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Educational Administration and Social Justice

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Abstract

This paper argues that social justice is central to the pursuit of education and therefore should also be central to the practice of educational administration. Social justice in education, as elsewhere, demands both distributive justice (which remedies undeserved inequalities) and recognitional justice (which treats cultural differences with understanding and respect). But, given that cultures are always in the process of change, education is a key agency for negotiating cultural change through the exploration and negotiation of difference. Educational administration as a field can no longer escape the consideration of such issues as they are brought to the fore by the recognition of the failure of schools and school systems to ameliorate injustice in the distribution of resources and to recognise and celebrate difference as a means to social and cultural progress. We still need a model of educational administration centered around the problem of the justice and fairness of social and educational arrangements. Given the renewed interest in such issues, perhaps what was impossible twenty five years ago might now be achieved

Some two decades ago I called for a model of educational administration centered around ‘...the problem of the justice and fairness of...social and educational arrangements’ (Bates, 1983:39). Mine was a lonely voice, apart from that of Bill Foster (1986) and a small number of similarly marginalised scholars, and the field continued to be dominated by the ‘search for a knowledge base’ rooted in a conceptual separation of educational and administrative issues and the pursuit of a ‘value-free’ science of educational administration (see, for instance the contributors to Boyan, 1988).

While voices such as Ken Strike’s (1982) were being raised around the issues of social justice in educational policy; while others such as Young (1971), Bernstein (1975), Bowles & Gintis (1976) and Bourdieu (1977) were transforming the focus of the sociology of education around the complicity of educational practices in reproducing social inequalities; while Dreeben (1968), Jackson (1968), and others were documenting the moral and social order of the classroom and its inequalities; and while others were listening to the voice of radical pedagogy directed in the service of liberation (Apple, 1982; Freire, 1970), educational administration as a field tied itself to the mast of its preferred (positivist) model of science and sailed on, refusing to be distracted by such siren voices.

There were, of course, voices at the margins of the field such as those of Thom Greenfield (see Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993) and Chris Hodgkinson (1978, 1991) who were pleading for values to be placed at the heart of the administrative enterprise in education.

Greenfield’s attack on the ontological reality of organizations and his insistence that organizations as human creations can be both made and remade through human agency, as well as his attempt to rescue Weber from the heroic stature (mis-) attributed to him as the champion of bureaucracy and reinstate him as the advocate of *verstehen* and interpretive methodology were truly significant contributions to the field. Or they could have been, had the leading figures in the field understood the significance of what he was saying. But Greenfield, while he clearly had significant concerns with structural issues such as poverty and discrimination, rejected structural analysis and failed to link his subjectivist theory of values with his broader concerns for social justice in any systematic way (see Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993; Bates, 2003a).

Hodkinson, of course, develops a convincing case for the place of values in administration (and educational administration in particular). But his position, like that of Greenfield, is subjectivist and essentially relativist. While articulating a formal hierarchy of types of value, Hodgkinson continues to insist that ‘...values do not exist in the world. They are utterly phenomenological, subjective, facts of inner and personal experience, ultimately only susceptible of location within an individual cranium’ (1983:31). Such a position disallows any serious consideration of the social sources of value and the role of the social in the construction of the self (see Taylor, 1989, 1991). Nor does it allow a Weberian analysis of the ways in which values are systematised through organisational and cultural structures (see

Samier, 2002). The result, again, is that while values are placed centrally in the study of administration they fail to be linked in any systematic way to issues of social formation or social justice.

Indeed, this lacuna is common to most of the discussions of the ethics of educational administration through the decades of the 1980's and 1990's. Indeed, such a perspective is still central to the field (Beckner, 2004). Burke's comment on traditional moral theorizing in *public* administration is widely applicable to this period of moral theorizing in *educational* administration which

...simply presents, case-like, the range of practical problems and then permits the morally perplexed free reign to pick and choose from a 'cafeteria of moral principles' in which competing moral theories end up being treated as equally valid, and since they often yield incompatible solutions they render morality meaningless.

(Burke, 1983: 1112 quoted in Samier, 203:75)

The result is clearly the 'conflicts, confusions and contradictions' that Dempster and his colleagues discovered among principals in their study of ethical decision-making (Dempster et al 2004). However, Dempster et al also fail to make the link between ethical decision making and social justice by suggesting that what principals (and by extension other educational administrators) need is a better 'general understanding of ethical positions' (p461).

