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ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: A TEXAS SCHOOL DISTRICT'S EFFORTS TOWARD CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

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Introduction

Diversity in United States K-12 public school systems demands culturally proficient leadership, which is situated in ethics. The challenge to meet this expectation is well articulated by numerous scholars in the field of multicultural education. Specifically, most educators, unlike their students, are European American, middle class females and the cultural differences between the educators and their students make them strangers within the dynamics of the daily school environment (Apple, 1996; Hawley and Nieto, 2010). Even with the best of intentions, ethical practices are compromised due to the cultural dissonance, which often leaves educators relying on invalid assumptions. Such beliefs and attitudes not only create a schism in the relationship between educators and their diverse students and families, but influence actions, which may be deemed micro-aggressions. One way to alleviate this gap in understanding is to develop leaders who safeguard diversity and equity (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia and Nolly, 2006) through the ethics of care and respect for people of all cultures and traditions (Noddings, 2005; Shah, 2006).

Ethical Leadership and Moral Purpose

Ethical leaders must have the moral conviction to challenge policies, which are detrimental to a caring and inclusive learning environment. For instance, the Texas State Board of Education voted to take the word "slavery" out of the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, turning a blind eye on historical factors which continue to plague society (National Education Association, 2012). They also approved language supporting political conservatives such as Barry Goldwater, Jerry Falwell, and others. Yet, they excluded Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor and other prominent Latinos, even though Latinos constitute more than half of the student population in Texas. These acts were dismissive of student needs and ultimately provoked a backlash. Such decisions defy the standard of ethics and social justice which inform all aspects of schooling and ensure the valuing and preparation of all young people to function successfully in a diverse world (Banks, 2012; Dantley, 2010; ISLLC, 2008). Reaching a state

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of care requires knowledge of self, one's values, and the values of others.

However, scholars indicate that the act of 'caring' has proven to be a challenge considering the current political and social context (Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore and Hodgins, 2007 and others). Pressures from accountability mandates have narrowed the focus to high stakes testing to the detriment of a caring and nurturing learning environment (Darling-Hammond and Orphanos, 2006).

Connecting Ethical Practice to Culturally Proficient Leadership

With rapid growth in cultural diversity in K-12 settings, there is a need to consider the interplay between *ethics* and *cultural proficiency*. Furman and Shields (2005) state, "In an era when schools are increasingly pluralistic, the issues of social justice are hyper-visible . . . [with] growing disparity of gaps in achievement, there has never been a more salient time to see the parallels between ethical practice in educational leadership and cultural proficiency." Fullan (2007) discusses the importance of the critical analysis of existing institutional structures and working toward transforming and sustaining the culture, toward one that is accepting and respectful of those students they serve. Accordingly, they are required to learn about a cultural, economic, or political world that shows a different reality. Such learning is needed to influence socially just institutional practices in consideration of race/ethnicity, class, gender orientation, language, faith, and ableness (Theoharis, 2007). Starratt (2007) provides a foundational understanding of how leading a community of learners is a moral endeavor as much as it is an intellectual one. Much has been written about ethical leadership but little has been said about linking this concept with cultural proficiency.

Cultural proficiency is defined as the wherewithal to understand and possess the skills and behaviors to relate effectively with individuals from various cultures and backgrounds (Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs, 1989). A culturally proficient leader values difference and the growth that occurs from increased knowledge about those who are different from them. Such learning transfers into communal learning about culture and families, which is inclusive of leaders, teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Jones and Nichols, 2013). Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2009; 2003) define culturally proficient organizations or individuals as those that adhere to the following standards:

- (1) Assess culture - understand how the culture of the organization affects others;
- (2) Value diversity – acknowledge differences as diversity rather than responses which are inappropriate;
- (3) Manage the dynamics of difference – learn strategies to resolve conflict which arise between individuals of different cultural backgrounds and values;

- (4) Adapt to diversity – change how things are done to recognize differences;
- (5) Institutionalize cultural knowledge – integrate adaptations through professional learning.

The Continuum of Leadership and Cultural Proficiency (Table 1) demonstrates how organizations and individuals respond to differences (Cross, et al., 1989; Lindsey and Terrell, 2009). With use of the continuum to analyze attitudes and behaviors, it is hoped that leaders can work toward cultural proficiency.

