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**Social Justice and Leadership Development**

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## **Abstract**

The revised professional standards for the teaching profession in Scotland are underpinned by a set of values which includes a detailed articulation of social justice for education covering rights, diversity and sustainability. There is a future orientation in these standards that privileges the contribution of teachers and leaders to realising a wider social aspiration for social justice. This expectation on leaders to contribute to this wider aspiration for social justice raises questions about the practice of leaders and their development. This article considers the implications of the articulation of social justice in the professional standards for career long leadership development. The article explores some of the issues related to social justice and the role of leadership in school. The article then focuses on the context of Scottish education, looking firstly, at the professional standards and secondly, at the issues related to social justice leadership. From this discussion the implications for career long leadership development are considered. The article concludes with a framework for social justice leadership development identifying key aspects of values, knowledge and understanding, inclusive practice, policy, issues of equity and equality that can be developed progressively across a leadership development continuum.

**Keywords:** leadership development, social justice leadership, professional standards, professional values, career long leadership development, educational leadership

## **Introduction**

Internationally, increasing emphasis has been placed on the discrete elements of leadership and social justice in terms of educational policy, theory and professional practice. More recently, attention has focused on combining those discrete elements through utilizing the role of school leadership in addressing issues of social justice and equality. Indeed, this has now become an international concern (Bogotch 2008, Blackmore 2009). The argument being advanced here, is that an ideal future state can be envisioned and through educational leadership, social influence can be used to shape school cultures and practices which in turn support greater equity in learner outcomes and future destinations. Bogotch (2008, p. 94) sees the project for education as one of ‘seeking a pedagogy and leadership that might guide us towards change and social justice’.

Despite such interest, to date there has been limited investigation or conceptual analysis of this area. Scotland provides an interesting case study through which the possibilities and constraints of embedding ‘leadership for social justice’ within professional learning for school leaders can be explored (Torrance and Forde, in press). This is far from unproblematic. While one of the historic policy concerns in Scotland is educational inclusion, there are questions about how far such ideas underpin the dominant constructions of leadership in leadership development programmes. What drives education policy currently in Scotland as elsewhere, is the search for ‘effective practice’ that will improve pupil attainment outcomes. However, if the intentions underpinning the policy articulations of equality and social justice are to be addressed, leaders need the understandings, skills and motivation to focus on shaping the conditions in schools and classrooms that foster inclusive pedagogies,

which engage constructively with issues of diversity. Leadership development programmes can support school leaders in this endeavor beyond the acquisition of knowledge, through the development of professional identities and confidence, through informed understandings impacting on practice, through well-developed skills. The article begins by examining the issue of social justice and educational policy and then goes on to consider social justice leadership. The article then considers the implications for leadership development and sets out a social justice leadership development framework across an educational leadership development continuum.

### **The International Policy Context / Global Traveling Policy**

Comparative studies of the performance of educational systems now dominate the policy imagination globally. Studies such as the two reports produced by the management consultancy McKinsey (Barber and Mourshed 2007, Mourshed *et al.* 2010) and the PISA assessment regime (OECD 2014) have led to increased pressure on school systems. As national and state systems of education pursue an agenda of improvement, one of the significant factors in measuring the level of performance of a specific system is the gap in achievement between the groups of high attaining and low attaining learners. This then would seem to be an opening where issues of equality and diversity might flourish, where improvement efforts are focused on engaging and enabling learners from those groups who continue to be marginalised in school education, or, as Lopez (2014, p. 480) proposes:

Education that is socially just and equitable becomes an imperative as we pursue a more socially just world, where society comes to understand that it is made richer by the diversity of its people.

A nexus of ideas around inclusion, equality and the building of an engaged citizenship sit within educational policy in the UK and internationally (Bell and Stevenson 2006). However, there needs to be some caution in any claims that the context is now set for the development of educational establishments and practices where the needs of diverse learners are being met routinely. The policy driver around inclusion sits side by side with concerns about economic performance as a result of which, education is also seen as the means of producing the necessary human capital to ensure economic prosperity (OECD 2010).

