

Training School Leaders Who Will Promote Educational Justice:

What, Why, and How?

José W. Lalas

University of Redlands

Ronald D. Morgan

University of Redlands

Abstract: This article examines social justice as a vehicle for equity for all children. It focuses on the training of school leaders who can promote democratic schools and address inequality in K-12 schools. It outlines the needs assessment, consensus building, curriculum, and faculty voice in establishing a doctorate in educational justice.

Closing the achievement gap between White, middle class students and minority students who have a lower socio-economic status classification is a common outcry in education circles today. Indeed, recent studies document the assertion that students in urban public schools face many educational challenges and failures associated with race, ethnicity, poverty, and social inequality (Johnson, Finn, & Lewis, 2005; Kozol, 2005; Kincheloe, 2004; Rothstein, 2004; Rumberger & Gandara, 2004). Rothstein (2004) explained that social class is a strong predictor of academic achievement in standardized measures and that school reforms alone such as higher standards, better teachers, more accountability, better discipline, and other educational best practices are not enough to narrow

Training School Leaders

the academic gap between White, middle class students and their minority and lower-class counterparts. Noguera (2005) characterized problems in education as a manifestation of social inequality rather than lack of technical capacity. He asserted that while we have the knowledge and resources to educate young people, the real question is “whether or not we care enough to provide all students, regardless of race and class, with a good education. So far the answer is no” (pp. 11-13).

In “Divided We Fail: Issues of Equity in American Schools,” England (2005) discussed, with telling examples, the inequities plaguing the spectrum of issues that are essential to serving the needs of all students in our schools: inequity within diversity, inequity within assessment, inequity within standards, and inequity in curriculum. However, she also explained that “our situation is far from hopeless ... There is time to act, a will to act, and a means to act. We have the resources to enact best practices, the technology to make our country more cohesive instead of more divisive, and the intelligence to engage in revolt, reform, and resolution” (p. 128).

With the intent to find solutions in addressing social inequality in K-12 schools, we report in this article the action we are taking in our university to facilitate the training of school leaders including teachers, counselors, and administrators who can promote socially-just and democratic schools. Specifically, we describe here the challenges we encountered including the specific issues and procedures raised by the faculty, support staff, university administrators and trustees, and local superintendents and principals and the processes we undertook in creating a doctorate program that emphasizes topics related to diversity, equity, and social justice. We also share how we established the needs for this type of training program and clearly outline and explain the steps we took in building consensus to establish a doctorate program with an emphasis in educational justice.

During the final phase of creating this Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program, we considered the scathing report by Arthur Levine, president of Columbia University’s Teachers College, on the inadequacy of Ed.D. in preparing K-12 school administrators and where he called for its elimination. In this four-year study of more than 1,200 education schools and departments in the United States, Levine (2005) found that too many educational leadership programs did not have a coherent curriculum, suffered from low admission standards and weak faculties, produced watered-down dissertations, and served as “cash cows” for other higher-priority programs on their campuses. Levine’s report provides us with reminders of what we should be striving for in conceptualizing and implementing an effective Ed.D. program. In this article, we describe the doctorate program that we created, its purpose

and rationale, and its curriculum in training school leaders who will promote educational justice.

Promoting Social Justice:
A Vehicle for Educational Justice For All Children

We believe that what happens in the broader social community affects what happens in school (Anyon, 2005). According to Noguera (2005) while testing, standards and accountability, and vouchers dominate current policy discussions, we neglect to consider the conditions under which students learn. He explained that simply listing schools by the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch provides us with knowledge about its potential academic rankings and the race and class makeup of the school. He also asserted that “we do provide all children with access to school in this country—public education remains the only social entitlement in this country—but we get unequal education” (Noguera, 2005, p. 14).

Presumably, to many educators, promoting social justice in schools is a way of recognizing this inequality and respecting and valuing differences in race or ethnicity, cultural traditions and beliefs, social norms, intellectual flexibility, and personal perspectives among students in a usually multicultural classroom in urban schools. Classroom practitioners believe that social justice can be cultivated in students by recognizing and honoring diversity, appreciating equity, advancing critical thinking and openness, and encouraging individual voice and unique expression (Brooks & Thompson, 2005). Urban school counselors view an emphasis in social justice as an important skill in assuming an advocacy role as part of their work and paying attention to social, political, and economic realities of students and families (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Brown (2004) offered a practical, process-oriented model that is responsive to the challenges of preparing leaders committed to social justice and equity. She explained that being administrators and leaders for social justice needs grounding in learning theories, transformative pedagogy, and critical discourse and reflection, aims to perceive contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality, and prepares to “work with and guide others in translating their perspectives, perceptions, and goals into agendas for social change” (p. 99).

