Chapter 6

Distributing Leadership Within Rural Schools:
Sharing Responsibility for Diverse Student Needs

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ABSTRACT

Along with the immigration throughout the US, rural schools have experienced changes in demographics and need to adapt to meet the needs of diverse students. Addressing this issue, this chapter argues that rural schools in the US might benefit from distributed leadership (DLS) to meet the needs of school personnel and better understand emergent bilingual (EB) students. The authors highlight that DLS is likely to promote student-centered pedagogy (SCP) when the values of democratic education are adhered to. They first map out the recent research on rural schools with EB students and address the common challenges through big ideas from DLS. Then, they argue why DLS is functional in grappling with these challenges and discuss how rural schools can implement DLS efficiently. Lastly, they present pedagogical implications for professional development with a focus on deliberative democracy and share recommendations for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Data from 2016 shows that the immigrant population in the US is 43.7 million, which makes up 13.5% of the nation's population (Pew Research Center, 2018). In this immigrant influx, the Latinx[1] population is increasingly moving towards midwestern, northwestern and southeastern areas of the United States in accordance with the job availability and affordable living costs in suburban and rural areas (Kandel & Cromartie, 2004). One challenge that these families face is that rural communities are not always culturally and economically ready to host large immigrant populations (Jensen, 2006). This impact of immigration is also observable at rural schools given the recent population of emergent bilingual (EB)[2] students. According to the Department of Education, EB students constitute around 9.1% of the total student population enrolled in suburban areas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

While the rural education literature has looked rather extensively at mainstream teachers and students within these schools, little research has devoted attention specifically to the intersection of rural schools and EB students. Given the rapidly changing demographics within rural schools, we see a need for thinking about what kinds of environments are best suitable to addressing the needs of these students. Given our particular backgrounds and interests in teachers and leadership, we saw this as a natural entry point into this complex territory. Therefore, drawing across multiple domains, including educational leadership and student-centered pedagogy (SCP), our aim of this chapter is to consider how educational leadership might be organized to help build more inclusive schools for EB students within rural settings. We look to the literature on Distributed Leadership (DLS) for inspiration in developing our argument.

We saw distributed leadership, or the sharing of leadership responsibilities and roles across multiple school actors (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003; Parker, 2015; Southworth, 2009; Spillane, 2006), as a useful framework because of how it values collaboration, inclusivity and collective responsibility. Given some of the challenges that schools (regardless of location) face in terms of building equitable and inclusive schools for EB students (e.g., providing necessary support, having adequate resources and qualified teachers, sustaining an inclusive culture, etc.), we argue that DLS offers compelling features that might help mitigate some of these challenges. In particular, DLS models that emphasize teacher participation in decision-making processes, professional development, and peer mentoring, offer ways of leveraging individual teachers' expertise, experiences and qualifications in ways that might help bolster a school's material and symbolic resources needed to support their EB students.

While we are careful not to suggest DLS as a simple "solution", we borrow from the logics and principles of the DLS literature in order to think through what

building a more inclusive school for EB students might entail. Furthermore, we will discuss how DLS complements student-centered pedagogy (SCP), which can also help promote a more student-focused and inclusive environment.

To this end, we start by mapping out the recent research on rural schools with EB student populations. This is followed by a summary of the big ideas from the literature about DLS, SCP and democracy within schools. We conclude by offering some thoughts about policy, practice and directions for future research.

BACKGROUND

While it might be easy to think of small, rural schools as having many limitations, some have argued that their size is what makes them the ideal place to try new methods and collaborative practices (Chance & Segura, 2009; Stern, 1994). Therefore, while we see it as necessary to identify the challenges that rural schools face in order to encourage more inclusive schools for EB students, we follow Chance and Segura's (2009) and Stern's (1994) lead in seeing how factors that might present "challenges" can also work in a school's favor. First, we identify some of the challenges.

