Courageous Leadership :
securing social justice

John West-Burnham

Professor of Educational leadership

St. Mary's University College

Leadership and Values

Leadership is doing the right things; management is doing things right.

Warren Bennis

Leaders need to bring together head, heart and hand in practice because leadership is, essentially, a moral craft.

Tom Sergiovanni The Lifeworld of Leadership

Leaders need to know more deeply who they are so that they can confidently tackle the complex and multi-dimensional ethical challenges facing them.

Pat Duignan

Moral purpose in school leadership
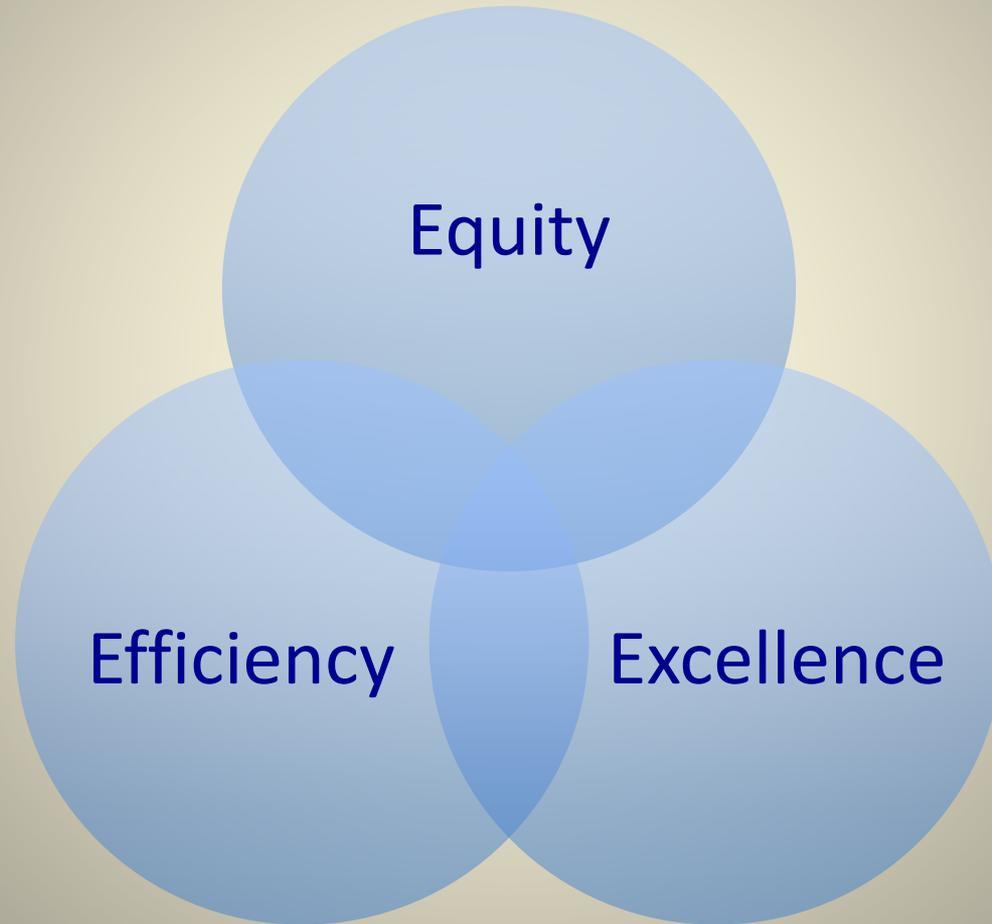
Social Justice in Education

- **Equality: every human being has an absolute and equal right to common dignity and parity of esteem and entitlement to access the benefits of society on equal terms.**

- **Equity: every human being has a right to benefit from the outcomes of society on the basis of fairness and according to need.**

- **Social justice: justice requires deliberate and specific intervention to secure equality and equity.**

Three broad conclusions seem to emerge from the research analysing the factors influencing student learning:

First, student background characteristics- especially social, economic and cultural background – frequently emerge as the most important source of variation in student achievement . . .

