EDUCATIONAL LEADERS AS PROMOTERS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SPANISH SCHOOLS

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Abstract   Presently, the subordination of schools to mandates of standardisation, competitiveness and selectivity reinforces educational inequalities and widens educational gaps. This conceptual article tries to recall the need to improve social justice in schools and describe the role of principals in this regard. The article offers an analysis of three topics related to leadership for social justice: (i) the importance of equity and social justice as a reference for educational leadership, (ii) the type of educational leadership that leaders require for social justice, and (iii) educational leaders as agents for inclusion and equity, and strategies to fight inequity. Based on the literature analysis, the results highlight that leadership for social justice is needed more than ever, given the increasing complexity and diversity in the school context. They also highlight that social justice is related to a more democratic, distributed, and transformational school leadership. And show that leaders who are agents of change can benefit from leadership for social justice as it proposes a direction for transformation, prioritising the values of equity, justice, commitment, and cooperation. The paper finishes by providing some examples of change in Spain and suggesting recommendations for promoting social justice.

Keywords   Educational leadership; leadership for social justice; equity; inclusion; principals; high need schools

Introduction

The increasing complexity and diversity in educational systems worldwide highlighted numerous problems and injustices and brought leadership for social justice (LSJ) to the fore, making it one of the central topics of educational leadership at a global level (Ayers et al., 2009; Bogotch & Shields, 2014; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2008; Lindsey et al., 2011; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Theoharis, 2007, 2009, 2010).

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Despite being an issue related to the history of humanity (Waite & Arar, 2020), the concern with SJ has become one of the central topics in educational leadership and management research in recent years (Gumus et al., 2020). Policymakers (Pont et al., 2008), educational leaders (González-González, 2014; Murillo & Hernández Castilla, 2011), and teachers (Pont, 2017) consider SJ a critical issue because, despite the advances, the achievement gap between students with different socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds and opportunities is still vast. These inequalities – along with topics related to disability and learning difficulties (e.g., mental health concerns)- are significant barriers to educational progress.

It is essential to eliminate such disparities; thus, educational leadership and management can be crucial in making a fairer world (Oplatka, 2013; Robinson, 2017; Wang, 2016). The same applies to school leaders who are the ones who can take the concerns raised from the ground up and step forward on the path to fairer and more equitable schools (Robinson, 2017; Waite & Arar, 2020). The behaviours and practices of these school leaders are critical components to understanding and analysing leadership for social justice (LSJ) within schools (Flood, 2019). For this reason, the main objectives of the current research will be to explore some topics related to LSJ that we will describe more specifically in the next section, including the characteristics and practices of school leaders as promoters of social justice.

Objectives and Methodology

This conceptual study seeks to broaden the existing knowledge of LSJ by answering three questions that are the main objectives of this research (i) what is the importance of equity and inclusion for school leaders and leadership, (ii) what kind of educational leadership, and educational leaders, are needed to improve social justice in schools, and (iii) which strategies can use school leaders to promote equity and what are Spanish principals doing in this regard.

The analysis is based on the results from two reviews of the literature. One is the latest international and systematic review of the literature on equity, diversity, and inclusion in schools to date (Gumus et al., 2020). And the other is a review of the Spanish literature related to educational leadership (Tintoré & Gairín, 2022).

In the first case (Gumus et al., 2020), the authors applied bibliometric methods to map the literature on LSJ in education. They examined the Scopus database, searched for articles on this topic published in peer-reviewed journals until 2018, and selected 308 documents.

The essential reference sources for the Spanish literature review were the articles available in peer-reviewed journals listed in Scopus, Web of Science and InDICEs-CSIC, published between 1990

and 2019, and based in Spain. Although the review analysed all kinds of topics related to educational leadership in Spain, we will only consider the 45 documents focused on SJ.

After analysing both reviews, as seen in the section that describes the state of the art, we delved into the three questions that guide our research using the information provided by the articles.

State of the art on SJ based on the results of the reviews

The systematic review on LSJ by Gumus and collaborators (2020) can be a good starting point to contextualise this paper and synthesise how research and practice related to LSJ has evolved and is currently positioned.

