
Globalized Educational Leadership: Advancing Ethnic Equity and Diversity

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Abstract: Under the wide spread of globalization, immigrant population has constituted an increasing proportion within that of most western countries, characterizing by ethnic and cultural diversity. The concept of educational equity could be ascended to 1990s, considering the leadership that takes account into needs and circumstances of all students varying in ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. This essay aims to find out how productive leadership mobilizes a transformative discourse of educational equity and diversity^[1], citing literature from a wide range of countries. The key finding is that the productive leadership considering educational diversity and equity has a remarkable impact on the achievements of schools, principals and students, especially on those from minority immigrant group. Moreover, the essay will point out the challenges faced by discourse of leadership then offer recommendations which were not covered in current research.

Keywords: Educational Equity and Diversity; Productive Leadership; Impact; Challenges

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1. Introduction

Educational leadership has been under researched for several decades within the concept of society, business and national economy. In the context of harmony and justice of society, there is a gap between indigenous inhabitants and immigrants including language, individual background and experience. This essay takes school as the stage to critically discuss the discourse of educational diversity in productive leadership through citing mainly western case studies, as there is insufficient research in China. With critical analysis of the data and evidence in those studies, the essay will address four questions: How does literature generate equity and diversity in educational productive leadership? How to practice professional learning in productive leadership? Is there any challenge or blind area for leaders when addressing ethnic segregation in school? Plus, what are the effective suggestions upon this issue for future research? This essay begins by conceptualizing productive leadership based on academic sources and by exploring how literature portrayed diversity and equity in school context. Then it moves on to a range of case studies, critiquing the practices of school leadership, basically, professional learning process and development of diversity, as well as some different view points held by school principals in leadership. The third section presents the challenge faced by leadership practitioners when addressing these issues. Finally, some recommendations for future research in this field will be given.

2. Portrait of productive leadership

With respect to history and traditional recognition, discourse of educational leadership has been constructed by leaders through instrumentalist strategies^[2]. Aristotle (1985) conceptualized ‘praxis’ as an ‘ethical virtue’^[3], and according to Rayner and Gunter (2005), ‘praxis’ could be viewed as both a pragmatic philosophy and a practical process concerning individual in acquiring and applying theoretical and managerial knowledge^[4]. To pursue ‘best praxis’ models, school leaders need to focus on how school leadership could productively approach equity and diversity to a greater extent. Elements which constitute productive leadership should be viewed as a series of philosophy practiced by teachers, principals and parents in different types of educational fields and organizations, as well as in a range of informal or formal managerial positions^[5]. With the case study in Rosewood High School, Niesche and Keddie argued that such elements predominately involved the work of school principals, administrative managers and teachers, being practiced based upon the ethos of social equity and justice dispersed in Rosewood, instead of regarding that conduction of leadership was merely principals’ responsibility^[6]. Traditionally, considerable models of leadership concern the significance of leader’s responsibility is to change the actions, behaviors and beliefs of others and to enact such change in a best pattern^[7]. Within these models which dominate the landscape of educational leadership, Hayes et al (2004) conducted a three-year study of 24 schools including classroom observations and interviews with teachers and principals. They characterized leadership by ‘productive’, referring to a set of leadership practices focusing on the professional learning of both teachers and students and democratic form of leadership. Within school context, Hayes claimed that productive leadership involved: a commitment to leadership dispersal, collaborative relations within school between staff, transforming of educational theory into practical action related to the community outside school, pedagogy of developing students’ learning achievements and organizational process that ensures smooth management of school^[8].

2.1. Conception of equivalent education

Based on a study in Swedish school, Johansson et al (2007) interviewed staff, principals and pupils from grade 9. They came to a conclusion that in the role of school leaders and pedagogical managers, leadership principals played a major role in students’ performance, in attainment of school goals and in equity, equality and quality in tuition, i.e. and equivalent education^[9]. Since 1990s, equivalent education has been regarded as a top agenda in most western schools, concerning equal access to education should be facilitated all over the country, regardless of students’ ethnic, gender, culture and socioeconomic background. In 1990, a debate was proposed that school should exert its influence of unifying, more specifically, acting as a place where students varying in cultural backgrounds and experiences assembled^[10]. Therefore, the elementary mission and target for school is to attain integration and inclusion in educational settings^[11].