William Greenfield (2004) in his comprehensive discussion of 'Moral leadership in schools' provides a broad discussion of various contributions to the placing of values in theories of educational administration. Arguing that '...at the very center of the leadership relationship is an essential moral consideration: leading and teaching to what ends and by what means?' (Greenfield, 2004:174). Noting the growing interest in 'studying values, ethics and the moral dimensions of educational leadership' (p174) he carefully describes the various sets of principles advocated as the bases for ethical leadership. In particular he suggests that Schrag's (1979) four principles foreshadow much of the discussion over the subsequent twenty years. These principles are

1. A moral agent must base his/her decisions on principles that apply to classes of situations, not on a whim of the moment or a predilection for one particular kind of situation...
2. A moral agent should consider the welfare and interests of *all* who stand to be affected by his/her decision or action...
3. A moral agent has the obligation to base his/her decision on the most complete information relative to the decision that he/she can obtain
4. A conscientious moral agent's moral judgements are prescriptive [and] answer the question: What ought I to do?

(Schrag, 1979: 208-209 quoted in Greenfield 2004:178)

Greenfield goes on to show, through his survey of the literature, how these themes are implicit in much of the subsequent debate. Notably, however,

Burke's stricture quoted above is equally applicable to this literature, devoid as it is of substantive content.

Bottery (1992) is quoted by Greenfield as a more recent example of similar discourse. His six questions to be asked by school leaders are

1. Does the management of the school promote personal growth?
2. Does it treat people as ends in themselves or as means to ends?
3. Does it foster a rationality which is not only tolerant of criticism, but actually sees it as an essential part of school and society?
4. Does it repudiate the view of human beings as resources to be manipulated, and instead see them as resourceful humans?
5. Does it create an ethos where measures of democracy can be introduced and replicated within the society at large?
6. Does it foster an appreciation of the place of individuals as citizens within their own communities, states and world?

(Bottery, 1992 quoted in Greenfield 2004:180)

Here, the questions do at least have some content in that they presuppose a commitment to rationality, autonomy, democracy and community. However, even here the links to social justice are not elaborated. Only two of the theorists cited by Greenfield make such a link. Foster (1986) is quoted as advocating a critical humanist position committed to '...the idea that the public school administrator has a special duty to improve the institution of schooling so that it is more just and equitable' (Greenfield, 2004:184). Starratt (1996) is also quoted as advocating an approach to morality that '...involves the total person as a human being; it involves the human person living in a community of other moral agents' (quoted in Greenfield:181).

Oddly enough this link between moral behaviour and community is not developed despite the work of, for instance, Strike (1999), Furman (2002) Furman and Starratt (2002), Sergiovanni (1994) or Goodlad (1996). And even where community is invoked as the context of moral leadership, community is defined as 'the school and its community', rather than the larger definition of community envisaged by Starratt (2003).

However, despite this small progress, the notion of community is set aside in Greenfield's summary of future directions for the field which are to be focused on:

1. Social relations among school leaders and others
2. Meanings and perspectives underlying school leaders in their relations with others
3. The espoused purposes of school leaders' actions and orientations towards others
4. The authenticity of school leaders relations with others
5. The emotional dimensions of school leadership
6. The commitments of school leaders

(Greenfield, 2004:191)

There is nothing here about the links between ethics, community and social justice, but a retreat into the subjective and intersubjective purposes, values and emotions of educational leaders as individuals. This orientation seems to also contextualise the work of the UCEA Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics which Greenfield so much admires (2004: 174-5).

But surely this introspective orientation is a mistake, for, as Furman (2003) makes clear there are significant relationships between ethical leadership, the idea of community, and the notion of social justice. These are particularly well spelt out in Furman and Shields (2003) where it is argued that

...there is an essential and dynamic interplay both within and between these concepts that provides a sort of check and balance...democratic processes permit the construction of what social justice means.
...social justice, on the other hand, suggests some essential underlying values and offers a construction of moral purpose that provides the compass for common good.

