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Educational Leadership for Social Justice in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Spain

Around the world war, political turmoil, and hunger are forcing legions of people to flee their homes and travel long distances under hazardous conditions in the hopes of finding peace and stability. Families move within countries and between countries to find a refuge of safety, a job that earns a living-wage and an education for their children. Yet upon arrival, the door to enter may be shut leaving would-be immigrants to fend for themselves. These disparities in wealth, well-being, and opportunity did not come about by chance.

Bourdieu (1986) introduced the concepts of cultural, social, and symbolic forms of capital and cultural reproduction to explain how elites of society are able to keep and pass on their position. Education further reinforces the ideology and control of dominant and powerful groups in society that take control of education through what Apple (2000) has called commodification, privatization, and marketization of educational problems. Apple is more optimistic than Bourdieu in that he sees a counter-hegemonic possibility for action, which becomes particularly salient when there is a crisis. The role of education is to raise consciousness of the oppressed so that they can create their own solutions (Freire, 2000). However, schools continue to perpetuate inequities in a variety of ways.

Nieto (1992) revealed systemic educational policies and practices that promote racism, inequality, discrimination, and exclusion of marginalized people. Oaks (2005) showed that racially unjust practices can go on inside of the school in the form of planned and unplanned tracking of students into ability groups. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) have tried to counter these and other inequitable racial and gender practices through the application of equity audits of schools. Other marginalized groups such as students with special needs, second language learners, foster children and of LGBTQ

youth are only now receiving increased attention. These youth frequently become homeless when they are pushed out by their parents (Theoharris, 2007).

Most studies of social justice have been carried out in English speaking countries, and there has been little communication about these issues across borders. Children of parents, who are attempting to migrate, present special challenges for schools. They are a diverse group who lack resources and often need education to learn a new language and culture to get training necessary for employment.

Social justice is not just a local issue, but it has global dimensions (Gaetane, Normore, et al, 2009; White and Cooper, 2014). Collard (2007) called for an international approach of mutual respect in pursuit of social justice:

> "Established educational leadership discourse has been dominated by Anglo-
> American perspectives oblivious to the cultural diversity that characterizes the
> contemporary world. It has frequently privileged mono-cultural, mainstream
> values which have meant indigenous and ethnic groups have suffered alienation,
> exclusion and disadvantage" (Collard, 2007, p 740).

Bogotch and Shields (2014) concluded their International handbook on social justice leadership with the simple statement that the way forward is to connect action and words. The role of the principal will be critical in making this connection and rallying teachers to address the needs of immigrant populations.

Leadership

Research on schools in English speaking countries indicates that the principal has a key role to play to establish a just school. (Bogotch & Shields, 2014; Brown, 2004; Collard, 2007; DeMatthews and Mawhinney, 2013; Pazey, Cole et al. 2012). While the same generalization is true in Spanish speaking countries, research in Spain and Latin America has not been widely published in English language journals. The

following three studies represent efforts to begin cross-cultural communication about social justice.

Fierro and Paradise Loring (2013) point out that the school principal exerts considerable authority over the lives of students, teachers, and parents by deciding who is to receive favor, mediating conflicts, and choosing which group to attend to. They completed a qualitative study based on the narratives of 248 school directors of elementary and middle schools in rural and urban areas. The vast majority of dilemmas had to do with teachers who lacked commitment or failed to come to school regularly and punctually.

The concept of *invisibilisation* helped to explain how principals tended to neglect the interests and concerns of students in favor of teachers. They paid more attention to teachers because their cooperation was necessary for the efficient running of the school.

Coronel and Fernandez (2013) examined the multiple and often conflicting roles of principals in Spain. The principal is expected to carry out laws and policies and supervise staff and students according to common practices, but there is also a responsibility to parents who entrust their children to the school, teachers who rely on the principal for direction, and students who may not be in a position to express their own needs.

The principal also has a personal responsibility to develop values and live up to them. These values may come in conflict with those of the bureaucracy, and the principal is left with the dilemma of serving as an employee of the system or an advocate for a point of view about what is best for students and the community.

Tiramonti and Nobile (2013) studied the challenges of school systems in the south cone of Latin America: Argentina, Chili, and Brazil. The key problem was incorporating marginalized sectors in the context of their extreme poverty and history of

exclusion. They argue that school principals must be capable of reading the historical moment so that they can coordinate school practice with new context characteristics.

Theoretical Framework

The International Study of Leadership Development Network (ISLDN) completed a study of its members' social justice statements from 12 different countries (Slater, in press). The most common theoretical framework cited was developed by Priest, Woods et al (2013). They delineate four types of social justice that built on the work of Cribb and Gewirtz (2003):

- economic justice assures equal opportunity as well as a minimum standard of living;
- cultural justice includes recognition of a person individually and as a member of an ethnic group;
- associational justice refers to encouraging the participation of all and
- developmental justice means a commitment to develop people's full capacities.

