

Leadership for equality in education: 50 years marching forward or marching on the spot?

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Abstract

This article examines how *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership* has embodied the values, concepts and practice of the field of educational leadership over 50 years and so played a part in challenging or sustaining inequality in education. The article explores selected key concepts, equal opportunities, diversity, and social justice, the disciplinary base and prevalent research methods underpinning work on inequality, the geographic location and characteristics of relevant published authors and the two areas which attract most attention, gender and ethnicity/race. All areas embody both a push for change and structural inhibitors that limit its extent. Omissions, silences and displacements are also examined, questioning why, for example, a focus on masculinity, white privilege, learner voice and lower status sectors of education hardly surfaces in half a century. The article concludes that despite the positive achievements of the journal in forwarding equality, there is an equality double bind whereby, like a Trojan virus, parameters limiting change are embedded in the very work that seeks to promote it. A number of positive suggestions for changes in the journal and field are made to encourage researchers and practitioners to detect and resist previous strategies of evasion and limitation.

Keywords

Leadership, equality, diversity, social justice, equal opportunities, gender, ethnicity, racism

For half a century *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership* (EMAL) has reflected the values, theories and practice of the field and so has played a part in shaping educational leadership. Given that most educators espouse a commitment to equality as fundamental, at this 50-year anniversary it is appropriate to examine how the Journal has embodied the area variously indicated by concepts such as equality, equity, social justice, diversity and inclusion in the hope that, though

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the experience of many in education remains blighted by inequalities, the reflexivity and praxis of researchers and practitioners can help to bring about change. The aim of the article is then to examine how far the work represented in EMAL has sustained or challenged inequality, or if a paradox of doing both simultaneously is evident in its 50-year history.

A variety of standpoints are adopted to meet this aim. Attention is first focused on how selected key concepts appear, change meaning and retreat over time. The disciplinary basis and methods that underpin relevant research are considered. The provenance and authorship of work published in the Journal are reviewed. The two equality themes that emerge as having attracted most attention, gender and ethnicity, are given more detailed consideration to explore how discrimination against stigmatised groups is presented in the Journal. Finally, the ways in which the Journal has both forwarded and constrained leadership for greater equality are explored.

Inevitably, only pieces of the jigsaw of EMAL's engagement with inequality are selected. Some may feel that greater consideration should be given to other aspects of inequality that rightly demand attention, such as disability, sexuality and religion. However, it is hoped that the article provokes sufficient reflection to meet the ambitious aim of understanding better how 50 years of publication may have forwarded greater equality or have been merely marching on the spot.

Equality concepts

This section focuses on concepts related to equality through examining the use of selected terms. Their history reveals shifting emphases and tactics. The selection draws on Blackmore's (2006) analysis of a swing in language from early emphases on equal opportunities to later references to diversity and later still to social justice. These selected terms are explored as examples of how the fluid discourse may have both pushed for and or deterred change.

The Sage database contains 2993 research and review articles, editorials and other content published in The British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society's (BELMAS) journal in its various incarnations, from the 1972 *Educational Administration Bulletin* to EMAL in 2020. It was searched by decade for use of a particular word or phrase anywhere in the text, in keywords or in the title. Snapshots of the earliest and recent appearances sketch how concepts have been used over time. Given that book reviews and editorials were included by the search engine and that some articles may have included the word or phrase only in the list of references, the results are no more than indicative of the degree of attention paid to particular concepts. The exploration is intended as a heuristic tool, provoking reflection on the part that the language of equality has played over half a century.

Equal opportunities

Equal opportunities emerged as a key concept in the 1960s, related to European legislation to reduce discrimination against women, minority ethnic people and those with disabilities.

As indicated in Table 1, a search in EMAL for the phrase 'equal opportunities' shows a slight rise in its use over the decades. However, assuming that in-depth engagement would be indicated by its location in either keywords or title, a different picture emerges of a vanishingly small consideration of what is implied by concept.

Table 1. Equal opportunities in articles.

Date range	Equal opportunities anywhere in text	Equal opportunities in keywords	Equal opportunities in title
1970–1979	1	0	0
1980–1989	17	0	1
1990–1999	23	0	1
2000–2009	23	2	0
2010–2019	25	1	0

In the earliest article in which equal opportunities appears in the title, Taylor (1987) suggests that ‘the most central issue to be addressed by education managers in the coming years is the redefinition of equality of opportunity’ (1987: 13). This assertion is based on her analysis that education is designed by a white, male, avowedly heterosexual, able-bodied elite, primarily for the elite, and had failed children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Taylor’s agenda for equal opportunities equates to a radical transformation of education: ‘change on a very large scale: changes in recruitment, in organisation, in curriculum content, in pedagogy’ (1987: 17). Her article is optimistic, suggesting ‘equality issues are being placed at the forefront of education’ (1987: 14), yet it is five years before the issue of equal opportunities again takes a central place in an article (Morgan, 1992). Taylor’s work is an example of how radical critiques appear in the Journal yet are not part of building systematic knowledge and action for equality.

