Preamble to IEJLL Special Edition

December 15, 2006
J. Kent Donlevy, General Editor of IEJLL

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Anthony Normore as the Guest Editor of this Special Edition of the International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning. His biography follows at the end of this introduction, but at the outset it is necessary to say that his stellar performance as the Regional Editor (USA) of IEJLL is responsible for this Special Edition. His editorial efforts have been unflagging as he has respectfully and collegially worked with authors from fourteen universities and four other institutions in bringing this Special Edition to fruition. It has been a delight for me as the Editor of IEJLL to deal with such an outstanding individual and scholar. Through his efforts the following Universities are represented in this Special Edition of IEJLL:

1. University of Oklahoma
2. University of North Carolina at Greensboro
3. Florida State University
4. Pennsylvania State University
5. University of Cincinnati
6. Kent State University
7. Temple University Philadelphia
8. Florida International University
9. Indiana University
10. Louisiana Tech University
11. Pennsylvania Widener University
12. Lynn University, Florida
13. Hofstra University
14. Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

Introduction to IEJLL Special Edition

December 15, 2006

Leadership for Learning in the Context of Social Justice: An American Perspective

Anthony H. Normore, Guest Editor

I am pleased to serve as guest editor for this special issue titled 'Leadership for Learning in the Context of Social Justice: An American Perspective'. The issue features a diverse group of scholars in the United States who have produced important scholarship on leadership for learning about issues of social justice over the last decade.

Recent commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education (i.e., the 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court took scientific research into account in issuing this landmark ruling for desegregation of schools across America) and the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act (i.e., the 1964 Civil Rights Act made racial discrimination in public places illegal in America, and required employers to provide equal employment opportunities) have emphasized how movements for social justice helped to define American history. Throughout the years, these commemorations have continued to serve as catalysts to refocus thinking on how educational leaders have become social justice advocates and activists. Discussions about social justice in the field of education have typically framed the concept of social justice around several issues including race, diversity, marginalization, equity, access, ethics, class, gender, spirituality, ability, and sexual orientation.

Within this special issue of The International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning (IEJLL), the authors provide a variety of rich perspectives to the social justice phenomenon from the lens of empirical, historical, narrative
and conceptual designs. These designs reiterate the importance of bridging theory and practice while simultaneously producing significant research and scholarship in the field. Collectively, the authors seek to give voice to empowering, social justice-focused research—an area that continues to garner much interest in the areas of educational leadership research, teaching, and learning. In conjunction with the “theme” of this issue, the articles offer research from an American perspective and offer suggestions, and implications for the field of educational leadership on both a national and international level. The collection contributes to research, theory and practice in educational and community settings.

In the first article, Gaetane Jean-Marie and Anthony H. Normore examine the experiences of four African American women leaders in historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in a Southeastern state. When the 1954 ruling of Brown v. Board of Education by the U.S. Supreme court declared that schools should be desegregated with all deliberate speed, these four women were among the freedom fighters who integrated public schools, and later pursued higher education and professional careers. The authors catalogue how these four women, 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 African Americans – and all people.

Jeffrey S. Brooks and Mark Miles present an historical overview of pedagogical orientations of school leadership in the United States. These authors discuss issues facing contemporary educational leaders in this context with a consideration of the early influence of Frederick Taylor and ends in the present day, a time when the fields of practice and scholarship in educational leadership collectively stand at a critical, yet not unprecedented, crossroad—the intersection of social justice and scientific management.

Dana Mitra extends her work by examining the leadership of young people in efforts to increase social justice in school settings. Through an examination of thirteen youth-adult partnership initiatives, Mitra considers the ways in which students and adults can collaborate to examine issues of equity and injustice that they experience in their lives, in their schools, in their communities, and in broader society.

Jonathan D. Lightfoot expands his research by arguing that modern educational reform owes much to the legal team and educational leaders who fought to make equal educational opportunity a reality for Black students in the United States. Their efforts helped to dismantle American apartheid; a.k.a. Jim Crow, a system of allocating human and civil rights according to assigned or assumed ‘racial’ classifications. Lightfoot questions commonly held wisdom that promotes the idea that if things are separate they must be unequal. He argues that seeking integration to overcome segregation without addressing racism does not solve the problem of unequal educational opportunity.

