



## A Philosophical Twist to the Scholar-Practitioner Tradition

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A new breed of leader is needed for American public schools, one who can both promote the public good and meet modern accountability demands. Often referred to as a scholar-practitioner, this type of leader blends theory with practice, philosophizing practice while practicing a philosophy. Such blending in a person is not simple, however, because practical and theoretical knowledge are qualitatively different. Instead, a blending of spectator-knowledge and participant knowledge is needed. Coupled with a thorough understanding of organizational realities, an awareness of these types of knowledge enables leaders to empower individuals within the schools, simultaneously fostering democratic principles, ensuring social justice, and giving voice to all.

### Introduction

We live in age of accountability, and the nature of that accountability is changing the very fabric of our social structure, a structure long rooted in democratic principles. Dewey (1937) saw the essence of these democratic principles as emerging from the idea that “no man or limited set of men is wise enough or good enough to rule others without their consent” (p. 457), meaning that all those who are affected by social processes should have a say in determining those processes. To accommodate this input, Dewey (1937) notes, “democratic political forms are simply the best means that human wit has devised” (p. 457) up to this point in history. As a result of this process, a reciprocal social and political

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relationship develops between a democratic people and their democratic government wherein the people determine what is “good” and the government devises the means of bringing that good about. In the spirit of maintaining, encouraging, and fostering that sort of democratic relationship in which each party holds the other mutually responsible for the common good, this paper examines the kind of leadership needed to bring about such results.

This paper bridges the foundations of various leadership traditions, practices, and trends of the past with the discourses of the present to argue that a philosophical twist to the scholar—practitioner tradition is capable of addressing the needs of current educational leaders. To do so, the authors examine the accountability movement, the role of leadership in schools, and the concept of scholar—practitioner leadership before discussing the concepts, counter arguments, means of leading, and the principles of voice, social justice, and democracy to twist the concept of scholar—practitioner leadership to meet today’s accountability demands.

### **The Rise of Accountability**

Many current educational practitioners would agree with Biesta’s (2004) contention that the demands of accountability are warping society’s social/political relationship with its government into an economic relationship which ultimately results in the deprofessionalization and, ironically, the increasing ineffectiveness of education. Comparing that contention to other views, as expressed by Bovens, Schillemans, & Hart, (2008), that “accountability is one of those golden concepts that no one can be against” (p. 225), leaves the field muddled at best. Academic literatures on accountability are rather disconnected (Bostrom & Garsten 2008), though the term has gained substantial political use for creating different, and shifting, meanings (Bovens, 2010). The beginning of this relational shift is rooted in confusion about what accountability really means. Biesta (2004) observes that the term has two distinct meanings, where, “in the general discourse,

accountability has to do with responsibility and carries connotations of “being answerable to,”” but in the technical-managerial realm “refers narrowly to the duty to present auditable accounts.” (p. 234). Despite the differences in meaning, the popular language of accountability “operates on the basis of a ‘quick switch’ between the two meanings, making it difficult to see an argument against accountability as anything other than a plea for irresponsible action” (p. 235).

Before the modern age ushered in the technical-managerial approach, the perception of accountability as merely a sense of mutual responsibility dominated. In this sense, teachers were accountable to themselves and their constituents as professionals, and it was a responsibility assumed by them through their professionalism. Additionally, schools were democratically accountable to society, as their reason for being was to promote the common good. In a sense, accountability was intrinsically motivated and did not arise from external demands. Biesta (2004) purports that, driven by some vague notion of “quality,” citizens have willingly—albeit unknowingly—allowed managerial accountability to push aside both the professional and democratic notions of accountability and to change the relationship between the state and the populace from a political one concerned about the common good (reference Dewey’s concept of democracy) to an economic one. In this new economic relationship, the state becomes a provider, the citizen becomes a consumer and the way the two relate fundamentally changes. As consumers, citizens enter in to a more formal relationship with the school and their interests become primarily economic.

