Children's spirit
Leadership standards and chief school executives

Christa Boske

Teaching, Leadership, and Curriculum Studies, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA

115

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to increase awareness of the interactions among school leadership standards, cultural competence, and decision-making practices for chief school executives.

Design/methodology/approach – To achieve this objective, 1,087 chief school executives, who were members of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in 2006, completed an electronic survey. Respondents rank-ordered eight leadership standards, from most to least important. These standards focused specifically on diversity issues promoted through school leadership programs within the USA (American Association of School Administrators, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium). Chief school executives also completed a 12-item survey identifying what training they received during their graduate studies to help them meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Findings – Respondents ranked the three most important diversity standards that promoted the success of all school-age children; the remaining diversity standards that focused specifically on marginalized populations were ranked as less important. The least important diversity standard was the ability and willingness to reject any arguments of a one-to-one correlation between race and culture or race and intelligence. Respondents indicated that their school districts do not promote culturally responsive professional development – also that their school leadership preparation programs did not prepare them for equity issues emphasized in the national standards.

Practical implications – The findings suggest that chief school executives might not have the ability or willingness to validate the cultural and ethnic experiences of the school communities they serve.

Originality/value – Understanding the implications of responding to marginalization as an institutionalized concept is just beginning to surface in scholarship and research. The study increases awareness of the interactions among school leadership standards, cultural competence, and decision-making practices for chief school executives and makes recommendations for practice and further research.

Keywords National standards, Students, Learning methods, Decision making, Chief executives, United States of America

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Worldwide student demographics are changing, especially in American schools. Much scrutiny accompanies these changes as pressures to meet the demands of diverse school populations (Glass *et al.*, 2000). Leaders must reconsider school practices and learning strategies that influence interactions with school-age children (Gimmett and Echols, 2000). Changes in American public schools (schools that are accessible to all children free of charge) include increases in populations of students from racial minority populations, children living in poverty and English Language Learners (Vernez and Kropp, 1999). These complex changes make it necessary to examine the

influence of cultural variables as a means to meet the diverse needs of the students they serve. American public school systems are primarily controlled by local government entities that select a chief school executive and elect a board of community representatives. This governing body is also heavily scrutinized as decisions influence school policy and procedures that influence student learning. Other countries experience similar pressures as well (Kanan, 2005; Newton, 1996; Reilly and Brown, 1996; Thody, 1998). Assisting school leaders to recognize how these demands are related to understanding culturally contextualizing leadership and teaching can no longer be left for debate. If school leaders are not sensitive to the needs of children who have been marginalized, then harm can occur (Grogan, 2004).

The aim of this article is to critically address how chief school executives (referred to as CSEs throughout this article) understand how their current school practices relate to expectations within national leadership standards, emphasizing diversity and student learning. Diversity elements within the standards encourage CSEs to investigate how their current practices promote equity and social justice. These central themes within national leadership standards should be at the heart of educational practices, especially for those who serve children from marginalized populations. This study is significant because little is known regarding how CSEs understand their decision-making processes and its relation to national leadership standards.

The article consists of six main sections. First, the author briefly reviews literature on the role of CSEs and national standards for school leaders. Second, the method and purpose of the study is outlined. Third, the author shares the results of the national study. Finally, the author discusses the implications of the findings, concluding with recommendations for research and practice.

Contemporary chief school executives

Today, CSEs must promote school practices that go beyond conventional didactic, individual and whole-class methodologies, especially with the need to address the undereducation of students from marginalized populations. Although many CSEs do not believe they are prepared to confront the complexities and realities of their leadership roles, facilitating this process is possible and worthy (Orr, 2007). School leaders need to be informed and discuss the relevance of culturally courageous leadership practices, which are essential to overcoming discriminatory practices experienced by children who are marginalized (Ryan, 2003; Young and Laible, 2000). Cultural issues are a recognizable construct in scholarship and present throughout national leadership standards; however, very little has changed in how culture and race are addressed in programs that prepare aspiring school leaders (Lopez, 2003). An emphasis on cultural diversity elements surfaced as essential components of national leadership standards. These standards require school leaders to reconsider how they understand the needs of marginalized populations.