Autumn Tooms and Judy A. Alston used the Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG) to study attitudes of two groups of graduate students in graduate level leadership preparation programs. Findings reveal that a majority of the population (61%) tend to have more tolerant attitudes toward members of the queer community while 35% of respondents were neutral about issues concerning equity.

Kathleen S. Sernak examines school reform and the challenges presented to educational leaders working toward social justice. Sernak uses Freire’s concept of conscientization, possessing a conscious understanding of one’s lived reality, as a framework by which to analyze two particular reforms, Success for All and Professional Development Schools. She suggests that educational leadership that seeks to liberate students to make social changes creates space for trust, and nurtures participatory, equitable and just relationships rather than simply managing programs and services, and facilitates “the opportunity for empowerment rather than ‘delivering it’.

Lionel H. Brown, Judith I. Larsen, Ruth Britt, Donna M. Ruiz, and Rachel Star trace the collaborative efforts of community educators/leaders in Cincinnati, following violence in the city in 2001. These authors examine how such efforts might help break the cycle of frustration, failure, and violence that shadow many disadvantaged inner-city African American students. As emphasized in the article, “...persistent, race-based inequities in urban areas are a major factor in this syndrome and the causes are proposed to be disparity in education, housing, economic opportunity, and political representation.”

Anthony H. Normore and Roger I. Blanco posit that schools must realize that their strength is found in the services they provide for students, parents, and the community members, not as an exclusive academic island unto themselves. These authors suggest that school leaders and their communities commit to collaborative partnerships through school-linked services and delivery systems for the plight of the poor. A review of literature revealed a growing rate of poverty among youth in American inner cities – a poverty which engulfed one in seven youth in 1970, one in six in 1980, one in five in 1990, and one in four in 2000. Research asserts that today, approximately 47 million Americans have no health insurance and out of the 48 million school children in the United States, more than thirteen million are poor.
Mary John O’Hair and Ulrich C. Reitzug expand their research by examining the K20 Oklahoma Science Initiative for Rural Schools that targets low-income, rural schools serving diverse populations in Oklahoma. One-third of all U.S. school children attend school in rural settings and are much poorer than urban America. Equity is a concern not only in terms of race, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, but also in terms of being geographically located in a rural area. These researchers assert that “rural teachers are often not certified in their teaching areas, with one in four rural science teachers lacking in academic preparation or certification.”

Gerardo López and Vanessa Vásquez focus on the attitudes and perceptions of school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel in one Latino-impacted school district in a Midwestern state. The authors argue that certain practices of language and cultural assimilation reinforce a subtle, but powerful, form of benevolent racism: where “good intentions” and compassionate altruism reproduce and reify a highly racialized discourse.

In narrative research, Pauline Leonard shares a journey of reflections about one College of Education team’s struggle for authenticity in the development of a new educational leadership program. However, the journey takes a turn in light of renewed deliberations about authenticity in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In the process, relevant ethical leadership and social justice principles are applied to examine, critique, and evaluate this struggle for authenticity. The narrative captures the multifaceted human dimensions embedded in the successes, achievements, challenges, and frustrations of striving for personal and professional integrity.

The final three articles focus on a movement known as The New DEEL (Democratic-Ethical Educational Leadership). Each author presents a different focus. Steven J. Gross describes the emergence of the New DEEL and the role it attempts to play in confronting the excesses of the current accountability movement typified by massive standardized testing and No Child Left Behind legislation in the United States. This article depicts the choice facing the field of educational leadership that pits a top-down control regime, modeled after corporations on the one hand against a progressive, democratic-ethical alternative on the other hand. A brief account of the historic traditions of the latter and its ties to the cause of social justice are offered.