Biesta (2004) also points out that, as consumers, citizens become more powerful and “seem to elicit behavior that suits the accountability system—behavior that suits the inspectors and those responsible for quality assurance—rather than to encourage professional and responsible action” (p. 240). As a result, it becomes more difficult for school officials to “act according to their professional judgment if it runs counter to the apparent needs

of the learner,” and similarly, it becomes more difficult for students and parents “to rely upon and ultimately trust the professionalism of educators and educational institutions” (p. 249). Parents demand “choice” and believe that such choice is democratic. Such choice, however, is just a product of a market system; consequently, “it should not be conflated with democracy, which is about public deliberation and the common good” (p. 237). In such a choice-driven system, educators are deprofessionalized and the focus of educational activity shifts to following the rules with, sadly, little discussion about the meaning or appropriateness of those rules. Continuing research findings and arguments related to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Dee, & Jacob, 2011; Normore, & Brooks, 2012; Webley, 2012; & Rowley & Wright, 2011) demand a new level of dialogue on leadership in schools in the era of accountability. Additionally, to add complexity to an already complex system, Jenlink (2014) argues that the current accountability system, despite its intentions, negatively impacts efforts to achieve social justice in schools.

### **Leadership in Schools**

Considering the effects of the culture of accountability described above, it becomes apparent that two tasks are now required of schools: they must continue to promote the societal good (few would argue against this), and they must do it while following the rules prescribed by the accountability system. Schools do, moreover, unquestionably maintain the responsibility to preserve, pass along, and promote the interests of society. Educators are the primary agents of this responsibility, and they are willing to bear the burden or they would not have entered the field. As such, they must keep this ultimate goal forefront and resist the temptation to hide behind the newly constructed façade of accountability, for “following the rules, however scrupulously, does not and will never save us from responsibility” (Biesta, 2004, p. 243). That said, it seems more important than ever to have capable educational leaders who can empower schools to accomplish this task. But what does such a leader look like and what sort of

challenges does that leader face? How do these leaders explore and internalize “cultural competence, education equity and social justice” (Miller & Martin, 2014, p.2), to lead diverse environments?

### ***Scholar-Practitioner Leadership***

In the adolescence of our conversion to managerial conceptions of accountability, Codd (1989) warned that resisting the temptation to confuse educational leadership with educational management was paramount. School leadership positions and the programs that prepare candidates for them increasingly define leadership in terms of “management, efficiency, and productivity . . . a view that is particularly inappropriate to educational institutions because it negates the educational purposes of those institutions” (p. 157). In this case, the educational purposes involve promoting the good of society and preserving the democratic ideal, not merely meeting the auditable demands of accountability.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) contend that this new definition of leadership is the product of a formal way of thinking which involves “break[ing] a social or educational system down into its basic parts to understand how it works” (p. 56). They further assert that meaning will not be found in the individual parts of the organization; it will be found as leaders and researchers “temper our system of meaning with a dose of post-modern self-analysis and . . . move to a new zone of cognition—a post-formal way of thinking” (p. 55). For these researchers, post-modern or post-formal ways of thinking demand that there is no existence “outside of the socio-historical process” (p. 60). The self is “de-centered” as a subject in the process and all of the context of a situation must be accounted for. Essentially, for a leader to attempt to arrive at meaning he/she must consider not only any personal convictions, but also what is going on in the environment, who else is in the environment, how those people will be affected, and how they will feel about the effects. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) maintain that the “frontier where the information of the disciplines

intersects with the understandings and experience that individuals carry with them to school is the point where knowledge is created” (p. 61) Thus, a special kind of leader, one who possesses both “information of the disciplines” and a sensitivity for individual experience, will be required.