Gumus and co-authors' review covered from 1980 to 2019 and revealed that academic documents on educational LSJ were very scarce until 1996 when five papers per year were reached for the first time; this figure will not be repeated until 2003. From that moment on, the increase in the literature was continuous: between 2006 and 2014, the publication rate oscillated between 10 and 20 articles per year, and from that date, the figures moved between 20 and 30 publications per year. The authors also pointed out that the geographical scope of publication expanded from the initial area, basically Anglo-Saxon, to encompass a greater number of geographical regions, including more than 40 countries and all continents.

However, we cannot forget that LSJ depends significantly on context and circumstances (Oplatka & Arar, 2016; Waite & Arar, 2016) and, as the review did not describe the specific weight of Spanish academic publications, considering our objectives, we incorporated the results from a Spanish review of the literature (Tintoré & Gairín, 2022) into our study.

In Spain, the literature on LSJ has followed a similar evolution with a chronological delay: timid advances from 2000 until 2012. And a remarkable growth since 2013 and, especially, since 2016. It is interesting to note that, currently, LSJ is the most studied leadership model in Spain (Tintoré & Gairín, 2022).

Spanish literature on LSJ centred on themes like those cited by Gumus et al. (2020), so we classify them together. The documents focused on:

(i) Characteristics and practices of inclusive leaders, especially addressing some forms of marginalisation such as socioeconomic, cultural, or ethnic vulnerability problems (Herrera-Pastor et al., 2019; León et al., 2018; Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2017, 2019; López Yáñez et al., 2013; Luque and Lalueza, 2013; Miller, 2016; Moral et al., 2018a, 2018b; Morales Ocaña et al., 2017) and in less quantity on physical disabilities or emotional vulnerabilities, even though there are exceptions (García-Rubio et al., 2014)

(ii) How schools and school top or middle leaders can overcome barriers to be more inclusive, specifically:(a) the characteristics and practices of leaders who take care of equity and inclusion (b) the organisational or social problems that inclusive leaders face and how to solve them (i.e., building networks, seeking for support).

(iii) The training of leaders to address SJ (see Table 1)

Table 1. Documents describing how educational leaders address inequity and marginalisation.

Characteristics and practices of inclusive leaders	Problems faced by inclusive leaders and ways to solve them	Leadership training to address social justice
Angelle & Torrance 2019; Fernández & Hernández, 2013; Gómez-Hurtado, 2016; Gómez Hurtado, & Delgado Algarra, 2018; Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2018; Hernández Castilla et al., 2013; Leithwood et al., 2020; Martínez-Valdivia et al., 2018; Moral, et al.,2018a,b; Murillo & Hernández-Castilla, 2011, 2014; Murillo et al., 2019; Valdés-Morales & Gómez-Hurtado, 2019	Amber and Martos, 2017; Azorín-Abellán, 2017, 2018 Civis-Zaragoza & Longás-Mayayo, 2015; Domingo-Segovia and Ritacco-Real, 2015; Flood, 2019; Furman 2012; Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2019; Longas-Mayayo et al., 2019; Luque & Lalueza, 2013; Moliner-García et al., 2016; Pàmies-Rovira et al., 2016; Slater et al., 2014; Silva et al., 2017; Theoharis, 2007; Tintoré, 2018; Tirado & Conde, 2016; Wang 2016	Arar, Beycioglu & Oplatka, 2016; Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014; Cambron-Mccabe & Mccarthy 2005; Moral et al., 2018; Furman 2012; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; León et al., 2018; Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2017, 2019; Sales et al., 2011; Slater et al., 2017; Tintoré, 2018

Source: by the authors, based on the analysis of the literature

From the information found in the documents in Table 1, we will try to respond to the three objectives of our research

Results

What is the importance of equity and inclusion for educational leaders and leadership

Education, like culture, health, or sports, is an activity that has a significant presence in all societies and is part of the political and social project characterising them. From this perspective, delving into the sense of education to improve its proposals and achievements cannot make us forget the intimate relationship with other aspects of the society where it develops.

Education must promote the integral development of each person and facilitate their socialisation process, and for this reason, it requires strong connections with families and the socio-cultural and economic environment. It is about considering the environment and interacting with it as a referential source and a space that benefits from the educational result. Unfortunately, and for decades, some academic centres have lived on the fringes of social reality and only recently and timidly have developed community projects (strategic environmental plans, opening of schools to the community, collaboration between institutions) and social projects (social responsibility, service learning, among others) (Tintoré & Gairín, 2022).

