

Distributed Leadership: Developing Leaders for Tomorrow

Alma Harris

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Distributed Leadership: Developing Leaders for Tomorrow is more than a book on leadership. It is a bold statement about how educational organizational structures and cultures, along with their leadership practices, must change to meet the demands of a twenty-first century educational system. Alma Harris situates the need for different forms of leadership in a mix of global forces. On the one hand are issues of entrenched poverty that form both a moral and educational challenge to any form of leadership if our education system is not to continue to expand the numbers of students belonging to the permanently poor. On the other hand, changes in technology are creating a global communication revolution with the potential for schools as we know them to become irrelevant to the students of the 24/7/52 generation who spend more time on social web sites than in school.

These challenges as Harris identifies them, however, do not remain in abstract global spheres. The more mundane issue is that in many educational systems there is a critical shortage of those wanting to take up formal leadership positions in schools. Harris provides statistics for the UK, but those of us from other countries know that this problem is more widespread. Leading schools as a principal or head teacher is becoming increasingly unattractive, rendering our present system unsustainable. Alternative approaches to leading schools are needed.

The book is organized into ten chapters. The first two identify the imperative for developing alternative forms of leadership. The next three chapters provide the theoretical basis underpinning the key concepts of distributed leadership identified in the book and the supporting evidence. Notions of distributed leadership explicitly reject portrayals of the (Camburn *et al.*, 2003, p. 348), "... heroic leader sitting atop a hierarchy bending the school community to his or her purposes". Rather they focus on the practice of leadership and how those practices create collaborative learning networks across organisational and inter-organisational boundaries. In a networked society, leadership that promotes the collective capability to co-construct knowledge for the purpose of achieving important outcomes is more relevant than hierarchical leadership where standardization and conformity are the organizing principles. Importantly, Harris defines what distributed leadership is not because there is the ever-present danger of interpreting new concepts in established conceptual frames. It is not a flattening of the hierarchy or delegation of tasks within an established hierarchical system. It is not the bossless team or leadership substitute approach.

Rather it is a more fluid concept in which leadership is a web of activities and interactions stretched across people and situations (Spillane *et al.*, 2004). Its effectiveness depends on the utilization of expertise focused on the co-construction of knowledge.

It is possible to romanticize such leadership as the way of the future and ignore the fishhooks. Harris, however, spends some time explaining that it is not the distribution of leadership *per se* than determines effectiveness, but rather how it is distributed. She outlines the knowledge and capability-building needed, together with the organisational accountabilities. Knowledge creation and organizational growth do not just happen if patterns of leadership are changed. Indeed, one of the greatest barriers to developing distributed leadership that she identifies is the entrenched assumptions and capabilities within the present system.

Chapter six examines the need for distributed leadership to go beyond individual schools if its knowledge and capability building potential is to be realized. Each part of the education system is embedded within a larger system with leadership needing to be distributed both within and across networks of systems. The case studies in chapters seven and eight illustrate how such an approach can work effectively in practice. The first of these chapters focuses on within school leadership, and the second within networks of schools. These chapters are important because distributed leadership can be a nebulous concept with fluidity as a central idea. The book concludes with two chapters drawing together the lessons from the cases and the earlier theoretical work into new directions for leadership.

While Harris is articulate about the vision, and grounded in its realization, my main hesitation is the limited empirical base to support it. This problem is more a comment on the state of the research than on the book itself. Spillane *et al.* (2007) describe the research as “pre-adolescent”. I believe a more accurate description would be “in infancy”. Although many of the underpinning ideas have been in circulation for some time (e.g. Etzioni, 1965) and Spillane’s work in particular (Spillane *et al.*, 2004; Spillane *et al.*, 2007) has provided us with powerful analytical tools to examine a distributed perspective on leadership, the empirical base on its effectiveness is weak. Proponents of distributed leadership have taken the stance that a central leadership responsibility is to impact positively on student outcomes. Case studies showing this impact abound but more systematic testing remains limited partly because of the difficulty involved in testing the complex relationships between distributed leadership and student outcomes. Many of the case studies, including those described in this book, show that greater distribution of leadership practices have brought leadership closer to core work of teaching and learning. The question remains, “Is this sufficient to improve valued outcomes?” Distributed leadership undoubtedly has promise but Robinson (2008) argues that to achieve this promise more focus is needed on the educational content of the leadership influence process. My own work has shown that distributing leadership is a risky business and has the potential to result in the greater distribution of incompetence (Timperley, 2005). It is not the distribution of leadership *per se*, as Harris so often reminds us, but how it is distributed.

