

# **University Preparation of K-12 Social Justice Leaders: Examination of Intended, Implemented, and Assessed Curriculum**

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*School leaders must design and lead equitable learning environments for all children, and administration preparation programs must build entry-level administrator capacity to do so. This article describes a study examining social justice/critical consciousness curriculum (intended, implemented, assessed) and instructor demographic characteristics of programs leading to California Preliminary Administrative Services Credentials.*

School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). As California faces challenges to close the achievement and proficiency gaps and ensure a rich and rigorous education for all students, the most critical variable is principal development, because an effective principal is essential to school success (Kearney, 2010). School leaders must structure schools for socially just outcomes (Marshall, 2004), and therefore, it is critical that programs preparing those who will step up to lead our nation's schools are grounded in principles that create equitable learning opportunities for all children. How are leadership and administration preparation programs building capacity of entry-level administrators to create and lead equitable learning environments?

This article describes a research study conducted to examine the social justice principles embedded in university education administration preparation programs that prepare candidates for a California Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. Working long hours, frequently at a relentless pace, principals are bombarded by a wide range of issues and must interact with diverse individuals and groups (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Education leaders must create safe spaces for listening and speaking in order to engage their constituents as well as analyze the complexities of the educational system to recognize overt and covert dynamics that influence their schools and school system as a whole. Principals need to model student-centered learning rather than authority-centered learning by expecting themselves and others to be inquirers open to new ideas. Equally important, leaders must be aware of the impact they make upon the system and how the system changes over time (Senge et al., 2000).

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The demographic landscape of California has never been more diverse (California Department of Education, 2010). Preparation of leaders in designing an education system to meet the ever-changing needs of a diverse student population has never been more important. In order to design a system to meet the needs of all K-12 students, leaders must understand not only the students they serve, but also the assumptions and beliefs that influence policy, equitable practice, and organizational culture (Brown, 2004).

In order to address the achievement gap of children of color, lead teachers in creating equitable learning environments, and gain the support of diverse communities, school leaders must understand the cultural differences of their students and teachers as well as their own consciousness about race and diversity. Understanding leaders' beliefs and assumptions is predictive of future decisions and effectiveness regarding issues of diversity and equity. Understanding one's own beliefs about policy, equitable practice, and organizational culture, and subjecting those beliefs to ongoing critical analysis is an important first step in preparing future school leaders to lead with social justice (Brown, 2004; Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

McKenzie et al. (2008) emphasized three main concepts that should always lead the philosophy and actions of school leaders: academic achievement of all students, critical consciousness, and inclusive practices. Leaders are uneven in their social justice competence and must continually strive to improve. Future leaders should be educated on how to recognize and remove barriers that prevent equitable access to educational opportunities (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Administration preparation programs need to address issues of critical consciousness and equity in the areas of race, ethnicity, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and inclusion (Hernandez & Marshall, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008). McClellan and Dominguez (2006) maintained that in addition to preparing future leaders to examine inequities and create change, education administration preparation programs should also build leaders' capacity to initiate structural and political changes within existing bureaucratic systems. School leadership preparation programs must move future administrators beyond examining inequities to intentional activism. School administrators need to recognize inequitable practices perpetuated by the dominant culture, and lead fundamental institutional changes that create school environments that embrace social justice (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

Race is a central variable to the equity agenda and the achievement gap, and education leadership preparation programs must include discussions of equity. Principals are confronted with equity issues daily, and thus need pre-service opportunities to discuss and internalize understandings to address equity issues (Barbara & Krovetz, 2005). School leaders must be prepared to take risks toward social justice ends, which requires university programs to align curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment oriented toward social justice with the "consciousness, knowledge, and skills that school leaders need to lead socially just schools" (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006, p. 220). Professors of education administration preparation programs should ensure that their graduates develop the competence and commitment to lead schools with equity. Future leaders must not only be informed, but also take action to address practices that disadvantage groups of students. Leadership preparation programs need to address student achievement as equity and social justice issues (López, Magdaleno, & Reis, 2006). López et al. contend that many education administration preparation programs are constructed from a privileged perspective that perpetuates the status quo and ignores inequities of gender, race, or status, and challenge education leadership programs to put an

end to “universal-one size fits all” approaches to leadership and instead employ “leading for equity” approaches (p. 15). Equity must be addressed openly and directly (López et al., 2006).

Leadership development is a key strategy for closing the achievement gap and improving California schools. Unfortunately, developing highly effective school leadership has received little attention in California in recent years. The governor’s and state superintendent’s 2007 task force reports devoted little attention to school leadership improvement or resource allocation. Budget shortages for professional learning, the urgency of intervention programs, and the private sector view of uncoordinated organization of the California system have resulted in the lack of prominence of K-12 school leadership development on the California action agenda (Kearney, 2010).

