Criticality and the Pedagogical Reconstruction of Leadership Standards in an Educational Leadership Classroom

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The authors describe their attempt to develop students' critical perspectives on the content and assumptions in the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) through a reflective essay assignment in a class titled Ethics, Equity, and Leadership in Education. The authors conducted textual analysis of 92 student essays (a total of 922 pages) submitted in 5 sections of a class from the summer of 2008 through the spring of 2009. The authors describe ways students analyze knowledge claims in the FPLS in relation to the standards' considerable silence around issues of ethics and equity, which were central to the class: a) Standards are sufficient and helpful; b) Standards are insufficient, but helpful; and c) Standards are insufficient and lack critical elements. The article concludes with a discussion of how university professors and other professional development leaders might consider working within and, when strategically appropriate, against notions of standards representing comprehensive legitimate knowledge through six specific pedagogical and professional stances.
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INTRODUCTION

To question the beliefs is to question their authority; to accept the beliefs is evidence of loyalty to the powers that be, a proof of good citizenship.

Dewey, 1991, p. 149

Educational leadership students have been described as nice, genuine, and committed to good citizenship (English, 2008; Marshall & Theoharis, 2007). Students enroll in state approved standards-based educational leadership preparation programs in order to gain knowledge and meet administrative licensure requirements that signal their potential to be effective administrators. A prominent and extensive literature has blossomed around the purpose and development of principal licensure standards, particularly the ISLLC-based standards movement. Standards are often invoked as central elements of educational leadership program curricula and program improvement efforts (Anthes, 2004; Fry, O'Neill, & Bottoms,

2006). However, as Dewey implies, we may have an obligation to question the authority of standards that guide principal preparation programs. As Assistant Professors new to a particular state context, we encountered standards that for us were inappropriately silent on issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, politics, ethics, and social justice. We pondered how to question the authority of the state standards as comprehensive representation of legitimate knowledge in educational leadership in our pedagogy. We wanted help students become advocate leaders when such an orientation was not included in standards that would be central to our programs' upcoming state-level program approval process. We approached this dilemma through a social reconstructionist pedagogical strategy utilized in one of our masters-level classes, *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership in Education.*

The purpose of this article is twofold: First, we share our pedagogical approach to teaching the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) and highlight myriad pedagogical tensions we encountered in our classrooms as we attempted to actively navigate stances of compliance with and resistance to knowledge represented in standards. This is illustrated in our description of a particular essay assignment and our analysis of 922 pages of 92 student essays produced in 5 sections of the Ethics, Equity, and Leadership class taught by the authors from the summer of 2008 through the spring of 2009. Second, we seek to publicly document our process of mutual adaptation to standards-based policy given the regulatory nature of program approval policy, and discuss strategic approaches to encourage equity-centered leadership preparation in a standards-based environment that was largely silent on issues of ethics, equity, and social justice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PEDAGOGICAL ORIENTATIONS

Teaching in Educational Leadership and Social Justice

The centrality of attention to pedagogy to social justice leadership education has been noted by various authors (Brown, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Hafner, 2010). Various scholars have provided models for programs preparing leaders for social justice in professional development, and pre and in-service leadership preparation programs as a separate but equal component to effective leadership training (Anderson, 2009; Cambron-McCabe, 2010; Larson & Murthada, 2002), while infusing transformational learning experience into preparation programs has gained importance (Larson & Murthada, 2002; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). However, transformational learning often requires a reevaluation of personal beliefs and values, and pre-existing paradigms (Cambron-McCabe, Mulkeen, & Wright, 1991). Inherently, such shifts tend to be accompanied with tension and resistance (Capper & Young, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Young, Mountford, & Skrla, 2006).

A considerable part of the literature emphasizes the importance of awareness and understanding of the potential harmful effects of the inequalities as a fundamental component towards creating socially just environments (Brooks & Miles, 2008; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Hafner, 2006; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Lopez, Magdaleno, & Reis, 2006; Theoharis, 2007) with specific recommendations provided to address aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of educational leadership programs oriented toward social justice. Young and Laible (2000) suggest three approaches educators could use to address racial injustice: a) the personal approach, b) the institutional approach and c) the multiple fronts approach. Brown

(2004) advocates a radical change of content, delivery, and assessment. She outlines eight strategies that comprise her transformative framework and pedagogy (Brown, 2004) that include: cultural autobiography, life histories, prejudice reduction workshops, reflective analysis journals, cross cultural interviews, educational plunges, diversity panels, and activist action plans. Hafner (2010) describes two specific pedagogical tools to create a socially just environment in one's classroom: a) Social justice education practice, and b) social reconstructionist schooling. According to Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006), emotional safety for risk taking is a necessary condition that permeates all dimensions of leadership programs that includes critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills, that need to be reflected in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Anderson (2009) stresses the need to train beyond managerial skills privileged in many reform models and to develop critically minded professionals that advocate for the less powerful. Similarly, Shields (2010) posits that there are limitations of transactional and transformational leadership models when social justice issues are concerned- leaders should be prepared for conflict and advocacy in order to become transformative rather than transformational leaders.