The continuum serves as a tool to provide language and define the range of values and behaviors from destructive to constructive. Scholars intimate that moving toward the right end of the spectrum is easier said than done (Branson,

Negative ←-----→ Positive

Change Mandated for Tolerance			Transformational Change for Equity		
Cultural Destructiveness	Cultural Incapacity	Cultural Blindness	Cultural Pre-Competence	Cultural Competence	Cultural Proficiency
Lead in a manner that seeks to eliminate cultures	Lead in a way that demeans or trivializes culture	Lead where you don't see the culture of others	Lead with an awareness of what you and the school don't know about working in diverse settings	Lead with personal values, behaviors and school policies and practices that are inclusive of others' cultures	Lead as an advocate for life-long learning with the purpose of being effective in serving the educational needs of cultural groups

Table 1. Leadership and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Terrell and Lindsey, 2009)

2007; Terrell and Lindsey, 2009). Suggested is an *inside out approach* to obtain knowledge of self, of others, and to recognize their crucial role in student success. The continuum was used to examine attitudes and behaviors in one suburban Texas school district.

Big Star School District and Cultural Proficiency

Big Star School District (BSSD) educates a population of 55,000 students from Pre-K through grade 12. An influx of culturally diverse students began in the 1980s when various corporations settled into the city. Given the rise in job opportunities and excellent schools, in time the district became a microcosm of diversity – ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, religious and more. Currently, there is no ethnic majority: 11% African American; 22% Hispanic; 42% White; 21% Asian; 3% two or more races; and less than 1% American Indian and Pacific Islander. In response to this growing diversity, the district engaged in a number of initiatives and central to these initiatives was the creation of the Diversity Advisory Committee.

The Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC), composed of district personnel and community members, addressed issues of policy and professional learning opportunities for the purpose of creating awareness for approximately 20 years. The most recent efforts were cultural competency trainings provided system-wide from 2010 to 2013. Two participants from each school and departments attended a full day train-the-trainer session each semester for a total of three years. The modules were rolled out in each

department and campus during a one-hour professional development session each semester. Year 1 was devoted to Religious Expression in the Workplace, year 2 to Age, Generation, and Experience (AGE) in the Workplace, and year 3 to Economics and Inclusion in the Workplace. The modules, created by district leaders, were designed to bring about openness in talking about issues of diversity. School and teacher leaders were encouraged to ‘keep the conversation going’. In order to explore the influence of the training, a qualitative case study design was employed.

Design of the Study

Over a one-year period, I conducted a qualitative case study in a Texas school district based on purposeful sampling. There are 70 schools in the district and the district officials allowed seven schools to participate (3 elementary, 2 middle, 1 high school, and 1 senior high school). District officials chose the schools based on demographic makeup, allowing for schools that were high, low, and average in socio-economic status and diversity in ethnic makeup to be considered. Selection was also contingent upon school leaders agreeing to participate.

I interviewed 14 district and school leaders, 7 focus groups with teacher leaders, and reviewed district documents (strategic plan, policies, district website, and professional development scripts). I also observed eight professional development sessions, and gathered data during seven classroom walk-throughs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The intent of the interviews was to capture “lived experiences” through qualitative methodology (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004). I wanted to better understand the district’s efforts to support cultural competency, after implementation of policies and trainings, and explore how these may have improved school leaders’ attitudes and behaviors (Merriam, 2009).

A priori coding procedures grounded in Lindsey and Terrell’s Leadership and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (2009) was utilized for data analysis (Richards, 2006). Also used was line-by-line coding to further guide data collection. I was aiming to ascertain actions, which aligned with standards for cultural proficiency, and ultimately to identify emergent themes (Saldaña, 2009). Member checks with the participants were conducted to determine internal validity (Silverman, 2001) and at no time did participants suggest incorrect analysis. Hence, the findings presented in this paper are consistent with both my interpretation and participant perspectives.

Findings

The research yielded three themes that detail the range of competencies held by district, school, and teacher leaders after three years of district-wide cultural competency trainings. The themes are: system-wide actions, endeavors toward acceptance, and fallacies about others.

System-wide Actions

Two decades ago, BSSD recognized the significance of diversity and formed a committee to address community needs. As time passed and the makeup of the student body continued to change, efforts were amplified and policies were implemented. There were shifts in hiring practices and cultural competency trainings were mandated system-wide. From analysis of the data, subthemes emerged about the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of leaders and teachers regarding issues of diversity. The following subthemes relate to the district’s actions.