Distributed leadership is undoubtedly an idea whose time as come. The idea of distributing leadership has gained rapid acceptance among the research and professional practitioner communities. This book makes a valuable contribution to understanding both its potential and its practice. The failure of its heroic forebears to

deliver either the quality or numbers of leaders required for our schools has led many to search for alternatives. Leadership tasks are becoming more complex in schools, knowledge economies require knowledge workers rather than compliant employees, global communication systems render many of our ways of learning and teaching obsolete. The fluidity of a distributed perspective on leadership resonates closely with these societal shifts and certainly has the potential to make a difference to our entrenched educational problems that run the danger of becoming more entrenched if we continue to organize and lead our schools in traditional ways. Harris helps us to understand how we can better distribute leadership to realise the vision of leading schools that belong to this century rather than to those of the past.

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Professional Learning Communities: An Implementation Guide and Toolkit

Kathleen A. Foord and Jean M. Haar

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We were all there at one time, our first year teaching. With myriad emotions on a daily basis: excitement, nervousness, stress, confusion. I remember as a first year teacher often feeling happy that I was staying "one day ahead of my students." As time passed, I became more comfortable within the confines of my classroom; I felt more innovative and creative; my lessons were progressive and adapted to fit the needs of my students. While those are all healthy positive ways to approach teaching, they are often times,

and by many of us, done in solitude. Creative lesson planning, innovative management techniques, new and improved subject matter dissemination are found on a regular basis throughout our classrooms. But how many times are they done in collaboration with other teachers? How often are those great lessons planned in a group so that more students benefit from the collective minds of those who care the most about them? As an education system, are we collectively progressing toward innovation, or are we simply trying to stay one step ahead of our developing students?

As generations change, so does the need to adapt and alter the approach to teaching. Teachers as educators, isolated to their practice on individual islands, have been replaced by the notion that we can better educate our future generations by opening up our classrooms and tearing down the barriers that hinder collaboration. Just like how the art of teaching is moving away from the lecture style to a more workshop-based approach, teachers working in communities rather than in isolation are becoming the more desired structure. Building teams rather than working in solitude is not a new concept, but one that has taken hold recently in the form of professional learning communities (PLCs). Arguably made famous in the late 1990s by Robert Dufour, PLCs have become staple organizations in most of our current schools. But while many schools sincerely try to develop PLC's, many do not have a framework or guide to implementation. Those roadblocks are the purpose behind Kathleen Foord and Jean Haar's book *Professional Learning Communities: An Implementation Guide and Toolkit*. They approach PLCs from an implementation standpoint, helping to guide not only teachers and teacher leaders, but also principals and superintendents through the challenge of creating lasting PLCs in their schools. The book is designed to give educators the proper foundation and structure to not only implement PLCs, but also sustain efficient and effective groups of educators.

There is no argument that structure is essential when building any team, however often times the structure of a PLC is the main focus, and often times we see PLCs fail because of this (p. 6). The most common trap administrators fall into is strictly focusing on the structure of the PLC, and relying on the (p. 7) "whatever it takes" mentality of the teacher to push through and commit to PLCs, regardless of whether or not the structure is meaningful to the students or to their own development as an educator. The commitment of the teachers and administrators (p. 7) "should not be on the mission or student achievement results, but rather to a process that permits professionals to learn with one another so that they are able to address the changing needs of all learners in the education system". Ultimately, those changing needs are the purpose for the PLC model, however in order to make PLCs an effective and efficient use of teacher planning time, teachers need to be (p. 9) "professionals not technicians, act and learn as adults not as children, have positive interdependence between each other and not be dependent on school administrators, and view themselves as part of a successful learning organization not just learning individuals". As educators, we have to (p. 9) "stop going through the motions" of developing PLCs, and actually create the conditions in our schools to where they can be successful. Therein lies the dilemma, and the inherent problem with trying to build PLCs. As a structure focused profession, how do you successfully develop PLCs without getting bogged down in a structure centric modality?

According to Foord and Haar, it all depends on the buy in of those involved on the front lines of education . . . the teachers. It seems like common sense, but we all have

been in situations in our schools where “new” structures or programs are thrust on us without first completely understanding the problem, nor without that problem being put in its proper context. An even greater problem is the fact that PLCs are often implemented in schools without first implementing proper environments for adult learning. Without proper adult learning environments, teachers will be reluctant to commit to the key structures needed to make PLCs work. In addition, changes in teacher practices and beliefs, creating the proper conditions in the school, and promoting effective relationships, are all essential areas of focus that teacher leaders, school administrators, and superintendents need for successful implementation of PLCs. But the success or failure of PLCs does not rely strictly on the shoulders of the teachers; an essential aspect of PLC building also relies on strong leadership. A lack of strong leadership will have a detrimental effect on PLC development, and throughout the last part of chapter two, Foord and Haar detail five dimensions of leadership geared toward the teacher leaders and administrators that are crucial for the development of PLCs.

