Exploring the Implementation of the After-School Alternative Program for Disadvantaged Elementary School Students in Taiwan from the Perspective of Social Justice Leadership Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes a variety of secondary sources to evaluate the implementation of remedial teaching for disadvantaged students in Taiwan’s elementary schools. There are five main findings: 1. The availability of sufficient financial provision for education will affect the effectiveness of implementation of after-class support policies. 2. The low proportions of supported students in schools can be explained by factors such as the times arranged for remedial teaching, the willingness of teachers to participate, the willingness of students, in addition to the compatibility of parents ‘time and parents’ willingness. 3. Of the three levels of selection regulations for after-class support, the Administration and Management level attained the highest score. 4. The Teaching level was most capable of effectively predicting the Study Assessments and Progress Checks level, with an explanatory power of 65.4%. 5. The overall effect of the impact of the Teaching level on the Study Assessments and Progress Checks level was .68, which was higher than Administration and Management (.32).

Keywords: Remedial teaching, social justice, disadvantaged students, national education.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of cultural reproduction is well-established in the field of education administration (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1998). In the US, the increasing diversity of public school students has meant that education leaders face new challenges that necessitate their understanding of a school’s culture and structure. These variables are expected to influence the relative degree of educational achievement. Social justice is important in this respect because it not only identifies occurrences of educational injustice but also actively encourages schools to realize educational justice (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Marshall, 2004; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002; Sleeter, 2001).

Public schools have the potential to imitate unjust institutions in the wider society (Anyon, 2005; Brantlinger, 2003; Larson & Murtadha, 2003), which means that education leaders are directly engaged in the reproduction of educationally unjust tasks. However, educational personnel with an awareness of social justice and educational justice will assist in the amelioration of educational injustice (Nieto, 2000; Scheurich & Young, 2002; Young & Laible, 2000).

During the process of school education, school leaders should be able to provide appropriate educational measures to accommodate students from different households, cultures, ethnic groups, and social and economic backgrounds, to facilitate the successful education of all students (Theoharis, 2004). In recent years, therefore, the US has gradually used the allocation of finances to reward the successful administration of schools and the implementation of positive innovation in schools (Amrein & Berliner,
2002). This approach has also meant limiting the provision of extra tuition fees and transportation subsidies to low-performing schools (Esparo & Rader, 2001). In summary, the success of school education is not measurable in terms of the achievements of a select group of students: only the success of all students can attest to a school’s performance.

Social justice leadership involves not just white, middle-class students from affluent households, but also students from diverse ethnic groups, social and economic positions, as well as religious and cultural backgrounds (Oakes, Quartz & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrle, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). Educational workers and policy makers are gradually becoming more aware that school education for the most part facilitates the success of young, affluent white students (Alexander, Entwisle & Olsen, 2001; Shield & Oberg, 2000). The main determining factors in such cases are the ethnic and socioeconomic background of these students’ households. In contrast, it has also been found that students from minority backgrounds and lower socioeconomic groups perform less well academically (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Therefore, in North America, low levels of achievement, poor retention rates and behavioral problems are mostly associated with students from minority backgrounds (McBride & McKee, 2001; Nieto, 1999). We can ascertain from such studies that various factors, such as students’ ethnicity, socioeconomic background and culture, shape the context in which students study. It therefore influences the effectiveness of their study habits.

There is currently a lack of school-based corroboration of the development of social justice theory, which limits the theory’s applicability (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Dantley, 2002; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; MacKinnon, 2000; Rapp, 2002; Shield, 2004). Taiwan’s Ministry of Education (MOE) piloted the After-School Alternative Program in 2007. Local governments, in accordance with the MOE’s policy, fully implemented the program until 2010, and evaluated the achievements stemming from its implementation by junior high schools and elementary schools. The educational world is gradually attaching greater importance to social justice leadership. This point can be demonstrated by studying the effects of the implementation of Taiwan’s After-School Alternative Program. A combination of theory and practice will be used to conduct school-based corroboration to facilitate early realization of social justice in the field of education.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Social Justice Leadership**

Social justice leadership is mainly the process of linking social justice to the practical daily needs of school leadership (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Gerwirtz, 1998; Goldfarb & Grinber, 2002). To integrate the findings of Theoharis (2004), Marshall and Oliva (2010), and Shield (2004), on the discourse on the meaning of social justice leadership, such leadership must involve the concepts of morality, fairness, compassion, and respect. Its targets are mainly students from minority backgrounds and lower socioeconomic groups. Its purpose is to promote relationships between students from different areas, as well as those of different ethnicities and different socioeconomic groups, to facilitate the success of all students and realize the educational ideals of fairness and justice.