Some of the most common challenges are associated with financial resources and staff (Marss & Eccles, 2009). Freeman Field (2008) showed that the scarcity of resources is one reason why rural and suburban schools struggle to recruit and retain, which is consistent with the findings of Abbott and Rossiter's (2011) study. This can put a strain on teachers who have to carry more of the burden. Batt (2008) found that teachers suffer from excessive workload that they need to carry out "solo and in tandem with many extra duties" (p. 41). In discussing the implications this has for teaching culturally diverse students, she proposed the idea that "an alternative must be devised to create a general workforce with the skills needed" (p. 41), since recruiting new teachers with specialization in the priority field is so difficult. Teachers who work with students with culturally diverse backgrounds in rural contexts, like any other teacher, need professional development "to meet the needs of changing learner populations, to improve newcomers' communicative competence, and to facilitate their integration into the communities in which they live" (Abbott & Rossiter, 2011, p. 205).

The ever-increasing linguistic and cultural diversity comes with some challenges for EB students, as well, especially in terms of how the schools establish responsibility for support and ensuring these students succeed. In a study based in rural Oregon and Idaho, Batt (2008) showed that there was a fixed boundary between the roles of mainstream teachers and ESL teachers in rural schools. The findings also show that school administrators avoided being involved in issues related with EB students. Likewise, in rural schools with increasing diversity, Rhodes (2014) found that

school personnel were reluctant to make instructional accommodations for EBs and take responsibility in grappling with the existing imbalance between the minority students and the White American students. These findings indicate that there is a need to think about how mutual responsibility amongst teachers in rural schools can be used to promote the support of EB students.

One area that might offer some insight as to how to contend with these challenges is the growing studies around DLS, which highlights and promotes the distribution of responsibility and leadership at all levels of the faculty. In the following section, we distinguish DLS from more traditional forms of leadership to highlight how such a model might be useful.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

What is DLS?

Until the late 1990s, education leadership research was centered around formal school administrators and often described success stories at the individual level (Spillane, 2006). Traditionally, school management was associated with the notion of "lone leadership" (Southworth, 1998, p. 123). Recently, it has turned out that "the task of transforming schools is too complex to expect one person to accomplish single-handedly" (Lashway, 2003, p. 3). Accordingly, the still-developing understanding of effective school management has undergone a visible shift from an individualistic approach to a team-based approach (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). In parallel with this transformation of the construct of school leadership, "the power of one is giving way to belief in the power of everyone" (Southworth, 2009, p. 94). Based on the notion of post-heroic leadership (Fletcher, 2004), DLS has been a strong alternative to the traditional model by virtue of its recognition of "mortals as well as heroes" (Spillane, 2006, p. 4) as the actors in the game of school leadership.

Although literature offers a wide range of terms, such as "collaborative", "shared", "devolved" (Parker, 2015), "emergent", "informal" or "dispersed" leadership (Bolden, 2004), the common verbiage is DLS. It is based on the basic principle that the whole school shares leadership (Lambert, 2003). DLS entails moving away from "lone leadership" (Southworth, 1998, p. 123) and adopting an understanding of sharing leadership throughout the whole school (Lambert, 2003). It recognizes the specialization areas of each school personnel and recognizes how each can contribute to the school's overall mission (Elmore, 2000).

The teamwork aspects of DLS emphasize collaboration, recognition, and inclusion of specialized tasks for quality school cohesion. Fletcher and Käufer (2003) approach it as a collaborative practice that is "enacted by people at all levels rather than a

set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the top" (p. 22). In a similar spirit, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) suggest that the focus of DLS is not "exclusively or chiefly on building the knowledge of an individual formal leader in a school" (p. 27). Stressing expertise as a critical point and student learning as the overall mission, Elmore (2000) asserts:

[DLS], then, means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organization, made coherent through a common culture. It is the "glue" of a common task or goal - improvement of instruction - and a common frame of values for how to approach that task - culture - that keeps [DLS] from becoming another version of loose coupling. (p. 15)