2.2. Discourse of equity and diversity in educational context

Henze, R.C. (2005) articulated diversity as a set of individual variations mobilizing an essence in each educational site, which was led by a number of personal and social factors^[12]. More specifically, in school context, Lee (2008) referred ‘diversity’ as differences between minority student groups in educational sites. To prove the significance of educational leadership, at an annual conference of the American Education Research Association, Lee presented,

...we cannot articulate a generative and robust science of learning and development without explicit attention to the diversity of the human experience. The National Science Foundation and the Institute of Education Sciences, the two largest and authoritative sources of federal funding for education research, both explicitly call for attention to diversity. (Lee 2008, 272)^[13]

However, some scholars have recognized the constraints related to the concept of diversity when adopted it into complex college admission and more progressive democratic outcomes^[14], because “a particular group under-representation and its salience to a schools’ educational mission might be associated with the group’s subordinate status in society, which in turn might shape discrimination”. On the other hand, educational diversity was criticized as it was ‘simply an invented idea that is rootless intellectually’. In response to this view, inversely, Moses and Chang argued that educational diversity

had a strong intellectual foundation of virtue, to justify and guide educational policies, because as a democratic ideal or as diversity itself, its concept could be traced back to the ancient Greeks, and forward to John Stuart Mill and John Dewey, and to the contemporary thoughts of Martha Nussbaum; and these theorists claimed that the ideal of diversity enriched the democratic society and educated students to function more effectively in society.

Smyth (2008) portrayed the notion of 'equity' in school as it has been constructing and structuring social arrangements concerning greater parity of students' participation drawing on productive leadership, involving transforming social factors that obstruct such parity. The conception of equity has been taken into practices by schools through identifying and supporting students from disadvantaged (ethnic, gender) group, in detail, by providing material support for those who suffer economic difficulties, or enhancing cultural identity and the acceptance of their cultural value for those who belong to minority or marginalized group. On the contrary, Blackmore (2006) presented that discourse of diversity and equity framed in both educational theory and practice within market models may cause constraints in transmitting their 'inclusive and equitable schooling'; The discourse of pupils' diversity tends to focus on individual preference and treatment instead of group variations, and also,

The managing-of-diversity perspective tends to discard the inequitable structural and specific cultural conditions under which particular schools and their leaders operate that actually impede their capacity to deliver equity. Such perspectives are premised less on principles of inclusive communities, citizenship and voice, or the cultural exchange arising from two-way learning, and more equated to individual choice in market oriented systems. (Blackmore, 2006: 182-189)

Though, Nische and Keddie highlighted the importance of equity agenda through the investigation in Rosewood: as school's 'guardian of equity', and as a 'powerful mechanism' to ensure that 'equity is never off the agenda', commented by the senior school head of curriculum^[15]. Also, one of the principals they interviewed pointed out that equity agenda in education played role related to equity. Moreover, a creative arts teacher described 'equity' as it is not about ensuring and affirming all the belief that each individual is the same but focusing on how individuals show diversity and uniqueness; as well as about to identify the individual who needs extra care, support or encouragement.

3. Learning Process in productive leadership and its pragmatic virtue

Learning to lead, as well as leadership which enables learning, are characterized as two distinctive parts of a symbiotic relation shaping learning leadership; When apply knowledge into managerial practice, the rationale of professional learning could be seen as a basis, or as a pragmatic approach upon understanding and learning and managing educational diversity. In addition, in the notion of productive leadership, the substantial significance is that it regards schools as communities, and conceptualizes them predominately concerning learning by, among other factors, placing emphasis on professional learning and democratic forms of leadership. In this sense, it is generated that the concept of 'learning leadership' or 'learning to lead', is effective in each educational stage of site or provision. According to Rayner, when approach challenges of diversity and equity in school, working practitioners confronted an individual and social diversity and were related to a proposition of professional learning, knowledge and 'thinking practitioner' offering praxis^[4]. Therefore, when adopted in higher education, principle of 'learning leadership' was given importance as,

... leadership development needs to be built not upon generic leadership competence frameworks, but on tailored processes that recognize the contingent, relational and negotiated reality of higher education leadership. At the heart of leadership, there is, or should be, a learning process that will deliver both better science and better outcomes for leaders and led in higher education^[16].

Rayner presented that more importantly, the way by which 'learning to manage' as a part of professional practice in leadership mobilized in the process of 'managing to learn' as a part of 'personal and career-long journey' need to be recognized carefully. Similarly, a number of studies considering 'organizational learning' has developed an effective discourse in the field of management, presenting a theory related to several ideas over past two decades, for instance, knowledge management, organizational effectiveness, life-long learning and professional development.

3.1. Addressing non-diversity and inequality in educational productive leadership

Juhong and Maloney (2006) did their study of ‘nexus between ethnicity and academic achievements’ in New Zealand, using transcripts from 3000 students across several ethnic groups and concluded that Maori students gained lower School Certificate marks than European students in Third International Mathematics, Science Study and English. Poor academic outcomes of Maori and Pacific Island students related to their ‘lower participation rates and lower lifetime income levels’. Besides, they found that some of these schools had been practicing bilingual language teaching, which decrease drop-out rate of Maori students, and quality report showed that language training had improved many schools’ non-European graduates^[17]. Similar results could be viewed in the Swedish school mentioned in section 1.1 that ‘real diversity’ and ‘being able to reflect together with people of different backgrounds and experiences’ permeates principals’ comments. However, sometimes it was not as apparent how assurance of diversity and equity was put into action. Although many studies stated the importance of educational diversity, for instance, Moses and Chang pointed out that the attainment of a ‘diverse student body’ widened the range of ideas collected by students and provided the university an ambience that developed the quality of higher education through greater speculation and such ambience was considered as the target of higher education, which was related to the nation’s future under the protection of the First Amendment, Johansson et al argued that diversity was highly connected to cultural and language obstacles: there were a certain number of immigrant students, but majority of curriculum were courses of Swedish; in addition, the entitlement of teaching native language has reduced since 1994 due to shortage of finance and new priorities. As a result, school head adopted the level of difficulty of Swedish based on students’ language abilities, which intended to improve the equality and equity education through promoting the organization of ‘mother-tongue tuition’.

