ATTACHMENT 4

EXTENDED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

part of

IMPACT REPORT

LEAD-IN

Leadership Empowerment and Development for Inclusive Education in Europe

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT

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1. INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Different terms are used to describe this leadership in disadvantaged schools: the most common terms are inclusive leadership, culturally responsive leadership, equitable or equity-oriented leadership and leadership for social justice.

In its essence, inclusive leadership aims to provide inclusive education for all students, maximising the learning opportunities and therefore the learning of diverse learners. As Gomez-Hurtado et al. (2021) state, *"**inclusive leadership** guides the management of cultural diversity, celebrates difference, advocates for diverse learners, and culturally develops the school at the personal, contextual, and curricular levels"* (p.71). Crisol Moya et al. (2020) state that "*the role of **inclusive leadership** refers to the participation and representation of all teachers, administrators, the school community and students. Inclusive leadership through collegial leadership focuses on improving the learning conditions of all students, is committed to the values of inclusion, and encourages and supports all processes of reflection and discussion among all members of the school.*" (p.2)

Inclusive leadership is closely aligned with culturally responsive and cross-cultural leadership, i.e. leadership that responds to students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Brown et al. (2022) for example state that: "*Whilst there are varying definitions of **culturally responsive leadership**, more generally, the foundations for culturally responsive leadership are centred on 'those leadership philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds'*" (p.581). Khalifa et al. (2016) also state that: *"by emphasizing the word **responsive**, we capture an important action-based, and even urgent, aspect of the term: the ability of school leaders to create school contexts and curriculum that responds effectively to the educational, social, political, and cultural needs of students.*" (p.7). According to Uy et al. (2024) "*central to the concept of **cross-cultural leadership** is the promotion of inclusivity, equity, and social justice within educational settings*" (p.165).

As the definition of Uy et al. indicates, inclusivity and cultural

responsiveness are closely aligned with equity and social justice leadership as well. The latter terms focus on actively addressing sources of inequity, injustices and marginalization in schools. Leithwood (2021) states *that "the term **equitable** acknowledges that some students need more of the school's resources and opportunities than others in order to achieve the same levels of success. The paper also uses equitable as a superordinate term encompassing related concepts such as social justice and inclusion. The sources of inequity serving as the focus of leaders' attention in the studies included in the review encompass, for example, various forms of disability, language, culture, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, social class, color, and poverty. Individual students frequently experience multiple sources of inequity at the same time."* (p.2)

Kemp-Graham (2015) uses *"the definition (of **social justice leadership)** postulated by Theoharis, 2007: principals make use of issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other historically and currently marginalized conditions in the US central to their advocacy, leadership, practice and vision to ensure the academic success of all students."* (p.104)

The elimination of marginalization is also included in the description of **'leadership for socially just and inclusive schools'** provided by DeMatthews et al. (2021), which they describe as *focusing "on collaborative, democratic, and advocacy-oriented approaches to eliminating multiple forms of marginalization"*. They discern this leadership from **'leadership for effective inclusive schools'**, which is more focused on *"principals who foster change in support of sustainable inclusive classrooms that increase achievement."* (p.11-12)

Another related term is **anti-racist** school leadership (Miller, 2020): *As provided by Greene (2007): The core of anti-racist work is to seek to recognize institutional bias and to make structural changes that are supported by policies and procedures that are accountable with outcomes of equity. Leaders, managers and supervisors must be taught to recognize that contemporary forms of racism exist and become familiar with the various forms that it takes in the lives of all staff and clients. They must become vigilant in learning and identifying what those issues are and how they are perpetuated in the organization's policies, practices and procedures. The goal of anti-racist work is to widen the circle of power and opportunity. The leadership must be taught how to help white staff as well as staff of*

color to better understand how systemic racism works and impacts all staff and clients and be prepared to offer strategies and support for systemic change. (p. 10)

In the LEAD-in project, we apply the term 'inclusive leadership', and focus on both 1) improving the learning conditions and therefore the learning of students from diverse backgrounds, and 2) actively addressing inequality and injustice related to various forms of disability, language, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, and poverty.