Social relations in the school environment appears to be of top importance in the DLS model (Bolden, 2004), which highlights the interaction dimension of the model. Accordingly, Spillane et al. (2001) view the sociocultural context as the constituent that impinges on the structure of DLS and contends that "leadership practice is constituted in the interaction of leaders and their social and material situations" (p. 27). As Spillane's (2006) "person-plus" term suggests, DLS ideally provides an environment for the interaction among the participants involved in school operations, including important decision-making processes. This rejects a top-down, traditional approach to leadership that privileges the school principal's authority over and above the rest of the faculty. Importantly, Bolden (2004) argues that DLS is based on the idea that "no one individual is the ideal leader in all circumstances" (p. 12). This supports the notion that individuals outside of the "traditional leadership" role can offer valuable insights and expertise to help the school achieve a number of goals. Rather than expecting an individual principal to be the "ideal leader" at all times, s/he might help facilitate collective leadership that draws across the faculty to address different needs and initiatives. Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon and Yashkina (2009) asserted that the school administrator is "to coordinate who performs which leadership functions, to build leadership capacities in others, and to monitor the leadership work of those others, providing constructive feedback to them about their efforts" (p. 248). Likewise, as Harris (2014) explains, DLS entails negotiating, encouraging and facilitating the leadership of others.

Ideally, DLS aims to depart from the bureaucratic model and move towards a more dynamic and interactive one. Lambert (2003) expresses the goal of this new understanding of leadership as "reciprocal, purposeful learning in community" (p. 425). Along the same lines, as per Fletcher (2004), it aims to cultivate schools that can "manage dynamic processes, leverage the learning from diverse perspectives, and accommodate the interests of multiple stakeholders" (p. 655).

What Can Rural Schools Learn From DLS?

Leveraging DLS to Support Diversity in Rural Schools

To frame our argument, we begin by looking at the administrative aspect of rural schools, with a focus on financial concerns that many rural schools unfortunately encounter (Marss & Eccles, 2009). Indeed, smaller populations often mean fewer resources. This can make recruiting and retention of ESL teachers rather difficult (Freeman Field, 2008), especially teachers with specific ESL qualifications/ certifications (Abbott & Rossiter, 2011). Similarly, another challenge that rural schools often grapple with is related to recruiting teachers with rural backgrounds or rural teaching experience (Miller, 2012). In their Montana-based study, Eckert and Petrone (2013) found that preservice teachers from a rural background might perceive rural education through deficit perspectives.

This is where a distributed model that incorporates the talents and experiences of each teacher based on their personal interests, specializations, life experiences and cultural backgrounds might help to cushion the pressure and distribute the responsibility related with these financial and retention issues. For example, school administrators might adopt DLS to tap into the resources of teachers. At this point, especially the teachers who are familiar with the culture of the rural community, which is not "just reduced versions of cities" (McIntire, Marion, & Quaglia, 1990, p. 166), are critical in helping to establish a positive and inclusive culture at the school. As indicated by Azano (2011), the contribution of a rural teacher might help with decision-making and implementing a place-based education by taking local values into consideration. It seems that DLS is a model that would enable teachers with rural backgrounds be involved and reduce the pressure on the school that struggles with meeting the needs of their students. This resource of rural teachers might be needed even more, especially if the school principal is not from the area or from a rural background.

DLS might also provide some tools for helping teachers within rural schools. For example, Batt (2008) found that ESL teachers in rural schools often carry excessive workloads. In a New England-based study with English language teachers, Liggett (2010) found that these teachers sometimes suffer from social marginalization. Another finding was that discriminatory practices based on language-use have been perpetuated and seen as a natural part of school life.

This portrait illustrates a potential risk for who is responsible for EB students. Given the environment described by Liggett (2010), it is possible that content-area teachers might be inclined to consider EBs as the responsibility of ESL teachers. In this case, material and symbolic mechanisms that help facilitate cultural understanding and mutual responsibility are necessary for building the type of school cohesion