National leadership standards focus on the need to create a world-class education system. These standards support the facilitation and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogical practices. Promoting a vision that encompasses worldviews suggests changes for school policy and practice. If these diversity elements within national standards are not validated by the CSEs who lead schools, then this new vision will not be realized. Changes in the national standards include promoting high academic standards, raising expectations and holding public schools accountable to

students, parents, schools and learning communities. What would it mean for CSEs to create and implement a world class educational system? What are the consequences of addressing change, not in relation to federal mandates, but as a way to promote equity, leadership and scholarship? American school leadership preparedness programs give only token consideration to these cultural diversity issues (Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy, 2005; Young and Creighton, 2002). Yet, CSEs are in positions to promote this culturally responsive vision by making a difference in the lives of students. Their leadership role has the potential to foster the development of citizens who will live and contribute to dynamically complex societies (Fullan, 1999).

Leadership organizations in the USA (American Association of School Administrators, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) recognize the importance of fostering this vision. The vision upholds CSEs to the standard of creating global perspectives within their school communities, which are critical to solving contemporary societal issues, encouraging academic excellence, and preparing children for a world-class workforce. Similar standards were presented years ago by the National Commission on Education (1996). This commission promoted the creation of a worldclass system that provided a high quality education for all children regardless of their cultural characteristics or educational needs. Today, this commitment to fostering cultural responsiveness is the foundation for contemporary national leadership standards for schools, specifically with public schools in the USA. Intercultural issues will continue to be heightened for all children, especially children from marginalized populations (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gron, 2003; Taylor and Whittaker, 2003). Schools are institutions central to the development of identity, promoting racial interactions, transmitting racial knowledge, and affirming/challenging racial attitudes and meaning. If intercultural issues are not addressed, schools will continue to reproduce and legitimize negative consequences (inequity, discrimination and traditional pedagogical practices), specifically for marginalized student populations (Kozol, 2006; Marshall and Oliva, 2006).

Assumptions influence intercultural interactions and communication styles, creating assumptions that can serve as unintentional barriers to the education of minorities, children living in poverty, and English Language Learners (Banks, 2004; Banks and McGee Banks, 2007). Since the majority of school officials in the USA are both White and middle-class, occupations of the CSEs hold positions of greater power and privilege. Having greater power and privilege serves as a way to maintain superior resources to maintain positions (Persell, 1977). For example, the majority of White students are educated in predominantly White institutions, influencing what is considered socially appropriate (Asante, 1991; Diaz, 2001). These social preferences include the presentation of Eurocentric history perspectives, integrating rote learning strategies, tracking student performance, and implementing rigid behavior modification techniques (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kohn, 1994). School practices such as these are powerful influences, that direct school leaders' decision-making practices (Marshall and Oliva, 2006; Firestone and Riehl, 2005).

CSEs, who are the most visible of educational leaders, need to be keenly attuned to intercultural contexts (Fowler, 2000). To achieve this, school leaders must learn how to respond intelligently to relatively unpredictable changes in a political climate, to use resources wisely, and to understand the relationship between social environments and

education policies in order to conceptualize their broad directions (Fowler, 2000). In response to demographic changes, national educational organizations in the United States focused on creating standards to help CSEs respond effectively to demographic changes. These new guidelines include standards by the American Association of School Administrators which encourage CSEs in Standard 1: "To demonstrate executive leadership that empowers others through multicultural and ethnic understanding"; and in Standard 6: "To integrate curriculum for multicultural sensitivity and assessment" (Carter and Cunningham, 1997, p. 18). As culturally diverse student populations move into formerly predominantly White middle-class school districts, CSEs are being challenged to rethink their assumptions about children with who do not share the same characteristics as previous constituency. Limited cultural experiences might include blind spots with real consequences for children from marginalized populations (Banks, 2004). These potential consequences include understanding how a person's background influences decisions made regarding personnel, community relations, and ultimately, student learning, policies, and practice.

