

A New DEEL for an Old Problem: Social Justice at the Core

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

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ABSTRACT: New DEEL does not refer to a specific policy or reform, but rather to an ideology, unencumbered by international borders and domestic politics. In this paper, we first endeavor to identify the rhetoric of New DEEL and social justice, and the reality of its implementation in schools today; spending time on the NCLB Act which we postulate is a major current impediment to New DEEL and social justice. We identify steps to scaffold strategies which facilitate the movement toward Democratic-Ethical Educational Leadership (DEEL) in schools today. By default, this ensures that social justice is the major priority of our education system. To achieve this end, we propose implementing a structure which expands the notion of pedagogy from the four walls of the classroom to a personalized, school-wide strategy.

“Greater than the tread of mighty armies is an idea whose time has come.”¹

Victor Hugo, 1802-1885

Introduction

The knowledge base, research, and professional culture of the educational administration professorate and practitioners face acute pressure in the current era of high-stakes testing and standardization. Furthermore, pressures to conform to federal and state-wide education reform are forcing many educators to question their *raison d'être*. As Fullan (1991) points out, the process of educational change often requires individuals to confront philosophical beliefs and values. May Sarton reminds us all that, “crisis may be one of the climates where education flourishes—a climate that forces honesty out, breaks down the walls of what ought to be, and reveals what is, instead” (Sarton as cited in Katz, 1999, p. 138).

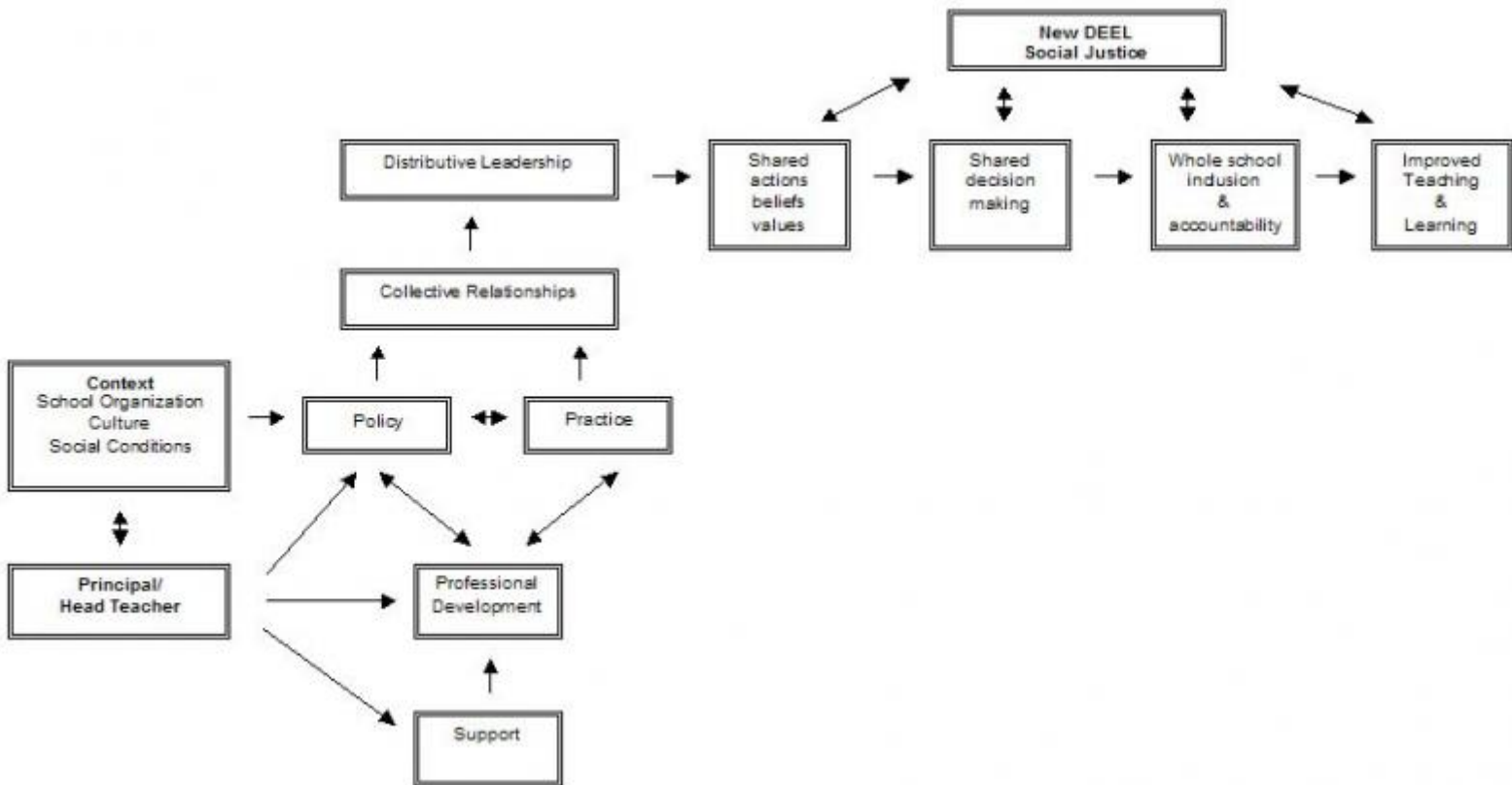
In *Teaching Democracy: Unity and Diversity in Public Life*, Walter Parker (2003) argues that in societies working toward democracy, the role of education is to help make citizens who are deeply engaged in the service of the public good, not merely in their own self interests. Following a pathway that “recognizes individual and group differences and to unite them horizontally in democratic moral discourse” (p.25) education is thus charged with fostering a discourse of authenticity, responsibility and duty, thereby enabling citizen participation in the public arena. There has been a permeation of unease growing amongst educators committed to this viewpoint as they see the emphasis in schooling moving away from service and the personalizing of education to a more standard view of one fit for all. The unease is further reinforced by a feeling among the profession that there is a loss of voice at the grassroots level as the drive towards standardization gains increasing impetus. For some, this unease has had a tangentially, beneficial effect. It acts as a catalyst, causing them to reflect, not only on what their students need to learn, but also on what they as teachers now feel compelled to teach in order for their students to succeed in the international arena.