Social Reconstructionist Schooling

Sleeter and Grant (1987) developed social reconstructionist schooling as a philosophical lens to view educational practices. Such a view teaches about oppression in educational institutions, and challenges individuals within these institutions to take action. As a two-step process, social reconstructionist schooling includes deconstruction and reconstruction. The former step seeks "to expose the silences and gaps between that which is valued and disvalued" (Cherryholmes, 1988 as cited by Capper, 1993, p. 290). The latter step involves a process of re-purposing or reconceptualizing practices. Hafner (2010) described social reconstructionist schooling as a useful pedagogical approach in social justice leadership preparation programs. We use this framework as a pedagogical approach in conceptualizing the assignment students complete in the first course of the masters-level leadership preparation program. We ask students to deconstruct the concepts, values, and knowledge Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) attempt to impart and legitimize, and reconstruct the standards by filling in the gaps with knowledge that centers social justice and inequities. We do so in hopes that students who are aware of "silences" and "gaps" would take action to address inequitable practices in their schools and classrooms.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STANDARDS AND PRINCIPAL LICENSURE PROCESSES

Development and Support for Leadership Standards

Standards for students, teachers, and more recently educational leaders are common features of the political lexicon and have, in some shape or form, permeated the educational platforms of presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama (Robelen, 2009). Debray-Pelot and McGuinn (2009) suggest that the standards-based accountability policy landscape is now characterized by the entry of so many actors that standards-based accountability policy is unlikely to be substantially altered in the near future, regardless of shifts in political party dominance. Standards-based approaches and attempts to provide a clear and cohesive set of expectations

have become even more prominent with the development and adoption of the common core standards across state contexts (Rothman, 2012). In Educational Leadership, state licensure standards play a significant role in legitimizing preparation content, values, and orientation. Recently, several states (including Florida in 2008) have become more prescriptive about program content and features, requiring schools of education to close their existing programs and reapply for accreditation using detailed guidelines and regulations aimed at connecting leadership to improved student achievement (Orr, 2010).

Educational leadership standards and program approval processes are normative, refer to research conducted in the field, and help clarify and reinforce specific roles university leadership preparation programs should have in preparing and developing educational leaders (Fry, et al., 2006; Murphy, 2005). Standards are created through a relatively public and democratic process that includes many more stakeholders beyond a select few university faculty to become involved in determining what future leaders should know and do (Murphy, 2005). Well-articulated standards provide a means for the state and accrediting agencies to regulate program quality through initial and ongoing program approval processes (Adams & Copeland, 2005). Engaging with standards, particularly at junctures of program approval, push faculty to deliberate over issues of quality and force programs to respond to the needs of k-12 schools and state departments of education (Anthes, 2004).

Limitations and Critiques of Standards-Based Approaches

Even advocates suggest that licensure processes are limited in purpose, scope, and power. For example, Adams and Copeland (2005) posit that standards, assessments, and program approval processes need to be more robust and designed not only as an initial gate keeping mechanism for individuals seeking initial administrative licensure, but as means of supporting individuals at various points in their careers. Even if the intent of standards is to provide a floor upon which to further develop, they can become interpreted, in practice as the ceiling. As Danzig and colleagues note: "standards, by their very nature, are typically basic or minimal standards, [yet] once adopted they tend to become 'The Standards' that imply the highest standard" (Danzig, Black, Donofiro, Fernandez, & Martin, 2012, p. 58).

Adams and Copeland (2007) note the minimalist approach of state licensing and accreditation processes, when the profession is better characterized as one of lifelong learning and support. In a similar vein, Anderson (2002) argues that standards are written and assessed in ways that tend to encourage sound bite and check-list thinking rather than deep reflection and the development of judgment. Scholars note that leadership standards tend to favor managerial and instructional leadership functions rather than reflect a more complex conceptualization of the principal's work, which includes artistry and craft knowledge (Bellamy, Fulmer, Murphy, & Muth, 2007). Furthermore, others highlight the historically loose relationship between licensure standards and educational leadership preparation program quality (English, 2006; Harrington & Wills, 2005; McCarthy, 1999). With the push towards measuring outcomes also affecting higher education institutions, the evolving and tricky measurement issues involved in attempting to establish links between program characteristics, leadership behavior, and ultimately student outcomes continue to be areas of study and concern (McNeil, 2009; Orr, 2007; Orr & Pounder, 2006). Even with its limitations, many argue that centering on leadership development that is attentive to producing positive measured student outcomes is a fundamental, if not exclusive, outcome for leadership

development. This emphasis is often politically much more sustainable than social justice approaches, which may conflict with powerful constituents' value orientations or perceived self-interest (Alexander, 2012; Jean Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Murphy, 2002).

Market-oriented critics reflect discomfort against the use of standards to support and legitimize the "monopoly" of university-based principal preparation programs, and argue for broadening access to leadership development experiences and for potential leaders from outside the certified teacher ranks and the university-based programs, which they believe should not be the primary or exclusive venue for training educational leaders (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Rather, they argue that an executive leadership model that demands accountability, makes data-based decisions, cultivates leadership in others, monitors performance and provides support for strong managerial leadership is not prevalent in university-based programs and should be supported through multiple institutional means (Elmore, 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005; Young & Brewer, 2008). This approach has gained much credibility with various policymakers, including the state of Florida, although evidence suggests relatively few individuals are choosing this route (Harrington & Wills, 2005; Smith, 2008).

Scholars with critical orientations are concerned that the instrumental bias of leadership standards does not push educational leadership students to become advocates for marginalized kids. In effect, attentive adherence to standards content in program curricula may serve to crowd out robust engagement with issues of values, justice, marginalization, and ethics and to silence discourse around those arenas as not pertinent to the legitimate knowledge represented in standards (Bogotch, 2009; English, 2006; Rusch, 2004; Young & Brewer, 2008).