The reform that followed in the late 1980s was in fact quite different to that which Taylor suggested. Globally, arguments prevailed that the introduction of market choice, privatisation and business practices would, through competition, offer greater opportunities to all (Chubb and Moe, 1990; Tooley, 2013). Many argued that choice in a market that reflected cultural and economic capital was unequal and offered no real choice for many (Ball, 1993). Nonetheless, school leaders increasingly embraced the new freedoms, so the ideals of equality of opportunity that demanded system-wide radical change narrowed to issues based on organisational action.

Morgan (1992) reflects this turn in the discourse to a focus on equal opportunities by means of theory and practice imported from business and industry (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Morgan’s article explores on the utility for equal opportunities of commercial quality systems and customer feedback: ‘it is seldom that children are seen as clients and even less seldom listened to as customers. This is puzzling given the experience of industry’ (Morgan, 1992: 193). Morgan reports primary schoolchildren’s accounts of discrimination and exclusion. The implication is that, should the field listen more to children, the failures in equality would become clearer. Neither Taylor’s call for root and branch change nor Morgan’s industry-derived suggestion that children be listened to have had much impact. There is overwhelming evidence that Taylor’s depiction of how schools fail many groups is still current in the 21st-century (UNESCO, nd; FRA, 2017) and children’s voices are rarely heard (Gunter and Thomson, 2007).

By 2009 onwards equal opportunities was falling out of fashion. For example, in his consideration of race inequality Miller (2020) uses the term equal opportunities once but it appears to have little traction and has been replaced by diversity and social justice, more frequently appearing concepts.

Diversity

The word diversity first appears in the Journal in the 1970s, used as an adjective indicating only a range of difference (Hughes, 1974), and it continued to be used throughout the 1970s and 80s simply to indicate value-free differences. From the 1990s onwards diversity begins to take on a wider range of meanings and values. For example, Glatter (1999) writes of the ‘policy goal of promoting choice and diversity’ (1999: 257), diversity being seen as positive because it offers alternatives in choice of schools. The concept reaches a turning point around 2000, when there is a sharp rise in its appearance, as in Table 2, and a difference in how it is employed. By 2012, Coleman sees the term as having become ‘associated with ethnicity at the present time’ (2012: 597).

From 2000 onwards a number of parallel discourses related to diversity have been sustained. On the one hand, the term is equated with a range of ethnicities or national identities that can be used instrumentally. Writing of education in Qatar, Romanowski et al. (2019) exemplify a normative positioning of diversity as a potential benefit to organisations: ‘When diversity is fostered, developed and managed well, both faculty and students benefit’ (2019: 731).

Headteachers are encouraged to ‘celebrate diversity’ (Fuller, 2012: 673), recognising and protecting the individuality of particular groups and meeting their needs, following the European motto of ‘Unity in diversity’ (European Commission, 2017: 2), a catchy motto yet opaque in meaning. Just as naming everyone a leader may render leadership meaningless, so diversity plays an ontological disappearing act. If everyone is diverse then the significance of diversity, and in particular the associated negative experiences of some, are certainly diluted, if not totally obscured.

A more critical discourse runs alongside. In 2002 the earliest article in which diversity appears in the title problematises the notion of difference, so that the term encapsulates the social and psychological impact of being perceived as other. However, even in this critical article, Starr-Glass and Schwartzbaum (2002) make it clear that changes proposed to accommodate diversity, in this case widening the curriculum for women, must not go too far and offend the dominant power, men of a religious group. The article both urges liberalism and embeds the dominance of men. Starr-Glass and Schwartzbaum’s article is an example of using the idea of diversity to push for reform while simultaneously protecting the status quo from fundamental change.

Equal opportunities focused on specific groups. Diversity expanded the focus to acknowledge a wider range of characteristics that meet with discrimination. However, the cases made for celebrating diversity, for unity in diversity and for protecting differences might look very different were they not constructed with the interests of dominant groups in mind. Blackstone (1983) deplores that acceptable changes ‘do not threaten the interests of power groups in the social structure’ (1983: 86). A kind of shallow commitment to respecting all, while sidestepping any real

Table 2. Diversity in EMAL.

Date range	Diversity anywhere in text	Diversity in keywords	Diversity in title
1970–1979	18	0	0
1980–1989	46	0	0
1990–1999	57	0	0
2000–2009	143	7	11
2010–2019	16	6	7

engagement with differences between groups in values, interests and power, provides the appearance of change yet avoids it in any meaningful way (Lumby and MacRuairc, 2020). If equal opportunities' insistence that all have the same proved to be too demanding a concept, diversity provided a much more malleable means of disguising the lack of fundamental change. Sidanius and Pratto (2001) challenge organisations to 'ask themselves what their diversity and inclusion initiatives could look like if they were not trying (intentionally or unintentionally) to incorporate dominant group interests' (2001: 116).