that is critical for EB students to succeed. In our view, one way of addressing this is through a form of DLS that prioritizes shared responsibilities and authority amongst the staff. Here we borrow from DLS proponents who seek to establish distribution as an organic practice (rather than simply a structure) in which school personnel conduct tasks "spontaneously and collaboratively with no necessary identification of leaders or followers" (National College for School Leadership, 2004, p. 5). We see this as one possible way of disrupting the barriers between teachers that perpetuate the challenges associated with teaching EB students. Following Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2004) argument that DLS "incorporates the activities of the multiple individuals in a school who work at mobilizing and guiding a school's staff" (p. 16), we see a similar possibility that a distributed approach might help blur the boundaries between the responsibilities of content-area teachers and ESL teachers. One possible way of organizing this sort of cohesive relationship might be to consider what Peters, Carr and Doldan (2018) found in their DLS study – that the school administrators "provide[d] leadership by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning while prompting an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership" (p. 33). With a similar understanding of enhancing the learning of EBs, as Menken and Sánchez (2020) showed in a case, an elementary school in suburban New York adopted DLS. The outcome was success in shifting the teachers' understanding of their EB students' resources, especially their home languages although the school principal was not an expert in any field like diversity issues or ESOL education. We know that some schools have sought to create this sort of environment by appointing mentor teachers who, in addition to their own classroom responsibilities, serve in peer-to-peer mentoring roles as well. As Lambert (2003) remarks, this type of collaboration not only can help with improving teaching quality, but that it can also help teachers develop a sense of

reflective inquiry into one's classroom practice as well as school-based issues, a focus on student learning and the acceptance of responsibility for each student's learning, an ongoing thirst for new learning and the capacity to adapt it to one's own practice, and the valuing of colleagueship and professional dialogue that is directed towards the achievement of high professional standards. (p. 428)

Also, Abbott and Rossiter (2011) focused on Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) professional development at rural schools and recommended initiating mentoring pairs to corroborate novice teachers and encouraging learning communities for teachers. From this view, we see potential for such practices to have a positive impact on rural schools, especially in terms of helping teachers unite towards a common effort in developing a more inclusive approach to supporting EB students. However, we must also remember that this mentorship practice might

be time-consuming for teacher leaders and limit their role in partaking in school leadership when DLS is implemented as a prescribed task as part of an incentive (Holloway, Nielsen, & Saltmarsh, 2018). Therefore, any such objective should be approached with careful consideration of teachers' time and expectations.

Democracy as the Key for School Diversity

Keane (1993) defines democracy as "a self-reflexive means of controlling the exercise of power [and] an indispensable weapon in the fight to question, restrict, and to dissolve arbitrary power" (p. 132) and boldly remarks that "a bad democracy is always better than a good dictatorship" (p. 132). If we focus on the broader definition of democracy, we might call on Dewey's (1916) definition that calls democracy a "mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 87). In this respect, DLS has the potential for promoting democracy through collaboration and shared experience amongst teachers. After all, as we have learned from the research (e.g., Alsbury & Whitaker, 2012; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Mayrowetz, Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2007), the idea of a single person being able to make good decisions and run a school with all the concomitant responsibility and accountability is untenable today.

Furthermore, Robinson (2001) contends that DLS can foster democratic practice "by decoupling leadership from rank and focusing attention on who is doing the work and how it gets done" (p. 93). In the context of rural education, an environment that promotes democratic participation might be better suited to bringing quality and inclusive education with more engagement and contribution from all members of the faculty. Likewise, Robinson (2001) remarks that distributing leadership among school personnel is a substantial factor for a democratic school management since it means shifting the focus from the construct of rank to the progress of collaboratively getting work done.

This possible impact of DLS on school personnel aligns with the nature of SCP that "gives learners, and demands from them, a relatively high level of active control over the content and process of learning" (Schweisfurth, 2013, p. 20). As active learners, students are expected to do more than listen (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) and partake in activities by constructing knowledge and understanding (Freeman et al., 2014). In Strayhorn's (2005) terms, we have a responsibility to educate "citizens of the world" and need to be cognizant of the expectations from all students and provide them with an equitable education. As Nieto (2009) points out, "[a]ll the decisions we, as educators, make, no matter how neutral they seem, may have an impact on the lives and experiences of our students." (p. 79). Thus, we see a great need for ensuring that the responsibility for EB students' success is distributed amongst all staff.