FLORIDA PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STANDARDS AND OUR PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSE

Introduction of New Leadership Standards and Program Review

With the passage of Florida Rule 6A-5.081, the Florida Department of Education established a mandate to develop new Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) in April, 2005 and adopted them in 2008. These rules required a total of 132 competencies and skills, as well as state-level leadership modules developed by vendors to be incorporated into the curriculum of the 11 public and 6 private university-based educational leadership masters and principal certification programs and for each of those programs to reapply to gain state approval (Mountford, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Acker-Hocevar, 2009). The development of the new standards was a result of a collaborative effort of the Council for Educational Change with 160 Florida K-20 educators, officers and membership of the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA), state department personnel, community leaders and university educational leadership professors. However, only a quarter of the faculty in Florida indicated that they had any opportunity to have input on the standards and only 9% had involvement in developing the Florida Educational Leadership Examination (FELE) (Mountford et al., 2009). The authorization of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards signaled the need for curriculum overhaul by university leadership preparation programs for program approval and preparation for the new high stakes FELE, which went into effect in January, 2009 and whose passage is now required in order to earn a masters degree in educational leadership.

Significantly, all these processes occurred over a period of six months and during a time period when public universities were struggling with significant budget cuts.

As often reported, redesign work is very labor intensive and forces faculty to cut back on other responsibilities (Reed & Llanes, 2010). Program redesign efforts involve multiple negotiations between the state requirements, faculty needs and interests (as is our case), school district needs and interests, as well as external agencies and foundations.. Surveying university faculty in Florida, Mountford and colleagues (2009) found that 38% of the educational leadership departments in the state spent over 40 hours in meetings cross referencing syllabi to the 91 skills and preparing documents for program approval in 2008. By November of 2012, the state of Florida adopted a new set of standards, which include 10 standards and 50 criteria (Florida Department of Education, 2012). The focus on this manuscript is with the previous standards, adopted in 2008.

Our Concerns as Professors

The 2008 standards were adopted as we were developing a foundational masters level class titled *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership in Education* and a program centered on inquiry, collaboration, and equity. One initial concern related to the prescriptive tone of the standards. We felt it could subtly lead Florida leaders to believe that individually centered rule-bound compliance is the most desirous behavior of leaders. Whereas the 2008 FPLS aligned with national movements to center instructional leadership and data management, they were distinct from the educational leadership standards that have been the basis for standards adopted in 45 other states, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) standards (Sanders & Simpson, 2005). Clearly, both sets of standards emphasize knowledge and skills, however while ISLLC standards focus on "valued ends and outcomes" (Murphy, 2002), the 2008 FPLS emphasized specific knowledge and function, alignment of curriculum and assessment, and the ability to formatively read student achievement data. While the ISLLC standards define in generalized terms the behavior and tasks of effective leaders that would lead to success of all students in schools (Murphy, 2002), in our interpretation, the FPLS attempted to excessively narrow expected behaviors of principals through specific definitions and descriptions of actions.

Scholars have long underscored the importance of collaboration and capacity building in schools (Sergiovanni, 2007; Strike, 2007), which is reflected in the ISLLC standards and the 2012 Florida Standards. However, we argue that the language in the 2008 Florida standards was largely absent of relational and collective processes beyond legally prescribed collaboration. Rather, they more strongly reflected a belief in individualized leadership and emphasized technocratic (assessment in particular) managerial skills. We felt that the language of the 2008 Florida leadership standards provided an exemplar of what Brooks and Miles (2006) consider a return to scientific management in schools where issues of equity and social justice are almost non-existent. At the time, we did not feel that the standards made the program stronger, rather that attending to them might crowd out a significant amount of what is important and part of broader national conversations around equity and excellence.

A final and significant concern dealt with the complete lack of attention to issues of equity, marginalization and social justice in the 2008 FPLS when students and district partners sought to operationalize the standards as the primary expression of important and legitimate knowledge in leadership preparation. In that context, our challenge was to respond to the

demands to incorporate knowledge of the standards and yet to keep the course content and assignments consistent with our social reconstructionist orientation and the department's social justice emphasis.

Our Negotiated Stance: Students Critically Examine the Content of the Standards

McClellan and Dominguez (2006) posit that philosophical divides exist between pedagogical stances that emphasize critique and engagement with issues of social justice versus those stances that seek to prioritize functional skills that are useful in their immediate applicability to workforce demands. While arguing for a pedagogical approach which is critical and social reconstructionist that engages large issues of equity and schooling, Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl (2002) also reminded us that the kind of work educational leaders are asked to do "tends to bias [them] toward solution-oriented learning" and therefore "nuggets of knowledge that can be immediately applied are preferred over solutions requiring reflection and long-term study" (p. 290). However, as we sought to incorporate a critical perspective into our teaching, we also did not want to take a naïve or disconnected stance. When McClelland and Dominguez (2006) considered democratic institutions and teaching social justice in educational leadership programs, they urged the professoriate to "recognize the complexity of educational institutions and account for all voices from students to policymakers, inclusive of those who think alike and of those who think differently…schools' relationship with social reform is far more sensitive than doing what is deemed as 'right'" (McClellan & Dominguez, 2006, p. 226). Additionally, Bogotch (2009) cautions that as activists in the academy, "our theories must push intellectual boundaries, but unless we provide educators with concrete strategies and skills to confront structures, cultures, and hierarchies, we see the predictable failures of reform" (p. 17).

With these concerns and tensions in mind, we considered what to do with an introductory foundational class in the program, *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership.* Similar to approaches in other leadership for social justice preparation programs (Hafner, 2010) and social reconstructionist pedagogical approaches, the *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership* class emphasizes critical reflection, problem based learning, and includes critical theories (social reconstructionist schooling, ethic of critique) and leadership that emphasizes ethics, diversity, and social justice. As professors of the course, we attempt to challenge students to move away from linear and managerial perspectives toward much more reflexive stances that engage issues of race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and privilege. The class is designed with the understanding that contemporary educational leaders are moral stewards and public intellectuals who reflect expansive and inclusive notions of who they are responsible to and what they are accountable for. In the class contemporary educational leadership practice is conceptualized as concerned with a) issues of equity, fairness, and justice; b) the development of people and the cultivation of leadership across school communities; c) the generation of respect across difference, d) the maximization of every student's opportunity to learn and e) the improvement of educational outcomes. Student assignments include writing an educational leadership platform, conducting an equity audit and writing a critical essay on Florida leadership standards.