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT FRAMEWORKS**

To explore university preparation of future leaders for social justice, the study was built on the theoretical underpinnings of both social justice and curriculum alignment. Both theories were applied to specifically examine university curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment oriented toward social justice (Capper et al., 2006). Social justice leadership theory was the framework through which curriculum, instruction, and assessment was examined as an ideal for which to aspire. A second theory, aligned curriculum, was the lens for exploring the components of an aligned curriculum system.

Multiple social justice theories are found in the literature. Brown (2006) defined social justice theory as an examination of learning opportunities for all children through analysis of curriculum, instructional strategies, differentiated student placement, school structures, and parental and community involvement. Brown emphasized social justice as a framework for developing critical consciousness in order to eliminate past practices nested in racism, sexism, homophobia, class discrimination, and religious intolerance. Brown’s framework challenged exclusion, power, inequity, and injustice. Theoharis (2008) contended that social justice leadership situates marginalized students at the center of all leadership decisions. Shields (2010) emphasized the importance of facilitating a moral dialogue that produces high achievement for all students and building relationships with students of all abilities and cultures. Kose (2009) focused on the importance of social justice leadership to create professional development opportunities for socially just teaching and learning. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) defined social justice leaders as transformative activists for school and social change who continually critique conditions that perpetuate inequities for marginalized groups. For the purpose of this study, social justice leadership was defined as advocacy and leadership through vision and practice that address and eliminate marginalization of groups due to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability, and other groups currently marginalized in the United States (Theoharis, 2008). Critical consciousness was defined as the critical examination of one’s personal and professional beliefs, attitudes and values regarding social, political, and economic inequities and power imbalances, and taking action to discontinue or prevent these inequities or imbalances (Brown, 2006).

Aligned curriculum theories explore the links between objectives, instructional activities, and assessment. Content validity, learning opportunity, and content coverage are all included in the overall concept of curriculum alignment. Aligned curriculum results in

understanding the effects of instruction on learning and provides program accountability (Anderson, 2002). Curriculum alignment provides common language about learning goals and a congruence between educational objectives, activities, and assessments in a unit, course, or curriculum (Krathwohl, 2002). Posner (2004) wrote that the nature embodied in the curriculum should correspond to what students are taught. Vitale (2010) defined constructive curriculum as the relationship between learning outcomes described in the course outline and the teaching activities and assessment tasks used to measure the level of student mastery of the learning outcomes. Marzano (2003) described three types of curricula: the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the attained curriculum. Intended curriculum is the expected content specified by the state, district, or local school board to be learned in a particular course or grade. The implemented curriculum is the content that is actually delivered by the instructor. The attained curriculum is the content students actually learned during the course (Marzano, 2003). The study employed Reinhartz and Beach's (2004) description of curriculum alignment as the recursive process of linking standards with planning, teaching, and the assessment of student learning; working interdependently to meet student needs and promote student learning.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the social justice principles embedded in university education administration preparation programs that prepare candidates for a California Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. More specifically, this study explored the intended, implemented, and assessed curriculum relative to social justice and critical consciousness, and investigated differences between university instructor demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, tenure status, and years of teaching education administration preparation courses) and the degree of social justice course integration and integration importance. In addition, this study examined the approaches used to align social justice leadership curriculum.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions regarding education administration preparation programs and social justice leadership informed the research:

1. What is the intended social justice curriculum in university education administration preparation programs?
2. To what degree are social justice and critical consciousness principles integrated into the intended, implemented, and assessed curriculum of university education administration preparation programs, and what are instructors' perceptions relative to the importance of integration?
3. What instructor practices are used in university education administration preparation programs to implement the intended social justice curriculum?
4. What activities/assessments are used in university education administration preparation programs to assess the intended social justice curriculum?
5. Are the demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, tenure status, and years teaching education administration preparation

- courses) of instructors teaching in university education administration preparation programs independent of social justice integration and integration importance?
6. What approaches are used to align social justice leadership curriculum in university education administration preparation programs?

## METHODOLOGY

A chronological mixed methods design was utilized for the study, as descriptive survey research, interviews, and document review were used. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected, bringing together the strengths of both forms of research. The qualitative data from survey short answers and open-ended questions, individual interviews, and document review explained the survey quantitative results in greater detail (Patton, 2002; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Results from the survey informed the eligible population for individual interviews. Semi-structured individual interviews provided access to understanding the experiences and behaviors of the individuals. Interviews provided the opportunity to examine concrete experiences and the meanings individuals attached to those experiences.

The unit of analysis was the curriculum in university education administration preparation programs that prepare candidates for a California Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. Curriculum included the intended, implemented, and assessed curriculum. The independent variables examined were instructor demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, tenure status, and years teaching education administration preparation courses) and degree of social justice curriculum integration and integration importance.