What this could mean is that a democratic environment of learning is most likely to retain the ideal conditions for SCP, which is emancipatory for students and assigns them with more responsibility in structuring their learning (Schweisfurth, 2013). In short, DLS can also empower EB students by giving them some agency in a democratic school environment where the school administrator shares leadership with teachers and teachers promote SCP. In a way that highlights the need for an alignment between instruction in the classroom and a collaboration-oriented relationship among teachers, a teacher in Hansen-Thomas and Grosso Richins (2015) expressed: "I prefer the relationship of coteacher or team member instead of one being the expert. ... We, as teachers encourage our children to think-pair-share and we need to take our own advice, then a peer-coaching relationship can begin." (p. 769).

On these grounds, we can argue that teachers at rural schools can have a regulatory role in procuring the conditions for appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity, so that multiple voices of EB students are also heard loudly enough. It is worth urging that today's democratic societies are likely to be missing in the good practice of equal rights, respecting and understanding one another, though these are the building blocks of a democratic society (Kyle & Jenks, 2002). Therefore, promoting the inclusion of EB students through democratically-oriented schools is relevant with rural US contexts, as well. To underline this need, Strayhorn (2005) advocates the view that democratic education has a crucial function as the "bedrock" for educating "citizens of the world" and reminds us of the urgency to understand diversity and tolerance towards different cultures. With a similar vision that brings the principle of inclusiveness into the local community, schools might prefer a whole schooling framework that "combines the work of school reform coalitions in poor areas that have focused on: including all, teaching and adapting for diversity, building community and supporting learning, building partnerships, and empowering citizens in a democracy" (Beloin & Peterson, 2000, p. 18).

Although a school that follows SCP might have teachers as the co-constructors of learning, this bridge between community and school or between the students from the local culture and the EB students can be built and maintained by teachers. For this reason, teachers should be empowered to rethink certain phenomena that might cause uneasiness and figure out ways to help the community and the students at rural schools redefine certain values. The findings of Thornberg and Elvstrand (2012) show that "teachers have to enhance their awareness of taken-for-granted power and interaction patterns in everyday school culture, classroom life, and class councils, since these counteract their efforts of making room for school democracy" (p. 52). In this respect, democracy and SCP can promise invaluable outcomes in student achievement through inclusive environments for rural schools. To provide these conditions, however, teachers must also operate in a democratic way, where they are involved in decision-making processes and other critical school matters.

Critical Factors and Challenges for Distributing Responsibility at Rural Schools

So far, we have highlighted some of the key features of DLS, which we think have some potential to help rural schools address the growing linguistic and cultural diversity of their students. While shared responsibility among teachers can result in school improvement, teaching practice and student achievement (Can, 2014), there are several factors that must be considered if such a system is to be executed successfully. Oduro (2004) uses the term "promoter" and "inhibitor" factors, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Seemingly, promoter factors are the conditions that are entailed for a sense of community and mutual acting. On the other hand, the distribution is discouraged when inhibitor factors are in action, which ends up with inadequate or no participation of teachers in leadership. It can be argued that "natural limit to freedom" is highly likely to be a barrier to DLS after considering Lambert's (2003) reminder that one of the pillars of DLS is about "right, responsibility and capability" (p. 33) of individuals. What makes these ideals challenging to achieve is the current policy environment that prioritizes evaluation, competition and high-stakes testing. Therefore, as we consider the benefits of what a supportive, collaborative and distributed school might promote, we are not naïve to the fact that doing so is very difficult within the