Concerns and issues about social justice that have been articulated during informal sessions at national and international conferences have been increasingly marginalized. These have served to unite previously disparate voices within educational administration to confront issues of inequality and injustice in our field. Ensuing collaborations served to build momentum to such a degree that representatives from university faculty, administration, Superintendents and school practitioners representing the U.S., Canada, Australia, and the UK have united under an umbrella of shared concerns to demonstrate how research, status, and influence can be utilized to transform our profession, taking Democratic-Ethical-Educational-Leadership (DEEL) into schools and the wider community.

New DEEL does not refer to a specific policy or reform but rather to an ideology, unrestricted by international borders and domestic politics. The aim of New DEEL is to transform the profession. It may seem a daunting task but ideology is what moves people forward. It inspires actions which we might never have thought ourselves capable of. It requires vision, trust, confidence, stamina and indeed bravery as the New DEEL is likely to make some professionals uncomfortable. It demands that individual values and beliefs are questioned. It entails a commitment to proselytize the message through conference presentations, journal publications, and policy papers to ensure a growing and supportive network. Finally, it compels all those committed to the New DEEL vision to ensure that the values, voices, and scholarship of social justice permeate all actions, both personal and professional.

An understanding of New DEEL, however, requires that we move beyond the abstract to paint a picture of New DEEL in practice. In this paper we first endeavor to identify the rhetoric of social justice and the reality of its implementation in schools today. Spending time on the NCLB Act which we postulate is a major current impediment to New DEEL and social justice in our current education system. Second, we identify steps to scaffold strategies which facilitate the movement toward the goal of Democratic-Ethical Educational Leadership in schools today. This by default ensures that social justice is the major priority of our education system. To achieve this end, we propose a model (see Figure 1) based on harnessing distributive leadership. This model contends that distributive leadership in the field of education should extend well beyond the Principal's (Headteacher's) office, the school corridor and even the classroom but to the student learner.