It is the critical essay on the standards that represented an effort to incorporate the standards into our coursework and program in a social reconstructionist fashion. First, the students needed to review all of the standards carefully. They were then asked to critically

reflect on the content of the standards in relation to the content and orientation of the course and department. Specifically, they were asked to write about the ways in which issues of equity and social justice were reflected (or not) in the standards. In addition, they were asked to incorporate in their analysis how the four ethical frameworks used in a central text-ethics of justice, critique, care, and profession (Shapiro & Stepkovich, 2005) were represented in the 2008 Florida Standards, and to offer their critique and suggestions for use of the standards in their future practice.

METHODS

All the students enrolled in the class submitted their papers as part of the class requirements. Approximately 85% of the students were white, and 70% were female. We used a classroom as research site clause in the syllabus as a way to acquire permission to use students' papers as data for our research. Document data collection spanned over 12 months (three semesters from summer 2008 through spring 2009) and included essays from five sections of the course. The full sample of 92 students' essays that range in length from 6 to 18 pages, with the majority of the students writing around 8-10 pages makes up the data collected for this study.

We conducted a textual analysis of students' work. As a team of two professors and a doctoral student, we collected and analyzed 922 pages of text using constant comparative thematic analysis protocols (Miles & Huberman, 2004; Walcott, 2004). Constant comparison method followed four distinct stages; comparing incidents applicable to each category, identifying the properties used for grouping, grouping the various categories, and writing a statement describing common threads related to the categories (Miles & Huberman, 2004). A graduate student performed the first stage analysis in order to limit professor bias toward selecting certain students or themes over others. We collectively identified categories used for grouping.   The professors performed the secondary analysis, underlining significant statements, identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns and clusters of statements in the data (Patton, 1990). We constructed the categories that are represented in the findings. Statements within each category requiring further differentiation were divided up into separate "sub-categories" and then we discussed implications from the subcategories by writing statements describing the common threads (Miles & Huberman, 2004).

FINDINGS

Our findings are organized across three major themes around standards, equity, and social justice: 1. Standards are sufficient and they should guide practice; 2. Standards are helpful and they should guide practice, but they are not sufficient; 3. Standards have critical shortcomings. Within each of the themes, we sought to answer the following-what do students' writings reveal about: a) the legitimacy and utility of the standards; b) the students analysis (if any) of assumptions embedded in the content of the standards; and c) students' understanding of concepts of social justice and diversity vis-à-vis the standards and d) students engagement with ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and profession, which were frameworks used in a primary text in the class, *Ethical leadership and decision making in education* (Shapiro & Stepkovitch, 2005).

Standards are ethically sufficient and they should guide practice

About 10% of students fell into this category. Students' essays in this category tended to embrace a traditionalistic political culture in which one should trust the lawmakers and those who make the rules (Fowler, 2009). As one student reflected, "I trust that the state of Florida has a good understanding of what constitutes a good leader. Even though the standards are a form of bureaucracy, if followed, they will develop an effective leader." Others expressed beliefs that compliance is simply unquestionable: "…complying with the law is a vital component in the standards that leaders need to be fully knowledgeable and adhere to at all times."

Students' essays in this category generally contained arguments that the ethic of justice was well represented in the standards because of the FPLS' emphasis on legal requirements. These students valued the standards because they emphasized, through knowledge of laws and regulations, concepts of fairness and equality (but not equity) in relationship to student achievement, special education students, ELL students and the rights of students and teachers. Not only did the students explicitly demonstrate an assumptive belief that knowledge of and compliance with laws led to more ethical and equitable schools (just schools), their statements tended to imply faith that just schools and practices would be accomplished by acting in a manner consistent with legal and regulatory policies. For example, one student stated, "If all Florida leaders would lead by the standards, and use the ethic of justice, then we would not have the injustices that we have in schools," while another opined: "all Florida Principals should have a clear unequivocal proclamation that these standards must apply to all students, all families, and all members of the school community."

The ethic of justice was represented through students' general stance that might be characterized as bureaucratic and non-critical: standards provided a comprehensive set of guidelines and knowledge claims that had been vetted through state approval protocols and a legal system. Although these students used the term "equality," none of these students used the terms "social justice" or "equity" in their reflective essay as they clearly avoided engaging the terminology and concepts in the ethic of critique. Their interpretation of the ethic of justice tended to lead this group of students to argue that statements in the standards sufficiently infer equity in regards to fairness, diversity, cultural relationships, and education of students with disabilities. It is in this subset of student essays that the term "must" was most evident in terms of describing behaviors and knowledge that leaders "must" have. The ethic of care was infrequently invoked by this group of students. The ethic of the profession was represented primarily in this group of students' suggestion that the specificity of the standards was particularly helpful, and compliance and fidelity to the intent and language of the standards was appropriate because they were official and would lead to higher student performance.

Standards are helpful and they should guide practice, but they are not sufficient

The majority of students, 70%, fell under this category. These students tended to have an additive approach, that is, other supplementary content knowledge, including much of the course content, needed to be added to their repertoire to become a strong leader. They tended to see standards as the floor, while issues of social justice represented the ceiling. As such, the assumptions and orientations of the standards were never robustly questioned or critiqued

beyond illustrating limitations. Even if they are overly focused on technical and managerial concerns and leaders need more frameworks, the FPLS are to be followed and constitute legitimate knowledge. As an example, one student reflected:

> based on the readings, the uses of the standards are legitimate, but they have their limitations. When implementing instructional leadership, managing the learning environment, technology, decision-making, community and stakeholder partnership, the standards can be a great resource and guide. On the other hand, in dealing with social issues, care, critique and equity, it is necessary to lean on the frameworks and conceptualizations presented in the readings.