As far as social justice leadership abilities are concerned, if we integrate the pronouncements of Marshall (2004), Theoharis (2004), as well as Marshall and Oliva (2010), on the question of such leadership ability, the building of that ability involves a series of theories, research and reflection on practical work, dedication to the design of curricula and teaching tools, a passion for educational justice, intuitive knowledge, care, concern and an associated vision, being able to apply specialist practical skills
and knowledge, and being dedicated to strategy building and facing policy and practical challenges in the real world.

As far as social justice leadership strategy is concerned, the works of Benadusi (2001), Gerstl-Pepin (2001), Oliva and Menchaca (2001), along with Marshall and Oliva (2010), found that factors such as education policy, social structure, educational investments, educational measures and the legal system, will influence trends in social justice leadership strategy. The prospects of success hinge on whether the government can protect the educational rights of the disadvantaged and realize the educational core value concepts of social justice, in order to preserve students’ right to study.

To integrate the above discourse on the meaning of social justice leadership, ability and strategy, the theoretical framework of this study is divided thus: social justice leadership ability, targets of social justice leadership, and purposes of social justice leadership. Table 1 illustrates this theoretical framework.

![Chart 1: Social Justice Leadership: a Theoretical Framework](chart1.png)

Taiwan’s After-School Alternative Program Implementation Plan

The After-School Alternative Program is a remedial study measure taken by Taiwan’s MOE for disadvantage and low-achieving students, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Objectives
   (1) Through after-school support, make-up the short-fall experienced by disadvantaged students, raise low-achieving students’ motivation and confidence to study. (2) Integrate resources, such as currently serving teachers, reserve teachers, junior college students, volunteers, and so forth, to care for the disadvantaged; for example, by teaching them how to become academic achievers. (3) Reintegrate retired teachers into the education system so they can contribute their wisdom and experience to counsel disadvantaged students about their schoolwork. (4) Integrate universities and business conglomerates, establishing partnerships to make good use of community resources. (5) Integrate counseling teams’ specialist manpower research and development remedial materials, and give to schools for consultation. (6) Commend excellent schools and staff in order to boost morale.

2. Targets of assistance
   Students identified as one of the following, but in the case of students benefitting from other
assistance programs (such as those receiving resource services), the principle of non-duplication of services applies. (1) Aboriginal students. (2) The children of the physically or mentally disabled. (3) Overseas, mainland Chinese, Hong Kong or Macanese spouses and children. (4) Students from low-income and medium-low-income households and the children of agricultural and fisheries workers who are exempt from income tax. (5) The children of households dependent on inter-generational nurturing or dysfunctional households (including single parents). (6) Physically or mentally disabled students (including those suspected by the Committee Responsible for Identification and Placement of Gifted and Disabled Students as being physically or mentally disabled students. (7) Other low-achieving or disadvantaged junior high school students determined by the Study Counseling Task Force to require assistance.

Low in-school study achievement involves one of the following: (1) A standard of the bottom 25% of results in a single discipline in urban areas or the bottom 35% of results in a single discipline in non-urban areas. “Urban areas” are the special municipalities, provincially administered cities and county-administered cities. (2) Standardized test results of less than 35% among students at screened, tracked and counseled, transitional pilot schools participating in the After-School Alternative Program.