The subsequent chapters (3-7) help guide teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and administrators through the quadrants in the change-cycle model: learn, plan, and apply techniques, then reflect, evaluate, and collaborate with staff. Foord and Haar also create a series of innovation maps that are designed to help educators implement PLCs in their schools or districts. They believe the (p. 44) “role of leaders is to provide a focused environment that facilitates effective change”. In order for that to occur, certain processes need to be in place. The authors further assert that (p. 44) “innovation maps provide the processes needed to analyze and evaluate implementation, continuous improvement, and sustainability”. When all is said and done, the sustainability of a PLC is what really generates lasting improvements across a school. It is the development of the teachers as a whole, rather than individual units, which take a school from failing to prosperous or from good to great.

In addition to being a roadmap for effective PLC implementation, *Professional Learning Communities* is rich in research and creativity. One of the most interesting facets of Foord and Haar’s research was done on the collective efficacy of teachers. When controlling for other factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, researchers found that collective efficacy beliefs have stronger effects on student achievement than student race or socioeconomic status. The authors reiterate that (p. 37) “When we systematically develop the awareness of our teachers about their collective capabilities, the increase in their collective efficacy will have a strong impact on student achievement”. Too often we find our schools operating in various stovepipes. We see teachers and administrators working hard, but working hard alone, often struggling or neglecting to build the bridges necessary to bring all members together. The collective power of the whole is much stronger than the strength of the individuals.

All in all, Foord and Haar do an excellent job of creating a very useable guide and toolkit to help educators at all levels build professional learning communities. The struggle will come as school leaders read this and internalize the research, try to make change in their schools, only to find that the rest of the staff is not on the same wavelength as they are. Before an eager leader tries to implement PLCs via Foord and Haars suggestions, he or she will need to develop a meaningful way to disseminate the information. This book can be used as a professional development tool to be best

implemented as a series of workshops designed to slowly build PLCs and incorporate each facet piece by piece until the environment at the school site is right for full implementation. The concepts, strategies, structures, and tools need to be broken up and delivered chapter by chapter on a school-wide basis with the purpose of garnering support and cohesion for the task at hand. Feedback from teachers after each step in the process and ensuring understanding is imperative to the success of implementation. More importantly is the breakup of the island mentality toward a more collaborative mindset. As the authors indicate (p.182), “Improved collaboration between teachers and leaders through effective PLCs leads to four important results: improved student achievement regardless of demographics, increased teacher proficiency in using research-based practices, increased student sense of belonging and efficacy, and increased sense of belonging and efficacy for teachers and leaders”. But while the road to collaboration is often times difficult and complex, it is that same road less traveled that makes all the difference in the lives of those we affect most: our students.

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**The Instructional Leader’s Guide to Informal Classroom
Observations (Second Edition)**

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Larchmont, NY

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Educational leaders have many competing responsibilities to fulfill; from providing vision to managing facilities, from supervising staff to allocating resources, from establishing connections with the greater community to maintaining legal requirements. Of all the innumerable duties educational leaders must juggle, none is more crucial than providing the instructional leadership required to support teacher growth. No educational leader can achieve success without attending to the essence of the profession; great teaching. While many other tasks may demand attention, fostering teacher effectiveness is considered the ultimate role of the administrative leader.

Sally Zepeda’s book, *The Instructional Leader’s Guide to Informal Classroom Observations* is a clearly written, well-thought out resource for principals, administrators and other instructional leaders in search of tools that support the art of informal classroom observation to advance teacher growth and learning. In light of the numerous and compelling demands administrative leaders must manage it is especially critical that efficient and successful instructional approaches are developed. Zepeda’s second edition of her best selling book provides the detailed, succinct steps that may be used as (p. 1) “the first step toward improving instruction and assisting

teachers to examine their practices". Zepeda has demonstrated a unique ability to establish clear and practical techniques for educational administrators based soundly on theory for the achievement of successful school leadership. Here she offers a protocol for using regular, informal classroom observation as a key component of exemplary instructional leadership. Included in this expanded edition are 40 reproducible classroom observation tools that are also available in downloadable PDF format from: www.eyoneducation.com. Also included in this edition is a new chapter detailing Zepeda's technique to guide in the evaluation of student work as part of the informal observation process.

Zepeda has produced a practical toolkit for principals and other instructional leaders eager to implement informal classroom observation as part of their improvement cycle. Her style is direct, clear and to the point; facilitating use of the book as a manual for instructional leadership. The book opens with a chapter providing the rationale and groundwork for use of the approach, "Readying for informal classroom observations". Describing the strengths of (p. 3), "job-embedded learning", Zepeda emphasizes the opportunities informal observation affords for relevant, timely, transferrable teacher learning. While the informal observations Zepeda promotes do not require a pre-observation conference, they should entail at least 15 to 20 minutes of observation time and must include a post-observation conference a majority of times. She provides the first two of the book's numerous and well-designed tools here for administrators to use in assessing the characteristics, career stages and developmental needs of the faculty. Acknowledging that (p. 8) "learning can neither be mandated nor imposed", Zepeda emphasizes the need for the Principal or other instructional leaders to properly plan for informal classroom observation. Further, she urges the development of a unified and well prepared administrative team to cultivate appropriate dialogue, relationships, and enhance a culture of learning as well as to extend the ability of the team to perform frequent and universal informal classroom observations.