Educational leaders, whatever their personal philosophical stance, must ultimately act—that is, after all, their job—and they must be aware that their actions have real consequences for real people (Bailey, 2010). As an additional influence, they must also now act in ways that will “fit” their given accountability systems. These leaders may derive the stimuli for their actions from one of three ways: they may select from a menu of theories developed by the scholars of educational administration (a choice which may prove insensitive to those upon whom they act); they may act on impulse, guided by intuition, experience, and common sense (which minimizes the “information of the disciplines”); or, they may develop a “philosophical critique of practice in which deliberative action is derived from a combination of empirical and interpretive modes of inquiry that have been brought to bear upon both the public domain of extant theory and the private domain of common sense” (Codd, 1989, p. 168). It is this last alternative that allows the leader to meet the demands of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) by blurring the lines between theory and practice, bringing to bear their “information of the disciplines,” their personal experience, and their sensitivity towards others. Mullen (2003) refers to such a scholar–practitioner as a change agent; similarly, Hebert (2010) states, “leaders that choose the scholar–practitioner way of life will tend to remain effective and motivated for many years to come, as the impact of the lives of such change agents continue to impact our students” (p. 29).

The type of leader that Codd (1989, p. 6) initially describes is now commonly referred to as a scholar-practitioner leader, and for the moment, Horn’s (2002) definition of scholar-practitioners as those who “engage in the interplay between theory and practice,” allowing them to “recognize the ubiquity of their interaction with

others and that this is mediated and informed by conversation” (p. 83) will suffice. Additionally, Jenlink (2003) states that the work of a scholar-practitioner leader is “that of the public intellectual, work which is situated in cultural and political contexts of difference” (p. 3). The definitions of both scholar-practitioners and their work reaffirm Kincheloe and Steinberg’s (1999) notions of decentralization of self and understanding in the socio-historical context.

### ***Arguments Against Scholar-Practitioner Leadership***

The idea of the scholar-practitioner leader has been well-accepted into the educational community, perhaps to the point that, as was the case for the standards of accountability noted above, to argue against scholar-practitioner leadership is to argue for some other form of flawed leadership. To that end, Saugstad’s (2002) observation that it is “one of the conventions of the educational world that there has to be a close connection between theory and practice and that these two entities should be involved in a fruitful relationship with each other” is well-supported in the literature, and such a leader who blends theory and practice is often referred to as a scholar-practitioner (Anderson & Saavedra, 2002; Hebert, 2010; Horn, 2002; Jenlink, 2001, 2002, 2003). Saugstad (2002), however, also notes that the assumptions and generalizations that often result from such conventions often lead to false understandings; in fact, they can become so prevalent that little room is left for forming alternatives. He contends that any relationship that exists between theory and practice is necessarily more complex than the prevailing convention would have it be, primarily because theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge “are of qualitatively different categories and therefore cannot automatically enter into a fruitful relation” (p. 374).

Saugstad (2002) posits that the root of the problem lies in the fact that the terms “theory” and “practice” both “depend upon an intuitive everyday understanding” (p. 374) of their meaning without further demand for definition, a situation which allows for

conceptual confusion and misunderstanding. For instance, a casual understanding of the terms can lead to a conflicting view of how they are related. As Saugstad (2002) observes, “put simply, in one perspective theory is understood to be normative for practice and in the other perspective theory is understood to be derived from practice” (p. 375). Consequently, even though both perspectives link theory and practice, they do so in very different ways. The first perspective identifies the link as the practical application of scientific knowledge (using the concept to solve the problem), while the second perspective results in the formulation of theory based on the results of practice (deriving the concept by solving the problem). Essentially, this is the same situation which fuels the debate between those who favor direct instruction and those who favor constructivist approaches. However, the bottom line is that this dichotomy must be explained in order for scholar-practitioner leadership to remain valid. To accomplish this task, Saugstad (2002) proposes that future understanding of the difference between theory and practice should be couched in an Aristotelian perspective, reflecting the possibility that successful theory and practice may be founded in different types of knowledge.

Aristotle, as Saugstad (2002) explains, divides knowledge into two categories: theoretical and practical. Theoretical knowledge is “scientific, certain, eternal, and universal” and “concerns everything that exists through necessity.” Theoretical knowledge is connected to “contemplative” activities, the purpose of which is to “give man an insight to the cosmos” (p. 378). Practical knowledge, on the other hand, “concerns itself with everything that does not exist out of necessity” and cannot become certain because it is experienced-based, “affected by practical life’s shifting circumstances, human intervention, and pure chance.” Such practical knowledge results from man’s intervention with the surrounding world, “either by production and making or by political, social, and ethical actions” (p. 378).

