Chapter 10
Leading as a Socially Just Practice: Examining Educational Leading Through a Practice Lens

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Abstract Educational leadership scholarship has typically focused on the practices of individuals or the interconnections between individuals in a practice. Critics of these approaches argue that they overlook questions of power, politics, and the cultural specificity of sites of practice. This chapter responds to these criticisms by proffering an alternative approach to educational leadership scholarship. Drawing on a case study of a previously monocultural school which had become increasingly multicultural, it employs a practice theory lens through which to examine attempts by the school executive to enact leadership as a socially just practice. In particular, it examines how the school executive challenged specific arrangements in order to bring into being changes in the intersubjective spaces in which leaders, teachers, and (Anglophone and ethnically diverse) students encountered one another. This endeavour is revealed as contested, contradictory, and only partially successful.

In this chapter I argue that bringing into being more sustainable and socially just leading and teaching practices requires theorising classrooms, staffrooms, playgrounds and schools more broadly as sites of practice. Examining and interrogating the nexus of arrangements – language and specialised discourses, activities and material arrangements, and relationships of solidarity and power – which hold socially unjust practices in place is a first step in this process. Bringing into being more socially just practices also necessitates a focus on the ecological interconnections between leading as a practice, and the related practices of enacting policy, professional learning, researching and reflecting, and students' learning practices. On the basis of an ecological understanding of the interrelationships between practices, the practice knowledge of individual teachers and formal leaders may be challenged and transformed. It is in this challenging and transforming that the broader educative purpose of leading as socially just practice and praxis may be realised.

Leading practices – be they formal or informal, school, district or central office based – both shape and are shaped by, transform and are transformed by, the site-specific arrangements with which they are enmeshed. Leading *as a socially just*

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practice is composed of a set of practical and political actions, i.e., actions which cannot be foretold or steered at a distance by central policies, implementation plans, or accountability mechanisms. Leading practices are struggled over, hard-won, constantly contested, and must be interactionally secured in the moment-by-moment 'happening-ness' of practices within specific sites (Kemmis et al. 2014; Schatzki 2002).

In this chapter, I examine this struggle through the lens of leading practices at Regional High School,[1] a largely monocultural secondary school which had become increasingly multicultural due to the arrival of refugee origin students from Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. In this respect, Regional High School was part of a broader trend of growing ethnic diversity in urban and regional locations in OECD nations (cf. Major et al. 2013; Makwarimba et al. 2013; Whiteman 2005). In particular, I examine how changes in the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political conditions for leading and professional learning practices at the school fostered the emergence of transformed sets of discourses, activities, and relationships. These changes suggested that some educators and students were experiencing a growing sense of shared responsibility for socially just practices.

Importantly, these changes did not occur in isolation from the broader practice landscape in which the school was embedded. For instance, leading practices within the lifeworld of the school site 'travelled' out to, and connected up with, regional and state offices of the Department of Education responsible for schools in the state (Wilkinson et al. 2013b). They connected to discourses emanating from specific departmental equity and anti-racist policies, through specific funding and resourcing arrangements linked to these policies, and in the relationships between practices that were shaped by these discursive and material arrangements. These arrangements supported more receptive conditions for fostering socially just and inclusive educational practices in the school.

In examining these transformations in practices, I adopt the verb, 'leading', rather than the noun, 'leadership', in order to draw attention to the dynamic nature of leading as a 'practice-changing practice' (Wilkinson and Kemmis 2015) which is "exercised and transacted" (Southworth 2008, p. iii). This is in contrast to much educational leadership scholarship, which, despite adopting the rhetoric of distributed and/or shared leadership, still tends towards a notion of leadership as a static condition unproblematically invested in formal authority roles such as the principalship (Kemmis et al. 2014; Wilkinson et al. 2013b). In using this term, I seek to deliberately trouble educational leadership research which has tended to view leading practices through the prism of charismatic *individuals*, or as *role incumbents* in organisations such as principals or managers (cf. Wilkinson and Kemmis 2015). Using the term 'leading' focuses attention on the ontological nature of leading as a practice. It draws the gaze to the *connections between practices* of leading and other related practices, such as enacting policy (Braun et al. 2010), professional learning, teaching, and students' learning enacted in specific sites. This is in contrast to theories such as distributed leadership, which focus on how

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

participants in a practice (e.g., leaders, teachers, students, central office, and district staff) connect up together (Wilkinson and Kemmis 2015). Foregrounding practices, rather than the participants in a practice, does not dismiss the role of personal agency. Rather, it highlights the critical role that specific sites play in enabling and shaping the conditions for changing practices (Wilkinson and Kemmis 2015).