The cited connections are necessary to achieve educational purposes and are closely linked to social and economic development (OECD, 2006; Richmond et al., 2008; Bernard et al., 2009; Blancas, 2018). Strengthening educational institutions will be, in this regard, a key factor to increase the competitiveness of the social, economic, and productive structure and to promote the development of a competent and committed citizenry.

Social problems and challenges are, in this context, educational issues, just as educational issues must be considered as social problems. The pandemic linked to COVID-19 has shown the importance of schools for societies and the systemic relationships between education, health, family structure, and social context (Gairín & Mercader, 2021).

Educational development can contribute to social development and reduce social inequalities and injustices if we understand that these inequalities originated in the disparity of educational opportunities for various reasons (race, gender, culture, and socioeconomic level, among others) that can perpetuate or accentuate social exclusion. Their involvement should allow people to establish a responsible, open, and critical relationship with their environment, enabling them to move towards more just and equitable societies (Gairín & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2014, pp. 821-822).

The structural factors of the social and educational systems indeed influence educational development, but it is also true that its realisation passes through the action of the academic centres and the actors that interact there. In this sense, we speak of the social commitment of educational institutions and the transformative role that certain types of leadership can develop (Gairín, 2004a).

We cannot and should not forget that organisations are structures of and for society (Gairín, 2004b) and that their behaviour (the behaviour of all their people) has an ethical dimension that goes beyond the responsibility and individual behaviour of their staff (Colorado, 2020). Educational centres are spaces for social interaction that, respecting the social values of their environment, must promote new commitments to social improvement. The responsibilities include the fight for equity, inclusion and other aspects of SJ Educational centres, as social institutions, must necessarily contribute to the social and community development of their immediate context, being actively involved in reducing social differences (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Tedesco, 2010; UNICEF, 2018) and assuming the social commitment that corresponds to them.

Fortunately, as Escudero (2005) reminds us, educational and social exclusion is not natural or episodic. Instead, it is a process developed and constructed in socio-educational contexts where school, personal and social elements intervene, and we can act to mitigate or combat the exclusion. Influencing social and community development promoting equity and SJ from educational processes is highly difficult if we cannot count on the involvement and commitment of local, political, civil and economic authorities in the context of action. General policies are indeed needed that include social obligations. However, it is also necessary that, in parallel, "there be ethical practices aligned at the level of authorities, territories, and educational centres" (Gairín & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2014, p. 823). From this perspective, promoting and impelling actions by schools, principals, and other community members against inequality is a matter of responsibility, courage, and commitment to constructing more just social realities. It also involves rebuilding some school realities by promoting social responsibility and organisational ethical commitment. Therefore, it is about advancing the relationships between social and educational commitment, which implies hard work that combines constant improvement in participation, equity and academic quality (Santos & Barca, 2009), directly linked to the SJ.

People's actions in educational centres are not neutral and are framed by specific values that are explicitly or implicitly present. Hence, it is necessary to highlight the ethical character of these institutions understood from a Levinasian perspective, based on otherness. Educational centres as organisations must stand next to the "other" and know that they have constituted thanks to that "other". As it is said from the personal perspective, "from the moment the other looks at me, I am responsible for them without even having to take responsibility concerning them; the responsibility for them rests with me. It is a responsibility that goes beyond what I do" (Lévinas, 2000, p. 80). Therefore, the issues of equity, inclusion and attention to diversity are not issues that an educational leader can or cannot address. Without them, one cannot be a true educational leader.

This perspective links with moral situations and ethical commitments and should compel school leaders to move from personal ethics to organisational ethics, from individual to collective values.

In other words, if the consideration of principals as agents of change who act on people cannot be separated from ethical considerations, neither must we separate organisational actions from the effects they also have on the people who interact with them.