The most important distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge, however, lies in the fact that each is learned in a



decidedly different way (Saugstad, 2002). Theoretical learning is abstract and can be acquired by anyone at any time. Practical knowledge can only be acquired through first-hand experience and cannot be learned in any other way. Willand (2003) offers the example of learning about war. Through study, one can learn much about war, including its causes, tactics, effects, costs, history, etc., but unless one actually experiences war, there is no possibility of understanding what war is like. Similarly, though one can read about making ice cream, one cannot know how it tastes unless actually experiencing it. Furthermore, the educational implications of this position are enormous. Through research and study one can amass all kinds of theoretical knowledge about issues that affect the school—issues such as being poor, an African American, a migrant, an outcast, an emotionally-disturbed kid, a learning-disabled kid, or even a smart kid, for instance—but knowing what it is like to be any of those people is impossible. That is a practical form of knowledge which they alone possess, but it is a knowledge that is crucial to the successful practice of an educational leader.

Cast in this light, it is no stretch to see that all practical learning is situational and intensely individualistic as opposed to theoretical learning which remains abstract and unchanging. Consequently, there can be no one-to-one relation between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge; that is, no specific theory necessarily applies to a given practice at a given time. Ultimately then, Saugstad's (2002) assertion that theoretical and practical knowledge are qualitatively different is correct and the two kinds of knowledge are not necessarily coherent and compatible. This is not, however, a dead end.

### ***A new concept of scholar—practitioner leadership***

Saugstad (2002) proposes that redefining the terms theory and practice will open the field to new possibilities. That which was formerly known as theoretical knowledge is more aptly labeled “spectator-knowledge,” and that which was known as practical

knowledge is more appropriately called “participant-knowledge.” Not only are these terms more accurate, their meanings are more self-evident. Spectator-knowledge is that which is gained through study and observation, and, though it can inform practice, it is not sufficient to determine it. Likewise, participant-knowledge is fundamental, intuitive, and individualistic; thus, though it is necessary for practice, it alone (from an individual standpoint) cannot form theory. The two are inter-dependent.

As noted above, the scholar-practitioner is commonly viewed as one who blends theory and practice, but as the subsequent discussion made evident, such blending is not always possible. The scholar-practitioner is in a position of acting in ways that immediately and powerfully affect the lives of people. The purposes of these actions should be twofold: first, they should promote the common good, and second, in order to reduce the potential for discord, they must promote the school’s accountability within the given system. Taking such actions must be informed by knowledge of the system and those within it. Even though the leader can amass a wealth of spectator-knowledge (“the knowledge of the disciplines”) he/she must rely on the input of others to provide enough participant-knowledge to mitigate the effectiveness, the fairness, the equity, and the justice of the decisions he/she makes. Giroux (2001), Mullen and Tuten (2010), Shields (2010), and Jenlink (2010) point out some critical obligations of scholar–practitioner leaders. One such obligation is to open “a space for disputing conventional academic borders and raising the questions” (Giroux, 2001, p. 8). Here, then, appears the need of criticality and cultural awareness as foundational blocks scholar—practitioner leadership.

For the purposes of this discussion, scholar-practitioner leadership, rather than being abstracted from educational leadership, will be treated as a particular form of educational leadership. Furthermore, the term will be used in a way that reflects the leader’s awareness of spectator- and participant-knowledge. Like any educational leader, the primary goal of the scholar-practitioner

leader is to effectively transition the school to ever greater levels of student achievement (the primary good) and stakeholder satisfaction (the constraints of accountability). The primary difference between the scholar-practitioner leader—particularly one who is sensitive to the nature and importance of his/her position—and other leaders, however, is the way the scholar-practitioner accomplishes that task. Examining how a scholar-practitioner moves a school forward is essential to understanding the value of scholar-practitioner leadership.

