SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS:

CRITICALLY-ORIENTED VALUES AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how second language program administrators (SLPAs) conceptualize and enact critically-oriented values—democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue—within their institutional roles. Drawing on Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1973, 1974) and extended through Critical Language Pedagogy (Crookes & Abednia, 2021), the study explores how administrators navigate institutional constraints such as financial pressures, political resistance, and bureaucratic demands (Eaton, 2013; Panferov, 2012), while striving to maintain their stated values within their programs.

Using a multi-method qualitative approach—including surveys, semi-structured interviews, and limited observations—the study gathers perspectives from SLPAs working across Oʻahu (Hawaiʻi) and the U.S. continent. Participants come from a range of institutional contexts, including university-affiliated programs, private language schools, and charter schools. Analytical methods include grounded theory-informed coding (Hadley, 2017) and hierarchical cluster analysis, which was used to identify three typologies of administrative orientation: Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates.

Findings indicate that while administrators express strong commitments to democratic governance, action-oriented problem-solving, and fostering critical dialogue, these values are frequently influenced by systemic challenges, such as resource constraints, institutional norms, and the pressure for compliance with standardized procedures (Begley, 2000; Eaton, 2013; Osborn, 2006). The study highlights how critical orientation is not a fixed identity but a set of practices shaped by context.

This research contributes to the field by offering a comparative framework for understanding how administrators' critical values are enabled or constrained by institutional

context. It underscores the need for professional development models that prepare SLPAs to navigate complex educational environments while promoting socially responsive and equity-oriented language education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

> *Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is a resolution of moral dilemmas.* (Foster, 1986, p. 33)

Second language program administrators (SLPAs) occupy a multifaceted role within educational systems. They are responsible for navigating institutional goals, stakeholder interests, and the ethical and political dimensions of schooling. Their responsibilities include policy implementation, resource allocation, and fostering supportive environments for teaching and learning—often under significant financial and accountability pressures (Osborn, 2006). As professionals, they are expected to make values-based decisions, as both ethical commitments and professional expertise are central to their work.

Yet despite the significance of their role, the values shaping decision-making in second language education—particularly those related to social justice—have been relatively underexplored. While educational leadership literature has examined how values inform administrative practice, limited attention has been given to administrators working in second language contexts. These settings involve distinct challenges—such as curricular mandates, multilingual populations, and sociocultural diversity—that demand nuanced, values-informed approaches. A closer examination of SLPAs is therefore essential, as their decisions can either reinforce or disrupt long-standing inequities in language education.

To understand why this gap matters, it is necessary to consider the scope and influence of the SLPA role. These administrators work at the intersection of educational administration and applied linguistics. Their work shapes teacher hiring, staff development, and policy enforcement, while also influencing how language curricula respond to students' sociocultural realities. They are more than program managers—they are institutional decision-makers who help shape the

learning experiences of multilingual students and the professional trajectories of language instructors. Like all educational leaders, they must navigate a shifting landscape shaped by accreditation requirements, institutional constraints, and the dynamic, student-centered needs of their programs (Begley, 2000).

While much of the literature on criticality in language education focuses on teachers and classroom practices, this study intentionally centers administrators as key agents of institutional decision-making. SLPAs—whether or not they self-identify as leaders—play a vital role in shaping the conditions under which critical pedagogy can succeed. Their decisions influence hiring practices, curricular direction, funding priorities, and professional development—each of which affects whether critical values such as democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue can be enacted. By shifting focus to these often-overlooked roles, the study contributes to a fuller understanding of how social justice efforts are enabled—or constrained—at the administrative level of language education.

SLPAs' decision-making is never neutral; the values they uphold influence institutional priorities, policies, and students' access to equitable education. While many administrators prioritize efficiency or financial sustainability, others actively work to align their decisions with principles of equity, inclusion, and social justice.

This distinction mirrors a core debate within critical pedagogy, a framework that views education as a means of challenging systemic inequities and empowering learners (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2011). Although critical pedagogy has gained traction in second language education, far less attention has been paid to how administrative decision-making supports—or obstructs—such efforts at the programmatic or institutional level. As Freire (1993) reminds us, transformative pedagogy depends not only on classroom practice but also on broader institutional structures. In

language program administration, the absence of alignment between critical values and institutional policies can significantly limit the enactment of socially responsive teaching.

While research on critical pedagogy in language education continues to grow, there remains a notable gap in scholarship examining how SLPAs' values align with—or challenge—the principles of *democracy*, *action-orientation*, and *critical dialogue* that underpin both Critical Pedagogy and its extension, Critical Language Pedagogy. In this context, the concept of *critical administration* becomes essential: an approach to educational leadership that supports transformative, equity-focused teaching through structural and policy-level decisions. Administrators' values—reflected in hiring practices, program goals, and resource allocation—ultimately shape the conditions under which socially just, critical language education can take root (Carr, 2011; Osborn, 2006).

This dissertation examines the factors that shape the development of critically-oriented—or social justice-driven—SLPAs. It focuses on the leadership practices, institutional decisions, and values that guide their work, particularly as they navigate the complexities of balancing educational goals with a commitment to equity. The study is primarily situated on Oʻahu, a location with a distinct sociopolitical and educational landscape where issues of settler colonialism, occupation, linguistic diversity, and educational equity intersect in complex ways. Hawaiʻi's history of colonization—including the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and ongoing struggles for Indigenous sovereignty—has profoundly shaped its educational systems and policies. Today, language education in Hawaiʻi exists within a broader context of Indigenous resurgence and continued institutional inequity, making it a critical site for examining how administrators enact or resist dominant norms.

As a non-Indigenous SLPA working within this context, I approached this research with a commitment to critically reflecting on my own role within these systems. I used analytic memos to examine how my positionality and institutional knowledge shaped both the research process and the interpretation of administrator narratives. This research site was not chosen for convenience but because it exemplifies the tensions between language policy, educational equity, and colonial structures that administrators must navigate daily. These dynamics raise urgent questions about how values like democracy and action-orientation are interpreted and enacted in institutionally constrained yet socially charged environments.

At the heart of this study are two core questions that guide its inquiry:

1. *How do second language program administrators describe and make sense of critically-oriented values such as democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue within their professional roles?*
2. *In what ways do these values influence their decisions, leadership practices, and responses to institutional constraints?*

These questions reflect the study's interpretive and exploratory focus, aiming to understand how administrators engage with values in context; the study describes how administrators' commitments are enacted across diverse institutional settings. To explore these questions, I draw on three primary data sources: surveys, semi-structured interviews, and limited observations of staff meetings. The study begins with administrators on O'ahu and later incorporates data from U.S. mainland-based educators, allowing for cross-contextual analysis of how decision-making is shaped by differing institutional and sociocultural conditions.

Throughout this dissertation, the term *critical* is used in the tradition of critical pedagogy and Critical Language Pedagogy, signaling an orientation toward equity, transformation, and the interrogation of dominant social structures. Drawing on Freire (1993), Pennycook (2001), and Crookes (2013), I use critical to refer to educational values and practices that raise awareness of injustice and support transformative action. When describing critically-oriented SLPAs, I refer to administrators whose practices reflect principles such as democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue—values that support student agency and challenge institutional inequity. Chapter 2 further elaborates this framing by tracing how *critical* has been defined in applied linguistics and educational administration. In keeping with this framing, I treat critical not as a fixed trait but as a relational stance—one that is enacted differently depending on institutional context, constraints, and opportunities for equity-oriented change.

Although the term *administrator* is used throughout, many participants did not strongly identify with that label. Some described themselves primarily as teachers, coordinators, or managers rather than institutional leaders. This ambiguity reflects the variation in program size, institutional visibility, and professional identity across the field. As such, I use administrator as a general term for individuals in decision-making roles within second language programs, regardless of title. When relevant, I also use terms like *leader* or SLPA to emphasize their broader responsibilities—especially those related to shaping institutional values, policies, and pedagogical direction.

Ultimately, this study offers a situated understanding of how second language program administrators articulate and enact critically-oriented values. While not seeking to produce a formal theory, the findings highlight the institutional conditions, leadership practices, and

personal commitments that influence administrators' decision-making. These insights may help inform training and professional development programs that aim to cultivate critical perspectives in language program administration.

The chapters that follow are organized to support this descriptive and interpretive inquiry. Chapter 2 explores the theoretical foundations of criticality in applied linguistics and second language teacher education, tracing its development and relevance to pedagogy. Chapter 3 shifts focus to educational administrators—particularly in second language settings—examining how they navigate tensions between institutional constraints and social justice commitments.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the study's methodology, detailing the design and implementation of the survey, interview, and limited observational components. These chapters also explain the interpretive framework used for analysis, including grounded theory-informed coding techniques.

Chapter 6 analyzes how O'ahu-based SLPAs articulate and enact their values, particularly in relation to democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. Drawing primarily from interview data, the chapter highlights how administrators and K–12 teachers respond to institutional constraints while attempting to enact socially responsive leadership.

Chapter 7 shifts focus to U.S. mainland administrators, examining how participants—many of whom were selected for their explicit commitment to social justice—frame and describe their practices. This comparison brings regional and institutional variation into sharper focus.

Chapter 8 applies a hierarchical cluster analysis to identify distinct typologies of second language program administrators based on shared institutional, financial, political, and place-based conditions. This cluster-based typology offers a cross-case analytic lens that complements the narrative findings in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 9 revisits the research questions and synthesizes findings across all data sources. It examines how administrators conceptualize and implement critical values, with emphasis on democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. The chapter also explores institutional influences and implications for professional development.

Finally, Chapter 10 concludes the dissertation by summarizing key findings, acknowledging limitations, and proposing directions for future research, including strategies for fostering critically-engaged leadership in language education. Together, these chapters offer a comprehensive analysis of the complexities and possibilities of critical administration in second language education.

2. EXAMINING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

As second language program administrators navigate the complexities of balancing institutional goals with social justice-oriented practices, it is crucial to understand the theoretical frameworks that inform their leadership. This chapter explores the concept of "critical" in applied linguistics and second language teacher education, laying the groundwork for how critical pedagogies—particularly Critical Pedagogy (CP) and Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP)—offer a transformative approach to language education. By examining the philosophical roots of CP and its expansion into CLP, this chapter establishes a context for understanding how administrators can integrate these values into their leadership practices. This is significant in the context of Hawai‘i where the intersection of Indigenous perspectives and decolonization efforts shapes the landscape of language education.

Additionally, to better understand how critically-oriented leadership might be conceptualized, it is necessary to first examine how the idea of "critical" has been developed within applied linguistics and education.

2.1 The Term “Critical” in Applied Linguistics

The concept of a critical approach to education and applied linguistics has generated an extensive literature over the past 50 years. A range of related terms has emerged, including critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical literacy, critical applied linguistics, critical language awareness, critical discourse analysis, and critical reflection. These terms often appear alongside others such as liberatory education, social justice education, transformative practice, empowerment, praxis, emancipatory, participatory, and democratic education. While these frameworks share an overarching concern with resisting oppression and promoting equity, they differ in scope, emphasis, and epistemological grounding. In particular, it is important to

distinguish between “transformative” and “critical.” Transformative practices emphasize deep, systemic change, often at the level of individual empowerment or institutional reform. Critical pedagogy, by contrast, maintains a sharper focus on the ideological and structural roots of injustice, framing education as a means to interrogate and resist power. Clarifying the key dimensions of criticality across these frameworks is essential for understanding how they inform leadership practices in second language education—a discussion further developed in later sections of this chapter.

Rooted in the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy emphasizes education as a means of effecting social action and transformation. Freire’s mission focused on empowering oppressed groups, particularly peasants and workers in colonial and postcolonial societies, using literacy as a tool for challenging systems of domination. At the heart of Freire’s philosophy is the concept of praxis—the intersection of reflection and action—as a means of achieving social and political change. Dialogue plays a central role in this process, serving as a way for individuals to uncover power relations and critically examine their positions within social structures (Freire, 1973, 1974). Yet for Freire, recognition alone is not sufficient; the purpose of dialogue is to generate collective awareness that leads to transformative action. By understanding their complicity in or resistance to systems of oppression, individuals become equipped to take conscious steps toward dismantling those systems through collaborative, liberatory practices.

Although Freire himself did not use the term *critical pedagogy*, his work interrogates how dominant ideologies shape meaning, maintain privilege, and marginalize others. Building on Freire, Habermas’s (1976) concept of legitimation crisis highlights how modern institutions, including educational systems, must continually justify their authority to avoid societal

instability. These ideas resonate with critical pedagogy's critique of education as a site of ideological reproduction rather than transformation.

McLaren (1989), Giroux (1988), and hooks (1994) further extend these foundations by positioning educators as intellectuals capable of challenging hegemonic structures. McLaren emphasizes critical reflection on how schools reinforce social hierarchies, Giroux conceptualizes teachers as agents of cultural production, and hooks advocates for pedagogy as a practice of freedom that transforms learning environments. Together, these scholars reimagine the role of educators as politically and ethically engaged actors whose pedagogical choices can resist oppression and promote democratic change.

Within applied linguistics, critical approaches highlight the relationships among language, ideology, and power. Fairclough's (1995) framework of critical language awareness draws attention to how discourse constructs social realities, while critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a methodology for revealing hidden relations of dominance (see also Gee, 1999; Rogers, 2004). Similarly, Luke's (1997) work on critical literacy emphasizes how literacy practices are embedded in ideological struggles, shaping access to knowledge and agency.

Benesch (1993) highlights an important ambiguity in the TESOL field regarding the meaning of *critical*, distinguishing between cognitive uses of criticality (e.g., analysis and reasoning) and transformative uses aimed at challenging social inequities. Pennycook (2001) extends this critique by proposing *critical applied linguistics*, a framework that challenges the neutrality of language teaching and research by situating them explicitly within broader societal struggles for justice. Rather than treating language as a discrete skill or communicative tool, critical applied linguistics interrogates how language practices are shaped by—and contribute to—structures of power, inequality, and globalization. Pennycook's work highlights the political

dimensions of language education and calls for pedagogical practices that actively resist marginalization and promote critical awareness.

Given these multiple traditions, the term *critical* has come to encompass a wide range of meanings—from individual cognitive skills to collective projects of social transformation. In this dissertation, I use the term *critically-oriented* as a broad label to describe administrators who actively seek to integrate equity, critical dialogue, and action-orientation into their leadership practices. I recognize that related terms such as *social justice orientation*, *critical awareness*, and *democratic values* could also be used. However, *critically-oriented* captures the study's emphasis on questioning dominant structures and working toward transformative change in second language education.

Importantly, these concepts extend beyond classroom teaching. While critical pedagogy is often associated with students and instructors, this study highlights how criticality can—and must—also guide the work of second language program administrators, who play a pivotal role in shaping institutional conditions that either support or constrain social justice-oriented education.

2.2 Critical Pedagogy & Critical Language Pedagogy

Building on the broader discussion of criticality in applied linguistics, this section focuses on critical pedagogy, a framework that explicitly links education to social transformation. Rooted in Freirean thought, critical pedagogy has been adapted across various educational fields, including language education. It is not merely a theoretical framework, but a practical one that requires continual reflection and action. As Gounari (2020) explains, "[C]ritical Pedagogy is both reflection and action, theory and practice that mutually inform each other. It calls upon educators to adopt it as a framework and a vision for their pedagogy" (p. 13). Kincheloe,

McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) similarly highlight that critical pedagogy is flexible and evolves through ongoing dialogue and reflection, making it particularly relevant for second language program administrators.

This section examines how Critical Pedagogy (CP) informs the development of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP), offering a foundation for understanding their role in second language education. In exploring different approaches to "critical" within language teaching and second language acquisition, it is important to recognize the complexity of the term's meanings over time. While Freire emphasized reflection and action as the core of critical pedagogy, later scholars—as discussed by Gounari (2020)—such as Foucault and Bourdieu expanded the notion of "critical" to include examinations of power structures and societal hierarchies. Gounari notes that defining "critical" is far from straightforward, as the term draws from a long intellectual history and encompasses diverse theoretical traditions. She underscores that critical theories "are not monolithic, neither are they static, as they change and shift due to ongoing, 'synergistic' relationships among themselves" (p. 154). This definitional complexity presents challenges for scholars striving to understand and apply critical approaches in education.

Education in the CP tradition is framed as a liberatory process aimed at empowering students and fostering critical consciousness. Its goal is to elevate students' awareness of societal injustices and prepare them to engage in broader struggles for social change. Rather than emphasizing the mere acquisition of knowledge, CP encourages critical examination of the social order and action in pursuit of justice (Akbari, 2008; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Pennycook, 2004; Shor, 1980). It calls for educational environments rooted in students' everyday experiences, facilitating discussions that resonate with their language and knowledge (Akbari, 2008).

Ultimately, CP seeks to cultivate citizens who are prepared to challenge oppressive social conditions and contribute to a more just society.

A key aspect of critical pedagogy is its emphasis on the transformative power of dialogue. As Shor (1992) argues, dialogue is not simply the transmission of ideas, but a collaborative, participatory process that resists passive consumption and invites critical reflection. Rather than accepting knowledge as fixed or given, participants in dialogue co-construct understanding by questioning assumptions, sharing lived experiences, and identifying the social conditions that shape their realities. This process allows individuals to "name the world," in Freire's terms, and to recognize their roles within systems of power and oppression. In this dynamic exchange, dialogue becomes a vehicle not only for awareness but for imagining and enacting collective action for social transformation (Shor & Freire, 1987).

2.2.1 Critical Language Pedagogy

While critical pedagogy provides the philosophical grounding for transformative education, its application in language teaching requires specific pedagogical approaches. This need has given rise to Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP), which integrates social justice principles with language instruction.

CLP emphasizes that language education should not merely develop linguistic proficiency but should also empower students to engage critically with the social, cultural, and political contexts that shape language use. Rather than adhering to a single instructional model, CLP embraces a flexible, context-dependent methodology that prioritizes democratic engagement, dialogic learning, and action-oriented pedagogy (Crookes & Abednia, 2021). Its aim is to create inclusive learning environments where students actively participate in shaping their own education.

One of CLP's core principles is its commitment to democratic values. Instructors are encouraged to position their classrooms as democratic spaces, where students' voices are integral to the learning process (Pennycook, 2021). This approach aligns with broader discussions of education's role in promoting social change, with scholars arguing that language classrooms should serve as sites for questioning power structures and advocating for equity (Muszyńska & Hansen-Thomas, 2023).

Dialogic engagement also plays a central role. Building on Freirean pedagogy, CLP emphasizes that through meaningful discussion and collaborative reflection, students can examine how power dynamics are embedded in language use (Benesch, 2012). These conversations foster critical awareness of linguistic and social inequalities, equipping learners to challenge dominant ideologies and construct alternative narratives.

Another key component of CLP is its emphasis on contextualization and relevance. Language instruction is anchored in students' lived realities, cultural histories, and local social issues (Ludwig & Summer, 2023). This approach not only makes language learning more meaningful but also empowers students to apply their linguistic skills to support their communities and engage with pressing social concerns.

Implementing CLP requires a shift away from traditional, prescriptive methods toward participatory and reflective practices. Educators adopting CLP must critically assess their curricula, incorporate diverse linguistic perspectives, and create spaces where students can engage in critical dialogue. In this model, language classrooms become sites of empowerment, where students not only learn language skills but also engage with broader sociopolitical dynamics (Crookes, 2021).

This emphasis on flexibility aligns with critiques of traditional curriculum design. Macalister and Nation (2020) argue that "the various aspects of curriculum design have not been systematically based on research and theory" (p. 122), highlighting the need for research-based, principle-driven approaches like CLP. Rather than following rigid methods, language programs must remain dynamic, reflective, and responsive to learners' needs.

While CLP does not prescribe a singular instructional model, certain tenets emerge across implementations: a commitment to democratic principles, the promotion of dialogic learning, and an emphasis on action-oriented educational experiences. Together, these principles foster environments conducive to critical inquiry, collaborative engagement, and transformative language education.

2.3 The Work of Critical Language Teachers

Given CLP's emphasis on social justice, agency, and transformative practice, an essential question emerges: How do language teachers enact these principles in real-world classrooms? This section examines how critical language teachers implement CLP, the challenges they encounter, and the pedagogical strategies they use to foster critical awareness among students.

In the context of teacher education, Bartolomé (2004) highlights the importance of fostering ideological clarity among teachers, particularly around issues of race, power, and class. She argues that teacher education must go beyond technical training to guide prospective teachers in critically examining the societal ideologies that shape their practices. This approach encourages educators to reflect on the political and ideological dimensions of their work, extending the goals of language instruction toward social justice and transformative action. Bartolomé writes from a sociocultural and critical race theory perspective, emphasizing the racialized and classed dimensions of teacher identity and institutional failure. Similarly, Anya

(2021), grounded in Black feminist thought and critical race pedagogy, explores how anti-Blackness shapes world language education, calling for intersectional approaches to equity and student retention.

Building on this perspective, Leal (2023) explores how early personal and socio-political experiences shape critical language teacher cognition. Through narrative and positioning analysis, Leal demonstrates that teachers' social justice-oriented practices are deeply influenced by formative experiences, including personal encounters with inequality or activism. Understanding these antecedents can be valuable for second language program administrators, who often play a key role in supporting teachers as they develop critical pedagogical identities and advocate for systemic change.

Within the broader fields of TESOL, Applied Linguistics, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), there has been increasing attention to critical theoretical perspectives on language use, teaching, and planning (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Hawkins, 2004; Okazaki, 2005; Pennycook, 2001; Phillipson, 1992). However, accounts of critical classroom practice by language teachers themselves remain relatively rare (e.g., Morgan, 1998); despite this, existing work offers valuable examples of how critical awareness, self-reflection, and social engagement can be integrated into both teaching and teacher education programs across diverse international contexts.

The concept of teaching for social change has deep roots in U.S. educational thought. Counts (1932) called on educators to confront oppressive forces as part of their civic duty, a position later expanded by Brown (1938), who emphasized the need for teacher education programs to prepare educators capable of fostering critical thinking and civic engagement. Brown's argument remains highly relevant today, especially given the ongoing pressures on

teacher education programs to prioritize licensure standards and standardized testing over critical inquiry and social engagement.

Nonetheless, a dominant model of second language teaching still often resembles what Freire (2000) termed banking education, where teachers are the primary holders of knowledge and students are passive recipients. In contrast, critical pedagogy demands a dialogic, participatory model. Hawkins and Norton (2009) advocate for a critical perspective on second language teaching, encouraging pedagogical practices that cultivate not only linguistic competence but also students' ability to interrogate and transform sociocultural, economic, and political structures.

Through the guidance and support of critically-oriented educators, students can develop what Bourdieu (1986) termed cultural capital, the knowledge, skills, and social awareness necessary to participate actively and critically in society. Equipped with these tools, students are empowered to contribute to social transformation at both local and global levels (Zeichner, 2011).

Effective language instruction within a critical framework also requires flexibility and learner-centered approaches. As Macalister and Nation (2020) emphasize, language courses should not simply transmit knowledge, but should train learners to monitor and direct their own development, fostering autonomy and critical engagement. This aligns with the goals of CLP, which seeks to adapt pedagogy to learners' sociocultural contexts and empower them as agents of change.

Thus, critical language teaching involves much more than adopting particular classroom techniques. It requires a deep engagement with students' realities, a commitment to democratic learning, and a belief in the transformative power of education. Importantly, this work does not

rest solely with teachers. It requires institutional structures—and administrators—that support, value, and sustain critical approaches to language education.

2.4 Critical Language Teacher Education

Sustaining critical approaches in language teaching requires more than classroom strategies; it demands systematic support through teacher education programs. Critical language teacher education (CLTE) seeks to prepare educators not merely as skilled instructors, but as transformative agents capable of challenging inequities within and beyond the classroom. While some teacher training programs incorporate aspects of critical pedagogy, a broader systemic shift is necessary to fully integrate critical perspectives into language teacher development. This section explores efforts in critical language teacher education, highlighting key frameworks, challenges, and their relevance for second language program administrators.

Learning to teach critically extends beyond acquiring isolated skills; it entails a dynamic process of integrating one's values, life experiences, and evolving professional identities within complex educational landscapes (Britzman, 2003; Montecinos & Ríos, 1999). This process often generates discomfort as teachers negotiate tensions between existing personal beliefs and new commitments to critical pedagogy (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Rooted in Freire's (1973) work, critical consciousness refers to the ongoing process by which individuals develop an awareness of social, political, and economic oppression—and a corresponding sense of agency to act against it. In this view, education is not only about acquiring knowledge but about interrogating systems of power and recognizing one's role in either sustaining or challenging those systems. Purposeful curriculum design, reflective planning, and scaffolded support are therefore essential components of critical teacher education programs, as they help educators engage in this reflective process and translate awareness into meaningful action.

Frequently, the development of critical consciousness in student teachers occurs under frameworks such as culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), and teaching for social justice (McDonald, 2005; Picower, 2011; Zeichner, 2009, 2011). While curricular models vary, critically-oriented teacher education programs share a common goal: to support educators in interrogating dominant ideologies and developing pedagogical practices aligned with equity and social change.

Scholars such as Bartolomé (1994, 2004), Montecinos (1995), and Ríos (1996) emphasize the importance of explicitly guiding teachers through this developmental process. Montecinos (1995) advocates for a multicultural teacher education curriculum that empowers educators to critique and transform inequitable practices. Bartolomé (1994, 2004) highlights the need to deconstruct deficit narratives about educational failure, encouraging student teachers to examine their own ideological assumptions. Similarly, Miller, Wilson-Segura, and Lorenzo (2008) call for developmental models that support teachers' social justice identities across contexts and over time, likening this process to scaffolding children's developmental needs.

Within the realm of second language (L2) teacher education, efforts to integrate criticality have been promising but remain relatively modest (e.g., Crookes, 2010; Hawkins, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Norton, 2004; Osborn, 2006). Initiatives often emerge at the level of individual faculty committed to critical pedagogy, with localized examples from diverse contexts including Iran (Abednia, 2012; Ahrabi, 2015), Hawai‘i (Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Okazaki, 2005), and Brazil (Pessoa & Urzêda Freitas, 2012). These efforts, while valuable, highlight the need for broader institutional commitment if critical approaches are to be sustained at scale.

For second language program administrators, understanding the aims and challenges of critical language teacher education is crucial. Administrators play a key role in hiring, mentoring, and supporting instructors, and their commitment to fostering criticality directly impacts whether classrooms become sites for social justice-oriented language learning. Thus, critical consciousness is not merely a goal for teachers, but a shared responsibility across all levels of language education leadership. Additionally, while not all individuals in these roles identify as institutional leaders, I use the term "administrator" throughout this dissertation to describe those responsible for shaping policy, curriculum, and programmatic direction in second language education.

2.5 Hawaiian Context: Decolonization, Education, and Social Justice in Language Programs

The principles of critical pedagogy and critical language teacher education take on unique significance in Hawai‘i, where historical and contemporary struggles for Indigenous sovereignty, educational equity, and linguistic rights continue to shape the educational landscape. Hawai‘i's educational systems have long functioned as both tools of colonial assimilation and spaces of resistance, and this complex history continues to shape how administrators, teachers, and community members engage in efforts toward equity. Understanding this layered context is crucial for second language program administrators whose work exists at the intersection of policy, pedagogy, and institutional culture.

Hawai‘i presents a distinctive sociopolitical and cultural context for discussions of social justice education, particularly within second language education and administration. As a site of ongoing coloniality, its educational structures reflect the legacies of American occupation, missionary schooling, and systemic marginalization of Native Hawaiian knowledge systems. Yet

Hawai‘i has also become a fertile ground for Indigenous resurgence and place-based educational movements that challenge dominant norms. While much of the scholarship on social justice in Hawai‘i focuses on teachers and curricula, administrators play a key role in mediating these tensions—shaping hiring practices, language program design, and institutional priorities that either perpetuate or resist colonial frameworks.

2.5.1 Education as a Colonial and Decolonial Tool in Hawai‘i

Hawai‘i’s educational system has long served as a mechanism of colonial assimilation. Grandinetti, Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, and Yamashiro (2017) argue that public schooling in Hawai‘i was historically structured to reinforce American cultural hegemony, systematically marginalizing Native Hawaiian epistemologies. Following the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893, English was imposed as the primary language of instruction, leading to the suppression of Hawaiian language, identity, and educational practices (Grandinetti et al., 2017; Trask, 1993). Education in this period served not only as a vehicle of linguistic colonization but also as a tool for reshaping social identity along settler-colonial lines.

This process extended beyond language policy. Okamura (2008) describes how educational stratification—historically tied to race and class—continues to shape access to resources and opportunity in Hawai‘i. The emergence of elite private institutions such as Punahou and ‘Iolani created exclusive pipelines for social and political advancement, while public schools—especially those serving Native Hawaiian and immigrant communities—remained underfunded and stigmatized (Bayer, 2009). This divide perpetuates structural inequalities within the broader educational system. Importantly, SLPAs working in this landscape must navigate these entrenched hierarchies, making decisions that can either reinforce or disrupt them.

Despite these challenges, Hawai‘i has also become a site of educational resistance and innovation. Efforts to restore Hawaiian language education—particularly through immersion programs—have repositioned education as a tool for cultural revival and decolonial practice (Meyer, 2001). Place-based pedagogies and curriculum grounded in Native Hawaiian epistemologies challenge the dominance of Western schooling models and offer alternative visions of what education can look like (Kaomea, 2009). For administrators, engaging with these movements involves more than symbolic inclusion; it calls for a sustained commitment to rethinking institutional priorities, program goals, and the cultural relevance of second language instruction.

At the same time, scholars such as Rohrer (2017) and Okamura (2008) caution against the co-optation of decolonial rhetoric by institutions that continue to uphold settler-colonial structures. While schools may adopt language that appears inclusive—integrating Hawaiian culture or offering limited heritage language programs—these gestures often lack the systemic changes necessary to confront inequality at its roots. This pattern mirrors dynamics in second language administration, where equity goals are sometimes invoked without critically examining the institutional power structures that limit their realization.

2.5.2 Social Justice Education and Indigenous Epistemologies in Hawai‘i

Approaches to justice in education in Hawai‘i cannot be separated from Indigenous knowledge, land-based learning, and community sovereignty. While Western social justice education (SJE) frameworks often emphasize inclusion and equity through access, Hawaiian perspectives on justice emphasize the restoration of traditional knowledge systems, self-determination, and resistance to settler ideologies (Kaomea, 2009; Meyer, 2001). These Indigenous epistemologies position justice not as integration into dominant systems but as a

reclaiming of space, language, and educational agency. Rather than simply extending critical pedagogy, they call for a paradigm shift that centers Hawaiian ways of knowing and being..

This framing aligns with decolonial theories that question the legitimacy of Western institutions to define justice or success. As Okamura (2008) and Bayer (2009) have shown, the structural inequities in Hawai‘i’s public education system—ranging from funding disparities to racialized achievement gaps—cannot be resolved through surface-level reform. Rohrer (2017) argues that even well-intentioned educational institutions often reproduce colonial hierarchies under the guise of modernization or accountability. The implications for administrators are significant: social justice leadership requires more than equity statements—it requires confronting the historical and ongoing legacies of exclusion embedded in institutional practices.