Economic justice implies "equal opportunity for all." The notion that everyone should start at the same place and have an equal chance is a well engrained belief in democratic societies that crosses lines of social class, wealth, and race. However, differences of income and wealth are on the rise, and they run counter to this ideal (Pickety, 2014).

Starratt's (1991) ethic of justice highlights the importance of careful thinking according to moral principles in the Kohlberg (1976) tradition. According to this view, there are fundamental principles of fairness to judge the rightness of actions. Economic policies can have a range of effects on people. They may do harm and take resources away from the poor or have a neutral effect and simply perpetuate the status quo. Liberal democracies purport to help those with less by providing education, health

services, and welfare. A number of writers have advocated for principals to engage in leadership that would challenge the status quo and transform economic policy to create society where everyone would have an equal chance no matter their beginning circumstances (Capper, Theoharis, et al 2006; Dantley and Tillman, 2006; Marshall and Oliva, 2006; Shields, 2004).

Cultural justice addresses the dilemma that we live in times and places where some groups have lower worth and are viewed as less deserving. Beachum and McCray (2011) describe the collision of the culture of white administrators and teachers with the culture of black parents and students in urban areas. They also see a collusion of hip hop culture with the dominant cultural values of violence, materialism, and misogyny. Black students live outside of the dominant culture but are influenced by it

Children and adults with special needs may be pushed to the side or ignored. Women and LGBT groups are demeaned and persecuted. Warring groups will often see the enemy as less than human and not deserving of respect. Even after a degree of peace and tranquility has been established these attitudes linger in a multi-cultural society and require constant examination and analysis (Larson and Ovando, 2001).

Starratt's (2005) ethic of critique and Marshall's (2004) challenge to the profession of educational administration make clear that there is a constant need to examine how school conditions can be oppressive. Anderson (2009) writes passionately about the need for leaders to advocate for students of color and low income students. The combination of advocacy for culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLD) and critical race theory come together in what Santamaria (2014) calls applied critical leadership (ACL).

Associational justice presents inclusion as the counter to marginalization. It is the constant examination of ways that people are excluded. The inclusive leader opens the society or group to others while the exclusive leader draws borders around the in-

group and the out-group (Gardner, 2011).A practice that may have been accepted in the past can later be brought to consciousness as discrimination and mistreatment. Oppression can then be fought best by those who are oppressed (Freire, 2000).

Developmental justice puts all groups on an equal level with the expectation that individuals can rise to great heights. Normore, Rodriguez, et al (2007) capture the essence of this form of justice in a quote from Lill Watson, an indigenous activist, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound with mine, then come, let's work together (Normore, Rodriquez, et al, 2007, p 653)."

Developmental justice includes Starratt's (2005) ethic of care and Noddings' (2002) view of the centrality of care in moral development. Both passion and reason are necessary as leaders work in a particular context and community.

Developmental justice takes place in community. Sergiovanni (2000) promoted the ethic of community in what he called the "life world of leadership," which should take precedence over the "systems world." The truly important mission of schooling is not technical and skill driven but strives for relationships in community. Bogotch (2002) maintains that the democratic ethic of community goes beyond traditional conceptions of heroic individual leadership. Fierro (2008) writing in Spanish uses the term "convivencia" to describe the need for democratic participation, inclusion, and a culture of peace.

Furman (2012) argues that you cannot have social justice without democratic participation. The community is the center of moral responsibility and communal skills such as listening, understanding others, communicating, arranging teamwork and promoting dialogue are primary.

It is with this spirit those researchers from Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain, and the U.S came together to study social justice leaders who are laboring not only to

accommodate and to educate students who are migrating to our schools, but also to seek mutual liberation from oppressive systems.

Purpose

The intent of this paper is to examine social justice leadership in schools that are receiving new students in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Spain. These countries share a common language and Hispanic culture. Despite their differences in terms of wealth and history, they all labor to meet the challenges of accommodating diverse groups of children in schools in a socially just way.

This paper will examine the social justice leadership beliefs and practices of a principal in Moravia, Costa Rica, a principal in Ensenada, Mexico and a principal in Catalonia, Spain. It is part of the International Study of Leadership Development Network (ISLDN), which began in 2008 and has been jointly sponsored by the British Educational Leadership Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) and the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA). The research is being conducted in countries around the world to explore the following questions:

1) How do social justice leaders make sense of social justice?

2) What do social justice leaders do?

3) What factors hinder the work of social justice leaders?

4) How did social justice leaders learn to become social justice leaders?