Professional Learning

The Director of Professional Learning indicated that the cultural competency trainings were structured to create discussion and to surface problems. He explained,

We were trying to create a culture that brings about conversation. [With the trainings] They’re now aware of the need. The scenarios mirror the language they already speak -- for better or worse. Our goal is to cause the conversation and to say it’s okay to talk about issues. This has prompted principals to call when problems arise. My comment to them is ‘What conversation do you need to have and I will be a resource.’ The questions are coming out and the conversations are taking place.

The cultural competency trainings focused on developing common language as a way to understand and talk about issues of diversity. Words such as micro aggressions, invalid assumptions, and trusting/distrusting relationships brought to light communication gaps and what changes needed to be made. The Director of Professional Learning stressed the need to have language to engage potentially sensitive topics. Interviews revealed that professional learning also occurred through coaching. During an interview, a principal shared the benefits of collaboration in problem-solving.

Right now we have a senior who is autistic, who really can’t play the instrument well, and has no sense of rhythm and cannot march. The band teacher said: We can’t accept the student, he can’t march. What are we going to do, he signed up for band? They have never been faced with this severe challenge . . . I had to say ‘How do we welcome the student so he feels like an integral part of the program?’ It took time. There was much resistance. In the ARD, parents indicated they didn’t want their son standing on the side. Also, their son didn’t want to change instruments. We had to be very creative.

This principal addressed how the cultural competency trainings have opened up opportunities to have honest conversations with teachers. In this case, crucial conversations helped to manage the dynamics of difference and to actualize the ethical stance of valuing students of varying abilities. Data revealed other scenarios of managing difference, with some school leaders addressing

issues of race, class, and faith. Professional learning opportunities surfaced during cultural competency trainings but also through coaching between district and school leaders and school leaders and teachers.

Leaders' Actions

The impact of the DAC influenced the district's leadership and vision, guidance on religious issues, hiring procedures, student/parent conflict resolution, affirmative action policy, Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute, and the diversity leadership award. District, school, and community leaders of diverse backgrounds held seats on DAC. The committee communicated directly to the board, demonstrating BSSD's seriousness toward inclusivity, and its mission was unambiguous:

To advocate for, promote and ensure stronger relationships, improved communication and enhanced understanding between Big Star and its diverse communities.

The superintendent spoke of efforts, which were analogous with those of his predecessor. He spent time in conversation with parent groups trying to coin the mantra "They are all our children." He visited schools and read to students where diverse populations were dominant. He attended graduations of parents receiving their GED. He described his role of continuously working to empower diverse groups to succeed. Although he admitted intolerance was still evident with longstanding community members and teachers, observations revealed neither he nor members of his cabinet were present at the trainings to demonstrate the magnitude of the initiative.

The Associate Superintendent of Academics explained how school-based teacher curriculum groups were commissioned to develop resources serving to advocate for tolerance and fairness.

Our teachers rely on the curriculum groups to provide resources. Children have the opportunity to bring personal perspective to these topics. . . Everything created . . . includes aspects of tolerance and fairness [yet] . . . there isn't always time to provide different perspectives . . . sometimes literature or history lessons come from one perspective rather than their perspective.

Although recognizing bias in curricula, he did not offer any solutions or suggest that more work needed to be done to make curriculum more culturally relevant.

In interviews and focus group discussions, school and teacher leaders conveyed the importance of the trainings and provided examples of culturally relevant practices. A principal of a Title 1 elementary school shared,

These trainings are needed for teachers to be successful with families . . . In our school 70% of the students are Hispanic, some are English Language Learners, and the other 30% are split between White and African American. We must

provide the experiences to bridge that cultural divide.

Out of the seven principals, this elementary principal, of Italian descent, was the only one to leverage the trainings. After teacher leaders presented a module on socio-economic inclusion in the workplace, the principal spent the second hour addressing the over-representation of African American males on discipline plans.

Principal: This chart represents the current challenge of 80-90% of African American boys [15% of the school's population] who are on discipline plans. The district flagged the schools with an over-population . . . and these schools must develop an action plan.

The principal stressed the importance of building a transparent culture that is data-driven and observations revealed the teachers to be forthcoming and engaged.

Teacher 1: They [African American boys] have issues with hyperactivity and have serious self-control issues.

Principal: We want to preface our statements without generalizing. You cannot lump everyone into one category.

Teacher 2: I have 3 African American boys and they couldn't be more different.

Teacher 3: I notice disruptive behavior, lack of respect, and anger. It's hard to teach the rest of the kids while trying to control behaviors.

Principal: Our goal is for you to walk away with one or two strategies to address these challenges.