New roles and responsibilities for CSEs include the need to engage in long-term planning and to develop effective strategies to build learning communities that meet the needs America's changing populations (Hoyle *et al.*, 1998; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). Yet, 90 percent of American school leaders identify themselves as White, but serve increasingly diverse schools (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004; Feistritzer, 1985). This imbalance amounts requires a new focus on cultural competence for school leaders responsible for improving the performance of Black, Latino, and impoverished children (Hill, 2005; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Making and sustaining change requires school leaders to reconsider their values, priorities and mission. Attitudes towards diverse student populations might impact how CSEs prioritize school district goals. These goals play a significant role in promoting educational success, especially for students from marginalized populations (Brown and Cooney, 1982). National leadership standards require CSEs to promote a worthy vision clearly initiating the development of strategic plans that assess the meaning of social attributes and the impact on student achievement to determine whether or not the goals of the strategic plan are being worked toward and met (Hoyle *et al.*, 1998). How often do CSEs investigate how school goals influence marginalized populations? Issues facing marginalized populations tend to concern schools when these issues threaten the harmony within the school (Sleeter, 1999). Simply discussing issues facing marginalize populations is ineffective in addressing the educational injustices of children from marginalized populations (Sleeter and Grant, 2007). CSEs must promote culturally responsive pedagogical practices within schools to address actions to teach diverse student populations more effectively.

CSEs are in key positions to address intercultural issues through the creation of policies that meet the needs of all children (Wilmore, 2002). These polices translate into decisions that influence school-wide pedagogical practices and student outcomes with CSEs responsible for developing goals, directing the organization, selecting the staff, and establishing and monitoring district-wide instructional and curricular focus (Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). Because the majority of American CSEs are White middle-class males, hiring practices might express limited multicultural commitments. In turn, this might influence who is and who is not hired; values shared with the new hire; and misaligning expressed district values and functional behaviors in schools.

These school practices suggest that personal identity influences intersection of race, class, and gender, interact with policy reform, classroom practice, and student learning (Boykin *et al.*, 2005; Ferguson, 2003; Leonard, 2002). Harris and Kendall (1990) conclude that unless CSEs attend to the wellbeing of equality and excellence, the crisis in America will worsen, and children from marginalized populations will suffer. The key to achieving equity for those undereducated is greatly dependent upon CSEs accepting and demonstrating their commitment through action, proceeding with purpose and deliberate speed.

Purpose
The purpose of this study was to investigate how CSEs ranked order leadership standards, focusing specifically on diversity elements from national leadership standards (AASA, NCATE, ISLLC). The overarching question that guided the study was: What did CSEs consider the most and least important diversity elements within the national leadership standards for action and decision-making?

Method
Participants
A total of 6,700 CSEs who served schools in the United States were invited to participate. The sample is comprised of 1,087 (16.2 percent) of CSEs who were members of the AASA. Demographic data representing the sample are presented in Table I.

Instrumentation
This school leadership survey provided a framework for understanding the chief school executive's perception of the least important diversity elements within the national leadership standards. CSEs completed the self-designed survey to identify the

	Number of respondents	Percent of total
Total population	1,087	100
Gender		
Female	273	25.1
Male	814	74.8
Race		
Asian	3	0.22
Biracial	8	0.76
Black	18	1.63
Hispanic	21	1.95
Native American	6	0.54
Multiracial	3	0.33
White	1,022	94.04
Other	6	0.54
Class		
Lower	169	15.54
Middle	866	79.65
Upper	52	4.81

Table I.
Respondent characteristics

most/least important diversity elements from eight summary statements representing the AASA, ISLLC, NCATE national leadership standards and 13 Knowledge Bases (Smith, 1998). The diversity elements were based upon the chief school executive's perceptions of importance from most important to least important. The survey was comprised of elements from the ISLLC, NCATE, AASA standards, and Smith's (1998) 13 Knowledge Bases.

Respondents also completed the modified Diversity Action Survey (DAS), created by Southwest Missouri State University. Assessment of reliability was conducted. The Cronbach alpha was reported as follows:

(1) diversity actions of the study group (0.82);

(2) urban school respondents (0.86);

(3) suburban school respondents (0.82); and

(4) rural school respondents (0.79).

The 12-item four-point Likert scale diversity action survey identified actions taken by CSES as well as experiences within school leadership preparedness programs.

Design and procedures
The study used an electronic anonymous cross-sectional survey design to elicit responses from CSEs across the USA. The researcher sent a hyperlink of the electronic web-based survey via e-mail to the American Association of School Administrators. All electronic anonymous surveys were e-mailed to the identified participants through AASA's e-mail database. Participants completed the electronic consent form on the web-based survey site.