What kind of educational leadership and educational leaders are needed to improve SJ in schools
LSJ will be the type of leadership that best responds to social problems. However, as many scholars have pointed out (Bolívar et al., 2013; González-González, 2008, 2014; Iranzo-García et al.; León et al., 2018; Moral et al., 2018a,b; Morales et al., 2017; Murillo et al., 2019; Sales et al., 2017, 2018), LSJ cannot be separated from other forms of leadership, such as pedagogical leadership and distributed leadership. The three leadership models provide the necessary elements to change educational organisations in an equitable and inclusive sense that attends at the same time to:

1. The empowerment and capacity building across the organisation (distributed leadership)
2. The improvement of academic and non-academic results of the students (pedagogical leadership)
3. The development of the conditions to promote each child so that all students can learn and use the skills necessary not to be left behind in our society (LSJ)

Once this point is made, let us delve into what LSJ is. Although a consensual definition has not been reached, and some authors considered LSJ as an umbrella term (Oplatka & Arar, 2016, p.360), several proposals coincide in considering LSJ as the ability of leaders to create a collaborative culture based on values of equity and inclusion, which helps students to develop their full personal and academic potential (Arar, 2015; Theoharis, 2009; Tintoré, 2018). Just redistribution, just recognition, and just representation are also considered characteristic elements of LSJ (Fraser, 2008).

According to Yuanyuan Zhang et al. (2018), LSJ is "a complex concept that is shaped by a multitude of personal, social, and political factors, as well as specific school and community contexts" (p. 67). LSJ is related to management by values, and in this sense, principles such as justice, respect, democracy, equity, equal opportunity, inclusion, and acceptance of diversity should be at the basis of the school culture (Blackmore, 2009; Rodríguez-Molina & Gairín, 2020). In developing this culture, some leadership practices are crucial, as noted by Leithwood et al. (2020, p.7) and Ishimaru and Galloway (2014): build a shared vision, model the school's values and practices, develop trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents, build collaborative cultures and distribute leadership, structure the organisation to facilitate collaboration, develop productive relationships with families and communities, connect the school to its wider environment, allocate resources in support of the school's vision and goals, staff the instructional program, and, finally, provide instructional support. With all these practices, it is not intended that all students reach the same objectives but that each one gets the best of themself.

LSJ also has to do with changes in management and organisation, as it is usually related to the introduction of more democratic and participatory organisational processes, in which all educational agents and bodies are given a voice (Jean-Marie, 2009; Lindsey et al., 2011). Furman (2012) observed that studies on LSJ highlight that LSJ is action-oriented and transformative, committed and persistent, inclusive and democratic, relational and caring, reflective, and oriented toward a socially just pedagogy (p. 195). LSJ, from an organisational point of view, should eradicate unfair and discriminatory situations from educational centres while achieving high academic quality (Gairín & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2014; Oplatka & Arar, 2016).

Although almost exclusively studied from a qualitative point of view, various authors point out the benefits of LSJ. Among them, we can identify, following Flood (2019): valuing and acknowledging diversity, creating support networks, facilitating dialogue, developing inclusive learning environments and reflecting on the practice.

After describing the type of leadership needed to improve SJ, we can describe leaders who exercise this type of leadership. What do some leaders do differently to identify themselves as promoters of social justice? Leaders concerned with SJ stand out for their capacity for dialogue and the ability for critical reflection on themselves and the circumstances accompanying them (Ayers et al., 2009; Furman, 2012). They are also characterised by humility, passion for their work, and relentless commitment to SJ (Theoharis, 2008). Faced with great difficulties, these principals try to increase expectations regarding the students' possibilities; they also improve structures to serve students better, build relationships with staff, families, and students, and, fundamentally, create cultures of support and collaboration (Tintoré, 2018). Flood (2019) compiled the behaviours that educational leaders undertook to achieve SJ within schools and classified those behaviours into three domains: school-specific, self-focused, or community-minded.

The obstacles these leaders face in their work, as identified by some authors (Macpherson, 2016; Theoharis, 2007; Tintoré, 2018), included, among others: lack of preparation or lack of capacity on the part of leaders or teachers, fear and stress of the situation, prejudices (deficit thinking about marginalised groups still prevalent in many schools), lack of support from families, lack of support from the administration and local or national policies, the valuing of technical leadership over moral leadership both in the field and in preparation programs, or the perceived lack of value placed on equity work.

Theoharis (2007) found that principals used different strategies to support themselves and suggested developing resistance to sustain their SJ agenda to cope with these difficulties. Macpherson (2016) described techniques used by the leaders to build SJ at schools: for example, abilities to gather information and formulate goals, to build relationships with staff, parents, and

students, or to challenge existing inequities, advocate for marginalised groups and empower others to act.