Methodology

An inductive, flexible, exploratory and cross-case study was conducted, under the interpretative tradition (Schwandt, 2000), characterized by searching for understanding of the social world from the point of view of the participants through the systematic analysis of the narrative. We are taking the positioned subject approach used by Theoharis (2010) to study six principals in the United States and extending it to look at principals internationally.

Context and Sample

We chose to examine schools in three Spanish-speaking countries that are members of the ISLDN. Their contexts varied in multiple ways. The schools worked in different national policy contexts; the communities had different cultural beliefs and practices; the schools were of different size and level, and the directors had different professional backgrounds. Despite these differences, there were also commonalities. They have an elevated (Costa Rica and Mexico) or increasing (Spain) index of inequality income, and have conditions of ethnic and cultural diversity, exclusion, and poverty, which challenged principals and teachers. These conditions presented issues related to social justice. The research addresses the scarcity of reports about social justice in the field of education in Spanish speaking countries, published in English-speaking journals.

To select school principals, researchers interviewed key informants from the local educational systems of San Jose, Costa Rica, Ensenada, Mexico, and Barcelona, Spain. Each team asked supervisors and/or experienced teachers for school principals who met the selection criteria used by Theoharis (2010). He selected principals who:

> "led a public school, possessed a belief that promoting social justice is a driving force behind what brought them to their leadership position, advocated, led, and kept at the center of their practice/vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or other historically marginalizing conditions, and had evidence to show their work has produced a more just school" (Theoharis, 2010, p 335).

The researchers gathered the names of one to three principals in each city to visit and to dialogue about the research proposal. The principals who most closely approximated the selection criteria, and showed accessibility and willingness to collaborate were selected.

In other words, we employed purposive sampling to select countries, convenience sampling to select cities, and a combination of criteria, reputation and convenience sampling to select principals. In order to provide some background, we also asked each national team to draft a brief overview of the contexts.

Costa Rica

The first school is near the capital of Costa Rica, a country characterized by a vast rain forest with a great variety of plants and animals. It is a small mountainous country with numerous active volcanoes. Costa Rica has a population of 4,301,712 inhabitants, of which 9.0% are migrants, mainly from the neighboring Nicaragua, which represents '74% of the immigrant population residing in the country (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, INEC, 2013).

Costa Rica is stable democracy. Article 12 of the 1949 Constitution eliminated a standing army. (Oficina de Información Diplomática del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación, 2016). The literacy rate in the country reached 96.3% of the total population (INEC, 2013), which positions the country as one of the most educated in Central America.

The government contribution to education was 7.3% of Gross National Product in 2015. Thus, Costa Rica is the second highest country in Latin America after Cuba in percentage of public investment in education. It has expanded compulsory education to include two years at the secondary level. Pre-school coverage was expanded; teacher salaries were increased, as was investment in land, school buildings, computer equipment and the Internet network. (V Report on the State of Education, 2015).

The Experimental Bilingual School of Moravia in Costa Rica has 640 students in grades 7 thru 11. It is a bilingual experimental center, which means it is in process of becoming a fully bilingual school, that is, all subjects are taught in English, except for social studies, and one of the admission requirements is an examination, which

constitutes a kind of filter to admit students with better academic skills, higher levels of literacy and better English proficiency.

The community is composed of two main groups of families, those that have always lived in the area and those that transferred from other neighborhoods in San Jose. These new families have not been able to integrate into the culture of the community, they present urgent economic needs, and the main household income comes from the mother. The lack of a father figure is common and in some cases where the father is present, they are not good role models because according to the director they display sexist behavior. There is a foreign migrant population but not in a significant percentage. Many of the students receive scholarships to attend school. On the other hand, there are students from families with more stability; therefore the school possesses a very heterogeneous population. The school offers programs in business management, interactive workshops with activities such as cooking skills or art classes, computer science and technology courses, and programs of conversational English. The principal has worked in the school for four years.

Mexico.

Mexico suffers from corruption and drug trafficking that has infected every part of society (Finnegan, 2012). Free trade has almost wiped out agriculture in rural areas that used to serve local villages (Carlesen, 2013). Mexico invests a significant amount of its Gross National Product in Education and has near universal education with an average level of education of 9th grade (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, 2014). However, in an economy young men cross borders to seek work and money to send to their families. Those who do not succeed in crossing the border to the United States may retreat temporarily to the south to Ensenada where the second school of this study is located.

The school in Mexico is a small rural elementary day school located in a settlement of migrants coming from the south of the country in search of work in agricultural labor. The school enrolment amounts to 133 boys and girls, indigenous in its majority, some of whom enroll in the school without knowing how to speak Spanish, and the teachers cannot speak the student's indigenous language. The community trusts the school completely; parents, as well as students, show a profound respect for their teachers. The Principal has worked in the school since 2006, the year in which she participated in the establishment of the school. The educational staff is stable and the working environment is described as harmonious.