Figure 1: Facilitating the movement towards the goal of democratic – ethical educational leadership in schools



Rhetoric: New DEEL and Social Justice

Contrary to experiences of educators in the field, research evidence suggests that social justice has reached the top

of the education agenda in many Western industrialized societies. According to Furman and Shields (2003) the concepts of social justice and democratic community have become major concerns for educational scholars and practitioners at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As Furman (2003) notes, the increasing attention given to social justice is part of a general shift in the field toward a focus on the moral purposes of leadership in schools and how to achieve these purposes. Current awareness is motivated by several factors, including the growing diversity of school-age populations, the increasing awareness of the achievement and economic gaps between mainstream and "minoritized" children and the increasingly sophisticated analyses of social injustice as played out in schools, including those that may arise from the high-stakes accountability movement (e.g., Larson & Ovando, 2001; McNeil, 2000)

Furman and Gruenewald (2004) note that there is increasing evidence of ongoing dialogue in the educational subfields of curriculum theory and cultural studies. Recent literature specific to educational leadership also marks the growing interest in this topic, including several chapters in the 2002 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Murphy, 2002) and two special issues of the Journal of School Leadership. They point out that social justice has become so prominent a topic that Murphy (1999) recently identified it as one of "three powerful synthesizing paradigms" (p. 54) embedded in the "shifting landscape" of the field.

Reality: New DEEL and Social Justice

We are reminded by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001), Katz (1999), and Noddings (1984), that teaching is a moral responsibility, that it is complex and that at the core of this moral complexity is the challenge of balancing care and justice. If we accept the truth of this construct, how do we ensure balance between a just education system and care for our students when the twenty-first century curricula being delivered in American classrooms today still tends to represent and promote the values and beliefs of the majority culture? Furthermore, the very constructs of school—timetables, policies, assessment methods, discipline, physical design, and so forth—are often quite foreign to students' experiences. While these problems appear to be entrenched norms due to being culturally and contextually based, they are not intractable.

In an effort to address this imbalance it is imperative that we move beyond the rhetoric and address social injustice pragmatically within our education system. Firstly, we must look at the micro level- at the student, classroom culture, school culture and secondly, at a macro level the values-aims and priorities of the state. This worthy aim cannot be achieved by maintaining the status quo but by critical reflection on current practices.

So what do we mean when we refer to social justice in the classroom? Many teachers have considerable trouble explaining what social justice is and what it looks like but can wax verbosely about everyday social injustices visible in their schools. With not a little embarrassment, countless teachers say that the classroom today has become a place in which learning is focused around the test, that its value has been narrowed, creativity and ingenuity has been replaced by instrumental and calculative pedagogy, and students rewarded for conformity rather than initiative. The ability to think critically has been surpassed by the need to regurgitate learned facts in the desired sequence. Personalized learning has gone out of the window and the philosophy of "one fit for all" predominates.

Students have become insular in many of their pursuits by using the internet, listening to their ipod, text messaging the friend standing next to them. Their thoughts tend to focus more on the individual than concerning themselves with the responsibility of citizenship. On the other hand many students are involved in school or community service but this is often seen as discrete from what happens in the classroom. The curriculum delivered by schools today offer students few opportunities for self reflection. It is therefore not surprising that young people are becoming more used to absorbing knowledge from the "expert", whether a teacher in the classroom or through current technology. The ability to critique, empathize, and develop personal viewpoints should not be left purely to the domain of Advanced Placements classes. All students should be presented with such opportunities.

Social Justice: Pedagogical Issues and New DEEL

While text books may refer to pedagogy as educational methodology and technique; educators know that it embraces the social, cultural, and political context of the institution of schooling. It seeks to engage members of the school body at all levels in the act of re-examining their educational assumptions to ensure that their school utilizes the capacity of all their members. Educators embracing the New DEEL, while actively critiquing current education policy cannot be regarded as 'Luddite', as they are involved in dialogue and empirical research aimed at presenting to policy makers alternatives to current education policy. According to Bogotch (2002), this is essential. Bogotch argues that it is necessary for all social justice/education reform efforts to be deliberately and continuously reinvented and critiqued.

It is such a critique of the educational system as advocated by scholars (Gross, 2006; Gross and Shapiro, 2006; Shapiro, 2006) that is required if schools are to foster equitable and socially responsible learning. It is a reasonable expectation that curriculum changes and newly implemented accountability systems have this as their aim. But according to Brown (2004), though scholars tend to have conflicting views of social justice, of the sources of injustice in schools and society, and of educators' obligations to committed action there is general consensus that the evidence is clear and alarming; various segments of public school population experience negative and inequitable treatment on a daily basis (Valenzuela, 2002) Gaps between sex, race, and socio-economic groups are persistent and pervasive.