Barnett and Stevenson (2014) note that an effect of globalizing educational policies and practices, is the development of regional and international networks of countries and international collaborations with a tendency for ‘pro-Western views to dominate projects’ (p 77). This raises questions about the development of policy and policy travelling related to social justice and education and to leadership development. Harris (2014, p. 97-98) argues that: ‘views of social justice are inextricably linked to social contexts within which models of justice make sense to the people involved’. Therefore, school leaders play a crucial role in taking forward improvement approaches, which will impact positively on achievement and this is of particular importance when considering the issues of social justice and education. Therefore, we need to consider how leadership development can support school leaders in their efforts to work for social justice within their own educational context. In this, there is a balance between enabling leaders to grapple with the specific issues within their context while at the same time finding overarching principles and strategies. Norberg *et al.* (2014, p. 101) argue that: ‘social justice leadership in practice, despite the

national context, offers more commonalities than differences'. Therefore, there is the possibility of considering the construction of social justice practice and how it might be enacted in different contexts. In the next section, we draw from the international literature to explore this question of how social justice leadership might be constructed and enacted. Then, we use the context of Scottish education to consider how these issues might play out in a particular system, from which we explore the implications for leadership development.

### **Social Justice Leadership**

Despite growing interest, to date, leadership for social justice has been little studied (Insana *et al.* 2014, Lumby and Coleman 2007) with empirical studies tending to be small-scale and related to pressing context specific issues of inequality and exclusion. This, perhaps, is partly explained by Middlewood (2007, p. vii) who highlights the nature of contextualised leadership for social justice:

For those in education, leadership for social justice involves confronting major issues, such as those of equity, diversity and inclusion, in stimulating the changes needed for the embedding of social justice.

There has been some work on interrogating issues associated with social justice leadership but this is still at the early stages of conceptualisation. Mullen (2008) perceives democracy and accountability, power and authority, and equity and opportunity as critical issues of social justice central to educational leadership. Moreover, Mullen (2008, p. 275) sees social justice as an educational intervention, connecting theory to practice and to the moral use of power. Similarly, over the years, Bogotch (2014, p. 54) has come to perceive social justice as 'a moral responsibility in

terms of how educational leaders used their power'. Theoharris (2007) recognises that school principals who openly confront issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation are social justice advocates motivated to raise the achievement of marginalised students through eliminating structural barriers and developing teachers' ability to engage with them, as well as developing a conducive school culture. In such efforts, Bogotch and Shields (2014, p. 10) contend that: '...educational leadership and social justice are, and must be, inextricably interconnected'. Despite international interest in social justice leadership, Bryant *et al.* (2014, p. 78) identify the need 'to explore its meaning in different contexts' as part of the task of school leaders.

A critical aspect from the literature is the need for leaders who pursue a social justice agenda to engage fully with their specific context and adopt an advocacy role. In this, there is a strong political dimension. Muzaliwa and Gardiner (2014, p. 183) identify social justice leaders as 'agents who are called to initiate change in classrooms, school buildings, districts, and communities toward equity and inclusion', working for 'substantive change in their schools' (Muzaliwa and Gardiner 2014, p. 193). Managing change and tackling resistance are keynotes of the current orthodoxies of leadership practice where, through transformational forms of leadership (Bass and Avolio 1993) leaders bring about change, by building a shared vision and sense of moral purpose, creating opportunities for staff to understand and take ownership of the proposed change through professional development (Fullan 2004). Indeed, Hunsberger and Balcerzak (2014, p. 571) argue that, 'social justice advocacy cannot merely be an effort of description and debate but instead the formulation of policies and actions to respond to social injustices'. However, the generation of policies and



actions around issues of social justice is, as Cochran-Smith (2010) proposes, a complex process around which there are tensions, paradoxes and competing demands.

Hynds's (2010) study of resistance to a programme of change with a social justice orientation in New Zealand schools indicates that the process is much contested and leaders need to engage with different interests. Consequently, Hynds argues that headteachers have a twofold task in bringing about change: firstly, to be prepared for the complexity and challenging nature of social justice reform and the impact on them individually; and secondly, that in any change process leaders must 'understand that collective dialogue and inquiry must be inclusive from the beginning and must be sustained' (p 389). This engagement Hynds explores, has a strong political character.

Ryan (2010) looks at this political dimension from a different perspective. He argues that the use of political skills or acumen is critical in enacting equality policies. From his study, Ryan identifies three broad areas of skills in this political acumen: an understanding of the political environment, developing political strategies and acting strategically. Implicit in this construction of leadership for social justice, is the idea that school leaders have and are expected to exercise considerable power, and so this is an inherently political process. Dominant models of managing change (for example, Fullan 2004) emphasise the importance of building capability through developmental and motivational processes. While these are indeed important elements, this approach to change overlooks the political dimensions where school leaders face competing demands, sincere differences in viewpoint and belief, and resistance based on principle rather than a fear of change. In acknowledging the political processes of changing, the intention is not to set aside the core values underpinning school

leadership. In this regard, part of the task of leadership development programmes is to enable school leaders to balance the two. We turn now to the Scottish educational context to consider the challenge of building social justice leadership systemically and the contribution career-long leadership development to this.