Results
Respondents estimated the percentage of racial minority children, children living in poverty, and English Language Learners (ELLs) within their school districts in five-year increments from 1995-2015. Respondents predicted changes in the percentage of minority students attending public schools from 1995 through 2015. The predicted percentages indicate a 15 percent increase in minority student populations. The number of children living in poverty was predicted to increase by 10 percent from 1995 to 2015, with an estimated school district averaging 43 percent of students living in poverty. CSEs predicted a 15 percent increase in the number of children who were identified as English Language Learners from 1995-2015. As shown in Table II, respondents estimated statistically significant increases in the percentage of minority children, children living in poverty, and English Language Learners within their school districts in five-year increments from 1995-2015.

Respondents were also asked to consider the most/least important diversity elements within the national leadership standards for action/decision-making. The diversity elements within the AASA, ISLLC, and NCATE national leadership standards are presented in Table III. The survey contained 8 items for the participants to rank order elements of diversity standards from most to least important (1 –- most important to 8 – least important). The table illustrates how many CSES identified each of the diversity standards as the least important leadership standard. The least important diversity standard was the ability and willingness to reject any arguments of a one-to-one correlation between race and culture or race and intelligence as the least

Years	df		MS	F	p	Power
Racial minorities						
1995 vs 2000	2.333	1	2.33	38.41	0.00	38.41
2000 vs 2005	7.937	1	7.94	79.04	0.00	79.04
2005 vs 2010	2.130	1	2.13	39.40	0.00	39.40
2010 vs 2015	2.032	1	2.03	38.33	0.00	38.33
Children living poverty						
1995 vs 2000	4,617.950	1	4,617.95	286.11	0.00	286.11
2000 vs 2005	6,393.106	1	6,393.11	216.10	0.00	216.11
2005 vs 2010	2,146.156	1	2,146.16	116.67	0.00	116.67
2010 vs 2015	2,549.287	1	2,549.29	230.18	0.00	230.18
English language learners						
1995 vs 2000	879.120	1	879.12	54.17	0.00	54.17
2000 vs 2010	1,621.393	1	1,621.39	21.40	0.00	21.40
2005 vs 2010	1,546.624	1	1,546.62	85.45	0.00	85.50
2010 vs 2015	2,183.665	1	2,183.67	18.70	0.00	18.70

Note: $n = 1,087$

Table II.
Within-subjects contrasts by years and group

Elements of diversity standards	n	Percent of the total respondents
1. Ability and willingness to reject any arguments of a one-to-one correlation between race and culture or race and intelligence	316	28.8
2. Awareness and willingness to face the tension, conflict and consequences that may arise due to differing cultures, folkways, and styles	273	24.89
3. Awareness of language and communication styles of marginalized cultures that facilitate and implement a vision for learning and shaping school culture	240	21.88
4. Rejection of ideas that spell personal harm or violation of personal rights or civil law	216	19.69
5. Recognition and demonstration of pedagogical characteristics and approaches that establish equity	136	12.39
6. High visibility and availability to build and maintain strong ties between families, businesses, community members, and others who seek to promote the success of all children	62	5.65
7. Commitment to hire, supervise, and retain competent personnel who are dedicated to promoting the success of all children	10	0.91
8. Consistency in displaying the demand and need for every school district employee to provide all children with hope and the experiences of success	7	0.67

Note: $n = 1,087$

Table III.
Respondents that ranked this standard as the least important diversity standard

important diversity standard (Table III). The second least important diversity standard was the awareness and willingness to face tension, conflict and consequences that may arise due to differing cultures, folkways, and styles (Table III). The third least important diversity standard was the awareness of language and communication styles of marginalized cultures that facilitate and implement a vision for learning and shaping school culture (Table III).

The diversity standard that was ranked most often as the number one standard was the commitment to hire, supervise, and retain competent personnel who are dedicated to promoting the success of all children (Table IV). The second most highly ranked diversity standard was the consistency in displaying the demand and need for every school district employee to provide all children with hope and the experiences of success (Table IV). Highly visibility and availability to build and maintain strong ties between families, businesses, community members, and others who seek to promote the success of all children was the third highest diversity standard chosen as the most important standard (Table IV).