Spain

In countries of central Africa people suffer persecution and starvation that pushes them north toward the Mediterranean where they risk a treacherous crossing to Spain. Those who survive may travel north to find work in Catalonia, a relatively prosperous region where the third school is located.

In recent years Catalonia has become a destination for emigration from southern Europe. The history of this region is one of welcome to immigrants from the rest of Spain and other countries. The arrival of migrants in 2015 represented a total of 1,028,069 people. This figure represents 14.5% of the total population of Catalonia (IDESCAT, 2016).

The Moroccan community is the largest, with 21% of foreign residents. They are followed by Romanian residents with 9 %, China with 5 %; Italian and Latino population with 5 % and 4 % from Pakistan. In addition the gypsy community has an estimated 100,000 inhabitants in Catalonia (IDESCAT, 2016).

The cultural diversity of the Catalan population influences the qualitative nature of coexistence with different lifestyles, languages and beliefs, as well as a certain social

distance. The vast majority come from marginal, socioeconomically disadvantaged and poor areas.

This school in Spain is a pre-school and elementary school which comprises nine groups, one for each grade (PK – 6). In total, the school serves 245 students from the surrounding neighborhood with a staff of 20 teachers. Most students come from various backgrounds, not all were born in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, and 90% of the students are foreign. Their nationalities are diverse. There are children of Moroccan origin, as well as Indian, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Chinese, Ecuadorean, Bolivian and there are also children from Honduras, Dominican Republic and Nigeria, among others. The school is classified as a "school of maximum complexity", because of its socio - economic characteristics.

The principal has over twenty years of teaching experience. He has 12 years of experience in his current position. He previously functioned as a coordinator and agreed to take over for the former principal, who became ill and left the school.

Instruments

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, tied to a preset protocol (Creswell, 2013; Norberg, Arlestig, et al 2014; Richardson and Sauers, 2014; Slater, Potter, et al. 2014; Szeto, 2014), which facilitated the narratives of the participants. The length of each interview was approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed, and reviewed by the principals as part of the criteria for the study.

Analysis

With the purpose to facilitate the handling and the initial summarizing of the data, and in order to reduce researcher bias, each interview was analyzed independently and then analyzed for predominant themes (Burgess, 1995; Weitzman and Miles, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998; McMillan and Schumacher, 2007; Merriam, 2015). The data analysis

was performed using ATLAS-ti, qualitative data software, (Burgess, 1995; Coffey and

Atkinson, 2005; Weitzman and Miles, 1995). The constant comparative method of

Glasser and Strauss (1967) helped to identify themes and excerpts that were selected

from the interviews in the following categories: a) background, b) context c) principal's

conception of social justice, d) actions driven by the principals to move forward in

terms of social justice e) elements that make their job easier, and (f) elements that

hinder their work. The categories were defined as follows:

Table 1:

Categories

Categories	Definition
Background **BAC SJ**	Includes the principals' previous experiences that led them to focus a good deal of their professional activity on aspects related to the social justice
Context **CONT SJ**	Refers to statements that describe the physical environment in which the school is located, as well as the social and economic conditions that describe the situation of the families that are part of the educational community that guide the principals to promote actions and/or strategies related to social justice
Conceptions **CONC SJ**	Contains a set of values, principles and ways of thinking that guide and give meaning to the principal's behavior in aspects related to the social justice.
Actions towards social **justice** **ATSJ**	Contains activities and/or strategies undertaken by the school principals to help overcome the educational, social and cultural disadvantages of the students
Elements that facilitate **social justice EFSJ**	Includes those aspects related with social skills, the collaboration of teamwork, the environment, the internal structure, etc. that have helped the principal support initiatives to achieve social justice
Elements that hinder **SJEDJS** **EHSJ**	Covers all aspects related to the areas of internal and external management that hinder the momentum of actions and/or strategies related to the social justice

Text fragments were selected for each of the categories. Subsequently, a phase of validation of categories between the researchers was performed to make necessary adjustments.

Then a general cross cases analytic strategy was used, identifying differences and common patterns observed by categories as a way to develop a theoretically explanation for the different outcomes. Subsequently the theoretical framework about types of social justice was used to examine within-group similarities and inter-group differences (Yin, 1994). The interpretation of the data was obtained by comparing fragments and extracting common and divergent elements between them.

The interviews, analysis, and first draft of the article were completed in Spanish by native Spanish speakers. The work was translated by two researchers who worked together; one was a native Spanish speaker and the other was a native English speaker.

Despite the fact that the study only had three participants, the results have a moderate scope (Mayring, 2007). The use of multi-case sampling adds to the validity and generalizability of the findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994) through replication logic (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2013). While the findings have meaning in these particular situations, they are also compared in a global context.

