Editorial: CJEAP Issue 183

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Although the contributions in this issue of the journal do not lend themselves to thematic content organization, a policy focus is evident across each of the papers. What is interesting is the variety of ways in which policy is understood, and the centrality of policy in the everyday enactment of administrative practice and research on educational administration. Policy can be considered as both text and discourse (Ball, 1997, 2006); they may be created as texts that define and enable local and specific purposes, or they may be an extension of broader public and political discourses that direct the activity of educational systems and actors. Another key idea from this collection of papers includes the ways in which policy is enacted, and how the structure and construction of policies may influence the way policies are experienced and implemented by actors in systems (Bascia, 2009). The notions of policy explored in these papers could be loosely characterized by understanding policy as regulatory frameworks; as tools for directing practice; as compliance instruments, and; as ideological and political discourses.

Timothy Sibbald of Nipissing University explores teacher mobility in five Ontario school boards. One of his key findings is how policies play a part in the experience of teachers who either chose to move schools or who were transferred by school board administration. In particular, Sibbald argues that teacher transfer policies were perceived as being employed for reasons other than they were intended. He further states that teachers perceived a "hidden agenda" in teacher transfer policies. His paper concludes that such hidden agendas might contribute to teacher stress with respect to teacher movement between schools.

Stephanie Muhling, of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Callie Mady of Nipissing University provide a review of provincial policies dealing with special education needs and second language programs. They assert that the purpose of specific policies is to reflect "the current state of inclusion of FSL [French as a second language], but also an important means by which to improve it". They argue that formal provincial policy is crucial for providing direction for improvement and ensuring "uptake" by local site-level administrators.

In A Tale of Two Policies: The Case of School Discipline in an Ontario School Board, Emily Milne, of MacEwan University and Janice Aurini of the University of Waterloo propose an understanding of policies as either tightly or loosely coupled. Their paper explores the important question of policy and teacher/administrator discretion in educational decision making. They argue that "each approach to policy presents educators and stakeholders with a series of trade-offs and often unintended consequences".

Lana Parker of York University suggest that social and political forces drive individual educational policies. In her paper, Parker refers to "neoliberal policy" that is influenced by an ideology of economic rationality. This phrase might also characterize general public or governmental policy with which all other policies that are subsumed by them are required to comply and cohere.

In Reconciliation and the Academy: Experience at a Small Institution in Northern Manitoba, Dan Smith speaks about the important work being done in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action at University College of the North. Smith identifies one of the constraints in implementing the Calls to Action as the policies pertaining to faculty appointment, promotion, and tenure. He introduces the important considerations of policy interpretation and policy flexibility in removing the barriers to reconciliation in post-secondary institutions.

Finally, Daniel April and Yamina Bouchama of Université Laval describe the regulatory and policy contexts for principals' supervisory practices in the province of Quebec. In line with the observations made by Milne and Aurini, April and Bouchama found that prescriptive policy frameworks and rigid implementation structures tend to negatively impact educators' experiences.

The papers in this issue illustrate that the variability in the ways that scholars and practitioners engage with and conceptualize educational policy directly impact administrative practice, and the experience of actors in schools and systems. Taken together, the papers provide a tale of the power of policy to achieve positive educational ends, but they may also evidence "maladministration" in their enactment, or when policy becomes disconnected from the lived realities experienced by those who are directly affected by them.

References

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