Respondents were asked to respond to the DAS survey. Respondents indicated how often school districts implemented multicultural staff development programs. Over 70 percent of CSEs (70.2 percent) indicated that their school districts did not promote cultural issues. Over 66 percent of respondents (66.94 percent) also indicated that their school district's staff is not cultural diverse. Over 75 percent of respondents (75.1 percent) indicated that their school leadership preparation programs did not prepare them to address equity issues in schools.

Elements of diversity standards	n	Percent of the total respondents
1. Commitment to hire, supervise, and retain competent personnel who are dedicated to promoting the success of all children	657	59.9
2. Consistency in displaying the demand and need for every school district employee to provide all children with hope and the experiences of success	173	15.8
3. High visibility and availability to build and maintain strong ties between families, businesses, community members, and others who seek to promote the success of all children	73	6.7
4. Rejection of ideas that spell personal harm or violation of personal rights or civil law	72	6.6
5. Ability and willingness to reject any arguments of a one-to-one correlation between race and culture or race and intelligence	66	6
6. Recognition and demonstration of pedagogical characteristics and approaches that establish equity	26	2.4
7. Awareness and willingness to face the tension, conflict and consequences that may arise due to differing cultures, folkways, and styles	18	1.6
8. Awareness of language and communication styles of marginalized cultures that facilitate and implement a vision for learning and shaping school culture	12	1.1

Table IV.
Respondents that ranked this diversity standard as the most important diversity standard

Note: $n = 1,087$

Discussion
The purpose of this study was to investigate what CSEs considered the most/least important diversity elements within school leadership standards. CSEs projected similar increases in marginalized populations as US projections (US Census Bureau, 2005). Their least ranked leadership standards do not seem aligned with the demographic changes their schools will endure over the next ten years. With over 90 percent of respondents identified as White, male, middle/upper class, rural/suburban and Christian, CSEs might not perceive themselves as school leaders who need to think interculturally. They in turn, might focus on local community concerns, overlooking how increasing demographic changes will influence their ability to create world-class educational systems.

The urgency to create world-class educational systems might be a moot point. CSEs are in positions to influence the priorities of district-wide professional development. Over 70 percent (70.2 percent) of CSEs indicated that the promotion of culturally responsive professional development did not exist. CSEs might be embedded within traditional bureaucratic school systems, with set norms and expectations that reflect White, male, middle-class preferences. This was also noted with the majority of CSEs indicating that their school districts did not comprise culturally diverse staff. CSEs might be limited to culturally diverse communities and unaware of the increasing complexities associated with diverse learning communities. The predicted increases in minority, impoverished, and English Language Learner populations might be viewed negatively. The CSEs' attitudes regarding culture set the stage for educators who serve diverse student populations. Educators might aspire to promoting "color-blindness" (not noticing overt racial/ethnic differences) because noticing racial/ethnic difference might feel wrong to them. When racial issues are not addressed, perhaps members within the organization might feel they would be perceived negatively, as bigots or having prejudice. With this in mind, CSEs might not consider the organizational impact of not recognizing cultural differences. Remaining invisible within the school setting, specifically in regards to race, might indicate that dimensions of children's experiences are not valued, especially in the classroom.

These changes might be perceived as negative challenges ahead. This perception may influence CSEs diversity actions, despite the presence of marginalized student populations. Based on the respondents' and demographic projections for increasing marginalized populations, a new cultural norm might emerge. Minority Latino/a and Black populations might become the new cultural majority. And even with these changes in mind, CSEs indicated that their school leadership preparation programs did not seem to provide them with the necessary training to address these issues. If cultural issues are not addressed, will Whites respond defensively towards cultural differences? Or will Whites become more empathic towards social and political issues associated with minority status as their population decreases? These unconscious attitudes towards cultural differences might influence how CSEs respond to their changing school populations.

