> "It is true that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation,
> but without it, transformation cannot occur" (Freire, 1998)

A Framework for Inclusive Leadership through the lens of Critical Theory

Introduction

As school communities continue to become more and more diverse, school leaders need to be equipped to meet the needs of changing school communities. The purpose of this paper is to outline a framework for inclusive leadership that is informed by the principles of critical theory, since critical theory is a key component of inclusive leadership. The first section of this paper explores different tenants of critical theory that are foundational in supporting an educator's ability to unpack and critically analyze some of the structures that marginalize certain populations. The second section explores inclusive leadership as a vehicle to support the authentic inclusion of all populations within schools. For this paper, I borrow from Ryan's (2013) concept of inclusive leadership to explore the strategies socially just minded principals use in creating inclusive school environments such as communication practices, critical learning strategies, fostering school community relationships, and exercising strategic advocacy.

Part I
Using a Critical Theoretical Lens in Education

Social theory helps us recognize the power struggles and power dynamics that help create more socially just societies (Kincheloe, 2005). Informed by social theories, critical theory specifically supports individuals in their understanding of issues regarding inequity, power and oppression (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1997). Many scholars have contributed to this field, which originated at the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory in the 1940s with the work of Horkeimer, Adorno and Marcuse. Influenced by the devastations of World War I and economic disparity, they sought to unpack unjust practices in society and transform practices that continue to oppress

human beings (Kincheloe, 2005; Wink, 2000). In general, critical theorists contest positivism, which purports that society is governed by truths based on research and facts. Rather, critical theorists see that society is shaped by various realities and forces and not by knowledge or one set of truths (Kincheloe, 2005; Wink, 2000).

Critical perspectives have been applied to educational institutions to support educational stakeholders in identifying and opposing oppressive structures and dominant pedagogies that privilege some groups while marginalizing others (Dei, G. et al. 2000; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; Foster, 1986; Kumashiro & Ngo, 2007; McLaren, 2007). Furthermore, many critical scholars consider the educational system a highly politicized, oppressive and hegemonic institution with its neoliberal, neoconservative agendas that perpetuate the status quo through regulatory social structures, prescriptive curricula, top down decision making processes, and standardized assessments (Apple, 1990; Dei, G. et al. 2000; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; Foster, 1986; Giroux, 1983). Despite these constraints on schooling, a sense of hope for emancipating experiences evolves from this criticality (Freire, 2000; Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1997). A critical theoretical perspective opens one's eyes to injustices, highlighting the need to help educators examine contradictory practices within their educational contexts in the hopes of constructing an education that is robust and transformative and that promotes social reform through individual and collective activism (Apple & Jungck 1993; Carr, 1995; Foster, 1986; Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe, 2007; McLaren, 2007). Given these characteristics, the use of a critical theoretical lens can help educators unpack and interrogate inequities that marginalize different populations.

Critical Pedagogy in Education

One of the first applications of critical theory in education was critical pedagogy. Underpinned by social justice, democracy and emancipation, the literature is rife with conceptualizations of critical pedagogy. I borrow from McLaren's (2007) definition:

> Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by dominant culture while others are clearly not. Critical pedagogy asks how our everyday commonsense understandings – our social constructions or "subjectivities" – get produced and lived out. In other words, what are the social functions of knowledge? The critical factor here is that some forms of knowledge have more power and legitimacy than others. (p. 197)

Wink (2000) provides a useful metaphor to help frame this concept further: "Critical pedagogy is the prism that reflects the complexities of the interactions between teaching and learning. It highlights some of the hidden subtleties that have escaped our view previously. It enables us to see more widely and deeply" (p. 30).

In educational settings, critical pedagogy is integral to creating schools where school staff and students can think critically to challenge oppressive power and inequity defined by dominant voices. This pedagogy has the potential to provide students and staff with:

> the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit. (Giroux, 2007)