Social justice

The term social justice appears in EMAL as early as 1974, but there is little use prior to the 21st century, when there is a rise in the number of references to the term and a few articles appear that focus on this concept, as in Table 3.

In the earliest article referring to social justice, Houghton and Gear (1974) assert that there is a 'principle of exclusion which is dominant in all advanced industrial countries' (1974: 19). They propose global-scale access to education for all, teaching societal and personal skills to enable individuals to take advantage of opportunities and designing the curriculum by listening to all. Their analysis, from a 'management science' (1974: 13) approach, reflects an instrumental ethic that is designed to reduce social conflict and maximise human resources. Nevertheless, the recommendations from nearly 50 years ago appear startlingly radical, naming a principle of exclusion rather than inclusion as the then norm. Blackstone (1983) refers just once to social justice in an article related to socio-economic disadvantage and gender issues. Social justice, as used here, encompasses changes to process and outcomes perceived through a wider social perspective, not just accredited outcomes but learners' potential to exist productively in society and have access to a full range of employment and social opportunities. Houghton and Gear (1974) and Blackstone (1983), using the concept of social justice, and Taylor (1987), using the concept of equal opportunities, suggest a need to reform education systems profoundly. All are outside the mainstream of articles and make little impact on education systems.

In the 21st century social justice has become widespread in the discourse of education, to the extent that it is embedded in the expectations of leaders, for example in the National Standards for Leadership in Scotland (GTCS, 2012). Ward et al.'s (2016) study of the implementation notes that the standards embody a 're-imagining of social justice as a private matter' (2016: 49) to be achieved by leadership and management within schools. This article exposes a kind of unspoken collusion whereby standards are set out for school leadership to rectify inequality, ignoring the limitations of leadership in the face of deep societal inequality. Increasingly in EMAL, this 'private matter' perspective appears in articles that look inwards to schools, where leadership is to

Table 3. Social justice in articles.

Date range	Social justice anywhere in text	Social justice in keywords	Social justice in title
1970–1979	1	0	0
1980–1989	2	0	0
1990–1999	16	0	0
2000–2009	51	3	0
2010–2019	107	5	4

achieve social justice irrespective of the wider political and social context, cuckoo-like shouldering aside radical critiques of who is running education and in whose interests.

The impact of the language of concepts

A full analysis of changing discourse over 50 years, including further relevant concepts such as inclusion and equity, is beyond the scope of this article. Even the brief snapshot given here suggests that language is part of the incorrigible creativity and ingenuity of the advantaged in reinventing means to protect their self-identity as committed to equality while simultaneously finding ways to avoid increasing it significantly. As Learmonth and Morrell (2017) argue, 'it is very difficult, perhaps often impossible, to construct radical critique in the language of the powerful' (2017: 267). Plaut et al. (2020) suggest that while the privileged are happy with high-level conceptions and aims, the concrete is perceived always as more threatening. This may in part explain the disappearance of the concept of equal opportunities that demanded a very concrete goal, the same for all groups. Alternative 'Nebulous and broad conceptualisations', such as diversity or social justice, 'themselves may beget an obliviousness to inequality' (2020: 110) and have become the terms of choice. They simultaneously draw attention to injustice and blur the focus on what is viewed. The examples explored show how language is used to expose inequality and simultaneously to inhibit change.

Knowledge and methods

This section looks behind the use of concepts to consider how and from where the knowledge that underpins theory and practice is derived. The disciplinary base of the field is slight. Articles such as Allix and Gronn's (2005), which draw on cognitive neuroscience, are rare. Psychologists researching the roots of discrimination suggest that 'Interventions should capitalize on behavioural science models and tools at multiple levels from a broad array of disciplines to explain harassment and bias, and then to defeat these behaviors' (Hayes et al., 2020: 117). Instead, the majority of research and practice in educational leadership draws narrowly on educational leadership theory rather than multiple disciplines. Social and applied psychology have produced relevant knowledge on the nature of discrimination and unconscious bias (Dovidio et al., 2019) that could support research, for example into appointment to leadership positions or the everyday maintenance of discrimination through body language (Fasoli et al., 2017). Educational leadership and management is a practice field which, unless it engages with the deeper understandings garnered through other disciplines, will remain trapped in shallow theory inadequate to educate leaders and overturn existing practice. The long-term aim is more than borrowing from other disciplines and, rather, a critical and collaborative process that reconfigures the resources of a variety of disciplines to transcend current knowledge and, crucially, create new knowledge that can move practice out of its current slough (Khoo et al., 2019).