Building on this groundwork for implementing an effective program, Zepeda moves further into the intent and design of informal classroom observation as a tool for instructional improvement. In chapter 2, "Framing informal classroom observations", she enumerates the benefits of such informal observations, noting that (p. 16) "effective classroom observations support the overall instructional program and the teachers who deliver it". Encouraging principals to make the commitment to being present in the classrooms, Zepeda explains how the spirit and practice used to conduct the instructional program will impact how a faculty responds to the program as a continuing element of professional development. Administrators are urged to (p. 18) "catch teachers in the art of teaching" and celebrate the efforts and achievements taking place. The concept of creating a positive, visible focus on classroom instruction through frequent observations that culminate in an opportunity to debrief and reflect is powerful. Zepeda also clarifies that in order to implement successfully it is necessary that all teachers are visited (not just new teachers or those believed to be experiencing difficulty), that visits are made as often as possible, that a focus area is chosen and that follow up should be consistent and include needed resources.

Maximizing results of informal classroom observations can only take place if data-collection is well performed. In chapter 3, "Understanding data-collection techniques and approaches" and chapter 4 "Looking in while stepping out" Zepeda

details steps to gathering and using relevant data through informal observation. The principal is advised to define a relatively narrow focus as this creates a greater likelihood that events observed can be meaningfully related. Where possible, tying the use of informal classroom observation to school-wide instructional improvement efforts will support success of the improvement cycle. More than two-dozen reproducible tools appear in these two chapters, offering solidly designed choices for gathering and recording relevant quantitative and qualitative data. Administrators are urged to tailor and adapt the resources found throughout the book so that a perfect fit between purpose and instrument can be reached.

Zepeda's rich and carefully constructed classroom observation tools offer excellent options for data collection, including both narrow-angle and wide-angle methods. Ultimately, once the observer has prepared possible areas of focus and data collection instruments, the actual events within the classroom at the time of observation will present decisions to be made on the spot. In chapter 4, there are constructive tips for implementing the technique and suggestions for how to approach the post-observation conference depending on the type of data collected and the purpose of the observation. Chapter 5, "Talking with teachers after looking in," delves deeper into the follow up process, without which no informal observation program will yield much impact. Zepeda points out that feedback should be timely and delivered in both written and oral forms to be most effective. The process of feedback is where the observational data is put to greatest use, as Zepeda states (p. 112), "through a purposeful discussion in which the meanings of data are explored, with the teacher assuming an active role in the process" (p. 112). Over time the principal and leadership team will also use the data in order to shape the ongoing goals and objectives addressed and measure school-wide progress.

In chapter 6, "Studying student work during and after classroom observations", Zepeda closes with her approach to analyzing student behavior, responses, and work products in order to assist teachers in improving their instruction. This analysis of student work is seen by Zepeda as a crucial component of the post-observation feedback process and is used by the leader to guide the teacher in formative assessment of their curriculum delivery. Multiple tools are offered that support the technique. Zepeda states (p. 133) the "objective is to study not only the artifact but also the learning objective, the standard and the instructional approach". While it is not advocated to evaluate student work at every post-observation conference, Zepeda strongly recommends it be incorporated as appropriate for optimal results.

This book furnishes a well-reasoned, soundly designed and practical plan for using informal classroom observation to improve the educational outcomes of students. By placing a positive, thoughtful and analytical spotlight on teaching, the instructional leader can enhance the professional development of faculty. While the challenge of finding time for regular, frequent, universal classroom observation is daunting, the purpose justifies the effort involved. Zepeda has provided a roadmap with clear and rich directions, landmarks and turn-by-turn guidance. This guide would be of benefit for any principal hoping to provide the kind of quality instructional leadership that teachers require reaching their potential and assisting students in turn to reach their own.

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Leadership and Management Development in Education

Tony Bush

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Book reviews

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Around a century ago, during the first decades of educational administration (EA) as a field of study it was substantially oriented to normative concerns, taught by former superintendents or principals who delivered their practical knowledge and wisdom to prospective administrators. For many in those days, the field's purpose was quite simple; the preparation and development of principal-candidates. Unfortunately, however, this purpose has not received much attention in the following years, as only a scant portion of the papers published in the field have dealt with administrator preparation programmes, as Murphy and Vriesenga (2006) maintained. In this sense, Bush's work is an exceptional and welcomed addition to the literature; it accumulates systematically the current international knowledge base and research on the development of educational leaders and suggests new directions and thoughts in this area of study.