Kaomea (2009) and Meyer (2001) offer clear alternatives: pedagogies grounded in Hawaiian worldviews, oral traditions, and environmental stewardship that center Indigenous forms of knowledge. For second language program administrators, these examples highlight the importance of supporting curricular and leadership models that are not only inclusive, but transformative. Administrators are not neutral actors; their decisions about hiring, curriculum design, and assessment shape whether such alternative visions of education are supported or sidelined.

In summary, this section situates the work of critically-oriented second language program administrators within the historical and political context of Hawai‘i. Understanding education as both a site of colonial reproduction and decolonial possibility challenges SLPAs to critically examine their roles—not simply as implementers of institutional policy, but as agents who can reshape what is possible within their programs. Recognizing the deep entanglement of language,

power, and place is essential for administrators committed to fostering justice-oriented language education in Hawai‘i.

2.6 Acknowledging the Complexity of "Critical" and "Social Justice"

As discussed throughout this chapter, the concept of *critical* is neither fixed nor universally defined; it varies considerably across intellectual traditions, political movements, and educational contexts. Gounari (2020) highlights the plural nature of critical theories, tracing their evolution from Marxist critique to Freirean pedagogy and beyond. Rather than representing a single coherent tradition, *critical* thinking in education draws from a dynamic and often contested set of frameworks, each emphasizing different aspects of power, ideology, and social transformation.

In Hawai‘i, where struggles for decolonization and educational justice are ongoing, the application of critical pedagogy must be especially nuanced. Local Indigenous epistemologies, sovereignty movements, and histories of colonial resistance complicate any straightforward adoption of critical frameworks. As Gounari (2020) emphasizes, while critical approaches are intellectually diverse, their radical content—the commitment to challenging entrenched power structures—must remain intact if they are to serve as meaningful tools for social change. This challenge resonates strongly in Hawai‘i, where the legacy of colonialism and the continuing fight for Indigenous rights deeply shape educational institutions (Kaomea, 2009; Meyer, 2001).

Gounari also stresses that social justice must be understood as more than an appeal to compassion or inclusion. A critical approach demands that educators and administrators frame social justice in concrete, radical terms—terms that interrogate and seek to dismantle the root causes of inequality rather than merely offering symbolic gestures (Gounari, 2020, p. 14). In this context, second language program administrators in Hawai‘i are called not simply to advocate

for diversity or equity in abstract terms, but to critically assess how their institutional decisions—hiring practices, curriculum policies, language access initiatives—either reproduce or resist systemic inequities (Okamura, 2008; Rohrer, 2017).

Taking these complexities into account, this dissertation uses the term *critically-oriented second language program administrators* to describe the focus of the study. The phrase *critical* is intended to capture a commitment to questioning and challenging systemic structures of power and inequality within second language education, while recognizing that the meaning of critical shifts depending on local sociopolitical realities. Similarly, *social justice* is not treated as a static concept, but as a contested and evolving framework that can be interpreted and enacted in multiple ways.

Thus, throughout this study, the phrases *critically-oriented* and *social justice-oriented* are used as flexible terms—ways of describing administrators who strive to integrate values of equity, action, and systemic transformation into their leadership practices. These terms acknowledge the complexities and tensions inherent in this work, particularly in a setting like Hawai‘i, where questions of justice cannot be separated from histories of settler colonialism, language loss, and Indigenous resurgence.

3. IDENTIFYING CRITICALLY-ORIENTED SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

In Chapter 2, I examined how critical perspectives have been applied in language education, exploring their theoretical foundations, contested definitions, and implications for second language program administration. The chapter traced the evolution of critical pedagogy (CP) and its extension into critical language pedagogy (CLP), emphasizing how these frameworks inform both teaching and leadership. Additionally, the discussion highlighted the intersection of critical perspectives with decolonization efforts in Hawai‘i, demonstrating how educational leadership is shaped by broader sociopolitical contexts.

While much of the literature on critical approaches in education focuses on classroom practices, it is equally essential to consider how these principles apply to educational leadership. Administrators, particularly those in second language programs, play a central role in shaping institutional policies and fostering environments that either support or hinder critical pedagogy. The transition from teaching to administration introduces new complexities, often absent from traditional teacher training programs. As Panferov (2012) notes, teachers who move into administrative roles must balance pedagogical commitments with leadership, budgeting, and personnel management responsibilities. This chapter shifts focus from the theoretical foundations of criticality to the practical question of how second language program administrators (SLPAs) conceptualize their values and decision-making processes across diverse institutional contexts.

3.1 Diverse Educational Settings and the Role of Second Language Program Administrators

SLPAs work across a variety of educational settings, each with distinct challenges, opportunities, and student demographics. These include adult education programs, intensive

English programs (IEPs), private language schools, international schools, charter schools, and programs within K–12 institutions and community colleges. Given this diversity, SLPA leadership is necessarily shaped by institutional priorities, stakeholder expectations, and resource constraints. Administrators must adapt their leadership practices to meet the specific needs and goals of their programs.

For example, adult education programs serve a broad range of learners, including immigrants, refugees, and individuals pursuing career advancement. Administrators in these contexts develop curricula that address diverse literacy levels and educational backgrounds, while also securing funding and promoting equitable access (Parisoff & Reeder, 2012). IEP administrators, typically situated in universities or language schools, face challenges related to fluctuating enrollments, budget pressures, and facilitating students' transitions into mainstream academic settings (Hamrick, 2012).

In private language schools, administrators navigate the intersection of educational and business imperatives, balancing quality instruction with the demands of financial sustainability and market competition (Reeves, 2012). Administrators in international schools oversee ESL programs that must accommodate students' cultural diversity while preparing them for academic integration (Scholz, 2012). In charter schools, administrators operate within semi-autonomous structures, requiring a balance between curricular flexibility and external accountability (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2013). They must also navigate political landscapes and secure funding while potentially fostering social justice values (Kaomea, 2009; Meyer, 2001).

These varied settings highlight the need to understand how educational leadership, especially in second language programs, intersects with broader goals of social justice and transformative change. In this study, social justice is defined as an orientation toward equity,

inclusion, and the redistribution of institutional power. It involves challenging structural inequalities and working to expand access, representation, and participation for historically marginalized communities. As administrators respond to institutional and social complexities, the integration of critical values into their leadership practices becomes a key area of inquiry. Therefore, it is important to explore how values influence their decision-making and problem-solving strategies across different educational contexts.

In this dissertation, I refer to individuals who manage or oversee second language programs—whether in universities, private language schools, or K–12 settings—as *second language program administrators* (SLPAs). This term reflects their formal role within institutional structures. However, I distinguish between *administration* as a positional designation and *leadership* as a values-driven practice. While all participants in this study are administrators, not all are necessarily leaders in the conceptual sense used here. In this study, *leadership* refers specifically to the enactment of critical values—such as equity, democracy, and action-orientation—in institutional decision-making. This distinction allows for a more nuanced analysis of which administrators are not only managing programs but also actively fostering socially just and transformative educational environments. Understanding leadership across settings raises an important question: how do administrators' internal values shape the decisions they make under these complex conditions?

3.2 Conceptualizing Values

In this study, values are understood as guiding principles or deeply held beliefs that shape how individuals interpret situations, make decisions, and prioritize actions. In the context of educational administration, values influence not only personal convictions but also institutional practices and policy choices (Begley, 2000). They serve as internal compasses that help

administrators navigate complex dilemmas, often under conditions of competing demands and institutional constraints. Understanding how values are conceptualized, enacted, and at times contested is essential for examining how administrators approach their roles—and whether their decisions align with broader commitments to equity, justice, and transformation.

Because values are central to educational administration, understanding how they shape leadership approaches and decision-making processes is essential. While many administrators articulate certain principles, how—or whether—these values translate into everyday decision-making remains an open question. Little research has examined these dynamics in depth, particularly in second language program administration.

Osborn (2006) observes that "[l]earning to teach a language is a value-laden process—it involves examining one's own privilege and position in terms of language and culture in the global context" (p. 44). Schools themselves formalize values through mission and vision statements. Similarly, language program administrators may wish to reflect on their own values, assessing how these principles manifest in daily practice. These could be democratic values such as liberty, equality, and solidarity (Crookes, 2021).

Understanding values conceptually is critical because they inform the decision-making frameworks administrators use to guide policies, institutional priorities, and interactions with faculty and students. Begley (2000) explains that values shape perceptions of what is desirable, guiding choices about actions, methods, and goals. From this perspective, an individual's value system is understood as a learned, ongoing system of rules for making choices and resolving conflicts (Leithwood et al., 1992; Rokeach, 1975). In administration, this often manifests through decision-making, problem-solving, and dilemma-resolution—daily activities familiar to most educational leaders (Begley, 2000).

Mental decisions ultimately lead to real-world actions. As Bunge (2009) notes, “all purposive human actions have always had a ‘values dimension.’ One takes action A because one values either A in itself or an expected consequence of A” (p. 87). Thus, administrators' observable actions and discourse are likely reflections of their internal values, manifesting through professional practices.

Critically-minded administrators may recognize that domination is embedded within structural systems, yet they must navigate tensions between conventional, data-driven models and socially engaged, value-oriented leadership. Aggers (2006) challenges the assumption that social structures are ideologically neutral, asserting that critical administrators must consciously consider how their decisions either sustain or disrupt systems of power. By embracing values aligned with social justice and equity, administrators can advocate for systemic change while centering marginalized perspectives. Similarly, Shor (1980) and Jayyusi (1991) emphasize that leadership involves ethical and political responsibilities: leaders either reinforce dominant power structures or resist them through value-conscious decision-making.

Examining administrators’ values, therefore, requires attention to both their stated beliefs and their everyday practices. Narratives provide insight into how administrators frame their leadership roles, while observable actions reveal how values are enacted in practice. As Jayyusi (1991) highlights, concepts such as "truth" and "objectivity" are "praxiologically organized," emerging through situated, real-world interactions rather than existing as fixed, neutral principles. In this sense, studying both discourse and action offers a more comprehensive understanding of administrators' values. These considerations inform my research design, particularly the methodological strategies outlined in Section 5.7, where I further discuss how administrators’ narratives and practices are analyzed.

3.2.1 Values Associated with Leadership

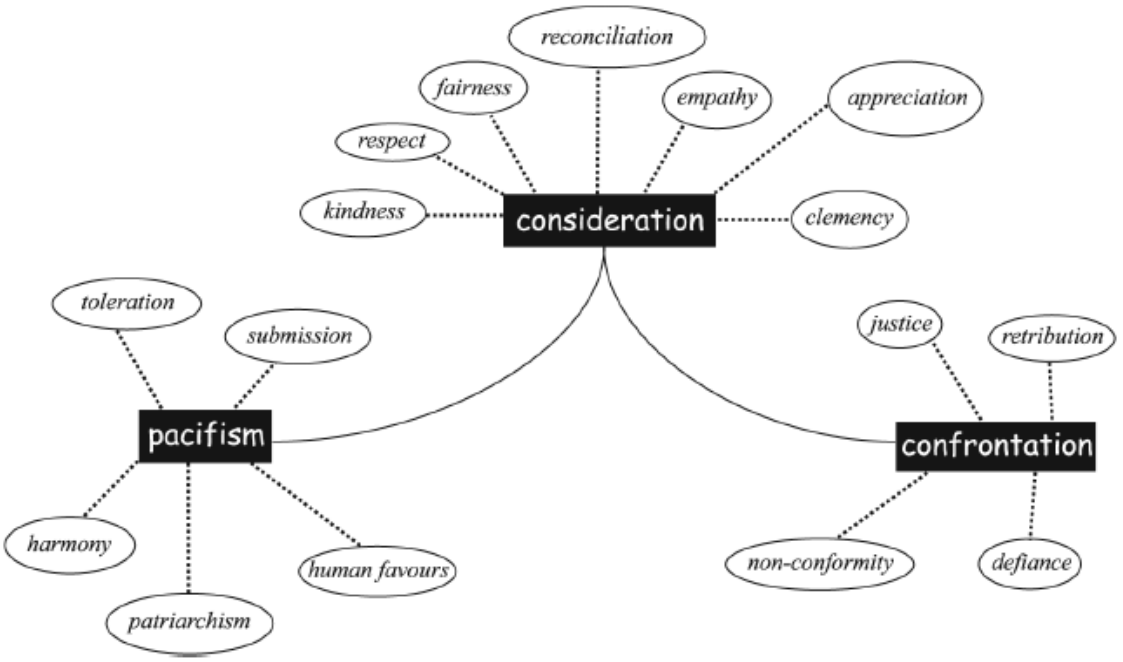
Research suggests that values are fundamental in shaping educational leadership actions, and this influence extends directly to second language program administrators. Law, Walker, and Dimmock (2003), building on Leithwood's earlier studies (Leithwood et al., 1992), highlight how values act as filters in leaders' problem-solving processes, sometimes even substituting for explicit knowledge when confronting complex scenarios.

Law, Walker, and Dimmock's (2003) study aimed to develop a theory explaining how values influence school leaders' approaches to problem-solving. Their research focused on five objectives: (1) identifying principals' values, (2) understanding common problems they face, (3) examining the relationship between values and problem perception, (4) exploring coping strategies, and (5) investigating how value-based frameworks influence problem resolution.

Using an inductive grounded theory approach informed by symbolic interactionism, the study closely examined principals' real-world experiences. Fifteen principals were purposefully sampled for interviews across a range of demographic and institutional contexts. Data collection included interviews, document analysis, and member checks to ensure credibility. Their grounded theory analysis—combining coding, memoing, and diagramming—culminated in the formulation of value-based congruence theory. This theory posits that administrators' values significantly shape their perceptions of problems and their preferred approaches to management and decision-making (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Value Clusters associated with Principals in Law, Walker, and Dimmock (2003, p. 506)



3.3 The Work of Educational Administrators

While understanding values in leadership is crucial, administrators' day-to-day work extends far beyond philosophical commitments. Their responsibilities require them to balance multiple roles, from managing logistics to engaging with broader institutional and political forces. These responsibilities often include key policy-level decisions such as hiring staff, allocating budgets, developing curriculum, and shaping institutional responses to shifting political climates. This section explores the multifaceted nature of educational administration, highlighting the practical realities that shape leadership practices in educational settings.

Educational administrators must remain highly flexible in their regular duties. They organize people, lead meetings, arrange events, fundraise, and continuously prepare to address moment-to-moment problems as they arise. Administrators often serve as the public-facing

spokesperson for their programs, defending decisions and communicating with various constituencies, including media outlets when necessary. They must also develop relationships with political leaders (both supportive and oppositional), community representatives, students, parents (in many but not all cases), and grant-making agencies. Recruiting staff, managing hiring processes, securing funding, and responding to unpredictable opportunities with limited lead time are all part of the administrator's role (Crookes, 2013; Eaton, 2013).

Panferov (2012) highlights the steep learning curve teachers face when transitioning into language program administration (LPA), particularly regarding skills such as financial management, staff supervision, and program development. Unlike administrators in other areas of education, language program administrators often enter leadership positions without formal administrative training, learning instead through experience. In contrast to K–12 school leaders, who frequently complete structured leadership credentialing programs, second language program administrators come from a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds—including TESOL, applied linguistics, and higher education—without a common preparatory path. This variability complicates how leadership is conceptualized and enacted across institutional contexts. Without structured coursework or leadership-focused professional development, many new administrators must quickly adapt to the unpredictable demands of the role. This reality underscores the importance of continuous learning—not only in acquiring new administrative skills but also in reflecting critically on past experiences to navigate the complexities of institutional leadership (Crookes, 2013; Eaton, 2013; Scholz, 2012).

Eaton (2013) also argues that effective administrators must be seen as peers by their teaching staff to create lasting impacts. However, administrators often lack the socialization or relational grounding necessary to build peer-level connections across an entire organization,

sometimes resulting in perceptions of insincerity. Navigating these relational challenges benefits from a critical theoretical perspective. By integrating critical frameworks—focused on understanding power dynamics, fostering equity, and building trust—administrators can establish more authentic relationships within their school communities and better align decision-making processes with democratic values.

Although administrators are frequently positioned as decision-makers, there is often an inherent irony: institutional structures do not fully grant them autonomy to act without consultation or oversight. This paradox reflects a broader tension—educational administrators work under different constraints than teachers or students, particularly when it comes to balancing bureaucratic demands with critical values. Foster (1986) argues that even critically-oriented administrators are bound by the limitations of business-oriented models that prioritize measurable outcomes and standardized methods. He notes that administrators must be politically adept to foster social change, while simultaneously engaging in praxis—"practical action, informed by theory, that attempts to change various conditions" (Foster, 1986, p. 167). Yet, within the business-oriented educational models they inhabit, administrators are often tasked with imposing order and rationality on what might otherwise be "unordered chaos" (Foster, 1999, p. 100).

This tension has profound implications for efforts to enact critical pedagogy through administrative leadership. Although policies are often framed as neutral or objective, scholars such as Freire (2000) and Apple (2004) argue that educational policies tend to reinforce dominant ideologies and maintain existing power hierarchies. Without critical attention, administrative decisions may unintentionally replicate these inequalities, constraining efforts to empower students or support more democratic educational practices (Pennycook, 2001).

Given these tensions, how do administrators' beliefs and values shape their decision-making? Crookes (2009) offers an important distinction: "one view is that truth exists separately from knowers, and knowledge is that subset of truths known by humans," whereas a belief is "a proposition deemed to be true by an individual" (p. 116). In L2 English language education, curriculum design in the mid-20th century was often rooted in scientific objectivity; however, by the 1980s, a growing emphasis on "moral foundations" and "value-laden dimensions" emerged, framing educators as "trustees of public social good" (Crookes, 2009, p. 141). This shift positioned ethical decision-making as integral to curriculum development. Likewise, administrators today must be flexible enough to support teachers in aligning curricula with evolving social and ethical concerns, while also navigating institutional business pressures.

One unique aspect of second language program administration—especially in private institutions—is the recognition that many language schools operate as businesses first and foremost. Bi, Ehrich, and Ehrich (2012) note that many language schools were explicitly created for profit, meaning administrators must remain acutely aware of financial sustainability, student enrollment targets, and resource allocation. When a school's mission or curriculum diverges from market expectations, declining student numbers can place even progressive educational initiatives at risk (Brooks & Miles, 2008; Eaton, 2013). Thus, administrators' choices are not purely educational; they are political and economic as well.

Navigating these competing imperatives can lead administrators and teachers alike to unintentionally align with dominant, status-quo structures (Clark, 2018). Even when language programs explicitly advocate for diversity, social justice, or critical pedagogy, the financial and structural pressures surrounding them may limit their transformative potential (Kezar & Lester, 2011). This tension is captured in Osborn's (2006) critical question: "Bluntly, should a critical

language educator attempt to work within existing standards structures or should they reject the standards completely based on their positivistic, educationally conservative, and political premises?" (p. 43).

3.4 Critically-Oriented Administrators

Given the complexity of administrative responsibilities, can an administrator maintain a critical or social justice orientation? Despite the structural constraints outlined in the previous section, some educational leaders actively work to disrupt inequities and foster more democratic environments. This section examines the concept of the critically-oriented administrator, outlining both theoretical and practical dimensions of leadership rooted in critical perspectives.

Understanding the work of critically-oriented administrators requires recognizing the inherent difficulty of maintaining systems of organization while simultaneously advocating for transformative change. As Box (2005) explains, contradiction is not merely a static opposition between forces but a dynamic, dialectical process involving continual shifts and contestations within structures. In contrast to positivist perspectives that assume stable realities, contradiction suggests a fluid, contested reality that administrators must navigate. In the field of public administration, actual practices often diverge from ideal purposes, particularly around tensions between serving the public good and advancing market-driven interests.

Within second language education, administrators encounter similar contradictions: balancing the demands of institutional survival with a commitment to social justice. Panferov (2012) notes that many teachers transitioning to language program administration (LPA) lack formal leadership preparation, complicating efforts to maintain a critically-oriented stance. Administrators must develop managerial skills such as budgeting and staff supervision while upholding broader values of equity, democracy, and inclusion.

Academics and practitioners recognize that full societal transformation may be elusive. However, incremental improvement, as Dewey (1927) advocated, represents a pragmatic approach for administrators constrained by institutional realities. While radical reforms may not always be possible, administrators can still advance social justice through incremental policy changes, discourse facilitation, and collaborative leadership practices (Hoy & Miskel, 2012).

For critical theory to effectively combat exclusionary governance patterns, Agger (1991) emphasizes the need for "lifeworld-grounded" practices—supporting resistances and small transformations in everyday life. Box (2005) explains that administrators must go beyond passive facilitation, taking active roles in structuring dialogue, bringing diverse stakeholders together, and ensuring inclusive decision-making. For second language program administrators (SLPAs), this might involve creating participatory spaces where faculty, students, and marginalized voices are empowered to shape institutional priorities.

Schools are inherently political spaces, where struggles over knowledge, language, and access are ongoing. Critical administrative frameworks must prioritize openness, teacher knowledge, and continuous professional learning (Crookes, 2003). Rather than viewing administration as a top-down managerial role, critically-oriented administrators seek to create institutional cultures rooted in dialogue, reflection, and shared responsibility.

Structural inequities in leadership remain a significant barrier. Marshall (1991) highlighted the dominance of white males in educational administration, a pattern that persists today. More recent research (e.g., Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2013; Kezar & Lester, 2011) demonstrates that systemic barriers continue to marginalize women, Indigenous educators, and leaders of color. Crookes (2003) argued that traditional models favor rational, hierarchical leadership styles that exclude diverse perspectives. Addressing these issues requires not only greater access to

leadership roles but also transformation of leadership practices themselves to prioritize equity and inclusion (Ruairc et al., 2013).

Foster's (1986, 1991, 1999) work offers important insights into critical educational administration. Foster challenged the assumption that management science could produce universal laws of administrative behavior, emphasizing instead that administrators operate within ideological structures that often reinforce domination and inequality. Foster called for a paradigm shift toward "postadministration," where leaders act as oppositional forces advocating for structural change rather than simply managing existing systems.

Central to Foster's framework is the idea that administration should be educative rather than bureaucratic. Drawing from Fay's (1987) *theory of transformative action*, and consistent with Foster's (1991) call for administrators to interrogate existing structures and work toward more equitable realities, this study builds on a foundational view of administration as a transformative practice. These ideas laid a foundation for contemporary models of social justice administration, which continue to emphasize community engagement and resistance to hierarchical, exclusionary practices.

Transformative leadership, as developed by Burns (1978) and later expanded by scholars such as Bass (1990) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), similarly emphasizes empowerment and collective responsibility. Carr (2011) argues that acknowledging differential power relations is essential for meaningful planning and inclusive decision-making. Administrators must motivate and build trust within their communities, recognizing that authentic transformation requires solidarity, dialogue, and persistence (Bunge, 2009).

For second language program administrators in particular, Crookes (2013) highlights the necessity of embodying the critical principles they advocate. Administrators cannot ask faculty

and staff to enact critical pedagogy without committing themselves to the same reflective, participatory practices. Leadership must be educative—fostering both personal growth and community-wide transformation.

Transformational leadership, described by Bi, Ehrich, and Ehrich (2012), centers on negotiation, participation, empowerment, and vision. Building trust through authentic relationships with community members is vital. As Beck and Murphy (1994) caution, administrators must also cultivate ethical reflexivity, avoiding oversimplifications or sentimentality that can undermine democratic decision-making.

Creating spaces for dialogue is an essential component of critically-oriented administration. Ruairc, Ottesen, and Precey (2013) emphasize the importance of visibility and transparent communication with community members. Similarly, Miller (2015) argues that recognizing and addressing oppositional behaviors within communities is critical for identifying hidden inequities. Leadership, as Foster (1991) reminds us, must be viewed not as a top-down function but as an ongoing, educative process of raising consciousness across the institution.

Ultimately, critically-oriented administrators work within, and sometimes against, existing structures. They recognize that their role is not to perfect the institution but to engage in an ongoing struggle toward greater equity, justice, and democracy. This work is imperfect, dynamic, and necessarily collaborative, but it remains essential for building more transformative educational environments.

3.5 Examples of Critically-oriented Administrators from Other Fields

To further contextualize the role of critically-minded administrators, it is helpful to examine examples beyond second language programs. In other educational settings, leaders have navigated similar challenges in their efforts to implement critical and transformative approaches.

In many cases, administrators may not have the luxury of relying solely on community member input, especially in smaller or less diverse communities. Critically-oriented leaders can therefore look to the experiences of others who have faced marginalization or hardship in addressing social justice issues. Educational leadership is deeply intertwined with power dynamics, and administrators—particularly those in dominant social positions—must critically reflect on how their identities shape their leadership. Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) emphasize that White administrators who advocate for social justice must "walk the talk," ensuring their actions consistently align with their stated commitments. They encourage administrators to partner with academics of color, forming collaborations that prioritize the public good and cross-cultural responsiveness. Such partnerships not only deepen individual critical awareness but also create space for shared leadership rooted in principles of equity and justice.

This collaborative model can help delink leadership from a traditional managerial mindset. As Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) explain, when Indigenous leaders, leaders of color, and White leaders purposefully align their practices toward cultural responsiveness, they create a more inclusive and sustainable vision for educational leadership. Vaudrin-Charette (2019) similarly argues that many White educators lack familiarity with knowledge systems outside of Western traditions, advocating for greater awareness and engagement with Indigenous epistemologies. For administrators, this means that learning must go beyond reading literature; they must also build real relationships with their communities and act on their new understandings of decolonization.

In terms of the language administrators use to frame their work, Foster (1999) describes leadership as the "seduction of others into a system of power relationships whose benefits go to

those in power" (p. 107). However, critically-oriented administrators do not have to perpetuate this system. Instead, Foster suggests, they must see themselves as "bridge builders and border crossers" (p. 111), sharing power and fostering a more democratic environment. This view is closely aligned with the concept of distributed leadership, which Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, and Ryland (2012) define as leadership that embraces all institutional members and promotes collaboration across teaching, learning, and research roles. Distributed leadership encourages leaders to move beyond traditional hierarchies, working alongside community members to foster collective action and decision-making.

An important benefit of distributed leadership is that it expands the network of allies and reduces the burden on any one administrator. Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, and Ryland (2012) highlight that this leadership model is "underpinned by a more collective and inclusive philosophy than traditional leadership theory" (p. 71). For critically-minded administrators, this approach allows them to focus less on excelling individually and more on building capacity within their communities through ongoing dialogue, reflection, and shared ownership of decision-making processes.

When critically-oriented administrators take the initiative to educate themselves, act toward social justice, and build authentic relationships, they create the conditions for shared values to emerge within their school communities. Ruairc, Ottesen, and Precey (2013) emphasize that authenticity is key at both the organizational and societal levels. At the organizational level, authenticity means genuinely caring for others and respecting their right to participate; at the societal level, it involves contributing to a more just and equitable society. Administrators must resist pressures to homogenize their communities and instead recognize and nurture the diverse needs of their students and staff (Ruairc et al., 2013).

As Brooks and Miles (2008) argue, truly transformative leadership is "other-oriented," characterized by service, humility, compassion, and active listening (p. 22). At its heart, critically-oriented leadership requires administrators to value people—not just as stakeholders or resources, but as co-constructors of a more equitable educational future. As Ruairc, Ottesen, and Precey (2013) succinctly put it, "Leadership matters. Leadership that values people matters. The development of leaders who value people matters" (p. 146).

3.6 Second Language Program Administrators

Research on second language program administrator (SLPA) leadership remains critically underdeveloped, especially within the broader field of applied linguistics. Much of the existing literature focuses on English language programs rather than the full range of second language contexts. Christison and Stoller's (1997) *A Handbook for Language Program Administrators* has served as one of the few comprehensive resources on SLPA leadership for nearly three decades. Although an updated edition was published in 2023, much of its core content remains unchanged, underscoring the limited development of the field. Other resources, such as Hamayan and Freeman (2012) and Tannacito (2013), primarily address the transition from teaching to administration, focusing heavily on practical, site-specific duties rather than critical leadership practices.

Given the scarcity of research, it is important to note that the majority of existing SLPA literature emphasizes business-oriented aspects of administration—such as budgeting, staffing, and partnerships (Eaton, 2013; Reeves, 2012; Winkle, 2014)—rather than the deeper value-driven motivations that guide administrators' leadership. As a result, there has been little exploration of how SLPAs enact critical or social justice values within their programs. Much of the literature positions administrators as institutional managers, prioritizing financial

sustainability and operational efficiency over educational values or critical pedagogy (Panferov, 2012).

Nevertheless, SLPAs occupy a unique position that intersects with language policy, cultural diversity, and institutional mandates, shaping how they can—or cannot—enact critical values. For administrators aiming to ground their leadership in critical pedagogy and social justice, several key considerations emerge.

First, as Edge (1996) notes, TESOL professionals must make their values explicit to avoid the charge of perpetuating covert neo-imperialism. This call for transparency resonates with administrators: if they truly believe in critical pedagogy, they cannot afford to hide their values until a convenient opportunity arises. Critical pedagogy demands consistent reflection, transparency, and action.

Additionally, administrators must be wary of leadership models that primarily serve existing power structures. Foster (1999) warns that what is valued in society often directly benefits those already in power. SLPAs must therefore continually interrogate whether their decisions reinforce inequitable structures or promote more transformative practices. Following scholars such as Rottmann (2007), administrators should view their role less as traditional leaders and more as counter-hegemonic advocates, fostering equitable educational environments even while navigating tensions around authority.

Power dynamics are a persistent challenge for SLPAs, particularly in contexts where administrative supervision can create adversarial relationships with teachers (Agheshteh & Mehrpour, 2021). Successful administrators must intentionally foster collegiality, viewing power as a collaborative and humanizing force (Monchinski, 2008) rather than as a mechanism of

control. This shift toward a more democratic model of leadership, where expertise is distributed and valued across the community, is essential for critically-oriented administration.

SLPAs must also balance ethical and financial tensions in their work. Bailey (2006) highlights the dual responsibility administrators face: evaluating and supporting staff development while maintaining institutional viability. Financial pressures—especially acute in private and competitive educational markets—often pull administrators toward revenue-driven decision-making at the expense of critical educational values (Eaton, 2013). Reeves (2012) similarly points to the growing pressure on language programs to prioritize survival over social justice.

Over time, the administrator's role tends to evolve from operational management to strategic leadership. Panferov (2012) describes this progression through three stages: manager, promoter, and leader. For critically-oriented administrators, this transition presents an opportunity to advocate for broader educational and institutional reforms, even while balancing the need for financial sustainability. Consistent with the work of Makaiau, Halagao, and Thao (2023), administrators may also extend their leadership to building collaborative networks beyond their immediate programs, strengthening their advocacy for social justice across educational spaces.

Finally, administrators must always recognize the human stakes of their decisions. Lindle (2004) reminds us that every administrative action "carries with it a restructuring of a human life." Foster (1986) similarly emphasizes that administrators are entrusted with developing, challenging, and liberating human potential. This ethical responsibility calls for continuous critical reflection and lifelong learning. As Osborn (2006) explains, understanding one's own privilege and social position is essential not just for teachers, but for administrators as well.

Centering the needs of the community—and maintaining the courage to act even under systemic constraints—is essential for administrators hoping to sustain a critical orientation in their work.