Principals as promoters of social justice. Guidelines and strategies to fight inequity, and some examples from Spain

The role of educational leaders must be reconsidered, taking as a reference the complex school reality and the communitarianism that they must develop if they plan to contribute to social development. From the perspective of critical pedagogy, they should strengthen their commitment to SJ, exploring its contributions to social development and promoting more democratic and inclusive social relations (Allen, 2006; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Murillo & Hernández-Castilla, 2011; González-González 2014; Murillo et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, the new obligations cannot be separated from some of the characteristics that school leadership must have if it intends to contribute effectively to SJ: transformative, technically and morally balanced (Dantley & Tillman, 2006), distributed (Pont et al., 2008), and collaborative (Kochan & Reed, 2005).

It makes sense, in this perspective, to consider principals as agents of change, as community leaders and as promoters of social development through educational development. Faced with a traditional management model focused on the maintenance of structures and processes, LSJ proposes a direction for transformation, where the values of equity, justice, commitment, and cooperation take priority over the traditional ones of equality, efficiency, control or competitiveness; all this from the perspective that combines personal ethics with the social and ethical responsibility of the organisation.

Following the contributions of Nava (2003), principals must move from a management model based on the ethics of exclusion to a model based on the ethics of sharing characterised by three dimensions (Gairín, 2004a):

- The nature of decision-making recognises a space for justice, where the actions of the members are not arbitrary but must follow the rules of cooperation and a climate of mutual respect. Management is seen as a constant dialogue with persons, favouring the sharing of purposes and leaving deeply rooted perspectives that are not always consistent with the community's commitments.
- The principal's experience as the moral foundation of management. The expertise of principals as teachers will be essential to share teaching and management approaches, thus linking the needs of teachers with those of the institution effectively.
- Principal's actions as virtues, when decisions are made following what one is morally obliged to do. It will only be possible if the behaviours respond to specific values.

Within the framework of institutional autonomy and the reconsideration of schools as nodes of educational networks from which to promote social, political and cultural change, a rethinking of the role of principals makes sense. They expand their competencies and responsibilities and assume essential functions for an adequate exercise of responsible institutional autonomy, such as intervening in selecting the staff, participating in choosing a part of the teachers, or determining the internal organisational structure. In all cases, SJ must guide its activity, and principals must pay special attention to the care of vulnerable groups and develop more inclusive institutions. There are few studies on the performance of principals in vulnerable contexts, and it will be necessary to consider their competence profile (Esteban et al., 2019; Villarroel & Gairín, 2014; Rodríguez, 2020) or what intermediate leaders can do (Amber & Martos, 2017; Domingo-Segovia & Ritacco Real, 2015; Rodríguez-Molina & Gairín, 2020; Villarroel et al., 2019).

We are not talking about proposals but challenges regarding the orientations and strategies to act against inequality. The different educational centres can move forward, pointing out in advance that change is possible as shown by various institutional actions at the system, school and principals level.

The movement for the quality of education in Madrid, born in the mid-90s and focused on the marginal neighbourhoods of the southwest, is a clear example of how the efforts of different educational agents, authorities and the territory can reduce social injustices. This movement, made up essentially of teachers, families and socio-cultural associations, and with a strong link with the educational and social community, "achieved significant influence with public opinion, authorities and the school and social community of the area" (Casas, 2008, p. 211) and served the objectives of a) Demanding legal, budgetary and organisational measures that would compensate for the socio-cultural deficiencies of the affected population; b) Promote the involvement and coordination of all administrations in the educational task; c) Promote coordination between schools, mainly primary and secondary schools; and d) Elaborate and disseminate new theoretical and practical perspectives.

Other examples of synergies between educational and socio-community development programs can be found in marginalised neighbourhoods such as 'El Raval' in Barcelona, the environmental plans promoted in Catalonia or the support programs for educational centres that work in vulnerable or highly complex contexts. They all try to encourage social insertion through education, understanding education as part of social transformation.

From an organisational perspective, it is worth considering organisations as social spaces where values are present, and actions can be taken to configure new values and ways of making sense of what has been done. We speak of organisations as ethical spaces where values such as justice, reciprocity, cooperation or creativity are developed. The commitment to the SJ implies, among other

things, a political commitment, effective codes of conduct, transparency in the activities and coherence with the declared values. And in this context, we cannot forget that ethics in organisations is a dimension of the broader set that would be civic ethics.