No Child Left Behind Act: The Paradox

For many advocates of New DEEL the culprits behind the current retrograde focus in the classroom are recent state and federal reforms, most notably the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, signed into law by President Bush in early 2002. This law requires schools and districts to break down achievement data by racial, demographic, and socioeconomic subgroups in every grade, and show progress for each group. The affect of this policy focuses attention on reducing and eliminating the achievements gaps between minority and White students; low income students attending schools that fail to meet academic performance targets for three straight years are eligible for free tuition from public or private providers that have been approved by state education officials. Districts are required to set aside a portion of the federal Title 14 (the largest of the federal education programs, providing federal funding for schools to help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Services can include: hiring teachers to reduce class size, tutoring, computer labs, parental involvement activities, professional development, purchase of materials and supplies, pre-kindergarten programs, and hiring teacher assistants or others) money they receive for disadvantaged students to pay for the tutoring and school choice provisions of the law.

The Act sets out with a laudable aim, that closing the achievement gap is essential to democracy, but needs to be followed up with reflection, guided by care to see whether the original policy has fulfilled its aims or has introduced new equities or harm (Noddings, 1999). Concerns regarding implementation and funding of the Act quickly emanated from advocates for equality and social justice as it became clear that not all states understood aspects of the Act. The increasingly, transparent accountability affected vulnerability at all levels of the education system. Not surprisingly, vulnerable people often react with negativity and hostility.

The Act has now been around for four years and research is being published that has longitudinal grounding. The fundamental question to address is: Has the Act fostered social justice? The answer is of course complex as each state has created its own set of academic standards indicating what a student should know and learn at each grade level. This lack of consistency between states currently negates direct state by state comparisons. Each school and district is expected to show adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting required participation and proficiency levels on state assessments. According to NCLB, such progress is measured for all students in each of the following categories of students:

1. *American Indian*
2. *Asian/Pacific Islander*
3. *Black (non-Hispanic)*
4. *Hispanic*
5. *White*

6. *Limited English proficiency (English as a second language)*

7. *Special education*

8. *Free/reduced price lunch*

9. *Entire student population of school or district*

In reporting AYP, a school or district must have at least forty students in a category for it to count for participation; twenty students are required for proficiency, except special education which requires forty students.

Research conducted by the Department of Education⁵ (2006) found that most sub-groups of students measured by the Act had made small but distinctive achievement gains in the fourth and eighth grade reading and math from the 2000-01 to the 2002-03 school year. State assessments also indicated slight reductions in the achievement gap between students from low-income families and other students⁶. These are positive, welcomed gains, but more negatively, the report also projected that based on current data only Delaware, Kansas, North Carolina and Oklahoma are likely to get their poor-student subgroup to state proficiency level by 2013-14 school year as mandated by the Act.

The reality is that there is a lack of consistency as to how the Act has been implemented in states and school districts, much being dependent on the commitment of resources both in the terms of dollars and personnel. Many parents remain unaware of the fact that their children are eligible for this additional tuition because by law, it is the school districts that have the responsibility of notifying parents and this is not always happening. Consequently, the beneficiaries of the Act tend to be those who are strong in political and social capital while for many students the Act actually contributes further to their perceived exclusion, conflict which has yet to be resolved. A survey from the Education Industry Association⁷ (February, 2006) revealed that many districts do not offer timely or clear enough notification to parents of children who are eligible for additional tuition and resources. The National Assessment of Title 1: Interim Report (April, 2006) confirmed the EIA findings. The report found that only seventeen per cent of eligible students nationwide signed up for the free tutoring that Title 1 schools are required to offer after not meeting educational targets three years in a row. However, the number of students receiving those supplemental educational services increased more than four-fold in the two-year period from the 2002-2003 school year through the 2003-04 year. Statistics from the Center on Education Policy (2006) in their report *From the Capital to the Classroom* (their fourth published report, comprehensively studying the implementation of NCLB at the federal, state and local level) indicated that the percentage of students participating in school tutoring programs has remained constant for the last two years at twenty per cent.

Districts known for successfully communicating educating policy to parents are experiencing a different problem in that in some districts (i.e. Chicago) demand is outstripping resources. The district has worked aggressively to ensure that all eligible students and parents are aware of the service and this is reflected in the relatively high participation rate. The district estimates that two hundred thousand students are eligible for free tutoring, Elizabeth F. Swanson, the director of the after-school and community-school programs said in an interview⁸ and of those, forty three thousand students received tutoring at the start of this school year.