Methods are also problematic. Sociologists are increasingly concerned with the inadequacy of their traditions and methods to 'address issues of power, race and coloniality' (Bhambra, 2014: 451). Little such soul-searching appears in EMAL. The primary methods used to collect data presented in EMAL are self-report of staff through interview or survey. The data are consequently performative in presenting preferred identities. Observational or ethnographic studies are rare. If Goffman's premise (1959) is correct, whereby performed self-identity may conceal even from themselves peoples' attitudes and actions, the structural role of methods in sustaining a potentially

distorted and overoptimistic perspective on equality is evident. Equally, feminist challenges to the results of the statistical methods used in patriarchal organisations have had little impact (Ollivier and Tremblay, 2000). It would seem that the knowledge and data collection methods of the field as reflected in EMAL provide shaky foundations for attacking inequality. Much relevant data is collected yet in a way that, both structurally and systemically, rigs the results.

Manipulation of perception: Who counts?

The previous sections considered the what of EMAL: equality-related language and the construction of the knowledge base. The focus turns now to who: authorship. This section problematises the representation of (in)equality in EMAL's 50 years of existence by examining who is considered mainstream and the extent to which alternative voices from the periphery have been included. It first examines the geographic location of published research and then the authorship of articles. Mainstream can, of course, be understood in different ways. Hallinger and Kovačević (2021) use numeric methods to calculate which authors have been published and cited most. Mainstream here implies presence, often frequent presence, of particular authors. Mainstream also implies a set of ideas that are followed by the majority, who adopt them as a basis for research and theorising. Both these understandings are relevant here. Peripheral then, by implication, are those whose work appears less frequently in EMAL and or whose ideas find little or limited followership.

The geography of publication

While EMAL opened its door to global scholars early on, their representation remains low. Systematic reviews of research (Castillo and Hallinger, 2018; Coleman, 2012; Hallinger and Bryant D, 2013; Hallinger and Chen, 2015) highlight differences in publication by geographic location. In the most recent at time of writing, Hallinger and Kovačević (2021) find that 83% of papers in their bibliometric review of research on educational leadership from 1960 to 2018 derived from just four societies: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Though an increase over time in contributors from less well-researched systems is evident, Hallinger and colleagues' note how contributions from the continents of Africa, Latin America and Asia continue to emerge from the same few locations within these underrepresented regions (Castillo and Hallinger, 2018). Though no relevant systematic research has been undertaken, it is evident from the authorship that 'hot spots' of publication in underrepresented areas sometimes relate to the incumbency of white Anglophone researchers.

Explanations for imbalanced representation in the geography of publication reflect differing perspectives. Implicit in editors' and publishers' efforts to support improvements in language and quality is a belief, considered stereotyped by some, that submissions from certain parts of the world are more frequently of a lesser standard than those from Anglophone nations. A different perspective is represented by Connell (2014), who argues that the labour process of knowledge production persistently shaped by colonialism is now also overlaid and restructured by neoliberal globalisation. Low- and middle-income countries and scholars struggle to acquire the resulting form of globalised intellectual capital controlled by wealthy Anglophone countries (Odora Hoppers, 2000). The non-discursive conventions of the publishing industry in wealthy nations serve to exclude 'Third World' (sic) (Canagarajah, 2002: 134) scholars from writing and publishing scholarly articles through the 'supposedly commonplace practical requirements of academic publishing' (Canagarajah, 1996: 437). The most significant barrier is the convention of publication

in English. At time of writing the recent decision of EMAL to trial online publication of articles in a second language as well as English, when the latter is not the author's first language, acknowledges the disadvantage to many authors and readers that English is the field's universal language. The paradox of concurrently promoting and demoting equality is evident. On the one hand use of a common language opens up knowledge sharing across the world; simultaneously, it advantage those who are often already advantaged by a high level of resource.

Whose voice?

EMAL has been very successful in building and maintaining a high standing. As a journal's impact factor rises, scholars from all parts of the world jostle for access, for national research assessment purposes, for promotion and tenure and to reach its wide audience. The expectation to publish in prestigious journals is impacting scholars of the north and south alike yet, while those of some northern nations have the resources and power to make and comply with the rules, the rubrics underpin a form of gatekeeping that tends to lead to exclusion of the poorly resourced and marginalised. This exclusion not only affects scholars located in low- and middle-income 'periphery' geographic locations, but also the 'peripheral scholars within the centre' (Odora Hoppers, 2000: 285), which would include scholars of minority backgrounds or lower status groups, women, and particularly women of colour, located in the contexts that hold monopoly in the knowledge production game (Moletsane et al., 2015). Not only may the characteristics of the individual author play a part, but the substantive subject they engage with may be considered not mainstream; that is, with little followership.

