

Chapter 13

Toward Social Justice: Leadership's Crucial Role in an Increasingly Expansive Technology- Dependent Context

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ABSTRACT

This chapter asserts that transformative leadership is essential to educational organizations. The authors identify andragogical leadership as synonymous with transformative leadership, with critical attributes hinged upon activism, praxis, technology, and social justice supporting adult learning. The transformative leader can engage in dialogue with their learners/employees to facilitate critical consciousness through a constructivist framework and provide evidenced-based feedback. The orientation of this chapter focuses on what social justice is and why it is central to leadership, access and use of technology as a form of social justice, the essential role of dialogue and inquiry for the andragogical leader, where learning takes place, and the necessity of transformative leadership to move organizations further along the social justice continuum to enact change for the modern world. This chapter contributes to the knowledge base of transformative leadership as a promising vehicle to address the growing need for humane (expansive/accessible) learning spaces.

BACKGROUND

Educational technology use continues to expand; it thereby impacts learning by both increasing access to knowledge and altering the way we learn. At both the K-12 level and the post-secondary level, some students and instructors/employees may not yet see technology as an opportunity. Leaders must recognize technology as a tool and refrain from being reactionary. For example, adopting all new technology

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every year is rarely the right option without examining outcomes from extant tools and practices. If we consider technology a tool, we must understand learning; learners; curricular decisions based on learning theory; and people. Considering all of these facets, leaders must be able to “...promote an environment of professional learning and innovation that empowers educators to enhance student learning through the infusion of contemporary technologies and digital resources” (ISTE, 2023).

As an advocate for citizenship and equity and given that technology can expand access for all, leaders must be able to envision technology uses for social justice. Holding this vision while embracing the potentiality of contemporary technologies and digital resources, the leader’s ability to facilitate the use of technology will be crucial to moving employees, learners, and staff forward. To do so, leaders must (in part): know about whom they are supporting; be courageous; encourage creativity; and support others by making decisions based on learning theory.

This chapter was written to support the educational leader in promoting professional learning and innovation. To do so, the chapter provides theoretical understanding so leaders may consider and form the rationale for their leadership decisions. The chapter also guides leaders who are navigating new technologies as well as the management of transitions for learners/employees. Some examples of these decisions are how to allocate budgets for hardware and teacher training (Scghaffhauser, 2016). The leader must consider what they know about themselves as a learner, what they believe about learning, and the leadership practices they will enact. These practices include creating a culture learners/employees are empowered to use technology in innovative ways to enrich learning.

The authors’ purpose for writing this chapter is to support leaders committed to social justice. These leaders realize the crucial role of technology in expanding access, recognize the importance of supporting the growth of others, and are concurrently developing their own capacities to engage, connect, and lead (Drago-Severson et al., 2023). Expansive, liberating use of technology must include the leaders’ ability to move beyond technology management toward a transformative leadership style. In contrast to transformational or transactional leadership, transformative leadership begins with the end in mind and fiercely advocates for justice and democracy (Shields, 2010).

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is known to impact educational organizations; those with dynamic skill sets can lead to an organization’s success (Bass, 2008; Collins, 2001). The authors assert that dynamic skill sets for the modern world reflect the beliefs and praxis of a transformative leader. Transformative leadership is grounded in social justice; such leaders demonstrate the potential to engage in equitable and inclusive democratic practices. “Transformative educational leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice” (Shields, 2010). The modern world also reflects increased access to and use of technology as the educational landscape shifts and changes to adapt to the assets and needs of learners/employees. The transformative leader uses technology as a tool to support adult learners and the growth of the organization.

This chapter will provide insights and practical strategies for individuals participating in graduate leadership programs, graduate faculty, students, researchers, and librarians in leadership programs, and any other leader interested in learning more about transformative leadership and the integration of technology. The focus is to present the authors’ perspectives and ideas, encourage the reader to think

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