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Full Length Research Paper

Enacting social justice in secondary schools: On track or off track in school leaders' professional development

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The various articles under the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) clearly express the concerns for participants to meeting basic learning needs of every person. This concern has also been used to inform the professional development of future school leaders. Various studies have found that leadership is the second element which impacts on student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom, 2004). Kouzes and Posner (1995) remind us that the role of the school leaders in shaping the direction that schools take is vital. They act as role models and signal to other stakeholders what is relevant and important at school (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991). One issue which is seen today as very important is that of social justice. Yet, Hawley and James (2010) claim that in America, most school leaders do not have a precise notion of the meaning and implication of social justice and applying social justice at schools. Is the situation in Mauritius the same, or it is different? Hence the focus of this study is to explore how heads of schools view their professional development in terms of preparing them to enact social justice at school and explore recommendations which they could make to improve the preparation of future school leaders. A qualitative study was thus conducted in order to answer the research questions. Interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of six school leaders who have followed a course in educational leadership and management. This course has social justice as one of its underpinning philosophies. The findings hint at the fact that school leaders have a clear view on the meaning of social justice, but find it hard to discuss the strategies which could be used to enact social justice at school. They also reveal that there are gaps in their professional development which did not address the issue of enacting social justice in depth. Whilst they were exposed to the various contextual factors affecting students' achievement, the link with social justice was not developed in depth. However, the participants mentioned how the other modules studied in the course such as management of self, innovation, conflict and change, helped them to overcome the challenges they face while enacting social justice. The authors argue that there is need to create more awareness on the theme of social justice and to review the preparation of aspiring school leaders so that the issue of social justice is deeply examined during their preparation. They will be better equipped to enact social justice at school, thus making it a reality.

Keywords: leadership, professional development, social justice

INTRODUCTION

There is a lot of pressure today for school leaders to adopt very important changes at school so that their schools are able to meet the expectations that

stakeholders have on them. School leaders are expected to design new structures and systems which will support initiatives and procedures (Fullan, 2001). A review of the literature on school leadership shows that among schools that are successful there are schools where there are students from different income groups, culture, ethnic

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groups (Touchton and Acker-Hocevar, 2001). Furthermore, when one investigates the factors which lead to such success, one notices that reference is made of the type of school leadership which is found in these schools (Riester et al., 2002; Solomon, 2002). Waters, Marzano and Mc Nutty (2003) found that when school leaders are effective students' performance increases. In fact Elmore (2003) claims that in order to bring about the necessary changes at school level to increase students' achievement, there is need for having people in schools with the knowledge, skills, and judgement' (p.9). Much attention is given to the fact that changes have been brought about by the school leaders and these changes have led to student academic progress (Rapp, 2002). Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., and Cohen, C. (2007) remind us that 'largely overlooked in the various reform movements of the past two decades, principals are now regarded as central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students, rather than merely maintaining the status quo' (p. 1). Furthermore, there is also the fact that nowadays the role and responsibilities of school leaders have changed and are now more complex (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson, 2005). One of the issues which school leaders have to tackle is that of social justice. Various studies show that in schools which have adopted social justice practice, the school leader has played a vital role (Riester, Pursh and Skrla, 2002; Schenrich, 1998)

It is now recognised that one of the main responsibilities of school leaders is to provide education for all. Educations for all ensure benefits of education to 'every citizen in every society' (UNESCO, 2012). The concept was decided in 1990 at Jomtien in Thailand. This is also what Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, (2004) found as a very important aspect of school leadership. They claim that school leaders have to harmonise the structures, procedures and system at school so that all students are successful. Furthermore, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) came forward with the proposition that effective school leaders work directly with teachers to improve effectiveness in the classroom, provide resources and professional development to improve instruction, regularly monitor teaching and student progress, participate in discussions on educational issues, and promote parental and community involvement in the school. Yet a review of the literature on school leadership points out the fact that whilst school leaders engage in these avenues, they have to ensure that these initiatives promote social justice at school. Connell (1993) reminds us that 'An education that privileges one child over another is giving the privileged child a corrupted education, even as it gives him or her a social or economic advantage' (p. 15). Emphasis is strongly laid on the fact that the education must be for all. This is also highlighted by Conaty (2002) who claims that there is 'the urgent need for change in the education

system so that schools may adapt to the needs of the marginalised as opposed to the expectation that the marginalised must always adapt to the needs of the school (p. 25).