A research by Smyth (2008) citing a case in *Sweatt v. Painter* in 1950, concerning the University of Texas illustrated that the Court ruled that the Law School ‘must admit Blacks because there were serious disparities and segregation for Blacks’^[2]. In addition, according to *Sweatt’s* Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson, student could not achieve success without the interplay of ideas and exchange of views with which the law is concerned^[18] (Liu, p.386, quoting Vinson). In response to such issues, Fraser proposed ‘parity of participation’ principle which could be viewed as to facilitate ‘social arrangements to offer the same opportunities to all citizens in society to interact with each other *as peers* ... as full partner’ in social participation.

In 2018, Gomez et al chose four secondary schools (two rural and two urban) in Andalusia, Spain, which were located in socio-economically uncultured area with insufficient economic resources, low employment rate and low educational attainment. They interviewed school principals and came to conclude that actions taken by school depended on the proportion between minority and native students. When native students outnumbered immigrants, the latter should incorporated to the majority; when the opposite is true, school need to access education and schooling through resolving enrolment, by providing language support to foreign students and emphasizing the importance of coordination between actors in school to offer equal help to all students. Also, three of four participating schools acknowledged the function of Integration Plan for immigrant students. Moreover, some of the principals considered curriculum integration as the basis of educational diversity^[19].

3.2. Different views of leaders in diversity-management

In the case of Spanish secondary schools above, some principals acknowledged that in terms of the diversity and equity issues, they did not consider their roles as leaders. Instead, they predominately based upon the assistance of other specialized educational agents, for instance, ‘special education teachers, social educators, non-governmental organizations, school guidance counselors and external departments of the school itself’. On the other hand, the leaders also claimed that carrying out special policies for immigrant students might otherwise encourage to ‘label and segregate’ them. In this aspect, school leaders did not perceive their responsibility by developing cultural transformation and integration, creating opportunities for immigrant students to interact with the native ones or reorganizing school actors for a equal learning environment. In addition, linguistic adaption teachers, rather than principals, were viewed as the most essential agents for inclusion of students in school: ‘Whenever I have a problem with immigrant pupils, I always call in the linguistic adaption

teacher. She knows how to deal with them', commented by teacher (case 4).

4. Challenges faced by leadership practitioner

Generally, challenges in leadership practice generating 'diversity and equity' exist predominately in the context of the loophole and barefaced discrimination upon minority students embedded in school's official regulations, as well as lack underpinning the acknowledgement of pragmatic virtue in educational diversity. Specifically, through an investigation in the University of Oklahoma, Sinclair found that the school's policy restricted Black graduates in access to library, some classrooms and cafeteria, generating it led to inequity and inequality in education by retraining the 'intellectual blending' of students and limiting the opportunities of Black students' participation in discussions and interaction with other students^[7]. Also, drawing on the 2003 cases of the University of Michigan affirmative actions, it is argued that in most current research, emphasis was mainly put on the diversity's empirical contribution to students' professional learning, educational outcomes and experiences in educational community^[20]; nevertheless, few studies concentrated on 'fundamental underpinning of the argument considering educational virtues of diversity'^[21].

5. Suggestion for Future Research

With an analysis of educational diversity in leadership through a range of case studies, some recommendations are summarized to improve the items of research uncovered in current literature. To begin with, it is necessary to critique leadership life circles related to the phases of development, in both individual and organizational contexts; furthermore, the perspective, context and target and assumptions of leadership underpinning the research design need to be critically examined in real educational setting instead of proposing only agenda or philosophy. On the other hand, Fletcher and Kaufer (2003) stated that in leadership, to assess cultural assumptions, myths, emotional models, stereotypes, value fundamental, rhetoric and language, is closely related to individual cultural diversity of those who might become 'designated leaders'^[22].

6. Conclusion

Overall, through the case-analysis of a wide range of studies and researches, although in some countries, challenges still exist in practices of developing educational diversity, and providing an equal learning environment for those who from minority groups, in most western countries, leadership practitioners normally recognize importance to support immigrant students and some of principals or staff make great efforts and contributions in identified the main obstacles in immigrants' academic achievement and minimize those obstacles by policy-adjustment in leadership.

Disclosure statement

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