Furthermore, I distinguish between the positional leading practices of those participants who hold formal positions of authority – such as the Principal and Deputy Principal of Regional High School, Regional District's Equity Officer, and Regional Director – and the informal leading practices of everyday practitioners at Regional High School, such as its counsellors, English as an Additional Language or Dialect [EALD] teachers, and School Support Officers (Ethnic).[2] In making these distinctions, I draw on Northern European pedagogical understandings of leading practice as a shared responsibility – in the more holistic sense of the moral and social formation of the whole child – i.e., 'education as up-bringing' (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008).

In the remainder of the chapter, I first sketch the case study and its methods. I then examine the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political conditions at Regional High School and its District Office, which were conducive for the carriage of practices of shared responsibility for social justice. Specifically, I examine how the leading practices of the school, district and central office, along with other educational practices such as enacting policy and professional learning, connected up in ways that supported the creation of these conditions of receptivity. I also sketch disconnections between leading practices and other crucial sites of practice – teaching and students' academic learning – which hindered a greater movement of shared responsibility for socially just practices. I conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical utility – as well as limitations – of the concepts of practice architectures (cf. Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008; Mahon et al. 2017, Chapter 1, this volume) and ecologies of practices (cf. Kemmis et al. 2012a) when it comes to examining leading practices as sites of and for social justice.

Negotiating Institutional Practice Architectures in Turbulent Times: The Case of Regional High School

In 2004, in response to declining populations and labour market shortages in regional Australia, the Australian Federal Government enacted a change to refugee policy, declaring that up to 45 % of all humanitarian settlers should be located in the regions (Withers and Powall 2003). As a result, the previously monocultural face of a number of regional centres began to alter. Settlers who were 'visibly different' from the largely white population arrived and took up residence in local communities, shopping, attending schools, worshipping in churches, participating in sport and

[2] The title 'School Support Officer (Ethnic)' was the formal title employed by the Department of Education and Training at the time this study was conducted. Hence, I have elected to use this title.

attending schools and community colleges. For instance, between 2003 and 2011, humanitarian entrants from a variety of African nations were settled in significant numbers in New South Wales, the state in which our case study was located. The figures for primary settlement of African origin refugees at the time of the study included a total of 1505 refugees distributed amongst four regional cities in New South Wales. In terms of Sudanese-born people (the group which were predominantly represented amongst the students in the case study school) the 2006 census recorded 19,050 Sudan-born people in Australia, an increase of 287.7 % from the 2001 census (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC] 2011).

Yet, despite this changing demographic for Regional High School and other similar public schools located in regional settings, little research has been specifically conducted on the implications for *educational practices* (teachers, administrators, district staff, and students) of this shift in previously more monocultural locations. This is even though access to services, as well as knowledge and expertise about EALD students, is limited in regional and rural Australia, with the exception of a handful of culturally diverse regional locations. Hence, the case study of Regional High School, *Examining school leadership and pedagogical practices in an ethnically diverse school in regional New South Wales* attempted to fill this gap. It examined the shifts which may have occurred in the leadership and teaching practices of the school in response to increasing student diversity (cf. Wilkinson and Langat 2012; Wilkinson et al. 2013a).

The case study was conducted from 2009 to 2010 and consisted of interviews with the Principal and two Deputy Principals; Careers Counsellor; Maths Head Teacher; EALD Head Teacher; School Support Officer (Ethnic); and the region's Equity Coordinator. Two focus groups were also held with mainstream classroom teachers from the following faculties: Technology and Applied Studies [TAS], Physical Education, Mathematics, English/History, Science, and Visual Art. Focus groups were also conducted with the school's two welfare counsellors; the EALD teachers; two focus groups with EALD students; and a focus group with students from ethnic majority backgrounds.

Analysis was initially conducted through the use of NVIVO software in order to code, categorise and link ideas, and accurately annotate each transcript. Three themes emerged from this analysis: (1) the challenges for EALD students and educators when it came to students settling into a previously monocultural school; (2) the development of whole school practices for social justice and inclusion; and (3) the role of teaching practices in enabling and/or constraining students' ethnic diversity. This chapter will focus on the second of these themes.

Developing Whole School Practices of/for Social Justice and Inclusion

For Regional High School, increasing numbers of EALD students, and, in particular, those from refugee backgrounds from a variety of African countries, posed a number of significant challenges and opportunities for administrators, teachers, and students

(both of refugee origin and non-refugee origin). Although these issues may be familiar to many schools in urban environments, they were new to the region. In the past, a small number of EALD students came to Regional High School, including refugees from the former Yugoslavia and Iran, but the larger numbers and increased learning and behavioural complexities associated with this new group of EALD students from diverse African nations, posed new issues with which the school initially struggled.