Results

The results will be organized around conceptions of social justice, the actions of principals to promote social justice, obstacles that they faced, and their background by addressing each of the research questions. Extensive quotes give voice to directors in each of the countries so that we can hear them in their own words.

Conceptions of Social Justice: How do social justice leaders make sense of social justice?

The conception of social justice that the principals had was related to principles of fairness and was oriented toward equality of opportunities:

Social justice means that we all have the same rights ... that education should be inclusive, and we all have the same worth, we have the same opportunities… Mx

The participants defined social justice as a type of leadership with a philosophical view that promotes deep reflection on radical transformation of situations and dynamics of an unjust school, "I think injustice occurs when a fundamental human right is violated. Taking away opportunities from a person can change their life and alter their potential to transcend" (CR)

To promote social justice the principals of these three cases were guided by principles and explicit values:

I think that my concept of social justice is giving someone what he or she deserves, respecting, obviously, their rights as human beings and their dignity. For me it is something that everyone in the world, including children and the elderly should have (CR).

For me social justice is to give equitably, which does not mean perfectly, but to distribute resources in a fairer way... It means to obtain or seek to give the same opportunities to everyone so that everyone then has what they feel is their share, or at least they would not be able to say they were not given the opportunity (Sp).

Social justice means that we all have the same rights... Mx

The Costa Rican director wanted more equilibrium and linked justice to participation:

I also relate social justice to participation of citizens in decision-making, it is essential! There is no social justice if there is no active participation of the people.

The student's family has an important role to play, without the support and involvement of the parents the student will most likely fail. Our priority now is the student's family; we want them to become an active asset for the institution. We need to focus on the emotional side of the student and his family, we do not want parents only to come to school when there are complaints or difficult situations, but rather have them feel like they are part of the institution. We need to build links with parents. CR

In the case of Mexico and Spain, social justice is related to the improvement of the quality and equity of education. The Spanish director said social justice is "… to offer quality education for everyone, having universal minimum quality educational criteria. Sp

"We are interested that children should know their rights and obligations...respect, equity…" Mx

In summary, the three directors had certain views in common. They wanted to give all students an equal opportunity to an education, they wanted resources to be distributed fairly, and they saw education as a right. They saw public schools as the first and most important social institution to promote this right that is common to all citizens without exception with special attention to those in precarious personal and family situations and at risk of falling into social exclusion. These directors differed, however, in the extent to which their beliefs were reflected in actions for cultural justice.

Actions: What do social justice leaders do?

Students helping students. Guided by their conceptions of social justice, principals organized and supervised activities, which often involved students helping students. In Spain the director organized a reading program to have upper level students help younger students. In Mexico, the director organized students as translators to

integrate indigenous students who did not speak Spanish. She described how school

handled the arrival of children who did not speak Spanish:

> We had to register them because they were not going to school and the
>
> authorities became aware of that. So what we did was to have a current
>
> indigenous student translate for us, and then we had several student translators…
>
> the staff often met to figure out how to handle the situation… we coordinated
>
> with a parent who was in charge of them all, and we would tell him what each
>
> child had to do at home. The whole school was involved… Mx

Her work was consistent with Pazey, Cole et al (2012) and DeMatthews and

Mawhinney's (2013) views that the role of the director is fundamental to promote

guidelines to enact social justice.

Cohesion through the arts and sports. The Costa Rican director empowered

students to organize sports activities, arts, and music. Students organized their own soccer

tournament and bought new jerseys. They acted independently without direct supervision

of staff.

In the Spanish school the arts also became a vehicle for teaching respect and

communication among cultures. The director was very sensitive when handling the

situation. Given that the students lived in conditions of poverty and in a neighborhood

of mostly immigrants, they had little access to any form of artistic training. Because of

this the principal promoted theater related activities for the children. He even convinced

teachers of the Municipal School of Music to go to the school and develop a musical

training program. These teachers gathered a group of 30 boys and girls and trained them

to play the violin, bass, accordion and guitar. The principal also managed to get

sponsors in order to buy musical instruments.

At the end of the school year the students and teachers offered a concert for the

whole community. The auditorium was filled with family and friends. The audience

was composed of people of varied ethnic groups, languages and origins. It was a personal success for the principal and the teachers, the concert had a great social impact for the students as well, who otherwise would have never been so close to music, to an instrument, or to developing an appreciation for music and art.

The coordination of sports and arts activities that promote social cohesion and communication across groups are examples of leading for social justice (Tiramanti and Nobile, 2013 and Cribb and Gewirtz, 2003).