In other countries major changes have been brought to school leadership programmes in order to address the issues of social justice. Hence in America, for example, the changes have led to the programme being called 'one of the best in the nation for preparing equity-oriented leaders' (Gooden, Venzant-Chambers and Scheurich, 2011, p.3).

Focus of the research

The focus of this study is to explore how heads of schools view their professional development in terms of preparing them to enact social justice at school and explore recommendations which they could make to improve the professional development of future school leaders

Research questions

- (a) How has the professional development which school leaders have received prepared them to enact social justice at school?
- (b) What are the recommendations which the school leaders can make to improve the professional development of future school leaders?

Significance of this study

This study aims at bringing into the limelight the role and responsibilities institutions involved in the professional development of school leaders in promoting social justice at school. Findings from this study will help to appreciate the efforts made by these institutions as they try to develop social justice orientated leaders so that there is social justice at schools. Other school leaders could be encouraged to follow suit. This might also help institutions of higher education involved in the training and preparation of school leaders to review their programmes. They would have to ensure that they address social justice in ways which will allow their trainees to implement and push forward the social justice agenda.

Literature review and conceptual framework

Defining social justice

Nelson, Greagh and Clarke (2012) claim that there 'appears no single definition of social justice' (p.3). Yet

there seems to be some consensus about social justice being associated with human rights, fairness and equity (Bates, 2007). This flows directly from the ideas expressed by two prominent Enlightenment philosophers Kant and Rousseau. Furthermore, Singh (2011) finds that social justice is related to finding out what is 'beneficial and valued' (p.482).

Gewirtz (1998) finds that social justice implies eradicating procedures which enhance marginalisation and exclusion, while Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) write that social justice is 'the exercise of altering these [institutional and organisational] arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in social, economic, educational and personal dimensions' (p.162). Furthermore, Theoharis (2007) also finds that social justice is about addressing issues which lead to marginalisation of an oppressed group.

Hence we find different definitions of social justice. Sen (2009) brings a more radical perspective on social justice. Sen considers that it is important to consider that there are differences in what individuals understand to be a just society. Hence social justice calls for choosing between alternatives based on differences in society.

Enacting social justice

According to Theoharis (2007) school leaders have to work to raise student achievement. They also 'counter the sorting mechanism of schools' (Villegas, 2007, p.378), treat all stakeholders 'fairly and equitably' (Villegas, 2007, p.371).

Then they have to improve school structure. This is done by including special education in mainstream education. Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) also support this measure as a means to enact social justice. It was also found that increasing rigour and access to educational opportunities (Theoharis, 2007, p. 234). School leaders also push teachers to raise their expectations about course content, to design assessment and to align them with national standards and to administer them individually to students. They are also encouraged to engage in advocacy on behalf of the marginalised (Parker and Shapiro, 1992). There are studies which support this means of enacting social justice by suggesting that school leaders should reflect on their own identities (Brown, 2006). They are on the lookout for school policies, practices and procedures which perpetuate inequalities and endeavour to change them (McKenzie et al, 2008).

Next school leaders have to work at recentering and enhancing staff capacity. This is done by increasing 'staff capacity by addressing issues of race, providing ongoing staff development focused on building equity, developing staff investment in social justice, hiring and supervising for justice and empowering staff' (Theoharis, 2007,

p.235). McKensie and Scheurich (2004, p.609) support this initiative by encouraging school leaders to encourage teachers 'to get to know their students and their students' families and community on a personal level' and 'to dignify the culture of their students'.

Furthermore, school leaders have to work at strengthening school culture and community. This is done by creating 'a warm and welcoming school climate' and by reaching out to the 'community and to marginalised families' (Theoharis, 2007, p.235). Hence emphasis is on relationship building with all stakeholders. Research found that social justice leaders 'advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other historically and currently marginalising conditions' (Theoharis, 2007, p.222)

Challenges faced by school leaders in enacting social justice at school.