(Furman & Shields, 2003:18)

It is this idea of the common good that sets out the foundation for approaches to social justice. Or, rather, it is observations of social *injustice* that set the scene for considerations of social justice and common good. Furman argues, for instance, that

Social justice has recently acquired a new intensity and urgency in education for several reasons, including the growing diversity of school populations, ... the increasing documentation of the achievement and economic gaps between mainstream and minoritized children,...and the proliferation of analyses of social injustice as played out in schools, including the injustices that may arise from the current policy environment of high-stakes assessment and accountability.

(Furman, 2003:5)

Similarly, Larson and Murtadha's (2002) review of the literature on educational leadership and social justice calls for 'researchers in educational administration who believe that injustice in our schools and communities is neither natural nor inevitable [to] coalesce under an umbrella of inquiry called leadership for social justice' (2002:135).

Such a commitment however, inevitably involves political engagement in a field which, while calling for a commitment to moral values, has always seen administration as a substitute for politics (Bates, 1983). The significance of such commitment is outlined by, for instance, Nieto in her review of public education in the United States where she calls for a renewed commitment to overcoming the injustices faced by minorities in the face of 'the re-emergence of extraordinarily segregated schools, the almost total dismantling of bilingual education and the continuing vociferous backlash against multicultural education' (Nieto, 2005: 16).

Various such injustices have been explored in the literature on education (though not so widely in the literature on educational administration). Injustices due to poverty (which is often a proxy for various marginalised communities and groups) were, for example, explored by Connell (1994). Arguing that 'poverty' is a catch-all concept that disguises radically different situations, Connell show how in industrial countries poverty is a result of *maldistribution* of resources and wealth, while in the third world poverty is also the result of *overall lack* of resources and wealth. Moreover, even in wealthy industrialised countries poverty is not static. People move in and out of poverty through the continual restructuring of labour. Again, economic deprivation is shared by people who are quite different in other respects: ethnicity, geography, gender. Yet again, individual poverty may be modified by access to public resources such as education, health services, public libraries etc. This complex of factors makes poverty difficult to address through 'one size fits all' programs.

This is particularly the case with 'compensatory education' designed to make up for the 'cultural deficit' of poor communities. Here Connell shows that the presumption that 'the poor are quite unlike us' is wrong. For instance, while the rate of poverty in the US in any one year might be between eleven and fifteen percent, over a twenty year period some forty percent of the population may move in and out of poverty (Connell, 1994 quoting Devine and Wright, 1993). 'We should, then, expect those in poverty at any one time to have a lot in common with the broader working class, including their relations with schools' (Connell, 1994:131).

Such relationships with schools are heavily constrained by power and violence, especially with regard to the urban poor. Educators are well aware of this fact. It is built into their daily lives by history and convention, though we would prefer to ignore this aspect of our lives. Moreover, Connell argues, disadvantage is structurally related to advantage and the redress of inequalities and injustice in education as elsewhere will involve conflict.

Disadvantage is always produced through mechanisms that also produce advantage. The institutions that do this are generally defended by their beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of the current educational order are, broadly speaking, the groups with greater economic and institutional power, greater access to the means of persuasion, and the best representation in government and in professions. No one should imagine that educational change in the interests of the poor can be conflict-free.

(Connell, 1994:144)

And, as we know, conflict over curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is endemic in public discussions of education. But such issues are largely sidestepped in discussions of educational administration. For instance, while Freire's work on 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970) has been widely influential in discussions over curriculum and pedagogy, it has been virtually ignored in educational administration. As Larson and Murthada observe while 'Freire's treatise on educating oppressed populations has been widely used in

curriculum theory...leadership theorists have largely overlooked it. Nevertheless, Freire's arguments are as relevant to leadership as they are to teaching and learning. (2002:146)

In an analysis quite similar to Connell's and Freire's, Larson and Murtadha argue that administrative power is used to exclude minority participation.

...[M]any well-intentioned leaders maintain institutionalised inequity because they are committed to hierarchical logics that not only fail to question established norms but keep impoverished citizens out of decision making.

(Larson & Murtadha, 2002:146)

Reasonably enough, such marginalised communities develop a lack of trust in organizations and their leaders. But the result is, ironically, that such mistrust often becomes regarded as a deficiency of the marginalised and a cause of their marginalisation.