Connections outside of the school. The directors work to promote social cohesion extended to parents. The Spanish director said:

And in terms of social cohesion, we realized that we needed to work closely with families, and we got that larger involvement with artistic activities because we knew that if they were involved with the school they were involved with society. They came out of their usual family and social environments and integrated into a much more mixed environment, more varied, which is the environment that the school offers. Sp

Spanish schools complete an Annual School Plan Center (PAC) with written guidelines to be followed by all people in the educational community. The Annual School Plan is derived from the Strategic Plan, which is a document that expresses objectives and actions to be taken over a four year period. In the case of Spain, the director felt that this external support had helped the school to improve and create a more just environment. However, despite the fact that schools no longer receive resources because of austerity measures, the school has continued to use it.

…(the Annual School Plan) proposed networking with all entities that are working with children and young people. This Plan meant, for example, that we were able to organize remedial and tutoring activities for children three days per week, two hours in the afternoon, and that helped all those children that needed

some type of reinforcement and we hired a Chinese translator to have better

interviews with the Chinese families. Sp

The director also carried out diagnostic studies to identify aspects that needed to be

strengthened, modified or changed. The SWOT analysis is a diagnostic tool that schools

use to analyze their internal characteristics (Strengths and Weaknesses) and their

external situation (Threats and Opportunities).

Despite not having economic resources of the Administration, the principal had

determined that the Strategic Plan and the Annual School Plan were good management

tools, and he has continued their implementation. One way that the directors have

managed to cope with dwindling resources has been to seek funding elsewhere. They

have designed projects to receive grants from various bodies and rearranged the

resources at their disposal to make them more sustainable.

> Since last year things have changed. We have embarked on a Strategic Plan that
>
> helped us to see the light from a more strategic vision. It allowed us to
>
> consolidate some staff, train them and plan each school year through the Annual
>
> School Plan. We got the whole center to work in a more organized way. I think
>
> it helped us to make progress in the distribution of tasks school activities. Sp

The Spanish director's plans were consistent with Furman (2012) who argues that there
is no social justice without democratic participation. Social justice is a democratic
principle that guides the behavior of individuals and institutions in order to achieve
civic equality.

Emotional Education. In Costa Rica and in Spain principals and staff received

training in topics related to emotional management as a fundamental element to meet

student needs. Emotional education is intended to develop competencies, consciousness,

self-management, interpersonal intelligence, and life skills that directors found to be

important for their students. The Spanish director explained why the school became

involved in a two-year training program:

> we had many students with various issues that they needed to understand such as
>
> why they had been removed from their usual environment and sent to a school,
>
> in a country that they did not know, in a society that they did not know and with
>
> parents who both worked; and these children saw themselves immersed in a
>
> different world and this caused emotional issues for many of them, which was
>
> reflected in the daily activities of the school. Sp

In Costa Rica the director not only paid attention to the emotional needs of

students, but also those of teachers. He wanted teachers to have selected their career for

the right reasons, and he encouraged them to take responsibility for forming and

maintaining teamwork. In Mexico, as well, the director promoted teamwork and made

sure that everyone was involved. She said, "When a new teacher has little motivation to

be involved we pull them in" Mx.

In summary, principals used a variety of methods to promote social justice. They

organized students to help other students, they developed programs in sports and the

arts with the intent to increase social cohesion, they undertook programs in emotional

education, and they encouraged collaboration inside and outside of the schools. These

actions are consistent with Bogotch and Shields' (2014) point that it is essential to link

actions and words; to combine what is said and what is done. The role of the director

was to lead the faculty to address the needs of children who attend the schools.

The actions of the directors were intended to promote equal opportunity and a

more inclusive school. The directors involved families and opened the doors of the

school to enable them to participate. The faculty then came to know and understand

better the culture of the community and the conditions faced by families. The Spanish

director said, "For me here, more than elsewhere, you have to ensure equal

opportunities, respect for their cultures and you have to make the school a social elevator." The traditions of different cultures were included in a multicultural curriculum. Respect was also critical for the Mexican director who wanted children to know their obligations and have respect for their elders.

If children and their families are welcome, feel recognized, and are emotionally safe, then children are more likely to learn. The Spanish director said, "The child who does not feel safe will not learn anything."

In the case of Costa Rica, there was more of a risk of social exclusion because of the entrance requirements that were not present in the other two schools. The Costa Rican director worried about teenagers in extreme poverty who might lose interest in their studies, get tired of fighting, and lose hope. He arranged scholarships to help with expenses for textbooks, lunch fees, and uniforms as a way to to mitigate their educational exclusion.

Obstacles: What factors hinder the work of social justice leaders?