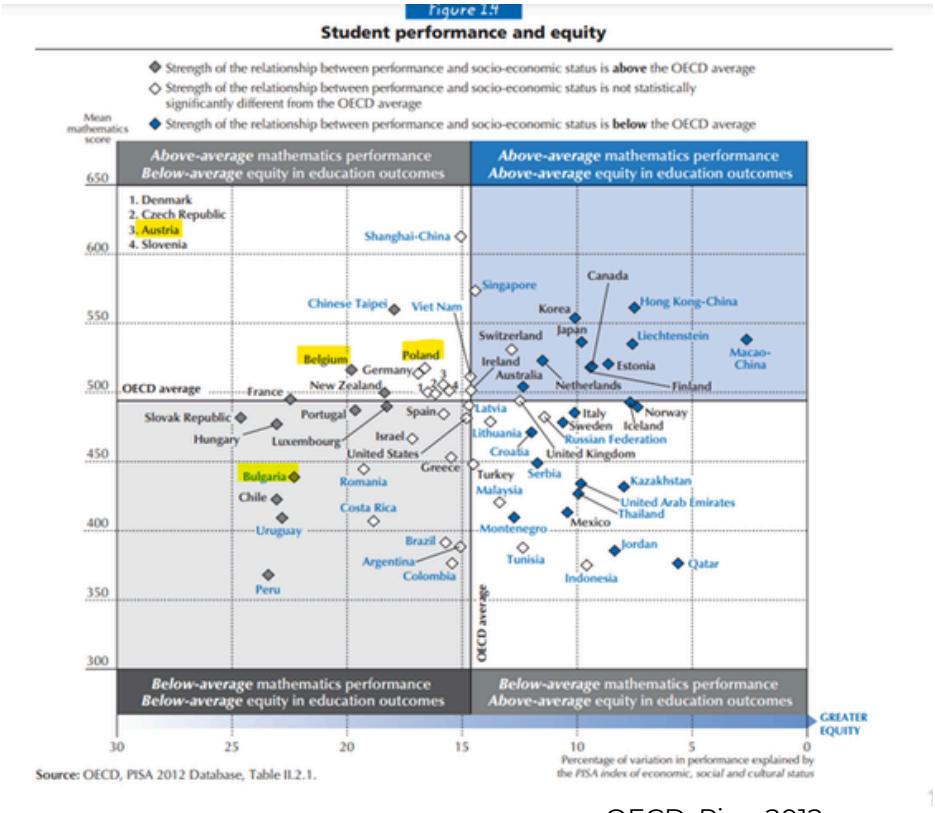
2. SCHOOL WITH A DISADVANTAGED STUDENT POPULATION

Many studies have shown that there is a strong association between students' socio-economic, gender and ethnic background and their achievement (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; Heckman 2006), calling into question whether schools are able to operate as 'equalizers of opportunities' or can perpetuate existing social inequalities. For example, in many European countries the inter-generational mobility is rather low due to a gap in terms of income and life opportunities between low and high income families (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009; Corak 2013). Consequently, this means schools are not able to function as such equalizers. On the other hand, some school systems provide more equity by weakening the link between individual circumstances and education outcomes. Nonetheless, educational inequality differs between schools, countries and varies across time (Schmidt et al., 2015). Education can promote inclusion, be used to diminish poverty and reach a more equitable society (Stromquist, 2005).

Attaining equity means students have equal opportunities and performance should not depend on students' SES, ethnic or gender background but on individual effort (Roemer & Trannoy, 2016). Socioeconomic status (SES) can be defined as the 'relative position of a family or individual on a hierarchical social structure, based on their access to, or control over, wealth, prestige, and power. It is often measured by either income, level of education, and occupational prestige or a combination (Willms, 2003). Of course, it does not imply that all students achieve the same results nor be provided with the same education.