Similar to the first group, an assumptive belief was that the standards represent the law, so therefore they needed to be followed with fidelity. This group of students perceived the emphasis on laws and regulatory policies, knowledge of performance accountability metrics and ability to use data as positives. Similar to the first group, the ethic of justice is represented through the process by which the standards were vetted.

Nevertheless, the students in this group were perhaps less naïve than the first group in that they recognized that standards would almost inevitably be lacking in terms of guiding the development of principal preparation curriculum and principal disposition and behavior, particularly in terms of ethical commitments to care and the cultivation of leadership, the profession, and notions of "good" communities. Ethic of critique and notions of social justice were not addressed in any particular depth by these students, although notions of diversity and equity were more commonly brought forth. Moreover, no students in this group addressed explicitly in writing the obvious absence of notions of social justice, equity, and diversity, which is what we found in the last set of student essays. Other ethical commitments did emerge as important in the students' responses:

Care. The majority of the students personally identified with the ethic of care however they found this ethical framework to be largely absent in the standards. These students wrote about care in ways that were tied to their professional purpose and identity as teachers. "Finding care and compassion in the Florida standards can be even more difficult than finding critique. Again, administrators are called to identify accommodations, rights and strategies for students, but they do not ask the administrator to make a decision based on the students needs or desires," expressed one student. Another lamented: "I feel that the Ethic of Care is not well addressed in the standards … In caring for our children, equity and equality are highly valued." This response reflects how many students in this group approached notions of equity and diversity primarily through more personally identifiable and well-developed conceptions of the caring teacher.

Profession. Discussion around the ethic of profession tended to be much more critical of the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards, as students engaging this framework with any depth tended to highlight the narrowness and technicality of the language of the standards. "It is obvious that the Ethic of Profession is irrelevant when it comes to the Florida Leadership Standards due to the fact that it has been ascertained that the standards revolve around data and law." Another noted the relationship between the rational and the good: "The standards seem to be what Sergiovanni (2007) would refer to as being technical, and educational (p. 7), and consequently lean heavily on leaders using technical rationality, 'rationality based on what is effective and efficient,' (p. 25) versus normative rationality;

'rationality based on what we believe and what we consider to be good' (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 25)." Another student offered a critique of the content and expansiveness of the standards: "What would the profession expect me to do? What does the community expect me to do? What should I do based on the best interest of the students who may be diverse in their composition and their needs?...the standards do not seem to reflect the ethics of the community and when it comes to, the best interests of the student, they are based on what is best from the eyes of the Florida legislature."

Cultivating leadership. Students also noted that the standards do not address this important process goal, as instead they focus on performance outcomes. One student directly pointed out that " 'cultivating leadership capacity in others' is not mentioned in the standards," while another argued that "the standards do not address how an educational leader should design a school community to cultivate leadership in school staff by distributing leadership, generating critical dialogue about students and learning, and developing trust and meaningful relationships." Another noted critically: "the standards do not do a commendable job on instructing leaders how to share leadership. The standards support communication with teachers and other groups, but they do not even hint at empowering these groups to grow in leadership qualities." Here the student notes that communication spoken about in bureaucratic and legalistic fashion, rather than in a way that cultivates leadership or builds good communities, themes touched upon in the class.

Building good communities. Using Strike's (2007) discussion of the purpose of leadership "to build good communities" and various articles and text on leadership for social justice, many students came to see the narrow and managerial foci of the standards. "The standards, do not answer the questions of how to live well together, how to engage in socially just educational institutions, or how to design school communities to encourage leadership in others," reflected one student. Drawing from a critique of business to education models, another student struggled with how to ever conceptualize the standards as sufficient: "The standards provide the bare, business minimum—the "legal conceptions expressed in a body of law" (Strike, 2007, p. 47); not the values, or moral ideals that are needed to create good school communities." With this group of student reflections, we again witnessed a critique of instrumental leadership. Nevertheless, the students did not particularly engage Strike's (2007) compelling discussion around the dangers of goal displacement and gaming as unethical responses to accountability pressures that ultimately destroy efforts to collectively construct a "good" community.

Standards have critical shortcomings

Around 20% of the students' reflective essays fell into this category. While discussion of ethics of justice and care were noted, this group tended to focus their arguments around the ethic of the profession as having a moral and communal dimension, and the ethic of critique, with particular attention to standards' silence on issues of equity and marginalization and the implication for leadership work.

Profession. For the ethic of the profession, students in this group reflected that the emphasis on individual behaviors and knowledge was a shortcoming, when compared to knowledge of vision, and moral transformation they had been exposed to, particularly as a collective endeavor:

The level of attention to school site culture building and leadership development within the FPLS is concerning. Future administrators have learned the need and tremendous impact shared ownership has on a school culture. … It is not the role of an administrator to say what needs to be done but to servant lead an environment that cares and practices what should be done.

Another student added: "those standards related to knowledge of vision support Strike's (2007) theory that leaders must have visions for their schools (34-35); however, Strike goes on to include that those visions must respect the views of others—a key piece that might be overlooked if following the Standards as written."

Critique. Many of the students' essays surfaced the argument that the standards entirely miss the ethic of critique. As one student pointedly observed:

…much of the FPLS neglects the ethic of critique. The [standards] do not deal 'with inconsistencies, formulates the hard questions, and debates challenges and issues' (Shapiro & Gross, 2008). While it does ask candidates to identify groups and implement strategies to increase performance, it does not ask administrators to question if these issues are institutional or societal inequities.