Theoharis (2007) explained that school leaders face resistance within the school and immediate community in terms of 'demands of the principalship, the momentum of the status quo, obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs, and insular and privileged parental expectations' (p.238). They face resistance in their journey to making policies, practices and procedures more equitable (Theoharis, 2007). They also face resistance in the district and beyond in terms of 'unsupportive central office administrators, a formidable bureaucracy, prosaic colleagues, a lack of resources, harmful state and federal regulations, and uninspired administrator preparation' (p.240). Resistance also came in the form of 'uninspiring preparation programs' (p.241). This also lead school leaders to face 'great personal toll and a persistent sense of discouragement' (p.242).

Overcoming challenges in enacting social justice

First Theoharis (2007) explains that school leaders developed 'proactive strategies to enable them professionally to continue their work toward social justice' (p.244). Hence they were involved in 'communicating purposefully and authentically, developing a supportive administrative network, working together for change, keeping their eyes on the prize, prioritizing their work, engaging in professional learning and building relationship' (p.244). School leaders also engaged in 'developing supportive networks' which 'provided opportunities to share ideas, emotional support, encouragement and assistance in problem solving' (p.244). School leaders also developed 'coping strategies as prioritizing their life outside of school, utilising mindful diversions, engaging in regular physical activity, providing for others, and employing potentially

self-destructive behaviours' (p.246).

Professional development of school leaders

Professional development has been defined by Guskey (2000) as 'those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of educators so that they might improve the learning of students' (p.16). It has also been defined as "a lifelong collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a daily job-embedded, learner-centered, focused approach" (DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour, 2006, pp. 217). Many studies found elements missing in school leadership programmes (Buskey and Topolka, Jorissen, 2010; Huber, 2008; Johnson, Shope and Rouse, 2009). For example, some programmes do not properly train school leaders for their roles as instructional leaders (Levine, 2005; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson, 2005). Furthermore, Davis et al. (2005) doubted whether the kind of preparation school leaders got would make them more effective. Other studies point the fact that school leaders might not be ready to face the numerous challenges which they will face at school (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008). This issue of being properly trained to face challenges is crucial to school leaders. Experts in the field of school leadership have recommended that proper training be given to school leaders (Bush, 2009). The same conclusion is reached by McKinsey Report (2010) which writes that 'Quality school requires quality leadership. Quality leadership cannot be assumed or acquired without a coherent, integrated, consequential, and systematic approach to leadership development' (p.1).

However, Darling-Hammond et al (2007) claim that some professional development incentives for school leaders are 'inadequate to the challenges of managing schools in a diverse society in which expectations for learning are increasingly ambitious' (p. 5). Furthermore, some authors are of the opinion that professional development should not be a one off affair but that it should be continuous (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Dempster, 2001). In fact there is strong support for professional development that is "long-term, planned, and job-embedded; focuses on student achievement; supports reflective practice; and provides opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with peers" (Houle, 2006, p. 146).

It is interesting to note that McKensie et al. (2008) recommend the development of school leader programmes to incorporate knowledge on social justice, while Farmer and Higham (2007) support the inclusion of culturally responsive leadership. Buskey and Topolka (2010) claim that there is need to have a programme 'grounded in an ethics-driven vision of school leadership' (p.12). These seem in line with Marshall (2004) who

writes that traditional leadership programme 'provides only isolated stabs at inequities or see them as management challenges' (p.4). However, Jackson (2001) claims that even programmes labelled as 'exceptional or innovative' do not provide much more attention to 'social justice, equity, excellence and equality' (p.18). This is supported with the findings of Henze, Katz, Noete, Sather and Walker (2002) who call the focus given to social justice in professional development programmes as 'lip service' (p.4) and that trainees were not equipped with the necessary tools to bring about social justice at school. Nieto (2000, p.183) writes that school leaders should be prepared in such a way that they can examine why and how school policies and practices 'devalue the identities of some students while overvaluing others'. The professional development of school leaders has to focus on developing in them the knowledge and ability to 'learn to create psychological spaces for genuine exploration of difference; they will initiate conversations where problems and challenges may be identified and discussed; and they will create a climate in which staff and students feel safe in clarifying their assumptions to deal with cultural dissonance' (p.130).