Yet, a further tension exists in relation to additional tuition, which McNeil (2000) points out. Educational reforms designed to increase equity in achievement through testing often translate into regimes of remediation and segregation that have a record of putting further behind the very populations they were supposed to serve. More empirical data is required to see whether the Act is indeed impacting disadvantaged groups in this way.

Nevertheless, this disparity in participation rates needs addressing. Even the "relatively high" participation rate in Chicago should not be acceptable. Currently there are no real statutory consequences at either the state or district level for failing to meet student needs. Some states have found several aspects of the Act to be unacceptable; primarily, the financial imposition on their education budget. Other states have cited the further assessment of students in reading and mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school, and determining whether schools are making adequate yearly progress toward ensuring that all students are proficient in reading and math by the 2013-2014, as unacceptable. Some states are openly rebelling (e.g. Connecticut)⁹. To combat this action by the state, civil rights groups, including the Connecticut National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the national office of the NAACP have joined the U.S. Education Department in defending the

NCLB Act. The general counsel for the national NAACP explained that allowing states to opt out of the federal law's test requirement would set a dangerous precedent for other states. The Connecticut NAACP, acting on behalf of three minority students in high-poverty schools, filed papers in federal courts in New Haven, Connecticut (January, 2006) asking the judge in the Connecticut v. Spelling case to allow the group to intervene on the side of the U.S. Department of Education¹⁰.

The Center on Education Policy (2006) found that while the Act is having the positive effect of encouraging schools and districts to more closely align teaching and learning with states' curriculum standards, and that test scores are rising, it is doing so at the detriment of subjects such as social studies, music and art, to make more time for the main subjects being tested (i.e. reading and mathematics), thereby "diminishing activities that might keep children in school" (p. 7). The in-depth study also found that districts have become more restrictive in what teachers are supposed to teach. This quantitative study is the first published, empirical research from an independent body, to confirm what teachers have been saying anecdotally for the last four years. As yet, the implications of the ad hoc approach by school districts have yet to be fully understood. While the rhetoric of most school districts and states place strong emphasis on the curriculum principles of breadth, balance and progression, there is recognition of the tension that exists in maintaining these principles and, at the same time achieves manageability and sufficient emphasis on developing skills and knowledge in the tested subject areas.

Teachers' frustration and negative views in relation to the effect of the Act on subjects taught, and their opposition to NCLB is becoming more overt and explicit. Over the past two years, the U.S. Department of Education has made so many compromises in implementing the NCLB that the law's legitimacy is in serious question according to a recent study by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. They found that state accountability has weakened as a direct result of the compromises being made by Education Department officials on NCLB implementation (contrary to American history where education was considered a more local responsibility). The department has felt pressurized on two sides. First, there has been increasing, political and professional criticisms of its requirements, and second there are an increasing number of schools and districts identified for improvement. This is very much an ongoing issue.

There is no doubt that high stakes testing has a major impact on which curriculum values are considered most important. Greater attention should be given to the way in which dilemmas might be resolved, at both a local, state, and federal level. While we have pointed the finger at the NCLB Act, and accused it of hindering pedagogical development within schools, it may also be argued that it is the catalyst by which interest groups previously outside the mainstream domain are welcomed into the system as coalitions develop to fight, not the inequities of the Act, but the inequities and justice issues of implementation and delivery.

Democratic-Ethical-Educational Leadership: How do we recognize it?

The key to positively implementing policy mandates often lies in the specific contextual responses of school leaders. Recent literature supports the view that the capacity for leadership exists, and must be developed throughout schools. Murphy (2006, p.50) points out that "while at first glance it may seem a bit paradoxical, evidence indicates that the headteacher occupies the critical position in ensuring that teacher leadership takes root and flourishes in schools."

Observing current developments, Fullan (2000) comments that "the scientific study of leadership has never been greater, nor has the recognition that broad-based leadership is the only way forward...We are forcefully reminded that the notion of leadership must not be confined to those holding formal leadership positions. All leadership, if it is effective, must have a strong component of sharedness" (p. xx). Only through actively engaging in shared dialogue can colleagues agree on a shared value system and thereby speak as one voice, ensuring that school leadership becomes and remains democratic and ethical.