### **Social Justice as Defined in the Professional Standards for Teaching in Scottish Education**

There is a relatively long history of leadership development in Scotland, traditionally targeted at serving and aspirant headteachers. This is now being challenged to consider the professional development needs of teachers across the leadership continuum. To that end, considerable effort has been focused on identifying the key components for appropriate leadership development programmes targeted at teacher leaders, middle leaders, aspirant and then experienced headteachers (NPG 2012: Appendix C). Such leadership development is directly related to the standards for teaching in Scotland, defined by a construction of professional practice underpinned by a set of values, bodies of knowledge as well as sets of personal attributes and professional actions.

The values of 'integrity', 'trust and respect', and 'professional commitment' set out in the professional standards (GTCS 2012a,b,c) cover the ethical dimensions of professionalism relating to personal conduct and development and in these the theme of social justice is evident: developing a critical awareness of the impact of personal values and beliefs; an inclusive and participative approach and an awareness of the context of learners; 'acknowledging their social and economic context, individuality

and specific learning needs and taking into consideration barriers to learning' (GTCS 2012c, p. 7). These ideas around personal conduct are complemented by an explicit statement concerning the centrality of social justice in the professional values for the teaching profession.

### **Table 1: Social Justice in the Professional Standards**

Table 1 sets out the element of the Professional Values concerning 'social justice' that underpin each set of professional standards for teachers in Scottish education. In this statement we can see the two broad constructions of social justice which align with those proposed by Gewirtz (1998). In this article Gewirtz maps out the concept of social justice in education. Here Gewirtz draws from Rawls's (1972) concept of distributive justice as one element of social justice in education but argues that that is insufficient, particularly in the light of the claims for recognition by minority and marginalized groups. Therefore Gewirtz also draws from Young (1990) and Fraser (1997) to consider the question of recognition and relational justice. Explicitly in the professional standards there is a sense of distributive justice implied in ideas of citizenship, sustainability and the future orientation. Perhaps more strongly in this statement is a sense of the idea of 'justice of recognition', where specific characteristics are identified and where the rights of specific groups within a broader framework of human rights, must be respected. Teachers are expected to uphold these values through 'fair, transparent, inclusive and sustainable policies and practices' (GTCS 2012a, p. 5). However, what is less explicit, is the third idea identified by Cochran-Smith (2010, p. 454), that of 'acknowledging and dealing with tensions'. The values in the professional standards underline the expectations placed

on teachers and leaders to understand and appreciate diversity among learners and more importantly, to act to serve the learning needs of different groups of learners. However, we need to acknowledge that some of the inherent tensions in grappling with issues of social justice in schools, place particular demands on school leaders and so have implications for leadership development.

One of the challenges faced by many educational systems including Scotland, is not just raising achievement but closing the gap between high attainment and the outcomes achieved particularly by marginalized groups. In addressing that challenge, Wrigley *et al.* (2012, p. 201) warn that many school systems are choosing to interpret the challenge by reducing social justice ‘to closing the performance gap on high-stakes standardized tests’. There is a danger that additive short term approaches are adopted with individual pupils targeted for additional support work to raise grades in examinations, without any fundamental change in the curriculum, teaching and learning processes and the wider culture that shapes the lived experiences of learners in schools. Further, such actions take place without any understanding of the context of different groups of learners. There does seem to be a need for the building of knowledge and skills to enable school leaders to move beyond simply short term targeting, to building more inclusive practices systemically, where tracking and monitoring are premised on issues of equality and fairness, rather than on simply attainment scores. Thus, the process of leadership development becomes critical.

### **Building a Model for Leadership Development for Social Justice Leadership in Scottish Education**

Leadership development has become a key element of career long teacher education in Scotland (Donaldson 2011, National Partnership Group 2012), where it is recognized that leadership is vital in shaping school cultures and the experiences of learners. Given the policy concern for leadership (Torrance and Humes, 2015), it is not surprising that there is a significant investment in leadership development. However, there is considerable debate about what form that leadership development should take. In Scotland, the bias is towards experiential learning, the processes of mentoring and coaching being favoured (Forde *et al.* 2013, Torrance 2011 and 2013) and the place of knowledge building remaining problematic (Forde 2011). Insana *et al.* (2014) argue that generally, scholarship connecting leadership and social justice is both fairly recent. Diversity ‘remains stubbornly peripheral in the main body of literature and in development programmes for leadership’ (Lumby and Coleman 2007, p. ix). We therefore need to consider how leadership development programmes might prepare and sustain leaders in their efforts to work for social justice. We begin by examining some of the core components identified in the international literature and then use this to develop a framework for social justice leadership development.