Respondents indicated their priorities to serve marginalized populations by rank ordering diversity elements within leadership standards (AASA, ISLLC, and NCATE). They ranked the three most important diversity standards that met the needs of all children, while the less important diversity elements focused specifically on the needs of marginalized populations. The priorities of White middle/upper middle-class school

communities might not be aligned with the leadership standard's emphasis on diversity. Because the majority of CSEs are members of the mainstream culture, serving all of the children would still encompass the cultural majority of students they served. If the least important diversity standards focus specifically on the ability to understand and respond to marginalized populations, then CSEs, who were members of the mainstream, might not perceive diversity standards as applicable to their current situation.

Another interpretation is the tension that might arise when CSEs address issues facing for marginalized populations. The least important diversity standards might carry a higher propensity for conflict. In the USA, most school leaders are embedded in established White majority school structures that have not had to serve marginalized populations; yet, national leadership standards promote culturally responsive policy and pedagogical practices. To what extent do CSEs reflect upon the interactions of unconscious multicultural attitudes and their influence on school practices? Perhaps school leaders would rather avoid agendas that have the potential to cause conflict. If CSEs promote issues facing marginalized populations, then what resources might be taken from the majority population? CSEs noted that their preparation programs did not equip them with the knowledge base or skill set to challenge issues of equity. This was also evident in the least ranked diversity standard alluding to having the ability or willingness to reject any arguments of a one-to-one correlation between race and culture or race and intelligence. How many CSEs have the knowledge base to debate this premise? CSEs who serve White middle-class communities might not recognize the issues or situations of inequity within diverse school communities. In turn, CSEs might not know how to conceptualize, to interpret, or to confront these complex societal issues effectively. They may not be aware of the diverse pedagogical practices, linguistic research, or policies to establish equity for demographically changing communities (see Marshall and Oliva, 2006).

As the USA continues to undergo racial demographic change, universities, policy makers, school leaders, and educators must embark upon a new era in public education. In order to make and sustain systemic change, school leaders must be willing to fight for the moral purpose of education (see Fullan, 1999). School leaders must be equipped with the ability to create long-standing systemic change that promotes educational equity encompasses fiscal, administrative, programmatic, and attitudinal roadblocks (AASA, 1993; ISLLC, 2003; NCATE, 2005). Scholars who prepare candidates to lead schools effectively might reinforce the philosophical underpinnings of the leadership standards through culturally responsive leadership. This transformation begins by creating learning communities that address issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion and other differences within preparedness programs. This proactive account creates a coherent framework for aspiring leaders to critically think about relationships between attitudes, perceptions and actions. Acquiring new knowledge and skill sets is essential to promoting equity in schools. These efforts might result in measuring to what extent candidates can demonstrate culturally responsive pedagogical practices as well as their effectiveness to lead culturally diverse schools (Dantely and Tillman, 2006; Firestone and Riehl, 2005; Marshall and Oliva, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1990).

Recommendations

Chief school executives should reconsider how to address the premise, purpose, and promise of diversity to ensure the promotion of a world-class education for all children. One means of promoting these pertinent issues is to create opportunities for candidates to immerse themselves in their field of study (see Orr, 2007; Smalley and Reyes-Blanes, 2001). Transformations in school practice might emerge when candidates are immersed in diverse school settings. These settings encourage candidates to address realities facing marginalized populations. Immersion presents opportunities for candidates to process contemporary issues and their influence on school practice.

Preparedness programs must encourage the investigation and critical examination of privilege, oppression and power within school communities. Promoting these investigations provides candidates with opportunities to become more culturally aware and responsive to the challenges facing diverse learning communities. Incorporating self-analysis – reflecting attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs on school practice provides candidates with opportunities to understand how these elements influence their behaviors/decision-making process. Candidates must be encouraged to reconsider cultural influences on student outcomes, parent involvement, community relations and policy-making.

As school leadership norms change, so too must preparation programs. Scholars preparing leaders need to create culturally diverse learning communities in which they claim to be preparing their students to serve (see Meacham, 2000). Creating culturally responsive leaders includes the facilitation of an ongoing reflective dialogue, encouraging what the author identifies as culturally responsive leadership. This school practice encompasses an in-depth investigation of school practices that influence children's experiences, especially concerning issues facing children from marginalized populations. Providing candidates with real-world opportunities regarding social, political, cultural and economic contexts creates opportunities to investigate intercultural links. These links raise the cultural competence and world-mindedness of aspiring school leaders. Assessing culturally responsive pedagogical practices provides candidates with opportunities to assess to what extent schools meet the needs of those they serve. School leaders who do not recognize the implications of culturally responsive practices are left with a void. This void continues to perpetuate the marginalization of children, contributing to their undereducation status. The author contends that the time is now. School leaders need opportunities to ensure that indifference toward marginalization does not blossom into insidious or overt conflicts that harm the spirit of children. Indeed, this is our defining moment.

