**Courageous Leadership for Social Justice: Perceptions and Experiences of Veteran School Leaders**

**Title:**
Courageous Leadership for Social Justice: Perceptions and Experiences of Veteran School Leaders

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**Keywords:**
Courage; Educational Leadership; Social Justice

**Issue Date:**
Jun-2020

**Abstract (summary):**
Abstract The inscription of courageous social justice practice in educational leadership is deeply embedded in the everyday struggle to advance just education and educational spaces. Despite the robust and controversial history of education, there is little research pertaining to the role of courage. This dearth is perplexing in light of the many socially just-minded school leaders who have persistently enacted numerous overt and discreet forms of social justice activism to shape the quality of education in an unsettling social order. A critical constructivist theoretical approach was used to explore how educational leaders employ courage to promote social justice. Based on qualitative interviews with 12 educational leaders, this research explores the perspectives of individuals who see courage as an indispensable value in their professional careers. Leaders' approaches to social justice, their understandings of courage, the role of courage in their pursuit of socially just endeavours and the challenges which participants believe enmesh the assignment of leading courageously for social justice are addressed. Educational leaders' acts of courage for social justice are informed by four interrelated themes: 1) Social Justice as a Particular Social Ideal, 2) The Intentional Nature of Everyday Courage, 3) The Emboldening Influence of Courage in Leadership and 4) Challenges to Employing Courage in School Leadership for Social Justice. Specific challenges are: Realities Surrounding Bureaucratic and Relational Tensions, Issues of Governing Authority, Issues of Trust, Issues of Conversational Incivility and Fear to Act on New Insights. In response to the afore-mentioned aspects, participants appeal to new school leaders to cultivate a courageous mindset. The appeal includes: 1) Resisting the Exceptionalism Impulse, 2) Resisting Retreat and the Passion for Self-Distrust, 3) Resisting Uninformed (Gut) Leadership and 4) Being Faithful to the Bigger Picture. Keywords: Educational Leadership, Social Justice, Courage

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Social justice school leaders can amplify the voices and activism of marginalized students by shifting from hierarchical relationships to working as allies. An ally is commonly defined as a person who is associated with another or others more. This includes acknowledging our points of departure, some touchstones of our experience, and how these enable a critical but constructive discussion of the concept of social justice. Despite our varied backgrounds and experiences, one point on which we agree – and the thrust of this chapter – is that the concepts of “the social” and “culture,” even or perhaps especially in their mundane, common usage, are problematic and can get us into trouble, such that it is hard to extricate ourselves and...

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