A Global Perspective *of* Social Justice Leadership *for* School Principals

edited by
Pamela S. Angelle

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This book is dedicated to socially just school leaders around the world who every day work for equity and equality for marginalized children.

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FOREWORD

IN SUPPORT OF CROSS-NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

Michelle D. Young
University of Virginia

Between 2009 and 2010, I had the opportunity to work with the leadership of BELMAS on the development of a new joint venture between BELMAS and UCEA: The International School Leadership Development Initiative (ISLDN). One of the general sessions at a BELMAS summer conference during this time was particularly memorable. It was during this general session that the audience and panelists together shaped the focus on the ISLDN around leadership development and social justice leadership.

There is a considerable amount of research on educational leadership in countries like England, Canada and the United States, and there is a growing body of research comparing the practice and context of leadership from different nations, but less is known about social justice leadership and how it differs from one national context to another. This is not surprising given that the focus on social justice leadership in many countries is less

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than 2 decades in making. Thus, the ISLDN project plays an important role in building knowledge for the field, bringing together scholars from Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Scotland, Turkey, United States, and Wales to explore what it means to practice socially just educational leadership, what the beliefs and behaviors of social justice leaders include, and how national contexts and circumstances impact both practice and belief.

Although giving serious consideration to context when exploring social justice problems and solutions is essential, cross-case comparisons can be useful even when contexts vary significantly. Histories of social injustice will differ, as will the issues considered to be most critical and why, but through the process of comparison, researchers can discover important patterns and meaning that may reveal insight into rectifying social injustices. Similarly, by examining the concerns and practices of educational leaders in other contexts researchers may "discover" social injustices in their own systems that they had previously taken for granted.

There are certainly numerous social justice issues in the United States that could benefit from cross-national research. Meta-analyses of the educational leadership for social justice literature in the United States reveals, for example, that there is a great deal of literature that focuses on specific student groups, such as race and social class (O'Malley & Capper, 2012); limited literature that discusses the implications of social justice leadership for girls (Young, Marshall, & Edwards, in press); even less that focuses on LGBTQ identities, students from low income homes including homeless students and individuals with disabilities (Capper & Green, 2013; Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; O'Malley, 2013); and a paucity of literature that examines the intersection of more than one student identity group (e.g., gender and homelessness, LGBT and race). A cross-national meta-analysis may reveal a similar trend, or such an endeavor might reveal insight into the performance, situations, aspirations, etc. of groups that have received limited attention in the United States.

More helpful would be a cross-national approach to studying social justice leadership that moved away from treating students and adults as if their identities existed in silos. Students have multiple identities and gaining insight into socially just practice, wherein leaders and their school staff members support an intersectional approach to student identities, would be tremendously helpful. Although research that considers the needs and experiences of particular student identities is important, more work that thinks across student groups is needed (Capper & Young, 2014). Consider the following: If an educational leader is literate in one area, is that enough? What if educators are racially literate, but illiterate with social class, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, and their intersections?

Two other issues would benefit from cross-national research focused around social justice leadership. The first is the issue of student achievement.

Student achievement and its central role within modern approaches for determining school, educator and leader effectiveness continues to be a divisive issue within the U.S. social justice research community. Arguments tend to fall between two seemingly polar issues. At one end, scholars make the case that student achievement should be the goal for socially just schools (McKenzie et al., 2008). In contrast, scholars at the other end of the spectrum argue that achievement is overemphasized to the detriment of other benefits that education offers (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004), and to the field in general (Anderson, 2009; Kumashiro, 2012). A second issue ripe for more cross-national attention is policy (in)coherence and its impact on social justice leadership. As Capper and Young (2014) point out, lack of coherence can be quite challenging for educators attempting to meet the needs of all members of their school communities. Uncoordinated, and sometimes contradictory, federal and state policies and initiatives and a lack of policy fluency by most educational leaders are only a few of the many issues that would benefit from coordinated multinational research attention.

Scholars are in a unique position—a position where it is possible to look across national contexts to think broadly about leadership practice. As we move into the future, I hope to see more cross-national work, like that included in this new book from the ISLDN. *A Global Perspective of Social Justice Leadership for School Principals* opens a window on the work of social justice leadership in eight countries and shares insight into the benefits and challenges involved in cross-national work. I am pleased to see the release of this new book and consider it to be an important contribution to the field.

A Global Perspective of Social Justice Leadership for School Principals is the second major contribution to the field that has developed out of recent collaborations between UCEA and its international partner organizations. The 2007 International Handbook of School Leadership Development, co-developed by UCEA, BELMAS, and CCEAM, was the first. The impact of such collaborations in terms of building and sharing knowledge across national contexts is clear, and UCEA is committed to continuing its work in the global educational research arena. I extend a sincere thank you to those scholars from UCEA universities and our colleagues in other nations for the time and expertise they have contributed to making projects and contributions like this important book a reality.