Whatever perspective is used in explaining the term, a strong argument needs to be made for “the necessity of a social justice agenda in a democratic and increasingly diverse society” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 168). Educational leadership for social justice is a set of beliefs that emphasizes equity, ethical values, justice, care, and respect (Marshall & Oliva, 2006). Others frame promoting social justice as a lifelong undertak-

Training School Leaders

ing that involves understanding oneself in relation to others, examining how privilege or inequality affects one's own opportunities as well as those of different people, exploring varied experiences and how those inform a person's unique worldviews, perspectives, and opportunities, and evaluating how schools and classrooms can operate to value diverse human experiences and enable learning for all students (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Darling-Hammond (2005) suggested in her definition that teachers for social justice need to understand one's identity, other people's background and their worldviews, and the sources of inequities and privileges. Sensitivity to these issues will be helpful for school leaders in facilitating the learning of students authentically in their schools and making a difference in the lives of teachers and students in the classroom.

Bell (1997) implied in a more philosophical sense that educational leadership promoting social justice means providing all individuals and groups in a society full and equal participation in meeting their needs. In her vision, a just society is where the "distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure" (p. 1). She further asserted that "social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole" (p.1).

It is clear from Bell's (1997) conceptualization that educational leaders who are committed to practice social justice need to understand that all individuals in the society must be responsible to each other and deserve to enjoy equity, security, safety, and involvement in their interaction and dealing with others and the society. Applied more narrowly to teaching, Cochran-Smith (2004; 2000) framed promoting social justice in education as a conception of teaching and learning that includes the following instructional agenda: (a) learning to represent complex knowledge in accessible and culturally responsive ways, (b) learning to ask good questions, (c) using diversified forms of assessment to shape curriculum and instruction, (d) developing relationships with students that support and sustain learning, (e) working with—not against—parents and community members, (f) collaborating with other professionals, (g) interpreting multiple data sources in support of pupils' learning, (h) maintaining high academic standards for students of all abilities and backgrounds, (i) engaging in classroom inquiry in the service of pupil and teacher learning, and (j) joining with others in larger movements for educational and social equity.

In this description of the "social justice agenda" in teaching and learning, Cochran-Smith outlined the knowledge, skills, abilities, and disposition that teachers and educational leaders need to develop to move

this agenda forward which include culturally responsive teaching, making content comprehensible and accessible, effective and purposeful questioning, use of different forms assessment to inform instruction, support for students, collaboration with parents, community members, and other professionals, knowing how to interpret data, maintaining high academic standards, being a teacher-researcher, and strong advocacy for equity. She also implied that teaching from a social justice perspective, is not a matter simply of transmitting knowledge and equating pupil learning to higher scores on high-stakes tests but rather engaging pupils in “developing critical habits of mind, understanding and sorting out multiple perspectives, and learning to participate in and contribute to a democratic society by developing both the skill and the inclination for civic engagement” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 159).

We view social justice as a vehicle for educational justice in k-12 educational settings. Educational leaders including school administrators, counselors, and teachers need to understand, value, and advocate for diversity and social justice because they are the foundations for providing ALL students with educationally-just learning environments.

Leaders for Educational Justice:
From Need to Concept to Implementation

The faculty of the School of Education (SOE) at the University of Redlands (UOR) who were part of the planning process for a new doctoral degree in educational leadership decided that in the training of school leaders it was imperative that promoting social justice and recognizing diversity become the cornerstone of the curriculum. To confirm our perceived need for such leaders in California and locally, we used the following sources and procedures:

Independent Findings: The need for educational doctorates was clearly established in a report by the California State University System. The report states the following: “in California, there is one education doctorate awarded for every 14,685 K-12 students, compared with one for every 9,438 K-12 students nationally” (CPEC 2000b, 16). Furthermore, the same report states that “California cannot continue to meet the demands of *growing* complexity in education administration and the *growing* need for education leadership with *stagnant* production of educational leaders.” With presently no universities located in San Bernardino County offering educational doctorates, the University of Redlands is strategically located in the Inland Empire to offer such a desirable program.