### Instrumentation

Three instruments were used to collect data: an online survey, semi-structured individual interviews, and document review. The 32-item online survey collected data regarding: (1) participants' use of social justice leadership principles in the intended, implemented, and assessed curriculum of required courses in education administration preparation programs and (2) instructor demographic characteristics and integration depth and importance of social justice leadership principles in each instructor's course. The survey instrument was divided into eight sections and employed a Likert-type five-point scale for Sections 1-4: (1) *None, Not at all, or I don't know*; (2) *1-25%*; (3) *26-50%*; (4) *51-75%*; and (5) *76-100%* or (1) *Not important*; (2) *Somewhat important*; (3) *Important*; (4) *Highly important*; and (5) *Extremely important/essential to my course*.

The survey was comprised of the following sections:

- *Section 1* explored the percentage of course goals related to social justice and critical consciousness and the importance instructors assign to integration of social justice curriculum. Short answer items solicited examples of course goals or objectives that address social justice and critical consciousness principles.
- *Section 2* investigated the instructional practices used to deliver the intended curriculum and the amount of time spent in each of the given practices.
- *Section 3* explored the percentage of course assessments/activities used to evidence social justice learning outcomes and the importance instructors assign to the

assessment of social justice curriculum. A short answer item solicited descriptions of significant or powerful assessments/activities.

- *Section 4* explored the amount of faculty time spent in critical dialogue and curriculum alignment of social justice topics. Short answers solicited clarification.
- *Section 5* explored support and/or barriers to program implementation of social justice principles through open-ended questions.
- *Section 6* invited survey respondents to add additional thoughts about social justice, faculty collaboration, or the survey itself.
- *Section 7* asked respondents to self-report demographic information about their age, race/ethnicity, gender, employment status, tenure status, and number of years teaching education administration preparation courses.
- *Section 8* invited survey respondents to participate in a follow-up individual interview.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to describe the nuanced and complex experiences of the participants (Salmons, 2010). Document review of course syllabi was used to examine student learning outcomes/objectives, course topics, assignment activities, and assessment activities as a complementary data source (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

### **Participants: Selection, Sample and Characteristics**

Purposeful criterion sampling was used to determine the sample, and participants were selected based on the ability to answer questions central to the research study (Salmons, 2010). The criteria for participation in the descriptive survey research was identification as a part-time or full-time instructor who teaches one or more of the required courses in a university education administration preparation program that prepares candidates for a California Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. Concurrent with survey data collection, program coordinators or department chairs for participating programs were asked to provide syllabi for each required course in the program. This data set was used for the document review portion of the study.

Individual interview participants were selected from survey respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in individual interviews. Three geographical regions stratified participants: Northern, Central, and Southern California.

Electronic surveys were sent to 145 education administration instructors teaching core courses leading to the California Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. Of the initial pool of 145 prospective participants, eight individuals opted out of the survey; three stated in an email that they had either retired or no longer taught courses in the education administration preparation program, leaving the total number of eligible participants at 137. Of the eligible population, 71 participants responded to the survey, a response rate of 52 percent. Of the 71 respondents, 15 participants submitted incomplete surveys (not every survey question was answered). Sixteen respondents were from the Northern California region, 16 from the Central California region, and 36 from the Southern California region. Three participants entered the survey through the Web invitation, thus the email address and region identification was not accessible.

Initially, 16 individuals indicated willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, however, two participants declined before interviews began, bringing the total number of interviews to 14. Each interviewee was assigned a code based on the first 14 letters of the

alphabet, Instructor A through Instructor N. All participants who indicated willingness to participate were interviewed. Three interviews gave voice to the Northern California region, four to the Central California region, and seven to the Southern California region. Although all respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in an interview were selected, the interviewees reflected the same mode value of demographic characteristics as the survey population. Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents and interview participants.

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents and Interview Participants*

Demographic Characteristics	Survey Respondents		Interview Participants	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Birth Year Category</b>				
1927-1945	10	18.1	1	7.1
1946-1963	37*	67.4	11*	78.6
1965-1983	8	14.5	2	14.3
1984 or later	0	0.0	0	0.0
Birth Year Total	55	100.0	14	100.0
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	26	48.0	4	28.6
Male	28*	52.0	10*	71.4
Gender Total	54	100.0	14	100.00
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Asian	1	1.8	0	0.0
Black or African American	4	7.3	1	7.1
Hispanic or Latina/Latino	7	12.7	2	14.3
White	43*	78.2	11*	78.6
Race/Ethnicity Total	55	100.0	14	100.0
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Part-Time Instructor	24	43.6	5	35.7
Full-Time Instructor	31*	56.4	9*	64.3
Employment Status Total	55	100.0	14	100.0
<b>Tenure Status</b>				
Tenured	16	29.6	5	35.7
On Tenure Track	9	16.7	1	7.1
Not on Tenure Track	29*	53.7	8*	57.1
Tenure Track Total	54	100.0	14	100.0
<b>Years Teaching Ed Admin</b>				
0-1 Year	2	3.6	0	0.0
2-5 Years	16	28.6	3	21.4
6-10 Years	15	26.8	5	35.7
More than 10 Years	23*	41.1	6*	42.8
Total Years Teaching Ed Admin	56	100.0	14	100.0