Yet, although many studies on professional development of school leader highlight the lack of attention given to social justice, research also found that schools are in need of leaders who are social justice orientated (Brown, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007). Andrews and Grogan (2001) call for future school leaders to 'understand their ethical and moral obligations to create schools that promote and deliver social justice' (p.24)

Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian's (2006) conceptual framework for preparing leaders for social justice

Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian (2006) developed a framework for preparing leaders for social justice by firstly reviewing the common themes in the literature and research on preparing leaders for social justice. Then they explored how that framework could serve as a guide for developing a course, set of courses or an entire program towards preparing leaders to lead socially just schools. The framework yields nine different aspects critical to achieve that aim. According to Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian (2006) 'to prepare leaders for social justice, educational leadership programs must attend to critical consciousness, knowledge and practical skills focused on social justice with their students' (p. 212). In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment be geared toward social justice. Hence we have the former giving the horizontal dimensions and the latter the vertical dimensions of the framework. Yet in order to get learners to engage with the various dimensions of the framework. Faculty members must provide students with a proper

learning environment, one where students 'experience a sense of emotional safety that will help them take risks toward social justice ends' (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2006, p.212). The elements in the framework are described below:

1. Curriculum on critical consciousness: This is described as content which 'raises student consciousness about power, privilege and associated issues, for example, white racism, heterosexism, and the ways schools are typically structured perpetuate power inequalities' (p.214). Furthermore, Parker and Shapiro (1992) advise that it is imperative to delve into the various dimensions which are associated with differences other than race, class and gender. They suggest that the curriculum should include history, philosophy and sociology of education. Brown (2004) supports the inclusion of the history and how inequalities are being reproduced every day. Furthermore, Rapp (2002) makes it clear that the professional development of future school leaders should include elements which would trigger in leaders the desire to fight injustice and be able to 'leave the comforts and confines of professional codes and state mandates for the riskier waters of high moral callings' (p.233).

2. Curriculum on knowledge: this is defined as curriculum focused on specific knowledge about related theories, subject areas such as special education, law, and knowledge about evidenced-based practices' (p.214). This is also supported by Parker and Shapiro (1992). Other scholars such as Brown (2004) suggest 'an integration of social justice and equity issues throughout a range of courses' (p.88). Young and Laible (2000) go further and suggest the inclusion of courses in addressing anti-racism and addressing this use in a constructive way and continuously throughout the whole programme.

3. Curriculum about skills: this relates to how 'content that pertains to how actually implement evidence-based practices or putting particular knowledge into practice to work toward erasing inequities in schools' (p.214). Solomon (2002) is very set into developing the skills of future school leaders to tackle anti-racist work. On the other hand, Parker and Shapiro (1992) argue that leaders should know how to advocate for the voiceless and dismantle procedures that work against marginalised groups. Rapp (2002) also strongly supports the claim that leaders should require skills that will make them not conform and fight against injustice. Furthermore, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) emphasise that school leaders need skills to get their staff to share their vision for social justice. They should be able to provide guidance and support to their staff so that the latter set up procedures which will allow them 'to get to know their students and their students' families and community on a personal level' and to 'dignify the culture of their students' (p.609). Hence they see the need for leaders to be facilitators and thus require that particular skill. Riester et

al (2002) and Theoharis (2004) feel that leaders need to acquire skills to set up new structures at school which will encourage collegiality and team building among staff. School leaders also need to be able to work on school data.

4. Pedagogy related to critical consciousness: This is related to information about teaching methods for raising student consciousness about power inequities' (p.216). McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) suggest that future leaders take neighbouring walks to conduct survey/interviews. Brown (2004) suggests, for example, cultural autobiographies, rational discourse using critical incidents, controversial readings, structured groups activities, cross cultural interviews, educational plunges and diversity panels.

5. Pedagogy related to knowledge: This related to 'teaching strategies to help students learn about evidence-based practices or related subjects and theories' (p.217). Parker and Shapiro (1992) propose the use of policy action research studies or informal or peer learning.

6. Pedagogy related to skills: this defines the 'teaching strategies to help students learn the skills that are necessary to lead socially just schools' (p.217). These strategies include internships or role playing in responses to queries of parents on issues of injustice. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) find that there are various strategies which could be used to develop the skills of future school leaders. They could, for example, team up with other teachers and observe their practice.