### *The Knowledge Base*

A key issue relates to the relative importance of knowledge building and of experience in developing effective school leaders (effective in terms of leading successfully school improvement). Knowledge based programmes have been substantially criticized (Levine 2005) because of the dangers of a disconnection with practice. However, ‘learning on the job’ through experience is also seen as inadequate. Increasingly, some form of structured preparation especially for school leadership is recognized in policy and established practice in many systems (Pont *et*

al. 2008, Asia Society 2013). Boske (2014, p. 294) identifies an understanding of the significance of context as essential to deepening understandings of social justice and in that regard, suggests: ‘Those who prepare school leaders will need to continuously negotiate and renegotiate, as well as construct and reconstruct ways of knowing about community, political ideals, history, leadership, and what is meant by ‘social justice’ within specific contexts’.

If, as Richardson and Sauer (2014, p. 107) assert, ‘Social justice in schools starts with leaders’, then leadership preparation programmes need to develop in leaders the ability to ‘recognize that inequalities exist within the system and focus their energies to ensure equity for all students’. Established programmes for the preparation for school leadership in Scotland are predicated on the *Standard for Headship* (GTCS 2012c). As part of the knowledge base headteachers are expected to develop and use, a theoretical understanding of teaching, learning, education policy, wider social and environmental developments, and leadership and management. However, within these aspects there is little specific reference to diversity. In the delineation of ‘Social and environmental trends and developments’ there is some sense of a wider more complex world:

Leaders keep abreast of, and apply their enhanced knowledge and understanding of, contemporary developments in society, digital technologies, the environment and the wider global community (including trends and changes in family patterns, work patterns, the media, leisure and politics) and consider their implications for leadership (p. 9).

The emphasis in other sections of the Standard, is on using the latest research to improve learning outcomes and develop a critical awareness, with no clear reference to issues of diversity.

There is a danger that the ‘knowledge base’ in relation to social justice is reduced to a ‘cultural literacy’. While an understanding of diverse cultures and minority positions is important, equally important is an understanding of how such insights need to be brought to bear on the teaching and learning process. Florian (2015) argues that we have to challenge some of the long held assumptions about ability, diversity and ways of learning. Similarly, Forde and Morley (2014) argue for the generation of pedagogies for diversity. Thus, the knowledge base leaders require is wide ranging and includes a critical understanding of policy and the inscription of particular ideas in such documents and of the ways in which ideas related to equality and diversity should shape the teaching and learning process.

### *Identity and Stance*

One of the important outcomes of headship preparation programmes is the development and strengthening of the participant’s identity as a school leader. Exploration of the impact particularly of the Scottish Qualification for Headship highlighted the way in which the identity of the participants is in flux as they move to headship (Reeves *at al.* 2005, Reeves and Forde 2004). Given this flux then, there seems to be another dimension of preparing leaders for social justice in the form of consciousness raising around issues of social justice. Blackmore (2009) argues for the adoption of a critical pedagogy in leadership development to disrupt taken-for-granted-assumptions. Jean-Marie (2010) demonstrates this in her reflections on the

leadership programmes she leads, by considering ways in which her own identity and position shape her practice. Leadership development can be seen as a transformational experience, ‘to enable leaders through their development programmes to shape the conditions in schools and classrooms that foster inclusive and culturally responsive teaching’ (Forde and Morley 2014 p. 2).

Therefore, there does need to be space for aspirant and serving school leaders to explore their identity and stance and consider the ways in which this can support or hinder leadership practice based on social justice. Boske (2014, p. 289) proffers that school leaders ‘need to be afforded spaces for renewed discussions, critical self-reflection, and experiential learning centered on broadening, deepening, and enriching their school leadership identity’. Boske considers further:

Critical reflection is essential to expanding a school leader’s self-consciousness, basic worldviews, and specific capacities of self for transformation. Through this process, school leaders begin to explore what it means *to understand, to become, and to know* social justice work (p. 304).