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PREFACE

CONSTRUCTIONS, ENACTMENTS, ARTICULATIONS

The Work of the ISLDN Social Justice Group

In 2009, the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) met in Sheffield, England, United Kingdom for the annual conference. At that meeting two colleagues, one an English delegate and BELMAS member, and one, an American delegate and University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) member, informally talked about a cross county collaborative research project on educational leadership. From that informal conversation, the International School Leader Development Network (ISLDN) was born. A memorandum of understanding was signed by Michelle Young, Executive Director of UCEA and Megan Crawford, the BELMAS representative, pledging support for this international research collaborative.

Initial project planning began at the 2011 BELMAS conference in Bedfordshire, England, U.K. and at the 2011 UCEA conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States. The network formed two self-selected strands, a leadership in high needs schools group and a leadership for social justice in schools group. This volume presents a selection of the research from the leadership for social justice group.

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During the first 2 years of the project, several challenges presented, challenges which the leadership for social justice (SJ) group had to overcome before research could proceed. Acronyms, language, structures, and operations, as well as ways of being and ways of doing had to be understood by each researcher across the 40 countries involved in the project. Definitions, most importantly the definition of social justice, and the myriad enactments of social justice were discussed, dissected, and negotiated as we sought common terms and understandings of the work we were about to pursue. An initial consensus was that our project would be unique in that, across countries, we would all use a qualitative case study design, seek to answer the same research questions, and use the same methodology with a common interview protocol. The time necessary to debate these sometimes sticky issues was inadequate if we only met at the BELMAS and UCEA conferences. Thus, we decided to hold our own ISLDN meetings, hosted by project members. Once again, BELMAS and UCEA provided resources for us to do so. The first meeting was held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States (2014), then Gosport, England, United Kingdom (2015), and Hamilton/Dunedin, New Zealand (2016).

These additional meetings swiftly moved the project forward. We reached a consensus on the guiding questions for our research project which include:

- What is social justice leadership and what does it look like in myriad international macro, meso, and micro contexts?
- How can our international and comparative methodology enhance our understanding of what social justice leadership means in different national contexts?

Within the parameters of these questions, a set of four research questions have been formulated.

- How do social justice leaders *make sense* of "social justice"?
- What do social justice leaders *do*?
- What factors *help and hinder* the work of social justice leadership?
- How did social justice leaders *learn* to become social justice leaders?

The time at these meetings allowed us to examine our own positionality regarding social justice (see Chapter 1), create a research protocol, and construct a macro/meso/micro frame for our data analysis (see Chapter 3).

While these issues presented challenges, we were enriched through our understandings of other cultures and gained invaluable knowledge of education in countries outside of our own. We visited schools and spoke to principals, teachers, and children in the countries which hosted our

meetings. The collegiality and research collaborations have enhanced us both professionally and personally.

The chapters presented in this book provide perspectives and research from 11 countries. Reading the volume as a whole or delving into individual cases from specific countries provides the reader with rich stories to enhance understanding of global perspectives of social justice leadership in schools. This volume is divided into three parts. Part I traces the research foundation and theoretical lens through which to view the ISLDN SJ research. Chapter 1 (Slater) documents the social justice positionality of each researcher in the group. A requirement of joining the project team has been a statement written by each project member, a self-reflection asserting the social justice views of the researcher. Examining and analyzing the statements across the research project team, Slater draws conclusions about the lens through which the cases might be viewed, further providing transparency and validity to the cases. A review of select international research on social justice is found in Chapter 2 (Robinson). Robinson provides a cross national look at social justice research to present a foundation for understanding the perspectives of social justice presented in the chapters that follow. As Robinson notes, understanding our past allows us to make sense of our present.

The early work of the ISLDN SJ project repeatedly illustrated the importance of context to the enactment of social justice. As a result, a macro/meso/micro framework for analyzing project data was developed. Morrison details the iterations of the ISLDN SJ framework through which project researchers view the contextual data of the cases in Chapter 3. While the ISLDN SJ frame has supported the project data as a view into the enactment of social justice across countries, Angelle poses a broader perspective to case analysis. Part I ends with Chapter 4 in which Angelle examines alternative lens through which to examine the ISLDN SJ cases. Suggesting that ISLDN cases may be examined through role identity theory, values theory, and ethic of care theory, she argues that the case study data may contribute to fields beyond the social justice literature.

Part II focuses on the practice of social justice leadership in schools, documenting case studies in England, Turkey, the United States, Wales, Ireland, Israel, Scotland, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. Beginning with Chapter 5, Fuller comments on researcher assumptions and surprises, following the data analysis of an English case study. With a focus on the micro context, Fuller reports the articulation of social justice leadership from one principal in England and examines her own understandings of social justice leadership in light of this. Chapter 6 (Beycioglu and Ogden) is a cross comparative study of two principals, one from Turkey and one from the United States. Examining the cases from a macro, meso, and micro context, Beycioglu and Ogden find stark differences, but also similarities

in the case principal's work for marginalized children. The Welsh perspective of social justice is the subject of Chapter 7 (Jones). Jones examines social justice in Wales as articulated through policy, as well as the extent of policy implementation in schools. Jones argues that government support for social justice is only as effective as the fidelity with which it is enacted by school leaders.