Specifically, a number of students were not literate in their first language and, due to civil war and long periods of time in refugee camps, had either interrupted or no schooling, prior to arrival in Australia. The cultural-discursive conditions of learning and teaching practices in Australian classrooms are still largely predicated on the discourse of the literate learner, i.e., constructs of the Anglo-Australian student who has had years of continuous formal schooling based on engagement with written texts. In contrast, many of the students were illiterate in their first language, but came from backgrounds where oracy and narrative were valued forms of cultural capital. Hence, many of the teachers struggled to shift from a deficit view of the students as learners, to an asset approach which focussed on the multilingual and oracy strengths this new cohort of students brought to the classroom (Wilkinson and Langat 2012).

Moreover, a number of the students suffered from a range of traumas as a result of their experiences living in high conflict zones prior to arrival in Australia. The combination of these major literacy demands, lack of familiarity with formal school settings, along with high levels of personal trauma, created a new set of circumstances in regard to EALD students. The most urgent need identified as a result of this new cohort of students was in terms of material-economic arrangements to support their language learning, for instance, creating an intensive English class, rather than students immediately being located in mainstream classes with very little extra support. Funding for EALD teaching in Australia is based purely on numbers of students. As urban centres tend to attract far greater numbers of students of refugee origin, the region did not have an Intensive English Language Centre into which students could be placed in order to cater for their specific learning demands.

Other pressing needs in terms of material-economic arrangements that both teacher focus groups and the executive team identified were: developing a more positive and reflexive welfare system which was proactive, rather than reactive; and providing professional learning activities which would support mainstream teachers catering academically and socially for the diverse range of learners in their classrooms (Wilkinson and Langat 2012). However, both the school's executive team and the teachers identified one of the most urgent projects of their practices in terms of social-political arrangements, i.e., nurturing a socially inclusive culture that would welcome this new group of students in a positive, affirming, and ongoing way.

Both the Principal and the Deputy Principal responsible for students of refugee origin articulated this *telos* or aim as a major project of the school, i.e., that it was an inclusive school which welcomed and catered for students of a wide range of abilities, skills, and backgrounds, including Indigenous students, Gifted and

Talented students, and students with intellectual and physical disabilities. This telos appeared to create a niche, i.e., a more hospitable set of practice conditions with which to receive students of refugee origin (Kemmis et al. 2012b, December), in that the language and activities of the school executive were framed in terms of the opportunities provided by the students' arrival, rather than as 'problems' to be solved. Critically, both members of the executive team recognised early on that nurturing such a culture in their previously monocultural school would require not only changes to material-economic arrangements such as extra EALD resources and upskilling of all staff, but changes to how staff *thought* about diversity; and shifts in *relatings* between staff and students, and between students and students. I will now examine these shifts in the practice conditions of the school and the kinds of practice architectures which enabled these changes, both in the school and Regional Office.

Transformations in Arrangements of/for Socially Just and Inclusive Practices at Regional High School

Both the Principal and the Deputy Principal responsible for the welfare of students of refugee background recognised the power of discourses such as 'African' to frame students as 'other' and subaltern to a taken-for-granted, Anglo-Australian mainstream student. The Principal engaged in a range of formal and informal practices to influence the language of staff in relation to students. These included raising staff awareness of the deleterious material effects of homogenising and essentialising students of refugee background as 'African', thus flattening out the rich cultural, linguistic, and historical diversity between the students' nations. He commented:

> There's a huge diversity in the kids we're getting … we had to avoid or try … to discourage people … in conversation or at meetings … from saying things like you know the African kids do this or the African kids think this way… You can't simply lump them all under the one group … we had quite a number of people from the Sudan, I mean their literacy background will depend very much on which way they got out of the country. If they went through Egypt and were in camps in Egypt then they come from an Arabic background as well as their own Indigenous language or languages, you know in some cases.
>
> Whereas the children of families who have come by Uganda – what little schooling they had was done in English, so their English, their initial competence in English is somewhat better.
>
> But, and that was another thing that we had to get the staff to realise … what it was like in their country and what their experiences were, and also their … own relationship with their country … with the colonial background of their country, so there's a whole range of issues.

In order to challenge this kind of essentialising discourse, the executive team ran a number of awareness-raising activities at staff meetings, led by various educators including the Deputy Principal and the School Support Officer (Ethnic). The Deputy Principal described one such session:

> We ran a session just on information about Sudan … just explaining to people that you know Sudan is a huge nation, nine borders, different population, this is the nature of the kids, this is the education system they would have come from, these are the cultural expectations so there was a whole lot of information that was provided …
>
> It broke down one of the really critical things that teachers here needed to start thinking about and that was: 1. If you are from Africa, Africa is a continent; it's not a country. 2: that the cultures in Africa are as complex – if not more so than say in Europe – and that somebody from the Sudan is as different from somebody from Sierra Leone as say somebody from Germany might be from somebody from England … we're talking about … twice the area and all of those sorts of things.
>
> Even well-educated Australians such as teachers are not necessarily [used] to working with different cultures … at least half [the teachers] are country people … and so their own experiences of different ethnic groups needed a little bit of massaging.