Directors in Costa Rica and Mexico stressed adverse conditions in society and lack of support from educational authorities. The views of the Costa Rica director extended to the national level:

> …injustice occurs in society when the economic system itself is not designed to overcome social disadvantages; this leads more people towards conditions of poverty…the government does not want to or cannot provide educational centers with minimum conditions for a quality education. CR

The directors in this study experienced significant resistance from outside of the school. The Costa Rican School director complained of lack of support:

> There are regional supervisors who are supposed to control the schools, but to me as principal I'd like them to be more involved and supportive of the schools. These institutions have become entities of procedures and bureaucratic

paperwork. There is no support in order to resolve problems that we face on a daily basis in our schools. The regional supervisor ensures that the rules and laws are being applied correctly. The Ministry of Education has a lot of national consultants, which at the same time have regional advisers, but in spite of this, I don't feel the support for the schools. CR

In Mexico, the conflicting guidance of the regional administration interfered with the duties of teachers and administrators.

We built our plan of improvement for the school; we presented it to the regional supervisors, but it was not accepted, they changed it. They sent us the topics and activities that we had to work on; they imposed the agenda throughout the year. We had to follow the imposed plan of improvement … we fulfilled it and let them believe we forgot about ours. But in reality, we worked on what they wanted us to do and then we worked on our own agenda. We did double the work. Mx

The Mexican school director expressed her frustration:

…the obstacles that the educational system presents to us do not have an impact on my results, but rather they impact my way of doing things. They wear me down a little, but I look for alternatives to solve the problems and I focus on the positive aspects. Mx

In summary, the main obstacles that these principals report come from the educational authorities who try to control rather than support their efforts.

Background: How did social justice leaders learn to become social justice leaders?

Past experiences, both personal and professional oriented principals to pay special attention to social justice. The principal in Mexico presented the most profound case and her words illustrate the challenges that these directors faced. She was surrounded by violence:

…I don't want any of my students or any of my parents to experience violence…
I protected a mother who had been beaten… they cannot let that happen, nor
allow their children to live with violence; I don't want my students go through
that. Mx

Her family experience gave great depth to her passion to right the wrongs of
education:

As Principal, my son with Down syndrome was not allowed in my school, the
school supervisor told me that there could be problems if he enrolled. I have
suffered so much trying to get a worthy education for my son… As I could not
find what my son needed, I devoted myself to lead a civil association that cared
for children with special educational needs. I am the President of this
Foundation.

At home, my dad was a role model for all of us, he set an example… he spoke
little, but he was a hardworking and responsible man. Mx

She also acknowledged that she learned much from other principals and teachers
whom she has considered exemplary.

As a teacher I learned a lot from a principal… he was always looking for
solutions… always thinking about how to obtain resources for a better school. I
learned a lot from him, I think I am like him. Another principal, my first one,
was very special, he would just see me, and say: Is there something going on
with you today? As if he knew… he would ask: Are you OK? He could perceive
something was going on, he would give us guidance and always helped us …
these teachers were always looking out for us, for everyone, so that no one
would be treated differently.

In high school I had another teacher who was an extraordinary human being and
hard worker, very human, and he made us feel special in the school…I liked

how he treated us, I liked his work, I liked that he was a very active person,

always defended us all… he would insist that we all had to be treated equally,

that we all had the same rights and we learned how to defend ourselves and to

defend others… that is how I am with my students… in the Pedagogical

University I had a wonderful tutor, I really liked his way of being, he was a bit

strict but he was an excellent teacher… Mx

These principals had previous experiences working in schools with marginalized

populations that prepared them and gave them perspective for their current work. Their

efforts have taken a toll on their personal and professional lives. The Mexican principal

often expressed frustration with the educational system especially because of how her son

was treated. The Spanish principal said that he was tired and ready to leave his position as

director and undertake social activities with the city government.

Discussion

Costa Rica, Mexico, and Spain have distinct histories, geographies, and cultural

contexts, but these three educational leaders expressed many commonalities about the

need for social justice reported as in the Results section above. In this Discussion

section, we will use the theoretical framework of Cribb and Gewirtz, (2003) and Priest,

Woods et al. (2013) to examine some of the differences. Of course, each principal was

working in a different context and brought varying perspectives to their leadership.

These perspectives can be viewed according to the types of social justice.

Costa Rica – Economic and Meritocratic Justice

All principals ascribed to Cribb and Gewirtz's (2003) description of economic

justice, and it was most central to the Costa Rican principal. He believed that quality

education should be a right for everyone, but students must demonstrate their skills and

abilities in order to access, stay, and develop in such a system, rather than

demonstrating class privilege or wealth. His beliefs are grounded in respect for the

individual and he sees social justice as everyone receiving what they deserve in relation to human rights.