3.6.1 Theorizing the Work of Educational Administrators

To better understand the challenges and opportunities for critically-oriented second language program administrators, it is important to examine how their roles have been theorized in educational administration literature.Values serve as the "springs to action" in administration (Greenfield, 1986, p. 57), shaping choices among competing alternatives on a daily basis (Stravakou et al., 2018). Administrative actions are thus deeply value-laden, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Several major theories have shaped conceptions of educational leadership:

- **Classical Organization Theory** emphasizes maximizing productivity through standardized processes, often at the expense of more humanistic considerations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).
- **Human Relations Models** emphasize the role of social relationships and workers' psychological needs (Maslow, 1943; Mayo, 1933).
- **Behavioral Science Approaches** expand on human relations theories, focusing on understanding and predicting employee behavior, while emphasizing leadership as a crucial determinant of success (Bolman & Deal, 2013).
- **Post-Behavioral Science Era Models** most relevant to this study, emphasize school improvement, democratic community, and social justice as central aims (Murphy, 2002). They view schools as evolving institutions shaped by both objective and subjective realities, and call on administrators to raise critical consciousness while managing structural constraints.

Building on these post-behavioral frameworks, this dissertation defines critical values as guiding principles that prioritize social justice, inclusivity, and democratic decision-making. These values move beyond procedural fairness to actively question, challenge, and transform systemic inequities. Whether framed in terms of liberty, equality, and community (Bunge, 2009;

Edge, 2013), or as pathways to broader human flourishing (Astin & Astin, 2000), critical administrators are called to center equity and authentic collaboration in their work.

As school communities become increasingly diverse linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically, administrators are increasingly required to address "value conflict situations where consensus cannot be achieved" (Begley, 2000, p. 239). In such contexts, critical administrators must be prepared to work through complexity without falling back on simplistic notions of problem-solving or universal solutions.

Applied linguistics, too, benefits from greater attention to these dynamics. Although the field has long focused on critical pedagogy within classrooms (e.g., Benesch, 2001; Pennycook, 1990; Wallerstein, 1983), there has been far less attention to how critical principles are—or are not—implemented at the administrative level. Understanding the decision-making processes and value systems of SLPAs offers a necessary expansion of the field's concern with social justice, bridging individual classrooms and broader institutional structures.

Ultimately, to understand critically-oriented second language program administrators, we must explore not only what they do, but also the values and principles that guide their practices, shaping their struggles, contradictions, and possibilities for transformative change.

3.7 Challenges and Barriers in Pursuing Social Justice as an Administrator

While it is important to understand how administrators' values manifest in practice, it is equally important to acknowledge the significant barriers they face in doing so—particularly when navigating institutional constraints and the political pressures surrounding social justice advocacy. Marshall and Anderson (2009) raise a critical question: is it even possible for an administrator to be an activist? Their work highlights that critically-minded teachers who transition into administrative roles often learn quickly that "taking a clear values stance or

political action may mean losing sponsorship and career opportunities" (p. 2). For administrators seeking to work within the system—or hoping to secure future positions—the risks of advocating for radical change may feel too great.

Morita-Mullaney (2018) offers a detailed account of these tensions in her study of becoming an "English Learner Leader" in an urban school in the Midwest U.S. She highlights the complex and often frustrating experiences she and her colleagues of color faced as they navigated expectations tied to race. For instance, she describes feeling pressure to perform as a model minority, particularly in approving policies that impacted students of color. Rather than being evaluated purely on her professional skills, she found herself judged through a racialized lens—one that limited her access to leadership opportunities and reinforced her sense of being an outsider, despite her professional success. As Morita-Mullaney notes, "[b]y avoiding the centrality of race and claiming language as the sole operating principle, we disquiet the interstices of language and race, reproducing racism and linguicism and using language or English as our shielding proxy" (p. 385). Yet paradoxically, although she saw these dynamics clearly, her role as an administrator often required her to address race superficially in ways that ultimately served institutional interests rather than the needs of students.

Similarly, Sampson (2019) documents the experiences of Latinx school board members, who faced public tokenization and intense community pressure to make decisions based solely on racial issues. Unlike administrators who make daily operational decisions behind closed doors, school board members must cast votes publicly on every issue—placing them in a highly visible "double-bind." As Sampson explains, the continuation of their elected positions depended largely on whether their communities embraced or rejected them for challenging educational inequities (p. 320). The burden of coalition-building across institutional and community lines

often fell disproportionately on these marginalized leaders, who were already navigating feelings of marginalization within their own districts. Sampson concludes that true progress depends not only on the resilience of marginalized administrators, but also on whether their colleagues—particularly those from dominant groups—are willing to develop genuine cultural competency and share the work of change.

Kezar and Lester (2011) extend these concerns in their study of minority leaders in higher education, highlighting how institutions often privilege surface-level "innovations" while resisting deeper organizational changes. As they note, “They [leaders of color] saw a privileging of programs, initiatives, and centers that simply used the word innovation but a lack of support for ideas that would require organizational change” (p. 63). In such environments, administrators must become adept at distinguishing between colleagues who are truly committed to systemic change and those who engage with social justice language only superficially, often to enhance public image rather than to pursue substantive reforms.

Taken together, these examples illustrate the profound tensions critically-oriented administrators face. Advocating for equity and transformation is not simply a matter of personal will or ethical clarity; it is also a matter of navigating structures that often resist or tokenize their efforts. Understanding these barriers is essential for any realistic discussion of how second language program administrators can meaningfully integrate critical values into their leadership practice.

3.8 Addressing the Gap

The challenge of enacting social justice principles is particularly acute for second language program administrators (SLPAs), where the gap between rhetoric and practice is even more pronounced. While theoretical frameworks offer valuable insights into the role of

administrators and their decision-making processes, there remains a significant gap in the literature specific to SLPAs. Much of what is known about leadership and values stems from broader studies of educational administration, often without direct application to the unique contexts of language programs.

Despite this, training programs for second language program administrators have been gradually emerging. However, as Panferov (2012) underscores, many administrators still enter the field with limited preparation for core responsibilities such as budgeting, personnel management, and program development. These managerial demands often conflict with their commitment to social justice values, creating tensions between institutional constraints and the desire to implement transformative practices. Addressing this gap requires deeper exploration of the professional development needs of SLPAs, particularly in how their values intersect with the structural realities they must navigate.

While training programs increasingly aim to prepare administrators for leadership roles, they tend to draw heavily from traditional administrative literature, often sidelining critical perspectives. Crookes (2010) observes that "accounts of theory and practice in our field pertinent to this are very rare, as also is critical educational administration literature" (p. 336). Even more recent work, such as Christison and Stoller (2023), continues to highlight the limited attention paid to administrators' pedagogical or ideological orientations. This ongoing gap underscores the importance of investigating how SLPAs' values—especially their commitments to critical pedagogy and critical dialogue—are expressed, enacted, and constrained within institutional leadership.

Administrators committed to social justice face significant obstacles, particularly when institutional structures limit their ability to enact transformative change. A critically-oriented

administrator must recognize that leadership requires continuous self-reflection, adaptation, and responsiveness. As Carr (2011) argues, leadership should be understood as "an endless process of critical interrogation, lived experiences, and dialectical questioning and dialog" (p. 23). No administrator is perfectly equipped for every challenge, but cultivating a mindset of ongoing learning is essential. Complacency risks reinforcing the very systems they seek to challenge.

These tensions are often amplified for administrators of color, who must navigate the additional burdens of conforming to institutional norms and racialized expectations. Many face marginalization even as they work to advance equity, confronting dilemmas about how—and when—to advocate without jeopardizing their professional standing. For these administrators, critical awareness is not merely theoretical but a necessary survival skill: navigating power structures strategically while remaining committed to transformative action.

Ultimately, navigating these complexities demands that administrators engage in ongoing critical reflection—both about their values and their actions—and prioritize collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Meaningful change is rarely the result of individual efforts alone; rather, it is the product of collective engagement grounded in sustained dialogue, trust-building, and shared vision.

3.9 Research Questions

The limited body of research on second language program administrators (SLPAs) who aim to integrate social justice values suggests that those who attempt to do so face significant institutional, political, and structural challenges. As discussed earlier, administrators working toward equity and transformative change often encounter resistance, whether through limited institutional support, political pressures, or the complexities of addressing race, language, and

power within educational settings. These tensions raise fundamental questions about how administrators conceptualize, articulate, and enact their values in practice.

To explore these dynamics, this study is guided by the following research questions, which examine how critically-oriented second language program administrators define, implement, and reflect their values within their professional environments:

1. How do critically-oriented second language program administrators refer to any guiding principles, beliefs, rules of thumb, or values, that may guide their work?
2. To what extent, if at all, do critically-oriented second language program administrators implement their critical values in their professional space (location, institution)?
3. How do critical values manifest in language used in these professional spaces? How do critical values manifest in decision making (and action) in these professional spaces?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Building on the theoretical and conceptual foundations of critically-oriented administration in second language education, this chapter introduces the methodological framework guiding the study. While previous research has examined educational leadership and values in broader contexts, there remains a notable gap in understanding how second language program administrators articulate and enact their professional commitments. In response, this study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach informed by interpretive inquiry, using this framework to explore how administrators engage with critical values in diverse institutional settings.

Although grounded theory was an early influence on the study's design, the project ultimately does not pursue theory generation in the classical sense (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instead, it draws selectively on grounded theory coding strategies, consistent with constructivist adaptations of the method (Charmaz, 2014), to support thematic development, memo-writing, and attentiveness to emergent meanings across data sources. Instead, grounded theory coding techniques—particularly open, in vivo, and focused coding—were selectively adopted to support thematic development, memo-writing, and attentiveness to emergent meanings across data sources. This hybrid orientation allowed for a flexible, context-sensitive analytic process grounded in participant narratives, without adhering to a single prescriptive theoretical model.

4.1 Research Methodologies for Investigating Administrator Values and Practices

This section outlines the approach to data collection and analysis adopted in this study. As previously noted, few empirical studies focus specifically on the values of second language program administrators. However, several studies in the broader field of educational administration have shaped the development of the current research design.

Prior studies in educational leadership have largely used qualitative methodologies that treat participants' interviews and discussions as text, offering potential windows into social realities. For example, early studies explored administrators' responses to structured interview questions using categories of values—such as Transrational, Rational, and Sub-rational values—both directly (Kasten & Ashbaugh, 1991) and indirectly through think-aloud or stimulated recall activities (Begley, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1992). Other researchers, such as Campbell, Gold, and Lunt (2003), conducted multiple rounds of semi-structured interviews to investigate how school leaders conceptualized personal, professional, and educational values.

While these studies were conducted over two decades ago, they continue to inform discussions of values in educational leadership. Building on these earlier efforts, Law et al. (2003) advanced the methodology by categorizing both the stated and enacted values of participants through a more narrative approach. Their study incorporated multiple rounds of interviews, scenarios prompting problem-solving discussions, and the collection of school documents and fieldnotes. Law et al. adopted grounded theory methodology to inductively build categories around administrators' decision-making and value articulation. However, their research did not include an observational component to triangulate interview data.

My research partially draws on Law et al. (2003) by using grounded theory *coding* methods to inductively develop thematic categories. However, unlike Law et al., this study does not aim to generate formal theory, nor does it follow the full iterative design logic of grounded theory. Instead, it is better characterized as a qualitative descriptive study informed by interpretive research traditions. Grounded theory coding techniques were used flexibly to organize and interpret participant narratives, without the expectation of building a new conceptual model.

Additionally, this study extends existing work by combining survey data, semi-structured interviews, and a limited observational component to provide a fuller view of administrators' practices. While observations were limited in scope, they served to provide additional context when interpreting administrators' narratives about how they navigate institutional constraints and enact their values in everyday practice.

4.2 Research Orientation and Rationale

This study is situated within a qualitative descriptive research tradition that draws on interpretive and critical paradigms to explore how administrators understand and express their values within institutional contexts. Unlike grounded theory, which seeks to generate new theories through iterative cycles of data collection and analysis, qualitative descriptive research prioritizes rich, context-sensitive accounts of participants' experiences (Sandelowski, 2000). This approach is particularly well-suited for examining the everyday practices and reflections of second language program administrators, whose roles involve navigating institutional norms, professional expectations, and social justice commitments.

Grounded theory coding techniques—specifically open, in vivo, and focused coding—were selectively adopted to guide thematic development without attempting formal theory construction. Rather than abstractly conceptualizing administrator practices, the goal was to document how administrators enact, negotiate, and reflect on their values in ways that are shaped by institutional settings and personal commitments. This approach aligns with more interpretive and constructivist strands of grounded theory, which view coding and theory-building as inherently co-constructed and situated (Charmaz, 2014; Clarke, 2005). These traditions allow for the integration of prior theoretical knowledge and researcher reflexivity while still supporting inductive, grounded analysis. The coding process was inductive and iterative but remained

embedded within a descriptive and interpretive framework that valued clarity, accessibility, and practical insight. This orientation also allowed for the integration of multiple forms of data—survey responses, semi-structured interviews, and limited observational field notes—while maintaining flexibility in analytic procedures.

In sum, the methodological approach reflects a pragmatic blending of qualitative strategies, aimed at producing a detailed, credible account of how second language program administrators interpret and enact critically-oriented values across diverse institutional environments.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This section outlines the multi-phase design of the study and the analytic processes used to explore administrator values in context. It includes an overview of the data collection sequence, a discussion of how interviews and observations were conducted, and a description of how grounded theory coding techniques supported thematic development.

4.3.1 Overview of Data Collection Methods

The data collection process in this study occurred in three overlapping phases: a survey phase, an interview phase, and a limited observational phase. These phases were designed to investigate how administrators articulate and enact critically-oriented values, including democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue.

The survey phase provided preliminary data on administrators' professional values and institutional affiliations, which informed the selection of participants for follow-up interviews. The interview phase consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with administrators from various institutional contexts. Interview questions encouraged participants to reflect on their

roles, values, and the challenges they encountered when attempting to implement practices aligned with social justice principles.

Following the interviews, a limited number of observations were conducted with selected participants. These observations focused on institutional meetings and decision-making practices, offering contextual insight to support and triangulate participants' narratives. Observation notes were used to complement the interview data but were not treated as a primary or standalone data source.

4.3.2 Coding and Thematic Development

Data analysis followed an inductive and recursive process. I began with open and in vivo coding, attending closely to participants' language and emergent concepts. These initial codes were developed into focused codes that captured patterns across cases. In developing and refining these codes, I drew on Saldaña (2021), whose work provides practical guidance on first-cycle and second-cycle coding, helping to distinguish between early descriptive labels and more interpretive thematic categories. Although my primary analytic orientation drew from grounded theory procedures, Saldaña's approach supported consistency and critical reflection throughout the process. His discussion of values coding was particularly relevant to the study's focus on how administrators articulate and enact personal and professional values.

Memos were written throughout the analysis to document coding decisions, emerging questions, and interpretive tensions. Coding was treated as a meaning-making process that connected participant narratives to the evolving analytic framework. In this study, grounded theory coding procedures were not used to build formal theory, but rather to surface shared and divergent themes related to administrator values and practices (Hadley, 2017).

While grounded theory methods are often associated with inductive logic, this study followed an abductive reasoning process—moving iteratively between participants' accounts and relevant theoretical frameworks. Rather than building concepts solely from the ground up, I interpreted patterns in light of prior research on critical pedagogy and values-based leadership. This approach enabled a flexible but rigorous process of meaning-making that incorporated both emergent themes and researcher-driven interpretation, aligning with Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory, which emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between researcher and data.

4.3.3 Interviewing as Co-Construction

Interviews served as the primary mode of data collection and were designed to elicit rich personal narratives from participants. Following traditions of constructivist grounded theory and the "active interview" approach (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), I conceptualized the interviews as dialogic spaces where meaning was co-constructed between participant and researcher. This framing resonates with Charmaz's (2014) emphasis on the interpretive nature of grounded theory interviews, where both participant and researcher contribute to the construction of analytic meaning.

Interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to guide the conversation toward meaningful professional experiences. Open-ended questions explored how participants became administrators, how they interpreted their roles, and how they navigated tensions between institutional demands and their personal values. This method aligns with Johnson and Rowlands (2012), who describe in-depth interviewing as a way to understand how individuals make sense of their social and professional worlds.

4.3.4 Use of Observations

While interviews formed the core data source, I incorporated limited observational data to contextualize participants' narratives. Observations were conducted during selected staff meetings and decision-making settings, offering glimpses into how administrators enacted their roles in practice.

Observation notes were analyzed alongside interview transcripts to explore consistencies or discrepancies between expressed values and observable actions. The goal was not to develop a full ethnographic portrait but to use observations as a secondary source of contextual insight. Particular attention was paid to institutional discourse patterns and practices related to fairness, transparency, and responsiveness (Devault & McCoy, 2003; Stravakou et al., 2018).

Importantly, the observational data were treated as supplementary and supportive rather than as a separate unit of analysis.

4.3.5 Cluster Analysis as a Comparative Tool

To complement qualitative coding and thematic development, I employed a hierarchical cluster analysis to identify groupings of administrators who shared similar structural and institutional conditions. This analysis supported the development of a typology of critically-oriented leadership orientations, reflecting distinct combinations of institutional mission, political climate, financial conditions, and place-based identity. By linking these patterns to participant narratives, the cluster analysis offered a cross-case analytic lens to better understand how context shapes the enactment of administrator values.

4.4 Critical and Interpretive Framing

In keeping with the broader interpretive orientation of this study, I selectively drew on critical perspectives to enhance the analysis of administrator values. While the study does not

adopt critical grounded theory as a formal methodology, it engages with core concerns of critical inquiry—particularly questions about how power, ideology, and institutional structures shape individuals' capacity to articulate and enact their values within educational settings.

This critical framing informed both the development of interview questions and the subsequent interpretation of data, particularly when participants described ethical tensions, structural barriers, or experiences of institutional inequity. Rather than treating administrators' narratives as neutral accounts, I approached them as situated reflections embedded within broader professional, political, and cultural discourses.

As Hadley (2017) emphasizes, critical approaches to grounded inquiry encourage researchers to ask not only "what is happening here?" but also "why is it happening this way?" Throughout the analysis, I was guided by this principle, particularly when participants described constraints on democratic engagement, action-orientation, or critical dialogue within their institutions. These instances were flagged in memos and contributed to the broader thematic development of the findings chapters.

Although this study does not aim to generate formal theory, it remains attentive to participants' moments of critical awareness—such as efforts to resist bureaucratic norms, advocate for marginalized student populations, or critique dominant organizational practices. These expressions of criticality were treated not as idealized models, but as locally meaningful responses to institutional complexity.

Finally, the critical framing informed how the final themes and narratives were constructed. Rather than aiming for thematic neutrality, I chose to highlight examples of democratic leadership, action-orientation, and critical dialogue where they appeared in participant narratives, acknowledging that these practices were often partial, situated, and shaped

by institutional realities. This interpretive stance reflects the belief that values are always enacted within context, and that understanding administrator practices requires attention to both individual agency and structural constraint.

4.5 Ensuring Data Sufficiency and Credibility

In qualitative descriptive and interpretive research, the decision to conclude data collection is typically guided by the concept of sufficiency rather than saturation. While traditional grounded theory emphasizes theoretical saturation—the point at which no new categories emerge—interpretive studies prioritize developing a sufficiently rich, coherent understanding of the research topic. In this study, I adopted Dey's (1999) notion of theoretical sufficiency, which emphasizes the plausibility and adequacy of the categories developed, rather than exhaustive coverage of all possible variations.

Rather than adhering to a predetermined number of participants or observations, I remained attuned to the point at which additional data were yielding diminishing returns in terms of conceptual refinement. I tracked emerging patterns through ongoing memo-writing, cross-case comparisons, and coding iterations. While some themes appeared consistently across participants, others were more context-specific, and both types of findings contributed to constructing a well-rounded interpretive account.

Throughout the interview process, I remained reflexively aware of how my positionality—as a white, cisgender male administrator—could shape participants' openness and perceptions of the study. My prior relationships with several participants helped foster rapport, but in other cases, identity differences may have limited depth of disclosure. This awareness informed my interview style and analytic memoing, prompting me to remain attuned to potential asymmetries in interaction.

Analytic memos were used throughout the study to capture emerging themes, reflect on code shifts, and record interpretive tensions. These memos provided an iterative record of how meaning-making developed across the stages of coding and cross-case comparison, and informed adjustments to both the codebook and broader thematic organization.

Regarding credibility, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility was supported through iterative coding cycles, regular memo-writing to document analytic decisions, and member reflections where feasible. Although formal member checking was limited, participants were periodically invited to reflect on preliminary interpretations during the interview process. Dependability was enhanced by maintaining an audit trail of coding frameworks, memos, and analytic shifts over time.

While this study did not employ formal inter-rater reliability procedures, peer debriefing and feedback from academic mentors served as informal checks on the coherence and plausibility of interpretations. These collaborative discussions helped strengthen analytic rigor while respecting the interpretive, context-sensitive aims of the project.

Ultimately, the goal of this study was not to produce definitive claims or generalizable theories but to offer a credible, ethically responsible, and richly contextualized account of how second language program administrators interpret and enact critically-oriented values in their professional settings. The analytic process was guided by a commitment to clearly tracing interpretations back to the data, honoring participants' lived experiences, and making sense of their perspectives in a way that felt contextually meaningful.

4.6 Concluding Notes on Design and Direction

This chapter has outlined the qualitative methodological framework guiding the study, including the use of semi-structured interviews, limited observations, grounded theory-informed

coding techniques, and a cluster analysis to support cross-case comparisons. While the project was originally conceived as a grounded theory study, the final design is more accurately characterized as a qualitative descriptive inquiry with interpretive aims. It draws flexibly from grounded theory procedures to support an emergent, context-sensitive analysis without seeking full theory generation.

Attention was given throughout to ensuring clarity and rigor in data collection, coding, and analysis, with particular focus on credibility, theoretical sufficiency, and ethical representation of participants' experiences. Supplementary strategies, such as memo-writing, audit trails, and peer debriefing, further contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings.

The following chapters present the core findings of the study, beginning with Chapter 5, which offers an overview of participants, institutional contexts, and key values identified through survey responses.

5. METHODS

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used in this study, detailing the research design, participant recruitment, data collection procedures, and analytical approaches.[1] I employed a multi-phase, iterative approach to investigate how second language program administrators conceptualize and enact critical values within their professional environments.

Initially, the study was structured around four phases:

1. **Survey Data Collection** – Participants completed an online survey about their background, values, and administrative practices.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews** – Administrators who aligned with critical values were invited for interviews to explore their perspectives in greater depth.
3. **Observational Data Collection** – I conducted limited observations of selected administrators in staff meetings to examine how articulated values were enacted in practice.
4. **Data Analysis and Theory Development** – I used qualitative coding and interpretive analysis to compare administrators' stated values with their observed practices, contributing toward a localized theorization of critical leadership in second language education.

Data collection took place between Fall 2021 and Fall 2024, unfolding in multiple phases that included initial surveys, follow-up interviews, and observations with post-observation interviews. However, as data collection progressed, methodological adjustments became

[1] Some phases of data collection overlapped with COVID-related disruptions. Surveys were completed asynchronously, interviews were conducted synchronously via Zoom, and observations with follow-up interviews took place in person once conditions allowed. No major changes to the research design were required.

necessary to ensure stronger alignment between how I defined critical values and how participants conceptualized and articulated their principles. In particular, the initial reliance on "social justice" as an explicit inclusion criterion proved problematic, as many administrators were hesitant to identify with this label despite demonstrating critical orientations in practice.

This chapter details the original research design, the rationale for methodological refinements, and the final approach employed to gather and analyze data.

5.1 First Iteration

At the outset, I envisioned the research design as a linear, multi-phase process with clearly defined stages for participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis. The initial focus was on second language program administrators based on O‘ahu, particularly those affiliated with diverse types of language programs.

I primarily relied on recruitment through professional networks and snowball sampling, wherein participants were encouraged to recommend colleagues who met the study's criteria. Given the relatively small number of language program administrators on O‘ahu, this approach was considered the most feasible for accessing a range of institutional contexts, including university-affiliated programs, private language schools, and charter schools.

Potential participants were invited to complete an electronic survey designed to gather background information about their professional experiences, leadership philosophies, and engagement with critical values in administration. The survey (see Appendix A) asked administrators to describe their career history and current administrative role, explain how their institution's mission statement influenced their leadership approach, reflect on a challenging professional situation and how they addressed it, and select the core values that guided their administrative decisions.

The final section of the survey offered predefined values adapted from Law et al. (2003), including *Empathy*, *Tolerance*, *Authority*, *Fairness*, *Respect*, *Social Justice*, *and Harmony*. Participants selected those they identified with most and provided brief rationales for their choices. I initially assumed that participants selecting "Social Justice" would be most likely to align with critical orientations and thus be invited for follow-up interviews.

The original goal was to survey 30 participants, with approximately 10 individuals selected for semi-structured interviews lasting 45 minutes to one hour. These interviews would serve as the primary qualitative data source on administrators' decision-making processes, leadership philosophies, and critical values engagement.

Following interviews, I intended to conduct on-site observations with three administrators, each representing a different institutional context:

- A private language school
- A university-affiliated second language program
- A charter school with a language-focused curriculum

Observations were designed to compare self-reported values with leadership behaviors and institutional practices in real-world settings, providing a more holistic understanding of critically-oriented administration.

5.1.1 Positionality and Reflexivity

Throughout the research process, I remained critically attuned to the ways in which my positionality could shape data collection, interpretation, and analysis. As a white, heterosexual, cisgender male who was younger than all of my participants, I was aware that these intersecting identity markers could influence the interpersonal dynamics of the research setting, including participants’ comfort and willingness to disclose during interviews.

While I had professional relationships with many participants—primarily prior working relationships or professional acquaintance—there were no close personal relationships. Nevertheless, these prior professional ties may have contributed to varying degrees of rapport across cases. In some instances, my positionality, particularly my racial and gender identity, posed challenges in building trust, particularly with participants who were people of color or who worked within Hawaiian charter schools. Some participants appeared more guarded, a dynamic that may have stemmed either from my positionality or from broader mistrust toward academic research institutions.

These dynamics were not consistent across all interviews. Rapport varied depending on participants' individual comfort levels, institutional contexts, and prior experiences with researchers. Importantly, my own approach evolved over time. Early interviews reflected my learning curve in navigating these complexities, while later interviews benefited from increased sensitivity and adaptations to my interviewing style.

I maintained a reflective research journal throughout the project, documenting positionality tensions, shifts in rapport, and ongoing adaptations. This reflexive practice helped me remain attentive to the ways in which my identity and role as a researcher influenced both the generation and interpretation of data.

In addition to these social and relational dynamics, I remained aware that my own professional commitments to values like democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue might influence what I attended to in participant responses. I made a concerted effort not to project my framework onto participants' narratives and instead allowed their own language and reasoning to guide the interpretation process. This was especially important when participants

expressed hesitancy toward terms like “social justice” or framed their work in more pragmatic or context-specific ways.

Moreover, administrators’ professional roles often involve managing public perceptions, emphasizing strengths, and projecting confidence. Combined with the positional dynamics described above, this tendency meant that participants varied significantly in their willingness to discuss institutional challenges, failures, or vulnerabilities. I approached participant narratives with this broader awareness in mind, exercising caution not to overgeneralize or treat individual accounts as universally representative.

Reflexive journaling also played an ongoing role throughout data analysis, offering a space to examine how my identity, assumptions, and positionality shaped interpretation. These reflections informed coding revisions and guided decisions about how to frame thematic findings.

In short, this project views the research encounter itself as a co-constructed space shaped by positionality, institutional norms, and the contingencies of each interaction. By engaging in ongoing reflexivity, critically examining data collection processes, and recognizing the socially situated nature of administrator narratives, I aim to provide a transparent, context-sensitive account of the study’s findings.

5.1.2 Survey Data

The initial survey (see Appendix A) was designed as a screening tool to gather background information about participants and to identify those whose values and practices aligned with critical perspectives in second language administration. Administered electronically via Google Forms, the survey included both structured and open-ended questions, focusing on three primary areas: professional background, decision-making processes, and value selection.

In the first section, participants were asked to provide a brief overview of their career history, current administrative role, and length of service at their institution. Participants were also asked whether their institution had a mission statement and, if so, to describe the most important elements from their perspective. These questions were intended to offer initial insight into how administrators positioned themselves within their institutional settings.

The second section examined professional problem-solving and decision-making. Participants were asked to describe a professional challenge they had encountered and how they addressed it. This question was designed to uncover implicit leadership philosophies and value systems, even if participants did not explicitly name their guiding principles.

The final section of the survey focused on core professional values. Participants were presented with a predefined list of values adapted from Law et al. (2003), including Empathy, Tolerance, Authority, Fairness, Respect, Social Justice, and Harmony. They were asked to select the values that they prioritized in their administrative roles and to briefly explain their selections. A blank field was included to allow participants to add values not listed.

A key methodological decision was the explicit inclusion of "social justice" as a selectable value, even though it was not part of Law et al.'s original framework. I anticipated that those who selected social justice would likely align with a critical orientation and would be suitable candidates for follow-up interviews. However, the survey results revealed an unexpected challenge: out of the first twelve participants, only one selected social justice as a core value.

This early finding suggested that participants might be enacting social justice-oriented leadership without explicitly labeling it as such. Consequently, I reassessed the survey's design, leading to methodological refinements to more effectively capture administrators' critical values in practice. These adjustments are described in later section

5.1.3 Interview Data

Following the initial survey phase, I conducted six unstructured interviews with participants representing diverse institutional backgrounds. These interviews explored administrators' perspectives on their leadership values and their reluctance to identify social justice explicitly as a core principle. These early interviews were not conducted for thematic analysis but instead played a formative role in shaping the subsequent design of the study. As such, selected excerpts are included here not as findings, but as illustrations of how the methodological approach evolved in response to early participant feedback.

The interviews were designed as dialogic encounters, allowing participants to reflect freely on their values and leadership experiences (Kvale, 2008; Mann, 2011; Prior, 2018). Drawing from Kasper (2015), I approached interviews not as data extraction exercises but as co-constructed, knowledge-generating spaces.

The primary goal at this stage was to understand whether administrators embodied critical perspectives in practice, even if they did not frame their leadership through the lens of "social justice." Many participants articulated values associated with inclusion, fairness, and equity—principles aligned with critical pedagogy—while expressing discomfort with the "social justice" label.

For example, one university-affiliated administrator articulated skepticism toward the term:

Excerpt #1

85 D: So- can I (.) I mean- why not social justice?
86
87 P4: Uh, social justice just seems like a fad (.) or a buzz↑ word to
88 me. But <if you'd ask me how I understand it> I would say DEI –

>Diversity, Equity, Inclusion< (.) or wokeness. I just think if you (.) va:lue respect and (.) maybe empathy? (.) you are accomplishing social justice.

The participant distances himself from the term "social justice," framing it as a transient or politicized concept ("fad," "buzzword"). Instead, he aligns with institutionalized frameworks like DEI, suggesting a preference for established, professional discourse. His emphasis on respect and empathy as practical expressions of equity indicates that critical values may be enacted even without embracing politicized labels. This highlights a tension between administrators' actions and the terminology they are willing to adopt.

A private language school administrator expressed a similar sentiment, emphasizing respect over explicit identification with social justice.

Excerpt #2

D: I noticed that it wasn't uh (.) one of your choices.