However, we forget that educational intervention is morally and ethically based and that a good education already contains many principles of action of an ethical nature and is linked to SJ. When we say that the school must be autonomous and indigenous, open and committed, updated and critical, participatory and democratic, a school for opportunities, we say just that. And when we state that the school should focus on strengthening leadership, the professional development of teachers, the implementation of information and communication technologies, and the constant improvement, we are also saying just that (Gairín, 2003).

The entire proposal promotes an ethical and excellent school for all citizens. This proposal includes a commitment to a school that is democratic in its objectives, processes and ends, reflective and self-critical, comprehensive and not elitist, inclusive and equitable, attentive to diversity, plural and not indoctrinating, competent and not competitive, based on dialogue and participation and committed to the environment and social improvement, as corresponds to a progressive vision of education and the training that accompanies it.

Achieving this kind of school requires strengthening ethical behaviours while promoting technical improvement and implementing appropriate strategies. If we consider that training is not a neutral action, we should consider its development (its institutionalisation or organisation through structures) as not neutral. We must remember that the future depends not only on the evolution of production systems or the vitality of the values and citizen attitudes that direct and nurture them but also on the development that organisations achieve as a context where people interact. In this context, education makes sense as a conscious and intentional collective project, an expression of the utopia we want to achieve and a methodology to achieve it.

As we have maintained for a long time (Gairín, 2004a), we must reject those organisations that do not measure or consider the effects of their decisions on people and society, only think of themselves and ignore their status as social realities. We must criticise organisations that destroy themselves and cause harm to their members and the community that needs their services, due many times to the effects of pragmatism, amoral management and the transgression of ethical principles.

Institutional social responsibility is not an individual issue, but a collective one, and it manifests itself in a transversal way in all the work that is made in the schools: working on attitudes towards learning; taking responsibility for the time and spaces for learning; including individual values and institutional culture in the training content and assuming the mistakes made as a source of knowledge. As Lozano (2007, p. 13) points out, "educational institutions should strive to regain

prominence, to openly affirm their goal as an organisation, to strengthen the role of professionals and to exercise pedagogical leadership before administrations and society".

It is necessary to identify those issues that generate practices that can endanger coexistence, personal relationships, the educational possibilities of some students, the role of the academic centres or their democracy. Defending SJ at school means its transformation as a living community with the students and the educational community at the centre.

The following Table 2 collects some suggestions concerning SJ at schools, based on the proposals that Colorado (2020) raises to develop organisational ethics.

Table 2. Proposals for the promotion of SJ.

The social reality of educational centres	Some proposals to consider
Factors that influence the development of SJ. in schools	Support from educational administrations and the management team to develop educational and social values.
	Increase the commitment to the values of the educational community.
	Promote positive and quality relationships.
	Respect for differences.
	Use consensus as a way to improve challenges.
	Develop pedagogical and distributed leadership.
	Align the PEC (Educational Project) and PCC (Curricular Project) with the school's needs.
Possible actions	Collaborative strategic planning.
	Promotion of the inclusive educational centre
	Give priority attention to vulnerable groups and situations of inequity.
	Incorporate proposals, cases and dilemmas about SJ into the programs.
	Systematic evaluation with ethical criteria.
	Training in values of the educational community
	Promote the existence of spaces for reflection and ethical dialogue.
	Involve the educational centre in social demands that are linked to educational processes.
	Create school ethical commissions and codes of ethics and conduct.
	Incorporate social responsibility in annual reports.
Professional competencies related to school management	Leadership based on values.
	Transformational leadership.
	Commitment to pedagogical development, resource management and managerial skills linked to adherence to equity.

Source: Colorado (2020)

The reflective process and actions to improve SJ should not ignore the possibilities and limitations of the context. Thus, the lack of training or the lack of involvement of teachers plays a fundamental role in individual behaviour. It is necessary to create and implement training courses and initiatives that reinforce and clarify the value system and awaken new values and principles in educational centres and communities.

Let us recall, in this regard, how several studies (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Jean-Marie et al., 2009) highlight that, frequently, issues related to equity, democracy and SJ are ignored or marginalised in training programs for educational leaders, hindering a deep understanding of the subject and effective social action by them. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) suggest that using the dialogical framework derived from critical pedagogy could help educational leaders develop a profile conducive to promoting SJ and coping with changing social conditions. The activity of training leaders in the perspective mentioned above must combine the previous contents with the development of sensitivities and positive attitudes towards community work and action against inequalities and marginalisation processes.