References

American Association of School Administrators (1993), "Professional standards for the superintendency", available at: www.geneonet.com/MRSD/Superintendent_professional_standards.htm (accessed September 22, 2006).

Asante, M.K. (1991), "Afrocentric curriculum", *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 49 No. 4, pp. 28-31.

Banks, C. (2004), *Improving Multicultural Education: Lessons from the Intergroup Education Movement*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

Banks, J.A. and McGee Banks, C.A. (2007), *Multicultural Education Issues and Perspectives*, 6th ed., John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY.

Boykin, A.W., Tyler, K.M. and Miller, O. (2005), "In search of cultural themes and their expressions in the dynamics of classroom life", *Urban Education*, Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 521-49.

Brown, C.A. and Cooney, T.J. (1982), "Research on teacher education: a philosophical orientation", *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 13-18.

Cambron-McCabe, N. and McCarthy, M.M. (2005), "Educating school leaders for social justice", *Educational Policy*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 201-22.

Carter, G. and Cunningham, W. (1997), *The American Superintendent Leading in An Age of Pressure*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Dantely, M.E. and Tillman, L.C. (2006), "Social justice and moral transformative leadership", in Marshall, C. and Oliva, M. (Eds), *Leadership for Social Justice*, Pearson, Boston, MA, pp. 16-30.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997), *The Right to Learn*, Jossey-Bass, San-Francisco, CA.

Diaz, C.F. (2001), "The third millennium, a multicultural imperative for education", in Diaz, C.F. (Ed.), *Multicultural Education for the 21st Century*, Longman, White Plains, NY.

Feistritzer, C.E. (1985), *The Condition of Teaching: A State-by-State Analysis*, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton, NJ.

Ferguson, R.F. (2003), "Teachers' perceptions and expectations and the black-white test score gap", *Urban Education*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 460-507.

Firestone, W.A. and Riehl, C. (2005), *A New Agenda for Research in Educational Leadership*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

Fowler, F.C. (2000), *Policy Studies for Educational Leaders*, Merrill, Newark, NJ.

Fullan, M. (1999), *Change Forces: The Sequel*, Taylor & Francis, New York, NY.

Gimmett, P.P. and Echols, F.H. (2000), "Teacher and administrator shortages in changing times", *Canadian Journal of Education*, Vol. 25 No. 24, pp. 328-43.

Glass, T.E., Bjork, L. and Brunner, C.C. (2000), *The Study of the American Superintendency: A Look at the Superintendent of Education in the New Millennium*, American Association of School Administrators, Arlington, VA.

Grogan, M. (2004), "Keeping a critical, postmodern eye on educational leadership in the United States: in appreciation of Bill Foster", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 40 No. 2, pp. 222-39.

Gron, P. (2003), *The New Work of Educational Leaders: Changing Leadership Practice in an Era of School Reform*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Harris, J. and Kendall, M. (1990), "Facilitating equity through the school superintendency", in Baptiste, H.P., Waxman, H.C., Walker de Felix, J. and Anderson, J. (Eds), *Leadership, Equity, and School Effectiveness*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.

Hill, R. (2005), "Hard lesson for minorities seeking top school job: African Americans, Hispanics, women vastly underrepresented among district superintendents across Texas", available at: www.statesman.com/metrostate/content/metro/stories/11/13supers.html (accessed March 5, 2006).

Hoyle, J.R., English, F.W. and Steffy, B.E. (1998), *Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders*, Association of School Administrators, Hampton, VA.

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (2003), November, available at: www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/ISLLCStandardsHandout (accessed September 12, 2006).

Kanan, H.M. (2005), "Assessing the role and training needs of educational superintendents in Palestine", *Journal of Education Administration*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 154-70.

Kohn, A. (1994), *I Won't Learn from You and Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment*, New Press, New York, NY.