Chapter 8 (King and Travers) looks at Irish principals through the lens of ecological systems theory. Using Bronfenbrenner's socioecological theory, King and Travers explore the macro, exo, meso, and micro contexts and their interconnectedness. Interactions and relationships at these levels through the perspectives of Irish principals support the authors' conclusions about the work of social justice in Ireland. Chapter 9 (Oplatka and Arar) examines Israeli principals through the lens of responsible leadership. With an eye toward inclusion of all stakeholders in the work of social justice, Oplatka and Arar present social justice leadership as enactment for the common good. The Israeli cases document one Muslim principal and one Jewish principal, as they utilize emotion and care in their work for social justice. Social justice in Scotland is investigated through policy and the words of Scottish principals in Chapter 10 (Torrance and Forde). While noting the marginalization and inequity found in schools in Scotland, Torrance and Forde focus on policy to investigate its relationship with social justice and the practice of equity in schools. The voices of Hong Kong principals are heard in Chapter 11 (Szeto and Cheng). Szeto and Cheng examine leadership practices and the influences of these practices on equity and equality in Hong Kong schools, specifically in the transformation of failing schools.

Growth and change predominate the stories of a principal in England (Chapter 12, Potter) and two principals in New Zealand (Chapter 13, McNae) as they articulate their social justice philosophies. The case of the English principal evidenced the change in perceptions of social justice as she moved to differential school contexts. As the context in which her social justice practice changed, so, too, did her identity as a social justice leader transform. This principal's change in location became a story of personal growth. Likewise, in New Zealand, two principal's stories of learning to lead became stories of growth as they made sense of the ways in which they enacted social justice. As they articulated the ways in which they worked for marginalized children, their reflections became an exercise in clarifying their personal identity and leadership philosophy. Part II ends with Chapter 14 (Flood and Oldham), an examination of two U.S. principals and the ways in which their view of the school's surrounding community influenced the enactment of social justice by them. The complexity of school/community relationships is described, portraying the principal as a bridge between the two. In doing so,

Flood and Oldham conclude that principal perceptions of the community impacts principal's decision making in issues of social justice.

The book concludes with Part III, a theoretical grounding of the project as we move into the next phase of our research. In Chapter 14, Potter considers the aspect of reflexivity as part of social justice leadership growth. He argues that aspiring leaders must develop reflective thinking to make sense of their context, a construct the ISLDN research has found plays a predominant role in how social justice is enacted in schools. Angelle explores quantifying the qualitative data in an attempt to expand the project findings to a larger scale in Chapter 16. Finding that single case studies in each country does not allow for generalizations, Angelle presents a method for constructing a quantitative instrument from the qualitative data. This quantitative instrument can be administered countrywide to elicit findings across the globe. She opines that this method may begin to move the ISLDN research toward a grounded theory of global social justice leadership in schools. Woods (epilogue) closes the book by placing social justice alongside the notion of freedom. Woods makes the argument that social justice, in focusing on opportunities and growth for all, allows the capacity for freedom. The duty of the social justice leader is to commit to this.

Within education there have been some notable attempts to frame social justice in ways that can help to explain and understand the practices of those working in schools, especially school leaders. Expectations for the emphasis placed on social justice and how this agency is enacted in schools stems from the school leader. The research contained in this book seeks to enhance our understanding of school leaders' actions as they work to promote socially just practices and/or outcomes in a range of different national contexts. The unique nature of this research is that studies took place in numerous schools across the globe in a variety of contexts yet utilized the same research protocols. This has allowed the researchers to draw conclusions at an international level about social justice decision making, the supports and barriers brought on school leaders by national policy and mandates, and the essential nature of context in the work of social justice leadership. The book is significant to scholars in terms of qualitative research design and studies of researcher reflexivity. Leadership preparation programs can utilize the cases presented which will inevitably lead to conversations of leadership and social justice decision making. District, state, and national policymakers will be informed about how their work can support or discourage the work of social justice and perhaps open a dialogue on how the work they do impacts the decision making of leaders as they go about their daily work. This book is rich in stories as well as successes and challenges faced in conducting international research and thus, holds significance for educational practitioners, scholars, and policy makers at all levels.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all of the researchers in the International School Leader Development Network, whose work has inspired this book and whose research continues to impact our knowledge of social justice leadership across the globe. Most particularly, I wish to thank the leadership of BELMAS and UCEA for their continued support which has made this research possible.

—Pamela S. Angelle, PhD