These sentiments are reiterated in Freire's seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire, one of the forefathers of critical pedagogy, experienced poverty first-hand in Brazil. He professed that the downtrodden can live a fuller and more dignified life through a democratic education that unpacks the complexities of diverse school contexts in addition to denouncing discriminatory practices against marginalized populations. For Freire, critical pedagogy has the

power to move teaching beyond its traditional role – from one which he refers to as the "banking concept of education" in which teachers transmit knowledge for students to passively receive, to one that elevates and nurtures the students' and teachers' conscientization. According to Freire, this "conscientization" is the catalyst for emancipation and transforming social change by providing the oppressed with a vision of hope and courage for a future that contests stringent structures and normalization: "[t]his pedagogy makes oppression and its causes, objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation" (Freire, 2000, p. 47). Hence, Freirian theory views people as subjects, not objects of oppression, who reflect and act on ways to transform their realities. Similarly, Giroux's "language of possibility" encourages educators and students to inquire about and critique oppressive structures, and construct social change that is emancipatory and transformative. Both Freire and Giroux have greatly influenced the realm of critical pedagogy by critiquing education's reductionist and mechanical approach and advocating for one that raises the level of consciousness where teachers and students can interrogate social, economic, historical and political forces that continue to advance the power and privilege of certain groups.

However, developing a critical mass of critical educators is not easily accomplished. Such critical pedagogies can upset the status quo, and change traditions of privilege and dominant power structures by opening up space for discussion, debate and critique (Giroux, 2007). As a result, socially just-oriented educators will meet with resistance from those who prefer the status quo. Additionally, many teachers undergo dialectical experiences in their decisions to bravely pursue socially just practices or forgo them for others to undertake (Carr, 1995). Finally, as Kincheloe and McLaren (2007) underscore, critical pedagogy is a constantly evolving process that can make most educators, who are used to prescriptive teaching methods,

uncomfortable by moving them out of their comfort zones. As with any skill, critical pedagogy needs to be developed and honed on an ongoing basis so teachers can support the diversities that exist in schools.

Discourse, Hegemony and the Hidden Curriculum

Despite its shortcomings, critical pedagogy has significant potential to unveil the injustices disenfranchised populations face and thereby support the need for their inclusion. In particular, certain domains of critical pedagogy – discourse, hegemony and the hidden curriculum – can shed light on how educators can better understand instructional structures and processes that can disadvantage certain students. In this section, I discuss how these domains of critical pedagogy are effective in underscoring different facets of marginalization.

Discourse

Discourse legitimizes power and domination through language (Kincheloe, 2007). The work of prominent French philosopher Michel Foucault on discourse and discursive practices highlights the ability of discourses to carry subtle status and power messages. For Foucault, discursive practices are:

> not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms of transmission and diffusion, and pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them." (Foucault as cited in McLaren, 2007, p. 209)

Cultural pedagogists have studied how these discourses serve as a form of domination that can control who speaks, who listens, what knowledge is valued, and what is not (Kincheloe, 2007; Wink, 2000). Hence, dominant cultures produce dominant discourses that determine what Foucault refers to as the "regime of truth" that are powerful enough to regulate the actions of people (McLaren, 2007).

Hegemony

If educators are to become more adept at critically analyzing oppressive social and educational structures, they need to understand ideological hegemony as a central concept of critical theory and critical pedagogy. Giroux defines hegemony as the "successful attempt of a dominant class to utilize its control over the resources of state and civil society, particularly through the use of the mass media and the educational system, to establish its view of the world as all-inclusive and universal" (Giroux, 1981, p. 23). Gramsci, a leading theorist and Italian Marxist, is best known for his work on hegemony, which gained popularity in the 1960s (Kincheloe, 2005). Gramsci claims that dominant power is exercised physically, emotionally and psychologically through a variety of means – family, schools, church, media, cultural institutions, and community organizations (Apple, 1990; Kincheloe, 2007). This domination is so powerful through hegemony that the public domain adopts it as reality and the social norm:

> For hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway. (Raymond Williams as cited in Apple, 1990, p. 5)

Hegemony is legitimized by the power of masses that make it appear neutral and normal (Apple, 1990). It is this neutrality in educational settings that concerns American critical theorist Michael Apple since schools promote ideological hegemony through curricula, routines, processes and structures. Apple argues that educators need to remove themselves from dominating economic and political powers and affiliate themselves more with groups who are working towards bringing issues of social justice and educational equality to the forefront.