3. Selection regulations Included:
   (1) Administration and Management
      a. Establish an After-School Alternative Program promotion task force, formulate an implementation plan, hold meetings periodically and promote implementation accordingly. b. Participate in relevant presentations and seminars held by local government departments of education. c. Publicize the spirit and content of the plan to educational staff participating therein, and take the minutes of meetings for that purpose. d. Publicize the spirit and content of the plan to parents and conduct surveys concerning willingness to participate. e. Expend funding in accordance with the regulations and account for such expenditure within the stipulated period of time. f. Take relevant measures to affirm the contributions of teaching staff participating in remedial teaching (such as: dinner parties, certification, public commendation and thanks, social activities ... etc.). g. Complete within the required period system reports on the holding of classes and results.
   (2) Teaching
      a. Ratios of actually assisted students to students who should have been assisted. b. Teaching staff participating in research and study on teaching materials, teaching methods and remedial teaching strategy. c. Prior assessment of causes of low achievement among students. d. Conduct remedial teaching appropriate to the extent to which the student has fallen behind.
   (3) Study Assessments and Progress Checks
      a. Perform random checks and record the state of students’ studies and their progress. b. Check and record students' attendance and matters relating to their studies (including progress in results, attitude to study, and ratio of completed assignments). c. Establish individual study portfolios for each student. d. Understand the feedback provided by teaching staff and parents, and review and improve.

RESEARCH METHODS AND TARGETS

The study adopted secondary data analysis and the interview method to survey the implementation of the After-School Alternative Program policy. Secondary data analysis was conducted on 170 selected schools whose assessment data was complete.

The interviewees were mainly the contracted staff and principals of schools with low ratios of
supported students (six schools were selected). Interviews involved semi-structured questionnaires, primarily to understand why the number of supported students was low and government funding subsidies and their use. The questions were as follows: (1) Why is the ratio of supported students at your school low? (2) Does the value of government funding subsidies affect your school’s promotion of the After-School Alternative Program?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sources of funding for the After-School Alternative Program

Through the interviews we discovered that the Taiwan MOE’s subsidies for the promotion of the After-School Alternative Program policy are decreasing every year, but do decreases in funds affect implementation of the policy? This was the question of greatest concern to the researchers. For this reason, in order to gain an in-depth understanding, the researchers conducted further interviews and found three schools that were able to continue to implement the original program because they enjoyed injections of community resources, while another three schools said that shortfalls in the subsidies were affecting implementation of the policy.

The status of the targets of implementation of Taiwan’s After-School Alternative Program

From the perspective of the targets of implementation of Taiwan’s After-School Alternative Program, the requirements of the targets of social justice leadership can already be met. As far as the objectives of social justice leadership are concerned, however, the ratios of disadvantaged students actually receiving support at most schools are low, between 56.96% and 72.19%, and therefore cannot assist every student to successfully meet his or her objectives. From the researchers’ further interviews it became apparent that the main factor was the arrangement of implementation times, as upper grade students in elementary schools can only participate in the program after-school; but arrangement for such times affects the willingness of the schools’ teachers to accept such teaching work, as well as that of the children themselves to stay at school to take part, and that of their parents to allow them to do so.

Analysis of secondary data on the selection regulations for Taiwan’s After-School Alternative Program

An analysis of the three levels of implementation of the After-School Alternative Program regulations appears in Table1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Summary Table of the Analysis of the Three Levels in the Selection Regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Administration and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Study Assessments and Progress Checks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p< .001

From Table 1 we can ascertain the results of implementation of the After-School Alternative Program’s three selection levels i.e. that the average for Administration and Management (3.58) was the highest, followed in descending order, by that for Study Assessments and Progress Checks (3.52), and Teaching (3.42), strong performances on the four-point scale at all three levels. We continued by adopting paired one-way ANOVA to survey differences in implementation at the three levels. Post hoc comparison (using the least significant difference method) found that the Administration and Management level was significantly higher than the other two levels and therefore more effective.
Comparative analysis of the different background variables for the implementation levels of the After-School Alternative Program

Differences in the comparative analysis of the different background variables for the implementation levels of the After-School Alternative Program are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 2: Summary Table of the Analysis of Principal’s Gender In the Implementation Levels of the After-School Alternative Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Management</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Assessments and Progress Checks</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the averages for principals of different genders in implementation of the three levels of the After-School Alternative Program, Table 2 shows that female principals scored higher than male principals. As far as post hoc comparison was concerned, however, there was no significant difference between the two, which demonstrates that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the implementation of the After-School Alternative Program arising from the gender of school principals.