Africa may serve as an example of both author location and cultural source of ideas placed at the periphery. In EMAL's first decade of existence, Majasan's (1974) postcolonial analysis of educational administration in Africa was the only publication from Africa by an African scholar. Over the following decades, voices from the southern hemisphere emerged but infrequently, and they rarely contributed to the (in)equality discourse. A search using (in)equality concepts and Africa illustrates that it is not until the fourth decade of EMAL's existence that literature on Africa and other parts of the Global South surfaced more. Eacott and Asuga's (2014) analysis showed that EMAL promoted African scholarship by publishing more articles on Africa than other leading journals in the field. Nevertheless, the persisting dominance of literature from Anglophone nations evidences the asymmetrical power structures in how knowledge is produced and consumed. Leadership concepts and theory that are indigenous to Africa are also rarely represented. For example, a search of EMAL for distributed leadership finds almost 800 sources that mention the subject, compared to a search for Ubuntu leadership that finds only 10, with the earliest in 2014. The degree to which indigenous voices of black and other minority scholars remain underrepresented is clear.

Oplatka and Arar (2016) analyse the multiple ways in which writing on leadership for social justice in very differing contexts nevertheless embeds a common set of values that are explicitly or implicitly seen as the goal. For example, they question 'even concepts used in the literature... such as oppressed students, ethnic disparities, inclusiveness and disadvantaged populations,' (2016: 359). Their analysis highlights how profoundly differing understandings of, for example, family, ethnicity and achievement are wiped away by a homogeneous set of values which are, for many principals, 'remote culturally and emotionally from their world' (2016: 358). The reader is tacitly asked to displace attention from what is valued in each society to what the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia prize.

Those who do find a voice through publication contribute to equality by their presence, while simultaneously detracting from it by what Lander (1998) calls 'pure submission if thinkers from

other latitudes identify their problems starting from Western social sciences instead of starting from the consequences of coloniality of knowledge in their own local histories' (1998: 590). This creates a form of epistemic injustice wherein relations of power and lack of access to resources created by colonialism constrain the Global South community from making their own values understood and accepted. Fricker (2007) defined social power as 'capacity... to influence how things go in the social world' (2007: 9). Arguably, western institutions in collaboration with the non-west must actively disrupt these dominant discourses of inequality in order to transform the patterns of epistemic injustice. By opening its doors to African scholars and others from the Global South, EMAL has been part of the solution giving voice to the traditionally marginalised and on the periphery of knowledge. However, as noted, this has been slow, and more needs to be done to actively engage in helping create alternative 'epistemic frameworks' (Bhargava, 2013: 415).

The dominance of a canon

Overall, an intellectual structure that builds power and ownership of ideas by a few people is evident. Hallinger and Kovačević found that early mainstream authors in the field were white North Americans, with only two exceptions. Though the diversity of the most cited authors has improved somewhat, it is still highly flexed towards the same group of people. Their 2021 review identifies 'canonical' scholars that 'have had significant impact on the development of the EDLM knowledge base' (2021: 19) leading to long-term 'and reasonably stable schools of thought' (2021: 20) and believe that 'This should be acknowledged and celebrated as a victory in the development of EDLM' (2021: 20). To those on the critical edge or holding different perspectives, the existence of pillars that uphold existing structures strongly, as implied by the metaphor, may not be seen as a matter for celebration. Hallinger and Kovačević find that although writing on gender and social justice emerged it did not, in their view, cohere into a school of thought. Consequently, generic ideas, such as leadership for change and leadership for learning, dominate in terms of building coherent and long-term structures of ideas. This scholarly helicopter view of what is important reflects the perspective of leaders, not the perspective of those teachers and learners who suffer discrimination.

Hallinger and Kovačević's (2021) analysis is of the field rather than a single journal. EMAL's record is perhaps more positive. The voices of 'peripheral scholars' (Odora Hoppers, 2000) are relatively recent in the Journal. Shah's (2006) work adjusted the dominant emphasis of gender by including a focus on religion. Moorosi's (2010; 2014) work on gender attempts to bring peripheral knowledge on black women's experiences to the centre, while the likes of Miller (2020) and Showunmi et al. (2016) bring minority voices from the centre-periphery through race and intersectional lenses. These are alternative voices to the dominant white liberal voices, but they remain on the margins; that is, they are literally read less, and so are indicated to be judged as of less interest or importance than, for example, generic theory on leadership.

Here then is a further example of simultaneous progress and the contrary. Hallinger and Kovačević (2019) argue that building knowledge systematically over time is of advantage to the field and so to learners. Clearly, random, disconnected research may fail to result in substantive guidance for practice in which confidence can be placed. However, the canon of generic leader theory assembled by the most cited authors involves a selected few in the construction of a stronghold of knowledge, using theory that asserts a connection to equality but lacks a specific and detailed engagement. The question then arises of how far those writing specifically on equality issues have been able to build a parallel or underlying coherent body of work over half a century.