Figure 1. Promoter and inhibitor factors that impact DLS (adapted from Oduro, 2004)
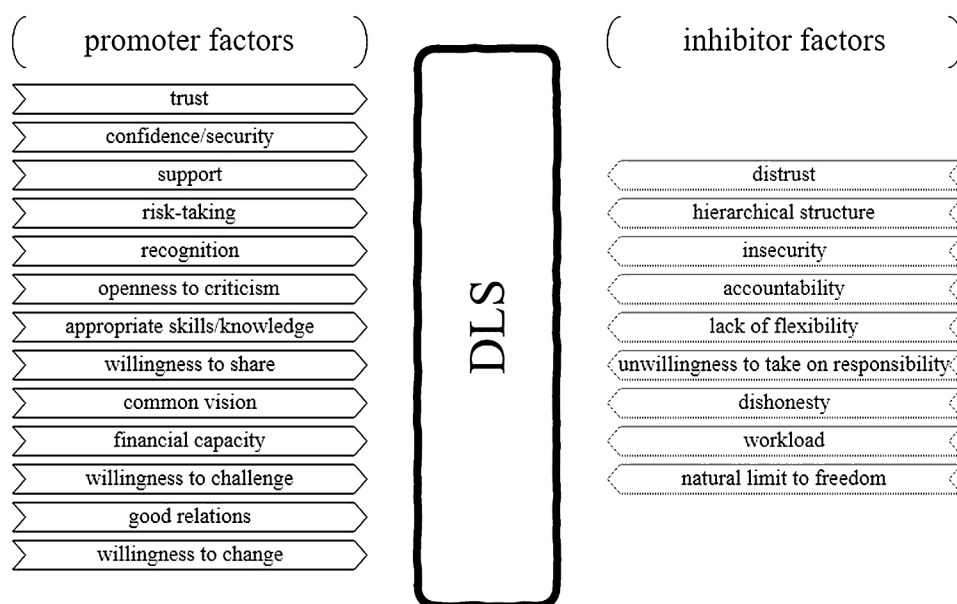
current climate of testing and accountability. In other words, in order to achieve the type of environment we propose, a significant culture shift needs to take place not only within schools, but also at the level of policy (discussed further below).

What we have now is a policy climate where individualism is valued more than collectivism, and competition is valued more than collaboration (Holloway, 2019). Furthermore, aspirations for distributing leadership and/or other responsibilities within schools has been co-opted by hyper-accountability (Holloway, Kerr, & Zacharakis, in press). What we have seen is that while schools might have ambitions for distributing leadership/responsibilities in ways that expand teachers' capacities to lead and contribute to their schools in meaningful ways, what has become increasingly common is teachers being forced to absorb increased responsibilities related to accountability. For example, mentor teachers might spend more time conducting observations and evaluations of their colleagues, as well as analyzing and reporting the results, rather than actually mentoring and coaching their peers to be better teachers (see, for example Holloway, Nielsen, & Saltmarsh, 2018). We raise these concerns because, as we think about rural schools and their capacity to provide an effective and inclusive education for EB students, these sorts of accountability-related challenges are critical for understanding how "solutions" can actually be realized. It is for this reason that we are careful when we advocate for DLS as a "solution". Indeed, what we want educators to consider is how a view towards shared responsibility, where teachers are involved in creating a common vision and mutual responsibility for educating EB (and all) students can help create more inclusive schools. What we are strictly not recommending is a top-down, hierarchical and prescribed form of DLS where teachers are asked to carry a greater burden that extends beyond the educative value and expertise they possess. In other words, we are adamant that DLS models that are created to address increased policy demands associated with, for example, accountability and evaluation, should be avoided and critiqued.

The systems that we support follow Urbanski and Erskine's (2000) argument that: "The culture of labor/management relations in the education community must change to one of shared responsibility, characterized by cooperation to improve instruction, rather than one of traditional polarized roles and adversarial relationships." (p. 368). Like Barth (1988), we recommend stressing the importance of a "common vision", where the school's vision acts "as a compass, a road map, a star that gives purpose and direction to [the school's] efforts" (p. 642) towards creating an inclusive school for EB students.

We must also question the power dynamics associated with leadership and how responsibility and authority are constituted within schools. We heed Lumby's (2013) warning about DLS when she argued that DLS became "a theory and frequently prescribed practice which promotes a fantasy apolitical world in which more staff are supposedly empowered, have more control of their activity and have access to a