The OECD (2012) distinguishes two dimensions of equity in education: fairness and inclusion. Fairness entails equal opportunity for success despite social background, gender or ethnic origin and aims to remove social and institutional obstacles to educational success for all students. Inclusion refers to ensuring a minimum education standard for all, aiming at reshaping educational structures so everyone has access to quality education (Zhang, Chan & Boyle, 2014). Inclusive education aims to serve all children and eliminate social exclusion, seeing education as a fundamental human right.

For example, when researching inclusivity, researchers often look at the segment of all students who are in schools and have obtained a basic level. Fairness emphasizes the impact of students' backgrounds on the educational outcomes. **Both aspects are essential to increase equity in education.** The Table below shows how students score in math per country and the impact of background variables such as gender, immigration background and home language on this score.



OECD, Pisa, 2012

Austria, Belgium, Poland and Bulgaria all score below the average on providing equity in mathematics performance for students (Schleider, 2014). Some countries also succeed in having a higher percentage of disadvantaged high achieving students, which is for example 6.7% in Luxembourg to 15.1% in Estonia.

Some schools will have much larger groups of students who have a disadvantaged background. These are often seen as early school leavers (ESL), youth not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), students with a migration background and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

3. SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PERSONAL RESOURCES

General Leadership Practices

For successful inclusive school leadership, general leadership practices and dispositions of successful school leaders also apply (Leithwood, 2021). In a review study of successful school leadership, Leithwood et al. (2019) found that these school leaders build on a repertoire of leadership practices in 5 domains: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, designing the organization to support desired practices, improving the instructional program, and securing accountability. Hallinger (2011) found that school leadership impacts learning by three main avenues: vision and goals, academic structures and processes, and people. He indicates that successful school leaders are value leaders, who impact learning through culture, work processes and people, and who focus on building the school's capacity for improvement. Similarly, Day et al. (2020) suggest that *"most leadership effects operate indirectly to promote student outcomes by supporting and enhancing a positive culture or mindset, and conditions for high-quality teaching and learning through direct impacts on teachers and their work. (...) Models of successful schools have been examined and the role of leadership values, practices and emotions highlighted. The evidence suggests that school leaders have a key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture, including the proactive school mindset and supporting and enhancing staff motivation and commitment, which is needed to foster improvement and promote success for schools in challenging circumstances." (p.53).* Next to these leadership practices, a number of leadership traits or dispositions were also found in successful school leaders, i.e. psychological resources (optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, proactivity), social resources (perceiving and managing emotions and acting in emotionally appropriate ways) and cognitive resources (problem solving, system thinking, domain-specific knowledge (Leithwood et al., 2019). Moreover, successful school leadership is context-dependent: successful school leaders apply the above mentioned leadership practices in ways that are sensitive/responsive to the needs and demands of the specific contexts in which they operate (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2019).

Or, as Day et al. (2020) put it, *"single leadership strategies unrelated to educational purposes and national and local contexts are less likely to lead to success than combinations and accumulations of values-led and context-sensitive strategies which best illustrate the dynamic and complex nature of schools in the 21st century* " (p.6).

Leaders can positively impact inclusion and equity in their schools through most of their actions, not just those explicitly designed for inclusion/equity (Leithwood, 2021). The most effective practices for equity-oriented leaders involve creating genuine partnerships among schools, families, and communities to support student success. Nonetheless, specific practices towards inclusion are necessary.

Valuing Diversity

First, ensuring a curriculum and instruction that acknowledges and values diverse students ethnic, cultural and linguistic aspects they bring to the school and aligns the schools values and priorities with the wider community. For example, knowing the school and district history can enhance inclusion. However, it is important to teach diverse students both within and beyond their own cultural and experiential contexts (Milner, 2013).

In order to acknowledge and value diversity, it is necessary for schools to be aware of the composition of their student population in terms of gender, SES, ethnic background and languages. Taking in diversity is to take in intersectionality (Bešić, 2020). This means different dimensions of one's identity such as gender, ethnicity, SES are taken into account, looking beyond a singular dimension of students' identities. Even more, inclusive leaders take into account that intersections of identities may lead to additional educational barriers. Having a lens that challenges such inequities presents opportunities for inclusive leadership.

