and leadership in schools have a vital role for social justice. However, Marshall (2004) criticizes traditional approach of educational leadership because of ignoring issues and concerns of social justice. Ignoring and marginalization of

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social justice concerns not only affects those with unequal social, educational and professional capital but also limits the voices of allies within educational administration which is going to confront issues of inequality and injustice.

School administrators should fulfill leadership roles and responsibilities to ensure social justice in schools. The main purpose of this article is to make an analysis of social justice and social justice leadership based on the literature and to review roles and responsibilities of school administrators related to social justice leadership.

2. What is social justice?

Human being is born and lives in a society without its own request. At this point, justice is a guide organizing how human being will live as a member of society. Every human being has some obligations to society and may not reject or neglect these obligations. Therefore, social justice is most important issue of contemporary societies, because people's actions can have an impact on other people. However, people's acts have more social impact today than the past (Rebore, 2001).

Theorists and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Marx and Rawls have all strived with the virtues of quality and liberty as they sought to define social justice. Most of the scholars described a communitarian approach to social justice as particularly relevant to the field of psychology. The communitarian viewpoint assumes that humans are "radically interdependent". A communitarian viewpoint considers the balance of principles of deserve (i.e., what is deserved), need (i.e., what is required) and equality (i.e., what is equivalent) to vary according to relationships. Social justice then becomes a deliberation about process and relationships, not simply outcomes (Speight and Vera, 2004; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Spohn, 2001; Miller, 1999).

John Rawls has outlined a particular vision of liberalism that has been sufficiently prominent so as to define the center of a liberal view in the second half of the 20th century. Rawls's central claim is that individuals are entitled to a fair opportunity to pursue a self-chosen view of the good life so long as they do so in a way that respects the rights of others. Rawls argues that the state may hold, promote and enforce a conception of justice, but it may not hold, promote and enforce a vision of the good life. These commitments are expressed in two principles of justice (Strike, 1999):

First principle: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Second principle: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair opportunity.

The first principle emphasizes the individual's right to choose their good and right and the second principle reveals that everyone has equal opportunities pursuing this good and right. These two principles put forward perception of justice around the world today. Every individual has the freedom to live his choice in a socially just and fair order. State strives to ensure social justice in conditions and opportunities providing further good to those who have fewer opportunities than others.

Defining social justice is very difficult since it is not a specific structure. Social justice and democratic community is an ideal, a moral purpose which is never fully realized. Therefore, it is not a thing or specific structure to be reified, defined, reduced, observed and replicated. Rather, it may be understood more usefully as a process, or a way of "ethical living" in a diverse society (Furman and Shields, 2003). In fact, the ideal of social justice exists in legal texts of many countries. However, this ideal makes sense when it reflects in social life.

3. Social justice in the field of educational administration and leadership

Marshall (2004) argues that professors and scholars in educational administration can shape the social justice value stances and skills of practicing and future administrators and future scholars. But traditional policy, leadership training, licensure and selection processes for school leaders often provide only token, isolated stabs at inequities or

see them as management challenges. Many educational administration faculty members may not have the knowledge, materials, strategies, rationales or skills to infuse their curriculum content with issues related to poverty, language minority, special needs, gender, race and sexuality etc. in the push toward credentialing, many faculties and curricula trip lightly on the ways in which education policies are framed without a critical, contextual or historical understanding of social inequities, equity concerns or desires for social justice.

Many scholars complain that the concept of social justice does not find true meaning and it is used to hide inequities in education. Pitt (1998), for example, criticizes that Schools are one of the institutions of the current culture and thus what occurs in them reflects the hegemonic practices of that culture. Ideologically, social justice policy and practice in schools is set within the hegemony of the intellectually trained. This being the case what is presented as social justice is seen through a veneer which has us believing it to be 'natural' and 'normal'. Social justice has been colonized by the dominant social group; it has become a symbol used to legitimate their material practices and thus consolidate their dominance. The policies and practices of the dominant social group result in social justice being defined according to economic gain, while marginal themes focus more on the development of social cohesion and a sense of community. To demonstrate what he means Table 1 below considers the key themes in social justice in terms of the dominant and marginal language used in policy and practice:

Table 1. Key Themes in Social Justice in 'New Times'

Dominant Language	Marginal Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● market driven ● global competitiveness ● individual access ● measured competencies ● development plans ● accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● social cohesion ● social capital ● community ● reciprocity ● trust ● co-operation

Pitt, J. (1998, November). *Social Justice in Education in New Times*. Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, Australia.

Nowadays, a special importance is given to social justice although it is not a new concept in terms of human history. Differentiation among social environments of schools, increasing elements of diversity and roles of schools to create a socially just structure can be shown as main reasons for this. Catherine Marshall, an American scholar, drew attention to social justice in the field of educational administration and leadership. Momentum intensified in the educational administration field in 1999 when 140 scholars convened by Marshall organized as Leadership for Social Justice (McCabe and McCarthy, 2005). Subsequently, social justice was discussed in annual meetings of various educational organizations. Reputable journals in the field of educational administration, such as *Journal of School Leadership and Educational Administration Quarterly*, published special issues on social justice.

4. Social Justice Leadership in Schools

It is not possible to make a definition for social justice that can be used for many years and fits every situation. Because, definition for today does not cover needs of tomorrow. Concept and understanding of Social justice should be renewed constantly since outcomes cannot be predicted in education. Therefore, the definition of social justice in education is a situational and instant definition. Social justice in terms of education, taking into account situational features, can be defined as “a deliberate intervention that requires the moral use of force”. Definition of social justice cannot be separate from the practices of educational leadership (Bogotch, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). the definition of Social justice leadership is also concerned power and influence. Social justice leadership is a social influence to ensure social justice in society or a certain organization.

Leadership for social justice includes the facilitation of moral dialogue that strives for high academic achievement and affirming relationships with students from all backgrounds and ability levels as well as keeping

one's epistemological awareness, value orientation, and practice toward social justice; It has also been characterized as fighting and altering institutionalized inequities, discrimination, and injustices that benefit few students and harm many more. These conceptualizations of leadership for social justice provide underlying purposes and beliefs in principal leadership of teacher learning. However, this scholarship has not focused principal leadership on teacher professional development or surprisingly on student learning for social justice (Kose, 2009; Shields, 2004; Brown, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002).

Conceptualizations and definitions of social justice as applied to educational leadership share a view that educational leaders need to become activist leaders with a focus on equity and appear to assume that a universal understanding of social justice leadership exists among scholars working toward this end (McKenzie et al., 2008). Therefore, the most important responsibility of school administrators is to institutionalize social justice in schools.

4. Conclusion

Ensuring social justice in schools is seen as closely related to leadership behaviors of school administrators. Schools consist of different students and teachers in terms of factors such as race, gender, ethnicity. Ensuring and fostering social justice in such a social environment are responsibility of school administrators. Carrying out leadership roles of school administrators for social justice is very important for teachers to understand concept of social justice and demonstrate appropriate behaviors.

All education systems, which adopt principle of "Education is necessary throughout community", must be sensitive to issues of social justice in schools. Because, this principle gives schools a multi-dimensional feature. Providing education those from different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds in same roof is very useful for socialization. However, it can be start point very large problems unless social justice is ensured. Social injustices in today's schools can lead to tomorrow's economic imbalances. School administrators have a great role to ensure social justice in schools. Therefore, studies related to leadership roles of school administrators to ensure social justice are needed.

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