P2: Uh (.) yeah. I'm-I'm all about treating people fairly (.) regardless of gender or race. If-If you're treating people with respect. (2) >you are doing social justice< (3)<as I understand it.>

The participant reframes social justice as practical action grounded in fairness and respect, rather than adopting the term explicitly. Her hesitations ("I'm-I'm all about...") suggest caution in associating with politicized language. By emphasizing interpersonal ethics across gender and race, she distances herself from ideological labels while still practicing core social justice principles. This highlights that critically-oriented leadership may be enacted through everyday values and relationships, even when participants reject or resist broader political terminology.

A local charter school administrator, whose work centers on Hawaiian language and cultural values, expressed hesitation about adopting the term "social justice" as a core value.

Excerpt #3

124 D: Yeah, >actually< I wanted to ask you about the term social
125 justice. It's uh- not currently checked.
126
127 P5: Yeah. (3) Uh I'm not fond of the term >in general< because I know
127 that it doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. MY goals of
128 incorporating <'social justice'> into this program would not be
129 the same <as (.) everyone else>, so it's not my CORE value.

The participant expresses discomfort with the term "social justice," viewing it as subjective and open to conflicting interpretations. Her emphasis on defining goals locally rather than adopting broad ideological terms reflects a desire for autonomy over how equity is framed and practiced. This suggests that critically-oriented leadership, particularly in Indigenous or culturally grounded contexts, often resists generalized frameworks in favor of community-driven approaches.

This pattern was not limited to a few participants but emerged more broadly across interviews. As conversations progressed, it became clear that many administrators preferred to articulate their commitments through specific values and practices rather than align themselves with terms they perceived as ambiguous or politically charged.

This presented a methodological challenge, underscoring the iterative nature of the research process. Kasper (2015) discusses how data collection and analysis exist in constant interplay, requiring researchers to adapt as new findings emerge. As my understanding of participant perspectives evolved, I became increasingly aware of limitations in the original survey design and revised the interview protocol to better align with the study's core values. The shifting standpoints of the interviewees, as new discoveries emerged, underscore the organic

nature of this study. As interview data began to accumulate, it became clear that relying on the social justice label to identify administrators aligned with critical pedagogy was ineffective. This presented a methodological challenge, revealing the complexity of applying a label that participants viewed as ambiguous or politicized. Kvale (1996) highlights that interviews are dialogical interactions where knowledge is co-constructed, which is particularly relevant in this case. It became clear that a more nuanced approach was necessary—one that considered the values and practices of administrators, regardless of whether they used the term social justice to describe their work.

This realization has informed the ongoing evolution of this study's methodological framework. Rather than focusing exclusively on the social justice label, I adopted a more inclusive approach, centering the administrators' broader values and their practical application in leadership. The findings from the initial interviews helped shape this more flexible and iterative data collection approach, as it highlighted the importance of understanding the underlying values that guide administrative decisions, even if these values were not explicitly framed as *social justice*. An overview of the first iteration of data collection is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

First Iteration of Data Collection and Notes

Data	Number of Participants	Notes
Survey Participants	12	● Survey was not working as intended, Participants were unsure what "social justice" meant to the researcher, and all participants chose "respect" as a core value ● Additionally, one of the question constructions was not eliciting narratives as intended
Interview Participants	6	● Since participants had not chosen "social justice" as a core value, interviews were meant to be opportunities for rapport building and overall discussion of values ● Interviews were conducted unstructured without using the interview guide ● Interviewees were selected based on their interest, availability, and initial responses on the original survey

In response, I adjusted the methodology: rather than focusing on a single term as an inclusion criterion, I sought a more effective method to identify administrators whose values and practices aligned with a critical orientation, even if they did not self-identify as social justice-oriented. The following section discusses how these findings informed the revision of the survey and subsequent phases of data collection.

5.1.4 A Note on Reactivity

One important concern was whether the shift in methodology after the first iteration introduced reactivity—where participants adjust responses due to familiarity with the research process. Reactivity is a common issue in qualitative studies and is not inherently detrimental if acknowledged and critically analyzed (Zahle, 2023).

Given that some participants engaged in both the first and second iterations of data collection, it is possible that their familiarity with the project influenced their subsequent responses. Some administrators may have clarified or adjusted their articulation of values over time. Similarly, those participating in observational phases may have been more conscious of their leadership behaviors knowing they were being observed.

Rather than viewing reactivity as a flaw, I treated it as a meaningful component of analysis. Field notes, cross-iteration comparisons, and reflective memos were used to track potential shifts in participant narratives. As Zahle (2023) and Paterson (1994) suggest, reactivity itself can reveal how participants negotiate, reinterpret, and perform leadership identities in response to institutional expectations and external inquiry.

Acknowledging reactivity transparently enhances the credibility and depth of the findings rather than diminishing them.

5.1.5 A Rationale for Methodological Changes

As data collection progressed, it became evident that my initial methodological framework needed revision. The varying interpretations of "social justice" among participants highlighted the inadequacy of using the term as a primary inclusion criterion.

To better align with the principles of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP), I restructured the survey's value selection process around three specific tenets:

- Democracy
- Action-Orientation
- Critical Dialogue

These tenets offered a more concrete, actionable framework for identifying critically-oriented administrators, regardless of whether they explicitly invoked the term "social justice."

I also revised the survey's problem-solving question. Instead of asking participants to recount a single professional challenge, the new question asked about their general approach to decision-making. This shift encouraged participants to reflect more holistically on their leadership practices and values.

Together, these refinements strengthened participant selection, enhanced alignment with the study's critical orientation, and ensured a more nuanced, substantive analysis of administrator values and leadership practices.

5.2 Refining Participant Selection and Recruitment

Having identified key limitations in the initial survey design, I refined the participant selection process to better align with the study's conceptual framework. This section outlines how these adjustments influenced participant recruitment, ensuring a more precise focus on administrators actively engaging with the core tenets of CLP.

As the study evolved, a key consideration was whether to invite previous participants to complete the revised survey. Of the twelve original survey respondents, eight had provided substantial responses, including all six individuals who had participated in initial follow-up interviews. Insights from these early interviews revealed that several participants believed they embodied a critical orientation in their leadership but were uncertain about how I conceptualized and labeled critical values. This misalignment highlighted the need for a clearer survey design and more precise language.

The first step in the methodological revision was to redesign the survey to more accurately capture administrators' engagement with critical values, while avoiding ambiguous or ideologically loaded terminology. By refining the language and selection criteria, the revised

survey better identified participants whose leadership practices aligned with the study's focus on democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue.

5.3 Refining the Survey Design

The revised survey (see Appendix B for the full survey instrument) retained a structure similar to the original but incorporated two key modifications to strengthen data collection and participant identification.

The first major change addressed the question about professional challenges. Initially, participants were asked to describe a specific challenge they had faced and how they resolved it. However, responses in the first round of data collection were often brief and lacked substantive detail, with many participants recounting minor logistical issues—such as resolving a small financial oversight or organizing a student event—often in just a few sentences. While these responses offered some insight into administrators' daily responsibilities, they provided limited information about deeper problem-solving processes or underlying value systems.

To address this, I revised the survey to replace the single-challenge question with a broader inquiry into participants' general approach to problem-solving. This change encouraged participants to reflect more comprehensively on their decision-making strategies and consider their values more explicitly before selecting core professional values.

The second major modification involved refining how participants were identified as critically-oriented. In the original survey, respondents were asked to select core values from a predefined list that included *respect* and *social justice*. However, two issues emerged. First, nearly every participant selected respect, making it an ineffective differentiator. Second, many participants who demonstrated critical leadership practices did not select social justice, reflecting varied interpretations of the term and highlighting a misalignment between my conceptual

framework and participant perceptions.To resolve this, I removed *respect* and *social justice* from the value list and replaced them with three core tenets of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP): action-orientation, critical dialogue, and democracy (Crookes & Abednia, 2021).

These critical values[2] were chosen because they directly reflect a critical approach to leadership and are widely recognized in the literature. Participants who selected all three were invited for follow-up interviews. Additionally, participants were allowed to select one additional value, which often served as a meaningful discussion point during interviews.

After implementing these changes, eight of the original twelve participants completed the revised survey, along with fourteen new participants from Oʻahu. The refined methodology improved the precision of participant identification and ensured that interviews were grounded in values explicitly aligned with critical leadership in second language program administration.

5.4 Refining the Interview Process

The revised survey not only clarified how administrators conceptualized their values but also served as a foundation for selecting interview participants. Those who aligned with the CLP framework were invited for follow-up interviews to explore their perspectives and leadership practices in greater depth (see Appendix C for the full interview instrument).

Following the revised survey, I identified ten administrators for interviews based on their selection of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP)-aligned values or their expressed interest in

[2] Although the term "critical values" is commonly used in research within the field of education and leadership (Bartolomé, 2004; Crookes, 2009; Foster, 1986), I recognize its limitations in this context. While it broadly encompasses values associated with a critical pedagogy orientation, the term does not always capture the full complexity or nuance of these concepts, particularly given the diverse interpretations that participants may have within different institutional contexts. I chose to use "critical values" as a shorthand for the values underlying critical pedagogy, understanding that it might not fully encompass all the nuances participants associate with their practice. However, this term was useful for operationalizing the values that aligned with the study's goals while also acknowledging that participants may approach these values differently.

implementing critical values within their professional spaces. Additionally, two participants from the initial iteration were invited for a second interview after revising their survey responses. Interviews were conducted as approximately 45-minute recorded video calls via Zoom to accommodate participants' availability and geographic locations.

The use of interviews in this study is grounded in the understanding that narratives serve as sense-making devices, shaping how individuals assign significance and meaning to their professional experiences (Clifton et al., 2019). From a critical social theory perspective, narratives also reveal how individuals internalize or resist dominant institutional ideologies (Agger, 2006). This perspective is particularly relevant for administrators, who often influence institutional cultures through their leadership practices.

As mentioned previously, to foreground both the content and the construction of administrators' narratives, I drew from Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) *active interview* approach. This perspective treats interviews not as neutral data collection tools, but as meaning-making occasions shaped by interaction between interviewer and participant. Rather than assuming that participants simply "report" their experiences, the active interview emphasizes that meaning is collaboratively constructed through the dialogue itself. This framing helped me remain attentive to how my questions, responses, and presence as a researcher influenced what was said, how it was said, and what was left unsaid.

The initial interview framework was influenced by Marshall and Anderson's (2009) Activist Interview Protocol, which explores how professional and political commitments intersect. While most participants did not explicitly identify as activists, this protocol provided a foundation for structuring questions about engagement with critical values. Sample questions included:

- There are lots of ways of taking a stand and/or getting involved in what you care about politically. In what ways do you do this?
- What are the ways you've devised to manage being an X activist and being an educator? (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 197)

Recognizing the dynamic nature of interviews, I continually refined questions through pilot testing and adapted them during interviews based on participant responses. This flexibility allowed the interviews to remain responsive to emerging narratives.

For administrators who also participated in the observational component, the interview process followed a two-stage structure, with interviews conducted both before and after staff meeting observations. This design allowed for deeper exploration of how administrators' leadership values were enacted in practice.

All interviews were conducted by me as the researcher, scheduled at times and locations convenient for participants. When in-person meetings were not feasible, interviews were conducted via video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom). All interviews were audio- or video-recorded with participant consent and securely stored on password-protected external drives and encrypted cloud storage.

5.5 On-Site Observations

While interviews formed the core of my data collection and provided rich insights into administrators' conceptualizations of critical values, I also conducted limited observations to further contextualize these findings. Observations were not intended as a primary data source, but rather as a supplementary tool to cross-reference interview narratives with administrators' practices in action.

I conducted observations during scheduled staff meetings, focusing on how administrators engaged with their teams, navigated decision-making processes, and enacted—or struggled to enact—their stated values in real-time. Of the twelve interview participants, three administrators—representing a university-affiliated second language program, a private language school, and a private university—agreed to site-based observations. Participants were strategically selected based on their discussions of CLP values during interviews, their narratives about leadership, their availability, and their representation of diverse educational contexts.

The goal was to observe each administrator for 3 to 7 hours, typically across 2–3 recorded meetings, to capture leadership practices across multiple interactions rather than a single event. Observations were video-recorded whenever possible to ensure a detailed, accurate record of participant behavior, discourse, and decision-making dynamics. Most observations were conducted synchronously (either in-person or via video streaming), though asynchronous reviews of pre-recorded meetings were considered when necessary.

To complement the recordings, I maintained detailed handwritten field notes during each session, later transcribed for systematic analysis. Field notes logged timestamps, key moments, and significant incidents, and served as references during follow-up interviews. Additional details about the observation participants are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Additional Details about Observation Participants

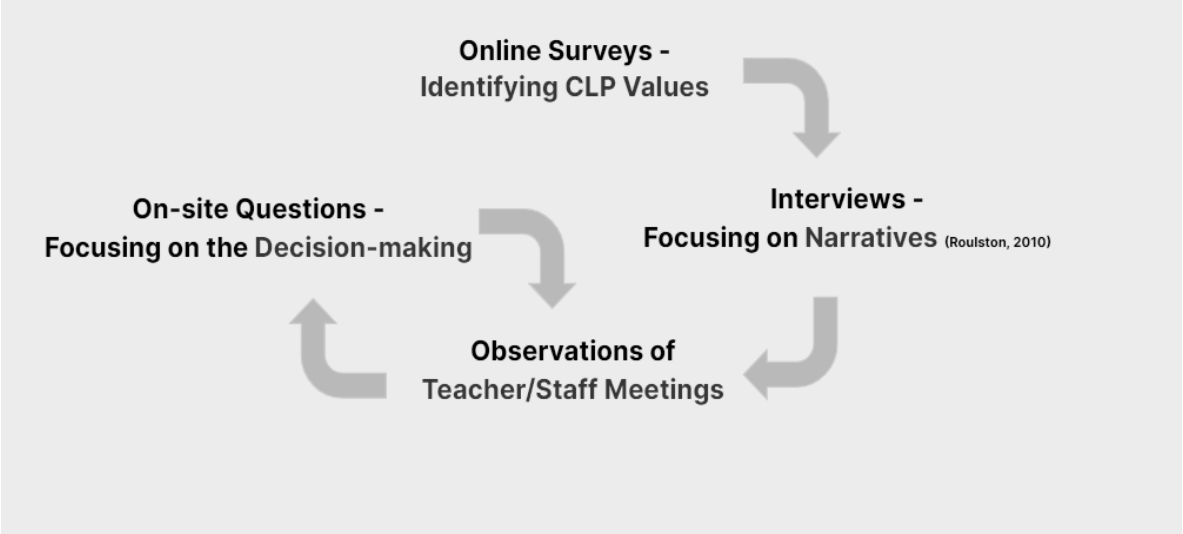
Administrator (*Pseudonym*)	School Affiliation	Observation Details
Luke	University-affiliated Second Language Program	Observed 8 staff meetings, collected 10+ hours of video data
Jasmine	Private Language School	Observed 3 staff meetings, collected 3+ hours of video data
Iris	Private University	Observed 2 staff meetings, collected 3 hours of video data

The three administrators were selected for observation based on a combination of institutional support, participant consent, and the relevance of their stated values to the study's core focus on democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. They also represented a diverse range of institutional contexts—university-affiliated, private, and international—which allowed for meaningful cross-case comparison.

Following each round of observations, I scheduled post-observation interviews with participants. These follow-ups allowed administrators to reflect on their meetings, clarify decision-making processes, and provide additional context for their observed behavior (see Figure 2). These interviews also functioned as a member-checking tool, enabling participants to confirm, challenge, or refine the researcher's interpretations of their leadership practices (see Appendix D for the full survey instrument).

Figure 2

An Overview of the Revised Methods for the Current Iteration of the Project



The primary aim of observations was not to offer surface-level descriptions but to deepen understanding of administrators' rationales for action, including institutional, interpersonal, and ideological factors. Follow-up questions were tailored to each participant based on notable moments from their meetings, ensuring that interpretations remained directly tied to real-world professional interactions.

While the observations offered important supplementary data, they were not comprehensive enough to form a primary analytic base. Given the constraints of institutional access, scheduling, and participant consent, interviews remained the central mode of inquiry. However, the observational data provided a useful point of comparison for participants' narrative accounts—helping to identify consistencies or tensions between stated values and observable leadership behaviors. For example, administrators who emphasized transparency and collaboration in interviews were observed inviting staff input during meetings, while others expressed frustration with structural limits that were also apparent in their facilitation styles.

These moments helped situate administrator discourse within the practical realities of their institutional settings. An overview of the second iteration of data collection is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

2nd (Revised) Iteration of Data Collection and Notes

Data	Number of Participants	Notes
Survey Participants	22	● 8 participants from the first iteration were asked to complete the revised survey (2 declined to continue, and 2 did not complete the original survey as intended)
Interview Participants	10	● Interviews were semi-structured, and used the interview guide from Appendix C ● 2 participants from the first iteration were asked to participate in an interview using the interview guide (selected after marking all 3 values associated with a CLP orientation)
Observation Participants	3	● Participants were chosen post-initial interview based on their narratives, discussion regarding CLP values, availability, and opportunity to represent diverse school contexts ● Each participant has been observed during staff meetings on at least two different days (3+ hours of video-data for each administrator) ● Participants were asked to participate in shorter interview sessions post-observation to discuss their discuss any emerging themes or questions related to decision-making

5.6 Expansion of Data Collection: U.S. Continent Administrators & O‘ahu-Based K-12 Teachers

As the study evolved, I expanded data collection to include second language program administrators from the U.S. continent and K–12 educators on O‘ahu. This decision emerged

from early patterns in the Oʻahu-based data, where participants consistently highlighted context-specific constraints—particularly in relation to public-private tensions, funding limitations, and institutional autonomy. These findings prompted a reexamination of the initial research scope and led to a broader, more comparative approach. To better understand how critically-oriented values were negotiated across varied environments, I expanded the study to include participants from different institutional and geographic contexts. The rationale for this expansion is discussed further in Section 5.6.4.

5.6.1 U.S. Continent Administrator Participant Selection and Survey Data

Recruitment of U.S. continent administrators mirrored the process used on Oʻahu. Thirteen administrators were contacted and invited to complete the revised survey, which emphasized the three CLP-aligned values: democracy, critical dialogue, and action-orientation.

Eight administrators who selected all three values were invited for follow-up interviews. The cohort included six women and two men, representing both university-based and private language programs. Unlike the Oʻahu participants—most of whom worked in ESL—U.S. continent administrators also oversaw programs in Spanish, French, and Italian. This diversity provided an important comparative lens to examine how critical leadership values were enacted across varied institutional and linguistic environments.

5.6.2 U.S. Continent Administrator Interview Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the eight U.S. Continent administrators. The interview protocol mirrored that used with Oʻahu-based participants, ensuring consistency across sites. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, recorded with participant consent, and securely stored. Since participants had already demonstrated a critical orientation through their survey

responses, interviews focused on how they conceptualized critical leadership, navigated institutional constraints, and engaged with social justice principles.

5.6.3 Social Justice-Oriented K-12 Teachers on Oʻahu

Recognizing the importance of K–12 education in shaping language learning pathways, I extended the study to include public school educators on Oʻahu who engaged in social justice-oriented pedagogy.Although these educators did not hold formal administrative positions, they played important leadership roles in advocating for critical practices within their institutions. To maintain methodological consistency, a slightly modified version of the survey and interview guide was used (see Appendix E and F).

These K–12 educators faced unique structural constraints, including state-mandated curricula and standardized assessments. Their perspectives offered valuable insights into how CLP values are enacted at the classroom level and how grassroots leadership develops within public education. No observational data was collected from this group, but the interviews provided compelling narratives about teacher advocacy, systemic challenges, and critical praxis in constrained institutional environments.

5.6.4 Rationale for Inclusion

Expanding the participant pool to include U.S. Continent administrators and K–12 educators was driven by both theoretical and practical considerations.

5.6.4.1 Comparative Insight: U.S. Continent vs. Oʻahu Administrators

U.S. Continent administrators operate within distinct regional and institutional structures compared to their Oʻahu counterparts, who navigate multilingualism, Indigenous resurgence, and postcolonial contexts. This comparative view illuminates both the shared challenges and the localized adaptations critical leaders employ across diverse educational environments. While

some U.S. Continent administrators self-identified with critical leadership values, many O‘ahu administrators demonstrated these values through practice rather than explicit affiliation, offering a nuanced view of how critical leadership manifests differently across contexts.

5.6.4.2 Expanding the Scope: K-12 Teachers as Grassroots Leaders

Including K–12 educators broadened the study beyond formal administration, recognizing that critical leadership also emerges from the classroom. Their advocacy work provided insight into how critical language pedagogy values are operationalized within public education, often in the face of significant institutional constraints. Given the key role public schools play in serving marginalized communities in Hawai‘i, including these voices helped ground the study in a broader educational and social justice context.

5.6.4.3 Strengthening the Theoretical Framework

Incorporating these additional groups strengthened the theoretical contribution of the study by highlighting the interconnectedness of critical leadership across different institutional levels. Understanding how critical values are fostered—or constrained—at various points in the educational system builds a more robust, locally grounded theory of critical language program administration. This broader scope underscores that second language program leadership cannot be fully understood without considering the broader educational ecosystems in which it operates.

5.7 Data Analysis and Analytic Trustworthiness

Building on the analytic framework outlined in Chapter 4, this section details how data were interpreted, organized, and refined in practice. While the coding approach drew from grounded theory procedures, the analysis also incorporated narrative and discourse elements to account for how administrators framed their roles and values. What follows is a description of how interviews were transcribed and coded, how emergent themes were refined across data

types, and how strategies such as memo-writing, member checking, and reflexive journaling were employed to ensure analytic trustworthiness.

The data analysis process began with reviewing audio-recorded interviews and identifying key excerpts with corresponding timestamps. I transcribed selected key moments and made preliminary notes and potential codes throughout the review process, generating analytical memos to capture early insights. Using the qualitative analysis software *Transana*, I categorized transcripts according to recurring themes. My approach followed grounded theory coding principles, applying induction (conceptualization), abduction (theoretical reasoning), and deduction (theoretical sampling) to develop analytical categories. As Timmermans and Tavory (2012) explain, abductive reasoning facilitates theory development by iteratively moving between empirical data and theoretical constructs, supporting the co-construction of meaning during analysis.

As analysis progressed, I cross-coded the data and refined emerging themes through constant comparison. Throughout this process, I wrote memos to document evolving interpretations, potential analytic tensions, and relationships between categories. This iterative approach was informed by Kasper's (2015) view of interviews and analysis as dynamic, meaning-making activities that evolve alongside data collection.

While grounded theory coding provided the primary analytic framework, I also drew from narrative and discourse analysis traditions (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004) to interpret how participants framed their leadership identities and values in relation to institutional and sociopolitical contexts. Narrative analysis was particularly useful in understanding how participants structured their accounts of leadership and decision-making, while discourse analysis informed my attention to language choices, tone, and interactional dynamics.

Although I did not adopt a formal positioning framework, I paid close attention to how participants articulated their roles and identities within their broader educational settings. Patterns were allowed to emerge inductively through grounded coding, without being imposed by pre-existing analytic models.

The depth and style of interview transcription varied based on analytic priorities. For selected excerpts involving interactional nuance—such as pauses, shifts in tone, or overlap—I used detailed transcription notation to support interpretive analysis (Ochs, 1979). This aligns with Potter and Hepburn's (2012) assertion that qualitative analysis benefits from attention to interactional cues, including the researcher's own minimal responses and elicitation techniques (Talmy & Richards, 2011). These techniques helped me explore how narratives were elicited, framed, and negotiated (Barkhuizen, 2011; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012; Kasper & Prior, 2015).

Although observations were used to provide supplementary context, interviews remained the central data source. Interviews provided a co-constructed space for administrators to articulate values, reflect on decision-making, and describe how they navigated institutional constraints. As Seidman (2013) emphasizes, interviews offer deep insight into participants' lived experiences, while Patton (2015) highlights their effectiveness for exploring complex social dynamics. Observational data were analyzed using the lens of leadership-as-interaction (Clifton et al., 2019), which enabled moment-by-moment analysis of how administrators enacted leadership in meetings and institutional interactions.

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the analysis, I drew on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. I employed prolonged engagement, memo-writing, and member checking as validation strategies. Establishing trust and

rapport with participants allowed for deeper conversations, while member checking during follow-up interviews helped ensure that my interpretations resonated with participants' intended meanings. While formal member checks were limited, many participants were asked to reflect on emerging interpretations during the interviews themselves.

I also remained reflexively aware of how my own position as a white, cisgender male administrator—often familiar to participants—could shape our conversations and influence what was shared (Polkinghorne, 1995). To monitor this dynamic and support analytic transparency, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study. This journal served as a space to critically examine my own assumptions, document positional shifts, and track how my evolving perspective shaped the coding and interpretation process. In practice, journal entries helped me flag potential biases in how I was reading participant narratives, question early thematic categories, and remain attentive to tensions between my values and those expressed by participants. These reflections often led to revisions in the codebook and helped ensure that my interpretations remained grounded in participants' voices rather than my own expectations.

Ultimately, the analytic process was guided by principles of clarity, coherence, and ethical responsibility. The goal was not to produce generalizable findings, but to offer a rigorous, context-sensitive account of how second language program administrators interpret and enact critically-oriented values in diverse institutional settings.

5.7.1 Considerations of Data Saturation and Participant Availability

As with any qualitative study, the scope of data collection was influenced by both the richness of participant responses and practical constraints, such as availability. In this study, saturation was understood as reaching a point where additional data collection no longer yielded novel discoveries relevant to the research focus (Dey, 1999; Kvale, 1996).

Among university-affiliated and private language program administrators, there was considerable overlap in how participants described leadership challenges and decision-making processes. Recurring patterns suggested that additional interviews within these groups would likely reinforce existing themes rather than generate new ones. However, saturation was more difficult to achieve for charter school and Indigenous-focused administrators due to the limited number of available participants.

Additionally, recruitment challenges—including scheduling limitations and some individuals declining to participate—further impacted sample diversity. While snowball sampling was effective in building a participant pool, it tended to attract administrators more willing to discuss leadership values with an external researcher. Despite efforts to ensure diversity, the sample ultimately leaned toward university-affiliated and private language institutions. Future research would benefit from targeted recruitment strategies to more systematically capture perspectives from underrepresented institutional contexts.

5.7.2 Participant Confidentiality and Pseudonymization

To protect participant privacy, all individuals were assigned pseudonyms. Limited biodata—such as role titles, general institutional types, and basic demographic descriptions—were included to contextualize participant experiences while preserving confidentiality.

5.7.3 Using Cluster Analysis for Comparative Interpretation

To examine cross-case patterns in how administrators enacted critically-oriented leadership, I used cluster analysis as a comparative interpretive tool. Using binary-coded survey data from 35 administrators, I applied hierarchical agglomerative clustering (Ward's linkage method) to identify groupings based on five institutional and contextual conditions: institutional

type, program type, political climate, financial security, and place-based identity (Kaufman & Rousseeuw, 2005).

This analysis revealed three distinct clusters—Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates—each defined by shared structural characteristics that appeared to shape how administrators approached critical values. These clusters provided an interpretive typology that informed cross-case comparisons and helped contextualize the thematic findings from interviews and observations. The method and distance metric were selected based on recommendations for binary data clustering (Kaufman & Rousseeuw, 2005), ensuring that the typology reflected underlying structural differences rather than surface-level similarity. The implementation and results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 8.

5.8 Toward a Theory-Informed Interpretation

Having established the methodological framework and examined the depth and breadth of participant responses, I now turn to the process of developing a localized interpretation of critically-oriented second language program administration. This final section outlines how the study's findings contribute to existing literature and offer a theory-informed understanding of critical leadership within language education.

Rather than generating a full grounded theory, this study draws on grounded theory coding procedures within a qualitative descriptive and interpretive framework. The goal is to develop a contextually grounded understanding of administrators' values and practices, guided by patterns that emerged through inductive and iterative analysis. As Charmaz and Bryant (2016) emphasize, qualitative research benefits from allowing emergent findings to guide theorization rather than imposing rigid analytical categories in advance. In this spirit, the findings presented

here are data-driven, situated, and offer contributions grounded in the lived realities of program administrators.

Following LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) discussion of theory construction, I aim to articulate meaningful relationships between administrators' articulated values, enacted practices, and the institutional conditions they navigate. The purpose is not to propose a universal model of critical leadership, but to theorize how second language program administrators engage with critical values within their specific professional and cultural contexts.

By identifying which administrators explicitly stated critical values and which demonstrated them through action, this study yields empirical observations about the conditions under which critically-oriented leadership behaviors are more likely to emerge. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how critical leadership is conceptualized, enacted, and sustained in second language program administration, while also highlighting the broader tensions administrators face between institutional constraints and critical commitments.

This interpretive work involved iteratively comparing themes across survey, interview, and observational data, guided by a coding framework rooted in critical values. I used memo-writing to track emergent patterns, examined contradictions and tensions within administrator narratives, and used cluster analysis to identify contextual patterns that shaped how values were enacted. This process did not aim to generate formal theory, but it did support the development of a cohesive analytic narrative that reflects how administrators negotiate institutional constraints, express critical commitments, and respond to structural pressures in diverse educational settings. The following chapters present these findings, beginning with an analysis of how values were expressed and prioritized by O‘ahu-based administrators.

6. FINDINGS - O‘AHU DATA

This chapter presents findings from second language program administrators and K–12 educators working on O‘ahu, examining how they conceptualize and enact values aligned with critical pedagogy, including democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. Drawing from surveys, interviews, and limited observational data, the chapter begins by analyzing patterns across two phases of data collection with second language program administrators (SLPAs), followed by two illustrative cases. It concludes with perspectives from social justice-oriented K–12 teachers, offering a comparative lens on how critical values are interpreted and enacted across institutional and hierarchical contexts. Together, these data offer insight into how O‘ahu-based educators navigate tensions between personal commitments and institutional constraints in their efforts to pursue socially just and participatory educational practices.

6.1 Overview of Key Findings and Data Collection

This chapter presents the findings from surveys, interviews, and observations conducted with second language program administrators (SLPAs) on O‘ahu. The goal of this analysis is to examine how administrators conceptualize and enact their professional values, particularly in relation to leadership, institutional constraints, and critically-oriented decision-making.

The dataset includes the following:

- **Survey Data from O‘ahu-based SLPAs** – Responses from 22 administrators, representing university-affiliated programs, private language schools, and charter schools.
- **Interview Data from O‘ahu-based SLPAs** – 10 semi-structured interviews, totaling approximately 15 hours of recorded conversations and 356 pages of transcribed interviews.

- **Observation Data from Oʻahu-based SLPAs** – Meetings from 3 administrators, with a total of 16 hours of recorded staff meetings and accompanying field notes.

Additionally, a small supplementary data set was collected from K-12 teachers on Oʻahu:

- **Survey Data from Oʻahu-based K-12 Teachers** – Responses from 8 educators working in K-12 public and charter school settings.
- **Interview Data from Oʻahu-based K-12 Teachers** – 4 semi-structured interviews, totaling approximately 2 hours of recorded conversations and 54 pages of transcribed interviews.

Participants were selected based on their alignment with three key tenets of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP): democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. Administrators represented diverse institutional contexts, including public and private institutions, university-affiliated programs, and charter schools with language programs.