Bush organizes the text into nine chapters. Chapter one sets the stage for the discussion on preparation and development programs in EA, by making the readers acquainted with major concepts and trends in the study of school leadership. The author briefly summarizes features of effective leadership, highlights the importance of an articulated vision in leader's success, distinguishes educational leadership from management and links between recent decentralization reforms and the emergence of school-based management and school leadership. This introductory chapter ends with some insights into the potential impact of effective leaders upon school improvement and outcomes, despite the methodological difficulties to construct a clear link between these two organizational dimensions.

The preliminary part continues in chapter two which is devoted to a concise, in some way even historical, description of major models of leadership in the educational literature. According to the author, the chapter aims at developing some awareness of alternative approaches to leadership that is essential in order to inform the design and development of leadership preparation programs, a very reasonable line given the need to link between the theoretical and social idealized features of leadership and the contents of these programs. The justification for leadership programs is further discussed in chapter three. Due to the expanded role of school leadership and the increasing complexity of school contexts in our era the author advocates the need for both prospective and acting principals in receiving effective leadership preparation programs that make a difference. Given the many countries on the globe lacking formal preparation programs for newly appointed school leaders, the author wisely devotes several pages to elaborate on the advantages and benefits of this sort of programs.

Whereas the first chapters display evidence advocating the need to establish specialist preparation programs for school leaders, the fourth chapter charts the main components of these programs in a way that contributes both to researchers, policy-makers and program designers in higher education institutions. But, instead of taking on a euro-centric standpoint, the author chooses very reasonably to base this chapter on international research. He examines the content of leadership preparation programs and the nature of the learning process for school leaders in nine countries, including USA, Canada, France, Norway, Finland, South Africa, Austria, Singapore, and China. Based on these and similar studies, the second part of this important, practice-oriented chapter exhibits the major contents commonly found in preparation programs worldwide (e.g. instructional leadership, law, finance), and the main teaching methods in these programs (e.g. mentoring, coaching, e-learning, school visits).

The international standpoint the author adopts is further developed in chapter 5 in which the reader realizes, for the first time in the book, that there is a distinction between developed and developing countries in terms of principal succession, recruitment, preparation, induction and certification. Yet, even among the developed countries, some of them the richest in the world, there is much diversity related, at least in part, to cultural and contextual scripts. The author divides the educational systems of these countries into centralized versus decentralized ones, thereby bringing up the varied conjectures about the nature of schooling, the role of educational leaders and the place of formal preparation programs. Loyal to his line throughout the book, the author is keen to demonstrate the great significance of a specific preparation for school leaders, as educational leadership is widely recognized nowadays as a specialized profession separated, almost entirely, from teaching.

From the varied mosaic of leadership preparation programs, the author elaborates in chapter six on the program in his own country, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) founded in 2000, for its “unique combination of features,” as Bolam (2004, p. 260) commented. An historical background of leadership development in the UK, probably for international readers, opens this chapter, followed by a discussion in the conceptual framework guiding the College’s work. But, the author, who, to the best of my knowledge, was one of the founders of this college, takes on in his integrity the role of a critical beholder, providing the reader not only with the strength of this new College, but also with its weaknesses and limitations. In a sense, I found this stance very helpful and challenging, especially for those of us whose countries have not yet established a similar College.

Most interesting and, in my view, commendable, is chapter seven that deals with leadership and leadership development in developing countries, topics on which our knowledge and research is very limited (Oplatka, 2006). Subsequent to a discussion in the demographic, economic, social, cultural and educational contexts of these countries, the reader is familiarised with the many distinctions between developed and developing countries in terms of principal requirement, training, quality, selection and induction. The conclusion of this chapter is that most of the newly appointed principals in developing countries have not been adequately prepared for their job. Some suggestions for in-service trainings for acting principals in these countries are provided at the end of this chapter.

In chapter eight the author further promotes his argument in favour of specific leadership preparation programs by addressing the intended impact of leadership

development and examining the evidence that preparation programs contribute to better leadership practice and schools. Given the complexity of cause-effect relations in education, as well as the limited research on the outcomes of leadership development programs, the author seems to face many challenges in this chapter. He commences to “decipher the code” by discussing the importance of devising clear purposes as a basis on which one can formulate criteria for assessing the value impact of a certain program and its content, methods and activities. The rest of the chapter provides designers and managers of leadership preparation programs with varied measures to evaluate the impact of their programs. Yet, the author draws attention to the difficulty to objectively assess this impact due to conceptual and methodological weaknesses, calling for further global investigations in this area.

The last chapter sums up the major points arising from the book chapters in a form of ponderings. The author poses several questions for future design of leadership development programs, such as content or process based programs, the location of the leadership learning activities, individual or group learning, the leadership of the programs, and the most effective leadership learning processes. Following the questions addressed, a model for leadership development during the career cycle is suggested. Any leaders and designers of future leadership development programs will find this model a very good starting point to plan their impending program.