Hidden curriculum

Students are subject to prescribed curricula throughout their schooling. Using a critical lens to examine materials can expose what scholars call the "hidden curriculum," which is the covert expression of dominant interests weaved throughout resources and instructional practices (Apple, 1990; McLaren, 2007). The expression was coined in 1968 by Philip Jackson who studied the difference between what was overtly taught in school versus what subtle messages students were actually learning; he referred to this phenomenon as "unpublicised features of school life" (Jackson as cited in Cottona, Wintera, & Baileyb, 2013, p. 192). Certain covert social and political influences shape the hidden curriculum to preserve dominant interests and reproduce inequity in power relations (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1981); certain knowledge and behaviours become accepted tacitly through curriculum, routines, lessons, choice of books, assignments and trips that reinforce neutrality, sameness, and the ideological hegemony of dominant classes (Apple, 1990; Carr, 1995). For example, studies have shown that sexism manipulates the hidden curriculum to privilege males over females in science and mathematics (McLaren, 2007); and that social bias stratifies working class students into skills and trades programs to perpetuate their status in the labour workforce (Cottona, Wintera, & Baileyb, 2013). Hence, it is incumbent on educators to examine these hidden notions that advantage certain groups over others.

Concluding Remarks

Discourse, hegemony and the hidden curriculum are powerful components of critical theory that can support educators' ability to understand and question the structures and processes that unfairly privilege certain groups. Critical theory allows educators to see the hidden

objectives and pose questions to challenge the underlying domination of certain communities: "Whose standard? Whose culture? Whose knowledge? Whose history? Whose language? Whose perspective?" (Wink, 2000). In this way, educators who view with a wide-angle critical lens can ensure all voices are heard and included in their classrooms by honouring the histories, cultures, and traditions of all students. The next section will discuss a framework for inclusive leadership, informed by critical theories, to highlight practical strategies that leaders can employ in their school communities to create inclusionary school settings for marginalized students and populations.

Part II – Inclusive Leadership Strategies

Introduction

Although various leadership theories exist, inclusive leaders' visions align with the principles of critical theory and critical pedagogy that challenge the status quo and work to improve the unfair conditions many students are subjected to. Thus, for the purposes of my paper, I borrow from Ryan's conception of inclusive leadership, which enacts various strategies to make school communities more inclusive. This section will first explore critical tenets of inclusive leadership and discuss obstacles leaders face in the pursuit of social justice goals. Then it will describe how inclusive minded administrators use specific strategies to promote inclusion through communication practices, critical learning strategies, fostering school community relationships, and exercising strategic advocacy.

The Influence of the Principal on Inclusive School Environments

There is an abundance of research that points to the significant authority of principals to effect change in his or her school community (Riehl, 2000) and indirectly impact student outcomes and well-being (Leithwood, 2013). In the area of inclusivity and social justice, a

growing body of literature outlines key influences principals have in creating inclusive school environments including promoting the equity and social justice agenda for all community stakeholders and removing barriers for student achievement (Riehl, 2000; Ryan 2006a, 2006b; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008).

Despite the payoff, however, social justice work can be difficult to achieve, even by experienced leaders who have good intentions (Ryan, 2006a). Broadly speaking, school principals need to contend with a myriad of issues, reforms, regulations and constraints that usurp their time and energy on a daily basis. Rapidly changing demographics, competing interests among different populations, educational reform initiatives, staff performance issues, fiscal responsibilities, community outreach, student safety, high stakes testing and classroom instruction are just some of the issues school administrators toil with regularly (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Dantley, 2003; Foster, 2004; Riehl, 2000; Ryan 2006a, Ryan 2012). Moreover, many leaders are conflicted between carrying out the neo-liberal agenda for schooling that focuses more on globalization, privatization and marketization than on engendering in students a sense of critical understanding to work towards democratic and social justice ideals (Foster, 2004; Ryan, 2012). In such a competitive educational arena, educators and leaders tend to blame students who lag behind rather than blame the system and take on an activist stance to change structures and processes that continue to marginalize certain groups (Ryan 2006a, 2012; Shields, 2004). Notwithstanding, leaders who are inclusive-minded will find ways to rise above these constrictive forces and pressures to advocate for populations who are disadvantaged. The next section will depict key tenets of inclusive leadership.

What is Inclusive Leadership?