The preceding sayings and doings (cf. Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008; Mahon et al. 2017, Chapter 1, this volume) of the Principal and Deputy Principal are in contrast to the actions of many school leaders who frequently may be '"colour-blind"' in their approach (Santamaria and Santamaria 2015, p. 24). Principals may leave the onus of responsibility for raising awareness of cultural responsiveness to EALD teachers or individual staff. Further, the executive team's responses suggest that both individuals possessed a critically conscious habitus, i.e., a "heightened and critical awareness of oppression, exclusion, and marginalization" (Brooks 2012, p. 23). For instance, the Deputy Principal spoke passionately about his abhorrence of racism and his despair at the racism he perceived in the school when the first family of students from Sudan arrived. He described his reaction thus:

> Back in the early 2000's there were a couple of kids who were from a … family who seriously I would suggest Mum would have been a clan leader if we were living in the States … They were just disposing the most appallingly inappropriate racist comments when the first family, African family arrived … I was really distressed about it …
>
> I spoke to the school counsellors about ways forward and I decided I'd talk [at school assembly] … about the good old days … in Washington DC in the 1960's … The only African-Americans I ever saw were the ones that were working for white families in our street … racism was a way of life … when some of their parents were alive or just growing up and that's no longer acceptable. This is where I took a chance … and I asked them to stand up if they felt that racism was wrong and that we should fight against it.
>
> So even if they didn't want to stand up I think they would have been shamed into it … All but one person stood … the girl of the family that I was referring to, now they stayed in the school for another three months and left and I think it was because of the sort of pressure that was now being placed on them. So there was this turnaround [in racist attitudes amongst the students]. So if you talk about student leadership in a sense I would even argue that there were a number of students that would have taken a chance that day and said I'm going to stand up – this is wrong.

One way to conceptualise the preceding actions would be to read it through the lens of the heroic leader, turning around (at least temporarily) students' racism through consciousness-raising and peer pressure. However, the reason I cite this incident is not to fetishise the Deputy Principal's individual leadership *per se*. Instead I draw attention to the deliberate *orchestration* by the Principal and Deputy Principal of practices in order to change students and staff sayings, doings, and relatings in regard to students of refugee origin. These practices included policy enacting (e.g., changes to how anti-racism and welfare policies were enacted at the

school); professional learning (e.g., awareness-raising sessions amongst staff; challenging of stereotypical language) and students' learning (e.g., the Deputy-Principal's anti-racist actions at school assembly).

These practices connected up together to inform the overall school telos or project of leading, teaching, and learning in inclusive and socially just ways. In turn, these practices were enmeshed with and enabled by specific cultural-discursive arrangements brought into the site from regional and state office of the Department of Education, such as the NSW Education Department's anti-racism policy. They were enmeshed with particular material-economic arrangements. For instance, the statewide funding arrangements for EALD students were based on a critical mass of students at designated low levels of literacy. After much discussion, the public schools and regional education office came to an agreement that new arrival students of refugee origin would be enrolled in Regional High School only rather than sent to different schools in the town, thus garnering sufficient numbers and funding to create an intensive English class. These practices were enmeshed with specific social-political arrangements. For instance, the Principal and Deputy Principal donned aprons and cooked food at a welcome barbeque for students of refugee background, their Anglo-Australian friends, and their families in order to demonstrate their delight at welcoming these new students. Traditional hierarchical distances between students and large high school leadership teams were deliberately subverted through the democratising practices of the Principal and Deputy Principal and this had a significant effect on the relatings between students of refugee origin and the executive team. As one EALD teacher later remarked:

> the kids were astonished that … [the Principal] … and … [Deputy Principal] … came down and served the sausages. They were just astounded that the leader would be serving, little things in some ways but that spoke enormously to kids that they were valued, important and that someone in that position would actually serve sausages.

These leading practices were not singular actions, but indicative of a deeper, whole-school leadership project to growing a greater sense of responsibility for socially just practices of leading across all staff and students. One of the school counsellors summed these practices up thus:

> [The executive team demonstrate] … a willingness to support getting these kids included. And to me it starts at the top, if you have that kind of attitude at the top, and I believe it has trickled down … that's a very strong characteristic and not being afraid to model compassion either.

Transformations in Arrangements of/for Socially Just and Inclusive Practices at Regional Education Office

The sayings, doings, and relatings of the school executive team were also nested in broader discourses, activities, and relationships of leading practices for social justice travelling from regional and central office sites. These interconnected

practices evolved and travelled over space and time and, given the right conditions, 'hung together' in Regional High School to create a distinctive educational project focussed on leading for more socially just practices (Schatzki 2002; Wilkinson and Langat 2012; Wilkinson et al. 2013a). For instance, at the time of the study, the NSW Department of Education and Training [DET] had a series of policies specifically framed around equity, inclusion, and citizenship (including anti-racism, cultural diversity, and community relations, and implementation guides for teaching EALD). The importance of these policies and their accompanying implementation plans was that they provided significant material-economic resources to schools such as Regional High School, signalled that socially just practices of educating were paramount, and discursively signified to schools that students of refugee origin 'counted' in NSW public education (Niesche and Keddie 2012). As the region's Equity Coordinator remarked:

> I certainly know that my role is the practical side of the coin, that if I'm not driving that, then it's not necessarily going to happen. You might get a school leader who does it intuitively, but it's very definitely something where the DET policy is the driver.