In short, contributing to SJ from education implies, as Tedesco (2010) suggests, "broadening the view on educational problems, incorporating the vision that comes from studies on the profound social, political, economic and cultural transformations that take place in society" (p. 8); also, assume the action of transformation as part of the educational and social process. And in this, principals, teachers, families, students, and social and political agents need to be involved.

Conclusions

Based on the latest literature reviews on LSJ at the international level and in Spain, this article has explored three conceptual themes that can help improve equity in schools. The studies mapped the literature and identified the conceptual structure of the field, and the research has sought to delve into three specific topics.

First, we have shown that LSJ is needed more than ever, given the increasing complexity of our world and the way this complexity and diversity affects education. In this context, school leaders must develop actions that promote equity, not treating all students equally but ensuring that each pupil receives what they need to develop their full potential. To do this, marginalised students require very thoughtful, appropriate, optimistic, and realistic actions to overcome obstacles that students alone will hardly overcome. Educational leaders need to help and think about this change and transform schools into fairer places (Tintoré, 2018).

Second, the literature analysis shows the importance of adding transformational and distributed leadership elements to LSJ to improve organisations and connect with internal and external social

projects. The leadership style is as important as the attitudes, commitments, and responsibilities acquired in the fight against inequality and social problems. Linking leadership behaviours for SJ with other types of leadership, fundamentally leadership for learning, and distributed leadership can contribute to more fair and equitable schools.

Finally, we have addressed how leaders who are agents of change can fight for equity, providing some examples of change and suggesting proposals for the promotion of SJ. Endorsing and impelling those proposals requires democratic leaders, with strong convictions about the role of the school in the fight against inequality, with an excellent capacity for dialogue, sensitivity towards students' problems, and skills to promote collaboration between students and teachers, and with the social community. Their strengths will be linked to their ability to detect problems, generate alternatives, and improve social cohesion.

The study of principals committed to SJ is a general concern, although it is incipient in some contexts and lacks concrete and contextualised analysis. For this reason, it is crucial to approach publications from non-Anglo-Saxon countries and share ideas and examples from those areas, which can be transferred to other geographical locations. This characteristic is perhaps the essential element of this research focused on Spanish literature. The examples of leaders in Spanish educational institutions who position themselves as agents of change have shown that improvement is possible. Although much of the bibliography and samples correspond to Spanish cases, we believe that this analysis can be extrapolated to very diverse contexts, as long as they are adapted to the particular circumstances of each place.

However, as in all research, there are certain limitations to this study: First, we have delved into three topics related to LSJ without exhausting these topics. In addition, there are many other issues related to SJ to be analysed, which we have not addressed. For these reasons, we suggest continuing to delve into everything that can promote equity in educational organisations and the tasks of the leaders working in them.

We can reasonably say that the principals' commitment to SJ is one expression of the proactive direction focused on the internal and external community of the educational centres. Internally, there is a constant concern to promote collective projects based on values of equity and inclusion, paying particular attention to the different individual or collective vulnerabilities that may arise. Externally, there is empathy with the social reality that involves a commitment to the fight to overcome inequity and alignment with unjust situations that affect education or educational community members.

Advancing in LSJ requires a shared vision on the social commitment of education, developing and improving relationships of trust between the community and with the environment, enhancing

coherence between school statements and practices, developing distributed leadership and maintaining supports that allow all students to develop their abilities; also fighting to eradicate unjust situations and inequity in educational centres (Leithwood et al., 2020; Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014).

Many of the contributions reviewed go beyond the mere traditional concept of legal justice to introduce us to other aspects linked to equal opportunities and human rights, bringing us closer to the idea of social justice. As Montané (2015) points out, when we promote citizens' rights to achieve a fairer world, terms such as legitimacy, dignity, justice, recognition, participation, and commitment acquire whole meaning.

Social justice is an ethical, political and legal imperative that materializes primarily in social and educational policies and the ethics of relationships (Montané, 2015:106). Educational institutions are, in this regard, committed to promoting human capabilities to help reduce the structural, institutional and personal elements that prevent the full development of people. Thus, a proactive conception is adopted (Murillo and Hernández, 2011) when ensuring people's active and equitable participation in society.

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