Fostering a democracy within every school will help ensure the full participation of all community members within the school building and the local community working for a consensually agreed common "moral good" of social justice. "If school leadership comes not only from the front of a classroom but from within the classroom itself, then the behavior of such leaders as observed by members of the organization and their constituents must mirror their rhetoric" (Storey & Beeman, 2006). In reality this means that many decisions on collective actions are context based being constructed

by members of the community in the midst of their unique local context (Furman & Shields, 2003).

Twenty years ago Guttman (1987) asked the pertinent question, "how much internal democratization of schools is desirable in a democracy?" (p.93). The question is critical and as valid today. In attempting to answer the question Guttman reflects on the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago lead by John Dewey from 1896-1903. Students were given responsible roles outside the classroom and participated in reviewing and planning their learning. "It was an embryonic democratic society because it elicited a commitment to learning and cultivated the prototypically democratic virtues among its students, not because it treated them as the political or intellectual equals of its teachers" (p.93). Despite the fact that students were not involved in curriculum planning and assessment and that many decisions were determined by teachers and administrators, Guttman does not see the internal structure of the school as a failure in democracy. She makes the point that "an ideal democratic school is not as democratic as an ideal democratic society should not disenchant us either with schooling or democracy, since democracies depend on schools to prepare students for citizenship" (p.94).

School Leadership

To ensure that schools are being lead in a democratic and ethical manner we propose that the leadership model adopted within a school is distributive among many actors. In other words, leadership is not the purview solely of administrators, but also exercised by people in many positions (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). There are many different models of distributive leadership, but taken together, they suggest that, not only is leadership distributed throughout the school, but that leadership "multiplies" through the type of interactions. Furman and Shields (2003) advocate the use of a second leadership lens i.e. constructivist leadership theory which purports that leadership aims at the construction of meaning and purpose by members of a community through their communicative relationships, or "the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling" (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Slack, 1995, p. 29).

We now turn our attention onto processes that we believe facilitate these communal relationships by explaining how democratic leadership becomes constructed and "distributed" across a school community.

Teacher Leadership

The classic bureaucratic model of leadership is one where knowledge and expertise resides with those with power and authority who then transmit to those on the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder. An alternative model of leadership is based on relationships and collaboration. Prominent school reformers are focusing on how opening the leadership relationship to all and focusing collective work on learning generate broad, collective leadership (Barth, 1990; Macbeath, 1998; Macbeath, Demetriou, Rudduck, & Myers, 2003; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Fullan, 2000) As teachers take on roles that might previously have been seen as beyond the scope of the regular classroom for which they were prepared new understandings are evolving. Yet the transition from teacher to leader involves a shift in 'cultural positioning' wherein processes and procedures normally associated with the role of classroom teacher change, and subsequently, the teacher's own perception of self, changes. Unobservable barriers among colleagues such as lack of trust or lack of respect may foster a negative school culture and may hinder such a transition. Barth (2001) suggests that something deep and powerful within school cultures seems to work against teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership has the potential to upset the status quo within a school as roles become blurred or merged as evidence of sharedness become more avert. The potential for rivalry or exclusion is obvious. Many teachers may find safety in the heroic leader model believing that this is the stronger route to academic freedom. Confusion regarding new roles and the fear of change may lead to feelings of negativity and distrust. In the UK, support for teachers has come from the voluntary program, Networked Learning Communities¹¹ (NLC) which is one of the largest projects of the National College of School Leadership¹² (NCSL), drawing to a close in August 2006. McGregor (2006) found that "those schools closely engaged in this voluntary NLC programme, with its emphasis on joint practice development, enquiry and distributed leadership might be those where such supported risk-taking is likely to take place" (p.16).

Teacher/Student Leadership

Democratic education requires empowering children to participate in, and take responsibility for, their own learning (Shields, 2004). "It is argued that a perception of leadership as a relational process of influence rather than of hierarchical power strengthens the possibility of recognizing the potential of students as leaders" (McGregor, 2006, p.1). This alternative way of conceptualizing leadership includes active teacher/student dialogue outside the classroom. While not totally eliminating the perceived power roles collaborative dialogue does allow the student a degree of freedom (seldom experienced) to participate in school strategy and planning as an equal partner (Fielding, 2002; Ruddock & Flutter, 2004; Mitra, 2004). Giving students a voice at the leadership and management (i.e. the decision making) table on strategic planning augments the focus on equity; presenting opportunities to raise and discuss contentious issues hopefully reducing issues of dissonance between teacher and student.