Kozol, J. (2006), *Shame of the Nation*, Crown Publisher, New York, NY.

Leonard, J. (2002), "The case of the first-year charter school", *Urban Education*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 219-40.

Lopez, G.R. (2003), "The (racially neutral) politics of education: a critical race theory perspective", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 68-94.

Marshall, C. and Oliva, M. (2006), *Leadership for Social Justice*, Pearson, Boston, MA.

Meacham, S.J. (2000), "Black self-love, language, and the teacher education dilemma: the cultural denial and cultural limbo of African American preservice teachers", *Urban Education*, Vol. 34 No. 5, pp. 571-96.

Murphy, J. and Hallinger, P. (1986), "The superintendent as instructional leader: findings from effective school districts", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 213-31.

National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004), "Assessment of diversity in America's teaching force", available at: www.nea.org/teacherquality/images/diversityreport.pdf (accessed March 3, 2007).

National Commission on Education (1996), *Success against the Odds: Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas*, Routledge, London.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2005), *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education*, Washington, DC.

Newton, E.H. (1996), "Persistent dilemmas in administrative preparation and practices in underdeveloped and developing countries", in Jacobson, S.L., Hickcox, E.S. and Stevenson, R.B. (Eds), *School Administration: Persistent Dilemmas in Preparation and Practice*, Praeger, Westport, CT, pp. 33-46.

Orr, M.T. (2007), "Learning advanced leadership: findings from a leadership development programme for new superintendents", *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, Vol. 35 No. 3, pp. 327-47.

Persell, C.H. (1977), *Education and Inequality: The Roots and Results of Stratification in America's Schools*, The Free Press, New York, NY.

Reilly, D.H. and Brown, J. (1996), "Issues in developing a school leadership preparation program in a post-communist republic of the former Soviet Union", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 5-23.

Ryan, J. (2003), *Leading in Diverse Schools*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, MA.

Shakeshaft, C. (1990), "Administrative preparation for equity", in Baptiste, H.P., Waxman, H.C., Walker de Felix, J. and Anderson, J. (Eds), *Leadership, Equity, and School Effectiveness*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, pp. 213-23.

Sleeter, C. (1999), *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender*, 3rd ed., John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY.

Sleeter, C. and Grant, C. (2007), *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender*, 5th ed., John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY.

Smalley, S.Y. and Reyes-Blanes, M.E. (2001), "Reaching out to African American parents in an urban community: a community-university partnership", *Urban Education*, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 518-33.

Smith, G.P. (1998), *Common Sense about Uncommon Knowledge: The Knowledge Bases for Diversity*, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Publications, Washington, DC.

Taylor, L. and Whittaker, C. (2003), *Bridging Multiple Worlds: Case Studies of Diverse Educational Communities*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, MA.

Thody, A. (1998), "Training school principals, educating school governors", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 12 No. 5, p. 232.

US Census Bureau (2005), "Statistical abstract of the United States", available at: www.census. gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-2001_2005.html (accessed September 12, 2006).

Vernez, G. and Kropp, R. (1999), "Projected social context for education of children: 1990-2015", available at: www.collegeboard.com/repository/projecteded_3951.pdf (accessed September 22, 2007).

Wilmore, E. (2002), *Principal Leadership: Applying the New Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Young, M. and Creighton, T.B. (2002), "Who is framing the nation's understanding of educational leadership preparation and practice?", paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, Burlington, VT, August 5-10.

Young, M.D. and Laible, J. (2000), "White racism, antiracism, and school leadership preparation", *Journal of School Leadership*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 374-415.

Further reading

Kowalski, T.J. (2005), "Evolution of the school district superintendent", in Bjork, L.G. and Kowalski, T.J. (Eds), *The Contemporary Superintendent: Preparation, Practice, and Development*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

National Center for Children in Poverty (2005), "Who are America's poor children?", available at: www.nccp.org/pub_cpt05b.html (accessed September 30, 2007).

About the author

Christa A. Boske has been in education for the past 18 years as a teacher, school social worker, curriculum coordinator, Dean, Assistant Principal, and Principal. Dr Boske has presented at national and international conferences. She is an Assistant Professor at Kent State University in their school leadership doctoral program.

www.manaraa.com