On a deeper level, schools that have diversity on these characteristics do not always have many encounters within the school of different students, as within-school segregation occurs. Thus, **interactional diversity** means that students with diverse backgrounds interact with one another, improving academic outcomes, critical thinking skills, and civic competencies as well as reductions in prejudice and bias (Bowman, 2010, 2011).

A different manner to look at diversity within a school is its

organizational diversity, or how schools expose students to a broad range of ideas, cultures, beliefs (Gurin et al., 2002). Thus, whether or not the school team is diverse influences the amount of this exposure. In addition, **curricular diversity** refers to the degree to which diverse perspectives are represented in the classroom itself (Denson, 2009).

Analyzing how schools interact with the many layers of diversity is of importance. For this, a theoretical model can be useful to stimulate reflection. The **School Diversity Model** – or **SDM** – is frequently used for this, as it illustrates three ways how schools can deal with ethnic-cultural diversity (Celeste et al., 2019, Plaut, 2010).

Assimilationist approach

Schools can approach diversity as something to reduce by striving to adopt the majority culture. This could be for example punishing students for speaking their mother tongue in schools (Celeste et al., 2019).

Color-blind approach

Schools can try to ignore diversity or downplay its importance in the school (Apfelbaum et.al, 2012). This could be done by not discussing cultural or intersectional differences and only emphasize students' individual personalities outside of their group memberships or ethnic groups. A ban on religious symbols for the sake of neutrality in the school also is a color-blind approach. School leaders unconsciously often cover up (cultural) differences, focussing more on each individual students' personality (Goddard, Johansson & Norberg, 2010).

Pluralist approach

Schools embrace diversity and use diverse cultures as pedagogical resources (e.g., Banks, 1993; Gay, 2015). Paying explicit attention to minoritized cultures (Celeste et al., 2019) or allowing students to use their mother tongues to explain difficult tasks to each other (Ağirdağ, 2020) are examples of this approach. Some also argue that the pluralist approach should also include critical consciousness, where students are also taught about structural (ethnic, SES and gender) inequalities that exist as well as ways they could counter such inequalities (Gorski, 2016). Having a clear analysis of structures of racism is an integral part of a culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). This means schools also analyze whether their discipline measures are for

example disproportionally used for students of color or boys (Milner, 2013). Studies show deficit perceptions of black male students are widespread in education (Love et al., 2023), as well as the hyper surveillance of Black girls (Farinde-Wu, Butler & Allen-Handy, 20222). Addressing, analyzing and counteracting the existence of these inequities are important steps for a pluralist approach.

Most schools adopt one of these approaches regarding a general perspective to diversity. When teachers have a goal consensus with the school, they have a higher sense of efficacy in the school and they often look for a school with similar (diversity) values as themselves (Damanik & Aldridge, 2017). Vice versa, schools look for teachers that agree with their approach regarding diversity."

School leaders need to align policies to one of these diversity strategies. The pluralist approach is the one that aligns best with an inclusive school. Nonetheless, awareness about these approaches is necessary to analyze the schools' practices. In addition, these policies are always enacted by teachers which means that these might be executed in different ways (Civitillo et al. 2017; Meetoo, 2018). In reality, different approaches often exist besides each other in schools and that teachers switch between the use of the different diversity approaches (Hagenaars et al., 2023).

Embeddedness of Schools in the Community

Second, school leaders are ought to nurture and capitalize on embedded networks in the community of the school (Klar, Moyi, Ylimake, Hardie, Andreoli & Dou, 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2018). To have a general promotion of positive relationships among students, teachers, parents and the community is important for inclusivity and for successful learning outcomes of students (Khalifa et al., 2019). The ability of school leaders to engage students, families, and communities in culturally appropriate ways can foster a culture of dialogue and a shared responsibility towards education (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Differentiation

Third, supporting teachers to differentiate their instruction to support underserved students, teach in a culturally responsive way and make sure the curriculum is relevant to all students is a key way in which

school leaders can be inclusive (Magno & Schiff, 2010). Making sure all students feel welcome in schools, celebrating diversity and supporting different needs by adjusting or providing support more for some students creates inclusion.