His view of social justice is based on equality. He wants to treat everyone the same. It is not a transformative view as suggested by Shields (2004) because he accepts the status quo that some students will not qualify to enter the school, and he leaves the task to the students to make changes in society after they graduate. He was, to some extent an exclusive leader (Gardner, 2011) who restricted membership in the school to a special group that had the qualifications. On the other hand, both Furman (2012) and Fierro (2008) conceived of democratic communities as being open all.

The Costa Rican principal was taking advantage of a new law that allowed students to advance to the next grade even though they failed a course. This created room for new students who were admitted by examination. These students were more capable and better able to master the curriculum. Over time they could begin to give the school a reputation as a good place to study and learn. The principal wanted to create a kind of meritocracy in which both rich and poor would have a chance to succeed based on their skill and effort. The school could become like a shining light for others and graduate students who would be prepared to contribute to the country as workers and citizens.

The belief of the Costa Rican principal that each student should get what he or she deserves is consistent with his position on entering students earning top marks in the examination (meritocracy). From this perspective, students with the highest scores are those who earn a spot on this separate program. A better range of students results in lower dropout and failure rates.

The Costa Rican principal is an advocate of the right of education for everyone. In his practice, he associates this right for education to a quality education. However, another element that is evident in his beliefs and in his practice is that the students must

make a personal effort in order to access the program and stay in school. In this line of thought, the principal furthermore understands that both parents and teachers are also responsible in supporting this quality education.

Mexico-cultural justice

By contrast the Mexican principal gave greater emphasis to Cribb and Gewirtz's (2003) view of cultural justice. She recognized both individuals and the groups to which they belonged. For her social justice means that everyone has equal rights to an inclusive education, and resources should be distributed according to need. She believed that resources must be distributed according to the needs of individuals and schools. Her views are consistent with the advocacy role of the leader (Anderson, 2009) and the need to open the school to everyone (Theoharis, 2010).

The actions taken by the director seeking social justice are based on at least two criteria: to those who deserve it and to those in need. The Mexican principal believed fiercely in the right of every student to attend school no matter what the level of skill. She was highly critical of schools that would neglect students with special needs and felt that all teachers should be prepared to teach all children. She was outraged in Sergiovanni's (1992) moral sense by the treatment of schools with poor children by an administration that did not provide enough books or resources.

At the same time, as the Mexican principal advocated for cultural justice, she appeared to have doubts about the capacity of parents to support education for their children. She may not have had strong beliefs in developmental justice as described by Woods, (2005).

Spain-associational justice

The Spanish principal was working in a school with about 90% immigrants. His beliefs resembled Cribb and Gewirtz's (2003) view of associational justice. His challenge was to integrate students into the mainstream of Catalonia and Spain.

Students must first learn to speak Catalan, the language of instruction, and then Spanish, the national language of commerce and law. He created special welcoming classrooms to bring students into the mainstream of the school as quickly as possible.

The Spanish principal wanted a more open school than the Costa Rican principal, but at the same time he accepted Spanish society for what it was just as the Costa Rican principal accepted his society. They did not advocate for systemic changes that would give greater recognition to immigrant or marginalized cultures (Marshall).

He also used the planning and diagnostic activities of the educational system to direct the school toward its mission of integration of immigrants. Learning language was undertaken through the arts and music. The principal also realized that integration of students into the community required the integration of parents.

In this context he developed a team of teachers who would attend to the emotional needs of students and promote an inclusive education. He was pursuing what Cummins (2009) would call a well-planned multilingual approach that included extensive professional development for teachers.

The Spanish principal worked counter to a system that segregated immigrants in schools apart from native-born students. His view of associational justice was limited because it was oriented toward what he could accomplish within the school, and he did not challenge the resistance of other schools to accept these students, nor did he challenge central school authorities.

Conclusion

There are four major lessons that can be drawn from the lives of these three social justice leaders.

1) A social justice model of management includes dispositions that are part of a philosophy and view of life. Each leadership candidate had come to grips with his or her own history and how it related to the mission of education.

2) Each principal had to be understood within the context of the work. Schools vary along many dimensions and chief among them are the culture and make-up of the community. Social justice leadership includes familiarity with the culture and commitment to enhance the lives of people.

3) Social justice is not only centered on the school site, but it is also related to global issues. Daring leadership that goes beyond preserving the status quo requires attention to macro issues beyond the school and community.

4) While each of these principals excelled in at least one aspect of justice, they also fell short in others. It may not be reasonable to expect that all principals will excel in all aspects of justice, and we might do well simply to recognize the value of their efforts, or we might challenge them to move beyond their current actions to determine how they could become more socially just.

These leaders strived toward the goal of an organizational culture that adopted consistent approaches to reinforce democratic involvement and advancement of student and teacher potential. Constant reflection and innovation form part of a continuous cycle of improvement. Social justice will not once and for all be achieved, but must form the agenda of each generation.

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