The field of education is strongly influenced by critical perspectives, particularly as they relate to inclusive leadership (McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley, González, Cambron-McCabe, Scheurich, 2008; Riehl, 2000; Ryan 2006a). Research in the area of inclusive leadership continues to gain momentum (Riehl, 2000) and has been recently deemed an area of study in educational administration (Ryan, 2013). There are many types of extant leadership theories, such as transformational, distributive, democratic, instructional, emancipatory and social justice. Inclusive leadership, however, aims not only to promote equity and social justice through advocacy and activism, but it is specifically interested in enhancing the participation and representation of minority groups in various facets of school life as well as creating school environments to support the inclusion of such populations (Ryan, 2013). Inclusive leaders care deeply about oppressed populations, have courage to challenge power imbalances, and open up the discourse that enables others to unpack injustices. Ryan's (2013) description of leadership processes that are inclusive is outlined as follows:

> (1) targets exclusive systemic practices, such as ableism, classism, sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.; (2) emphasizes the importance of access, participation, recognition and achievement of all students; and (3) advocates for the meaningful participation of all members of school communities in the decision- and policy-making activities of schools and school systems. (p. 5)

Inclusive leaders' abilities to be respectful, humble, modest, highly collaborative, and non-heroic, and to reject hierarchical structures are just some of the key attributes they ascribe to, setting them apart from other leadership approaches (Ryan 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2012, 2013). Ryan speaks explicitly about issues of inclusion and exclusion from different levels – students,

structures, and processes. According to Ryan, inclusive leadership promotes a specific end-
inclusion, which transcends all aspects of schooling and society both locally and globally.

Obstacles for Inclusive Leadership

Socially just minded school leaders face additional obstacles above and beyond their
responsibilities that prohibit them from achieving inclusive school cultures (Riehl, 2000; Ryan
2006a, 2012, 2013; Theoharis, 2007). On a macro level, as discussed in the previous section,
workload and the neo-liberal agenda, which infiltrate many facets of school life and governance
such as policy, programs and pedagogy, deter equity-oriented leaders from pursing inclusive
goals (Ryan 2012, 2013).   School leaders themselves can be the objects of obstruction for this
work: Some are incapable of fully appreciating the counter-narratives espousing different beliefs
and viewpoints (Brown, 2004); others may feel compelled to carry out reforms and policy
mandates despite their exclusionary undertones (Ryan, 2012). In Theoharis' (2007)
investigation, those who forged ahead with inclusive goals faced consequences such as burn out,
stress or discouragement. These leaders who subscribed to social justice ideals confronted
"formidable resistance" and "paid a high price" struggling for inclusion (Theoharis, 2007). What
can become more disheartening is the fact that achieving inclusion may never be fully realized in
complex evolving societies (Dantley, 2003). Hence, committed inclusionary leaders may never
fully recognize the fruits of their labour. Considering the persistence of barriers, it would be
easy for leaders who are working in this area to become disillusioned.

On the micro level, the reluctance of school community members or staff to embrace
change or espouse the transformational vision of inclusive leaders constitutes just one of the
many obstacles along the equity journey (Ryan, 2012, 2013). Schools typify "hegemonic
conservative structures" that perpetuate status quo (Riehl, 2000), making it all the more

challenging for individuals to understand the need for change. To support this contention, Ryan extends this notion further by stating that exclusion and privilege are so common that for many people, it has become a taken-for-granted part of life (Ryan, 2013).

Strategies Inclusive Leaders use to Overcome Obstacles and Promote Inclusion

Despite the obstacles that may deter some leaders from pursuing inclusive goals, not all leaders struggle to the same extent. Notwithstanding, school administrators' skill sets, knowledge base, and priorities are also important factors in determining the ability of administrators to successfully navigate through these hurdles (Ryan, 2013). Particularly illustrative in this study, Ryan (2013) posits a variety of strategies that can support inclusive leaders who undertake inclusive school practices. The next section will explore the critical nature of certain interdependent strategies that inclusive leaders adopt in their efforts to promote inclusion through communication strategies, critical learning strategies, fostering school community relations, and exercising strategic advocacy (Ryan, 2013).

Communication Strategies

As school communities become increasingly diverse, communication amongst various stakeholders can become highly complex. A leader's visibility and approachability are important in inviting two-way communication. However, there are different considerations for creating authentic dialogic exchanges that can remove barriers for marginalized populations. For principals to engage others in meaningful dialogue, they first need to understand their privileged positions in dismantling the structures and obstacles to allow genuine communication to occur (Ryan, 2013). A principal's positional power can be intimidating for people and the language

they use can project that power. Foster (2004) borrows from Foucault's technologies of power theory to illustrate this point. A leader's language is powerful in conveying messages and thoughts while concomitantly legitimizing power relations. Such hierarchical power dynamics need to be deconstructed so that those who are marginalized feel comfortable and confident to engage in dialogue.