The school leader as an activist is a recurring idea (Theoharris 2010) in the literature and Mackenzie *at al.* (2008) argue for this form of school leadership where a school leader actively seeks to bring about change that supports the needs of diverse groups of learners. A theme reiterated by successive cohorts of participants undertaking the *Scottish Qualification for Headship* is the impact that pursuing the programme has had on their understanding of the place of values in their leadership role (Forde 2014). Consistently, many participants will report that this is the first time they have thought about their values in any depth and for some, this process in itself is transformative



through which they gain greater understanding and become more skilled in dealing with challenging issues. They report that they are able to set out their values as part of their practice and to recognise the contested nature of these values. The exploration of values is similarly an important element of the coaching process in the *Flexible Routes to Headship* (Davidson *et al.* 2008, Forde *et al.* 2013). However, to pursue an equality agenda takes more than simply the articulation of a set of values.

### *Political Acumen and Advocacy*

Through authority conveyed to them and their access to power relationships, formal school leaders potentially have ‘the possibility to disturb power relations in ways that may not be open to others’ in their efforts to invoke social justice (Lumby and Coleman 2007, p. 6). The limited empirical studies conducted to date suggest that, ‘Enacting social justice [is] highly contextual’, how school leaders enact social justice being ‘dependent on the schools they served’ (Richardson and Sauers 2014, p. 108). Within their contexts, the school principals in Norberg *et al.*’s (2014, p. 104) study identified social justice issues as being ‘at the forefront in their everyday interactions’ (2014, p. 101), emphasising ‘the proactive nature of social justice leadership, demonstrated through decision-making, strategic planning, and daily interactions’. Beyond believing in and articulating a vision, Berman (2011, p. 129) argues that leadership for social justice involves, ‘providing the leadership for integrating into a culture of schools and into classroom instruction those programs that effectively engender social responsibility and develop social consciousness’. In responding to context, much of the literature relating to leadership development points to the significance of the personal skills and attributes of school leaders, including political skills (Ryan 2010). Theoharris (2010, p. 341) found in his study, that school

principals who sought to challenge injustice, looked to achieve a fundamental reshaping of the school questioning practices and ‘school structures which marginalize, segregate and impede achievement’. In so doing, these principals actively promoted social justice and created an inclusive ethos particularly for marginalised families as well as developing and empowering staff to promote social justice, rather than on a narrow attainment focus.

Experiential learning processes, particularly coaching, mentoring and collaborative learning, help strengthen personal qualities to enable leaders to commit to and seek change. However, other sets of skills also need to be developed which acknowledge and prepare school leaders for the political processes they will have to address and enact, to bring about change. Here, there is a fine line between being political and simply acting on the basis of expediency and so there is a further dimension to be considered. Dimmock (2012) highlights the way in which demands of the specific context, side by side with the increasing expectations of school leaders by policy makers, have intensified the pressures exerted on them considerably. This is what Forde (2014) describes as, ‘the ‘grit’ of social justice [that] can help interrogate policy, strategy and practice’. Indeed, Boske (2014, p. 289) asserts, ‘Leading for social justice is a highly emotional endeavor requiring courage, integrity, imaginative possibilities, and self-awareness’. Furthermore, Lumby and Coleman (2007, p. 111) suggest that, ‘educational leaders will need to change a great deal simultaneously at a variety of levels to have any significant effect’, requiring ‘moral energy and moral stamina’ (Lumby and Coleman 2007, p. 122).

### **Designing Leadership Development for Social Justice**

The ideal of social justice for all learners is a weighty one and on the one hand, school leaders have to balance the hope inscribed in a vision of inclusion and equality with, on the other hand, a resilience to tackle barriers and resistance. School leaders also have to appreciate the partial nature of their own understandings and experience across areas of equality and inclusion and that working for the achievement of all learners is never fully accomplished. This is an ongoing stance and process, rather than a delineated change project. If we are to realise the intentions underpinning the several articulations of social justice and fairness, we need to enable leaders through their development programmes to shape the conditions in schools and classrooms that foster inclusive and culturally responsive teaching. From this discussion, a number of aspects have emerged as significant in social justice leadership: around leaders' knowledge and understanding of issues related to equality and social justice, their own position and sense of purpose and the sets of skills to work for social justice across the school community.