Note. \* = mode. Not all respondents provided demographic information.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Responses from the online survey were analyzed to examine the current state of integration of social justice principles in university education administration preparation courses. Frequencies and percentages for the demographic characteristics and the intended, implemented, and assessed social justice curriculum were derived. A series of Chi Square tests were conducted using SPSS. The Chi Square test of independence was used to test if instructor demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, tenure status, and years of teaching education leadership preparation courses) were independent of social justice course integration and integration importance. Frequencies and means were analyzed for the quantitative items related to the intended, implemented, and assessed curriculum. Significance was determined at .05 level.

Qualitative data from the survey, individual interviews, and course syllabi were analyzed using inductive analysis. Using Patton's sequence of classifying and coding, data were analyzed for convergence, recurring regularities and divergence, and deviant cases or outliers. Inductive analysis was used to integrate survey respondent comments and transcribed interview notes into coherent categories, patterns, and themes (Patton, 2002).

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This section presents the major findings of the study relative to each of the six research questions.

### **The Intended Curriculum**

The intended curriculum refers to the official course content described in formal documents such as courses of study, program outlines, and course syllabi. When investigating the intended social justice curriculum, results revealed that most education administration preparation programs used either the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs), the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Administrative Services Credential, or a combination of the standards to address social justice learning outcomes. Thirty-four of 38 course syllabi cited course goals based upon credentialing or licensure standards. The remaining four syllabi cited specific fieldwork activities, finance and human resource activities, and student outcomes related to Charter College of Education or standards from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

When investigating the degree to which social justice principles are integrated into the curriculum as well as the importance instructors placed on integration of these principles into their courses, results revealed that 38 instructors (54.3%) indicated that more than half of their course goals addressed social justice principles. Thirty-one instructors (44.3%) indicated 1-50% of their course goals addressed social justice principles, and one instructor (1.4%) reported the course did not address social justice principles.

Survey results revealed that 68 instructors (97.1%) indicated social justice integration in their course was important, highly important, or extremely important/essential. Two instructors (2.9%) indicated that integration was somewhat important, and no instructor (0.0%) reported integration as not important. A greater percentage of instructors reported the



importance of integrating social justice principles in their courses than the actual percentage of social justice goals integrated into courses.

Chi-Square test of independence was significant ( $\chi^2 = 43.19$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < .001$ ) for degree of social justice course goal integration and integration importance, indicating that social justice course goal integration is dependent on instructors' perceptions of the importance of integrating social justice principles into their courses.

Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages of goals/objectives that address social justice principles in a given course and the instructors' perceptions relative to the importance of integrating social justice principles.

Table 2

*Frequencies and Percentages for Social Justice Course Goals/Objectives Integration and Integration Importance*

Importance	Integration of Social Justice Course Goals/Objectives and Integration Importance											
	0%		1-25%		26-50%		51-75%		76-100%		Percent of Total	
	SJCGs/Os N	%	SJCGs/Os N	%	SJCGs/Os N	%	SJCGs/Os N	%	SJCGs/Os N	%	N	%
Not at all	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Somewhat	0	0.0	2	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.9
Important	0	0.0	8	11.4	3	4.3	1	1.4	1	1.4	13	18.6
Highly Important	1	1.4	4	5.7	9	12.9	7	10.0	3	4.3	24	34.3
Extremely/Essential	0	0.0	3	4.3	2	2.9	5	7.1	21	30.0	31	44.3
Total	1	1.4	17	24.3	14	20.0	13	18.6	25	35.7	70	100.0
	$\chi^2 = 43.19$											$p < .001$

*Note.* SJCGs/Os = Social Justice Course Goals/Objectives. Results based on responses from matched items.

Critical consciousness principles were integrated into fewer courses. Survey results revealed that 30 instructors (48.4%) indicated that more than half of their course goals addressed critical consciousness principles. Twenty-eight instructors (45.1%) indicated 1-50% of their course goals addressed critical consciousness, however, four instructors (6.5%) indicated they did not address critical consciousness in their course. Survey results revealed that 58 instructors (93.5%) indicated critical consciousness integration in their course as important, highly important, or extremely important/essential. Two instructors (3.2%) indicated that integration was somewhat important, and two instructors (3.2%) reported integration as not important. A greater percentage of instructors reported the importance of integrating critical consciousness principles in courses than the actual percentage of critical consciousness principles integrated into their courses. Table 3 presents the frequencies and percentages of course goals/objectives that address critical consciousness principles in a given course and the instructors' perceptions relative to the importance of integrating critical consciousness principles into the course.