Critical View on (In)equities

Fourth, having a critical view on one's own school, choices, policies and reflection on your background as a school leader is important for inclusive leadership (Leithwood, 2021). Adopting a critical consciousness on inequities in society and creating ways to counteract these is a successful practice of inclusive leadership (Johnson & Fuller, 2014). For example, striving for an awareness of self and his/her values and dispositions as school leaders and as a whole school team is what makes schools more inclusive. Building such critical capacity for an entire team will support inclusion. Actively looking at own one's biases and deficit minded pedagogies in the school, that might be masked as classroom management strategies but disproportionately target or discipline a certain group of students, can diminish inequities (Casey, Lozenski, & McManimon, 2013; Foiles Sifuentes, 2015).

Whole School Approach for Inclusion

Fifth, school leadership cannot be alone in its continuous quest for more inclusion, all school actors have to be involved. Several principals have highlighted the importance of relying on social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists to support inclusion. A key element in this process is developing collaboration-based organizational strategies and providing professional development opportunities for all staff members (Glenda et al., 2014; Porakaria et al., 2015; Valdés, 2020). Fostering intermediate and informal leadership is also crucial. This approach encourages the emergence of informal leaders and intermediate leaders, who play dual roles as both leaders and followers. Generally, the goal is to develop a culture of inclusion through collaboration.

High Expectations

Sixth, it is imperative that teachers have high expectations for all students in order to have a culturally responsive school leadership (Klar et al., 2020). Such high expectations help to disrupt negative

stereotypes and biases that often result in lower expectations for students of color, students from low-income families, or other marginalized groups. When leaders and teachers demonstrate belief in every student's potential, they push back against societal or systemic assumptions that can limit opportunities for success. This creates a more level playing field, where students are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential since high expectations lead to more rigorous instruction.

Organizational Development: Direction and Vision and Professional Development

Seven, Turner-Cmuchal and Óskarsdóttir (2020) emphasize that setting direction is key to organizational and human development within educational institutions. This involves creating opportunities for both formal meetings and informal conversations, allowing all stakeholders—teachers, staff, and families—to actively contribute to school development. Leaders play a crucial role in providing adequate support for teachers, whether through professional development or guidance in designing behavior plans to address student behavioral challenges, as noted by Osiname (2018). According to León-Guerrero et al. (2025), building a professional learning community is another critical element. It promotes ongoing training, supports the professional growth of teachers, and fosters the creation of professional learning communities within schools.

Individual Traits School Leader

Eight, culturally responsive leadership builds upon the following individual traits: empathizing with those who are different or marginalized, implementing strategies to address the inequities students, ensuring that every voice is valued, integrating the cultural norms and values of a diverse student body, and supporting teachers in adapting their practices to meet the needs of students from various backgrounds. Being culturally competent as school leaders will increase academic success of students (Bustamante et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2020). Nonetheless, these traits are enacted in practices in the school that are carried out by all school members.

To conclude, the following elements are considered good practices to foster inclusive leadership: valuing diversity, embedding the school

in the community, differentiation, having a critical view on inequities, adopting a whole school approach, maintaining high expectations and striving for continual organizational development. However, school leaders often face complex and unpredictable challenges in their efforts to improve equity in their schools, challenges no fixed set of “successful” leadership practices is likely to suffice (Leithwood, 2021).