Training School Leaders

Investigative Needs Assessment: To investigate the existence of demand within the Inland Empire, the School of Education conducted formal focus groups with local school district administrators including principals and district superintendents. The results of these interviews strongly indicate that the proposed doctorate program is needed.

Survey of Potential of Candidates: A survey of local educators determined that a large number were prepared to enroll as soon as the University offered the program.

Unsolicited Input: A large number of Inland Empire administrators, counselors, and teachers, as well as former and current graduate students of the School of Education MA programs, have repeatedly conveyed their interest in the doctoral program.

The UOR faculty then developed a curricular map of the doctoral program's core content that blends the strands of educational leadership and social justice. They agreed on the following four ways to integrate the concepts of social justice into the doctoral program: (a) Train leaders to be social constructors of knowledge who empower all and embrace fairness for all students as they strive for effective leadership, (b) Educate leaders to be equitable users and disseminators of knowledge, power, and resources in the areas of finance, pupil services and curriculum development, (c) Help leaders become critical consumers of knowledge who challenge existing knowledge systems and find equitable solutions, and (d) Encourage leaders to be social constructors, critical consumers and equitable disseminators of knowledge in their policy making and governance decisions.

There was a consensus that these important concepts for social justice be integrated into each of the newly-created doctoral courses that are imbued with principles of social justice, equity, critical theory, transformative leadership, and ethics. Graduates from this new program at the UOR will learn to perform as researchers, school leaders, school administrators, and/or education instructors with a strong understanding of the blend of theory and practice grounded in social justice that is essential in making K-12 environments educationally-just. Table 1 shows the courses and the strands of educational leadership skills and social justice concepts comprising the curriculum.

Addressing Social Inequality With Passion and Rigor

As can be seen in Table 1, the knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions in administering, managing, and leading any K-12 setting are

Table 1
Ed.D. Leadership Skills and Social Justice Strands

Core Content Courses	Leadership Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities	Emphasis on Social Justice
Social Justice Theories and Issues in Education	Policy making and governance; curriculum development; employer-employee relations and negotiations	Leaders as social constructors of knowledge who empower ALL and embraces fairness and democratic values
Ethics in Education Leadership	Finance; pupil services; School climate and safety	Leaders as equitable users and disseminators of knowledge, power, and resources
Sociopolitical Leadership for Educational Policy and Reform	Personnel and human resources; special populations and special needs services	Leaders as critical consumers of knowledge who challenge existing knowledge systems and find equitable solutions
Transformative Leadership in Organizational Systems Emphasizing Social Justice	Attributes of effective leadership	Application: Leaders as social constructors, critical consumers, and equitable disseminators of knowledge
Information Systems in Equitable Environment	Information and resources for learning management	Issues related to the equitable distribution and use of technology
Theory and Application of Critical Pedagogy	Change agent in learning environments	Leaders as critics of society who value participation and honor individuality

carefully mapped with issues, concepts, and ideas related to equity and social justice. There is an explicit goal to train educators who can lead schools and school programs with technical abilities integrated with beliefs that emphasize educational justice, ethical values, equity, care, and respect.

The UOR faculty needed to assure that current as well as new faculty had the background and experience to teach in an educational leadership doctorate that emphasized social justice. To help address this concern, it was decided that ongoing research and training of faculty in the area of social justice is a must. To initiate this process it was decided that the SOE

Training School Leaders

would coordinate with the local school districts in hosting summer workshops on social justice in education. Dr. James Banks, a leading authority in social justice, was chosen as the first keynote speaker for this event and it was open to faculty, students and local educators. This workshop helped set the framework for providing faculty with essential social justice tools in the training of school leaders and will be a part of the ongoing curriculum each summer with national experts in social justice as keynote speakers. To ensure the most benefit from this workshop, the SOE faculty also began working in reading groups covering an array of related social justice themes prior to the workshop. Currently, many SOE faculty are involved in conducting research on topics related to social justice and educational leadership.

The program design and course offerings have been created for practitioner-educators, including teachers, counselors, and administrators, working in a wide range of educational settings who are interested in pursuing careers with advanced skills in teaching, counseling, and administrative positions. Thus, the series of required courses is planned to provide them with breadth and depth in educational leadership with emphasis on social justice. Appendix 1 shows the program overview and course descriptions.