They observed the absence of concern for issues such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Another reflection included this statement: "The standards cannot compensate for ingrained prejudices deeply hidden within one's own psyche. Only effective educational leadership instruction can help build those immeasurable qualities that create the constructs of ethical administration." The very "soft" and non-controversial language in standards was seen as very limited in relationship to the course readings around larger institutional and societal dynamics: "the generic terms of respect and tolerance do not erase or eliminate the prejudices and pain that ignorance has nurtured… The FPLS do not specifically address the impact of these larger societal issues [race, gender, class, sexual orientation] as they pertain to their impact about schooling. "

This group of students pointed out the inexistent support for concepts of equity and social justice, and the overemphasis on accountability, laws, and student achievement on standardized testing.

As I read the course questions I really started to gain a greater appreciation for the purpose of the master's program I am enrolled in. If you are looking to the standards as a definitive source of answers to moral or ethical questions such as the purpose of education or meaning of leadership, you will find yourself empty. If you look to them for guidance toward social issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation you will find them to be absent of any direction with the exception of statutory requirements.

Similarly, another student observed: "The standards also do little to address issues of inequity specifically connected to race. There is mention of discrimination and the socio-political influence on schools in terms of discrimination and access, however the standards do not call attention to the inequity that often occurs." Others spoke to the lack of value explicit language around social justice and equity. One student argued that "much of the state

certification test pertains to the identification and intervention of disabled students and those in ESL programs, however little is said about race, gender, class, or sexual orientation"

A final set of reflections focused on the role-bound and technical/managerial emphasis of the standards that crowds out discussion of ethics and equity and argued that the explicit nature of standards leaves little room for decision-making that takes into consideration issues of equity and social justice is a significant shortcoming of the Florida leadership standards. One student's quote captured the ethic of critique and the shortcomings of laws: "If the Jim Crow law supports segregation, that doesn't mean that the principal has to support segregation because it is not fair and it is unjust. When the law shows evidence of injustice a leader has to turn to ethics to make fair decisions."

DISCUSSION

We are professors residing in a field often defined as a problem by government and business interests (Bogotch, 2009) as well as academics (Elmore, 2006; Levine, 2005). In addition, the knowledge base on leadership preparation may be characterized as embarking upon a journey to maturity with standards playing a significant role in program curricula and governance (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009). In this context, as professors of educational leadership we understood reasons for the development of the 2008 FPLS and the rationale for state program approval processes. We had an obligation to our students to provide programmatic exposure to the 91 skills-based indicators of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards in a manner that provides students with certain skill sets and knowledge that was generated by a process that included various stakeholders. And, our students practically need to pass the state licensure examination, the FELE.

We also felt that knowledge of many of the skills embedded in the standards prepared students to work within the assumptive worlds of hierarchical and rule-governed school contexts informed by data-driven performance norms that were intended to have positive effects on student learning. Yet, when we as faculty came to believe that the standards largely ignore the robust research and discourse around ethics, equity, and values-centered leadership that has become much more prominent in the field of educational leadership (Fullan, 2003; Furman, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2010), the questions for us became not how should we comply, but how might we legitimately socially reconstitute aspects of the generally technicist orientation of standards in our own teaching?

Educational Leadership Students Discomfort with Critique and Embrace of Care

Students tended to have a shallow understanding of ethics in general and ethic of critique in particular. Some even thought that asking whether a curricular program or approach "worked" demonstrated application of an ethic of critique. Given the early stage of the students' journey and many students' confessions that this is new material that was not covered in their undergraduate teacher education program, this is not a surprising finding. As students beginning in the program, many of the students were encountering new concepts and some students lacked vocabulary that helped to provide schema for understanding concepts. Very few students could explore the multiple meanings associated with critical thinking, being critical, and critical theory/ethic of critique. By contrast, they generally understood more varied definitions of care, which they commonly attributed as a necessary trait for teaching.

Most students had been exposed to a relatively narrow, but dominant policy approach to equity through the construct of closing the achievement gap, which emphasized the use of student achievement data and differentiated instruction. This approach aligned with the language of the FPLS,. While the use of data and compliance with regulations are important and necessary, as critically informed scholars, we note that this emphasis is not neutral or innocent. The FPLS text is wrapped in powerful discourses and practices that tend to narrow conceptions of ethics and equity to issues of management of data and not inquiry. Without decentering and entering of difficult conversations, efficiency and compliance then came to be viewed as justice in many of the students' reflections, demonstrating little evidence of a deep examination of the assumptions of who stands to benefit if one loyally follows the standards. While we remain hopeful about the power of turning a critical eye back on the standards, our examination of student essays clearly demonstrates the limitations of learning in one course. Equity-oriented advocacy leadership is an ongoing process of critical reconstruction (Anderson, 2009; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Hafner, 2010). Understanding that leads to such a critical disposition is not gained through a course, but rather processes of selection, program exposure, robust internships, and socialization and ongoing professional development experiences in schools (Capper, 1993).

As indicated in the responses of the students, many aligned with an ethic of care and they generally characterized themselves as nice people who did not like conflict and politics, which the ethic of critique represented. Marshall and Theoharis (2007) point out that many teachers may not consider it "nice" to "reflect critically about how inequity and injustice occur" (p. 2). Congruent with Marshall and Theoharis (2007), we have come to the conclusion that more work on the knowledge of the self and the construction of whiteness needs to occur, before guiding students to understand the reasons behind the silence in the 2008 standards around issues of social justice in a state where half the students are students of color and low SES. It is our responsibility to guide students and ourselves make meaning of ethics, equity, and social justice in ways that help students see that "good intent" is not sufficient and to provide them with alternative ways of thinking as well as concrete applications that allow begin to take steps against practices that reproduce marginalizing ideologies and unjust outcomes.