7. Assessment: Hafner (2004) asserts that as a result of a leadership course on social justice, there is need for the awareness, attitudes and actions of the students to change. Hence this is what needs to be assessed. However, Capper, Theoharis and Sebastoian (2004) could not find any literature that would assess 'leadership knowledge and skills related to social justice' (2004). Yet, any assessment should provide 'qualitative insight into student understanding' (Shepard, 2008). At the same time, attention is to be given to assessment of learning and assessment for learning (Black and William, 2003; Broadfoot, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research has been conducted. Qualitative research explores the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena. Qualitative research, broadly defined, means 'any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The output of qualitative research is descriptive information that can help the interviewer to better understand the feelings of respondents (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Qualitative research reports typically rich with detail and insights into participants' experiences of the world, and

'may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience' (Stake, 1978, p. 5) and thus more meaningful.

Data will be gathered using an interview. This data collection method is found to empower both the researchers and the participants (Williams and Katz, 2001) and provide rich data. So we can but agree with Arksey and Knight (1999:32) who found that 'Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings'. Gray (2004) also finds that interviews are very interesting data collection methods because of the 'richness of responses'. Six participants will be interviewed. A purposive sampling method has been chosen to ensure that the participants have the desired experience (Allen, 1971). The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Qualitative data analysis hence follows an inductive approach (Patton, 2002). This leads to the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive themes. The findings are thus derived 'from the words and voices of the people involved' (Clark et al, 1996, 203).

Emergent themes

Leading schools

All the participants revealed that they were taught how to manage daily school activities such as discipline, timetabling, canteen problems, fire drills, and health and safety issues among others. They all emphasized the importance of being taught various skills which are linked to leading schools such as planning, organizational and communication skills. Participant C described his preparation as 'holistic'. He explained that he learnt 'many things' in terms of preparing him to lead schools. This is also what participant B explained. He talked about 'being well prepared to lead schools'. While participants A and B mentioned that it is always the goal of professional development to be 'empowered'. Hence we find that an attempt is made to provide future school leaders with proper training. (McKinsey Report, 2010).

Content knowledge

The participants also stated that they learned a lot of 'content' about the various issues impacting on education, including social justice. They explained that they learnt about social justice as an issue in educational leadership and management. They were given extensive notes on social justice. They could easily explain what social justice is about. Participant C explained that social justice entails 'helping all students', 'fighting against injustice' and is the 'mission of the school', while Participant E talks about social justice 'being the duty of

heads of schools'. On the other hand, Participant B talks about 'levelling from below' or 'providing equal opportunities to all students'. This matches what Participant D described as seeing social justice to be 'promoting fairness in education so that it can become a vehicle for development and progress'. Participant A described social justice as 'the need to meet the myriad needs of students, families and communities'. The various definitions of social justice focus around the main ideas expressed by Nelson, Greagh and Clarke (2012).

Instructional methods

This was done in a very teacher-centered way using whole-group lecture format. Participant C revealed that he was 'passive' and 'provided little participation'. However, they explained that there were attempts to engage learners through the use of questioning and class discussion but some learners encouraged the use of traditional lecture method. There seems to be a weak attempt to raise students' critical consciousness (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2006).

Application and case study

Participants explained that they were presented with case studies on school situations where they had to discuss issues of social injustice and how they would intervene to enact social justice. Participant D also explained that they were given 'readings' on social justice and were expected to 'develop a critical appreciation of the issue'. Hence in their professional development, attempts have been made to provide future school leaders with pedagogical knowledge (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2006). This seems to be in line with what Participant E revealed. Participant E emphasized that according to him and what he has read about social justice, there is more to it than read and learns about it as a topic. He explained that 'if people are going to change things at school and work along the lines of social justice, they must believe in it'. He explained that this important element was not well addressed in their preparation. Participants A and C also emphasized that there is need for a 'change of heart' to happen for school leaders to promote social justice at school. Although the participants explained that they had to review their own definition of education and its purposes, they started to reflect on their own positions and biases and even their 'upbringing'. This again is an attempt to address the students' critical consciousness (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2004). Yet, participant D revealed that 'more is needed to convince us so that we can convince others'. Although they explained that they were given assignments on social justice, they found that 'supporting theory with examples proved to be a challenge'. This is in line with developing

the students' skills.