Because poor and minority populations have learned to mistrust many public leaders, well-intentioned school leaders often have difficulty in earning their trust and cooperation. Freire explains that the lack of trust poor communities show to those who lead public institutions can be interpreted as an 'inherent defect' in poor people, 'evidence of their intrinsic deficiency'.

(Larson & Murtadha, 2002:147)

Ironically, such a conclusion can encourage leaders to engage further in those very authoritarian mechanisms of control which alienate the poor in the first place.

Contemporary solutions to this dilemma point in two quite different directions: one is in the direction of 'choice' and the other the direction of 'one size fits all'.

The issue of choice is very much connected to the idea of school as community where community is seen as a group of similar minded people. Sergiovanni's (1992) 'virtuous school' would seem to be typical of this model. Here the members of the school and its community are held together by shared values and commitments.

The heart of the school as a moral community is its covenant of shared values. This covenant provides a basis for determining its morality... The virtuous school subscribes to and uses these moralities as the basis for deciding what its values are and how they will be pursued.

(Sergiovanni, 1992:108)

But this is a solution that is potentially corrosive and divisive as far as the wider society is concerned. Indeed it is capable of dissolving society in the solvent of Balkanised 'choice' for, as Peshkin observes as a result of his case study of such a school

The academy epitomizes the case of a community successfully projecting its idiosyncratic outlook onto its school. More than just a community school, however, the academy is a 'communal' institution... Communal describes a community whose strong commitment to its own welfare inevitably places it in conflict with other communities that do not accept its doctrinal foundation. A communal school serves an internally integrative or community-maintenance function. That is, it simultaneously links believers together and separates them from non-believers. In its defensive capacity, the academy shields its students and beliefs from competitors by promoting dichotomies not only of we and they, but also of right and wrong. *We* follow God's truth in God's preferred institution; *they* are the unfortunates of Satan's dark, unrighteous world.

(Peshkin, 1986:282)

To be fair, Sergioivanni acknowledges that for large public schools are constituted by pupils from diverse communities 'There is no easy answer to the difficult question of covenant building' (1992:109). But in our increasingly diverse societies this is precisely the issue that we face. 'Choice' and Balkanisation where 'virtuous' schools and their communities glare at each other from behind circled wagons would not seem to be an enticing future.

The second response to the problem of diversity is that of 'one size fits all' where a 'community standard' is set politically by the state as a presumed adjudication of desired values and performance, and where individual communities and schools are held accountable for the achievement of such standards and publicly praised or vilified accordingly.

Much educational policy in Western societies is currently driven by such an approach. A typical (if extreme) version is that of the 'No Child Left Behind Act' (2002) in the USA. Such moves have some initially attractive features. As Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy (undated) suggest

Regardless of one's position on the school accountability movement, it has focused attention on the widening achievement gap among students and related equity concerns. (p9-10)

The intention is to make schools (and especially public schools) more 'effective', to remedy the underperformance of under-performing schools, students and communities. While this may be a laudable objective the mechanisms employed may be counter-productive.

For instance, the School Effectiveness Movement, which provides some of the justification for the NCLB legislation, is a widespread international phenomenon and a particularly reductionist attempt to lift school performance.

Managerially driven, this movement is devoted to raising scores on standardised tests as a mechanism for improving both individual and school performance. 'School effect' is isolated as a variable with all environmental

variables stripped away statistically. The result is quite the opposite of the complex interaction of historically situated social, cultural, school and community characteristics that Thomson (2003) and Packer (2001) present us with. Community is displaced by economy: a functionalist account of 'performance' and the strategic action required to promote performance in a field of uncertainty and competition takes centre stage. But this functionalist account of schooling, as with most functionalist accounts, misrepresents the reality of human interaction in schools and between schools and their communities. It is an account stripped bare of the humanity and complexity of human interaction, one which reduces the person to a simulacrum and sees the relationship between schools and their communities solely in terms of the support or inhibition of 'performance' (See Bates, 2004).

Indeed, there is growing evidence that, despite the improvements claimed by some schools and school districts, for many groups, processes of exclusion have increased and engagement with learning has decreased, thus producing subsequent declines in performance and exaggerating the differences in performance between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Cobb & Glass 1999, Fiske & Ladd 2000, Foster 2002, Gilborn and Merza 2000, McNeil, 2000, Strike, 2002, Fuller 2003, Wrigley, 2003, 2004, Black and William, 2004).