The perspective of disadvantaged groups

EMAL reflects the perspective of specific groups subject to disadvantage, yet not evenly. Women and gender are given most attention and, to a lesser extent, those who focus on diversity or race. Despite the emergence of intersectionality theory that demands attention be given to multiple characteristics, issues related to socio-economic status, sexuality, disability, special learning needs and religion are less often considered. Consequently, the next two sections explore engagement with gender and the area in EMAL variously termed race, ethnicity or diversity as being the most strongly represented in articles, and so with the best chance of building a coherent body of work sufficient to bring about change.

Women and gender

'Gender inequalities arise from the unequal power relations between women and men' (Subrahmanian, 2005: 397) and are by far the most researched dimension of inequality reported in EMAL (Coleman, 2012). The first mention of women was by Morris of Grasmere (1974). In the first decade of EMAL's history, amidst the habitual use of male pronouns to refer to individuals, there are 15 articles that make reference to women, yet the general discourse is sexist and the generic term to refer to a principal remained 'headmaster' (Soubry, 1978). Neither women nor gender featured in article titles.

Gender as a concept surfaced more than a decade into the Journal's existence, with Johnston's (1986) analysis of differences in leadership style between men and women using the term gender in the title for the first time. Hough (1988) exposes gender bias in the previous five years of publication. A more widespread and explicit use of gender and women is observed as the field began to analyse the problematic under-representation of women in educational leadership (Weightman, 1989). By the third decade gender and women became a common presence in publications, with an even bolder mention of *feminism* in a title towards the end of the century (McCrea and Ehrich, 1999).

By the 21st century gender had become tightly associated with women and, generally, the territory of female researchers. The conceptualisation is limited to gender as a social characteristic (as opposed to social practice ridden with unequal power relations) and a dichotomisation of gender as men and women (Ely and Meyerson, 2000) that tends to exclude other aspects of gender, such as sexual orientation. Social constructionist feminism (Lorber, 2010) suggests that the use of gender as a social characteristic disregards that gender inequality is deeply ingrained in the fabric of society and organisations and that gender inequality can take many forms, depending on the socio-cultural context. The conception of gender prevalent in EMAL and more widely (Hall, 1999) equates gender with an unproblematic westernised category of women and largely ignores that gender inequality also disadvantages men (Lorber, 2010). There is no sustained, deep reflection on the nature and mechanisms of male power, despite the dominance of men in the field (Billing and Alvesson, 2000).

In EMAL's 50-year history, masculinity has not appeared once in a title or as a keyword. It appears in six abstracts, in every case in reference to the masculine nature of leadership, management or bureaucracy rather than as a focus in itself (Grummell et al., 2009; Sherman, 2000). If, as many argue, the issues faced by women are caused by the behaviour of men as embedded through systemic and structural means, the construction of gender to focus on women is an example of an apparent push for change while simultaneously impeding it. Instead of a focus on the root causes of the disadvantage to female learners and staff, hegemonic masculinity, the correlation of gender with

women acts as a blinker, firmly directing attention to results and not causes. Consequently, the attention paid to gender in the relatively numerous articles is an example of the paradox of pushing for change by exposing the experience of girls and women yet simultaneously ensuring that substantive change is unlikely since the gaze rarely strays to detailed analysis of dominant males. The way that the term gender is used in EMAL and more widely results in repeatedly asking the prisoner what it is like to be in jail while failing to build knowledge of the jailer and law-makers who run the system.

Despite the growth of interest in women/gender and educational leadership over decades, indicated in Tables 4 and 5, by the middle of the fourth decade diversity had become a term preferred to gender as indicating a more intersectional approach. Coleman's (2012) review illustrates the trend to focus on diversity and she foregrounds diversity in the 40th anniversary issue of EMAL.

In 50 years, 15% of articles in EMAL mention women anywhere in the text and 13% gender. Given that this includes the term women as a simple descriptor of those observed, interviewed or surveyed, the minority status of articles that take substantive cognizance of women is clear, even in the limited way discussed above. Hallinger and Kovačević find that only two of the top 100 cited authors in EMAL's first decade were women, rising to 21 in 2010 to 2018, still a considerable underrepresentation. Both women authors and articles on gender are not fully included in building mainstream knowledge.

Racism and race equality

Just as gender has come to direct attention to the disadvantage experienced by women and not those who act to disadvantage them, diversity directs leaders' attention to the groups who are perceived as different from a dominant norm. By contrast, racism directs leaders' attention to those who create the disadvantage suffered by many minority ethnic learners and staff. The literature in EMAL that adopts racism as a framework is small, as in Table 6:

Since 2000 there have been 280 uses of the word diversity in EMAL articles and 54 uses of the term racism. Clearly racism is not the preferred focus, nor race equality, which term is used only once in an EMAL article up to 2019, though it may be also that diversity is used more often because it refers to more than ethnicity, encompassing gender, sexuality, disability, and so on.