Other teaching strategies

In order to help develop understanding about social justice, participants explained that they were given a role play. Hence again an attempt is made to provide students with pedagogical skills (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2004). They explained that they were given the freedom to choose the issue which they wanted to tackle concerning social justice. They explained that they learned by doing, as they had to play the role of a school leader enacting social justice. Participant C revealed that he had to be 'creative' and had to develop his 'critical thinking'. They had the freedom to display their work in any way they wanted but it had to be focused on 'real-world examples'. At the same time, this exercise helped students to develop their curriculum skills (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2004). This proved difficult as they had not come across many examples of incentives to enact social justice at school. The assessment did not prove very effective to develop in students 'new ideas for action' (Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian, 2004). A film was also used to help participants reflect on leadership and role of leaders in addressing social justice issues, but participant B explained that 'they could have better exploited that opportunity to address issues related to social justice such as racism'. Participant B explained that 'although attempts were made to include various teaching strategies, the topic of social justice require much more! Lecturers need to get out of their comfort zone and dare be different!'

Other modules

All the participants explained that they learnt about the significance and practicality of using leadership perspectives as well as developing a sound understanding of school leadership and management practice and theory as it applies in school settings. They also explained that their preparation developed their critical reflection which had enhanced their practice and developed their leadership and management competencies. Participants A and B explained the content of the other modules 'contributed to make them stronger'. Participant A explained that they developed their instructional leadership skills and their sense of professionalism. They further explained that they were given opportunities to develop their capacity in leading and managing change, dealing with conflicts. Participant E explained that the other modules in their preparation provided them with 'the necessary skills that they would need to enact social justice at school'. Hence there is an attempt to provide future school leaders with the necessary skills to support them in their endeavour to

enact social justice at school. This seems to contradict Davis et al, (2005) who doubted whether the kind of preparation school leaders got would make them more effective. Participant A explained that the module Management of Self provided them with much knowledge and skills to face stressful situations and how to successfully manage them. Participant D explained that the module Innovation, Change and Conflict was also important in helping them to 'frame their plan' when they would enact social justice.

Andragogy

Participants revealed that they believed that faculty members 'should review the literature on andragogy'. Participants C and D explained that at time the faculty members 'were still focused on pedagogy'. Participants explained that faculty members had extensive experience of secondary schools and could thus share their experiences. This proved helpful to bridge the gap between theory and praxis. However, the concern of the participants was that it was not clear at times that 'as adults they learn differently'. Although they admitted that various teaching strategies were used, Participant A explained more efforts should be made to teaching adults and more specifically adults who would be sent on 'the delicate task of enacting social justice at school'. Participant C explained that more efforts should be invested 'in pointing to the relevancy of the topic'. Hence attempts have been made to provide a pedagogy which is related to knowledge, skills and critical consciousness (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2004).

Additional issues

Participants explained that in order to better appreciate the importance of enacting social justice at school; they should have been given a deep overview of the history of Mauritius, more details about the historical events which have led to such a diverse population with diverse needs. Participant D talked about 'the commission of justice and reconciliation' which was set up in Mauritius and which has produced a report on their findings. He explained that 'this might have been a very good way to raise awareness about social justice'. Here some attention has been given to developing pedagogical critical consciousness (Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian, 2004).

Social justice expertise

Participants called upon faculty members to deepen their expertise on social justice. They believed that it is a topic that cannot be taught on its own. They suggested that faculty members get acquainted with other issues

concerning social justice but also on topics linked to social justice such as history of Mauritius, racism and how it relates to pedagogy, they also suggested organising more workshops with resource persons who have expert knowledge on issues related to social justice.

Preparation of future school leaders

Participants explained that there should be much more in the preparation for future leaders if they are to be able to enact social justice at school. They feel that other subjects should also be taught. Participant C mentioned 'History' while Participant A suggested that future heads of schools should learn how to prepare 'awareness programmes about social justice to empower young people to take actions to help create a more just world'. Participant D explained that it would be important to deal with legal issues surrounding discriminations and how to conduct awareness campaigns to get teachers and parents to accept social justice at school. Participant D said that 'we need to convince teachers that social justice is an issue. We need to be able to show teachers how to recognise practice which perpetuate social injustice. We need to teach teachers what to do to get rid of these practices'. He also suggested that they should learn how to supervise staff to make sure their teaching support social justice.