Another important consideration is that these dialogic exchanges should be authentic, not superficial. Brown (2004) speaks to "rational discourse" which has implications for authentic communication:

> Unlike conversation in which genial cooperation prevails, dialogue actually aims at disequilibrium in which "each argument evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself" ... Dialogue focuses more on inquiry and increasing understanding and tends to be more exploratory and questioning than conversation. Acknowledgment is a necessary step in linking awareness to action. Through rational discourse, awareness is validated, refined, and focused and motives leading to social action are cultivated. (p. 94)

For Brown, leaders need to be cognizant of their own and their colleagues' biases so that they can more actively and carefully listen to new perspectives and counter-narratives. Shields (2004) pushes the notion of dialogic exchange further with her conceptualization of "moral dialogue"; leaders who are truly transformational seek out ways to break the silence rather than perpetuate it:

> We often remain silent in a well-intentioned but inept attempt not to single children out. In so doing, we are pathologizing the lived experiences of many school children and preventing them from fully entering into the "conversation that makes sense of things." (p. 118)

Hence, by refusing to discuss inequities and injustices that some communities experience, we inadvertently and implicitly send messages that disadvantaged populations are abnormal.

Thus, school leaders can employ a variety of communication tactics to promote dialogue and conversation around the inclusion of all communities. However, in order to truly break

down the barriers for different groups, leaders must understand the power of language and of dialogic interchanges in opening up channels for authentic and sincere communication. Towards this end, leaders will have more success engaging parent and student voice in school governance activities (policy, parent council), garnering feedback from them (surveys, consultations), and inviting community members to partake in school activities and events. In this way, principals' efforts to fairly represent different voices are more realizable.

Critical Learning Strategies

Developing a critical consciousness through critical learning is an essential component of inclusive leadership since:

> Critical skills can assist people to understand the basis of claims, the assumptions underlying assertions, and interests that motivate people to promote certain positions. They can help people to recognize unstated, implicit and subtle points of view and the often invisible or taken-for granted conditions that provide the basis for exclusive stances and practices. (Ryan, 2013, p. 13)

This concept echoes what critical theorists such as Freire label "conscientization," which is the catalyst needed to dismantle hegemonic social structures within educational institutions. However, we cannot assume that all school leaders are born with a high level of critical reflexivity. In fact, researchers maintain that this level of criticality is difficult for school administrators to exercise "not because it seeks to serve dominant interests but because it is 'trapped within a discourse of efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness that make problematization or critical reflection difficult'" (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998 as cited in Riehl, 2000).

Research also shows that the training for principals lacks explicit teachings related to topics of social justice leadership (Brown, 2004; McKenzie et al, 2008). For some school leaders, informal learning opportunities are the main sources of the professional development

they access to better understand the dynamics of inclusion (Ryan, 2013). Regardless, there is a significant body of literature that supports the need for this type of critical learning for prospective and practicing leaders through ongoing professional development and research opportunities (Capper, Theorharis & Sebastian, 2006; Karpinksi & Lugg, 2006; McKenzie et al, 2008). Leaders who engage in critical learning can open their eyes to examining all school-related functions and interactions using a social justice lens. Honing this critical stance, drawing on various critical theories supports a leader's ability to engage others in shifting values, attitudes, and belief systems needed to do ethical work (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

The importance of ongoing critical learning in promoting inclusive environments for all students in schools cannot be underestimated. Leaders who engage in cultivating their own critical reflexivity can transfer these skills and knowledge to influence other school community members. There are a number of ways to achieve this end: Modeling inclusive approaches; hiring equity oriented staff; deliberately weaving equity themes in policy, pedagogy, and professional development; organizing meetings and other school-related events; and having critical conversations with different stakeholder groups – these are just some of the ways to foster a critical mass of equity advocates (Ryan, 2012 & 2013; Theoharis, 2007). To gage the level of impact of ongoing critical learning on the inclusion of diverse populations, principals and staff can conduct equity audits to analyze data (school climate surveys, student absenteeism rates, suspension rates, numbers of bullying incidents, student at-risk data) that unpack the inequities inherent in school practices (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004). These tools provide leaders with a framework for leading staff in discussions that address inequities and barriers affecting different groups, to deepen the analysis of inequitable practices and provide the

impetus for broader critical discussions of solutions and interventions to make the school more inclusive of different communities.