The principal led teachers in charting difficulties and discussing problems. Teachers were asked to document challenges, set goals, and commit to two strategies. Based on a data-informed culture, teachers agreed to continuous monitoring of their progress and that of their students. The principal advocated for face-to-face encounters between teachers, students, and their families to build relational capacity. This type of leadership was aligned to the mission of DAC but was an anomaly. Beyond the mandated trainings, the other six school leaders limited efforts to problem solving through one-on-one coaching.

Policy Actions

BSSD also instituted policies some of which were directly related to faith, affirmative action, and the diversity program.

Topics that include the study of comparative religion, the history of religion, and its relationship to the advancement of a course based on the books of a religion other than Christianity is acceptable (2007).

Affirmative action shall ensure that applicants are employed in a manner that reflects a commitment to equal opportunity for minorities, women, and persons with disabilities (2008).

The District is committed to an ongoing diversity program that enhances opportunities for all individuals, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, gender, age, religious conviction, creed, or disabling condition, to work and learn together and gain greater understanding and appreciation of each other's differences and commonalities (2008).

One African American middle school principal shared that since the Affirmative Action policy was adopted there were new hires each year of teachers and administrators, which reflect the diversity in the district. Although, she admitted:

BSSD is forward thinking in terms of hiring diverse leaders but if you go to a meeting and look around, there isn't balance yet, but we do have a love for each other. I can make a phone call to any of my colleagues and get support.

Another policy, which showcases the importance of diversity, addresses the composition of the Superintendent's cabinet. The policy states that, "Members of the Superintendent's Cabinet may serve as ex officio members of the committee. The Superintendent shall seek to ensure that the committee membership represent the diversity of the community" (1996). Although the district infused diversity in their policies, they have yet to broach the topic of sexual orientation, even though it came up in several teacher focus group discussions.

We have kids who come from same gender two member households . . . demographics have changed in the last 10 years . . . one of my students who loves reading shared 'I don't care about boys and girls who like each other.' I allowed her to read a book that was applicable to her orientation.

Other teachers were clearly uncomfortable after this teacher's statement. The teacher who shared it felt the discomfort and shifted the conversation. During focus group discussions at a number of schools, teacher leaders described issues of sexual orientation, yet the inclusion of sexual orientation was not present in the policies, which defined diversity. Overall, trainings did not dictate what teachers should do but provided language to encourage awareness, sensitivity, and dialogue.

Endeavors toward Acceptance

BSSD hoped that its diversity initiatives, policies, and cultural competency trainings would make an impact on efforts made by school leaders and teachers to build relationships with diverse students and their families. Interviews, focus group discussions, classroom walk-throughs, and observations revealed gaps in knowledge, skills, and motivation.

Limited Knowledge, Skills and Motivation

BSSD expressed the importance of inclusivity; however, there was a clear disconnect between the perception of being inclusive and the reality of attitudes and beliefs that prohibit inclusivity. The district lacked structures for digging deeper to see if district beliefs were in harmony with that of individuals and if disparities existed in knowledge and skills.

In a focus group discussion with teacher leaders, one teacher shared:

One little boy was made fun of because he had a juda on. He had long hair and it was wrapped up . . . I pulled a fifth grader to talk to me so I could learn about the juda . . . (then I asked him) 'How would you feel about talking to this boy's class?' He shared with them (his bullying experience and how it affected him). . . It's all about empathy and understanding their story.

Immediately after the teacher shared this incident, one of her colleagues rebutted:

Our kids know how to be tolerant of each other. You don't have to spend classroom time teaching that. You just go right on teaching.

Dismissal of bullying type behavior negates an educator's ethical duty to guide the development of children by teaching cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills. For such skills to be taught to students, teachers must possess the skills themselves and be able to embrace the common humanity that exists among people. In the aforementioned case, the teacher who provided the character building opportunity was visibly agitated and eventually got up and left the focus group discussion. At the time of the discussion, the principal remained silent and further inquiry revealed that she did not address it at a later time.

Lack of Clarity in School Leaders' Roles

At a high school, a secondary principal laid down the gauntlet by asking teachers to encourage diverse students to enroll in AP and Honor classes. AP teachers insisted their classes were diverse. The principal pointed to data, which revealed the inclusion of many Asians and very few Black and Hispanic students.

I called students into my office . . . and asked them 'Why aren't you in AP world history?' [The answers varied] I'm just too lazy for that. That's not my crowd. Nobody ever asked me. Out of 61, 17 took me up on the offer. I really wanted half. We have to work on perceptions. Some attitudes are crème de la crème. I need to correct it. I don't know how long it will take, but it will be corrected. The kids self-select, they know their groups, and they stay there.