The text is well-organized and well-structured enabling both scholars and practitioners to benefit from the host of ideas, insights and empirical data arising in the book chapters. This is a book the reviewer found very useful and illuminating during his membership in a national committee aimed at reforming the pre-service training for school principals in the country. The book is highly recommended for instructors who teach in EA programs and professional development courses for principals, who are interested in gaining more holistic knowledge about effective leadership development worldwide, as well as for policy-makers and superintendents.

No text is perfect, however, and the author is strongly recommended to consider including further discussions (in a second edition) about the development of emotional understanding and intelligence among principal-candidates and acting educational leaders, about special courses for women and ethnic minorities, and about the distinctive nature of internships within the leadership development programs. These additions may enrich the text and provide insight into the complexity of leadership development in our era of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity.

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Leadership for Social Justice: Promoting Equity and Excellence through Inquiry and Reflective Practice*Edited by Anthony H. Normore*

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Leadership for Social Justice: Promoting Equity and Excellence through Inquiry and Reflective Practice is the first book in a new book series, *Educational Leadership for Social Justice*, published by Information Age Publishing. Normore, as the editor of this first book, has brought together leading scholars in the field of social justice to present a collection of their peer reviewed works that (p. x) “reiterate the importance of bridging theory and practice while simultaneously producing significant research and scholarship in the field”. The authors courageously explore the sometimes (p. viii) “fuzzy space” between research and activism, carefully delineating an ethical path toward improved educational opportunities and experiences for all students. With a primarily American perspective, the authors report on their research into diverse topics spanning local K-12 public schools, community partnerships, and national policies and movements. Readers of this book will have the unique opportunity to see leadership for social justice in action at the individual and collective levels.

Normore artfully organized the book’s 14 chapters as a nested system, beginning first with four chapters related to social justice and school leaders titled “Commitment to social justice, equity, and tolerance.” The three chapters of Part II, titled “Promoting social justice pedagogy,” explore social justice pedagogy in action at the classroom levels. In “Collaborative partnerships for social justice: communities, youth, and school-linked services,” Part III, the three chapters reach beyond the school walls into the critical space of school and community partnerships. In the final section of the book, Part IV, “Ethical leadership and principles of social justice,” the four chapters expand into the realm of identifying common principles of social justice and their relevance to a growing movement, the New Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership (DEEL).

In the first chapter of the book – “A repository of hope for social justice: black women leaders at historically black colleges and universities,” (p. 3) Jean-Marie and Normore, “document and catalogue how four Black female leaders at HBCUs committed to social justice and racial uplift, connect their professional work with social and political activism in the quest for access, equality, and social justice for all”. The women’s stories of triumph over personal struggles with racism and sexism are inspiring and present the reader with concrete examples of how individuals are capable of transforming institutional practices and structures through (p. 27) “critical awareness, reflective inquiry, and discourse”. Lightfoot, in chapter two, takes on the commonly held wisdom that “Separate is Inherently Unequal.” Through a historical review and assessment of black educational opportunity and literal critique of *Brown*

v. *Board of Education*, he lays the groundwork for the reader to more deeply understand the critical need to address racism that results in segregation, rather than holding onto the hope that integration alone will solve the problems. Tooms and Alston present the findings from their study into the attitudes of aspiring administrators towards the gay community in chapter three, “(Out)siders at the gates.” The opening vignette illustrates the complexity of preparing school leaders to lead inclusive school communities and the results of the Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale provided further evidence of the need for educational leader preparation strategies that better develop the capacity for empathy towards the queer community. Their Heterosexual Privilege Checklist is a valuable and insightful contribution toward this end. In the final chapter of section I, Lopez and Vazquez present the findings of a case study that illustrate the challenges caused by administrator’s deeply racialized logic related to language, culture and good parenting. They build a strong case for school leaders to more actively interrogate their good intentions around increasing Latino parent involvement and see more clearly the negative influence of assimilationist ideology.

Brooks and Miles open Part II of the book with the fifth chapter, “From scientific management to social justice . . . and back again?” They present an historical overview of pedagogical trends in educational leadership sweeping broadly from the early 1900s to the present and highlighting the present challenge to reconcile a resurgence of (p. 109) “Taylor-inspired traditions” and social justice. They engage the reader in the (p. 110) “difficult and controversial work” of “exploring this tension” – work that is most definitely (p. 110) “extremely relevant and necessary in a maturing high-accountability policy environment”. In chapter six, Sernak follows with an analysis of two school reform programs, Success for All and Professional Development Schools, and their implementation in one New Jersey elementary school. Using “Freire’s notion of conscientization as a framework”, Sernak suggests that any reform model (p. 129) “is only as good as its leader and those who choose to follow him/her.” Progress toward more socially just learning environments depend more on the leader’s willingness to engage in a process that is often (p. 145) “messy and contentious” than simply on the program parameters. O’Hair and Reitzug, in chapter seven, address “A neglected dimension of social justice,” teacher quality and student success in the rural schools of Oklahoma. They describe the K20 SCIENCE model that engages rural science teachers in authentic research, lesson study, and professional learning communities. These authors assert that (p. 162) “K20 SCIENCE advances social justice in rural schools through new conceptions of teacher professional development that enhances learning and prepares citizens for democratic participation”.