### ***The Means of Scholar-Practitioner Leadership***

Scholar-practitioners should have sufficient spectator-knowledge to give them a commanding view of the field in which they operate. In brief, they must know something about organizations, about the role of individuals within those organizations, and about how the organization impinges upon the lives of those individuals. The latter can be obtained only through participant-knowledge, which can be gained only indirectly. To that end, the scholar-practitioner must surround him/herself with individuals who can contribute that knowledge, which, in itself, connotes a democratic ideal. An examination of each of these factors is in order.

### ***The nature of organizations***

Greenfield (1984) argues that organizations, particularly schools, are not a result of some natural order; rather, they are product of human invention. As a result, they are also prone to human capriciousness and are best understood in that context, “from a sense of the concrete events and personalities within them rather than from a set of abstractions or general laws” (p. 143). Furthermore, viewing organizations as “non-natural entities” grounds them “in meanings, in human intentions, actions, and experience” instead of some “ultimate reality” or unifying, controlling theory (p. 150). Essentially, then, organizations are no more than the collective experiences, personalities, and

consciousnesses of the people who comprise them; they are the sum of the collective participant-knowledge within the system.

Wheatley (1999), however, contends that organizations are more than just the sum of their parts, however endemic those parts are to the organization. In fact, summing the parts yields an entity, whether natural or not, that far transcends the parts. This concept is evident in every aspect of school, as the learning community, acting in common, regularly achieves much more than could be achieved through individual efforts. Importantly, though, valuing the individual's contribution to the whole remains important, for without those efforts, the whole would cease to exist. Ideally, Wheatley (1999) adds, "Each organism maintains a clear sense of individual identity within the larger network of relationships that helps shape its identity. Each being is noticeable as a separate entity, yet is simultaneously a part of the whole system" (p. 80). The organizational leader's responsibility becomes "one of providing the opportunity for the organization to grow naturally, not coercively. As the leader allows nature to take its course, creativity will emerge" (p. 83). Removing barriers and debris from the leader's and followers' surroundings allows for the natural transcendence of each individual to occur; consequently, the organization becomes stronger.

Based on the argument thus far, if organizations are to move forward, then the individuals within them must also move forward. To that end, Donaldson (2006) contends that there must be sufficient unity and cohesion within the organization so that once individuals start moving forward they are able to all move in the same general direction. Similarly, Senge (1990) discusses the importance of shared vision among the members of the organization: "When there is a shared vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar "vision statement"), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to" (p. 9). Carrying forward the spirit of learning organizations, he adds that "organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning.

But without it, no organizational learning occurs” (p. 9). The school leader accepts that schools are learning organizations and strives to cultivate learning throughout.

Unfortunately, many times in organizations learning is stifled and human needs are sacrificed upon the altar of managerial accountability. The result is a loss of ownership by members of the group. Members become, at best, dissatisfied or, at worst, completely disenfranchised. As a result, the potential to achieve greatness is minimized and the organization as a whole as well as the individuals who comprise it suffer. The organization’s collective success must derive from and be a product of the individual member’s successes (Senge, 1990). In that regard, celebrating even the smallest achievements of members fosters natural desires within the individual, pushing them and the entire organization forward.

### ***The role of the individual within the school***

Fazzaro, Walter, and McKerrow (1994) argue that “American public education is not an island unto itself in a dynamic social sea” (p. 92). Rather, the public schools are an integral part of the fabric of society. At one time or another, practically every individual in this society will play some in role in a public school. As a result, schools have the responsibility to simultaneously meet the needs of individual students, such as preparing them for valuable, productive futures, and also to promote the “sociopolitical good.” To that end, the “original theoretical purpose of universal public education in America included the perpetuation of the democratic ideals upon which the republic was founded” (p. 85). Ideally, then, the perpetuation of democratic ideals will include some practice with the basic process of democracy. The inclusion of democratic practices facilitates the inclusion of diverse individuals and groups which increases the store of participant-knowledge from which the scholar-practitioner can draw. Additionally, current accountability systems favor the inclusion of such peoples.