The following major themes were identified through iterative analysis of the data:

- **Values and Professional Identity** – Administrators demonstrated two distinct value orientations. In the first iteration, most prioritized fairness, empathy, and respect; in the second, participants emphasized democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue—aligning more directly with the tenets of CLP, even if not explicitly labeled as such.
- **Institutional Constraints and Strategic Framing** – Some administrators strategically aligned their initiatives with institutional priorities to navigate funding and political challenges.
- **Tensions in Leadership Practices** – Balancing faculty expectations, student needs, and policy constraints shaped administrators' ability to act on their values.

The following sections provide a detailed analysis of how second language program administrators (SLPAs) on O‘ahu articulated and enacted critical values, beginning with survey data, followed by interview excerpts and two illustrative cases. Later sections offer an initial comparative perspective using the supplemental K-12 educator data, exploring how critical values are understood and enacted across different educational contexts.

6.2 Initial Survey Data

The initial phase of data collection, outlined in Appendix A, provided an important starting point for exploring the leadership practices of second language program administrators on O‘ahu. This first iteration included surveys and unstructured follow-up interviews, offering early perspectives on administrators’ values and professional challenges. However, the data collected in this phase also revealed a significant misalignment with the study’s intended focus on critical pedagogy values. Table 4 summarizes the core values identified by participants, along with notable leadership challenges they reported.

Table 4

Details about Oahu Administrators (Initial Survey, 1st Iteration, N=12)

Survey Item	Response	Number
Location	University Language School	5
	Private Language School	6
	Charter School	1
Most Selected Values	Respect	11
	Empathy	9
	Fairness	8
Notable Challenges	High turnover rates	8
	Low student & teacher engagement	6

In this initial survey, participants were asked to identify the core values that guided their leadership practices. The most commonly selected values were empathy, respect, and fairness—important traits for leadership, but ones that did not fully align with the critical pedagogy principles that this study sought to investigate. Notably, *social justice* was selected by only one participant, suggesting a disconnect between administrators' self-reported values and the broader aims of critical pedagogy.

This gap highlighted a methodological limitation: while values like empathy and respect are important, they do not necessarily engage with the institutional and systemic inequalities that critical pedagogy seeks to challenge. As a result, this first iteration did not fully capture the orientation toward democracy, action, and critical dialogue that was central to the project's evolving focus.

The unstructured follow-up interviews during this phase also provided useful, though inconsistent, insights. Many administrators reported challenges such as high turnover among teachers and students, difficulties sustaining engagement, and struggles with teacher collaboration. These issues reflected common administrative concerns but were largely framed in technical or logistical terms. Few participants linked these challenges to deeper structural or ideological factors—a core feature of critically-oriented leadership.

Taken together, the findings from this initial survey and interview phase highlighted the need for revision. Moving forward, a second phase of data collection was designed to more directly target administrators whose practices aligned with democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue, allowing for a more robust exploration of critical leadership in second language program administration.

6.3 Initial Interview Data

In this section, I present findings from the unstructured follow-up interviews conducted with six O‘ahu-based administrators as part of the first iteration of data collection. While these interviews offered valuable insights, they revealed that although many participants identified leadership values that could align with a critical orientation, they were reluctant to explicitly adopt the label of social justice. This hesitation highlighted a limitation in the initial survey design and informed the decision to revise the methodology for the second phase of data collection.

The interviews reinforced the observation that administrators were committed to values such as *fairness*, and *respect* but did not consistently connect these commitments to the broader framework of social justice. As a result, the study’s approach shifted to focus more directly on critical leadership values—specifically *democracy*, *action-orientation*, and *critical dialogue*—which are more clearly aligned with critical pedagogy principles. The revised survey and interview protocols provided a more targeted strategy for identifying administrators whose practices reflected a critical orientation, even if they did not explicitly use the language of social justice.

These early interviews thus underscored a key issue: participants were often engaged in practices consistent with critical pedagogy, but the terminology used in the original survey did not fully capture their leadership orientations. Recognizing this disconnect emphasized the need to revise the study’s framing, resulting in a sharper focus on values that administrators actively enacted, rather than the ideological labels they did or did not embrace.

6.4 Revised Survey Results

The second iteration of the survey provided more focused perspectives on the values and practices of O‘ahu-based administrators and educators. Unlike the initial phase of data collection, which revealed broad and sometimes ambiguous value orientations, the revised survey was specifically designed to capture leadership values aligned with critical pedagogy and social justice principles. This iteration elicited clearer responses regarding how participants prioritized democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue in their leadership roles.

This section highlights key trends from the revised survey, emphasizing the most frequently selected values and the challenges participants faced in enacting them. These findings offer a more nuanced understanding of how administrators and educators conceptualize their work in relation to critical leadership values. (See Table 5 for a summary of participant demographics; the complete data set is available in Appendix G.)

Table 5

Details about Oahu Administrators (Revised Survey, 2nd Iteration, N=22)

Survey Item	Response	Number
Location	University Language School	10
	Private Language School	9
	Charter School	3
Most Selected Values	Critical Dialogue	13
	Action-orientation	10
	Democracy	10
Notable Challenges	Budget constraints	5
	Teacher/ Student turnover	5
	Resistance to systemic change	4

6.4.1 Core Values Identified by Participants

The revised survey results provided a clearer and more targeted representation of the core values held by O‘ahu administrators and educators. Rather than indicating a shift in participants’ beliefs, the adjusted survey better aligned with how respondents conceptualized critical values such as *democracy*, *action-orientation*, and *critical dialogue*. These three values were prioritized by a large number of respondents, suggesting a stronger alignment with critical pedagogy principles than was observed in the first iteration. These patterns, which are central to the study’s focus, are explored in more detail below.

Democracy emerged as a central leadership value, often associated with inclusive decision-making and shared governance. Many administrators described democracy as the active involvement of staff, students, and sometimes parents in shaping institutional policies and practices. This emphasis on participatory leadership highlights a preference for collaborative structures that value multiple perspectives. Participants expressed a commitment to fostering an educational culture where stakeholders meaningfully influence language programs and institutional policies, reinforcing the idea that democratic engagement strengthens the learning environment.

Action-orientation also appeared as a key leadership value, though participants expressed varying perspectives on its meaning and application. Some administrators described it as the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to institutional challenges, while others acknowledged the difficulty of balancing immediate action with long-term strategic planning. Many emphasized adaptability and problem-solving as central to their leadership philosophy, though interpretations ranged from pragmatic responses to broader, visionary approaches. This variation suggests that

while action-orientation was widely valued, its practical application was deeply shaped by institutional context.

Critical dialogue was similarly prominent among participants, although interpretations varied. Many administrators emphasized open, honest communication as a leadership priority, while others framed dialogue more narrowly as a reflective tool for evaluating practices. Critical dialogue was often associated with creating spaces for diverse voices to influence decision-making, particularly in private language schools where administrators navigated competing priorities with fewer rigid structures.

Although *democracy*, *action-orientation*, and *critical dialogue* were the most frequently cited values, some participants also highlighted other values such as fairness and collaboration. These values, while still important, appeared less emphasized in the second iteration compared to the first. This shift suggests a move toward values more closely aligned with systemic and institutional concerns, potentially signaling a stronger orientation toward social justice principles. However, this trend was not uniform across participants, reflecting the ongoing complexity of how administrators interpret and enact critical leadership values within their specific contexts.

6.4.2 Challenges in Enacting Core Values

While the survey suggested that many administrators expressed a strong commitment to values aligned with critical pedagogy, the data also revealed the challenges they faced in enacting these values in practice. Institutional constraints and external pressures played a significant role in shaping leadership approaches, often complicating efforts to apply ideals such as democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. This tension between expressed values and institutional realities highlights the complexities administrators encounter when navigating funding, staffing, and curriculum mandates within their professional contexts.

Budget constraints emerged as the most common challenge cited by participants. Many administrators explained that, although they were oriented toward democratic practices and critical dialogue, they struggled to implement these approaches due to funding shortfalls, staffing shortages, and broader institutional pressures. Financial constraints, in particular, limited opportunities for professional development, staff engagement, and participatory governance. These pressures often forced administrators to prioritize immediate operational needs over collaborative leadership ideals, highlighting the broader systemic tension between values and resource allocation in underfunded educational environments.

Teacher and student turnover also surfaced as a major obstacle. Participants described how high turnover rates disrupted the continuity necessary for building stable, value-driven programs. Frequent personnel changes made it difficult to cultivate long-term relationships between administrators, faculty, and students, undermining efforts to foster critical dialogue, shared leadership, and community engagement. This instability frequently forced administrators into reactive management strategies, reducing opportunities for sustained, systemic change.

Standardized assessments and curriculum mandates were another widely cited constraint. Administrators in both private and university-affiliated programs reported tensions between external accountability pressures and their commitments to democratic, action-oriented leadership. The need to meet testing benchmarks and adhere to rigid curricular structures often limited administrators' flexibility, constraining their ability to implement student-centered, critical approaches. Several participants noted that such external demands frequently reinforced top-down decision-making models, making it harder to realize participatory leadership ideals in everyday practice. Beyond these formal constraints, some administrators also described more subtle forms of institutional resistance to systemic change—such as reluctance from leadership

teams or governing boards to adopt equity-focused initiatives. These dynamics often compounded the effects of policy mandates, creating an environment where critical, values-based innovation was possible only in isolated or incremental ways.

Collectively, these challenges highlight the ongoing tension between administrators' critical leadership values and the systemic structures within which they operate. While many participants demonstrated a commitment to critical pedagogy principles, their ability to enact these values was often shaped—and at times limited—by the institutional contexts in which they worked.

6.4.3 Fuzziness in the Interpretation of Core Values

While democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue were consistently highlighted as core values by participants, the survey data revealed considerable variation in how these values were interpreted and applied. This variability introduced a degree of "fuzziness," making it difficult to draw clear or uniform conclusions about how administrators enacted these principles in practice.

Democracy was broadly associated with inclusive decision-making, yet participants conceptualized it in different ways. Some described democracy as a genuinely collaborative process, emphasizing active staff participation in discussions and shared decision-making authority. Others framed it more hierarchically, suggesting that while stakeholder input was welcomed, final decisions ultimately rested with leadership teams. These different interpretations reflect ongoing tensions between ideals of full participation and the perceived need for centralized authority to maintain program stability.

Critical dialogue was similarly understood in diverse ways. Some administrators saw critical dialogue as an ongoing, proactive practice—a means of fostering continuous reflection,

challenging assumptions, and promoting institutional improvement. Others treated dialogue more reactively, engaging in critical discussions primarily during moments of conflict or crisis. This distinction suggests important differences in how administrators integrated dialogue into the everyday fabric of leadership, with some positioning it as a foundational practice and others as an occasional intervention.

Action-orientation, too, was interpreted along a spectrum. Some administrators associated it with swift, pragmatic responses to immediate institutional challenges, such as addressing student disengagement or staffing shortages. Others conceptualized action-orientation as a long-term strategic approach, emphasizing gradual change and sustained institutional development. These varying interpretations underscore the complexities administrators face in balancing short-term responsiveness with the need for broader, systemic transformation.

Overall, the survey findings highlight the elasticity of core leadership values when applied in practice. While democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue provided a useful framework for identifying critically-oriented administrators, the ways these values were enacted reflected the diverse realities of institutional leadership. This variation points to the need for caution when making generalizations about critical leadership practices, even among administrators who endorse similar values.

6.5 Revised Interview Findings

The semi-structured interviews conducted with the 10 O‘ahu-based administrators during the second phase of the study offered valuable perspectives on how leadership values are conceptualized, enacted, and constrained in practice. Participants from diverse institutional backgrounds shared narratives that reflected the intersection of personal commitments, professional experiences, and structural realities.

6.5.1 Trends in Leadership Values

Across the interviews, several key values consistently emerged as central to how administrators understood their leadership roles: democracy, action-orientation, critical dialogue, empowerment, and multiculturalism. While aligned with the tenets of critical pedagogy, these values were articulated in diverse and sometimes institutionally mediated ways.

Administrators described their leadership practices as a negotiation between institutional expectations and personal commitments. Some framed themselves primarily as managers, emphasizing efficiency, compliance, and organizational stability. Others portrayed their work as advocacy-oriented, focusing on inclusivity, collaboration, and systemic change—even when they did not explicitly label their efforts as “critical” or “social justice” leadership.

This variation suggests that administrators’ conceptions of leadership were fluid and context-dependent rather than fixed. Participants' narratives reflected ongoing efforts to balance professional obligations with personal commitments to democratic engagement, action-orientation, and critical dialogue, often within complex and constrained organizational environments.

6.5.2 Democracy in Action

Democracy emerged as a core leadership value for many O‘ahu administrators, though their interpretations and applications varied. In this section, I present excerpts from administrator interviews that illustrate how participants conceptualized and enacted democratic leadership practices. These narratives highlight the practical challenges of fostering democratic engagement in institutional environments shaped by resource constraints, organizational hierarchies, and competing stakeholder interests.

Luke, a university-affiliated administrator, described democracy as an ongoing process rather than a static governance model. He emphasized the importance of feedback and open communication, suggesting that democratic leadership involves continuous engagement with staff and students to ensure that institutional goals align with daily operations.

Excerpt #4

88 D: Yeah, and you had chosen democracy. Could yo-could you say a
89 little more (.) about that.
90
91 L: Yeah. So (3) >you mentioned it earlier< but I see my role as
92 aligning our mission- >academic English< with our umm (.) like
93 daily operations, right? So, it's not just about running a
94 program without getting feedback. It's about creating a space
95 where people can come up to you about tho:se daily operations.
96 You need feedback to to make sure you are working towards the
97 bigger umm (.) picture.

Luke's response reflects an applied view of democracy, where leadership is framed as a continuous feedback process rather than a static decision-making structure. He contrasts simply "running a program" with actively "creating a space" for dialogue (lines 93-95), emphasizing responsiveness over hierarchical control. His use of hesitations ("umm," "like") and reformulations suggests that for him, democracy is a dynamic and evolving practice. Importantly, by linking feedback to the "bigger picture" (line 97), Luke highlights a long-term, values-based view of leadership, where institutional goals are shaped through everyday interactions.

To offer a contrasting perspective, Iris, a university-affiliated ESL Director, spoke about the challenges she faces in achieving consensus during group decision-making.

Excerpt #5

136 D: Does it come more naturally for you? >do you think<

137

138 I: No. (1) I don't- I don't always have a clear solution >right

139 away.< I make it a priority to hear everyone out, but the real

140 issue is that <conse:nsus is rare>, and I have to navigate

141 compromises.(4) You have to do that though.

Iris's response highlights the tension between democratic ideals and the pragmatic realities of leadership. Her admission that she "doesn't always have a clear solution" (line 138) reflects the uncertainty involved in inclusive decision-making. She frames consensus as "rare" (line 140), pointing to the difficulty of achieving full agreement in complex institutional environments. Her comment about needing to "navigate compromises" (line 140) and her concluding statement, "you have to do that though" (line 141), underscore a pragmatic acceptance: democratic leadership often requires balancing diverse voices with the demands of institutional governance.

Both Luke and Iris emphasize democracy as central to their leadership philosophies, but they frame it in different ways. Luke stresses the importance of continuous feedback loops that align daily practice with broader goals, while Iris focuses on the realities of compromise and the challenges of achieving full consensus. Together, their narratives illustrate how democratic leadership is enacted as a negotiation between ideals and institutional constraints.

6.5.3 Action-Orientation and Resilience

The theme of action-orientation emerged prominently in the interviews, particularly in the way administrators discussed responding to ongoing challenges in their roles. Jasmine, an ESL Program Administrator, shared her practical approach to managing teacher turnover.

Excerpt #6

61 D: So, could you describe those challenges a little more?

62

63 J: Yeah, sure! $ha ha$ I've faced many, many challenges (2) >but

64 particularly with< teacher turnover, and I've realized that

65 I need a sys:tem to train new teachers quickly, and I have

66 to ke:ep working at that process every term. Every term. $ha ha$

67 I'm still trying to get it right or- (.) more (.) efficient.

Jasmine's account highlights a hands-on, iterative approach to leadership. Her focus on creating a "system" (line 65) to better manage teacher turnover suggests a long-term commitment to operational improvement, not simply reactive problem-solving. The repetition of "every term" (line 66) conveys the persistent nature of the challenge and her sustained effort to refine the process. Her acknowledgment that she is "still trying to get it right" illustrates that action-orientation, for her, is about ongoing development rather than achieving a final, static solution.

Kailani, another ESL Director, similarly emphasized proactive intervention to address deeper communication and workflow barriers within her team.

Excerpt #7

82 K: One major challenge was the administrative dis:tance that makes

83 communication with faculty difficult.

84

85 D: >When you say< 'distance', you mean-

86

87 K: Yeah. I'm talking about the physical distance between my office

88 and theirs ha, but I'm also saying >we have some distance<

89 be:tween us. My expectations and thei- reactions- No, I'm trying

90 to talk about general workflow. what needs to get done. So, for

91 this past year, I wor:ked closely with our staff to improve our
92 workflow, and that change (.) stepping in helped us to overcome
93 some of those lo:ng-standing issues.

Kailani describes "distance" not only as a physical separation (lines 87-88) but also as a symbolic divide between her leadership expectations and faculty engagement. Her decision to work closely with staff to improve workflow (line 91) reflects action-oriented leadership aimed at addressing systemic barriers rather than treating symptoms. Her reference to "stepping in" (line 92) underscores the necessity of active leadership intervention in overcoming organizational inertia, suggesting that without her proactive involvement, long-standing issues might have persisted.

While both Jasmine and Kailani described their leadership practices as action-oriented, their interpretations often reflected pragmatic and institutionally grounded forms of action rather than the transformative change associated with Freirean critical pedagogy. Their efforts focused on resolving immediate challenges within their programs, shaped by the practical demands and constraints of their institutional contexts. This distinction highlights a recurring tension in the data: action-orientation, as understood by participants, frequently centered on problem-solving and program maintenance rather than broader systemic critique. Still, these approaches represent meaningful expressions of values-based leadership within the boundaries of what their roles and institutions permitted.

The theme of action-orientation surfaced repeatedly in administrators' accounts, particularly in their efforts to improve day-to-day operations. Jasmine emphasized building reliable systems to manage ongoing teacher turnover, while Kailani prioritized clearer communication structures and streamlined workflow within her team. These actions demonstrate a proactive stance toward institutional improvement and suggest that, even when framed in

managerial terms, action-orientation can serve as a conduit for sustaining educational programs. Their cases illustrate how critical values are often interpreted through the lens of feasibility, with action taking form in the spaces available within their institutional roles.

6.5.4 Critical Dialogue in Leadership

Critical dialogue emerged as a key leadership practice for many administrators, though its application varied depending on institutional context. Some used dialogue primarily to maintain team cohesion, while others leveraged it to navigate conflicts and systemic pressures.

Jasmine, an ESL Program Administrator, framed critical dialogue as essential for aligning leadership decisions with collective values, especially when facing external constraints.

Excerpt #8

```
101   D:    So, what do you do when funds seem to be limited?
102
103   J:    When our resources are lim:ited, it's about $getting creative$,
104         and trying to get everyone involved. I think I ma:ke a point to
105         talk with everyone. >For me< it's making sure that ev:ery
106         decision, big ones or small ones, ties back to fu:ll team.
```

Jasmine's response (lines 103–106) highlights her commitment to inclusive decision-making. Her emphasis on "getting everyone involved" (line 104) shows that dialogue, for her, is not only about information-sharing but about building a collective approach to navigating constraints. By stressing that "every decision, big ones or small ones" ties back to the team (lines 105–106), Jasmine frames dialogue as an ongoing, proactive strategy for reinforcing shared institutional values. Even when external pressures such as budget cuts arise, critical dialogue serves as a mechanism for preserving a sense of unity and collective agency within the program.

Jordan, a program manager at a Hawaiian charter school, described critical dialogue as a tool for confronting institutional resistance and maintaining value-driven leadership.

Excerpt #9

106 D: So, do you have any thoughts on-

107

108 J: Yeah, the key is building a supportive and inclusive environment.

109 Sometimes that means enga:ging in tough conversations,

110 <especially> when the >ya know< (.) institutional norms push back

111 against our values (2) or what we think our va:lues are.

Jordan's account (lines 108–111) emphasizes that critical dialogue often requires engaging in difficult conversations, particularly when institutional structures conflict with the values held by educators and leaders. His reference to "institutional norms push[ing] back against our values" (line 110) highlights the tension between individual commitments to equity and systemic forces that resist change. Jordan's framing suggests that critical dialogue is not only about sustaining cohesion within a team but also about strategically challenging broader institutional pressures when necessary.

Together, these examples show that critical dialogue, while interpreted differently across contexts, consistently functioned as a key leadership practice. For some administrators, it was primarily about maintaining internal coherence and inclusivity; for others, it became a vital strategy for navigating tensions between personal and institutional values.

6.5.5 Challenges Faced by Administrators

Administrators expressed a strong commitment to critical pedagogy values, but they also faced substantial challenges in translating these values into practice. The most frequently cited barriers were resource limitations, teacher turnover, and pressures from standardized assessments. These challenges were not only practical hurdles but also reflected the complex dynamics between democratic leadership and the institutional frameworks within which these administrators operated.

6.5.5.1 Resource Limitations

O‘ahu administrators spoke candidly about how resource constraints shaped their ability to fully implement their democratic and action-oriented values. Luke, a university-affiliated administrator, reflected on the ongoing tension between his vision for student opportunity and the financial realities of his institution.

Excerpt #10

```
36    D:    One of the mo:st interesting things that I've been discussing is
37          the relationship between (.) funding and student opportunity.
38
39    L:    Yeah, >for sure< (3) So, the mission here is ultimately
40          developing language proficiency, so it's not-  but yeah(.) >let's
41          face it.<  We need mon:ey to be able to provide that opportunity
42          for academic success. Do I wish that we had access to more
43          resources? Yeah(.) of course(.) but I feel like I keep pushing to
44          find ways to ma:ke it work every semester. (3) Somehow, I always
45          do.$ha$
```

Luke's response (lines 39–45) highlights the tension between aspirational leadership and structural limitations. While he maintains a strong commitment to student success, he acknowledges that fulfilling the mission of language development is dependent on access to resources ("We need mon:ey," line 41). His hesitation ("yeah (.) of course (.)") conveys frustration with systemic funding gaps, while his insistence that he continues to "find ways to make it work" reflects a resilient, action-oriented leadership stance. Luke's narrative illustrates how critical values such as democratic access to opportunity must often be adapted pragmatically within financial constraints.

Similarly, Casey, a Director at a private language school, discussed how financial limitations complicated her ability to practice collaborative leadership.

Excerpt #11

52 D: I think it would be difficult to al:ways compromise though.
53
54 C: When it's about budgeting, it is. We try to engage in (.)
55 collaborative decision-making, but when our budget is tight, it's hard
56 to involve everyone fu:lly. (1) In fact, I often can't. When our
57 year-to-year budget is less than- (.) >it just reduces< our capacity to
58 offer the support our teachers and students need.

Casey's account (lines 54–58) similarly illustrates the strain that resource scarcity places on democratic leadership efforts. Although she values collaborative decision-making, she acknowledges that tight budgets restrict full participation. Her reflection—particularly the pause before "it just reduces"—signals the discomfort of having to limit inclusive processes in favor of expediency. Casey's experience shows how financial pressures can curtail administrators' aspirations toward democratic and equitable practices, even when the commitment to those values remains strong.

Overall, resource limitations emerged as a recurring theme across participants' narratives. Administrators like Luke and Casey demonstrated adaptability and resilience, yet their experiences revealed the structural barriers that can make the full enactment of democratic and action-oriented leadership ideals extraordinarily difficult.

6.5.5.2 Teacher/Student Turnover

Another major challenge highlighted by the Oʻahu administrators was teacher turnover. Frequent staff changes disrupted the stability of programs and made it difficult to sustain the collaborative relationships necessary for democratic leadership practices.

Jasmine, an ESL Program Administrator, described how turnover undermined efforts to build a consistent educational community.

Excerpt #12

19 D: You mentioned the turnover here.

20

21 J: The CONSTANT turnover of teachers $ha ha$ it breaks up the flow

22 of our programs and makes it difficult to build a consis:tent

23 community (1) and program, to be honest. ha

Jasmine's response (lines 21–23) underscores the destabilizing effects of frequent staff changes. Her emphatic phrasing ("CONSTANT turnover") and laughter signal both the frustration and the ongoing, seemingly unavoidable nature of the problem. She highlights that turnover "breaks up the flow" of the program, disrupting efforts to build a "consistent community," a feature emphasized in the literature as foundational for democratic leadership and collaboration (e.g., Foster, 1986; Murphy, 2002). Stability and trust are critical for participatory decision-making, and their absence can undermine efforts to foster critically-oriented practices. Jasmine's narrative reflects the emotional labor involved in continuously trying to rebuild a fractured institutional culture.

Kailani, an ESL Director, similarly discussed how structural employment patterns contributed to instability.

Excerpt #13

33 D: You mentioned that it's your biggest challenge?

34

35 K: We're always having to introduce new people (.) due to the type

36 of limited position, right? (.) and it's no:t always easy to

37 predict when they will leave. So, absolutely, yes.

Kailani's account (lines 35–37) highlights how the temporary nature of teaching contracts intensifies turnover challenges. The ongoing need to "introduce new people" reflects the continuous disruption of team cohesion, while the unpredictability of departures complicates long-term planning and relationship building. Like Jasmine, Kailani's experience illustrates how high turnover not only challenges logistical management but also weakens the conditions needed for fostering democratic dialogue, trust, and shared leadership.

Overall, teacher turnover emerged as a major barrier to sustaining critical leadership practices among Oʻahu administrators. The constant need to rebuild teams impeded the development of strong, collaborative environments and placed additional emotional and organizational burdens on administrators striving to uphold democratic and action-oriented values.

6.5.5.3 Standardized Assessments

The pressure to meet standardized assessment expectations emerged as a major challenge for administrators committed to democratic and student-centered leadership values. Participants described how external accountability measures often conflicted with their efforts to foster critical dialogue, collaboration, and individualized learning environments.

Iris reflected on the difficulty of balancing student-centered leadership with institutional demands for standardized testing:

Excerpt #14

```
78    D:    So, ho-how can you balance being student-centered (.) and the
79          testing you mentioned?
80
81    I:    I think that we strive to keep up with the student-centered
82          approach, >especially with the general curriculum<- but there is
```

an emphasis on standardized assessments here (.) which is coming from a level above me. and ma::ybe because that's what the students think they need too? So- it for:ces us to adopt a more (2) one-size-fits-all teaching model.

Iris's response (lines 81–86) captures the systemic tension between maintaining a student-centered approach and responding to institutional and student expectations for standardized assessments. Although she expresses a strong commitment to individualized learning, the institutional emphasis on testing—"coming from a level above me" (line 83)—forces her program toward a more rigid, one-size-fits-all curriculum model. Her acknowledgment that students themselves may reinforce these pressures (line 85) highlights the complexity of navigating leadership between top-down accountability systems and student-driven demands. Iris's narrative illustrates how standardized assessments constrain administrators' ability to fully enact democratic leadership practices, particularly when flexibility and individualized education are compromised.

Similarly, Jasmine shared her perspective on how student expectations for test preparation shaped curricular decisions.

Excerpt #15

D: I didn't rea:lize that you offered test prep classes, actually.

J: Yeah. I know that many of the instructors say that they want more communicative class options. >But you know< the students usually ask for classes that help them prepare for the big tests like TOEFL. >You know< that we have A LOT of students from Japan, so that probably makes sense to you. >So, where does that leave us?< The schedule usually doesn't allow for flexibility (2) >or instructors' desires.< ha

Jasmine's response (lines 51–57) further highlights the challenge of balancing instructional ideals with external expectations. She explains that while instructors desire more communicative, student-centered classes, students' prioritization of high-stakes exams such as TOEFL pressures the program to offer standardized test preparation instead. Her comment about scheduling limitations (lines 56–57) suggests that institutional structures often prioritize efficiency and measurable outcomes over educational approaches that foster critical dialogue and agency. Jasmine's reflection underscores how both institutional and student-driven pressures can limit administrators' ability to fully implement critical and democratic leadership practices.

Together, Iris and Jasmine's accounts demonstrate how standardized assessments and external accountability pressures often force administrators into difficult compromises. While they remain committed to fostering democratic and student-centered environments, the realities of institutional expectations and student demands for credentialing opportunities restrict their ability to act on these values fully. This tension reflects a broader structural challenge faced by administrators seeking to integrate critical pedagogy principles within contemporary educational institutions.

6.6 Case Study: Luke

The revised survey and interview data emphasized key leadership values—democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue—while also highlighting the challenges administrators face in enacting these values within institutional constraints. Although many administrators emphasized participatory decision-making and empowerment, these ideals were often tempered by resource limitations, turnover, and institutional mandates. Leaders had to balance democratic values with pragmatic considerations.

To explore these dynamics in greater depth, I highlight the case of Luke, a university-affiliated administrator on O‘ahu. His leadership practices reflected a strong commitment to collaboration and dialogue but were also shaped by practical considerations. Luke’s case illustrates the nuanced and often tension-filled ways that administrators engage with democratic values while navigating institutional realities.

6.6.1 Initial Interview Data with Luke

Luke discussed his approach to group decision-making, emphasizing the importance of trust-building as a foundation for democratic leadership.

Excerpt #16

52 D: So-how do: you (.) make final decisions as a group?
53
54 L: Uh, well, >you know< I’m motivated to build trust first. You need
55 to build trust first, and then my, uh, staff would be willing to
56 (.) do things with you. It’s a win-win.(3) I have colleagues
57 that I trust implicitly, and I run everything by them before
58 making a final decisions. >I know that< ultimately, the buck
59 stops with me, but I ne:ed good influencers around me. I hire
60 good people and then try to stay out of their way.

Luke highlights trust as a prerequisite for collaboration (lines 54–56), viewing decision-making as a relational rather than hierarchical process. However, his acknowledgment that "the buck stops with me" (line 58) indicates a pragmatic view of leadership responsibility. His comments reflect a balance between fostering democratic engagement and retaining final authority. Luke’s orientation suggests that participatory leadership is valued, but operational demands and accountability ultimately frame his decision-making.

6.6.2 On-site Observation Data with Luke

Observation of a staff meeting provided insight into how Luke enacted his leadership philosophy under time-sensitive conditions. While the interviews reveal his leadership philosophy, this observation offered a closer look at how Luke navigates real-time decisions under pressure. In a 30-minute impromptu meeting with his office staff—Margaret (assistant administrator) and Rinka (office secretary and student coordinator)—Luke discussed the urgent task of finalizing a syllabus for an upcoming program with Japanese University X's international undergraduate students. The meeting combined practical decision-making and collaborative effort, highlighting both the urgency of the situation and Luke's emphasis on input from his team.