4. CPD OF SCHOOL LEADERS AND NEEDS

As schools become more racially, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse (Grooms et al., 2024), in the international literature many scholars emphasize the importance of providing professional development programs for inclusive leadership. School leaders should understand and value students from diverse cultural backgrounds and believe in their ability to achieve academic success, to enable school leaders to shape learning conditions for a diverse student population, and to foster inclusive and culturally responsive teaching (Barakat et al., 2019; Brown & Williams, 2015; Forde & Torrance, 2017). As Barakat et al. (2019) state: '*A fundamental principle of democracy entails providing every student with a solid education and an opportunity for a successful, productive, and rewarding life, no matter his or her background*' (p. 213). School leaders play a crucial role in student learning. According to Leithwood et al. (2020), school leadership has a significant effect on many core characteristics of the school organization and therefore on the quality of teaching and learning. This impact of school leaders is especially important in schools where students are underperforming (Leithwood, 2021). These schools are often located in metropolitan areas, with a concentration of poverty and students of color, in which principals must confront many challenges in their pursuit of inclusivity, equity, and social justice in their schools (Carpenter & Diem, 2013). Ylimaka & Jacobson (2013) has found for example that school leaders face significant dilemmas and tensions in order to meet the needs and expectations for schooling in diverse contexts, such as tensions between honoring student home cultures and emphasizing student learning.

Often however, professional development programs do not adequately prepare school leaders for the day-to-day challenges they encounter when leading socially disadvantaged and diverse schools (Brown & Williams, 2015; Carpenter & Diem, 2013). These programs should include cultural responsiveness, inclusion and social justice. Moreover, they should enable school leaders to respond to a diverse student population and to the learning and development needs of all students, and teach school leaders to build inclusive school processes, structures and cultures, to mitigate the achievement gap (Brown & Williams, 2015; Miller, 2020).

In this section, we discuss characteristics of effective professional development for (aspiring) school leaders on inclusive leadership, found in the literature (Barakat et al., 2019; Grooms et al., 2024). Of course, the literature review above on successful practices of inclusive school leaders provides additional insights for the development of inclusive leadership professional development programs.

Being, Knowing, Doing and Understanding One's Context

In the literature, several scholars indicate that professional development should address aspects of the self, knowledge and skills. Booysen (2013) e.h. states that 'inclusive leadership development should incorporate the development of knowing, doing, and being; it should not be seen as a choice of competencies versus knowledge versus mindset, but rather be focused on all three' (p. 302). In the same regard, Bustamante et al. (2009) indicate that to build one's cultural competence, professional development programs should incorporate the development of awareness, knowledge and skills. According to Forde & Torrance (2017) "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" (p.3-4).

*the **self**: being*

In the literature, we found an emphasis on the importance of focusing on 'the self' of the (aspiring) school leader, which is described with terms such as being, self-awareness, personality, values, beliefs and motivation.

School leaders should learn to explore their personal beliefs about elements such as ethnicity, race, class and ability and carefully consider their own practices and biases, and reflect on how their beliefs, attitudes, values and past experiences affect their leadership (Brown & Williams, 2015; Bustamante et al., 2009; Spikes, 2018). Or as Miller (2020) states: "Professional development opportunities should get school leaders to reflect on who they are as individuals, as leaders, and on what matters to them as individuals and as leaders (p. 10)". Their sense of purpose, motivation, professional identity and confidence can support or hinder inclusive leadership practices (Forde & Torrance, 2017).

knowledge: knowing

Since student learning is the fundamental goal of inclusive

leadership, scholars emphasize that for inclusive leaders, gaining knowledge of research-based instructional strategies that support inclusive education and academic achievement is crucial (Bustamante, 2019; Johnson et al., 2011). Forde & Torrance (2016) state: “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.” (p.15). In the same regard, Gordon (2016) suggests that professional development for inclusive leadership should provide learning experiences that balance the constructs of organizational learning, instructional leadership and culturally responsive leadership.