wider range of possibilities" (p. 592). She went on to say that "[i]n its avoidance of issues of power, [DLS] is a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power." (p. 592). Therefore, we reiterate our point that DLS will not work singlehandedly. Rather, we argue that the distribution of authority, expertise and responsibility amongst teachers provides some guiding principles that might help rural schools address some challenges they face with addressing the needs of EB students.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the last decade, DLS has been extensively studied (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2019), yet little work has looked specifically on how DLS might work within a rural school that serves linguistically and culturally diverse populations. Furthermore, rather than viewing DLS in a strict sense, we argue that viewing the distribution of authority, expertise and responsibility as a set of principles, might help avoid romanticizing or overstating the benefits of what a DLS structure might provide. In other words, we see some of the foundational logics of DLS as compelling for thinking about how smaller schools might grapple with the challenges they face, particularly in terms of building a more inclusive school for EB students. As the literature has demonstrated previously, many ESL teachers feel isolated from their colleagues and as if they bear the responsibility for ensuring that EB students succeed. Therefore, we see ways of drawing on DLS as a set of practices that might help build more cohesion between teachers and their colleagues, as well as between teachers and the leadership at their school. Furthermore, the values of DLS -although not a single and simple solution- seem to align with those of SCP, which can also help build the types of schools that are best suited for EB (and all) students.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Considering the alignment between DLS and SCP, which offers various possibilities to meet the needs of diverse students, we need future research to look at the specific relationship between rural settings and the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In particular, research that explores the involvement of teachers in decision-making processes and forms of community practice might help us better understand how the responsibility for EB students is distributed amongst staff and how this might be done more effectively.

Furthermore, we also need to better understand how accountability impacts schools' and teachers' capacities to build inclusive schools. Much of our argument in this

chapter has assumed that collective effort, shared responsibility and collaboration are necessary features of an inclusive school. However, we also acknowledge that teachers face unprecedented pressures to demonstrate excellence and growth via performance measures. Oftentimes, these pressures create conditions that undermine efforts to work collaboratively, as competition is at the heart of the high-stakes accountability systems that currently dominate U.S. schools (Hursh, 2016). Therefore, we must challenge not only rural schools to consider alternative forms of practice and governance, but we must also challenge educators and policymakers more broadly to consider the impact of testing, evaluation and accountability on the ability of rural schools to serve their students effectively and ethically.

CONCLUSION

The current book chapter has provided a glimpse of the big ideas in DLS research and illustrated that DLS provides some compelling arguments for how rural schools might empower teachers to share the responsibility of EB students. Aligned with the spirit of DLS, instruction should also be in such a way that it empowers and challenges students to participate, construct and manage their learning. As Shen (2008) expresses, "students [sic] learning is the centres of change, teachers are the key roles in the change, and school is the supporter" (p. 77). When all these three actors are combined, the change is possible, or safer to say, its initiation might occur more easily.

In sum, rather than asking rural school leaders to support DLS at face value, we ask that they consider ways of including teachers more prominently in a variety of ways (e.g., leading professional development; peer-to-peer mentoring, etc.). We stand that schools that encourage adopting democratic values across its units could set an example for students, for whom the school is meant to serve. This makes it incumbent upon educators at rural schools with diverse student communities to contribute to initiatives and support school change towards inclusivity.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Differentiated Instruction: The approach to teaching that promotes individually tailored instruction for the achievement of all students.

Diversity: The concept of having demographic (i.e., language, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status) and philosophical differences in a society.

Emergent Bilingual: A person who is continuously acquiring and using English and has resources and potential to develop bilingualism.

Equality: The principle of providing all students with the same resources.

Equity: The understanding that each student has different needs and resources need to be tailored accordingly.

Immigrant: A person who leaves their country of origin with a conscious decision to settle in a foreign country.

Language Awareness: The knowledge of language learning, teaching and use, which usually brings sympathy towards speakers of a different language.

Marginalization: The process of pushing a group (usually with different characteristics from the group that represents the dominant or "default" culture) towards the edges of the society.

Refugee: A person that is forced to abandon their country of origin due to reasons such as war, violence and feared persecution.

ENDNOTES

[1] We use the term "Latinx" for the purposes of gender inclusion. For further information, see Salinas and Lozano (2019).

[2] Following the recommendation of García, Kleifgen and Falchi (2008), we avoid usages such as "English language learner (ELL)" or the detrimental "Limited English Proficient (LEP)" and prefer to use the term "emergent bilingual", since it embraces bilingualism and recognizes the continuous process in language development.