The fundamental problem with the 'one size fits all' approach is that it decontextualises learning for many students, decoupling it from the worlds in which they live. Not only does the focus on summative assessment linked to high stakes rewards and recriminations inhibit the possibility of richer learning for students, learning contextualised within their history and the possibilities of its reconstruction, it also prevents schools accommodating to the variety of needs brought to the school by its students.

The inherent conflict between these two approaches produces significant difficulties for schools and school districts, caught as they are between official demands for standardised performance and policy initiatives directed towards localisation and choice (Fuller, 2003, Hands 2003).

As Hands suggests, such decontextualisation destroys any possibility of the creation of community in diverse societies.

Along with increasing globalisation over the past several decades, societies have become more pluralistic. Paradoxically, the response to globalisation and the resultant diversity has narrowed many schools' curricular foci. In Canada and the United States of America, for example, schools have moved toward a unified, single concept of what students should know and value (Shapiro, Sewell & DuCette, 1992: Strike, 2002). Accordingly, a pluralistic approach to education, which recognises and accommodates the needs of a diverse student population, has fallen by the wayside (Shapiro et al, 1992). Within such

narrowed educational parameters, administrators are challenged and often unable to accommodate the needs of the various, and increasingly diverse groups of individuals their schools serve. Schools are consequently unable to provide a sense of community (Noddings, 1992; Strike, 2002).

(Hands, 2003:123)

So how are we to conceive of social justice in such a situation and how can such a conception inform the work of educational administrators?

One helpful way is that proposed by Fraser (1997). She suggests that there are two kinds of social justice, one concerned with *redistribution* and the other with *recognition*. The issue of redistribution is concerned, pace Rawls (1972), with the issue of redressing undeserved inequalities in wealth, opportunity, access to public services etc. Major concerns here include economic concerns over

- Exploitation (having the fruits of one's labour appropriated for the benefit of others)
- Economic marginalisation (being confined to undesirable, poorly paid work or having access to none)
- Deprivation (being denied an adequate standard of material living)

(Fraser, 1997:13)

The general principle of distributive justice is easily understandable in education where gross inequalities in the distribution of such resources are observable and well documented (see for instance Kozol, 1991 for a searing description of such inequalities). One version of distributive justice therefore advocates the equalisation of resources available to all students and schools. The stronger, more Rawlsian, version is to advocate that *more* than equal resources ought to be allocated to those who suffer from greater disadvantages (be they physical, psychological, cultural, geographic etc). These are easily understood arguments and are publicly rehearsed frequently. I shall not discuss them further.

Recognition as a foundation of social justice, is, however, a less well known principle. Here concerns are more cultural than economic, in that cultural justice would involve a positive affirmation of the cultural practices of oppressed groups is required. Fraser suggests that cultural justice involves a principle of recognition that seeks to redress

- Cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own)
- Non-recognition (being rendered invisible by means of...authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices...)

- Disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life situations)
(Fraser, 1997:14)

Such principles have profound implications for the construction of curricula, the practice of pedagogies and the methodologies of assessment. And, as curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices are controlled by processes of educational administration, for educational administration also.

In a recent special issue of Educational Administration Quarterly (Marshall, 2004) attempts are made to address such issues within the context of the preparation of educational administrators. The issue '....places social justice at the center, so concerns about bureaucracy, hierarchy, efficiency, and even instruction and achievement are secondary' (p3). Declaring, along with Parker & Shapiro (1992) that 'there has been very little systematically and formally taught in the areas of race, gender, ethnicity, social class and other areas of difference throughout the entire educational administration curriculum' (p5), Marshall argues for '...a vision of multicultural and multiracial democracy that goes beyond mere tolerance' (Marshall, 2004:6).

Here Marshall begins to address the central problem for twentieth century societies: that of constructing harmony from diversity. As Gray (2000) points out, while a liberal consensus over values might possibly have been reached in traditional societies (though even this is somewhat doubtful) a single system of value is no longer possible.