## *Democracy*

Based in part on the above arguments, there is a call for democracy within today's schools. As society becomes more diverse, so do the needs of its members, and a primary need is practice and training in the art of democracy. Starrat (2001) points out that in the United States democracy takes two forms: first, there is the representative form of the government, in which citizens elect leaders to represent their views at various levels in the government; second, there is "the traditional usage of the word that refers to social forms of living together as equals under the law, citizens with moral bonds to one another, yet each free to pursue their own interests" (p. 334). However, conflict often arises from competing interests within the society, leading Taylor (1998) to ask how "people can associate and be bonded together in difference, without abstracting from these differences" (p. 214). As a partial answer, consider Starrat's (2001) suggestion "that a qualified form of democratic leadership of schools is not only possible, but also necessary" (p. 335) in order to model successful democratic behavior and ameliorate the potentially divisive effects of diversity.

In order to model democracy in action effectively, Apple and Beane (1995) purport that "in a democratic school it is true that all of those directly involved in the school, including the young people, have the right to participate in the process of decision making." Ideally, this sort of arrangement provides everyone with a chance to promote individual interests and to share their personal participant-knowledge with others. The successful democratic leader values and utilizes the authentic input offered by both school and community members. Thus, a sense of ownership materializes and stakeholders feel validated through the process.

Schools should be designed to educate all students and, in the process, teach and model true participatory democracy. Codd (1989) agrees, noting that "if schools are to educate for a

democracy, they must embody within their own structures such central moral principles as justice, freedom, and respect for persons, combined with an overriding concern for truth” (p. 177). This authentic modeling of the desired results is essential. Every group and individual is important to the organizational makeup. “In the ideal democratic state, education should promote social criticism, not reinforce, for example, any elitist, racist, or sexist practices that might exist” (Fazzaro, Walter, & McKerrow, 1994, p. 89). A collaborative effort can only be achieved if all stakeholders feel valued.

Democratic participation, as argued by Anderson (1998), “is justifiable on the grounds that it is educative and provides a development process in which social actors become more knowledgeable about their choices and aware of their own beliefs” (pp. 584-585). As members come to participate democratically in the organization, educational leaders facilitate multiple layers of authentic learning for everyone. The participant knowledge gained through the participation process is shared by individuals and will ultimately spread to affect the entire group.

In theory, many leaders express a desire for democracy within their schools; moreover, many even claim to operate within a democratic organization, but hidden below the verbiage lies a different truth. Many schools continue to function through authoritarian leadership with a top-down hierarchal structure. Anderson (1996) shares that many administrators do not want a vocal majority; they actually prefer to silence any “disruptive” voices so that elite power is not questioned. The inability or lack of desire to practice democracy creates disconnect among the members of the organization. It is important to note, however, that such an experience could prove to be negative and harmful when the democracy is discovered to be inauthentic (Anderson, 1998). Participants may become disillusioned with, disinterested in, and disconnected from the process. Participation and connection are two key components of democracy. Wheatley (1999) stresses the importance of keeping every member interconnected throughout

the organization. Other authors (Donaldson, 2006; Duffy, 2003; Fullan, 2001) reinforce the point, stressing the importance of maintaining strong, healthy connections and relationships as a way to facilitate success and cultivate authentic democratic participation. A scholar—practitioner has to show the courage of initiating difficult dialogue and change and the skills to facilitate the process (Boler, 2010), both non-traditional leadership skills. Starratt (2005) hammers traditional classroom practices, which can also be correlated to traditional leadership practice, referring to learning in an autocratic or nondemocratic environment: “this form of learning is posed learning, phony, fake, superficial learning. Indeed, this learning is morally harmful” (p. 402). The only solution is democracy (Dewey, 1916) and a pedagogy of freedom (Freire, 1998), which are the core philosophical foundations of leadership for social justice.