Plaut et al. (2020) argue that the whole of American society is organised so that the privileged should not be inconvenienced by being confronted by their privilege. If this is correct, then other nations, their journals and specifically EMAL may reflect a similar rejection of any challenge to 'white fragility' (2020: 108), evident in the language and in the rarity of reference to relevant theory. For example, Critical Race Theory (CRT), which insists on confrontation with individual

Table 4. Women in EMAL.

Date range	Women anywhere in text	Women in keywords	Women in title
1970–1979	15	0	0
1980–1989	51	0	3
1990–1999	63	0	4
2000–2009	94	1	5
2010–2019	164	10	13

Table 5. Gender in EMAL.

Date range	Gender anywhere in text	Gender in keywords	Gender in title
1970–1979	0	0	0
1980–1989	37	0	2
1990–1999	55	0	2
2000–2009	122	7	5
2010–2019	247	20	11

Table 6. Racism in EMAL.

Date range	Racism anywhere in text	Racism in keywords	Racism in title
1970–1979	0	0	0
1980–1989	7	0	1
1990–1999	8	0	0
2000–2009	14	0	0
2010–2019	25	1	1 (book review)

experience as a premise for progress (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006), appears just six times in EMAL's 50-year history.

CRT itself may not escape the double bind of intending to forward equality yet also impeding it. Repeated narratives from stigmatised groups that raise awareness and understanding of the impact of discrimination may shape a focus that does not adequately probe the intentions, self-justification and guile of the privileged. CRT and feminist philosophies adopt an imperative to explain the extent and nature of discrimination in the belief that this voice will lead others to wish for substantial change (Maylor et al., 2021). The logic is irreproachable, that if we communicate injustice clearly enough others will wish to eradicate it; nevertheless, it is a defective tactic. In practice, preservation of privilege trumps justice, and progress on inclusion of all learners and equality for staff is painfully slow.

Intersections

In adopting an intersectional perspective on both gender and race, tensions in the interests of differing groups emerge. Until the fourth to fifth decades of EMAL's existence gender in educational leadership was dominated by white liberal feminist discourse that focused on barriers and under-representation of white women in leadership positions in Anglophone nations. A critical discourse appears, for example in the work of Blackmore (2006) but still reflecting the hegemony of the west Coleman (2012) argues that access to those who are stigmatised is more likely to be achieved by researchers who share similar characteristics. Nevertheless, work that focuses on experiences of black women is widely researched by white scholars so, while there appears to be a focus on the Global South experience, these peripheral spaces are also largely inhabited by white scholars. Thus, while it seems that more knowledge is being produced on the experiences of black women and ethnic minority groups through intersectional approaches, knowledge production is

still largely framed through the white eye. It can be argued as legitimate for white women to contribute through their research to increasing gender and ethnic equality, but from the perspective of those disadvantaged by ethnicity, their power and control of research may be judged to be more ethically ambiguous.

Omissions: blind spots and displacement

The article has explored the field's engagement with equality through looking at what has been included in EMAL. It is little enough. Since 1972, articles with a keyword that is a major term relating to inequality have formed only 3.4% of all published material. What may also be revealing is what is omitted or disguised. In 2005, Heck and Hallinger acknowledged 'blind spots in our knowledge' (2005: 238). Blind spots imply more than merely not seeing something; the phrase suggests a turning away. There are numerous blind spots in relation to inequality. For example, while there are many articles exploring the experience of women, this is more often in relation to female staff than female learners. More generally, although the putative aim is to improve things for learners, it is the voice of staff that is heard. Rarely is the focus on leading for pedagogic justice for all. The impact of the transition of staff from a working-class or impoverished background to the higher status of schoolteacher is researched in less wealthy nations such as South Africa, but rarely, if at all, in Anglophone contexts (Lumby and Azaola, 2014). Issues relating leadership to sexuality, religion and special learning needs have received little attention in EMAL. Not only are the needs of specific groups set aside. Less prestigious parts of the education system also, such as further/technical education, which caters generally for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and early years, are rarely the subject of research and publication. The strategy of displacement is evident; that is, directing attention away from something that some may prefer to stay hidden. White privilege, masculinity and indigenous knowledge are examples that have been discussed.

Moving forward or standing still?