Table 3

*Frequencies and Percentages for Critical Consciousness Course Goals/Objectives Integration and Integration Importance*

Importance	Integration of Critical Consciousness Course Goals/Objectives and Integration Importance											
	0%		1-25%		26-50%		51-75%		76-100%		Percent of Total	
	CCCGs/Os N	%	CCCGs/Os N	%	CCCGs/Os N	%	CCCGs/Os N	%	CCCGs/Os N	%	N	%
Not at all	2	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.2
Somewhat	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.2
Important	1	1.6	6	9.7	5	8.1	1	1.6	0	0.0	13	21.0
Highly Important	1	1.6	3	4.8	10	16.1	10	16.1	3	4.8	27	43.5
Extremely/Essential	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	6	9.7	10	16.1	18	29.0
Total	4	6.5	11	17.7	17	27.4	17	27.4	13	21.0	62	100.0
	$\chi^2 = 63.10$											p < .001

Note. CCCGs/Os = Critical Consciousness Course Goals/Objectives. Results based on responses from matched items.

Chi-Square test of independence was significant ( $\chi^2 = 63.10$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p < .001$ ) for degree of critical consciousness principle course integration and integration importance, indicating that critical consciousness principle integration is dependent on instructors' perception of the importance of integrating critical consciousness principles into their courses.

### The Implemented Curriculum

The implemented curriculum is defined as the pedagogical practices used by the instructor to deliver the course content. When investigating the instructional strategies deployed to implement social justice curriculum in courses, the results revealed 60 instructors used course readings and class discussions to deliver content related to social justice principles. Fifty-three instructors included field experiences, 55 instructors used lectures, 54 instructors engaged candidates in case studies, and 49 instructors used other instructional strategies. The strategy used least (16 instructors) was in-class simulation. Table 4 details the frequencies and percentages of instructional strategies used by survey respondents to implement the intended social justice curriculum.

When asked to elaborate on two of the most powerful activities used for the teaching and learning of social justice principles, most survey respondents reported using case studies, readings, discussions, discussion board posts, role plays, scenarios, and simulations. Twenty-seven (of 50) activities were described in language which *implied* that social justice principles were embedded in the activity such as mock interviews that allowed candidates opportunities to address social justice principles, an advocacy paper reflecting the rights of students to a free appropriate education, and classroom observation of differentiated instruction.

Twenty-three (of 50) open-ended responses described activities with *explicit* social justice teaching. One respondent wrote about "a fishbowl exercise where students of color discuss white racism while all white students sit on the outside listening, but unable to talk (for once)." Another respondent described the Color Line activity that illustrates the results of a student survey about access and feelings of acceptance; this activity usually ends with students of color standing at one end of the line and white students at the opposite end. One

discussion activity focused on teacher attitudes and practices around student placement, grading, differentiating, and achievement results, and how these practices create institutional racism and perpetuate a deficit-based culture. Instructor L described the Star Power Simulation used in class:

It's got multiple colored chips – blue, white, green, red – and they all have different value. So they start trading, and they try to trade up to get the most points. At the end of the first round, you'll have three groups. You separate them, and you have a high, medium, and low group. Then you do a second round of trading and divide the groups. And I'm going to give you the short version. After the second round you say, the rules for the third round will change. The group with the most points will get to make the rules for the last round. You tell the group to go outside and make the rules and come back and tell us the rules that everybody has to play by. Invariably, when they come back, they make the rules to make sure they stay in power, to make sure that they win. But when that happens the low group feels so helpless, so disenfranchised, they check out. They don't want to play. They rebel. And so after we debrief this whole thing, you find out number one, why are white males on top in our society? They make the rules to keep themselves in power. Why do certain people act a certain way when they don't have power? Because they feel so helpless. We go through this whole thing that becomes the frame for the semester.

Table 4

*Frequencies and Percentages of Instructional Strategies Used to Implement the Intended Social Justice Curriculum*

Instructional Strategy	Frequency of Instructional Strategies Used to Implement Intended Social Justice Curriculum in a Given Course											
	0% of Course Time		1-25% of Course Time		26-50% of Course Time		51-75% of Course Time		76-100% of Course Time		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading	2	3.2	22	35.4	17	27.4	12	19.4	9	14.5	62	100
Lecture	6	9.8	20	32.8	18	29.5	8	13.1	9	14.7	61	100
Discussion	2	3.2	14	22.6	16	25.8	19	30.6	11	17.7	62	100
Case Study	7	11.5	17	27.9	15	24.6	18	29.5	4	6.5	61	100
Field Experience	5	8.6	15	25.9	16	27.6	15	25.9	7	12.0	58	100
Simulation	16	25.8	21	33.9	10	16.1	13	21.0	2	3.2	62	100
Other	7	12.5	24	42.8	11	19.6	9	16.1	5	8.9	56	100

*Note.* Participants responded to all strategies that applied.