Excerpt #17

429 L: Ok. Uh, I me:an another (.) concern with the excess hours (.) uh:
430 we will need to trim this back. I mean, >I don't know. We should
431 do it right now.< You know, let them look at this and give us
432 feedback. That'll (.) change everything. But umm, >the fact of
433 thematter is< (.) they are not paying 358 hours. I mean, if I
434 keep you know- the uh calculation is based on about 300 hours-
435
436 M: Well, I-I don't know, but it's=
437
438 L: =You know, 358 is- now we've added more hours, anyway. So it's
439 actually close to 400 I would guess↑ now. (1.8) With-with this.
440 >So, we need to recalculate.<
441
442 M: Yeah. >Let me recalculate.< But we've-we've always been way over.
443

444 L: Yeah.

445

446 R: Oh yeah, I was going to say- I mean, are we recalculating and

447 sending it as it is, or we're going to cut back now? Cuz I feel

448 like it's a little bad form to send it to them with like like a

449 bunch of hours and then later on cut back

450

451 M: $ha ha$

452

453 R: No, we're not going to give you 360, we're going to give you 300.

454

455 M: No, I'll calculate, and I'll send it to you, so you can take a

456 look.

457

458 L: >O-ok, take a look and trim-trim some hours maybe.<

459

460 R: Yeah.

461

462 L: Ok, I just want to make sure we agree on um: (.) this.

In this meeting, Luke facilitates collaborative problem-solving, encouraging input from Margaret and Rinka (lines 436–456). His repeated use of "we" (lines 430–431) emphasizes a collective orientation, even under pressure. However, the urgency of the situation requires expediency, and Luke ultimately guides the team toward a pragmatic solution ("trim-trim some hours maybe," line 458). While the meeting involves dialogue, it is oriented toward immediate operational outcomes rather than a critical examination of institutional structures or power dynamics. Luke's leadership in this instance reflects pragmatic collaboration rather than transformative critical dialogue. This interaction also reflects a subtle tension between urgency and inclusive decision-

making. While Luke sought input from staff, the time-sensitive nature of the task limited the extent of deliberation, highlighting the practical compromises often involved in participatory leadership.

6.6.3 Initial Follow-up Interview Data with Luke

In a follow-up interview, Luke reflected on why he prioritized consulting with his team, even during urgent decision-making moments.

Excerpt #18

10 D: Is it (.) uh time consuming to always consult with the group
11 every time?
12
13 L: I'm intensely loyal to the program, and things obviously need to
14 get done, but more importantly, I'm a (.) cheerleader for people
15 >in general<. Treating staff with respect, and honesty about
16 expectations (.) This is like- >you know< these are people, and
17 they are not numbers. My approach in >dealing with people< is
18 that they can and should be open with me, even if they dislike
19 decisions I make->I mean< (.) especially if they don't like the
20 decisions I make.

Luke frames his leadership around loyalty, respect, and openness (lines 13–19). His emphasis on treating staff "as people, not numbers" (line 17) underscores a human-centered approach to leadership. While this approach resonates with critical pedagogy's emphasis on dialogue and respect, Luke's motivation appears rooted more in relational and organizational pragmatism than in ideological commitments to systemic transformation.

Throughout Luke's case, democratic engagement and collaboration are central, but they are framed primarily as strategies for program effectiveness and team cohesion. His leadership

reflects important aspects of critically-oriented administration but stops short of full alignment with the transformative aims of CLP.

6.7 Case Study: Jasmine

Jasmine's leadership reflects many key CLP principles, including democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue. Although she did not initially identify with critical pedagogy or social justice values when first surveyed, her later practices show growing alignment with these ideals. As a mid-career second language program administrator at a private language school on O'ahu, Jasmine's leadership has evolved in response to the unique institutional challenges she faces, which differ from those in university-affiliated settings. Her case highlights how administrators may gradually integrate critical values into their leadership over time, even when navigating practical constraints.

6.7.1 Initial Interview Data with Jasmine

In the following excerpt, Jasmine discusses her approach to decision-making during regular staff meetings, particularly how she manages group decisions within the context of democratic leadership.

Excerpt #19

```
71    D:    Umm, do you find it to be a (.) challenge to make these group
72          decisions?
73
74    J:    Yeah! $ha ha ha$ It can be a challenge. A real struggle. >You
75          know< sometimes. I just know that I don't always know the- the
76          best path- or like, the best option right away. I make a point
77          to try to listen to every:one, and the struggle is that we hardly
78          ever agree and I have to figure out compromises. (3) But (.) like
79          (.) it's a part of my job, and I have to make it work. (2)
```

80 Somehow. $ha ha$

Jasmine highlights the difficulty of achieving full consensus during staff meetings. She acknowledges the value of listening to all perspectives while also recognizing the reality that decisions often require compromise. Her emphasis on listening and compromise reflects her commitment to democratic engagement, yet her pragmatic acceptance of leadership responsibility shows the balancing act required to manage a private language program effectively.

6.7.2 On-site Observation Data with Jasmine

Observation of Jasmine's leadership during a Friday afternoon staff meeting further illustrates how she negotiates between democratic ideals and practical management. The team was debating whether prospective part-time teachers should meet current students—a practice Jasmine was hesitant to support, but one that her staff advocated for.

Excerpt #20

95 J: So, circling back (.) I think we have to decide on the meeting
96 with students uh (.) thing. (3) I'll be upfront with you all. I
97 don't see a whole lot of benefit, and it's gonna be hard to pull
98 off >you know< logicall- I mean (.) logistically. I know we've
99 done it in the past, but- (3) anyway, what do you all think?
98
99 T3: I think (.) that it's a go:od way to see how they will interact
100 ou:tside of the class time and it does (.) push the students to
101 talk outside of the usual (.) gang.
102
103 T2: =And some of them liked it! They were like $oh, I get to meet new
104 people!$ The outgoing students.
105

T3: Yeah. They said they liked that.

J: Ok (.) What about you, T4?

T4: Uh, I didn't do that. $ha ha$ After my interview, I mean.

J: ha Yeah, right.

T4: But, I mean, I ge:t it. I like it. I think it sounds fun for them

J: For the um teachers (.) or for the students?

T4: I think both! ha

T3: Yeah (.) it's fun.

T2: I think it's probably worth the headache. >We'll figure it out.<

(4)

J: OK. Then, I'll send the emails explaining the plan (.) today. Later today(.) to the applicants, but, I still don't know how we're going to coordinate meeting students. Especially in the late afternoon. It's-

T2: After we set up the times, I'll figure it out.

J: Ok I happ:ily pass it to you.

Although Jasmine initially expresses skepticism, she invites staff input, creating space for democratic dialogue. Throughout the conversation, she maintains openness to different

viewpoints. Even after the majority favors the idea, Jasmine highlights logistical challenges (lines 125–126) but ultimately agrees to proceed, with staff volunteering to assist.

This meeting exemplifies Jasmine's balancing act: she maintains democratic values by seeking staff input and adjusting her plans based on collective feedback, even while grappling with operational concerns. Her leadership reflects critical dialogue, collaborative decision-making, and pragmatic delegation of tasks.

6.7.3 Post-Observation Interview Data with Jasmine

In the brief follow-up interview after the meeting, Jasmine reflects candidly on the outcome.

Excerpt #21

```
1     D:    So, did it go the way you wanted? $ha ha$
2
3     J:    $No!$ >I didn't want to do it.< $ha ha ha$ I still don't think-
4           (.) Yeah, but yeah. That's the way it goes. Sometimes. (2) At the
5           end of the day, I understa:nd where they are coming from and I
6           understa:nd why it's a good thing (.) as an id:ea, but I just
7           know-(.) from experience, that the timing is ne:ver quite right,
8           and it makes it a little- >I don't know<. But, I respect their
9           perspectives, and they really do often share the work when I need
10          help. It's a big $big$ plus. $ha ha$
```

Despite her personal reservations, Jasmine expresses respect for her staff's perspectives and acknowledges their contributions. Her willingness to prioritize team input, even when it challenges her own preferences, demonstrates a maturing democratic leadership style.

This reflection highlights Jasmine's ability to critically examine her leadership choices, recognizing both the logistical difficulties and the relational benefits of shared decision-making.

It illustrates an evolving critical consciousness about how leadership values and institutional realities must be negotiated in everyday practice.

6.8 Beyond the Label: Critical Leadership in Practice

Luke and Jasmine both embody critically-oriented values such as democracy, action-orientation, and dialogic engagement, even though they do not explicitly identify themselves with these labels. Luke, for example, prioritizes trust and collaborative decision-making, describing himself as a “cheerleader” who aims to empower staff members. His willingness to share responsibility and invite diverse perspectives during meetings aligns with the core principles of CLP, despite his reluctance to associate his leadership with "social justice." Similarly, Jasmine consistently creates space for her team’s contributions, allowing staff members to influence key decisions. While she is initially hesitant about new ideas if they seem too cumbersome or time-consuming, she ultimately enacts a democratic process that respects and integrates her colleagues’ viewpoints.

Both Luke and Jasmine demonstrate a tension between their practices and the terminology associated with critical approaches. Luke questions the value of the social justice label, suggesting that its principles can be realized through more widely accepted values. His leadership is thus more pragmatic and outcome-focused, aligning with democratic ideals without overtly invoking social justice rhetoric. In contrast, Jasmine views social justice concerns as secondary to immediate program needs such as efficiency and operational stability. Her leadership reflects the nuanced ways administrators must navigate critical values within the practical realities of program management.

Despite their reluctance to adopt the social justice label, their actions foster the kind of inclusive, reflective, and empowering environments that CLP advocates. Both administrators

create opportunities for dialogue, emphasize action-oriented problem-solving, and cultivate democratic leadership. The gap between their self-identification and their demonstrated values highlights an important dynamic in second language program administration: practitioners can enact critical, transformative leadership without consciously framing their work in terms of social justice. In this sense, their leadership is grounded in everyday practice, where values like democracy and action-orientation are expressed through decisions and relationships rather than through explicit ideological alignment.

This tension underscores the complexity of critical leadership in language program administration. Values of democracy and empowerment may be deeply embedded in leadership styles, even when they are not labeled as "critical" or "social justice" practices. This challenges the assumption that critical pedagogy must always be accompanied by overt political frameworks, suggesting that leading critically often occurs in subtle, pragmatic, and non-ideological ways.

6.9 Tensions Between Social Justice and Language Program Administration

While O‘ahu-based educators articulate social justice in deeply localized and decolonial terms, the language program administrators in this study did not explicitly adopt the social justice label. This contrast raises important questions about the conceptual boundaries of social justice within educational administration. The administrators in this study worked within institutional structures that prioritized program sustainability, enrollment management, and compliance with accreditation standards—factors that often constrained their ability to take explicit political or ideological stances. This underscores the structural constraints within which administrators must navigate their leadership roles, making it difficult to fully engage with social justice principles in a more overt or direct way.

This is not to suggest that administrators in Hawai‘i were indifferent to justice concerns, but rather that they navigated these issues through institutional frameworks that did not explicitly position them as social justice leaders. As Trask (1993) and Grandinetti et al. (2017) argue, the broader educational system in Hawai‘i continues to operate within a settler colonial paradigm that often marginalizes Indigenous perspectives. The absence of explicit social justice rhetoric among administrators may reflect this structural reality rather than a lack of alignment with justice-oriented principles. Luke and Jasmine's leadership practices reflect the limits of adopting overtly social justice language, as their institutions often prioritize other pragmatic goals, such as long-term (and sometimes short-term) sustainability and accreditation.

Furthermore, research on educational leadership suggests that the positionality of administrators influences their approach to social justice (Nieto, 2006). Leaders who are deeply embedded in community-based education, such as those in Hawaiian immersion schools, may be more likely to explicitly align with social justice values than those working within more traditional institutional settings. This distinction reflects the broader tension between critical pedagogy and the institutional constraints that shape administrators' decisions. For example, Jordan, a Hawaiian charter school administrator, described critical dialogue as a means for "engaging in tough conversations… when institutional norms push back against our values" (Excerpt #9), illustrating how his community-based context may have allowed for a more overt justice-oriented stance than was observed among university-affiliated administrators in this chapter. Broader comparative patterns across geographic regions and program types are explored in the following chapter.

This raises a crucial consideration for language program administration: to what extent do institutional constraints shape the ability of administrators to engage in social justice work, and

how might alternative leadership models—such as those rooted in Hawaiian Indigenous education—offer pathways for more explicit justice-oriented administration? Administrators who are navigating institutional pressures can still work toward social justice in subtle ways, but the absence of the social justice label complicates the broader narrative of how these values can be fully embraced and applied within the educational system.

As Hawai‘i’s educational system continues to operate within a settler colonial framework, it becomes essential to reconsider the definitions of social justice and how these can be enacted within the constraints of the current system. This consideration is vital for understanding the evolving nature of critical pedagogy and how social justice values are implemented, both explicitly and implicitly, within language programs across different contexts.

6.10 Social Justice-Oriented K-12 Teachers on O‘ahu: Analysis of Survey Data

To deepen the understanding of how critical pedagogy values are enacted across different educational contexts, this section examines survey data from K-12 teachers on O‘ahu. Unlike the second language program administrators discussed earlier, these educators were selected for their explicit alignment with social justice values. Exploring their perspectives offers insight into how democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue are applied at the classroom level, where teachers directly engage with students.

While the institutional contexts differ, both administrators and teachers navigate systemic challenges that complicate the enactment of critical values. Teachers, however, work from a more grassroots position, allowing for a closer view of how critically-oriented leadership can emerge within constrained environments.

Survey responses from eight K-12 teachers were collected, including individuals from public and charter schools across O‘ahu. (See Table 6 for a summary; the full dataset is available in Appendix I.)

Table 6

Details about K-12 Teachers on O‘ahu (N=8)

Survey Item	Response	Number
Location	Public School	6
	Charter School	2
Most Selected Values	Democracy	7
	Action-orientation	6
	Equity	3
	Cultural Sustainability	2
Notable Challenges	Need for decolonial curriculum	6
	Lack of administrative support	3
	Standardized testing limitations	1

6.10.1 Core Values in the Classroom and Their Importance

Survey responses revealed a strong commitment to critical pedagogy values. The most frequently selected values—cultural sustainability, action-orientation, equity, democracy, and empowerment—reflect efforts to create classrooms rooted in social justice and student agency.

- **Democracy**: Teachers emphasized participatory decision-making, encouraging students to share their voices and engage actively in shaping classroom practices. Moana, a special education teacher, highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces for students to

explore issues like privilege and discrimination. However, as Kaiulani noted, balancing democratic participation with timely decision-making remained a challenge.

- **Action-Orientation**: Teachers consistently linked classroom discussions to real-world applications. Nalani, a high school English teacher, described projects that connected students' learning to pressing issues like food insecurity, aiming to foster meaningful action rather than passive awareness.
- **Equity:** Teachers described equity as addressing systemic barriers faced by marginalized students. Kaleo, a charter school teacher, emphasized adapting instruction for multilingual learners and challenging structures that disadvantage Native Hawaiian youth.
- **Cultural Sustainability**: Particularly significant among educators working in Hawaiian immersion settings, cultural sustainability emphasized maintaining students' connections to their heritage. Teachers like Aolani stressed that preserving cultural identity was not simply an educational goal, but a crucial form of resistance against historical erasure.

These values collectively reveal that K-12 teachers on O‘ahu are engaging with critical pedagogy at a deep level, often prioritizing student agency, cultural relevance, and real-world impact over more traditional, compliance-driven models of education.

6.10.2 Challenges in Enacting CLP-Oriented Values

Despite their commitment, educators faced several systemic barriers to fully implementing critical pedagogy principles:

- **Need for Decolonial Curriculum:** Several teachers expressed frustration with state-mandated curricula that lacked relevance to their students' lived experiences. Aolani noted that the absence of Indigenous perspectives in district-approved materials made it

difficult to honor students' cultural identities or engage them in critical inquiry rooted in place.

- **Lack of Administrative Support:** Many participants described how limited backing from school leadership undercut efforts to implement equity-focused initiatives. Moana shared that while she integrated DEI principles into her classroom, broader institutional inertia meant these efforts were often isolated and unsustained.
- **Standardized Testing Limitations:** Teachers, particularly in secondary settings, emphasized that high-stakes testing requirements narrowed the scope of instruction and discouraged critical dialogue. Nalani remarked that these pressures pulled her away from culturally responsive teaching and toward test preparation that felt disconnected from students' realities.

These challenges underscore the structural tensions educators navigate—often mirroring, and at times exceeding, the constraints described by second language program administrators in this study.

6.10.3 The Role of Personal and Cultural Values

Despite institutional challenges, K-12 teachers consistently described personal and cultural commitments that grounded their work in critical pedagogy. Rather than treating culture as supplementary, these educators positioned cultural identity and community engagement as central to their teaching philosophies.

Participants, particularly those in Hawaiian immersion or culturally focused settings, emphasized connecting students to their heritage as a form of empowerment. Aolani, for example, framed cultural education as both preservation and preparation for social advocacy,

while Kaleo described integrating Hawaiian mo‘olelo (traditional stories) into his art curriculum to resist standardized educational frameworks.

Teachers’ personal identities were deeply entwined with their professional roles. By centering Indigenous knowledge and valuing students' cultural experiences, they challenged dominant narratives and fostered inclusive learning environments aligned with critical pedagogy. However, participants also acknowledged tensions, noting that institutional frameworks often limited support for culturally responsive teaching and required ongoing negotiation between personal commitments and systemic constraints.

Overall, personal and cultural values served as essential foundations for sustaining critically-oriented practices, even in the face of systemic obstacles. These findings underscore the close relationship between critical pedagogy and cultural relevance among social justice-oriented K-12 teachers on O‘ahu.

6.11 Social Justice-Oriented K-12 Teachers on O‘ahu: Analysis of Interview Data

The interview responses of four K-12 teachers selected for their alignment with democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue offer a nuanced perspective on how these values are enacted in classroom practices. Drawing from the survey data, these educators navigate a complex landscape where their commitments to social justice often conflict with institutional frameworks emphasizing standardized assessments, accountability, and resistance to culturally inclusive practices—although such tensions were less pronounced in charter schools. Their narratives highlight both the challenges and possibilities of social justice-oriented pedagogy, revealing how educators balance critical ideals with systemic constraints.

6.11.1 Democracy for Reflection and Growth

For these educators, democracy is not limited to participation but is conceptualized as fostering environments where students actively share their voices, engage in decision-making, and recognize their agency in challenging societal structures. This broader view of democracy emphasizes critical reflection, empowerment, and social transformation.

Leilani, a kumu (instructor) at a local charter school, describes democracy as a practice of creating community, encouraging students to express their thoughts—even amidst disagreement—and building collective skills for decision-making and social change.

Excerpt #22

82 D You had also identified (2) um demo↑cracy. Could you say more
83 about that too?
84
85 L: Yes, sure. I'm not sure how others talk about it, but- for me, I
86 look at demo:cracy as an opportunity for more voices to share
87 what's on their mind. Even if we- or they disagree, I push them
88 to still share and try to manage reactions. If you can create a
89 community (.) <in the classroom> (.) it teaches students how they
90 can play a role in challenging and changing current power uh
91 structures >for the better< (2) They learn how to make decisions
92 in a group.

Leilani's response (lines 85–92) frames democracy as a community practice, where disagreement is welcomed as part of learning collective decision-making. Her emphasis on managing reactions and sustaining open dialogue reflects an understanding of democracy as more than procedural—it is transformative. Leilani's approach overlaps with notions of critical dialogue, but her distinct

focus on students learning "how to make decisions in a group" highlights democracy as an embodied, practiced skill tied directly to social engagement and change.

Similarly, Nalani, a high school English teacher, emphasizes that democracy in education must be intentionally created. For her, building a democratic classroom is inseparable from the goal of decolonizing the curriculum.

Excerpt #23

```
33    D:    So, you mentioned democracy is essential?
34
35    N:    Ya, CREATING a class↑room democracy is essential when we talk
36          about decolonizing the curriculum together. It helps students see
37          that THEY have a role to play in transforming their communities,
38          and that sta:rts right HERE.
```

Nalani's comments (lines 35–38) position democracy as foundational to her vision of decolonizing education. Her emphasis on "CREATING" a democratic classroom signals that democracy is not automatic; it must be intentionally nurtured. By underscoring that "THEY have a role to play," she frames students as active participants in both their own education and broader societal change. Nalani's work clearly connects to critical pedagogy's call for education that challenges oppressive structures by equipping learners with the agency to act.

Across these two interviews, both Leilani and Nalani describe democracy as more than a classroom management style—it is a pathway for student empowerment, critical reflection, and collective action. Their practices illustrate how democratic classrooms can foster the critical consciousness necessary for students to engage with and transform their communities.

6.11.2 Action-Orientation: Empowering Students to Act

Another key theme that emerged across the interviews was the importance of action-orientation in teaching. For these educators, it is not enough for students to simply recognize systemic inequities; they must also be equipped and empowered to act upon that knowledge. Action-orientation, in this context, reflects a core tenet of critical pedagogy, emphasizing transformation rather than mere awareness.

Kaiulani, a middle school teacher, emphasized that her goal is to move beyond raising consciousness, focusing instead on helping students challenge systemic inequities within their communities.

Excerpt #24

123 D: Could you say a little more about action-orientation?
124
125 K: Ya. I want my students to not only lea:rn about the systemic
126 inequities that affect them >but to also< feel empow:ered to make
127 a difference. It's about using what they know to challenge those
128 systems (.) and hopefully create change.

Kaiulani's response (lines 125–128) illustrates her commitment to empowering students to move from understanding to action. The elongation of "lea:rn" signals the importance she places on deep engagement with issues, while her emphasis on "empow:ered" highlights the necessity of agency. Her reflection on challenging systems (line 128) aligns closely with Freirean principles, emphasizing that education should enable students not just to interpret the world, but to intervene in it.

Similarly, Nalani, a high school English teacher, highlighted the importance of building critical consciousness that moves beyond recognition of injustice to active engagement.

Excerpt #25

52 D: So >you mean< that they can already ki:nda see the inequality?
53
54 N: Yeah. BUT it's not just about tea::ching students to recognize
55 inequalities. They KNOW about inequality >before they ever step
56 into my class< It's about helping th:em develop the tools to ACT
57 on those inequalities.

Nalani's comments (lines 54–57) underscore her belief that awareness of injustice is not enough. Students "KNOW about inequality" before entering the classroom, but critical education demands that they also develop the skills and agency to act. The repeated emphasis on action ("tools to ACT," line 56) reflects her commitment to fostering transformative agency rather than passive understanding.

Together, Kaiulani and Nalani demonstrate an action-oriented approach to critical pedagogy. Their teaching moves beyond traditional models of social critique toward praxis—empowering students to critically engage with social realities and to see themselves as active participants in creating change. Through this focus, they embody Freire's vision of education as a practice of freedom.

6.11.3 Cultural Relevance and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

A strong theme that emerged from the K–12 educator interviews was the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems and the prioritization of cultural relevance in the classroom. Unlike the Oʻahu-based second language program administrators, who often emphasized democratic values more abstractly, these K–12 educators grounded their leadership practices in the lived cultural identities of their students. This difference may be partly attributable to the institutional contexts in which these educators worked—many of whom taught in Hawaiian-focused or community-based schools, where cultural relevance is central to the school's mission.

Their pedagogy reflects a commitment not only to critical pedagogy principles but also to the preservation and empowerment of cultural heritage as an act of resistance.

Kaiulani, a middle school teacher, described how she integrates Hawaiian cultural frameworks into her curriculum to strengthen students' sense of identity and belonging.

Excerpt #26

```
22    D: Could you speak to how those values um manifest in your classroom.
23
24    K: Ya. >I try to integrate Hawaiian mo'olelo< an:d the HĀ framework
25    into my lessons to try to connect my students with their heritage. (1)
26    I try to make a learning environment where their voices are heard and
27    they are celebrated.
```

Kaiulani's emphasis on connecting students to their heritage (lines 24–27) reflects a deliberate move toward culturally sustaining pedagogy. By incorporating Hawaiian mo'olelo (traditional narratives) and the HĀ framework[3]—which focuses on holistic student development—she creates spaces where students' identities are not only validated but also celebrated. Her approach highlights the link between cultural relevance and critical consciousness, where fostering pride in heritage becomes a form of empowerment against systemic erasure.

Similarly, Leilani, a kumu at a local charter school, ties cultural engagement to broader notions of social responsibility.

[3] The HĀ framework (*Nā Hopena A'o*) is a core part of the Hawai'i Department of Education's approach to holistic student development, emphasizing outcomes such as Belonging, Responsibility, and Hawaiian identity. See: https://hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/AdvancingEducation/NāHopenaAo/Pages/home.aspx

Excerpt #27

56 D: So, in general, what have been some- some high points for you.
57
58 L: >Like I was saying< I LOVE seeing students truly engage with 59
59 their Hawaiian culture and identity. (2) <When they connect with
60 their heritage>, you can see that it strengthens their
61 sense of responsibility to their community (.) and the ʻāina
62 ((land)).

Leilani's response (lines 58–62) underscores the transformative potential of cultural education. Her focus on strengthening students' ties to the ʻāina (land) and community suggests that cultural identity is not merely celebrated in the classroom but actively linked to civic engagement. This framing echoes the goals of critical pedagogy by positioning students as future agents of community care and social change.

However, despite these successes, participants also highlighted the ongoing challenges of integrating Indigenous epistemologies into education systems dominated by Western norms. Kaleo, an elementary art teacher, spoke candidly about this tension.

Excerpt #28

101 D: It seems like that could really be a challenge.
102
103 L: I think (.) that (.) the difficulty is in reconciling our
104 Indigenous knowledge systems that I strongly value wi::th the (.)
105 standardized curriculum that's often forced on the kids (2) >and
106 us too< But I try to use Hawaiian moʻolelo alongside teaching art
107 to help students understand and respect multiple ways of knowing.

Kaleo's comments (lines 103–107) illustrate the structural barriers educators face. His acknowledgment of being "forced" into standardized frameworks highlights the external

pressures that constrain culturally responsive teaching. Yet, his continued use of Hawaiian mo‘olelo signals a persistent commitment to fostering a more inclusive educational space, even within these constraints.

Taken together, the experiences of Kaiulani, Leilani, and Kaleo demonstrate that cultural relevance and Indigenous knowledge systems are not peripheral to their teaching practices; they are central to how they enact critical pedagogy. While challenges remain—particularly the pressure to conform to standardized curricula—these educators continue to carve out spaces where students' cultural identities are honored, fostering both academic and personal empowerment.

6.12 Comparison of O‘ahu-Based Second Language Program Administrators and K-12 Teachers

A striking similarity between O‘ahu-based second language program administrators and K-12 teachers is their shared commitment to democratic principles, action-orientation, and student empowerment. Both groups emphasize creating inclusive and participatory environments where students' and staff members' voices are heard. However, the ways these values are operationalized reveal important differences tied to their institutional contexts, resource constraints, and degrees of flexibility.

6.12.1 Democracy and Action-Orientation: Enacting Shared Values

Both administrators and teachers strongly emphasize democratic decision-making and action-oriented leadership, but at different institutional levels.

Administrators like Luke and Jasmine prioritize creating participatory structures in staff governance, seeking feedback, building trust, and promoting shared decision-making in the broader organization. In contrast, K-12 teachers like Leilani and Nalani implement democracy

more intimately at the classroom level, where students actively shape learning experiences and curricular decisions.

While administrators emphasized collaborative leadership to build organizational coherence, teachers stressed student agency and community empowerment through classroom democracy. For example, K-12 teachers reported using frameworks like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and restorative justice practices to support inclusive participation, whereas administrators focused on staff buy-in and operational collaboration. This distinction highlights that while the core values are shared, the locus of implementation differs: administrators work through program-level leadership, while K-12 teachers operationalize democracy directly in daily student interactions.

6.12.2 Challenges with Institutional Constraints

Both groups face significant structural barriers that constrain their ability to fully realize their critical pedagogical commitments.

Resource limitations emerged as a major challenge across contexts. Luke and Jasmine discussed how tight budgets limited opportunities for professional development and democratic staff engagement, while K-12 teachers like Kaleo highlighted how financial constraints and staffing shortages hindered their ability to sustain social justice initiatives.

In addition to funding issues, standardized accountability structures—such as accreditation standards for administrators and high-stakes testing for teachers—created tensions with their values. K-12 teachers, in particular, emphasized how state mandates and standardized assessments often conflicted with efforts to decolonize curricula or foster culturally sustaining pedagogies. Although the specific manifestations of constraint differ, both groups confront systemic pressures that make it difficult to enact critical pedagogy without compromise.

6.12.3 Flexibility and Resistance: Differences in Professional Contexts

Despite shared challenges, administrators and K-12 teachers differ in the degree of flexibility they have in navigating institutional constraints. Administrators working in university-affiliated programs often retain some autonomy to implement democratic practices and action-oriented strategies at the programmatic level, even when faced with financial limitations. This relative flexibility allows them to adapt procedures and institutional practices within certain bounds.

In contrast, K-12 teachers must operate within much more rigid, top-down frameworks dictated by state policies, testing requirements, and standardized curricula. Nalani's struggle to balance state-mandated assessments with curriculum decolonization, and Leilani and Kaleo's efforts to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into Western-centered standards, reflect the heightened structural resistance teachers face. Thus, while both groups confront obstacles, teachers often experience more direct and restrictive limitations on their ability to enact transformative practices.

This comparison suggests that institutional flexibility is an important, and sometimes overlooked, factor influencing how critical pedagogy can be operationalized in different educational contexts.

6.12.4 The Importance of K-12 Teachers in This Study

The inclusion of K–12 teachers in this study is crucial for understanding the broader application of critical pedagogy across diverse educational contexts. By examining teachers who implement democratic and action-oriented practices in resource-limited classrooms, we gain an understanding of how critically-oriented pedagogy can be enacted despite significant institutional resistance. K–12 teachers' ability to create inclusive and empowering environments highlights

the potential for grassroots social justice leadership in education and their critical role in advocating for transformative education in marginalized communities. Although they do not hold formal administrative titles, these educators often act as de facto leaders within their schools—initiating curricular changes, mentoring colleagues, and modeling values-driven decision-making. Their work offers a valuable counterpoint to formal administrative leadership, revealing how critical pedagogy is enacted at the classroom level in ways that parallel and inform institutional leadership practices.

This comparison contrasts the experiences of second language program administrators, offering a broader perspective on how social justice principles can be applied across different settings and impact students directly. While administrators may have more flexibility in their roles, K–12 teachers face greater institutional challenges when attempting to implement critically-oriented pedagogy, particularly in environments resistant to these values. By including these educators, it not only enriches the institutional diversity of the study but also offers a grounded perspective on how social justice values are translated into everyday practice across hierarchical levels of the educational system.

The findings presented in this chapter highlight the complexity of enacting critically-oriented values such as democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue across diverse educational contexts on O‘ahu. While second language program administrators and K–12 teachers share core commitments to empowerment and participatory leadership, their approaches and challenges vary depending on institutional structures and levels of flexibility. These comparisons deepen our understanding of how critical pedagogy is both constrained and enacted in real-world settings. In the next chapter, the focus shifts to the perspectives of U.S. continent

administrators, offering a broader comparative lens on how critically-oriented leadership is conceptualized and practiced across different geographic and institutional landscapes.

7. FINDINGS – EXPANDING THE SCOPE: CRITICALLY-ORIENTED LANGUAGE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS BEYOND HAWAIʻI

Building on the analysis in Chapter 6, this chapter shifts the focus to critically-oriented second language program administrators working on the U.S. continent. While Oʻahu-based administrators engaged with social justice principles in nuanced and sometimes indirect ways, many of their U.S. continent counterparts more explicitly identified as social justice-oriented leaders. These administrators share several examples of how they adopt the core tenets of CLP decision-making into their professional identities, actively working to shape institutional policies, curriculum design, and advocacy efforts within their language programs.