Work on student voice in schools and communities is a rapidly growing research literature (Fielding 2001). New practice and emerging research knowledge indicates the potential for the student voice movement to transform education processes but in order to achieve this potential Fielding believes that educators need to embrace a view of education which understands that the means of engagement cannot sensibly be separated from the nature of aspirations. However, his review of the literature leads him to the conclusion that "work on student voice is at an interesting crossroads" (p.100). He suggests that the movement to increase student voice has a dual capacity to either reinforce the current status quo, or "develop genuinely transformative practices that offer the possibility of more creative, more fulfilling alternatives" (p.100). He presents two different scenarios for increasing the advocacy of student voice:

In the first scenario: the student becomes the voice of the customer disciplining the teacher into the pre-ordained, imperfectly internalized competences of government edict and market responsiveness. Here the rigors of performance culture deepen the accountability and responsiveness of teachers as pedagogic technicians and sustain a notion of students as the collectors of educational products (test results, certificates, saleable skills) that 'add value' to their employment prospects (Fielding, 2001, p.107).

In the second scenario: teachers and students: go beyond what is currently required to create a quite different present, a present that has within it a future that is more securely centered on the development of persons in and through community, rather than the growth of consumers in and through the market. Insofar as students and teachers do this together, their practices are 'transitive', transgressive, emancipatory, creative of quite different realities to those we are currently required emulating (Fielding, 2001, p.108).

Fielding cites research currently being conducted in the UK, funding of a major ESRC (Economic & Social Research Council) Network Project - *Consulting Pupils About Teaching & Learning*¹³ that forms part of the wider ESRC Teaching & Learning Research Program and in North America, South America, and Australasia, all of which has within it the possibility of new communities of democratic practice. While Fielding advocates strongly for a communal transformative model of student voice he suggests that the need for implementation of supporting systems maybe an inhibiting factor and that in the era of accountability the model of student quality management will dominate.

Mitra (2006) in her advocacy of student voice envisages students working with administrators and teachers to co-create school reform. Recent evidence from her research suggests that such involvement enables students to meet their own developmental needs and strengthens student ownership of the change process. It is envisioned that an outcome of the developing synergy will be to enhance pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and school culture; ultimately enabling students, teachers, and administrators to co-create school reform.

Involvement in the dynamic process of pedagogy enables the student to develop an enhanced understanding of the ideological underpinnings of the curriculum. A relevant example of student input into curriculum development is the reviewing and adopting text books. Particularly controversial for specific cultural groups is what they perceive as inaccuracies and biases in text books' portrayal of racial, religious or ethnic groups. For example, California, the largest text-book adoption state, recently put off voting on over five hundred revision changes requested by the Hindu Education Foundation in the San Francisco Bay area on the grounds that the revisions were of a religious-political

nature. The volunteer curriculum commission review felt unequipped to respond to the vocal interest group¹⁴. There is evidence of similar efforts by groups that want to revise the portrayal of Islam in text books¹⁵.

Students can provide insights and contribute to the conversations on improving teaching and learning in their school. For example, The Best Practices (BP) club at Lexington High School in Lexington, Massachusetts is a student-run club that works with teachers to improve teaching and learning at the high school. BP was created as an outlet for positive student feedback on teaching and learning. It is now a place that has started three different kinds of dialogue at the high school: (a) student-student; (b) student-teacher; (c) teacher-teacher. BP student members have used student observers in the classroom, facilitated student-teacher meetings, and conducted workshops on best teaching practices used in the classroom¹⁶. The workshops have the dual purpose of improving curricula delivery and engaging students in the “in language” of the teaching profession. They contribute to the mutual “respect” that BP students recognize as essential to the success of their initiative. Students also expressed the hope that teachers would respect what they were doing, respect their opinions, and also respect their viewpoints.