**The Assessed Curriculum**

The assessed curriculum is comprised of the assessments/activities used to evidence student learning of social justice curriculum. Survey results, course syllabi, and individual interviews were analyzed to investigate the degree to which student learning of social justice principles is assessed as well as the importance instructors placed on the assessment of these principles in their courses. Results revealed that 18 instructors (30.5%) indicated that more than half of their course assessments/activities assessed student learning of social justice principles. Thirty-seven instructors (62.7%) indicated that 1-50% of course assessments/activities

assessed student learning of social justice principles, and four instructors (6.8%) reported that no assessments/activities were used in their course to assess student learning of social justice principles.

Survey results revealed that 49 instructors (83.1%) indicated assessment of social justice principles in their course as important, highly important, or extremely important/essential. Eight instructors (13.6%) indicated assessment of social justice principles as somewhat important, and two instructors (3.4%) reported assessment of social justice principles as not important. A greater percentage of instructors reported the importance of assessing student learning of social justice principles than the actual percentage of assessment activities implemented in their courses.

Chi-Square test of independence was significant ( $\chi^2 = 60.44$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p < .001$ ) for degree of assessment of student learning of social justice goals and assessment importance, indicating that assessment of student learning of social justice principles is dependent on instructors' perception of the importance of assessing social justice principles in their courses.

Table 5 presents the frequencies and percentages of activities that assess student learning of social justice goals and the instructors' perceptions relative to the importance of assessing social justice principles in the course.

Table 5

*Frequencies and Percentages of Course Activities that Assess Student Learning of Social Justice Goals and Importance of Assessment*

Importance	Percent of Assessments/Activities Assessing Student Learning of Social Justice Goals and Assessment Importance											
	0% of Assessment		1-25% of Assessment		26-50% of Assessment		51-75% of Assessment		76-100% of Assessment		Percent of Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all	1	1.7	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.4
Somewhat	3	5.1	4	6.8	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	13.6
Important	0	0.0	9	15.3	8	13.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	28.8
Highly Important	0	0.0	2	3.4	8	13.6	6	10.2	1	1.7	17	28.8
Extremely/Essential	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	6.8	4	6.8	7	11.9	15	25.4
Total	4	6.8	16	27.1	21	35.6	10	16.9	8	13.6	59	100

$\chi^2 = 60.44$

$p < .001$

*Note.* Results based on responses from matched items.

A review of the course syllabi indicated that assessment is the curriculum component least implemented. Twelve syllabi assessments explicitly noted social justice principles such as developing a student achievement plan based on gap analysis, case study assessment data of a demographic group below average, change in attitude regarding issues of equity, and a curriculum equity audit.

**Instructor Demographic Characteristics**

When examining for differences between demographic characteristics of instructors in university education administration preparation programs and social justice goal integration and integration importance, results revealed that all demographic characteristics were independent of social justice goal integration and instructor perceptions of integration importance. Table 6 summarizes results of instructor demographic characteristics and social

justice goal integration and integration importance. Although results show variability, no results were found to be significant.

Table 6

*Summary of Significance Values Cross-Tabulating Instructor Demographic Characteristics and Social Justice Goal Integration and Integration Importance*

Paired Variables	Chi-Square	Df	P
Age * SJCG Integration	10.01	8	0.264
Age * SJ Importance	7.07	6	0.315
Gender * SJCG Integration	7.02	4	0.135
Gender * SJ Importance	3.96	3	0.266
Race/Ethnicity * SJCG Integration	13.73	12	0.318
Race/Ethnicity * SJ Importance	4.91	9	0.842
Employment Status * SJCG Integration	3.84	4	0.428
Employment Status * SJ Importance	1.68	3	0.641
Tenure Status * SJCG Integration	4.42	8	0.817
Tenure Status * SJ Importance	5.78	6	0.449
Years Teaching in Program * SJCG Importance	13.71	12	0.320
Years Teaching in Program * SJ Importance	10.30	9	0.327

*Note.* SJCG = Social Justice Course Goal and SJ = Social Justice

### **Program Approaches to Curriculum Alignment**

When investigating approaches used to align social justice leadership curriculum in university education administration preparation programs, results revealed that department meetings may provide a venue for discussing topics related to social justice learning. Three instructors (6.0%) indicated that more than half of department or program meetings were devoted to topics related to social justice learning. Thirty-five instructors (70%) indicated 1-50% of their meetings were devoted to topics related to social justice learning, and 12 instructors (24.0%) indicated no meetings were devoted to social justice learning. Table 7 presents the frequencies and percentages relative to the extent department or program meetings were devoted to topics related to social justice learning.