### *Social justice*

All of the discourse on democracy ultimately leads to the question: Who participates, in what areas and under what conditions, and to ask: Participation toward what end? What is the meaning of democracy? The answer that Dewey (1916) presents is freedom of mind. To extend, Anderson (1998) insists that to be authentic, participation must “include relevant stakeholders and create relatively safe, structured spaces for voices to be heard” (p. 575). He further argues that even though these measures address the nature of participation, they fail to address the ultimate ends of participation. For Anderson (1998), the ultimate ends of democracy should be “the constitution of a democratic citizenry and redistributive justice for disenfranchised groups.” In educational terms, this equates to “more equal levels of student achievement and improved social and academic outcomes for all students” (p. 575). Thus, authentic participation should result in “the strengthening of habits of direct democratic participation and the achievement of greater learning outcomes and social justice for all participants” (p. 576). Leaders’ critical self-reflection (Dantley



and Tillman, 2009) is important to their abilities to foster social justice through participative means.

Fostering a socially just practice and stepping toward increasing participation and re-enfranchising those who have been pushed to the sides of the system is to determine exactly who those people are. Friere (2010) maintains that, regardless of the reasons, the poor and people of color are most likely to be silenced within organizations. Often historical and structural forces work to reinforce this isolation; in fact, the origin of much of it can be traced back to the schools. Oakes (1986) points out that, as schools struggled to educate diverse groups of learners, they turned to tracking as an answer. Standardized testing became the primary tool of sorting, providing a seemingly scientific and equitable solution to the problem; at the time, “this solution defined student differences and appropriate educational treatments in social as well as educational terms” (p. 150). Importantly, however, Oakes (1986) argues that tracking was more than a solution to an instructional problem—it provided a means of social control. Ultimately, tracking “helped to institutionalize beliefs about race and class differences in intellectual abilities and to erect structural obstacles to the future social, political, and economic opportunities of those who were not white and native-born” (p. 150). Successful scholar-practitioners believe in and are capable of breaking down the class structures and diversity issues that provide obstacles to social justice. They do this by viewing the world through a lens which allows them to see through class structures and realize inherent equality of people. Leaders develop this lens through both reflection and action (Furman, 2012).

To illustrate the difference social class can make, Bates (1984) notices that the children of the working class are often seen as inferior, as an enemy, and that when conflicts arise in schools, they predominately involve this group of children. The needs of these children are often not met. He further argues that the middle class children are often viewed as cogs in a machine, and these students meet stifling, bureaucratized relationships in school.

Though their needs are met, most of the children in this group are awash in a sea of anonymity. Meanwhile, children of the upper class are treated as negotiators, as rational adults. They are treated as individuals, with special attention aimed at meeting their needs; they represent a powerful manipulative force within the same organization (Bates, 1984). Ultimately, the responsibility of valuing all members equally and treating all members fairly falls in hands of the educational leader. And these leaders assess their practices through reflection which is a critical underpinning of growth and learning (Dewey, 2005).

The oppression of the poor and working class is not limited to children, but is a problem that runs rampant throughout the lives of poor and minority adults as well. Anderson (1998) states that “many advocates of poor and disenfranchised groups claim that participation of any form holds out the possibility of greater accountability from educational institutions that have tended to at best ignore them and at worst to pathologize them” (p. 582). People should not be labeled as good or bad based on the environment they come from or what color of skin they have. Giroux (1994) argues that, unfortunately, “many educators view different languages and backgrounds in students as deficits to be corrected rather than as strengths to build upon” (p. 41.) Every individual possesses the capability to learn and contribute as a productive member of the organization or school and should be afforded the opportunity to do so. Individuals from the working class can think creatively just like those from the upper class. Each person offers a unique perspective on and knowledge of various issues and should be validated as important.

### ***Voice***

If each individual offers a unique perspective, then, according to Greenfield (1984) it is because each individual experiences a unique, perspectival reality, a reality that is “woven by human will from stuff created from our imagination and colored by our personal interests” (p. 142). Because there is no objective means

of determining the legitimacy of anyone's "reality," in a democratic system each person should be free to express his or her own perspective, unhindered by issues or race, class, or gender. In fact, "the crux of this argument is that we can do nothing to validate our perceptions of reality other than to describe it as we see it and argue for the truth of our description" (p. 142). This is an example of the participant-knowledge that can be shared, but cannot be experienced by another.