**Table 3 Summary table of the analysis of numbers of classes in schools in the implementation levels of the after-school alternative program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of classes in school</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>F value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Management</td>
<td>1.6-12 classes</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.13-24 classes</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.25-48 classes</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.49 or more classes</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>1.6-12 classes</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.13-24 classes</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.25-48 classes</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.49 or more classes</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Assessments and Progress Checks</td>
<td>1.6-12 classes</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.13-24 classes</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.25-48 classes</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.49 or more classes</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p< .05

Regarding different schools’ average class numbers for the three implementation levels of the After-School Alternative Program, it can be concluded from Table 3 that schools with few classes (6-12 classes and 13-24 classes) scored higher than schools with many classes (25-48 classes and 49 and more classes). But in the post hoc comparison, the four presented no significant differences, illustrating that there were no significant variations in the effectiveness of the implementation of the After-School Alternative Program caused by the numbers of classes in the schools.
Regression analysis of the three levels of selection regulations for the After-School Alternative Program

Table 4 shows the results of regression analysis of Administration and Management and Teaching in the regulations for the After-School Alternative Program in relation to Study Assessments and Progress Checks.

Table 4: Summary table of the regression analysis of administration and management and teaching in relation to study assessments and progress checks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input Variables in Order</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$ Increment</th>
<th>$\beta$ Coefficient</th>
<th>F Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Level</td>
<td>.808</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>157.59***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** $p<.001$

From the results of the analysis in Table 4, it can be concluded that in the process of implementation of the After-School Alternative Program, the Teaching level can effectively explain the Study Assessments and Progress Checks level with an explanatory power of 65.4%. Also, the results for the Administration and Management level are insignificant. The study shows that Teaching is the only important factor which affects students’ Study Assessments and Progress Checks.

Path analysis of the three levels of selection regulations

Two conclusions can be drawn from Chart 2:

1. Teaching had a significant direct effect on Study Assessments and Progress Checks. The path coefficients were: .48 ($p<.01$); through the significance of the indirect effect of the intervening variables of Administration and Management upon Study Assessments and Progress Checks, the indirect effect value equates to $64 \times .32 = .20$. The value of the impact of the overall effect of Teaching on Study Assessments and Progress Checks test variables was therefore $.48 + .20 = .68$

2. Teaching had a significant direct effect on Study Assessments and Progress Checks. The path coefficients were: .32 ($p<.01$). The value of the overall effect of the impact of Administration and Management upon the variables of Study Assessments and Progress Checks was therefore $.32$
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of the above statistical analysis and interviews point to the following conclusions:

(1) The adequacy of financial provision for education will in practice affect the effectiveness of the implementation of after-school assistance policies. (2) The main reason why schools have low numbers of supported students is the time arranged for remedial teaching, in addition to teacher willingness, student willingness, and accommodation of parents’ time. (3) Among the three levels of selection regulations for after-school support, Administration and Management show significantly the best performance. (4) The Teaching level is the most capable of predicting the Study Assessments and Progress Checks level, with an explanatory power of 65.4%. (5) The value of the overall effect of the impact of the Teaching level upon the Study Assessments and Progress Checks level is .68, which is higher than that of Administration and Management (.32).

Recommendations

On the basis of these conclusions, this study proposes the following recommendations:

(1) Recommendations for administrative organs responsible for education:
   a. Allocate education funding broadly in order to realize social justice in education. b. Draw up measures to reward staff who implement after-school support (including administrative, teaching, and other relevant staff). c. Arrange, as a matter of priority, educational substitute personnel to attend small rural schools to assist with the after-school support of disadvantaged students and student care work. d. Cancel the requirement of a minimum student number to constitute a class in order to fulfill the responsibility of caring for each disadvantaged child. e. Actively seek community resources for investment in work educating disadvantaged students in schools. f. Actively cultivate reserve teachers, junior college students, and other teaching staff, to conduct after-school remedial teaching work.

(2) Recommendations for school leaders
   a. Enhance the understanding of and passion for social justice among leaders and all other school staff. b. Actively seek community resources for investment in work educating disadvantaged students in schools. c. Establish, with government assistance, a human resource database for after-school remedial teaching work. d. Establish sound school-community relations as strong support for after-school support policies.

REFERENCES