Table 7

*Frequencies and Percentages for Extent of Department/Program Meetings Devoted to Topics Related to Social Justice Learning*

Department/Program Meeting Time Devoted to Social Justice Learning	Respondents	
	N	%
Not at all	12	24.0
1-25% of the meeting	22	44.0
26-50% of the meeting	13	26.0
51-75% of the meeting	2	4.0
76-100% of the meeting	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Opportunities for faculty to engage in critical dialogue about social justice principles are both formal and informal. Six instructors (11.1%) indicated that their faculty employed a structured approach to engage in critical dialogue, and thirty instructors (55.6%) responded that critical dialogue occurred informally. Six instructors (11.1%) indicated that their faculty

did not engage in critical dialogue, and twelve instructors (22.2%) reported that they did not know. Table 8 presents the frequencies and percentages regarding the approach faculty used to engage in critical dialogue about social justice principles.

Table 8

*Frequencies and Percentages for Faculty Engagement Approach in Critical Dialogue about Social Justice Principles*

Faculty Engagement Approach in Critical Dialogue about Social Justice Principles	Respondents	
	N	%
I don't know	12	22.2
Faculty does not engage	6	11.1
Informal approach	30	55.6
Formal structured approach	6	11.1
Total	50	100.0

Programs that integrate social justice principles throughout the curriculum use both formal and informal methods. Almost a fourth (22.8%) of the instructors indicated that their program did not have an approach. Table 9 presents the frequencies and percentages for the approaches programs used to integrate social justice principles throughout the curriculum.

Table 9

*Frequencies and Percentages for Program Approach to Integrate Social Justice Principles Throughout the Curriculum*

Program Approach to Social Justice Curriculum Alignment	Respondents	
	N	%
I don't know	11	19.3
Program does not have an approach	13	22.8
Unstructured, informal approach	16	28.1
Structured, formal approach	17	29.8
Total	57	100.0

## **FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION**

Four overarching themes emerged regarding facilitators and barriers to implementing social justice curriculum: institutional support of the curriculum, academic freedom and the curriculum, student push-back to the curriculum, and the hidden social justice curriculum.

### **Institutional Support of the Curriculum**

Instructors reported examples of university or program support for social justice curriculum through colleagues, department chairs, program directors, and deans. One respondent credited leadership for the “developed goals and objectives for the courses, the texts identified by the department, and the specific assignments identified as required assessments.” Faculty

described facilitators as the college and faculty commitment to social justice and the development of a new social justice curriculum, pride in “working as a team,” and “resolved to make changes in our system for achievement of all groups that have been and continue to be marginalized.” University leadership was credited for supportive hiring practices and mobilizing social justice curriculum practices.

Instructors also described the *lack* of institutional support through examples such as lack of time, too many standards to cover, or assigning social justice principles to a single course, cohort or grant program rather than embedding principles across the curriculum. Incidents of internalized or institutionalized racism were reported. Programs were criticized for not sharing social justice as a priority. Leaders were criticized for hiring practices that perpetuated the status quo, for a “lack of socio-cultural experience” or hiring cronies or golf buddies “with very little experiential knowledge about social justice issues.”

In addition to lack of university or program support, instructors also discussed a lack of support from school districts and policy makers. Instructors were critical of school boards and leaders who “choose to ignore inequities and cling to the status quo that treats some better than others.”

### **Academic Freedom and the Curriculum**

Academic freedom and individual passion to implement the social justice curriculum were frequently described as *facilitators* of social justice implementation. Instructors used words such as “personal commitment,” “autonomy to plan curriculum,” “expertise,” and “personal belief systems.” One instructor described, “absolute passion and belief in empowerment and enfranchisement of people who have been marginalized and dispossessed. It goes to the core of who I am and what I believe. I make it clear on day one that this is my bias, and encourage others to critique, challenge, or concur, but this is not a neutral topic with me.”

Academic freedom was also reported as a *barrier* to social justice implementation. Instructors spoke of department members, and sometimes leaders, who exercised the academic freedom not to implement social justice curriculum. Respondents described a lack of concern to include social justice if it has “been covered over there.” Multiple concerns were voiced that some instructors, “mostly White instructors, who have never had to confront issues of equity and social justice other than intellectually ...consider people who fight for it as radicals.” Instructors referred to liberal colleagues “who can talk about issues” but relegate the challenging questions to their colleagues of color.

### **Student Push-Back to the Curriculum**

Instructors described the varying levels of critical consciousness that students bring; many students are building self-knowledge about social justice, while some students are ready to learn how to lead others. Instructors discussed student push-back to social justice curriculum, and how student reactions shaped implementation of the curriculum through expectations to learn “the nuts and bolts” or “the tools” required for future jobs. Instructors reported, “students do not self-reflect” and fear “if they step forward someone is going to think they’re not a team player.” Multiple instructors described students’ lack of courage, reluctance to lead change, and students’ fearful attitudes about losing jobs if they take on the social justice agenda. One instructor commented that a student in class stated, “I have a mortgage to pay, and I’m not gonna risk that.”

### **The Hidden Social Justice Curriculum**

Social justice curriculum was often described in terms such as “embedded,” “expected,” “implied,” “woven into outcomes,” “not explicitly stated in goals,” and “allowing students opportunities to discuss.” These terms describe a hidden curriculum, or curriculum that may or may not be implemented, based on the individual perspective of the instructor.