This high school principal modeled for teachers the behaviors of advocacy that he wanted to see. On the following year, the district moved him to another school. It

is difficult to say if the practices initiated will continue since data-driven decisions and problem solving were all done by him. An organizational structural model that extends leadership responsibility beyond the individual will more likely leverage sustainable practices.

Fallacies about Others

Some school leaders and teachers were unaware of or indifferent to district policies, structures or practices. Even after professional development, what they knew about district policies and expectations was nominal.

Indifference or Neglect of Others

Classroom walk-throughs and observations demonstrated that some principals lacked clarity in their role and responsibilities as a culturally proficient leader. During one high school walk through, teachers were taken by surprise. Some teachers were found teaching and helping students, but others were seen at their computer, while students were bored or slumped over their desks or worse involved in inappropriate, conversation, wandering or unsuitable behavior. Classrooms with AP and honors students had a semblance of classroom management and engagement; yet, in some classrooms where students of diverse background were more prevalent, there was disarray with apathetic teachers and disinterested students. When the high school principal was asked about the effectiveness of the cultural competency modules, she said:

We've received training on diversity through Ruby Payne workshops, and so the focus on cultural competence is not new. I feel our staff is highly competent. This is integral to the success we have in the classroom.

Her false-sense of confidence was apparent in her neglect of monitoring the teaching and learning process. Unconcerned teachers and disengaged students mostly filled the classrooms of students who were African American, Hispanic, or socio-economically disadvantaged. Teachers who were highly competent did so regardless of the principal's lack of involvement.

Condescension and Aggression

Some teachers openly or privately proclaimed the superiority of their culture. One high school teacher stopped me in the hallway to share her approval of the research study.

I'm so glad you're doing this study. These parents need to understand that they're in America and should speak English. Some are here for 10 and 20 years and think it's okay to continue speaking Spanish.

This teacher viewed speaking English as synonymous with being American. Similar sentiments were made by one elementary teacher who wrote:

If I'm to be honest . . . Islam . . . is NOT a 'religion of peace.' . . . The U.S. is a nation founded on Judeo-Christian values and beliefs and I'm going to . . . make sure this doesn't change.

Both teachers defended their beliefs about language and faith and engaged in disparaging remarks, which undermine students and their families who are different from them and corroborate statements by the superintendent. He shared that longstanding members of the community, including teachers, were traditional in nature and were distressed about the growing diversity. At a board meeting, a parent said, "there are subgroups infiltrating our schools." Largely, BSSD's efforts at developing a culturally proficient district fell short. Even though gains were made through policies and professional learning, some principals and teachers continued to hold invalid assumptions and fallacies.

Discussion

Ethical leaders strive to increase knowledge of self, their values, and the values of others to create culturally proficient organizations. The attitudes and behaviors of leaders toward others are a result of interactions between self-concept, self-esteem, motives, values, and beliefs (Branson, 2007). The quality of the interactions shapes the understanding and relationships between school leaders, teachers, students and the families they serve.

Lindsey and Terrell's (2009) cultural proficiency continuum provides district leaders with a tool to assess attitudes, beliefs, and understandings of the organization, school leaders, and teachers. Instituting policies and professional learning have proven to be somewhat effective tools in furthering the understanding of difference. Such training, however, could never equal the benefits of ongoing dialogue imbued with the ethics of care and respect, support for multi-perspective curricula, and encouragement in the use of communication strategies and skills (NCCREST, 2010; Riehl, 2000; Ruff and Shoho, 2005).

The district's good intentions were evident through policies and professional learning, barring Texas' absence of an ethics standard addressing diversity and equity. One of its more evident successes was that it kept diversity in the spotlight and provided a language to cultivate a 'diversity discourse' – allowing for productive discussions on what 'diversity' or 'difference' might mean, and the ways in which those concepts manifest in our culture, more specifically in our schools. The program allows the district to avoid the most fatal flaw of most reform efforts – the sense that what is being offered is no more than the latest fad.

On the other hand, I discovered the effort was neither centralized nor uniform in execution: in fact, most of the schools could impose limitations. An increasing body of scholarship suggests that if professional learning is to have relevance, then such learning should be aligned to specific aims that are understood by all. If such goals and related

activities are left to open-ended interpretation then, more often than not, the intended goals are not realized. Furthermore, such learning should not be attempted in isolation, but rather through individual and organizational habits and structures, which encourage the learning to take place on a continuum (Datnow, Park and Wohlstetter, 2007; Fullan, 2007; Supovitz, 2006).