Professional development programs should of course also build school leaders’ knowledge of diversity, culture and social justice, to help leaders understand cultural in general, and the characteristics of one’s own and other cultures and learning needs of different cultures (Brown & Williams, 2015; Gordon, 2016). Knowledge on concepts and theories about equality and social (in)justice should also be incorporated, such as white privilege, deficit thinking and ‘cultural funds of knowledge’ in the curriculum, to develop a critical consciousness of power relations in connection with cultural relations and systematic inequalities (Bustamente et al., 2009; Forde & Torrance, 2017; Gordon & Ronder, 2016; Johnson et al., 2011). Diem & Carpenter (2012) states that leadership preparatory programs must carefully examine five key issues/concepts: (a) color-blind ideology, (b) misconceptions of human difference, (c) merit-based achievement, (d) critical self-reflection, and (e) the interrogation of race-related silences in the classroom. As Kemp-Graham (2015) puts it: “In order for school leaders to begin to interrogate policies and school structures that support inequities that exist in public schools, they first must recognize what those inequities look like (p. 124).

skills: doing

While inclusive school leaders need to develop a wide range of skills to perform successful leadership practices as identified in previous research on school leadership in general, in domains such as setting directions, monitoring student learning and school

development, facilitating staff collaboration and building trusting relationships (Leithwood, 2020), we focus here on a number of skills that we found in the literature on the professional development of inclusive school leaders in particular.

Firstly, inclusive school leaders should develop adequate **relational and communication skills, and the ability to connect people**. Diem & Carpenter (2012) for example, state that "the preparation of today's school leaders must include a more purposeful focus on building the conversational skills necessary to facilitate social justice oriented conversations within their schools, particularly conversations about the variety of complex issues pertaining to race and racism. Principals must have the capacity to engage in, and facilitate, social justice oriented conversations with students, parents, and community stakeholders" (p. 97). School leader development should engage students in difficult conversations to prepare them for facilitating discussions on privilege, inequities and racism (Kemp-Graham, 2015).

According to Booysen (2013), inclusive leadership is in essence relational-based and therefore leadership training should address relational leadership skills that focus on the more complex collective relational practices needed for inclusive leadership. These include (cross-cultural) communication skills, networking skills and collaborative leadership skills for school–community collaboration building, the mobilization of the social capital of a diverse community, the empowerment of ethnic minority students and their families, and enablement of the representation of community subcultures that traditionally lack representation (Bustamante et al., 2009; Gordon & Ronder, 2016; Miller, 2020). In addition, professional development programs should target collective decision-making skills and distributed leadership skills, in order to build and foster a community feeling among all stakeholders and unite different school community groups in common causes (Bustamente et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011).

Second, inclusive school leadership development should prepare school leaders to become **change agents**. Inclusive school leaders know how to lead changes and reform in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and other teaching practices, as well as in the school environment and in the school's interaction with the community of parents and students (Brown & Williams, 2015). They know how

to leverage support for change initiatives from within and outside the school, and to handle resistance (Bustamente et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Miller, 2020). Gordon & Ronder (2016) also talk about "skill building in the collection and analysis of a variety of data to measure a school's progress toward cultural responsiveness" (p.149).

Additionally, scholars also discuss how inclusive school leaders need to understand the political dimensions of school leadership (policy expectations placed on school leaders, micropolitics in schools) and develop **political skills** to deal with the political processes to bring about change (Forde & Torrance, 2016). According to some scholars, inclusive leadership is in essence also **activist**, and therefore professional development programs should build school leaders' skills to fight oppression, exclusion and discrimination, advocate for an understanding of traditionally marginalized students, and fight for the equality of education and the expectation of success for all students (Barakat et al., 2019; Kemp-Graham, 2015). Bustamante et al. (2009) e.g. state that "educational leadership preparation programs can encourage school leaders to develop the knowledge and skills to advocate for policies and legislation that support inclusive and culturally sensitive practices, rather than accept and enforce policies at face value without questioning and observing whether outcomes are equitable and socially just" (p. 819).

context

In the literature, we found an emphasis on the importance of focusing on 'the self' of the (aspiring) school leader, which is described with terms such as being, self-awareness, personality, values, beliefs and motivation.