The existence of such policies and plans is crucial, as the Coordinator notes. Recent moves to greater school autonomy in states such as Queensland suggest that removal of targeted funding for equity groups can lead to marginalisation of equity considerations when individual principals overlook or are ignorant of the specific needs of students of refugee background (Keddie 2015).

For instance, the New South Wales DET policy, *Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy*: *Multicultural Education in Schools* stated in Objective 1.5 that "schools will provide specific teaching and learning programs to support … students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds" (Department of Education and Training 2010). It was compulsory for schools to develop their own anti-racism policies, appoint an anti-racism officer who underwent regional training, and schools which received funding for EALD support were held accountable for ensuring the money was spent directly on this area rather than on more general initiatives (E. Brace, pers. comm., 27.02.15). Each regional office had an Equity Portfolio with consultants whose brief it was to provide training and support for schools and staff who worked with students of refugee origin. Hence, these policies did not operate only at an espoused level but functioned as policies-in-use, i.e., with specific resources, funding, and accountability mechanisms tied to them (Walker 2004).

The significance of these material-economic arrangements in enabling (although not guaranteeing) more socially just and inclusive practices at Regional High School was outlined by the region's Equity Coordinator:

> At a state level there is an EALD consultant who has responsibility for rural and regional NSW … I have someone obviously, with expertise who I liaise with quite regularly … As well as that … they have created positions that their title is EALD Teacher Mentor. They've been a huge benefit to our region. They are trained EALD teachers, who … work directly with the teacher who is responsible for the EALD new arrivals program … An example, we have a family arriving … and there will be three children … it will increase the amount of time that they're entitled to, and that's for twelve months … the EALD teacher mentor will

> make immediate contact with the teacher who is allocated, and make sure that they have the professional support that they require …

There is a major difference, however, between policies-in-use and the lifeworld of regional offices, schools, and their leading practices of/for social justice and inclusion. At the time of the study, the NSW Education Department was composed of a 'top-down', bureaucratic and highly centralised set of social-political arrangements that prefigured relatings between central and district office on the one hand, and Regional High School on the other hand. However, there was evidence of more democratic, collaborative, and consultative practices of leading for/of social justice emanating from the Regional Office that connected up with more socially just and inclusive practices of leading in the school. The region's Equity Coordinator described these practices as follows:

> [T]he only way that the EALD teacher mentor would work with those teachers is that we have established EALD information networks, so that regularly, each term in our designated EALD areas, there are EALD information network meetings … All of the EALD teachers come together at those meetings, and they are generally coordinated by the EALD teacher mentor, and it's a shared agenda, so the teachers have a say into the agenda and there's a lot of professional sharing and professional learning that occurs at those meetings …
>
> Since I've been coordinator we've made sure that that was a very coordinated process … it's very strong; there's a very strong network and they're also very committed and dedicated teachers.

These more collaborative practices appeared to be the hallmark of equity initiatives in the region. Such practices were in turn prefigured and enabled by the distinctive nature of the site in which Regional High School was located. That is, as a regional town, there were shared understandings, activities, and relatings amongst educators and agencies about the realities and vicissitudes of working in a non-urban locale where scarcity of government funds and lack of trained personnel prefigured relations of solidarity between agencies, when it came to best meeting the interests and needs of families and students. However, though there may be more conducive conditions for practices of solidarity in regional settings, these cannot be presupposed or taken-for-granted. Rather, they needed to be advocated for and struggled over in order to be realised.

For instance, the region's Equity Coordinator described how when the first group of families from Sudan and other African nations arrived, the town and education agencies were unprepared and thrown off balance. However, drawing on the partnerships and collaborative practices which Regional Office personnel had built between intergovernmental agencies and non-government agencies responsible for refugee settlement, a more hospitable niche was fashioned in which students and their families could be welcomed and integrated in the local schools. The Equity Coordinator described the creation of these more socially just conditions of practice as follows:

> And our schools at the time – it probably was confronting for them because these students arrived with backgrounds that were totally unfamiliar – totally unfamiliar – we were ill-prepared, not just as a school system but as a community in terms of the needs that they had. In some ways we were fortunate that the enrolments tended to be at two schools [Regional

> High School and one of its feeder primary schools?]. [T]hat was by design, as much by chance, because we realised that it would be far better to have a concentration of those students in two schools, because with a concentration of students comes additional resourcing, rather than having them scattered …
>
> And I'm pleased to say that our schools took that on board very positively, and they could see too that whilst initially, it was probably going to be a huge learning curve for them, that it was certainly in the best interests of the students, in particular and their families …
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> And I guess the whole nature of the ability to support schools has been very much strengthened by our experiences in [Regional High School Town]. So, as a region we've been much better prepared; you know what to expect, you actually know what resources a school needs, you know how to prepare the school and provide the support, almost before the students arrive. And that's very much a model that I use now … And again, that comes through developing your partnerships with different inter-agencies and groups who have that responsibility. So, now, with the Multicultural Council, they will let me – I have a lot of warning, as to when a new family is arriving.