The focus of this discussion so far has been on the work of school leaders and the implications for their preparation and ongoing development. However, it would be important that social justice leadership is not seen as a function solely of headship but is a facet of all leadership roles. As part of the work following a review of initial and continuing teacher education, *Teaching Scotland's Future*, (Donaldson 2011), a leadership development continuum has been created (Forde *et al.* 2015) and as part of this, themes to underpin programmes within the continuum have been identified (Strategic Development Group 2015):

- pedagogical leadership
- middle leadership

- school leadership
- system leadership

The continuum begins with ‘pedagogical leadership’, a form of emergent leadership exercised by teachers, founded on their expertise in teaching and learning for all learners, working collaboratively with peers to enhance teaching and learning across the school. Middle leadership covers first line management roles where there is a vital connection to be made between classroom practice and the strategic development of the school and so again, practice has to be based on values around social justice. School leadership is about shaping the whole school culture, structures and relationships, which influence teaching and learning and the position of diverse learners. Systems leadership has come into the framework to highlight ways in which school leaders can have a constructive collaborative influence across a system, a vital issue where the performance of individual schools could create a competitiveness that in the end will only disadvantage vulnerable learners and their communities. Therefore in this framework, the focus is on building an educational system based on the principles of social justice. The emphasis within this framing of leadership development is on imbuing each form of leadership and its associated practices with an underpinning theme of social justice.

**Table 2: Social Justice Leadership across a leadership development continuum**

In generating curricula for leadership development programmes across the leadership continuum issues related to values, vision and purposes are associated predominantly with forms of leadership exercised by those in senior management roles. Further,

early leadership development can be driven by the need to build basic interpersonal skills and confidence. If social justice is to be a core aspect of educational leadership, then this should be a key theme underpinning leadership development across the continuum. The framework sets out the development of key dimensions of social justice leadership across the stages of leadership: values, knowledge and understanding, inclusive practice, policy and issues of equity and equality where at each level, participants explore their personal stance and the way in which values shape their practice within their specific context of leadership. Thus in pedagogical leadership exercised by teachers working collaboratively, for example, the emphasis is on ensuring their own practice is based on the principles of inclusion and equality which underpin the school's mission, so that they begin to develop understandings of the area of social justice and take a critical stance to policy. Then moving through each 'layer' of leadership, participants develop their understandings and practice within their specific management role and context. The role of middle leaders in exercising social justice through their contribution to the wider school context is one dimension but consideration has to be given to the exercise of social justice leadership in their role in leading teaching and learning across a specific area. An important aspect underpinning each level of leadership development in this framework is that a critical stance is built, where values are the basis of action and decisions, and where the tensions and dilemmas faced by leaders are acknowledged and ways of addressing these are explored.

## **Conclusion**

Scotland as a small and relatively coherent educational system has generated a range of strategies to take forward educational change in order to meet the needs of

increasingly diverse school populations. Current policy seeks to improve the attainment of all learners and there is an active concern with closing the attainment gap. However as Reeves and Drew (2012) illustrate the relationship between policy generation and enactment is not a simple linear process and where there are many points of translation and indeed mistranslation of policy intentions. There is a danger that unidimensional and politically expedient solutions will be generated that are short term and largely concerned with targeting individual pupils to improve their exam scores rather than looking at systemic change to address the needs of diverse learners.

Much then rests on leadership in schools fostering the conditions for effective learning for the diverse group of learners in the school. Leadership development has a vital role to play in enabling leaders to have the required understandings, skills and stance for social justice leadership. To enable school leaders to generate longer term strategies, leadership development has to be seen as a transformational experience. This article highlights the significant political dimensions of leadership, from the policy expectations placed on school leaders, to managing the micropolitics of a school. Programmes are not simply about school leaders acquiring skills and emotional resilience – important as these are. Instead, areas of knowledge building, identity and stance around equality and diversity, as well as an understanding of the political and ethical dimensions of school leadership need to be central to development programmes for leadership across the continuum. The exploration and critical reflection on professional values have been an important element of headship preparation programmes in Scotland. However, we need to go further than this to take ‘social justice’ from rhetoric to action. The establishment of a development continuum for educational leadership side by side with sets of professional standards

are important elements in seeking to build social justice leadership. We argue that the theme of social justice leadership should be regarded as a core issue in leadership development programmes across this educational leadership development continuum. Such programmes can enable participants to explore ways in which social justice is significant within their own leadership context and generate the necessary skills and abilities to understand and address the challenges of social justice leadership. Further, approaching social justice leadership as a core element for leadership development across the continuum sets this as a concern for all leaders in a school. This may well bring to the surface some of the inherent tensions and where conflict and differences might emerge. By examining social justice leadership, leaders will be able to appreciate that these tensions are the core of what we have to engage with in seeking to exercise this form of leadership.

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