Comprehensive Professional Development Programs

Scholars emphasize that inclusive leadership development should be comprehensive and done in a systematic way, and that it cannot be done in a single course or workshop (Booysen, 2013; Bustamante et al., 2009; Kemp-Graham, 2015), since, as Gordon & Ronder (2016) state, it should address "working with all members of the school community (students, teachers, staff, parents, community members), integrating CRL across all school structures (school policies, procedures, curriculum, instruction, assessment), and viewing CRL as

part of all decisions made by school leaders" (p.148). Development requires time and opportunities for practice and application (Barakat et al., 2019). According to Booysen (2013) "a good leadership development program starts by focusing on the individual leader (leading the self, with focus on intra- and interpersonal relations); it then progresses to leading in more complex relations (leading other individuals and groups), then to leading organizational functions and projects; finally, it moves into leadership development by focusing on the processes of leading whole organizations, subsidiaries, mergers, and acquisitions, and ultimately leading globally across organizational and country boundaries" (p.312). In addition, Brown et al. (2022) state that culturally responsive leaders should dedicate themselves to ongoing learning, and that PD should differentiate the training depending on the career stage of the school leaders, as newly appointed and more experienced school leaders have different learning needs.

In the literature, inclusive school leadership development has a clear 'action component' or 'hands-on' approach: experimental, active, practice-based and collaborative learning opportunities are considered as crucial. As Booysen (2013) states: "It shows that training or development experiences or interventions need the elements of assessment, challenge, and support, all of which feed into each other. It also shows that leaders and organizations need both (1) a variety of development experiences and (2) the ability to learn from experience" (p.314). According to Carpenter & Diem (2013) and Ylimaka & Jacobson (2023) professional development programs should include problem and field-based learning approaches that address "day-to-day" issues and real-world problems pertaining to diversity and inclusivity encountered by school leaders.

Central is the interrogation of practice against relevant theory and research and vice versa, with a clear focus on student learning processes and outcomes (Precey et al., 2013). In this regard, Diem & Carpenter (2012) state: "We believe education leaders must be provided with a rigorous and critically oriented curriculum, one that offers multiple opportunities to participate in the reflective examination of the ideologies/concepts that often limit and/or block discussions focused on race from occurring." (p. 97). This includes for example learning activities that analyze the dilemmas of race, culture, and diversity in education related to equity and equality for

all students, power differences and structural inequalities, as well as school policy, practice and culture and one's personal biases, identities and experiences (Bustamante et al., 2009; Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Johnson et al., 2011; Spikes, 2018).

Field-based experiences are also considered very valuable in this regard, such as immersion opportunities in local communities, international exchange experiences and internship opportunities in diverse contexts (Barakat et al., 2019; Bustamante et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Gordon & Ronder, 2016). According to Brown & Williams (2015) "this allows aspiring principals e.g. to recognize academic models that are built on the cultures and experiences of students to make learning more meaningful" (p. 154).

Another common theme in the professional development literature is school leaders engaging in data decision making and transformative practices once they have developed the skills necessary to do so (Brown & Williams, 2015; Spikes, 2018). School leaders should thoroughly examine school culture, organizational structures, policies, programs, rituals, artifacts and traditions and identify inequitable organizational values, beliefs and practices: do these reflect the needs, perspectives, and experiences of diverse student groups and the school community, or do they impede inclusive teaching and learning and student performance (Bustamante et al., 2009). Therefore, they should be taught frameworks and tools to collect school level data (Bustamante et am/, 2009). Performing an **equity audit or cultural audit** of the school (or meso level, e.g. school district) is considered to be a very valuable transformative practice and learning opportunity in this regard (Spikes, 2018). According to Johnson et al. (2011), it can help to uncover race and class differences in three areas—teacher quality, educational programs, and student achievement. Bustamante et al. (2009) state that they "found that having students conduct culture audits as a course assignment has raised their levels of awareness as well as provided practice in acquiring inquiry oriented skills" (p. 818). The authors consider it to be a mixed method approach and team approach to collecting data from multiple sources, and perspectives from inside and outside the organizations.

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