Applauding Ed.D. Despite Levine's Report

During the time it took to create our doctoral program several questions and concerns surfaced regarding a doctorate program in education. From Levine's study (2005) came the suggestion to do away with the Ed.D. Degree. Levine concluded in his study that Ed.D. degrees are "watered-down doctorates" and have no future place in preparing educational leaders. This statement goes against the philosophy of what this degree is really intended for. His further statement about an Ed.D. Degree being "unnecessary for any job in school administration" was both unfortunate and unfounded. To be leaders of school sites and certainly at the district levels requires a combination of theoretical understanding and practical experience. In the purest sense, that is exactly what the Ed.D. degree is designed to be—a practitioner's degree that consists of a blend of academics, scholarship and field experiences.

Levine's study also pointed out that "many university-based programs are engaged in a race to the bottom in which they compete for students by lowering standards and offering faster and less demanding degrees." If that is indeed the situation in some universities, then let us be proactive in reversing that trend and work on strengthening those degrees rather than eliminating them. In many universities, the Ed.D.

Degree is a rigorous program that combines a strong curriculum along with research expectations that most often require a doctoral dissertation. The candidates in many of these programs have a strong connection to local public schools and are taught the necessary elements to be a quality educational leader which should be the goal of any or existing doctoral programs.

Unfortunately, some of the recommendations in Levine's study are the type of "knee-jerk" reactions that are often seen in the education arena. Rather than make the changes that can strengthen or improve an area that is lacking, recommendations are put forth that want everything thrown out and something new created in its place. The focus in this case should be to put energy into raising the bar on new and existing Ed.D. degrees in educational leadership—ones that reflect the important balance of theory and practice. This certainly was the focus of the UOR planning committee as it reiterated that curricular content covered such areas as finance, human resources, negotiation, educational technology, and organizational leadership all within a social justice framework.

Conclusion

The current research literature supports the creation of a program in educational leadership that has at its foundational core a strong emphasis in social justice (Marshall & Oliva, 2005; Brown, 2004; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Rusch, 2004; Shields, 2004; Michelli & Keiser, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2004). The Ed.D. program that we have created and continue to "massage" at the University of Redlands is a comprehensive one that provides rigor while balancing the theory and practice that is essential for today's educational leaders. Our definition of social justice comes from a variety of sources and implies that it is not only the development of our critical consciousness of the broader societal inequalities that are prevalent in our society but also as a personal virtue of fairness, equity, care, respect, and compassion for all people regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other personal experiential backgrounds. Specifically applied to K-12 settings and classrooms, we argue that teachers, counselors, and administrators who have the leadership skills with grounding in social justice play key roles in narrowing the academic achievement gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in our public schools and creating learning environments that are educationally-just.

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Appendix 1

Course Sequence

The series of required courses is planned to provide candidates with breadth and depth in educational leadership. After candidates have completed at least 12 credits of advanced graduate work in an area of expertise, the program sequence is as follows:

YEAR ONE

Summer Intensive Institute: (Begins courses and is required of all candidates). The first summer intensive of the program will focus on the content area of the core coursework: social justice theories in education, ethics, policy and reform, leadership in a diverse society. Noted scholars will keynote the sessions. Participation is included as part of the requirements for subsequent courses.

FIRST TRIMESTER:

EDUC 830 Social Justice Theories and Issues in Educational Leadership (3). Examines social justice theories and their implications in developing leadership in school reform. Identifies the social, cultural, political, and economic factors that influence schooling in a diverse society. Provides leadership skills for dealing with societal and institutional barriers to academic success and personal growth of all learners.

EDUC 840 Educational Inquiry (3). Explores research theories within the context of an inquiry framework on issues related to educational leadership. Develops an understanding of the range of research methodologies to plan, conduct, and evaluate qualitative and quantitative research. Develops ways of thinking and knowing about educational inquiry that contribute to the field of study.

EDUC 850A Research to Practice Seminar I (1). A topical seminar that links research to practice relating to social justice and leadership. Seminar continues throughout the first year (EDUC 850 A, B, and C).

SECOND TRIMESTER:

EDUC 831 Legal and Ethical Issues in Educational Leadership (3). Explores legal and ethical issues in educational leadership within the context of developing and implementing policy. Course topics focus on laws affecting education and the application of legal and ethical practices in human resource management, student services, and curriculum and program development.