As a consequence of mass migration, new technologies of communication and continued cultural experimentation, nearly all societies today contain several ways of life, with many people belonging to more than one. The liberal ideal of toleration which looks to a rational consensus on the best way of life was born in societies divided on the claims to a *single* way of life. It cannot show us how to live together in societies that harbour many ways of life.

(Gray, 2000:1-2)

One solution to this problem, as Touraine (2000) points out, is an authoritarian imposition of particular values through an appeal to an ideal of community and tradition, usually rooted in ethnicity, nationalism or religion. Such authoritarian regimes can have disastrous consequences such as ethnic or religious 'cleansing'. Even where such authoritarian regimes are imposed by states claiming legitimacy through a 'democratic' mandate of 'fifty per cent plus one' of the population, and where 'tolerance' of other cultures and values is appealed to, the likelihood of marginalisation, exclusion and vilification of minorities is quite high.

One alternative to these scenarios is pointed to by Touraine who argues that there is a contemporary temptation to abandon such conflicts of values to 'the market'. But here the difficulty is that markets are not structures of social action guided by culture and values but rather fields of strategic action which

are designed around risk and competitive advantage under conditions of uncertainty.

Gray's solution is the building of institutions within which multiple values can co-exist: the project of *modus vivendi*.

The aim of *modus vivendi* cannot be to still the conflict of values. It is to reconcile individuals and ways of life honouring conflicting values to a life in common. We do not need common values in order to live together in peace. We need common institutions in which many forms of life can coexist.

(Gray, 2000: 5-6)

Schools are clearly such institutions.

But this does not mean that all ways of life and all kinds of behaviour are acceptable. It means, in reality, that all ways of life are continuously held up to scrutiny and evaluation. Moreover, living alongside each other in such institutional contexts allows also for the process of cultural 'hybridization' that Rizvi (1997), among others, points to as a certain consequence of our increasing proximity. Touraine makes a similar point when he observes that '...cultures are not, at least in the modern world in which we live, separate and self-contained entities, but modes of managing change as well as systems of order' (Touraine, 2000,177)

As a result of the changing nature of cultures, their internal conflict and reorganisation and their hybridisation, some quite radical alterations in the principles that govern social (and therefore, educational) life are required. Far from appeals to public order, the market, or traditional ways of life, the only possible universalistic ethic upon which social organisation can be based is that of enhanced communication between individuals. Touraine puts it like this:

The call for freedom to build a personal life is the only universalist principle that does not impose one form of social organisation and cultural practices. It is not reducible to *laissez-faire* economics or to pure tolerance, first, because it demands respect for the freedom of all individuals and therefore a rejection of exclusion, and secondly because it demands that any reference to a cultural identity be legitimised in terms of the freedom and equality of all, and not by appeal to a social order, a tradition or the requirements of public order.

(Touraine, 2000: 167)

The only possible basis for an institutional order that will allow us to live together with our differences is, therefore, a fundamental respect for the autonomy of the individual upon which the economic capabilities argued for by Sen(1992,1999) and the moral capabilities argued for by Nussbaum (2000) can be built. Quite explicitly it is important to assert

...that all individuals have a right to freedom and equality, and that there are therefore limits that cannot be transgressed by any government or any code of law. Those limits relate both to cultural rights such as the rights of women and to political rights such as freedom of expression. This position is threatened both by those who would reduce society to the status of a market and by those who want to transform it into a community.

(Touraine, 2000: 168)

The moral basis of the school as an institution must, then, be a defence of the individual rights of all pupils to freedom and equality, and to cultural, political and economic rights to the development of those capabilities through which they can create their selves and contribute to the wider society (Bates, 2004). This moral basis cannot be established in any school that practices exclusion, nor in any school that fails to provide the basis for communication between individuals pursuing diverse and defensible ways of life.

The role of the school then is to protect the individual rights of all pupils and provide for communicative action between the differing ways of life that they value or could come to value, within the context of the school. This implies that the instrumental processes of the school need to be matched with normative processes. These are unlikely to be achieved through current conceptions of the school as a performative agency related principally to the interests of economic organizations. They are more likely to be achieved by schools which build into their practices activities that help form the capacity to reach agreement across boundaries of difference.

Nixon and Ranson (1997) argue just this position in response to increasing cultural diversity and the breakdown of cultural certainty within previously confident cultures. In current circumstances, they suggest, the certain consensus of cultures is less obvious than cultural discord.