This contrast highlights key differences in how administrators engage with social justice leadership, raising important considerations about the factors that influence their orientations. While some administrators openly embrace social justice as a defining aspect of their leadership, others hesitate due to structural, political, and institutional constraints. Understanding these differences requires examining the broader forces that shape administrative decision-making beyond the initial research site, including the challenges of sustaining critically-oriented practices within diverse institutional landscapes. The following analysis explores how these SLPAs define social justice leadership, navigate institutional barriers, and engage in critically-oriented leadership across varied contexts.

7.1 Overview of Key Findings and Data Collection

This chapter draws on survey and interview data collected from 13 U.S. continent administrators, all of whom were identified through targeted recruitment for their active engagement in social justice leadership. Unlike the Oʻahu-based administrators, who were selected through broader snowball sampling, these participants were specifically sought out

based on professional networks that emphasize social justice in language education. This methodological distinction does not suggest that all U.S. continent administrators embrace social justice leadership, but rather that those who do were more visible within professional circles where such work is recognized and valued.

The dataset includes:

- **Survey Data from U.S. continent Administrators** – Responses from 13 administrators working in university-affiliated language programs and private language institutions.
- **Interview Data from U.S. continent Administrators** – Semi-structured interviews with 8 participants, totaling approximately 5 hours of recorded conversations and 271 pages of transcribed interviews.

Drawing on the coding and thematic analysis process described in Chapter 5, I identified three key themes that characterize how mainland administrators conceptualize and enact social justice-oriented leadership:

- **Explicit Identification with Social Justice Leadership** – Unlike many Oʻahu administrators, U.S. continent administrators readily embrace social justice as a defining aspect of their professional identity, integrating these values into their leadership practices.
- **Institutional Constraints and Strategic Framing** – Administrators recognize the challenges of advocating for social justice within higher education institutions and use strategic framing to align their work with institutional priorities.
- **Sustaining Equity Initiatives in Bureaucratic Structures** – Leaders employ various strategies—such as coalition-building, external funding, and framing DEI work in

financially viable terms—to ensure the longevity of their social justice-oriented programs.

The following sections provide a detailed analysis of the survey and interview findings. These findings offer a comparative perspective on how critically-oriented values are understood, enacted, and sustained across different educational contexts.

7.2 Participants and Institutional Contexts

The 13 U.S. continent administrators represent a diverse range of institutional settings and language programs. Unlike the Oʻahu-based administrators, who primarily worked within English language programs, these U.S. continent administrators oversaw programs offering multiple languages, including Spanish (2), French (2), and Italian (1), alongside English (3). Six participants work in university-affiliated second language programs, while two administer private language programs. This institutional and linguistic diversity helps illuminate how social justice principles take shape across different program structures and funding models, highlighting variations in priorities, challenges, and implementation strategies.

Because U.S. continent administrators were intentionally selected for their active engagement in social justice leadership within language education, their perspectives offer insight into how social justice leadership is conceptualized and enacted by those who position themselves within these professional discourses. While not all U.S. continent administrators may share identical views, their inclusion allows for a focused examination of how critically-oriented leadership manifests in second language program administration. Their responses also reveal how professional networks shape the visibility of social justice-oriented leadership and illustrate the strategies administrators use to integrate these principles into their institutional roles.

7.3 Analysis of Survey Data from U.S. Continent Administrators

The survey responses from the 13 U.S. continent administrators illustrate a clear and consistent commitment to social justice as a leadership framework. Unlike their O‘ahu-based counterparts, who often aligned with critical values without explicitly adopting the social justice label, U.S. continent administrators openly and actively embraced this orientation as a core part of their professional identities. All 13 participants selected at least two of the following values: democracy, critical dialogue, and action-orientation. These values serve as foundational principles that inform their leadership practices. (See Table 7 for a summary of these participants; the full data set is available in Appendix H.)

Table 7

Details about U.S. Continent Administrators (N=13)

Survey Item	Response	Number
Location	University-affiliate language schools	7
	Private language schools	6
Most Selected Values	Critical Dialogue	10
	Action-orientation	10
	Equity + Inclusion	10
	Democracy	8
	Empathy	6
Notable Challenges	Budget/Resource Constraints	5
	Institutional resistance	5
	Engagement / Participation Issues	2

A common challenge reported by administrators was sustaining social justice initiatives amid funding limitations. Although many institutions publicly support DEI initiatives, the financial backing for such programs is often limited or inconsistent. Administrators noted that when social justice work is framed purely as activism, it becomes more difficult to justify financially. Conversely, when aligned with institutional goals or revenue streams, these initiatives are more likely to receive ongoing support.

Institutional resistance also emerged as a significant barrier. Navigating institutional politics was described as an ongoing task, with several administrators emphasizing the need to position advocacy efforts carefully to reduce resistance and ensure the longevity of their initiatives. Some participants noted that balancing internal advocacy with external consulting work had become an important strategy for maintaining credibility and sustaining momentum.

In addition to navigating political and financial barriers, many administrators emphasized the strategic framing of their work. By presenting social justice initiatives as both ethical imperatives and strategic assets to the institution, they were better able to secure resources and institutional support. This dual framing positioned DEI efforts not only as socially necessary but also as aligned with institutional longevity and broader educational goals[4].

These survey findings highlight the complexities U.S. continent administrators face as they work to integrate social justice values into leadership practices while contending with financial pressures, political resistance, and institutional constraints. The next section draws on

[4] At the time of data collection (2021–2024), many administrators still positioned DEI efforts as institutionally supported initiatives. However, political shifts in the U.S. during early 2025 have led to increasing restrictions and backlash against DEI programming in higher education, which may alter how such efforts are framed in the near future.

interview data from eight selected participants to further explore how these dynamics play out in practice.

7.4 Analysis of Interview Data from the U.S. Continent Administrators

The qualitative interview data from the eight U.S. continent administrators provides an in-depth understanding of how social justice leadership is implemented in practice. These administrators not only identify social justice as a core guiding principle but also articulate how they actively integrate these values into their professional roles. Their narratives offer valuable insight into the tensions they navigate between advocacy and institutional survival, the strategies they use to overcome bureaucratic and financial constraints, and the broader systemic factors that influence their decision-making and leadership practices.

7.4.1 Why These Administrators Identify with Social Justice

In contrast to their O‘ahu counterparts, the U.S. continent administrators interviewed for this study explicitly identified as social justice-oriented leaders. For many, this identification is deeply personal, rooted in lived experiences of exclusion, systemic inequities, or direct confrontations with institutional resistance to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Jordan (Program Manager for Foreign Languages at Small Liberal Arts College X) highlights an advocacy-driven leadership philosophy. For Jordan, leadership goes beyond management; it is a personal commitment to supporting marginalized groups and dismantling systemic inequities.

Excerpt #29

78 D: It seems like you treat this role ve:ry-with a sense of

79 seriousness, which I haven’t always-

80

81 J: Yeah, well, my work is always born out of the need to support

82 others who have been marginalized in the field or who are being
83 underserved in some way.

Jordan's statement that his work is "born out of the need to support others" (Line 81) underscores a leadership philosophy centered on advocacy rather than administrative management. His emphasis on "marginalized in the field" (Line 82) reflects a commitment to challenging systemic exclusion and transforming institutional structures.

Morgan (Director of ESL at Small Private University B) similarly underscores how social justice work serves not only as a professional value but also as a survival strategy. Her leadership involves navigating institutional limitations while expanding her impact through external consulting and equity initiatives.

Excerpt #30

56 D: Could you say a little more about survi↑val? It's my first time
57 hearing this.
58
59 M: I think you can imagine that I don't have opportunities to always
60 do social justice in this position, BUT I've built my enti:re
61 consulting side hustle around doing workshops and trainings on
62 anti-racism and equity-mindedness. Everywhere I go, people are
63 DES:PERATE for this.

Morgan's reference to her "consulting side hustle" (Line 61) illustrates her effort to continue equity work beyond institutional limitations. Her emphasis that "people are DESPERATE for this" (Line 63) highlights a strong demand for social justice initiatives even as institutional support remains limited, suggesting resilience and adaptability in her leadership approach.

Leila (Department Chair of Linguistics at Public University A) frames DEI work as a fundamental ethical responsibility for language program administrators.

Excerpt #31

71 D: It se:ems to me like you're actively umm >trying to embrace< the
72 DEI aspect (.) to your program.
73
74 L: Uh well (.) If we're not actively making our programs more
75 accessible, then we are just reinforcing the same inequities we
76 claim to be challenging (3) Don't you think that's right?

Leila's view that "we are just reinforcing inequities" (Lines 74–75) if we do not act actively highlights the ethical urgency she associates with leadership. Her emphasis on "actively" doing the work reflects a clear alignment with the values of critical pedagogy, where intentional efforts to dismantle inequities are central.

Finally, Avery (ESL Program Director at Public University Y) emphasizes that language education itself naturally serves as a platform for advancing social justice, framing this integration as inseparable from her leadership identity.

Excerpt #32

112 D: I was sur↑prised to hear you say that, actually. Everyone usually
113 says like you can add in a critical orientation, but the primary
114 purpose of the course is the language. What about the language?
115 >What are they< learning? $ha ha$
116
117 A: $Yeah sure$ but >for me< I think language education often serves
118 as a site of cultural and linguistic diversity, which makes it a
119 natural platform to dri:ve social justice principles.

Avery's view that language education is a "natural platform" for driving social justice principles (Line 119) reflects a strong belief that equity and critical engagement are inherently linked to the

teaching of languages. This perspective reaffirms the idea that critical pedagogy is not an "add-on" but central to her work.

Taken together, these administrators' reflections show that their identification with social justice leadership is not incidental—it is deeply intertwined with personal experiences and professional values. Their leadership approaches move beyond traditional management models to actively confront inequities, often using creative strategies to navigate institutional barriers and advance justice-oriented initiatives.

7.4.2 Institutional Constraints and Strategic Adaptation

While deeply committed to social justice, U.S. continent administrators often described the institutional constraints they must navigate. One of the most frequently mentioned barriers was institutional resistance to DEI initiatives, particularly when these efforts were perceived as politically or financially risky.

Avery (ESL Program Director at Public University Y) reflects on the delicate balance administrators must strike between advancing social justice and addressing institutional priorities.

Excerpt #33

84 D: I thought it was rea:lly interesting that you mentioned the uh
85 money aspect be:ing part of your program. >I guess< I wouldn't
86 have thought that was one of your goals (.) thinking about
87 gener:ating money.
88
89 A: Yeah, I think if you're pushing equity initiatives that don't
90 generate revenue (.) it's rea:lly easy for them to cut the
91 program (.) and honestly just cut you. If you care about this

92 stuff, the key is to fra:me your work in ways that align with
93 institu:tional priorities.

Avery's response (lines 89–93) highlights the financial risks associated with social justice advocacy that lacks an institutional revenue stream. Her emphasis on the need to "fra:me" equity work strategically suggests a pragmatic adaptation: framing initiatives as both ethically necessary and aligned with institutional goals to ensure sustainability. This approach reflects the reality that advocacy, to survive, must often be tied to institutional priorities.

In contrast, Jalen (Program Manager for Foreign Languages at College X) takes a more direct approach by rejecting formal administrative roles altogether to preserve his autonomy and advocacy potential.

Excerpt #34

19 D: So, just to be clear- you do not like the second language program
20 administrator title-or um (.) label?
21
22 J: No. I cannot be an administrator at any higher official capacity
23 (.) because that would strip me of my ability to unionize. I
24 didn't even want to ta:ke on this role. >It's really just a title
25 in name only<. I DON'T want to be a representative of the
26 university and be subject to censorship.

Jalen's refusal to accept a full administrative role (lines 22–26) reflects a conscious resistance to institutional structures that might limit his voice. His emphasis that it is "really just a title in name only" (line 25) shows a deliberate strategy to maintain freedom for unionizing and advocacy, highlighting an alternative model of critical leadership grounded in autonomy rather than institutional authority.

Cameron (Program Manager for an Italian Language School) further underscores the financial precarity of social justice initiatives, particularly those serving underrepresented students.

Excerpt #35

91 D: I've been hearing a lot more about survival when it comes to DEI
92 initiatives or foreign language programs >especially with the
93 coming administration<
94
95 C: Well, that's exactly right. We're often the first to face cuts
96 when budgets are tight, and that makes it difficult to sus:tain
97 any LONG-term projects that serve underrepresented students.

Cameron's comment (lines 95–97) points to the chronic vulnerability of DEI programs during periods of financial strain. His emphasis on the difficulty of sustaining "LONG-term projects" (line 97) highlights the broader structural challenges administrators face when working toward equity without guaranteed institutional investment.

Together, these examples demonstrate how administrators strategically adapt to institutional constraints: by reframing initiatives to align with financial goals (Avery), resisting formal authority structures (Jalen), or seeking external funding to sustain vulnerable programs (Cameron). These approaches reflect both the challenges and the ingenuity required to maintain justice-oriented leadership within higher education's complex and often inhospitable environments.

7.4.3 Strategies for Sustaining Equity Work

Despite facing significant institutional constraints, U.S. continent administrators have developed innovative strategies to sustain their social justice-oriented initiatives. These strategies

often involve reframing equity work to align with institutional priorities, fostering collaboration among faculty, and leveraging external networks for support.

Jordan (Program Manager for Foreign Languages at College X) highlights the critical importance of financial viability in protecting and sustaining equity programs.

Excerpt #36

88 D: I had ne:ver really thought about DEI umm initiatives and the
89 profitability factor. It's interesting that you bring it up.
90
91 J: If you're doing some:thing that irritates and inconveniences
92 them, BUT it also makes money (.) >it's harder for them to cut
93 you<. But if you're a pain in the ass with NO money, >those are
94 very easily gotten rid of<

Jordan's response (lines 91–94) stresses the pragmatic need to demonstrate financial benefit when advocating for DEI work. His comment, "it's harder for them to cut you" (line 92), underscores the reality that social justice initiatives must often be framed within institutional financial goals to survive. The risk of being "very easily gotten rid of" (line 94) highlights the precariousness of advocacy efforts without a financial rationale.

In addition to strategic framing, Taylor (ESL Program Director at Public University C) emphasizes coalition-building as a way to deepen faculty engagement and create more sustainable social justice initiatives.

Excerpt #37

112 D: >Actually< when I was a Masters student, we had a week discussion
113 about professional learning communities, and how it's important
114 for teachers to have that time and spa:ce outside of scheduled
115 work meetings.
116

117 T: $Yeah$ it was something like that. I created spaces for
118 faculty-led discussions where instructors could voice concerns
119 and share strategies. <That shift in approach- was like> uh (.)
120 MOVing from training to collaborative problem-solving. I think
121 there was more faculty buy-in and $actuall:y$ it led to more
122 engagement than I expected.

Taylor's response (lines 117–122) demonstrates how shifting from top-down training to peer-led collaboration enhanced faculty buy-in. By "MOVing from training to collaborative problem-solving" (line 120), Taylor fostered a sense of ownership among instructors, which strengthened the sustainability of social justice efforts.

Finally, Morgan (Director of ESL at Small Private University B) illustrates how administrators extend their advocacy work beyond institutional boundaries to maintain momentum.

Excerpt #38

76 D: Based on those experiences, it seems like may::be you're uh
77 LIMited in what you were REALLY hoping to accomplish. Is that
78 accurate?
79
80 M: >Being too radical within the institution< can limit what I can
81 accom:plish. Yes, that's right. So I do what I ne:ed to stay in
82 the ro:om, but I take my more direct advocacy outside of
83 institutional boundaries.

Morgan's response (lines 80–83) highlights a strategic balance between internal moderation and external advocacy. By "taking more direct advocacy outside of institutional boundaries" (line 83), Morgan preserves space for transformative work without jeopardizing her institutional position. This reflects a broader strategy among administrators who build external partnerships,

consultancies, or community collaborations to sustain critical work when internal channels are limited.

Taken together, these examples show that sustaining social justice leadership often requires flexible, multi-faceted strategies: aligning equity work with institutional priorities, building faculty coalitions, and pursuing external avenues for advocacy. These adaptive approaches illustrate the complexity of critical leadership in institutional environments that may not always welcome transformative change.

7.4.4 Broader Implications for Leadership in Language Program Administration

The experiences of these U.S. continent administrators illustrate that social justice-oriented leadership in second language education is both deeply impactful and precariously situated. Although committed to advancing a critical orientation, administrators' ability to enact meaningful change is often shaped—and constrained—by financial pressures, political resistance, and institutional priorities. Their strategies—whether framing social justice initiatives to align with institutional goals, building coalitions among faculty, or pursuing advocacy beyond institutional boundaries—demonstrate the adaptability required to sustain critically-oriented leadership in higher education.

A key distinction between U.S. continent and Oʻahu-based administrators emerges in their relationship to the social justice label. While many Oʻahu administrators hesitated to identify explicitly with social justice leadership—often prioritizing frameworks rooted in Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization—U.S. continent administrators more readily embraced and integrated the social justice identity into their professional roles. This contrast reflects broader political and historical contexts: whereas Oʻahu-based administrators navigate a landscape shaped by the legacies of settler colonialism and Indigenous activism, U.S. continent

administrators operate within institutional cultures more directly influenced by national DEI debates and frameworks.

Ultimately, the work of these administrators underscores both the possibilities and the limitations of critical leadership within language education. Institutional barriers remain formidable, yet strategic, adaptive leadership can carve out meaningful spaces for equity and inclusion, even in environments that are resistant to change. As higher education continues to confront shifting political, financial, and cultural pressures, the approaches shared by these administrators offer important insights into sustaining justice-oriented leadership in complex, often contested, institutional landscapes.

8. CONTEXTUAL PATHWAYS TO CRITICALLY-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP: A CLUSTER ANALYSIS OF SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

Building on the administrator narratives presented in Chapter 7, this chapter explores how second language program administrators' ability to enact socially just or critically-oriented leadership is shaped by their broader institutional and contextual environments. While previous chapters highlighted how administrators described and enacted values like democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue, the present analysis examines how these practices are situated within specific institutional conditions, including financial precarity, political risk, and mission alignment.

To understand these dynamics, I employed a cluster analysis of 35 administrators based on five binary-coded conditions: institutional type, program type, political climate, financial security, and place-based identity. The analysis revealed that administrators tended to group into three distinct clusters that reflected shared patterns in their institutional contexts and leadership orientations. These clusters offer a typology of critically-oriented leadership styles that are responsive to institutional affordances and constraints.

8.1 Cluster Analysis: Identifying Patterns in Administrator Contexts

To better understand how administrators' institutional and contextual conditions shaped their capacity for critically-oriented leadership, I first conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis. This analysis was designed to identify natural groupings among the 35 administrators based on shared structural conditions. Each participant was coded across five theoretically grounded binary variables, summarized in Table 8 below. The use of binary coding and Ward's linkage method follows guidance from Kaufman and Rousseeuw (2005), who recommend this approach for categorical data in hierarchical clustering.

Table 8

Binary-Coded Contextual Conditions Used in Cluster Analysis

Condition	Code = 1	Code = 0
Institutional Type	Institution has a social justice or cultural mission	No stated social justice or cultural mission
Program Type	Administrator works in an ESL or multilingual program	Administrator works in a foreign/world language program
Political Climate	Institution operates under high DEI risk or political resistance	Institution is politically supportive or neutral toward DEI work
Financial Security	Institution has stable or consistent funding	Institution experiences financial precarity
Place-Based Identity	Institution emphasizes Indigenous, local, or decolonial frameworks	Institution emphasizes national values or has no stated emphasis

These conditions were selected based on prior research and conceptual significance. Scholars have emphasized the influence of institutional mission and financial autonomy (Crookes, 2021; Eaton, 2013), while political climate and program type are frequently cited as mediating factors in justice work (Furman, 2012; Shields, 2010). Place-based identity was included to capture the distinct cultural and epistemological frameworks found particularly in Hawaiian and Indigenous-serving schools (Kaomea, 2009; Meyer, 2001).

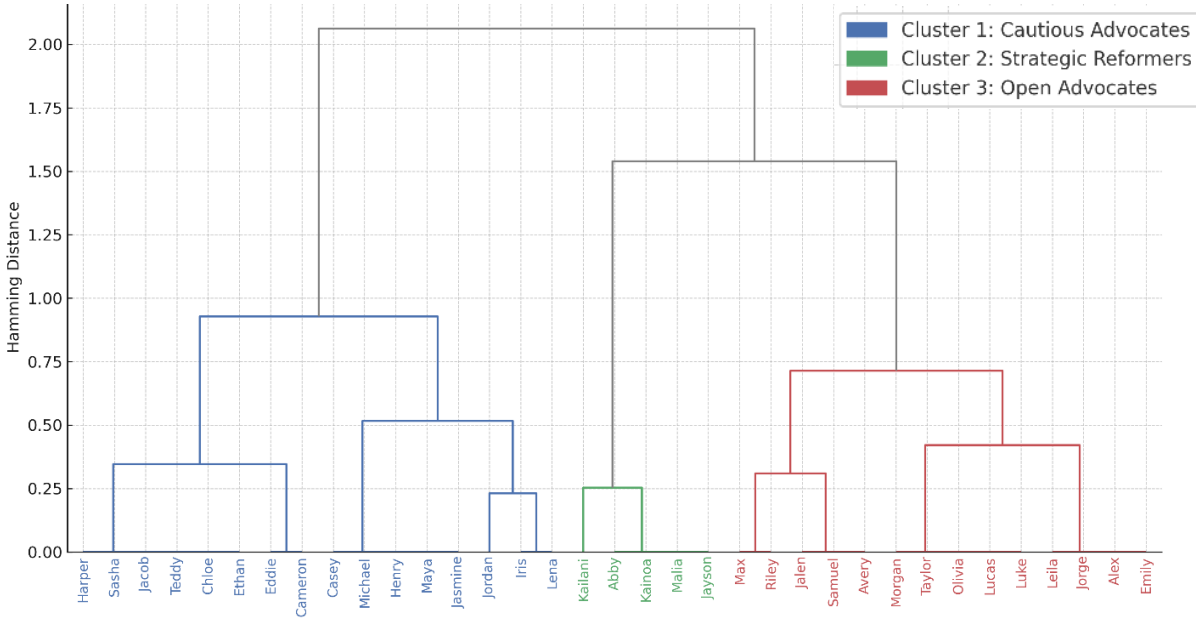
The cluster analysis used hierarchical agglomerative clustering with Ward's linkage method and a binary distance metric appropriate for dichotomous data (Kaufman & Rousseeuw, 2005). The algorithm began by treating each administrator as an individual cluster, merging the most similar ones step by step to minimize within-cluster variance. The resulting dendrogram

showed relationships among administrators, with shorter branch lengths indicating greater contextual similarity. Visual inspection and linkage distances suggested a three-cluster solution. Administrators were not grouped by the number of binary codes they shared, but by the overall pattern of their coded conditions—meaning that participants with similar combinations (e.g., 3 ones and 2 zeros) could be grouped together if their configuration closely matched others.

Once the three clusters were identified, I examined interview data and institutional profiles for each group to interpret shared patterns in leadership values, communication strategies, and equity practices. These interpretive categories confirm that administrators' leadership orientations are not random but reflect patterned responses to shared institutional, political, and financial conditions. Figure 3 illustrates the three-cluster solution, highlighting how administrators' financial, political, and institutional contexts grouped into distinct patterns that shaped their leadership orientations.

Figure 3

Hierarchical Clustering Dendrogram of SLPAs



Based on these shared conditions, the analysis revealed three distinct clusters of administrators, described below.

Cluster 1: Cautious Advocates (N = 16)

This group included administrators working in institutions with limited resources and high political risk, often without explicit social justice or cultural missions. Despite personal commitments to fairness or student-centered learning, these administrators tended to avoid politicized language or public stances. Their leadership was shaped by a need for caution, and their actions often reflected a reactive or adaptive posture. For many in this group—including several administrators based on Oʻahu—quiet advocacy and incremental change were the only viable paths within their constrained environments.

Cluster 2: Strategic Reformers (N = 5)

Administrators in this cluster typically worked in moderately supportive environments, such as charter schools or mission-aligned institutions. They faced fewer political risks and slightly more financial stability than Cluster 1 but still navigated institutional limitations. These leaders often framed their work as an extension of the school's mission, drawing on culturally grounded or community-based narratives. Their approach to justice work was strategic: aligning values with institutional expectations, securing internal buy-in, and advocating for reform through long-term positioning. These administrators practiced advocacy with intentional restraint.

Cluster 3: Open Advocates (N = 14)

This final group comprised administrators situated in well-resourced, politically supportive institutions with explicit social justice or cultural missions. These participants openly identified with social justice leadership and described integrating critical values directly into

curriculum, staffing decisions, and program structure. Their leadership style was visible, assertive, and often embedded in formal institutional processes. This openness was enabled by their contexts—both financial and political—which granted legitimacy to justice-oriented goals and allowed for more expansive and structural approaches to equity work.

These clusters are not only statistically distinct but reflect important differences in how administrators navigate financial, political, and institutional conditions. These clusters provide an important analytic frame for interpreting the diversity of leadership orientations across administrators. Rather than viewing critically-oriented leadership as a matter of individual conviction, this approach highlights how specific combinations of structural conditions tend to enable, constrain, or reshape how administrators enact critical values in practice. This framing helps move beyond individualistic interpretations of leadership, directing attention to the broader contexts that shape administrative agency. It also invites a more nuanced understanding of the situational factors that influence whether critically-oriented leadership is possible, visible, or sustainable across different institutional environments.

Table 9 below presents a visual summary of participant membership by cluster. It illustrates how individual administrators were grouped based on shared institutional conditions and briefly characterizes each group's defining features. This typology highlights how institutional resources, missions, and political climates shape the form and visibility of administrators' critically-oriented leadership. These clusters also correspond to the leadership orientations explored throughout Chapters 6 and 7, providing a cross-case lens for interpreting administrator practices in context. By integrating these groupings into the broader analysis, the cluster typology strengthens the connection between structural analysis and lived administrative

practice. It also offers a practical tool for identifying patterns of leadership that may otherwise remain obscured when viewed through isolated case studies.

Table 9

Cluster Membership by Typology

Cautious Advocates	Strategic Reformers	Open Advocates
Limited resources and political risk; cautious alignment with justice values.	Mission-driven and culturally grounded; strategic and incremental approaches.	Well-resourced and aligned institutions; explicit advocacy for social justice.
Cameron	Abby	Alex
Casey	Jayson	Avery
Chloe	Kailani	Emily
Eddie	Kainoa	Jalen
Ethan	Malia	Jorge
Harper		Leila
Henry		Lucas
Iris		Luke
Jacob		Max
Jasmine		Morgan
Jordan		Olivia
Lena		Riley
Maya		Samuel
Michael		Taylor
Sasha		
Teddy		

Note. Cluster membership reflects participants' shared institutional conditions as described in Table 8 (e.g., funding level, political climate, program type).

By naming each administrator and summarizing the structural conditions associated with their grouping, this table enables readers to trace how specific values and leadership orientations emerged within distinct institutional contexts. It also enhances analytic clarity by linking the quantitative groupings from the cluster analysis to the qualitative narratives presented in the next section.

8.2 Patterns of Practice Across Clusters

The three clusters that emerged from the analysis—Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates—reflect distinct ways administrators navigate the complex institutional and contextual terrain of second language program leadership. These groupings were identified through cluster analysis and reflect distinct institutional conditions and leadership orientations. Together, they demonstrate how institutional context shapes the enactment of justice-oriented values in practice. To deepen the analysis, this section integrates representative excerpts from participant interviews, illustrating how values like democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue are expressed, adapted, or tempered within each cluster.

8.2.1 Cluster 1: Cautious Advocates – Illustrative Cases

Administrators in Cluster 1 (Cautious Advocates) typically worked in financially precarious institutions, often under high political scrutiny. While many shared a commitment to fairness or student-centered learning, they tended to avoid language associated with national DEI frameworks. Their communication strategies tended to emphasize stability and harmony, often avoiding overt confrontation—reflecting both institutional constraints and strategic choices.

As Jasmine, a private language school director on O‘ahu, exemplified, administrators in this cluster often prioritized institutional stability over visible advocacy. Her account exemplifies

the pragmatic stance common among participants in this group.

Excerpt #39

J: We try to do the be:st we can with what we have. I wouldn't say we >have the luxury of< launching bi:g initiatives. It's more like— what's the most immediate need, and how do we me:et it without rocking the boat too much?

For others, like Iris, the challenge was not a lack of values but navigating institutional receptivity. Iris, who worked in a private university, noted:

Excerpt #40

I: There are convers:ations I'd like to ha↑ve, but (.) I'm not sure how they'd la:nd with everyone. I've found it more effective to make sma:ll changes that align with our values rather than like- >push for< (.) swe:eping changes.

These administrators illustrate a model of quiet, adaptive leadership—one shaped more by constraint than by public advocacy. Jasmine's focus on "the most immediate need" and Iris's cautious approach to initiating dialogue both reflect the adaptive pragmatism characteristic of Cluster 1. Rather than pursuing high-profile initiatives, these administrators emphasized incremental change and relational trust, shaped by limited resources and uncertain political climates. Their leadership practices were not absent of values, but deliberately calibrated to fit within the boundaries of institutional viability.

8.2.2 Cluster 2: Strategic Reformers – Illustrative Cases

In Cluster 2 (Strategic Reformers), administrators described working within moderately supportive contexts, often charter schools or mission-aligned institutions with place-based cultural commitments. Their leadership strategies were deeply values-driven, but also attuned to institutional realities.

Abby, a charter school administrator, described how her decisions were grounded in her program's community-based mission:

Excerpt #41

A: So, >our mission is to< fo:ster more global engagement through our bilingual language program, wh:ile ALSO embra:cing the cultural ri:chness of our community. Actually, this mission impacts ev:erything I do (2) whether it's >curriculum planning, teacher training, or engaging withs students< (3)So-like (.) each decision I make is guided by the goal of en:suring that our students grow (.) not just acade:mically but also as (.) cultu::rally aware global citizens.

Kailani offered a parallel but more explicitly strategic view, explaining how she balances advocacy with institutional expectations:

Excerpt #42

K: Um, how does that impact my work? It means I >have to be< strategic. I have to frame program development in ways that (.)umm align with the university's financial interests, while still finding ways to ce:nter equity work. I have to >you know< ba:lance things and figure out how to push for what's right withOUT putting the program in a (.) vulnerable position.

Abby's alignment with her school's cultural mission and Kailani's deliberate framing of advocacy efforts both reflect the strategic posture shared by administrators in this cluster. Rather than confronting institutional norms directly, these participants described leveraging mission language and internal logics to advance equity goals over time. Their leadership was characterized by careful positioning—driven by values, but shaped by the constraints of institutional buy-in and risk management.

8.2.3 Cluster 3: Open Advocates – Illustrative Cases

Administrators in Cluster 3 (Open Advocates) worked in well-resourced institutions with explicit social justice or cultural missions and relatively low political resistance. These administrators described their work in direct terms, linking pedagogy and program design to justice-oriented goals.

