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Teacher Leadership for Social Change in Bilingual and Bicultural Education
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Christian Fallas Escobar

University of Texas at San Antonio

Teacher Leadership for Social Change in Bilingual and Bicultural Education (2018) was born out of the need to equip bilingual teachers with the tools to bring justice and equity to their classrooms and thus provide emergent bilinguals with the quality education they deserve. Based on tenets of dialogue in zones of contact (Bakhtin, 1998), funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), and praxis, problem-posing education, and humanizing pedagogy (Freire, 2000), Palmer traces the trajectory of teachers who completed the *Proyecto Maestría* program at the University of Texas at Austin, as they developed the leadership skills, the agency and the advocacy to challenge structural inequity and fight for justice and positive change for minoritized students in their schools. Throughout the book, Palmer builds her argument around the need for more bilingual teachers with leadership and advocacy skills while at the same time giving prominence to the participating teachers' voices.

In chapter one, ―*Why Bilingual Teacher Leadership*―, Palmer recounts that it all started with a 1.4 million grant to run the *Proyecto Maestría Collaborative for Teacher Leadership in Bilingual/ ESL Education*, initially a pilot program funded by the *Austin Independent School District* (AISD), with positive transformational results that triggered a desire to ensure its continuation. As Palmer explains, the *Proyecto Maestría* provided a context, a laboratory, and a platform to explore the transformation from bilingual education teachers to leaders and its connection to the teachers' cultural and linguistic identities, their expanding professional networks and embracing of identities as advocates for students and families marginalized by the school system. This initiative was justified by the need to prepare qualified bilingual teachers to work effectively with the increasing population of emergent bilinguals: over 980,000 English Language Learners in public schools in Texas (p. 3). After providing an account of how the State of Texas has moved from English-only education, to transitional bilingual education, to dual language bilingual education, Palmer describes the procedures she followed to document the participating teachers' experiences, as they co-constructed and co-authored their leader identities using dialogue as a powerful tool.

Chapter two, *Literature Review: Defining Bilingual Teacher Leadership*, evidences that literature on teacher advocacy and teacher leadership has thus far omitted the needs of bilingual students and educators. Against this backdrop, Palmer contends that not until bilingual education is understood as grounded in advocacy and leadership, the school system will continue to fail to meet the needs of the increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the U.S. Overall, the literature review centers on the state of bilingual education, teacher advocacy, teacher leadership, and works situated at the nexus of these fields. Regarding bilingual education, Palmer touches on language as a problem, as a resource and as a right (Ruiz, 1984), additive or subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1975), and culturally relevant (Ladson & Billings, 1995), or sustaining (Paris, 2012) pedagogies. As regards teacher advocacy, she discusses critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000), anti-racist pedagogy (Lopez, 2008), and sociocultural consciousness (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). As to teacher leadership, she discusses several models, Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) being the one that aligned with *Proyecto Maestría.* At the nexus, she situated works constructing teachers as policy makers (Menken & García, 2010) and models of bilingual teacher *liderazgo* (Wiemelt & Welton, 2015).

Chapter three, *Developing Teacher Agency and Identity in Bilingual/Bicultural Educational Contexts: Critical Pedagogies for Hope and Transformation*, lays the theoretical foundation at the core of both the *Proyecto Maestría* and the conclusions drawn in this book. Agency, framed as in tension with structure (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1995; Holland et al., 1998), is constructed as essential given the pressures exercised by top-down reforms in education running counter to the needs of marginalized bilingual students. Also endorsed in Palmer's work is Bakhtin's notion of dialogue amidst the zones of contact between authoritative discourse structures of the curriculum (monoglossia) and the internally persuasive discourses of diverse linguistic practices in communities (heteroglossia). Such dialogue within this tension-filled space enables teachers to assert their agency, act upon the world, and transform their identities: ideological becoming. The author also draws on Freire's (2000) notions of critical and humanizing pedagogies and the power these have to open individuals' eyes "to their own oppression and/or their own role in oppressing" (p. 41) and the idea that the power and responsibility of liberation lies in the hands of the oppressed; a task in which losing hope is not an option. Another important anchoring concept is that of praxis, which entails a critical confrontation with reality, expressing one's own humanity to the oppressor, and gaining ideological clarity.