Fostering School Community Relations

The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" resonates with theories of inclusive leadership that promote a collective process. Education that is truly democratic is concerned with the quality of relationships among all school community members, not just a privileged few (Ryan, 2012, 2103; Shields, 2004). It is precisely this collective commitment that can positively impact on school improvement initiatives and inclusivity, not the heroics of one individual leader (Riehl, 2000; Ryan 2007 & 2013; Ryan & Rottmann, 2007). Inclusive leaders are aware that certain parent groups lack confidence, language, and knowledge to navigate through bureaucratic educational structures such as formal meetings, school governance, and policy committees (Ryan, 2007). Dismantling some of these hierarchical structures enhances a school leader's ability to ensure that certain minority populations feel welcomed and comfortable to partake in and share their perspectives in different facets of school life (Ryan and Rottmann, 2007).

Transparency, visibility, openness, accessibility, and authentic dialogue are approaches inclusive-minded leaders employ to break down the barriers to meaningful participation in school life for diverse populations. When principals open up their school doors to make all stakeholders feel like valued members of the school community, then the probability of attracting these students and their families to school events (curriculum night, parent meetings, book fairs, concerts, plays, etc.) are much higher. As well, inclusive principals can look for ways to establish relationships with community outreach agencies or advocacy groups that can provide additional services to support the needs of families. By reaching out to their communities and

understanding the needs of their families (Riehl, 2000), school leaders can experience more success in encouraging a broader and more meaningful representation of voice from different groups.

Exercising Strategic Advocacy

Although critical theorists denounce ideals of power and privilege, inclusive leaders find ways to use their stature in politically strategic ways to advocate for equity. The heightened risks associated with the political nature of this role are echoed by Lugg and Soho (2006). They stress that socially just minded leaders who practice the political dimension of leadership take risks and, as a result, may face professional consequences and backlash from their local work contexts. However, Ryan (2013) contends that if leaders ignore the micropolitical orientation of their institutions, they run the risk of being unsuccessful in their efforts for inclusion. Therefore it is incumbent on equity minded leaders to understand the politics of their organizations in order to use this awareness strategically for inclusive goals. Inclusive leaders must also be cognizant of the structural changes required to support inclusive measures. Authors McKenzie et al. (2008) outline ways that leaders can strategically change micro and macro school-level structures to improve the experiences of marginalized students. At the micro level, considerations should be given to building teacher capacity and timetabling to foster teacher collaboration. At the macro level, student organizations should reflect balanced heterogeneous groupings where students are not centered out through segregated programs. More so, principals must use their political skills to leverage money and resources and reallocate support staff where needed most.

If inclusive leaders are to be effective in promoting inclusive environments, they must be politically astute when engaging in the micropolitics of their organizations, leveraging their

political acumen and skills by implementing strategies and involving people through persuasion at opportune times. By convincing and persuading others about the importance of inclusive initiatives through dialogue, debate, questioning, stories, sharing of data and so forth, administrators can influence others to join the cause. Inclusive leaders need to optimize on relationship building by forging alliances with different organizations that can support their goals for social activism and change (Brown, 2004), by forming coalitions with like-minded individuals (Ryan & Rottman, 2007) and by aligning themselves with key school board personnel and community agencies that can provide the resources needed for their schools (Ryan, 2013). Additionally, by aligning themselves with such groups, inclusive leaders form networks to build capacity to better serve their school communities. In other words, inclusive principals who are in tune with the political culture of their schools can strategically take risks in a variety of ways that will serve populations who are under-represented in the dominant organizational structures of their schools.

Conclusion

Inclusive leadership is a critical component needed to advance the inclusion agenda for minority groups and stop the perpetuation of exclusionary practices that marginalize them. Such leaders play a critical role in mobilizing staff and school community members to challenge the status quo and create conditions that realize inclusion for all students (Riehl, 2000; Ryan 2006a; Ryan 2006b). Moreover, using a critical lens, inclusive school leaders can critique current institutional structures and practices, particularly those that are fraught with inequities and replicate the status quo that privileges some groups while marginalizing others. In particular, I have presented some of the critical strategies that leaders for social justice need to nurture and develop in order to effectively lead for inclusion.

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