These increasingly collaborative practices were underpinned by the shared goal of the region's Equity Coordinator and the Regional Office's Director when it came to prioritising equity initiatives in the region. Like the Principal and Deputy Principal of Regional High School, these formal leaders appeared to have made the decision to "race themselves outside of Whiteness and work to benefit systematically underserved learners" (Santamaria and Santamaria 2015, p. 30). The Equity Coordinator observed:

> So, I think that my role is critical, so that if I were not as proactive as I am, I think the level of the support we can give to schools could be negligible. But because I see it as very important and because [the Regional Director] knows that it's very important that, as far as the region goes, we've put it as a high priority. Because I mean, I've been there, I've seen – and that's one of the reasons that you take on these roles, you want to support teachers.
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> So, whilst you understand that obviously, the focus of our support is for the students, we're in these roles because we realise the students aren't going to achieve, unless the teachers and schools are well supported.

The more consultative and inclusive practices of relating at Regional Office level connected up to and with, attempts to build more democratic leading practices of/for social justice at Regional High School. These practices included a range of doings including school executive designating two positions on the Student Representative Council [SRC] for students of refugee origin, in order to ensure greater visibility in a positive sense and build students' leadership skills. It also included running a series of focus groups with Learning Support Officers (Ethnic) and key members of the refugee community in order to discuss the key issues for students of refugee origin arriving at the school. These focus groups resulted in changes to practices in the school – such as transforming the welfare system to focus on positive rewards as opposed to a previously more punitive approach. As one of the school's counsellors observed:

> We've had a series of focus group discussions with key members from the African community to talk about what the kids are experiencing and what can we do as a school. Because I remember being at … meetings at such level and that was when we were having a lot of conflict with kids getting settled and teachers understanding kids … Kids would …

> arrive in Australia on Monday and they're in school on Wednesday. And with very little orientation and feeling lost and confused and unsettled.
>
> … There were different people from the multicultural community … support people … churches or organisations that sponsor them … mentors and Learning Support Officers (Ethnic) …
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> Our welfare policies have changed … we offer a lot more positive reinforcement to students and encouraging them to achieve, like Honours Award and Principals Award, there's been a lot of prestige attached to students striving for these …

These consultative practices are bundled together with what Santamaria and Santamaria have termed "Applied Critical Leadership" [ACL] practices (2015, p. 28). These practices included, for instance, a willingness to "initiate and engage in critical conversations" with staff about the racist implications of their language; and the Deputy Principal's actions in "leading by example to meet the unresolved challenges" (Santamaria and Santamaria 2015, p. 28) of racism within the school. The practices in turn fostered and rendered visible previously hidden and more informal leading practices, i.e., forms of leadership practice devoid of managerial authority. For instance, EALD teachers at Regional High School often taught their students' parents at the local Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college, bumped into these families in the supermarket and assumed the role of cultural mediators and advocates, taking students to after-school sport and advocating on their behalf to other teachers and the executive team (Wilkinson and Langat 2012). They were a critical source of expertise and support in the executive team and teachers' professional development. Their intercultural knowledge meant they played a key brokering role at Regional High School between home, family, and school (Matthews 2008). Rather than the reported hostility, which characterises relatings between mainstream teachers and EALD staff in urban schools (Major 2006), Regional High School staff were highly appreciative of the EALD teachers' skills and intimate knowledge of the students. Moreover, there was evidence that informal professional learning was occurring as a result of some teachers learning new teaching practices through working with EALD staff. Thus traditional hierarchies of power were subverted between the secondary subject teachers as 'experts' and EALD teachers as 'helpmates', serving teachers. For example, a mainstream teacher noted how she would voluntarily ask the EALD teacher's advice, remarking:

> I might say to … [the EALD teacher] … I want to do this … what's the best way to approach this? … I've written very explicit … instructions how to do these certain things and with both of us there … hopefully we can try and get them to achieve things or you give them things to model off.