EMAL's power has been used positively. Over the 50-year period of its publication, the references to issues related to equality have increased. Quantitative statistics on inclusion and narratives of the phenomenological experience of the disadvantaged have offered a perspective such that none can claim to be unaware of the persistence of discrimination and the widespread negative experiences of those in stigmatised groups. Over time, in reported research there is a widening range of authors and geographic location (Bush and Crawford, 2012). Agendas and proposed actions to increase equality appear, particularly throughout the latter half of the Journal's existence (Miller and Martin, 2015; Morrison et al., 2006; Taylor, 1987). At time of writing a special issue on race and educational leadership has been published and a trial period has commenced for publishing online in languages other than English. So much the Journal may take credit for, in terms of pushing for progress, reflected in articles offering case examples of schools that have decreased inequality (Fuller, 2012; Van der Merwe, 2020; Wilson, 2001) and a wider readership of critical articles, for example Miller's article on race (2020). However, such headway is only part of the picture. Notions of masculine, Anglophone-derived and apolitical leadership permeate EMAL. Though incisive analyses and detailed agendas for action to increase equality appear, they do not constitute a coherent, systematic body of work.

This periphery is set against a mainstream canon comprised of the major areas of writing identified by Hallinger and Kovačević (2021), such as leadership for improvement, for learning,

for change, and, while such an approach may intend a goal of improving outcomes for all, it side-steps detailed engagement with sexism, racism, classism and other forms of exclusion. The common apolitical stance of researchers aligns leaders in schools with state political leaders in emphasising leadership's potential to increase equality while turning a blind eye to the foundational causes of the inequality, systemic poverty and discrimination. The promotion of equality as a private matter, referred to earlier in the article, dependant on in-organisation leadership, is a major component of how leadership is constructed, accepting parameters that make its achievement problematic. Articles around the globe assert a power of educational leadership in relation to social justice that would have been seen as unrealistic by many in the 1960s, who located equality issues in a wider political and societal context (Brown et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2020).

In exploring the thesis that EMAL has simultaneously forwarded and impeded a drive for greater equality, this article has depicted an equality double bind. In this, the sincere intentions of articles written to attack inequality are rendered impotent by a disciplinary base, methodological habits and an apolitical and culturally insular viewpoint that relegates many of the body of relevant articles to an unconscious kind of virtue signalling with relatively little resulting change. Ndlovu (2018) suggests that Fanon's analysis (1968) of 'repetition without change' still pertains. After 50 years of slow progress, it is time for greater acknowledgement of the limitations of the field in relation to equality and a much greater determination and sophistication in addressing them.

EMAL is not the entire field, and there are books and other journals that may address the blind spots, displacements and narrow disciplinary base outlined here (Lumby and Coleman, 2016). Nevertheless, it is a leading journal that reaches a wide audience and has a role in carrying equality forward. Renewed determination to improve is particularly timely in that some believe that societies are at a crucial turning point where regressive attitudes and policies towards stigmatised groups have strengthened and been met by renewed resistance in movements such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too. Some suggest that issues of inequality have reached a critical juncture, 'a moment or certain window in time where there is a significant possibility of a decisive transition' (Liu et al., 2014: 6).

How to move forward? Articles related to specific groups contribute. They raise awareness of the impact of how education is led and strengthen the stigmatised, yet they have too little impact. The mainstream normative canon reflecting the status quo drowns the peripheral scattering of critical work. Some may interpret the equality double bind explored in this article as no more than an illustration of the law of unintended consequences. It is more than this. The means to impede greater equality are embedded in the very intentions to achieve it, like a trojan virus that infects all systems and of which we are unaware unless we use the equivalent of sophisticated software to detect and circumvent it. It is the moment for EMAL to consider ways to encourage researchers and practitioners to challenge themselves to detect and resist previous strategies of evasion. The field may not be quite marching on the spot but, having reviewed the body of work generated through EMAL, it seems that its forward motion could be much more determined and effective.

Numerous recommendations might be made, but many have little realistic chance of implementation. For example, the encouragement of submissions that use ethnographic and observational methods in order to circumvent performative self-report data would falter, given the paucity of resources available to most researchers. However, there are changes that are more practical, for example:

- A determination to address blind spots, for example through commissioning special issues on learner voice and equality, masculinity, white privilege, pedagogic justice and under-represented regions of the world.
- Greater encouragement of trans and inter-disciplinary work, harnessing the resources of politics and psychology for example, to ask new questions of leadership and draw in researchers from other disciplines.
- On submission to EMAL to require authors to include a specific statement of the relationship of their article to increasing equality and for reviewers to assess its degree of focus on equality.

Such examples of recommendations relate to the Journal. More critical is the change needed in the work that it reflects. This review of EMAL over half a century challenges how far the majority can continue to assert that equality is fundamental to their work. Houghton and Gear's belief (1974) in a universal 'principle of exclusion' (1974: 19) is a less disingenuous starting point. The field does not primarily need further narratives and statistics detailing the disadvantage suffered by many in education. The extent of discrimination and its impact is widely evidenced. Much more we need a majority change of orientation, a dismantling of performative disguise, a greater acknowledgement from the privileged of the nature and impact of privilege, and a renewed determination to focus on concrete practical change for equality embedded in the mainstream.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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