The current sense of cultural fragmentation is widely documented... A prevailing image ... is of the compression of cultures. Things formerly held apart are now brought into contact and juxtaposition. Cultures pile on top of one another in heaps without obvious organising principles. There is too much culture to handle and organize into a coherent system of belief systems, means of orientation and practical knowledge. The image of fragmentation presented here is not of culture as something singular and monolithic breaking up into fragments, but of cultures caught in a multiplicity of discordant clashes.

(Nixon and Ranson, 1997:208)

This image is, for some, an image of despair. Nixon and Ranson however argue quite the opposite for,

... as long as there is consensus on issues of value something like effective agreement can be achieved on that basis. But once that consensus has broken down, attempts to build agreement on anything

other than a full recognition of difference is doomed to failure. The only hope is to rebuild agreement from the bottom up, so that values can be 'rediscovered' through the search for agreement.

(Nixon and Ranson 1997:208)

The search for agreement through deliberation which acknowledges different values is central to such rediscovery and

... the quality of any agreement is dependent not only upon its purposefulness, in respect of the action(s) to which it gives rise, but also upon its inclusiveness, in respect of the deliberative processes that it involves...[D]eliberation is not simply discussion oriented towards action. It is, crucially, a communicative process that actively seeks to engage with values and recognise different value positions.... *The point here is not to deny difference, but to ground the recognition of difference in a moral project that holds good across cultural boundaries.*

(Nixon & Ranson 1997:200-201 italics added)

This presents a problem for existing institutions including schools, in that they have an ineluctable tendency towards unification and unitary systems of action and belief. As Douglas (1986) suggests ' while the moral project may be one of integration through the recognition of difference, the institutional drive is always towards 'sameness' based upon polarisation and exclusion' (in Nixon and Ranson 1997: 203).

Schools are clearly continuously subject to such pressures for conformity through pressures on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices. Their moral purpose, in the contemporary world, inheres in their resistance to similarity and exclusion as procedures through which they operate.

As Nixon and Ranson suggest

The quest for agreement as integrative action is the search for a discourse maintained across the boundaries. It is not an attempt to create a further all-embracing 'sameness'; but, through imaginative grasp, to hold the differences in tension. It is the urge to argue beyond the point at which differences divide; to love beyond the point at which loyalties define the limits of loyalty; to teach beyond the point at which the normative benchmarks of achievement place a ceiling on student attainment. Ironically, only a culture fragmented by its own multiple compressions and complexities can offer this unique opportunity to learn beyond limits.

(Nixon & Ranson 1997:209)

Conclusion

The conclusion of this argument is that social justice is central to the pursuit of education and therefore should also be central to the practice of educational administration. Moreover, neither administration nor education can be

properly practiced through a technical orientation to principles and procedure. At the heart of the educational process is the issue of values. Moreover, the condition of the contemporary world within and between societies exemplifies cultural, social, economic, ethnic, religious, geographic differences as well as those of gender, disability and sexuality. Many of these differences are currently structured, through institutional and political processes, in ways that instantiate advantage and disadvantage. Social justice in education, as elsewhere, demands both distributive justice (which remedies undeserved inequalities) and recognitional justice (which treats cultural differences with understanding and respect). But, given that cultures are always in the process of change, education is a key agency for negotiating cultural change through the exploration and negotiation of difference. Educational administration as a field can no longer escape the consideration of such issues as they are brought to the fore by the recognition of the failure of schools and school systems to ameliorate injustice in the distribution of resources and to recognise and celebrate difference as a means to social and cultural progress. We still need a model of educational administration centered around the problem of the justice and fairness of social and educational arrangements. Given the renewed interest in such issues, perhaps what was impossible twenty five years ago might now be achieved for, as Connell declared back then

The education we are speaking of is plainly more than a mere reflection of existing social life; it bears on its reconstitution... Education has fundamental connections with the idea of human emancipation, though it is constantly in danger of being captured for other interests. In a society disfigured by class exploitation, sexual and racial oppression, and in chronic danger of war and environmental destruction, the only education worth the name is one that forms people capable of taking part in their own liberation.

(Connell, 1982:207-8)

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