Leading as a Socially Just Practice: A Contested Practice

Leading as a practice needs to be situated in ecologies of practices that have a "common commitment to an overall project of education development" rather than "the command and control view of leading which seems … to underlie many

programs of school improvement around the world – and which may often take a technical and managerialist view of the process of educational change" (Kemmis et al. 2014, p. 176). In this chapter, I have attempted to capture this insight by focussing on the site-distinct particularities and 'messiness' of leadership practice as a previously monocultural secondary site wrestled with the unique opportunities and challenges faced in integrating a new and 'visibly different' student cohort. The issues faced by this venture cannot be assuaged by prescriptions, rule-following, or practice orientations to leadership which focus on it as a technical activity only. Rather, I have attempted to draw attention to how the creative problem-solving displayed in the leading practices of Regional High School staff (Principal, Deputy Principal, EALD staff) and Regional Office personnel was underpinned by a fundamental ethical, moral, and political commitment to education as a socially just form of practice. In other words, a praxis-oriented disposition informed their actions, suggesting that these were 'morally-informed' leading practices that were part of a "socially-critical practice tradition in education" (Kemmis et al. 2014, p. 177). Hence, one of the major contributions of a site ontological view of leading practice is that it foregrounds not only the inherent sociality of leading practices in the particularities of a site, but the profoundly moral and ethical situatedness and 'history-making' dimension of the day-to-day practices enacted in classrooms, staff meetings, and playgrounds. This is a contribution which more technicist-oriented interpretations of leadership ignore or downplay.

However, one of the critical components of leading praxis as 'history-making' action is that we cannot foresee its material consequences or implications. On the one hand, there was evidence that certain leading practices for social justice had had positive material impacts on some Regional High School staff and students' sayings – understandings and thinking – actions and relatings when it came to more socially just educational practices. On the other hand, there were suggestions of the limitations of current forms of leading practices as they were enacted at Regional High School. These limitations can be analysed in two ways: firstly, in terms of the practice architectures that continued to prefigure secondary traditions of pedagogical practice at Regional High School; and secondly, in terms of ecological *disconnections* between leading as a socially just practice and teaching practices.

Through a practice architectures lens, there was evidence that teaching practices had remained stable and resistant to the increasingly diverse learners in Regional High School classrooms (cf. Wilkinson and Langat 2012; Wilkinson et al. 2013a). As noted earlier, these teaching practices were prefigured by practice traditions in secondary schools in which largely Western bodies of knowledge (cultural-discursive arrangements) were organised in subject-specific disciplines (material-economic arrangements) prefigured on a normative assumption of the white, literate student who possessed the cultural capital of uninterrupted literacy learning that allowed them to learn from largely white teachers' practices (social-political arrangements). Despite laudable attempts to challenge teachers' discourses in relation to students of refugee origin, the practice architectures of teaching at Regional High School remained largely intact (for instance, staffrooms arranged in subject disciplines, discourses of the 'mainstream' learner, and corresponding

assumptions of the illiterate learner as deficit). In essence, as a 'traditional' Australian secondary public school, there was a different logic of practice operating in terms of its more hierarchical and discipline-based teaching and learning practices. This was a logic that is detrimental to not only students of refugee origin, but Indigenous and other students. It was a logic which the executive team's attempts did not challenge, despite their attempts to change practice architectures that constrained more socially just practices (Wilkinson et al. 2013a).

Focus groups with Regional High School teachers suggested that the sayings, doings, and relatings of their teaching focussed on an uncritical and unexamined privileging of the literate mainstream learner as opposed to students of refugee origin as the deficit 'other'. Yet, Regional High School was changing. The evidence from its classrooms suggested that the normative assumption of an ethnically and educationally homogenous cohort of students was no longer viable. As one teacher remarked:

> I just reckon it puts a lot of pressure … about three years ago, I had a Year Eight class and I had about six Sudanese in there but I also had about six major learning difficulties … I couldn't get anything done. I felt bad for the kids who knew how to read and write because you just spent so much time just with the basics and there was no support and I just thought that was ridiculous – that was allegedly a mainstream class.

In making this critique, I am not ignoring the very real pressures faced by educators in catering for the increasingly diverse learners in their classrooms, particularly in the face of insufficient material and economic support. Rather, what I am pointing to is the ecological disconnections between attempts to enact more socially just practices of leading and other forms of practice in the school, such as teaching. For instance, I have documented how particular leading practices undertaken by the executive team (as well as EALD and Learning Support Officers) clearly connected up to policy-enacting and professional learning practices in the lifeworld of the school in ways that suggested positive changes to staff practices of and for social justice. However, the preceding quotation suggested the limitations of professional learning practices which remain at the level of consciousness-raising alone. These practices did not equip teachers to teach in more pedagogically appropriate ways, nor did these sessions engage teachers in deeper forms of reflection upon their teaching practices, for instance, engaging in 'critical conversations' around challenging topics such as "race, language, culture, difference, access, and/or educational equity" (Santamaria and Santamaria 2015, p. 28). This is an aspect of leading as a socially just practice that appeared lacking at Regional High School and which might not have been much different from many other secondary schools in the state or nationally.