Second, school-related factors, which are more open to policy influence, explain a smaller part of the variations in student learning than student characteristics.

Third, among school level variables, the factors that are closest to student learning, such as teacher quality and classroom practices, tend to have the strongest impact on student achievement.

(Pont et al 2008 P33)

Bringing the lowest-performing 10% of teachers in the UK up to the average would boost attainment and lead to a sharp improvement in the UK's international ranking.

In five years the UK's rank among OECD countries could improve from 21st in reading to as high as 7th, and from 22nd in maths to as high as 12th. Over 10 years the Uk would improve its position to as high as 3rd in reading and 5th in maths.

The effects of high quality teaching are especially large for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, who gain an extra year's worth of learning under very effective teachers compared to poorly performing teachers.

(Sutton Trust 2011 Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK.)

The challenge of securing consistency

In US research, an eight year-old consistently given a teacher in the top fifth of performance was found to perform 50 percentile points better three years later than a similarly performing eight year-old consistently given a teacher in the bottom fifth of performance.

Internal Department for Education analysis suggests that this translates into a difference of more than two years' progress.

Analysis of test data from Tennessee showed that teacher quality affected student performance more than any other variable; on average, two students with average performance (50th percentile) would diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher they were assigned.

Source: Sanders & Rivers, *Cumulative and Residual Effects on Future Student Academic Achievement*, McKinsey in 'The Case for Change'

Strategies to secure equity

- Focus on closing the gap
- Eliminate variation – celebrate variety
- Define and celebrate outstanding practice
- Challenge poor performance
- Embed consistent usage of effective strategies
- Improve through shared learning
- Question inappropriate policies and strategies

Effective Learning

- **Every learner is unique.**
- **Learning is a social process**
- **Intelligence can be learnt**
- **Learning is a neurological function**
- **Learning can take place anytime, anywhere with anyone**
- **Understanding is the most appropriate criterion for assessing learning**

Effective Teaching

- **Feedback informs and challenges rather than just encourages and praises.**
- **Cognitive strategies developed and applied in a consistent way across the whole school.**
- **Teachers scaffold learning through mentoring, facilitation and dialogue.**
- **Teachers work through challenge and problem solving.**
- **Collaborative approaches are used whenever appropriate – e.g. shared problem solving, peer mentoring, reading buddies etc.**

The duty to care

The hardest part of sustainable leadership is the part that provokes us to think beyond our own schools and ourselves.

It is the part that calls us to serve the public good of all people's children within and beyond our community and not only the private interests of those who subscribe to our own institution.

Sustainable leadership means caring for *all* the people our actions and choices affect – those whom we can't immediately see as well as those whom we can. ...Sustainable leadership is socially just leadership, nothing simpler, nothing less.

Hargreaves, A. and Fink, D. (2006): <u>Sustainable Leadership</u>

Collaboration:
leading beyond the school

Cooperating is harder than simply sharing, because it involves changing your behavior to synchronize with people who are changing their behavior to synchronize with you. . . Unlike sharing, where the group is mainly an aggregate of of participants, cooperating creates group identity – you know who you are cooperating with.

Shirky C (2009) *Here Comes Everybody* **Penguin**

Values and relationships

. . . **trust represents the social energy, or the "oven's heat," necessary for transforming these basic ingredients into comprehensive school change. Absent the social energy provided by trust, improvement initiatives are unlikely to culminate in meaningful change, regardless of their intrinsic merit.**

Bryk A et al (2010) *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago* University of Chicago Press

Issues and implications

- **Rethinking the architecture of community.**
- **Securing equity in the classroom**
- **Securing consent, consensus and alignment around values.**
- **Working through empathy and interdependence.**
- **Developing schools as communities rooted in trust.**
- **Make schools microcosms of a just society and communities of hope.**

Courageous leadership: personal implications

- **Security in personal beliefs and values.**
- **Consensus across the team.**
- **Shared knowledge – the big picture.**
- **Exploring scenarios.**
- **Questioning, analysing and explaining.**
- **Growing personal authenticity.**
- **Nurturing relationships.**
- **Sustaining hope.**