Several district leaders, school leaders, and teachers were on the 'transformational change toward equity' side indicating pre-competence to cultural proficiency. Others, however, were located on the 'change mandated for tolerance' indicating cultural destructiveness, incapacity, or blindness. Some were able to demonstrate their ability to manage the dynamics of difference through problem solving and coaching. Only one principal exhibited cultural proficiency to the extent that learning about differences became institutionalized. With regard to the district's lack of uniformity in execution, variances in principal performance played a critical role, and brought to light two clear-cut impediments: First, there seemed to be a lack of clarity in principals' roles and responsibilities toward promoting and ensuring cultural competency. And to return to a problem addressed throughout this paper, how do we measure "cultural competency" within the walls of the school and individual classrooms? How do leaders harness information to make data-informed and action-oriented strategies to deepen conversations and move toward cultural proficiency?

I clearly observed that district and school leaders were ethically driven, to coach principals and teachers, respectively, when situations of diversity arose. Such instances of learning happened on a case-by-case basis, and were not integrated into existing collaborative structures. Thus, issues of diversity and difference came across as 'different and special' – not part of the existing structures that are in place to deal with any hurdles. All seven school leaders utilized coaching as a means to further the cultural competency of individual teachers. One school leader heightened the awareness with respect to deficit thinking (Guerra and Nelson, 2013) to effect school-wide change for increasing AP and honor course enrollment for African American and Hispanic/Latino students. Lastly, one school leader capitalized on the trainings to engage teachers in race/ethnicity discourse specific to African American male students and discipline. This school leader was the only one to develop a process to amalgamate cultural competency within the organizational learning structure to ensure cyclical discourse yearlong.

While the research on organizational cultural proficiency, although substantial with relation to the stress on policy, programs, and practices, is still nascent and developing. Nevertheless, the extant research still advocates for the efficacy of changes initiated within the context of structures, and specifically through processes within a given structure. Thus, an interrogation of professional learning practices is needed when it is void of structures, which allow for an understanding of roles and

responsibilities toward ethics (Furman and Shields, 2005) and introspection (Branson, 2007).

Conclusion and Implications

Although not district-wide, some principals and teachers built relationships with and valued their diverse students and families. These educators acted on their sense of duty [professional ethics] and did so notwithstanding the trainings. To advance toward a pluralistic-minded organization, it is befitting to move beyond the conventional approach. A metamorphosis of consciousness toward reverence for difference requires a reconstitution of institutional structures that demarcate clear paths between ethics, moral purpose, and cultural proficiency. Culturally proficient leadership is an inside out process of personal and organizational change. It is first and foremost who we are – more than what we do. This is predicated on one's courage and ability to examine one's self and the organization.

There are a number of crucial points with respect to culturally proficient districts and their school leaders and teachers. The systemic coherence was missing in this district, and this manifested itself in many ways. For example, district leaders were not present at cultural competency trainings to demonstrate their resolve and did not follow up with principals to see how the trainings and efforts were to be implemented. Not all principals were engaged in classroom walk-throughs to monitor the teaching and learning process and noteworthy was the lack of lessons on intercultural understanding at the student level. Instead schools engaged in "multicultural events" referred to by Derman-Sparks (1993) as the "tourist multicultural curriculum" (p. 69). Such disengagement leads to missed opportunities for inter-cultural discourse.

As an academic and scholar, I would like to add that our Universities are culpable in this lack of knowledge and skills. Preparation programs can enable the process of developing more culturally proficient teachers and leaders by continually assessing and reforming their programs and collaborating with State government and districts to encourage policies that further culturally proficient practices. In a state as diverse as Texas, it is inexcusable that professional standards in ethics addressing cultural proficiency are non-existent. Void of state policy, universities will minimize or eliminate courses, which advance cultural proficiency. A recommendation for further research is to explore university programs, which have a strong focus on ethics and cultural proficiency.

The last point to remember when examining the roles and responsibilities of school districts and universities is the ethical underpinning of education in the United States, which is mitigated by the belief that educational institutions play a significant role in shaping a democratic and socially just society. All too often we hear advocates for 'tolerance', I believe it is time we abandon that word and replace it with 'acceptance'. Even in schools where children are perceived to be culturally homogeneous –

educators are ethically obliged to prepare their students to interact appropriately and effectively with people who are different from them. After all, in a country as diverse and plurivocal as ours, do we simply settle for 'tolerating' difference?

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