Initiating and engaging in difficult conversations such as examining the privilege that whiteness bestows upon one's practice is an important characteristic of applied critical leadership (Santamaria and Santamaria 2015, p. 28). I do not wish to take away from the significance of what was achieved at Regional High School. However, the fundamental lack of change in teaching practices does reveal the limitations of

leading practices in which social justice remains something that is 'done' for or to the 'other', rather than critiquing how one's own privilege (e.g., as a male, as white, as literate, as middle class) may be holding in place the very practice architectures that one is attempting to challenge. Furthermore, if constructions of the white, 'mainstream' learner remain at the centre of teaching practices, then one might well ask, how much that mattered had genuinely changed in the school? This is a valid question. However, what it overlooks is that there is more to schooling and educational change than formal classroom practices alone – an insight which the executive team recognised and which I have attempted to outline in this chapter.

Conclusion: Towards Researching as a Socially Just Practice – Implications for Future Research

The theory of practice architectures foregrounds the social and political nature of attempts to enact leading as a socially just practice. One of the clear contributions that the theories of practice architectures and ecologies of practices can make to leading as a socially just practice is to, firstly, foreground and render visible the inherently *political* nature of leading, i.e., as a practice that is enmeshed in the culture, discourses, and material and economic arrangements that prefigure educational practices. This is a critical point, for too often mainstream analyses depoliticise and neuter the power relations inherent in educational leadership practice, despite acknowledging that positional leading operates as a practice-changing practice (cf. Kemmis et al. 2014; Wilkinson 2008).

Secondly, the theories provide a set of conceptual tools for empirically tracing connections and disconnections between leading as a socially just set of practices and other educational practices such as enacting policy and professional learning, in ways that can reveal the gaps and inconsistencies that may lead to potentially deleterious teaching and learning practices. Thirdly, the theory of ecologies of practices in particular draws attention to the inherently *relational* nature of leading practices as a process of "interpersonal and mutual influence that is ultimately embedded within a collective" (DeRue and Ashford 2010, p. 629). However, ecologies of practices and a site ontological view of leading practices suggest that rather than 'mutual and interpersonal influences' within a collective of participants, it is the connections or lack of connections between practices as part of a larger Education Complex of practices (cf. Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008; Mahon et al. 2017, Chapter 1, this volume) that are critical to examine.

In my analysis, I have attempted to highlight that leading as a socially just practice, and socially just (and unjust) educational practices more broadly are not tangential concerns for those of us engaging with the theory of practice architectures. Rather, they are fundamental to questions of how new intersubjective arrangements and ways of being, doing, and relating in the world can be shaped in ways that

support the aim of building a world worth living in. Moreover, I have attempted to render visible how the social-political conditions shaping sets of leading practices are intrinsically enmeshed with and 'bleed into' the culturally-discursive and material-economic arrangements of schools and related sites. This is not a new insight and is indeed one that has been stressed throughout the ongoing development of the theory of practice architectures (cf. Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014). However, I raise the point as anecdotally my research experience has been that although we may separate out cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements in our analysis, the broader challenge remains how to analyse educational practices (and the conditions that shape them) in ways that recognise how they are 'bundled together' (Schatzki 2002), while simultaneously holding each up to the light of critical analysis. In this sense, a fruitful area for enquiry may be to examine the kinds of sense-making practices that we engage with as researchers when analysing data using these theories as our key lenses (cf. Pennanen et al. 2017, Chapter 12, this volume).

Finally, I suggest that researching of and for morally-informed educational practice and praxis should, by its very nature, entail a range of socially just researcher practices, including reflexively examining the practice traditions and histories that we bring to our practices of researching and analysis. This would entail engaging in critical conversations about how these traditions may influence our ways of working with and interrogating – or failing to interrogate – aspects of the data, i.e., in terms of the kinds of questions we may or may not ask about practices. For instance, as a critical feminist scholar, my doctoral training in Bourdieuian analyses of field, capital, and habitus shaped my disposition to ask questions of the Regional High School study in regard to not only existing sayings, doings, and relatings, but also the 'raced' nature of silences; for example, how particular teaching practices positioned refugee youth as other to a mainstream (white, Anglo-Australian) learner. It trained my gaze on how particular leading practices of and for social justice may be prefigured by gendered, 'raced', or classed social-political arrangements that render as illegitimate, assets Sudanese students bring to their learning, such as their oral capacity. Moreover, I am acutely aware that there may well be other questions or areas of leading as a socially just practice that I have failed to engage with as part of this analytical process. Given the strength and vigour of practice architectures as an emerging theory in educational practice, future research may profitably engage in conversation with other, related theoretical lenses such as critical feminism or practice theories such as that of Bourdieu's, as part of our research commitment to stimulating "new beginnings for education in and against an era of schooling" (Kemmis et al. 2014, p. 22).

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