Making this critical argument, however, requires that each individual has free and legitimate access to the political process. As noted in the discussion above, this is not always the case. Often, certain individuals and/or groups have lost their "voice." McElroy-Johnson (1993) does a remarkable job of explaining the concept of voice and all that it entails. Just as each individual has a unique fingerprint, each individual has a unique and distinguishing voice. Moreover, each person actually possesses two voices: an outer voice heard by others and an inner voice heard only by the self. Due to personal and cultural factors, many people—particularly those who are members of oppressed groups—find that even contacting the inner voice becomes difficult (if not uncomfortable), much less expressing and heeding it. Consequently, these people become so accustomed to hearing the voices of others that they lose touch with their personal voices, sometimes even displacing someone else's voice for their own. When this displacement occurs, social justice is denied. Brown (2006) asserted, "schools in a racially diverse society will require leaders and models of leadership that will address the racial, cultural, and ethnic makeup of the school community" (p. 585).

When an individual allows someone else to speak for him or her, that individual retreats from and loses a place in the political process. Voices become silenced; identity fades; injustices emerge; and, oppression begins. McElroy-Johnson (1993) uses the term voice when she references the "strong sense of identity within an individual, an ability to express a personal point of view, and a sense of personal well-being." Moreover, "voice is identity,

a sense of self, a sense of relationship to others, and a sense of purpose. Voice is power—power to express ideas and convictions, power to direct and shape an individual life towards a productive and positive fulfillment for self, family, community, nation, and the world” (pp. 85-86). Working from such an articulate, cogent, and powerful definition of voice, it naturally follows that establishing and maintaining legitimate, genuine voice is fundamental to ensuring social justice and democracy.

## **Conclusion**

As noted above, American public schools are now shackled in chains of accountability. The pressures to meet constantly changing standards lead to practices which serve to deprofessionalize educators and marginalize certain parts of the citizenry. Additionally, the pressure to remain accountable encourages standardization and detracts from the school’s purpose of promoting the public good. As a result, a new breed of leader is needed to guide the schools through these troubling times, at once promoting the public good and remaining accountable. This type of leader needs to be a public intellectual (Jenlink, 2003), and socially just, moral and transformative individual (Dantley & Tillman, 2009). This leader advocates for change and practice and becomes the change agents (Hebert, 2010; Mullen, 2003). These leaders also embody strong moral assets (Starratt, 2005), criticality (Giroux, 2001), and democratic practice (Dewey, 2016). This type of leader is often referred to as a scholar-practitioner who blends theory with practice.

This paper has demonstrated that such blending is not quite so simple, because practical and theoretical knowledge are qualitatively different and do not accurately reflect the goal of leadership. What is needed is the blending of spectator-knowledge and participant knowledge, which will, as Johnston (1994) notes, allow the leader to “address the cultural meanings and purposes that organizational participants bring with them to school and that develop as a consequence of participation in the daily routines of

the institution” (p. 127). He further notes that this type of understanding will lead to research that combines the “story” of an event with its analysis, making it “more legitimate and useful” than the forms of quantitative research that “maintain separation between knowledge and the social occasion of knowledge use” (p. 127).

Coupled with a thorough understanding of organizational realities, an awareness of these types of knowledge enables leaders to empower individuals within the schools, simultaneously fostering democratic principles, ensuring social justice, and giving voice to all. It is only through these means that the schools can remain accountable and continue their original mission of promoting the common good. Greenfield (1984) wraps up this notion most cogently when he observes that “the gist of this argument is that schools, and also organizations in general, are best understood in context, from a sense of the concrete events and personalities [and particular participant-knowledge] within them rather than from a set of abstractions or general laws [provided by theoretical knowledge]” (p. 143). ). Understanding organizations and the individuals who comprise them in such a way—by taking into account their socio-historical context and unique realities—is central to our new model of effective scholar-practitioner leadership. It is the time of conceptualizing leaders as scholar—practitioners who can truly practice leadership for social justice (Jenlink, 2014) and whose work remains unfinished (Freire, 2010).

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