Chapter eight opens Part III with a fascinating case study entitled, “A collaboration of community educators follows crisis in Cincinnati.” Brown, Larsen, Britt, Ruiz, and Star examine the root causes that resulted in riots in 1967 and then again in 2001 – (p. 175) “root causes [that] have remained distressingly similar, although decades of social upheaval and striving for equality separate the two”. They further describe an innovative education/museum partnership that serves to facilitate deepening dialogue among multiple perspectives and progress toward improved race relations in Cincinnati. Mitra, in chapter nine, “Student voice or empowerment,” examines the work of 13 youth-adult partnership initiatives to better understand the role of youth in promoting social justice in schools. She details specific examples of youth empowered

work at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels. The cases illustrate the powerful effects of including student voices at the leadership for social justice table. In chapter ten, Normore and Blanco continue the conversation about partnerships by exploring the moral imperative for school leaders to engage in multiple community partnerships that specifically address the needs of the urban poor, moving beyond the concept of school (p. 232) “as a stand-alone institution”. They highlight the importance of taking on the work of developing partnerships within the unique school community, noting that (p. 233) “helping each student succeed is a shared school-community responsibility”.

In the final part of the book, Leonard (chapter 11) presented a narrative inquiry entitled, “Ethics, values, and social justice leadership,” that engages the reader in a thoughtful exploration of her personal journey toward authenticity. As a professor in educational leadership in northern Louisiana, she used events surrounding Katrina to make her continuing journey transparent, acknowledging that (p. 252) “Being authentic is not easy . . . what it means for me is that I must find ways to align my professional responsibilities with my personal and professional values as a teacher, as a researcher and scholar, and as servant to the community”. Gross, in chapter 12, “(Re-) constructing a movement for social justice in our profession,” moves the conversation about guiding principles from the deeply personal to a new national movement, the New DEEL and (p. 257) “the role it is attempting to play in confronting the excesses of the current accountability movement”. He provocatively challenges educational leaders to leave behind any vestige of traditional corporate leadership and to fully embrace the partnership of democracy, social justice, and school improvement – (p. 264) “The New DEEL vision promotes democratic life growing from the heart of the community toward the wide world”. In chapter 13, “A new DEEL for an old problem”, Storey and Beeman present contrasting views of (p. 269) “the rhetoric of social justice and the reality of its implementation in schools today” along with a practical model for the New DEEL in practice. Their model promotes expanding (p. 282) “the notion of pedagogy from the four walls of the classroom to become a personalized, school-wide learning strategy” with the aim to “reassign democratic values to their rightful place, the heart of education”. Shapiro’s chapter, “Ethics and social justice within the new DEEL,” closes the book with an exploration of the paradox between accountability or control and democracy. She emphasizes the place of social justice as at (p. 297) “the very center of this paradox” and thus, the critical importance of making the best interests of the child at the heart of ethical decision making.

Leadership for Social Justice: Promoting Equity and Excellence through Inquiry and Reflective Practice provides a rich beginning to Information Age Publishing’s new series, Educational Leadership for Social Justice. The diverse array of peer-reviewed works provides theoretical, empirical, conceptual, and personal evidence of leadership for social justice in action. Practitioners will value the explicit and concrete illustrations of individuals and organizations striving to improve and deepen practice consistent with the high ideals of social justice. Innovative and practical ideas for bridging theory to practice abound. Graduate students in education will benefit from the cutting edge of research that continues to push toward new questions and modes of inquiry. Professors in educational leadership will find this volume a rich resource for their own personal reflection, research, and teaching. Congratulations to the editor and all

authors on an outstanding beginning to a new and critically important series of books focused on social justice in educational leadership!

Book reviews

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Rigor Is NOT a Four-letter Word

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What is rigor? How can you heighten rigor in curriculum and classroom practice in order to increase student learning? Barbara Blackburn defines rigor, addresses the stumbling blocks and effectively identifies and outlines concrete ways to infuse rigor in classrooms in her book *Rigor Is NOT a Four-letter Word*. She incorporates 20 years of experience into the practical examples for raising rigor while keeping focused on what teachers can control. These experiences range from early childhood, elementary, middle and high school, as a consultant and presently as a university professor. Although she primarily includes middle school and high school examples, elementary teachers can adapt her processes to their own situations and school settings.