Directions and Challenges

Our discussions of democratic-ethical-educational leadership underscore the fact that education in twenty-first century schools has a moral purpose. Schools in the earlier days of the republic were truly reflections of the local community teaching core values and the basics considered by the local community to prepare youth to become good citizens and lead a productive life. As the roles of parents, teachers and local citizens were usurped, first by the state and then by the federal government, more emphasis on measurement than developing a moral citizenry has evolved. Instead of creating educated and motivated young people, the increased federal involvement is having a reverse sobering and leveling effect. Suggesting that young people today are less able to take on roles of good citizenship, a sense of competition and not collaboration is affecting the social milieu. To rectify the situation schools must again take on the mantle of the moral agent, facilitating the energizing of a democratic community; based on agreed common values; promoted by school curricula and pedagogy; reinforced in the home. By building student capacity for leadership young people are able to work with teachers, administrators and members of their local community to co-create the path of reform, it enables students to meet their own developmental needs, and strengthens the understanding of the community for the values espoused by the school. Implementing such a model enhances a democratic, socially just, and ethical organization.

Has the Dialogue Reached Stalemate?

Is this a “Pollyanna-ish ideal”? A paradigm shift in ideology, most certainly, but feasible within current education contexts. New DEEL advocates articulate the need for a radical review of the system and structure of schooling, and to reconceptualize pedagogy as learner-centered. We propose constructing new organizational possibilities to enhance active involvement for the whole school body to ensure all feel involved or represented in the leading and forward strategic planning of their school, personalizing teaching and learning to the student body. Each student will be presented with the opportunity to become involved in the process of decision making relating to their school and their personal learning, and of critically examining choices in their learning process, personal expectations, interpersonal relationships, and personal lives. Such a reflective and participative culture will assist students to view ethical choices as a vital part of their future lives, both as professionals and in their daily living. While this may be regarded as transformational it is not unrealistic. The implementation of such structures will expand the notion of pedagogy from the four walls of the classroom to become a personalized, school-wide learning strategy. There is however a sense of urgency as a worrying concern is whether teachers entering the profession today, under the umbrella of NCLB, are equipped with the necessary skills and mindset to implement New DEEL ideology. Transformation unfortunately is hard work and often the tyranny of the urgent impedes collective thinking. Advocates of New DEEL have a shared responsibility to make their voices heard. As international collaborations continue to grow and develop, research and emerging new practices are likely to challenge existing education structures demonstrating how research, status, and influence can be utilized to transform our profession, and reassign democratic values to their rightful place, the heart of education.

Endnotes

- 1 Victor Hugo, French author, 1852, The Book of Political Quotes, p. 166.
- 2 The two other powerful synthesizing paradigms according to Murphy are school improvement and democratic community.
- 3 Presentations made at New DEEL, Winter Strategy Session, February 16th & 17th at Temple University, Philadelphia.
- 4 Title I, the cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, is the largest federal education program. It is intended to help ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic standards and assessments. Many of the major requirements in No Child Left Behind are outlined in Title I - Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), teacher and paraprofessional requirements, accountability, sanctions for schools designated for improvement, standards and assessments, annual state report cards, professional development, and parent involvement.
- 5 National Assessment of Title 1: Interim Report to Congress.
- 6 National Assessment of Title 1: Interim Report (April, 2006) from the US, Department of Education.
- 7 Washington-based association, a trade group representing a range of private-sector education businesses, commissioned the survey. The independent American Institutes for research analyzed and reported the results from 216 respondents.
- 8 Education Week, February 22nd, 2006.
- 9 Connecticut officials, argue that NCLB duplicates many of their own accountability measures, which were put in place long before the federal law and provide ample information about how students are performing. Several other states have also mounted protests against the 2002 law. Utah says its laws will take priority over federal laws.
- 10 Education Week, February 8th, 2006.
- 11 NCSL's Networked Learning Communities (NLC) program was launched in 2002. It is a coordinated reform initiative involving over 130 school-to-school networks drawn from over 1,500 schools. Each NLC comprises a group or cluster of schools working collaboratively in partnership with local authorities, higher education institutions and the wider community to improve opportunities and raise standards for their students. Accessed from <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/networked/index.cfm>.
- 12 The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) provides learning and development opportunities and professional and practical support for school leaders at every stage in their career. NCSL's core purpose is to develop individuals and teams to lead and manage their own schools and work collaboratively with others. Accessed from <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/>
- 13 ESRC (Economic & Social Research Council) Network Project - Consulting Pupils About Teaching & Learning raises a number of issues and concerns that must be addressed. Primarily, the creation of new/different student elites comprised of the voices of those who find it easiest to speak coherently and those who adults find it easier to hear.
- 14 Education Week, February 6th, 2003
- 15 Education Week, February 8th 2006
- 16 <http://www.bestpracticeslex.org/>

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