Teaching with and against Standards: The Pedagogical Politics of Social Reconstruction

Recognizing that the state had taken a bigger role in defining the content of our professional practice of teaching, we realized that we played a part in constituting the state's role in producing legitimate knowledge by teaching the content of the standards. As such, we are partially functioning as pedagogical agents of the state, constituting legitimate knowledge not just from competing and often less power-privileged claims from the discipline of educational leadership and subfield of leadership for social justice, but rather in our own teaching about the standards. This led us to consider multiple ways to think about working with and against the claims of comprehensive knowledge of important leadership practice being best represented in the content of standards. We offer six ways to conceptualize our teaching and professional work vis-à-vis technicist standards.

Enacting Safe Spaces for Critique. As professors, we believe in classrooms as democratic spaces where pedagogy of care (Noddings, 1987, as cited by Shields, 2004) centered on relationships is fundamental and influences all the facets of the curriculum. We

recognize the issues of power associated with our position as instructors however we attempt to create classes based on democratic fundamentals where dialogue is central to learning and sensemaking (Shields, 2004; Strike, 2005). We employ dialogue to engage our students in conversations about social justice issues that are purposefully omitted from Florida standards to overcome "pathologies of silence" (Shields, 2004) regarding ethnicity, SES, home language, disability, sexual orientation, and gender. We acknowledge and see difference and by doing so we seek to acknowledge everyone's lived experiences.

We discovered that our students were more forthcoming and willing to openly express their views in discussions than in written form. Interestingly, writing could be a source of uneasiness around issues of ethics and equity, as one student commented that writing it down rather than saying it seems that much more permanent. Some students saw the opportunity to be liberating and energizing. What we have noticed is that some students, who are younger teachers, have commented that discussing these issues in schools might mean you will not get a job.

We had to work constantly to enable students to reach their own conclusions on standards without imposing our views of them. We continue to reflect critically on our own practice. After grading the papers and dialoguing with the students through feedback on their statements and views, we found ourselves in a somewhat defensive position as to why we were not more forthcoming on our views of the standards. Some students on the other hand clearly picked up our value orientation through the assignment wording and texts assigned which leads to apprehension that this group of students knew what the "right" answer might be in this particular course. Nevertheless, the classroom has been a site for powerful discussions, disagreements, tears, "coming out" in class, and admission of bias and deficit thinking. It is through socially just spaces, caring relationships and dialogue that we can model and hopefully assist our students to overcome pathologies of silence and start their own conversations in their schools and classrooms.

Collective Professional Engagement and Evaluation. In their survey of faculty in Florida, Mountford et al. (2009) reported that 47% of faculty felt that their professional identity had been challenged as a result of the standards adoption process and many expressed great frustration over having their course content, particularly in reference to ethics, equity, and social justice, potentially delegitimized by the competing content of the standards. As professors of educational leadership, we can and should collectively organize to directly impact the state's construction of leadership standards and assessment of school leaders.

One important component of our work is finding new and multiple ways to define our own measurement metrics as an important way to evaluate our effectiveness (Orr & Pounder, 2006). We are obligated to question and evaluate ourselves as a profession, including reference to shifting dispositions toward ethical commitments and equity. We also need to recognize that even the educational leadership field is fractured as well, with many faculty members endorsing the standards and others finding them limiting or even harmful-even within the same department. This implies doing the work of finding points that most can agree upon even though university Educational Leadership Departments are busy places with many stressors, vulnerabilities, and urgencies fed by webs of policy mandates and growing high stakes assessment pressures. Given the time intensive nature of collective work, conversations about university reward structures would also need to be put in place in ways that allow for different ways of measuring faculty productivity and impact (Cambron-McCabe et al., 1991; Orr, 2010; Reed & Llanes, 2010).

Continued Intellectual Work on Knowledge and Power. We argue that the deep modernist epistemological orientation of the standards provide an opening to interrogate knowledge claims through post-structural lenses (St. Pierre, 2012). Johnson (2008) argues that post-structural approaches to social justice are concerned with how "the interests of the powerful exert a regulatory influence over the meaning and enactment of social justice in the collective (p. 310), and it is postmodernists' responsibility 'de-construct,' 'de-center' and expose marginalization. Given post-structuralism's subjectivist ontology, the standards come to be seen as subjectivist claims of knowledge that are always open to the work of de-centering assumptions of truth embedded in the knowledge claims that constitute the standards. The final group of reflections deconstructed critical shortcomings in the standards, and began to see the subtle circuitry of power that serves to maintain dynamics of marginalization of certain kinds of knowledge. Our teaching can also provide students with lenses to view standards and curricular initiatives as internalized within their own ways of being in schools and importantly, can guide students to view claims of leadership effectiveness and curricular packages marketed as "scientific" and "evidence based" as partial claims to be contested or expertly appropriated in local practice (Bogotch, 2009; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009).

In addition to teaching, we should continue to use our place in Universities to interrogate knowledge and power in our writing. Writing about power and the elevation of some forms of knowledge over others is an important contribution given that our positions as university professors allow us to engage in this work. It is also an important space to claim in an anti-intellectual environment that tends to delegitimize work that does not provide solutions that can be quickly applied or does not consent with dominant policy parameters (Lather, 2004). Our writing can focus on the invisible and subtle ways the unequal effects of power are hidden. We strategically may even desire to suspend solutions in order to better understand how power is articulated in the implementation of standards-based claims of knowledge (St. Pierre, 2012).

Our teaching and writing can provide students with a healthy skepticism that fights blind naiveté that would make the Florida Leadership Standards as the only comprehensive and coherent way to see the world of educational leadership practice. This stance allows us to envision spaces for socially reconstructing purpose and limitations of standards, and allows us to put standards knowledge "on the table" to enable teaching a politics of negotiation and to create spaces for values and attention to the local.