CONCLUSION

The study found that most participants have a clear understanding of social justice. They could easily explain what social justice meant. They also understood that was a topic which embodied many elements which needed to be addressed extensively in order trigger a profound understanding of the issue. The study also found that most participants did not fully agree that their professional development has prepared them to enact social justice at school. They felt that attempts have been made to empower them, to help them develop a better understanding of social justice. Yet they also felt that it is topics that need to form part of a series of topics which are inter-related.

The study also observed that some participants mentioned the efforts made to develop their critical consciousness, skills and knowledge about social justice. This shows that there is still room for improvement in heads of schools' professional development in terms of social justice leadership. It was established that the course provided heads of schools with other skills that they would need to enact social justice at schools. While most participants have a positive opinion of the way they have been prepared they nevertheless felt that the issue of social justice should have been dealt more deeply. It emerged that most participants strongly believed in the

critical role that education, and thus schools can play on promoting social justice. Hence they believed there are gaps in their professional development which did not address the issues of enacting social justice in depth. There is evidence that this issue cannot be dealt alone and that it should be linked to other topics such as History. From their explanations, it can be gathered that their knowledge about social justice is fragmented. They learnt about the various contextual factors of students' achievement but the link to social justice was not fully developed.

Hence what seemed to stand out from this study is that the topic of social justice has made an impact on the participants. Yet there is still room for improvement as far as the training of future school leaders is concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the conclusions that unfolded in the study, the following recommendations are made:

While participants seemed to have found the various instructional methods used helpful, literature points to various other methods which could be used. Other strategies such as educational plunges, life histories, controversial readings, diversity panels and cultural autobiographies.

Other topics related to social justice such as history, sociology, philosophy of education, racism, special education, disabilities, need to be examined. Trainees should also learn how to supervise, train, and support staff in enacting social justice in the classroom and at school.

Faculty members need to focus more on andragogy and to be proactive in their teaching. They need to include evidence-based practices in their teaching which will help create equitable schools.

There is need to have social justice, skills, attitudes throughout the course not just talk about social justice as a unit of study. Hence attempts should be made to embody social justice principles in every aspect of the course.

There is need to develop deeper engagement strategies which will boost critical and transformative change in participants. This could be done through inquiry-based learning. Participants should be provided with ample opportunities to question their own biases prejudices and encourage reflection which can improve practice. There is need to engage students in deep reflection on issues related to diversity, identify the way they see education, diversity and how they could integrate broader social, cultural, political, historical issues into better understand why it is important to enact social justice at school. At the same time there is need for future heads of schools to develop a bold vision for their schools. They need to understand the benefits that inclusive schools bring to all students. They need to

commit to differentiation and learn how to develop a sense of belonging and community. Together with developing their instructional skills, they also need to acquire the management skills to make social justice a reality at school.

Participants could be given more practice in terms of assignments. This could take the forms of action research. They could identify issues, review the literature, collect evidence, and identify changes which they could bring. They could then implement the change and enact social justice at school. This will help them make connection between theory and practice.

Future school leaders need training in developing their skills in providing on going staff development for their teachers in areas of social justice. They need to see to it that their teachers reject the deficit thinking attitude and consider the value of diversity. They should also commit to continual professional development.

It is also important that future school leaders develop strong school-home community partnerships. Heads of schools need to be able to relate to all families especially not as clients but as partners in school and community improvement. They need to know how to offer small-scale activities and plan outreach programmes with a personal touch in order to get marginalized families to respond. They need to learn how to acknowledge the moral and emotional support for learning that all parents offer at home. They should be able to develop links with marginalized families with a true spirit of partnership to learn and work together. They also need to learn how to develop targeted programme that value the experiences and aspirations of marginalized families. They also need to develop their skills at developing programmes together with their teachers how to meet parents on their home turf. Hence, in their preparation, it is vital to include topics on how to create a school culture that welcomes all.

Hence we find that participants have highlighted various elements which they feel should be included in the preparation of future heads of schools. The ultimate aim is to have school leaders who are able to enact social justice at school.

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