EDUC 841 Quantitative Research Methods (3). Focuses on understanding a

Training School Leaders

framework for conducting quantitative research in education. Emphasis will be on the application of descriptive and inferential statistics. Important topics will include hypothesis testing, regression analysis, and nonparametric methods.

EDUC 850B Research to Practice Seminar II (1). A topical seminar that links research to practice relating to ethical and legal issues in leadership.

THIRD TRIMESTER:

EDUC 832 Educational Policy and Evaluation: A Multiple Perspectives Approach (3). Explores federal, state, and local policy development, implementation, and analysis. Topics include school governance, boardsmanship, and working with contracts and state and federal agencies to assure equitable access to all students.

EDUC 842 Qualitative Research Methods (3). An in-depth study of the major paradigms and perspectives of qualitative research. Strategies of inquiry, methods of data collection and analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and representation will be the focus of the course.

EDUC 850C Research to Practice Seminar III (1). A topical seminar that links research to practice relating to educational policy and evaluation.

First Year: Total (21) credits.

YEAR TWO

Summer Intensive Institute EDUC 851 Dissertation Development and Proposal Writing (3). Focuses on the process of dissertation development with emphasis on proposal writing skills and mechanics. Successful proposal models will be reviewed. Candidates will select and consult with major advisors and faculty members on areas of research. Dissertation proposals should be completed and accepted by the end of Year Two.

FIRST TRIMESTER:

EDUC 833 Using Information Systems to Create Equitable Environments (3). Addresses technology-related issues in leadership and vision; learning and teaching; productivity and professional practice; support, management, and operations; assessment and evaluation; social, legal, and ethical issues based on the Technology Standards for School Administrators (TSSA). (Suggested background in operating systems, word processing, spreadsheets, electronic presentations, and information searching skills.)

EDUC 852A Research to Practice Seminar I (1). A topical seminar that links research to practice relating to technology and information systems in management and instruction. Seminar continues throughout the first year (EDUC 850 A, B, and C).

SECOND TRIMESTER:

EDUC 834 Educational Finance and Budgeting (3). Explores how revenues are

generated, negotiated, distributed, and budgeted to achieve desired educational outcomes. Topics include the underlying social, political, and economic tensions associated with planning, developing, delivering, and managing educational nance resources, funding sources, facilities, and means of resolving programmatic tensions related to revenue generation, negotiation, distribution, and budgeting.

EDUC 852B Research to Practice Seminar II (1). A topical seminar that links research to practice relating to budget and nance.

THIRD TRIMESTER:

EDUC 835 Theory and Application of Critical Pedagogy (3). Presents theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of critical theory and pedagogy. Explores application of critical pedagogy as a step for positive social and educational changes. Examines rapid change in education and society, and prepares educational leaders who will manage and create change within educational institutions for social justice.

EDUC 852C Research to Practice Seminar III (1). A topical seminar that links research to practice relating to use critical theory and pedagogy to manage and create change.

Second Year Total: (15) credits

Upon successful completion of the written comprehensive exams and the acceptance of the dissertation proposal, students will be advanced to doctoral candidacy status.

YEAR THREE

Summer Intensive Institute: EDUC 845 College Teaching Practicum (3). Students will prepare to teach a college-level course. Curriculum design, selection of appropriate reading materials, and teaching styles and techniques will be covered. Preparation will lead to students' actually teaching a college course in their area of concentration, normally during the following academic year.

FIRST TRIMESTER:

EDUC 853 A Dissertation Writing I (3). Dissertation work continues through year three with guidance from the candidate's faculty advisor and committee. (Continued with EDUC 853 A, B, and C).

SECOND TRIMESTER:

EDUC 853 B Dissertation Writing II (3). Dissertation work continues through year three with guidance from the candidate's faculty advisor and committee.

THIRD TRIMESTER:

EDUC 853 C Dissertation Writing III (3). Dissertation work continues through year three with guidance from the candidate's faculty advisor and committee.

Training School Leaders

Third Year: Total (12) credits

Year Three includes a teaching assistantship or teaching as an adjunct faculty member in selected disciplines or content areas.

Please Note: There will be a seven-year completion deadline from the time of initial enrollment in the doctoral program. Candidates must remain continuously enrolled in a 0-credit dissertation course that will include a fee for each trimester after the conclusion of Year Three until the dissertation has been successfully completed and defended.