Moving towards Teaching a Politics of Negotiation. Even if standards are examined and deconstructed in ways that allow students to articulate their limitations or their reinscription of marginalizing practices through their regulatory expression of power, this is certainly not sufficient. McClellan and Dominguez (2006, p. 227) importantly remind us of the complexity of developing leadership preparation programs centered around social justice values that nevertheless need to develop students' abilities to work *within and against* k-12 governance systems and school leadership norms in strategic ways by providing keys on how to work within traditional structures, maneuver the political terrain, critique bias, and learn to shape socially just organizations. Therefore, it is worthwhile to provide students with knowledge about how leaders learn to be savvy political leaders who strategically recognize short term conventions that are unlikely to change. A more explicit teaching of how leaders engage in different politics of negotiation is called for. Students need to be provided with tools from advocacy leadership portraits, social network analysis, critical policy

implementation, school law, and school finance that prepare them to negotiate complex organizational structures and shape them into more socially just organizations.

We are not so constrained if we understand policy implementation as slippery (Fowler, 2009), or even as a cultural phenomenon that provides many opportunities for appropriation and the active practice of power (Levinson et al., 2009). In studying experienced school leaders, Haynes and Licata (1995) found that one important component of their discretionary decision-making was creative insubordination, which was a "means of counteracting the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic authority" (p. 21). Creative insubordination practice is rarely sharply disruptive, but rather demonstrates a sophisticated reading of policies such as standards and a commitment to local needs and values. Leaders who engage in creative insubordination are strategic, as they read and play with aspects of a policy that can be loosely coupled. They tend to have a stronger internal locus of control that grants them permission to bend some mandated programs, a tolerance for deviation, and view the acts of creative insubordination as tied to professionalism. In responding to mandates of standards, can we also seek value-defined and "professionally invoked" (Hayes & Licata, 1995, p. 33) stances that are justifiable on the professional and ethical grounds articulated in the broad literature on leadership for social justice.

Centering Values. As Begley (1996) reminded us over 15 years ago, values have a special function and influence on administrative action. An increased attention to social justice brings to the center a focus on the moral purposes of schooling (Jean-Marie, et al., 2009). Therefore, we would argue for explicit discussions of values that guide leadership actions in schools (Theoharis, 2009; Strike, 2007), as well as curriculum and teaching (Schiro, 2012) and policy development and implementation (Alexander, 2012). This effort provides students opportunity and theoretical frameworks to reflect on practice. This includes insight into what students find exceedingly important, why we, as professors choose a social reconstructionist approach to teaching the class. It also spurs discussions of ethics and equity and large and enduring issues in education that go beyond knowledge that is represented in standards. The centering of values in our teaching allows us to help students forecast what they are willing to stand for in their politics of negotiation, including what stance informs the future leaders' negotiation of the politics of the local vis-à-vis the state.

Centering Place. Whereas our students may not know state politics, as in Hayes and Licata's (1995) creatively insubordinate leaders, they can come to know rather intimately the local. Their critical responsibility is to create more expanded notions of the school community than are represented in the standards, to build meaningful connections with others, and to start from the local and place-based pedagogies as a political standpoint from where to incorporate leadership standards. Students need to have the cultural and political perspectives to "negotiate the borders and ideological dissonance between [socioecological justice and a critical pedagogy of place] and the more instrumental purposes of externally mandated standards and accountability mechanisms" (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004, p. 69).

In their work in Alabama with faculty committed to social justice, Reed and Llanes (2010) argued that social justice oriented faculty were very concerned with a prescriptive and deficit-driven approach laden in leadership standards and program approval processes. In reflection, they felt that "faculty and partners should interrogate these competing demands while remaining open to fresh points of view to determine which approaches are contextually appropriate for their own programs" (p. 393). As a starting point, they viewed standards as a minimum baseline that were addressed in the program that also encompassed other

approaches that responded to local pressures in ways that were true to the vision they had for their program.

CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

The passage of the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards and the requirement to resubmit educational leadership programs that demonstrated how 132 competencies and web-based modules had been woven into the curriculum for approval within 6 months to the state of Florida created much stress, discord, and some sense of vulnerability into leadership programs in Florida. Many of the requirements were seen as prescriptive by faculty throughout the state (Mountford et al., 2009), and we as instructors, viewed them as silent on issues of ethics, equity, and social justice-central themes in the course we were to teach and the mission of the department.

We believe that emerging school leaders should be taught to be accountable to all students and communities, and in questioning our own pedagogical stances as professors, we recognized and taught many of the skills and dispositions represented by the standards, and sought to appropriate and contest the regimes of truth the 2008 FPLS presented to us. We sought to prepare "administrators [who] must open organizations to educational ideologies that are inclusive and diverse, ones that uphold the status quo and those that call it into question. The programs that educate these leaders must address the complexities of working within while changing throughout" (McClelland & Dominguez, 2006, p. 227).

Our analysis of student reflections suggests that our efforts need to be continued and extended. Our texts and course content expanded the notion of knowledge of practice and value-centered leadership that might lead them to work beyond and against some of what was represented in the standards. We attempted to use the unique positions we have in Universities to create safe spaced that helped students to practice critical inquiry, understand how knowledge is socially constructed, and recognize the hidden curriculum, all central components of preparing leaders for social justice orientations. Future work needs to include more extensive collaborations with our colleagues across local districts, as well as the state in order to find ways to continually engage in discussions about the assumptions and limitations of standards. Our analysis of student texts, while showing some promise, clearly showed us there was more to do. We continue to strive engage in the intellectual work of looking at knowledge and power in its many forms, including in the construction and potential [re]construction of leadership standards in our localized practices of teaching and writing.

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