Organized into nine chapters the author threads research centered on a three-tiered approach that includes levels of questioning, differentiated instruction, and multiple intelligences theory. Each chapter opens with clear bulleted objectives or critical ideas, reviews information from previous chapters, and explains content through narrative and charts. After each chunk of information she includes a bolded space entitled "It's Your Turn!" where questions for personal reflection and group discussion are presented. For further reflection, at the end of each chapter, she creates a space for final insights that include an important idea, a classroom connection and questions. The book also includes (p. xi) an online guide for study groups, (p. 163) school and district activities focused on rigor, and (p. 169) resources that include articles, books, and websites. An additional feature is the accessibility to download templates and activity guides which are mentioned throughout the book from her web site: www.barbarablackburnonline.com

In the first two chapters Blackburn guides the reader through an inquiry approach to help the reader understand and define rigor. In chapter 1 she builds a case for the importance of rigor based on the overwhelming numbers of students who are under-prepared for high school and college and who lack basic skills as they enter the work force. Through research findings and student interviews, she identifies the critical need for rigor. The interview quotes used in support of Blackburn's arguments raise urgent questions about teaching since the students reveal that they know when they are not being challenged and when their teachers do not care. She presents key research, provides other people's definitions of rigor, and asks the reader to reflect on

personal examples and understanding of rigor, before stating her own definition. Blackburn states that (p. 16) “rigor is creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels”. She narrows her focus on the classroom environment in her three-tiered approach. In chapter 2 Blackburn connects rigor to the curriculum as she creates a rationale for the importance of understanding the levels of questioning, differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences.

Chapters 3 through 7 include practical ways to increase rigor in classrooms. The author designed the chapters to be read in a conversational style according to topics of choice rather than in a sequence. The central ideas include ways to raise the level of content, increasing complexity of tasks, providing support and guidance, designing open-ended questions, projects and vocabulary instruction and creating a culture of high expectations. Each chapter is similarly structured beginning with a brief introduction, a description of the strategy emphasizing rigor, and examples of the strategy across different disciplines that can be adapted across grade levels and content areas. Interspersed throughout each chapter are spaces for reflection and dialogue.

The last two chapters are designed to connect rigor to assessment and to provide possibilities for a school or district-wide movement. Chapter 8 makes a case for formative assessment as it impacts learning. The author compares formative and summative assessments and highlights Popham’s levels of assessment. She describes a three-step process of formative assessment (p. 131): “look at your students to learn about them; watch their progress; help them grow”. The chapter then shifts to grading with an emphasis on learning. In chapter 9 the author includes five questions generally asked as teachers begin to consider ways to begin to incorporate rigor and plausible solutions to overcome obstacles (p. 147): “Where should I begin? How do I handle resistance from students? What do I say to parents? How should I respond when other teachers aren’t supportive? How can I gauge progress?” She makes practical suggestions to these final queries.

At its core is an inherent sense of advocacy grounded in the belief that (p. 1) “one teacher always will make a difference in the life of a student”. How to increase rigor in the classroom is the guiding issue that Blackburn specifically addresses. In approaching this issue - often approached in the form of a question – she builds upon the research of others to describe practical strategies and activities that teachers can use now. It is evident that the examples of the projects suggested increase complexity and are open-ended in structure. Yet, some of the projects seem formulaic, such as the poetry forms suggested in chapter 6. Nonetheless, based on some of these ideas, teachers could be inspired to move towards a more inquiry approach to raise rigor.

A commitment to reflection is apparent in the spaces created intermittently throughout each chapter to reflect both on ideas and to consider classroom applications. I am intrigued of the potential to use this book in study groups or book clubs. The chapters offer a starting point for critical discourse. For middle school and high school teachers, principals, educators involved in professional development, and instructors in university settings *Rigor Is NOT a Four-letter Word* provides concrete ways to raise rigor in those settings and integrates a structured protocol for conversations about rigor in classroom practice to begin.

Of particular significance in this book is the integration of the critical components of curriculum, instruction and assessment to maximize student learning. While the desire to raise the rigor in curriculum and instruction is laudable, specific issues critical to urban settings have not been addressed within the context. Although Blackburn intentionally chose not to address English Language Learners (ELL) and briefly includes some ways of meeting the needs of special populations, I felt that accommodations could easily have been added to address the content and linguistic needs of ELL within the strategies. In the light of current practices in most schools and the growing population of ELL across the USA, a deliberate and intentional effort needs to be implemented to raise the rigor for all students. Delivering rigorous and relevant instruction is what principals look for, what teachers strive for, and what parents have come to expect.

Rigor Is NOT a Four-letter Word offers concrete and practical ways to raise the rigor in curriculum and instruction. The questions that are posed will cause teachers, school administrators, and other instructional personnel to take an authentic look at current practices and opportunities for dialogue to infuse rigor to maximize student learning. Blackburn concludes by reiterating her belief that (p. 163) “the most powerful change in the life of a student occurs when an individual teacher has high expectations of that student, and then acts on those expectations in ways that help the student be successful”.

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