In chapter 4, *The Proyecto Maestría Program and the Teachers*, the author describes the five cohorts that participated in the study, the Proyecto Maestría, the data collection and analysis procedures. The Proyecto Maestría was an intensive 15-month program offered to in-service bilingual

education teachers with at least five years of experience. Although the program was framed as professional development, it still had the rigor characteristic of graduate level work in that it provided participants with problem-posing, inquiry-based and dialogic experiences. The core coursework was sequenced following Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) model for the development of leadership. The majority of the participants were female teachers who identified themselves as Latinas and were originally from either Texas or Latin American countries. Given the large amount of data, the author focused on cohort 5 and members from across other cohorts. Data included reflections from online discussion boards, written assignments, recordings of out-of-class conversations, and interviews of graduates. Data was analyzed using a grounded approach: open thematic coding that was later illuminated by theory. Data was loaded onto NVivo, which helped with themes and sub-themes.

In chapter 5, *Bilingual Teacher Leaders are Reflexive Practitioners*, the author uses excerpts from the data to illustrate the participating teachers' insights as to the power of reflexivity. As the teachers ascertain, reflexivity enabled them to develop comprehensive connections between theory and their practice, which in turn supported their growth as leaders. Even those who started the program with 'ideological clarity' (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001) reported to have undergone a transformation in their levels of reflexivity. Here Palmer differentiates reflection (improving practice based on observations) from reflexivity (critical consideration of larger structures of power). Throughout the program, the teachers were exposed to assignments and learning scenarios that encouraged them to seek answers to their own questions. Examining their own practice as they solved their own challenges, the author explicates, helped maximize the teachers' agency and nurture their reflexive skills. Their enhanced reflexivity, to greater or lesser extent, also enabled teachers to be more outspoken about issues of curriculum and instructing affecting their own classrooms or schools. As Palmer notes, reflexivity served as an antidote to the discouragement bilingual educators experienced in face of challenges. Reflexive practice, and critical sociocultural awareness, helped teachers grapple with these challenges, since they could see the underlying causes and envision ways to ameliorate them.

Chapter six, *Bilingual Teacher Leaders are Cultural/Linguistic Brokers*, focuses on the role of teachers' cultural and linguistic identity and their development of leadership skills. Teachers came into the program with different levels of critical awareness of the structures of society that stratify their emergent bilingual students. Along the program, examining their own cultural and linguistic identity led them to question deficit assumptions, which turned out to be key to their development of leadership skills. Several assignments (e.g. *Ahora Sí* Column and Literacy Journal Box) helped teachers

debunk the myths around literacy practices in Latinx homes and realize how the dominant society imposed on them one single lens to understand literacy. Acquiring clarity on their cultural and linguistic identity even led them to adopt culturally sustaining practices in their classrooms, which were framed by the teachers as key to adopting a problem-posing perspective and enacting activist leadership identities. The community Walk assignment was an eye-opening exercise, as they had to walk around an unknown community taking an anthropologist's stance and notice the community's assets and cultural wealth. Overall, exploring their cultural and linguistic identities and examining their schooling experiences allowed them to identify moments of connection and disconnection, from which they drew to decide the type of educators they wanted to be.

In chapter seven, *Bilingual Teacher Leaders are Collaborators*, examines the teachers' reported feelings of isolation arising from their roles as teachers serving minoritized students and from being members of marginalized communities themselves. In this regard, the teachers repeatedly reference the key role played by the sense of community and collaboration they built on their cohort in their development of leadership skills. As they note, having allies is crucial in facing the hardships of advocacy and leadership work. Similarly, teachers sustain that developing activist and leadership identities requires the creation of safe dialogic spaces where they can learn from each other, share resources, and engage in reflexive practice. Most of these teachers built such strong collegial communities that they continued to collaborate after graduation. Others even extended their collaboration circles outside of their cohorts to local, regional and national levels, which they leveraged to share their creative, critical and culturally sustaining work. Mentoring and coaching colleagues, teachers account, was a challenging experience that required that they step out of their comfort zone and work in collaboration with colleagues with different philosophies of teaching; sometimes this meant working with mainstream white colleagues. As Freire (2000) posits, however, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to show the oppressor their humanity in working towards liberation.