Valerie A. Lee Storey and Tom Beeman argue that New DEEL does not refer to a specific policy or reform, but rather to an ideology, unencumbered by international borders and domestic politics. These authors identify the rhetoric of New DEEL and social justice, and the reality of its implementation in schools today especially in light of the No Child Left Behind Act. Specifically, Storey and Beeman postulate that NCLB is a major current impediment to New DEEL and social justice and propose implementing a structure which expands the notion of pedagogy from the four walls of the classroom to a personalized, school-wide strategy.

Joan Shapiro addresses the ethical and social justice implications of New DEEL. Shapiro emphasizes the ethical underpinnings of this movement by focusing on the paradox of control versus democracy. This important paradox is developed through a discussion of the profound contradictions between the accountability thrust and the democratic emphasis in schools, particularly in the United States. Shapiro presents the inconsistencies within the paradox and provides some suggestions for coping with the challenges of blending these two very different and opposing concepts together to illuminate what a New DEEL moral educational leader might value. Focus is in the area of social justice and how an educational leader might guide an organization.

On behalf of the editorial team at IEJLL, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all of the authors who contributed to this special issue. Our hope is that these articles will serve as a catalyst for further discourse about research on leadership, teaching, and learning for social justice. Please feel free to make contact with any of the authors. Their contact information is provided accordingly.

Thank you.

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Biography

Anthony H. Normore (Tony) is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at the College of Education, Florida International University, Miami, Florida. He completed a “Maîtrise en Education et Politique Scolaire” from Université Laval, Sainte Foy, Quebec followed by his Ph. D from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at University of Toronto. A former K-12 educator (i.e., teacher, school administrator, district office program director), Dr. Normore instructs a range of courses in Educational Leadership seminars for aspiring and practicing school leaders on topics including school personnel management, theories and ethics in educational leadership, instructional leadership, and issues of diversity and social justice.

During his years in K-12 public education, Dr. Normore regularly engaged in active membership on school advisory councils, student retention committees, school growth and development, curriculum and professional development. These public school experiences have helped shaped his current approach to his work in higher education. Dr. Normore demonstrates his commitment to education at all levels that is inclusive, promotes civil democracy, and celebrates diversity among students by working with communities, faculty and students from different backgrounds, outlooks and experiences.

In the summers of 1995 and 1999, Dr. Normore worked with teachers and school leaders in the foothills of the Himalayas in the kingdom of Nepal, where he represented the Canadian Teachers Federation on “Project Overseas.”

In June, 2005, he conducted a keynote address for the Southeastern Consortium for Minorities in Engineering/Education (SECME) where he addressed one hundred school leaders at the Leadership Academy, Huston, Texas. In February, 2006, he accepted an invitation to present his current research on Miami-Dade County Public School principals as leaders of radical change for low performing inner-city schools, at the 2006 Superintendent’s Symposium, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Dr. Normore’s work launches from a perspective that every interaction he has as a member of the professional and academic community must be consistent in supporting growth, compassion, competence, and accountability. As teacher and mentor he supports and practices routines that indicate his belief for high-quality education for an ethnically and culturally diverse student population, equipping them with the capability to become productive citizens who continuously contribute to a global and rapidly changing society.

He was awarded the College of Education Dean’s Research Grant Award on three occasions at Florida International University, to conduct research in the areas of leadership development, class size reduction, and the School Improvement Zone of Miami-Dade County, Florida. He was nominated in 2004 for FIU’s Excellence in Research Award, and Outstanding FIU Faculty Award. In May, 2005, he was one of three recipients of the College of Education Builder’s Award. In 2006, he was a nominee for Florida International University’s Graduate Mentorship Award.

As service to his local community, Dr. Normore regularly visits local schools in order to stay connected with the daily realities of schools. For the last four years he has been a member of the Mayor’s “Mentoring” initiative for the City of Miami and more recently received accolades by the County Commissioner and the Mayor’s Office of Miami-Dade County for his community participation during Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts.

His vision is to create professional learning communities and to build foundations for collaborative efforts among community stakeholders, business officials, parents, teachers and school leaders by supporting the need for critical understanding of leadership for social justice, curriculum and instruction, community, transformation and change. For Dr. Normore, cultivating leadership that connects people, purpose and practice can only serve for the greater good of learning.