The most striking evidence of the hidden curriculum was that it is rarely, explicitly assessed. Review of 38 course syllabi found only 12 assignments that specifically assessed student learning of the implemented social justice curriculum. Many instructors stated that they did not know how the curriculum was assessed. Several instructors described course signature assignments, but rubrics had not yet been developed for the assignments. Instructors described assessment in vague language such as “it comes out when I look at the papers,” “we have to see what they do or say because it’s not part of the rubric,” or “I know it when I see it.”

### **SURPRISE FINDING: THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TERM**

Hess and Kelly (2007) analyzed and coded 210 course syllabi to examine the skills and knowledge taught in education administration preparation programs. Although 65 percent of the norms and values topics were coded as progressive, words like diversity, diverse, multiculturalism and multicultural appeared in syllabus topics in only three percent of all course weeks throughout the semester. The absence of explicit language around social justice was mirrored in this study’s findings.

An unexpected theme arose from the interview data. Six of the 14 interviewees made unsolicited comments about the *term* social justice. Instructor G described an international perspective about the term:

I think in this country sometimes people do not like to use the term social justice because it seems to carry some political weight. When you talk to people internationally, they do not seem to have any hesitation in saying social justice is the key issue that they would like to promote and would like to study.

Instructor C spoke of theoretical names creating “theoretical camps,” going on to describe the term as “*passé*, ...and social justice was very *in* a few years ago, the words. And it is now very *out*, except for in some areas, and perhaps in some universities the words social justice will be used.”

Instructor J distanced himself from the actual words, “I think that I don’t like the words social justice because I’m not sure I always know what it means or not, so personally, I wish that you wouldn’t use it.” Instructor D described “hesitancy” for the college to put the words social justice into the mission statement. “Words like social justice and critical consciousness, they make a lot of people nervous.” Instructor E pointed out that “many people do not even like to use it [social justice] because it is a given.”

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Social justice is not a given. The opportunity to learn social justice leadership in education administration preparation programs is inconsistent between schools and within schools.



There is discrepancy between the intended and implemented curriculum. A greater percentage of instructors reported the importance of integrating social justice and critical consciousness principles in their courses than the actual percentage of social justice and critical consciousness goals integrated into courses. Although the goals were strongly represented as student learning outcomes in course syllabi, it appears that candidate knowledge and skill development for social justice leadership is largely dependent on the instructor for the course and the value the instructor puts on social justice, but independent of instructor demographic characteristics.

Instructors' use of readings and class discussions as primary instructional practices to deliver the social justice curriculum supports candidates' development of conceptual knowledge. Activity based strategies such as field experiences, case studies, and in-class simulations are essential for candidates to develop adaptive leadership skills and move from knowing about social justice principles to implementing social justice principles in K-12 schools.

Some programs have strategically aligned course goals and objectives with instruction, but intentional, explicit assessment of the intended social justice curriculum rarely, if ever occurs. Curriculum alignment requires that course goals and objectives, instruction, and assessment be aligned to create an equitable opportunity for all candidates to develop essential knowledge, skills and dispositions. A lack of alignment is especially problematic for programs preparing graduates for licensure or accreditation.

Education administration preparation programs should engage in critical dialogue about the integration of social justice principles in the intended, implemented, and assessed curriculum throughout their program. Program and department leadership can either facilitate or hinder this undertaking. Continuing current uneven practices will not adequately prepare future California school leaders to fulfill the promise of advocacy and leadership to promote the academic achievement of all children, including those who have been marginalized and have not benefitted in the past.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Education administration preparation programs should embed social justice curriculum throughout all courses in the program to allow candidates to develop a broad base of knowledge and skill regarding all aspects of school, including curriculum, instruction, policy, law, human resources, leadership, research, and field based experiences.

Instructors should align course assessments to course goals and objectives, ensuring that all candidates have the opportunity to learn the intended social justice curriculum. Programs should create rubrics for signature assignments that explicitly describe the criteria and indicators for competency that would evidence student learning expected for social justice leadership.

Professors should be mindful of the varying levels of their candidates' critical consciousness and be cautious not to view their students through the same deficit perspective that is described in social justice curriculum.

## SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The expectations and moral imperative for this generation of school leaders is historically unparalleled. In order to close the achievement and proficiency gaps for all our students, school leaders must structure and lead schools for socially just outcomes. It is critical that programs preparing candidates who will step up to lead our nation's schools are grounded in principles that create equitable learning opportunities for all children.

Education administration preparation programs should design and deliver a curriculum system that produces graduates with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to lead schools with equity. The social justice curriculum must be a non-negotiable, guaranteed curriculum, ensuring that all future leaders have the opportunity to learn principles that prepare them to be social justice leaders.

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