Finally, in *Bilingual Teacher Leaders are Advocates and Change Agents*, Palmer recapitulates the teachers' growth in different dimensions in their trajectory to embracing leadership and advocacy. First, exposure to alternative narratives about schooling led teachers to become more reflexive of their larger societal and institutional structures within which their schools were embedded and of their own teaching practices. Second, teachers developed critical consciousness as a result of gaining a deeper connection to their own cultural and linguistic identities, which in turn led them to respect their students' life experiences funds of knowledge. This heightened awareness also enabled them to

examine their own experiences and to create spaces for their students and the community to engage in critical discussions about the self and the world. Third, as teachers absorbed radical new ideas and realized that teaching is a political act (or, in Bartolomé & Balderrama's words, ideological clarity), they moved from conceiving their roles in bilingual education as that of following to that of leading. Fourth, realizing that they were not alone in feeling marginalized and in wanting to organize for change (collaboration) nurtured teachers' activism, which took different forms in their schools and communities. At the end, Palmer presented a model for supporting bilingual education teachers as they take on activist and leadership roles. This model is comprised of three main pillars/principles: praxis (reflexivity/ideological clarity), cultural and linguistic identities, and professional communities.

Undoubtedly, Palmer's book provides a comprehensive, detailed and systematic account of the experiences that teachers from *Proyecto Maestría* had and which were conducive to their development of leadership skills and advocacy stances. Forming bilingual education teachers equipped with the tools to make positive social change is a timely and much needed enterprise, especially in the face of challenges posed by an educational system that continues to marginalize linguistically and culturally diverse minoritized communities. One of the most outstanding features of this book is that the author allows the participating teachers' voices to take central stage and tell the story of how they moved from a conception of education *as following* to education *as leading*. It becomes clear throughout the book that as teachers gained ideological clarity, heightened their critical awareness of their cultural and linguistic identities, and built long-lasting collaboration networks, they became more outspoken about issues affecting their schools and the communities within which their reflexive praxis was embedded. The teachers' voices tell us about their processes of transformation; about the increasing sense of agency, responsibility and advocacy that drove them to switch roles in their jobs and undertake the task of building bridges between their school and the communities so that they all could engage in polyphonic dialogue about the self and the world. Likewise, the interwoven voices of the participating teachers also point to fertile ground for further research. After having transformed from followers to leaders, some participants moved from teaching to administrative positions. This might be so because leadership maybe constructed as inherent to administrative rather than teaching positions, which would explain the fact that literature on leadership centers on principals rather than educators. If true, this would constitute a hegemonic structure that needs to be problematized and transformed so that educators can also be agents of change. Second, given that culture has historically been understood as fixed and monolithic, concepts such as culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies should be further problematized to avoid the risk of essentializing minority groups.

Pedagogy has always been responsive to mainstream cultures but failed to operate upon principles of social justice and equity in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Finally, educators teach who they are, and thus an examination of their own biases and the hegemonic discourses that feed them should extend to scrutinizing ideological stances and positionalities beyond linguistic/cultural identities; this would go lengths in helping educators gain the ideological clarity they need to act upon the world as leaders and advocates.

Overall, this book is a must-read for educators and researchers interested in transforming the state of affairs of bilingual-bicultural education by situating leadership and advocacy at the core of its raison d'être; a necessary next step in disrupting hegemonic narratives and discourses that homogenize education and disregard the culturally and linguistically diverse nature of classrooms of the U.S. and beyond. As a book that calls for the transformation of the laissez faire stance of policy makers that has brought bilingual education to a state of stagnation, it becomes a valuable source of practical ideas for educators and scholars to continue to instill in bilingual-bicultural educators the skills of reflexivity, sociocultural awareness and *liderazgo* they need to advocate for equity and justice for those families and children who have crossed geographic and symbolic borders in search for a better life. Palmer's three-part model for bilingual teacher leadership for social change becomes of utmost importance for Latinx educators facing anti-immigrant and anti-diversity discourses and narratives deep-rooted in the present Trump administration. Against this backdrop, the U.S. educational system necessitates more and more bilingual teachers—Latinx or otherwise— with the tools for leadership and a strong sense of advocacy to counter and problematize the ever-more-present hate-laden ideological forces marginalizing and casting a deficit light on the Latinx youth in U.S. classrooms.

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