Avery, who worked in a public university setting, exemplified this alignment:

Excerpt #43

A: I guess the things that dr::ive me (.) are fairness a:::nd (2) equity (.) yeah. So, yeah—if we are in a meeting and (.) somebody's pushing a top-down policy >or idea< that marginalizes students of color (.) or multilingual students, I will speak up. That's what I think social justice requires of me in this role.

Luke, a university-affiliated program director, echoed this sentiment but extended it to structural critique:

Excerpt #44

L: Actually(.) >just my opinion< but I think if you're not centering jus:tice >and a general level of respect< in the struc:ture of your program, then I don't think you're actually doing go:od pedagogy. >In language education< we're shaping how peo::ple uhh (2) navi:gate society. That's a responsibility (.) and I take that se:riously.

Avery's readiness to speak out and Luke's insistence on embedding justice into program structure reflect a leadership style grounded in both conviction and institutional support. Rather than navigating resistance, these administrators leveraged institutional alignment to enact visible,

unapologetic forms of critical leadership. Their ability to act publicly and assertively was enabled by environments that legitimized, rather than constrained, their values.

Across all three clusters, the form that justice-oriented leadership took was deeply shaped by institutional conditions. The next section draws out cross-cutting patterns that illuminate how financial, political, and cultural contexts converge to shape critically-oriented practice.

8.3 Cross-Cluster Patterns and Interpretive Synthesis

While each cluster reflects a distinct combination of institutional and contextual factors, several cross-cutting patterns illuminate how social justice leadership is shaped—not only by administrator values—but by the environments in which those values are enacted. These leadership patterns underscore the importance of viewing critically-oriented leadership as a negotiated practice: one that is enabled, constrained, or redirected by the structural realities of a given institutional setting. These patterns reflect how combinations of institutional mission, financial stability, and political climate influenced administrators' ability to act visibly or strategically.

One of the most significant differentiators across clusters was financial security. Administrators in well-funded institutions (especially those in Cluster 3) described being able to take public stances on controversial issues, integrate justice goals into hiring and curriculum, and maintain long-term initiatives. In contrast, administrators in financially precarious contexts (especially Cluster 1) often focused on meeting basic program needs or protecting staff from burnout, rather than launching new equity-driven projects. As one participant noted, "we do what we can with what we have," reflecting a sense of constraint that was both material and ideological.

Institutional mission also played a critical role. Administrators in Clusters 2 and 3 were more likely to describe alignment between their own values and the explicit goals of their program or school. This alignment allowed them to frame their work as legitimate and mission-driven, even when their strategies remained cautious. In place-based institutions, particularly Hawaiian charter schools, participants described grounding their leadership in cultural and community goals, offering an alternative to nationally framed DEI discourse. This reinforces the idea that critical leadership can emerge from localized values and does not always require alignment with standardized social justice terminology.

Meanwhile, political climate interacted with both funding and mission in shaping how administrators chose to act. Those in politically supportive or low-risk environments had greater flexibility to be outspoken, while others described working "under the radar" to avoid administrative or community pushback. Even among those with strong commitments to equity, political context often determined the visibility of their leadership. Participants in Cluster 2, for example, commonly described “framing” their efforts to fit institutional logics—advocating for change while staying within perceived boundaries of acceptability.

Importantly, the presence of constraint does not equate to the absence of impact. Administrators practicing quiet, adaptive leadership often created significant change through informal channels, relational trust, and incremental shifts in culture or practice. These approaches—while less visible—were no less intentional or grounded in critical values.

Taken together, these patterns show that critically-oriented leadership in second language program administration is not reducible to individual disposition or ideology. Instead, it is a form of contextual practice—shaped by the interplay of financial, political, and cultural conditions. Each cluster reveals a version of this practice: from quiet adaptation, to strategic alignment, to

public advocacy. Recognizing these patterns challenges one-size-fits-all models of equity leadership and requires closer attention to how institutional contexts shape the form, visibility, and sustainability of justice-oriented leadership

8.4 Reflections and Key Takeaways from the Cluster Analysis

This chapter has demonstrated that critically-oriented leadership among second language program administrators is not simply a matter of individual conviction or pedagogical philosophy. Rather, it emerges through dynamic and often fragile alignments between administrator values and institutional realities. By grouping administrators based on shared contextual conditions, the cluster analysis revealed three distinct typologies of leadership: Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates. Each reflects a different configuration of support, risk, and opportunity.

A key takeaway is that financial stability and institutional mission together appear to create the most enabling environments for administrators to enact justice-oriented practices. Those working in well-resourced, mission-aligned programs were more likely to describe their leadership in terms of visibility, public advocacy, and structural transformation. However, the absence of one of these elements—especially stable funding—often limited what could be said or done, regardless of the administrator's personal commitments.

Another important finding is that political context and institutional expectations shape not only how much risk administrators can take, but also how they talk about their work. Many participants described adopting pragmatic or strategic frames—not to obscure their values, but to preserve their programs and maintain trust within their institutions. In some settings, this involved adapting justice language to local community frameworks; in others, it meant choosing when and where to speak.

Finally, the findings suggest that quiet, incremental leadership should not be dismissed as less critical or impactful. In contexts where visibility comes at a cost, administrators demonstrated resilience and ingenuity in advancing values-aligned work through backchannels, partnerships, and iterative change. These forms of leadership are often underrecognized, but they are no less vital to the work of enacting equity in language education.

The analysis in this chapter affirms that social justice leadership is an adaptive, situated practice—shaped by the institutional, financial, and political ecologies in which it unfolds. Rather than seeking a singular model of advocacy, this chapter calls for a broader recognition of the diverse ways administrators lead for equity, both visibly and strategically, across a range of conditions.

9. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. The discussion focuses on how critically-oriented second language program administrators conceptualize their guiding principles and values, how these values are implemented in practice, and how they manifest in decision-making processes within diverse institutional contexts. Specifically, the chapter addresses three key research questions:

1. How do critically-oriented second language program administrators refer to any guiding principles, beliefs, rules of thumb, or values that may guide their work?
2. To what extent, if at all, do critically-oriented second language program administrators implement their critical values in their professional space (location, institution)?
3. How do critical values manifest in language used in these professional spaces? How do critical values manifest in decision making (and action) in these professional spaces?

By exploring these questions, this chapter synthesizes the findings, examines their implications for second language program administration, and considers how these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership, decision-making, and institutional dynamics in language education.

9.1 Answering RQ #1: Guiding Principles, Beliefs, and Values

9.1.1 How Administrators Describe Their Guiding Values

Administrators in this study consistently referred to several guiding values that shaped their professional practices. Across both O‘ahu and U.S. continent contexts, democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue emerged as shared points of reference. While the articulation of these values varied based on institutional context and leadership style, they served as anchors for how administrators navigated their roles. These guiding values were expressed across all three

administrator clusters (Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates), though the degree and form of expression varied depending on institutional context. For example, while democratic ideals were emphasized broadly, their enactment differed—ranging from cautious adaptation to visible structural transformation—based on contextual affordances. This emphasis on values as guiding anchors aligns with Begley's (2000) view of leadership as fundamentally shaped by personal and professional belief systems, and with Osborn's (2006) recognition that language educators bring deeply held ethical commitments to their work—particularly around inclusion and respect.

Oʻahu-based administrators often emphasized democratic decision-making as a core element of their leadership. This pattern was especially evident among Strategic Reformers and Open Advocates, who often had institutional missions or cultural narratives that explicitly supported democratic approaches. They described their work as grounded in collaboration, trust-building, and inclusive processes. Decision-making was characterized as a collective endeavor in which input from faculty, staff, and students was actively sought. Many administrators emphasized that this participatory approach was not simply procedural, but aimed at fostering a sense of shared ownership and community within their programs.

Action-orientation was also frequently cited as a critical value—particularly in relation to addressing challenges within the program. Several administrators noted that values must be applied rather than merely stated. This included taking concrete steps to address staff concerns, budget limitations, or student needs. Importantly, action was framed not as reactive problem-solving, but as a sustained, strategic effort to improve program structures and outcomes over time.

Critical dialogue was likewise identified as an essential dimension of leadership. Administrators described regularly engaging in reflective conversations—with colleagues, staff, or themselves—as a way to evaluate whether their decisions aligned with their values. These dialogues were often forward-looking, serving as tools for planning and professional growth. However, in more politically or financially constrained environments (e.g., Cautious Advocates), this dialogue was often internal or relational, rather than institutionalized. Critical dialogue was framed as a method for maintaining transparency, encouraging accountability, and supporting the evolution of both leadership practice and institutional culture.

9.1.2 Implications for Administrator Development and Leadership Practice

The central values identified in this study—*democracy*, *action-orientation*, and *critical dialogue*—offer meaningful implications for the field of language program administration. Administrators who prioritize these values are well positioned to build inclusive and participatory environments where faculty, staff, and students engage meaningfully in shaping institutional practices. These findings echo the foundational tenets of critical pedagogy, which emphasizes dialogue, reflection, and collective decision-making in pursuit of equity and justice. Freire (1973, 1974) emphasized that education must begin with a commitment to dialogue and collective action, and Pennycook (2001) similarly argued that critical language pedagogy depends on reflective practice and responsiveness to broader social conditions. The administrators in this study appear to internalize those commitments through the daily enactment of democratic and dialogic leadership.

In terms of professional development, these values suggest a need for sustained training that supports reflective leadership, which was a point echoed by several participants who expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in value-centered decision-making or who

described learning on the job due to a lack of formal preparation. This observation aligns with Bartolomé's (2004) argument that educational leadership development must foster ideological clarity and critical awareness—not just procedural competence—if it hopes to support equity-oriented practice. It is not enough to implement democratic practices mechanically; administrators must have opportunities to examine how their leadership aligns with broader goals related to equity, inclusion, and social justice. Training that emphasizes collaborative leadership, action-driven problem-solving, and critical reflection can help leaders engage with the complexities of diverse institutional settings while maintaining a values-based approach.

Embedding these values into the professional development of both administrators and educators can foster environments that are more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of multilingual learners. Rather than promoting top-down administrative models, such development efforts can support shared responsibility, collective inquiry, and leadership that is oriented toward continuous improvement.

These findings also point to a broader professional development gap: many administrators transitioned into their roles from teaching backgrounds with limited formal training in administration, suggesting the need for leadership preparation that bridges pedagogical and organizational responsibilities. The cluster typology introduced in Chapter 8 underscores the need for differentiated professional development pathways. While some administrators require support in navigating institutional risk, others may benefit from guidance in leveraging institutional mission to advance justice-oriented leadership.

9.1.3 Translating Guiding Values into Institutional Practices

In practical terms, the application of these values points to several key shifts at the institutional level. First, policies that support collaborative decision-making should be

prioritized, especially given that many participants described shared governance, open communication, or staff input as central to their leadership practices. This might include routine staff meetings with open agendas, feedback loops that inform program planning, or structured opportunities for cross-role dialogue among teachers, administrators, and students.

Second, action-orientation can be advanced by encouraging administrators to lead focused initiatives tied to clear values—such as improving retention through more inclusive pedagogy or responding to teacher workload concerns through equitable scheduling practices. Importantly, these actions must be framed as part of a larger, ongoing effort to align institutional practices with core values.

Finally, critical dialogue can be supported by building in time and space for reflection. This might take the form of facilitated retreats, value-based planning sessions, or professional learning communities where leaders and teachers engage in sustained inquiry. Such practices not only build stronger internal cultures but also ensure that values remain visible, discussed, and continuously refined.

The findings suggest that institutions committed to equity must move beyond surface-level commitments and invest in structures that enable values-driven leadership. Democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue cannot remain abstract ideals—they must be practiced and supported at every level of language program administration. As Crookes (2013) reminds us, critically-oriented leadership requires not only clarity of values but also institutional structures that allow those values to take form in collective action.

9.2 Answering RQ #2: Implementing Critical Values in Practice

9.2.1 How Critical Values Are Put into Practice Across Institutional Contexts

Administrators in this study implemented critical values in varied but consistent ways, often shaped by the specific constraints and affordances of their institutions. While many O‘ahu-based administrators—especially those identified in the Cautious Advocates and Strategic Reformers clusters—did not explicitly label their work as “social justice-oriented,” their practices consistently reflected the values of democratic leadership, action-orientation, and critical dialogue.

Democratic practices were most visible in the ways administrators involved stakeholders in decision-making. O‘ahu-based administrators regularly emphasized open communication with staff and students, often through structured meetings and informal feedback channels. This participatory leadership style served to build trust and foster shared ownership of program development.

The degree to which these values could be enacted, however, varied considerably by institutional context. Administrators in university-affiliated programs on the U.S. continent generally reported greater institutional support and access to resources that allowed for more explicit integration of critical values. This finding aligns with Crookes (2013), who argues that institutional conditions either constrain or enable the enactment of critically-oriented practices—and that administrative environments often dictate what is seen as feasible, risky, or professionally acceptable. In contrast, several O‘ahu-based administrators—despite strong personal commitments—operated in political and institutional climates that discouraged overt references to social justice. This strategic adaptation was especially common among

administrators categorized as Cautious Advocates, whose institutional conditions limited the overt articulation of critical values despite strong personal commitments.

Nonetheless, across both settings, administrators actively engaged in values-driven leadership. The differences were less about whether values were enacted and more about how they were expressed and framed within particular institutional cultures.

9.2.2 Institutional Factors That Shape Critical Leadership

These findings suggest that critically-oriented leadership is not simply a matter of personal will but is deeply influenced by institutional conditions. This reflects Foster's (1999) critique that educational leadership is often caught between bureaucratic expectations and transformative intentions, requiring leaders to navigate contradictions between their values and their institutional roles. Participants working in well-resourced, mission-aligned institutions frequently described having the structural support to integrate critical values into daily practice—citing access to funding, administrative buy-in, or an explicit DEI mandate as key enablers. In these settings, critical leadership was not only possible but often expected, allowing administrators to enact their values more openly and sustainably.

Conversely, administrators in under-resourced or politically sensitive environments often face additional burdens in implementing justice-oriented leadership. In such contexts, administrators must translate their values into language and actions that align with broader institutional goals—such as student success, retention, or community engagement—without losing sight of their core commitments.

This highlights an important implication for professional development: training for language program administrators should prepare them to navigate not only pedagogical challenges but also the political and institutional landscapes in which they work. Critically-

oriented leadership depends on the ability to align values with organizational language and priorities, making it crucial for leaders to be skilled in both advocacy and institutional negotiation. Eaton (2013) similarly emphasizes that ESL program leaders often walk a tightrope between revenue generation and student-centered values, reinforcing the need for administrators to adapt equity commitments to their institutional constraints. However, the feasibility of such alignment varies considerably, particularly in politically resistant environments where DEI language or initiatives may be met with skepticism or institutional pushback. As seen in the cluster analysis, administrators in these settings often belonged to the Cautious Advocates group, whose leadership approaches were shaped by resource constraints and institutional conservatism.

9.2.3 Strategic Approaches to Enacting Critical Values in Practice

Practically, the study points to several ways administrators can implement critical values even within constrained environments. One key strategy is reframing social justice practices in ways that align with institutional priorities. For example, an administrator might advocate for faculty workshops on inclusive teaching by linking them to improved student engagement or retention, rather than explicitly framing them as equity-driven initiatives.

Building coalitions with like-minded colleagues and external partners also emerged as a valuable approach. In institutions where systemic change is difficult, collective action can provide legitimacy, protection, and increased leverage for advancing critical values.

Professional development programs should also emphasize concrete tools for navigating institutional complexity. This includes training on how to advocate for policy changes, frame equity work strategically, and respond to political pushback while maintaining alignment with democratic and justice-oriented goals.

In sum, the findings demonstrate that administrators do not need to explicitly adopt the language of social justice to practice its principles. Values such as collaboration, responsiveness, and strategic action can be expressed in institutionally resonant ways, allowing administrators to sustain meaningful change even in less supportive environments.

9.3 Answering RQ #3: Manifestation of Critical Values in Language and Decision-Making

9.3.1 How Critical Values Surface in Everyday Discourse and Institutional Action

Administrators in this study often expressed their values through the language they used and the decision-making processes they described. Across both Oʻahu and U.S. continent contexts, critically-oriented values—particularly democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue—were embedded in how administrators framed their leadership and how they approached institutional challenges. These practices were particularly characteristic of administrators in the Cautious Advocate and Strategic Reformer clusters, who emphasized participatory dialogue as a means of building trust while working within institutional constraints.

Oʻahu-based administrators frequently described their leadership in dialogic terms and emphasized inclusive decision-making. Many shared examples of holding open forums, facilitating ongoing staff discussions, or soliciting input from students and teachers. These practices reflected not only a desire for participation but also a commitment to reflection and transparency as a regular part of leadership. This resonates with Freire's (1974) concept of dialogue as both a method and a goal of emancipatory leadership, where communication is grounded in trust, reciprocity, and co-constructed meaning.

Administrators in the Open Advocate cluster, particularly those on the U.S. continent who explicitly identified with social justice leadership, were more likely to frame their decision-making within the discourse of equity, inclusion, and critical pedagogy. For these administrators,

language was often a strategic and intentional tool for institutionalizing values: decisions were discussed in terms of who would be most affected, how policies might support marginalized students, or how program practices aligned with larger justice-oriented goals. Pennycook (2001) emphasizes that language is never neutral; how administrators frame their decisions reflects deeper ideological commitments and can either reinforce or challenge institutional norms.

Across all clusters, action-orientation surfaced as a shared theme in how administrators described their responses to challenges. Many participants underscored the need to act—even incrementally—rather than wait for ideal conditions. While some administrators pursued larger structural reforms, most described small, pragmatic steps that improved daily operations or addressed immediate concerns—highlighting that action-orientation, in practice, often reflected sustained effort rather than transformative change. Decision-making was portrayed as an ongoing process of identifying issues, testing solutions, and refining practices in response to feedback. This emphasis on responsiveness grounded their values in daily operations, even when formal support or recognition was limited.

9.3.2 Implications for Language Use and Institutional Framing

The findings highlight the role of discourse in both expressing and enacting critical values. How administrators talk about their work—whether in formal settings or informal conversations—shapes the institutional culture around leadership, inclusion, and justice. Language becomes a mechanism not just for communication but for framing priorities, legitimizing decisions, and cultivating collective meaning. This mirrors Shor's (1992) claim that educator language, especially in leadership roles, functions as a tool for either participatory empowerment or bureaucratic compliance.

Action-orientation also plays a crucial role in sustaining values over time. Rather than presenting critical leadership as abstract or idealized, administrators in this study demonstrated a pragmatic orientation. They often engaged in continuous decision-making processes that reflected a willingness to try, revise, and adapt. This pragmatic commitment was especially important in contexts where structural or political limitations—such as those faced by Cautious Advocates—made transformative change difficult to implement all at once. Conversely, Open Advocates were more likely to describe direct policy shifts or institutional reforms, often because they were positioned in supportive environments that rewarded visible equity work.

These findings suggest that leadership development must focus not only on the content of critical values but also on how those values are communicated and operationalized. Leaders must learn to frame their decisions in inclusive and equity-conscious ways, and they must be trained to recognize how everyday language practices can support or undermine institutional goals related to justice and inclusion.

9.3.3 Supporting Reflective and Dialogic Leadership Practices

In practical terms, these findings point to the need for professional development that strengthens both discursive and action-based leadership skills. Administrators should be encouraged to adopt reflective, inclusive language when articulating their goals, priorities, and decisions—whether in faculty meetings, emails, program documents, or classroom observations. Training can include workshops on value-aligned communication, framing difficult decisions with transparency, and using language to build institutional buy-in for equity-focused initiatives.

Action-oriented leadership can also be supported through goal-setting frameworks and implementation tools that encourage incremental progress. For administrators in less supportive contexts (such as Cautious Advocates), this might involve cultivating informal networks and

pursuing small-scale improvements. For those in more mission-aligned institutions (such as Open Advocates), it may involve strategic initiatives that reshape structures more directly. In either case, support systems should help administrators translate values into sustainable practice.

Finally, institutions should consider embedding inclusive decision-making structures directly into program operations. This could include cross-role working groups, rotating leadership opportunities, and scheduled opportunities for collective reflection. Such structures not only reinforce democratic practices but also ensure that critical values become part of the day-to-day life of the program, rather than resting solely on the disposition of individual leaders.

9.4 Synthesis of Findings: The Interplay of Values, Context, and Leadership Practices

The findings from this study suggest that democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue function as central pillars in the professional lives of critically-oriented second language program administrators. However, how these values are expressed and enacted varies significantly depending on the institutional, financial, and political conditions in which administrators operate.

To make sense of these variations, the cluster analysis presented in Chapter 8 offered a typology of three administrator groups—Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates—each shaped by distinct configurations of structural conditions. This typology provides a comparative frame for interpreting how contextual affordances and constraints shape the enactment of critical values.

Administrators in Cluster 3 (Open Advocates), most often located in well-resourced, mission-aligned university programs on the U.S. continent, were more likely to articulate their work explicitly in terms of social justice leadership. With access to stable funding and institutional legitimacy, they embedded critical values into program structures and public

discourse. By contrast, administrators in Cluster 1 (Cautious Advocates), many of whom were based in O‘ahu public institutions or charter schools, faced more pronounced constraints. While they shared similar commitments, their approaches were more cautious—relying on quiet adaptation, incremental action, and strategic framing to sustain their values within restrictive environments.

Across all clusters, administrators demonstrated a shared commitment to inclusive and responsive leadership. Regardless of whether participants used the language of “social justice,” many enacted democratic practices, addressed institutional challenges proactively, and engaged in critical dialogue. These findings reinforce the idea that critically-oriented leadership is not a static model but a dynamic, context-sensitive practice negotiated within specific institutional ecologies.

The analysis also underscores the importance of institutional support. Administrators with access to structural enablers—such as equity-oriented missions, funding for DEI initiatives, and political cover—were better able to sustain public-facing leadership aligned with critical values. Those without such supports often relied on informal strategies or reframed their advocacy in institutionally acceptable terms. These differences were clearly reflected in the cluster analysis results, suggesting that institutional conditions do not merely mediate critical leadership—they actively shape how it is understood and expressed.

Finally, this study shows that critical leadership is not dependent on ideal conditions. Even in contexts marked by risk or instability, administrators made principled, pragmatic decisions that aligned with their values. This finding challenges narrow definitions of advocacy and calls for a broader recognition of how values-driven leadership unfolds—quietly or publicly, incrementally or structurally—across a range of institutional settings.

10. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored how critically-oriented second language program administrators enact their professional values—particularly democracy, action-orientation, and critical dialogue—within varied institutional settings. Drawing on interview, survey, and limited observational data from administrators across Oʻahu and the U.S. continent, the study examined how these values are conceptualized, implemented, and expressed in leadership practices. In doing so, it has highlighted the complex negotiations administrators undertake as they navigate institutional constraints while striving to maintain a commitment to socially responsive and inclusive leadership.

10.1 Summary of Findings

This study found that critically-oriented second language program administrators consistently drew on a set of core values—*democracy*, *action-orientation*, *and critical dialogue*—to guide their work. These values informed how administrators approached leadership, interacted with colleagues and students, and made decisions within their institutional contexts.

10.1.1 Guiding Values

Administrators described their leadership as rooted in participatory decision-making, trust-building, and inclusive dialogue. Across both Oʻahu and U.S. continent settings, democratic engagement was seen not only as a leadership ideal but as a necessary response to the complexities of language program administration. Action-orientation emerged as a complementary value, highlighting administrators' commitment to taking concrete, often incremental steps to address structural challenges. Critical dialogue, meanwhile, provided a

reflective space through which administrators examined their choices and aligned their decisions with broader social and institutional goals.

10.1.2 Implementation of Critical Values

While core values were shared, their implementation varied depending on institutional resources and political conditions. U.S. continent administrators in well-funded, mission-aligned institutions were often able to openly integrate social justice frameworks into their programs. In contrast, many O‘ahu-based administrators—particularly in more politically or culturally sensitive environments—pursued similar goals through reframing or quiet advocacy. These adaptations underscore the importance of context in shaping how critically-oriented values are enacted.

10.1.3 Manifestation in Language and Decision-Making

Values were also reflected in the language administrators used and the decision-making processes they described. Some administrators explicitly used the language of social justice and equity, while others embedded these values in more localized or pragmatic terms. Across cases, decision-making was shaped by a balance of conviction and constraint—where administrators framed their choices in ways that aligned with institutional expectations while still advancing inclusive and democratic practices.

Together, these findings point to the nuanced and context-sensitive ways that second language program administrators express and enact critically-oriented values. Rather than operating from a fixed model of social justice leadership, participants demonstrated flexibility, creativity, and resilience in aligning their commitments with the institutional landscapes in which they worked.

10.1.4 Cluster Typology and Contextual Variability

In Chapter 8, a cluster analysis identified three administrator typologies—Cautious Advocates, Strategic Reformers, and Open Advocates—each shaped by shared structural conditions. This typology emerged as one of the most actionable insights of the study, offering a framework for interpreting how administrators' values were enacted differently depending on institutional mission, political risk, and financial support. While all participants shared core values, the form and visibility of their leadership were shaped by the resources and constraints of their professional environments. This cluster framework provides a useful comparative lens for understanding how administrators' values were enacted differently depending on institutional mission, political risk, and financial support.

10.2 Implications for Practice

The findings of this study carry several important implications for second language program administrators, particularly those seeking to integrate critically-oriented values into their work. They suggest that social justice leadership is most sustainable when supported by institutional structures, but can also emerge through strategic adaptation, coalition-building, and values-driven decision-making.

One central implication concerns policy development. Administrators in values-based roles may need to advocate for institutional policies that prioritize equity and inclusion—not only at the programmatic level but also within broader institutional planning. This includes promoting diverse faculty hiring, embedding critical pedagogy into curriculum development, and forging partnerships that expand access to language education. Aligning these efforts with strategic priorities such as student retention, enrollment growth, or accreditation outcomes can help ensure their longevity.

Equally important is the role of professional development. To sustain critical leadership, administrators should foster learning environments that promote reflective practice, collaborative leadership, and culturally responsive teaching. This requires more than one-time trainings; it involves ongoing support for educators and staff to engage with critical pedagogy and to develop the confidence and capacity to navigate institutional constraints. Administrators, too, benefit from spaces for reflection—where leadership practices can be re-evaluated in light of shifting contexts and long-term goals. These findings also suggest that professional development should be tailored to administrators' contexts. For example, Cautious Advocates may benefit from strategies for institutional negotiation and coalition-building, while Open Advocates might focus on sustaining structural equity initiatives and mentoring others. The cluster typology provides a practical tool for designing context-sensitive leadership support.

Finally, the findings reinforce the value of democratic and action-oriented leadership. While institutional resistance is a reality for many, administrators who cultivate participatory decision-making structures—such as open forums, shared governance committees, or faculty working groups—can foster stronger relationships and greater buy-in across stakeholders. Action-orientation, when applied incrementally and strategically, enables leaders to respond to challenges while maintaining alignment with their values. Even in constrained environments, small, consistent actions can contribute to a more critically-oriented program culture.

Taken together, these implications point to a model of leadership that is both principled and pragmatic—grounded in core values, but responsive to institutional realities. Supporting this kind of leadership requires not only individual commitment but also systemic investment in professional development, participatory structures, and equity-centered policy frameworks.

10.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into critically-oriented leadership in second language program administration, several limitations should be acknowledged.

10.3.1 Sample Size and Diversity

The participant pool, though diverse in professional context, was limited in size and geography, focusing primarily on administrators in O‘ahu and on the U.S. continent. The mainland sample, in particular, was relatively small and did not capture the full range of regional variation likely present across different U.S. states. As a result, the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of administrators working in other regions, institutional types (such as community colleges or K–12 public schools), or international settings. Future research with broader sampling would allow for deeper exploration of how critical values are enacted across a wider range of contexts.

10.3.2 Institutional Constraints

This study primarily relied on individual administrators’ perspectives. While these insights are central to understanding leadership values and practices, the study did not examine institutional policies, budgets, or governance structures in detail. A deeper analysis of these structural elements—alongside administrator narratives—could further illuminate how systemic conditions shape or constrain values-driven leadership.

10.3.3 Observational Data Limitations

Although observations added depth to the study, they were limited in scope due to participant availability and institutional access. The short-term nature of the observations restricted the ability to capture longitudinal leadership patterns or institutional shifts over time.

More robust ethnographic or longitudinal research could provide a fuller picture of how critically-oriented leadership evolves within complex educational systems.

Taken together, these limitations highlight opportunities for future research to deepen and broaden the understanding of social justice leadership in second language education.

10.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This study opens several pathways for future inquiry into the leadership practices of second language program administrators, particularly those working from a social justice orientation. One important direction is the need for longitudinal research that examines how critically-oriented leadership develops over time. Tracking administrators' efforts across months or years would allow researchers to capture how values-based decision-making evolves, how institutional dynamics shift, and what forms of advocacy prove sustainable in the long term.

Further research should also expand the geographic and institutional diversity of participants. Including administrators from underrepresented settings—such as community colleges, adult education centers, or international language programs—would offer a broader perspective on how critical values are enacted in varied political, cultural, and economic contexts. This could help identify patterns specific to low-resource environments or institutions outside the U.S. continent.

In addition, future studies could explore the relationship between social justice leadership and institutional change. Investigating how administrators advocate for reforms, navigate resistance, and influence policy would deepen understanding of the levers available to those working within complex bureaucracies. This research could illuminate not only what individual leaders do, but how structural change can be initiated or supported over time.

Another promising area involves examining faculty and student perspectives on critical leadership. While this study centered on administrators' voices, future work could explore how their efforts are perceived and received by others in the institutional ecosystem. Understanding how critically-oriented leadership is enacted, supported, or challenged at the grassroots level would offer a more holistic view of its impact.

Future research might also expand or refine the cluster typology introduced in this study, either by applying it to other institutional contexts (e.g., community colleges, adult ESL programs, international settings) or by testing its relevance across time through longitudinal tracking. Doing so could reveal whether these categories hold over time or shift as administrators move through different roles and conditions.

Together, these future research directions would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how second language program administrators can lead with integrity and purpose in pursuit of equity and justice—across contexts, over time, and in collaboration with their institutional communities.

10.5 Conclusion

This dissertation has examined how second language program administrators enact critically-oriented values—*democracy*, *action-orientation*, and *critical dialogue*—within complex and varied institutional landscapes. Through interviews, surveys, and limited observations across Oʻahu and the U.S. continent, the study has highlighted how administrators balance their commitments to social justice with the realities of political, financial, and cultural constraints.

Rather than applying a fixed model of critical leadership, administrators demonstrated flexibility and intention, using language, relationships, and strategic decision-making to advance

equity in ways that were both principled and pragmatic. Their work reflected not only personal conviction but also a deep awareness of institutional dynamics and the need for coalition-building, incremental change, and reflective practice.

The findings point to a central insight: critically-oriented leadership in second language education is not defined by labels, but by how administrators act, adapt, and engage with their communities. As the field continues to evolve, administrators who hold social justice values must be equipped to navigate institutional complexity while remaining grounded in inclusive, participatory practices.

Though the path forward is not without barriers, this study affirms that it is possible to lead with integrity—even in constrained environments—when values are not simply stated, but woven into the everyday work of program development, decision-making, and dialogue. The future of critically-oriented administration depends on sustained efforts to bridge the gap between what we believe and what we do—and on the collective imagination to keep pushing that work forward.

Appendix A
Original Survey Materials

Second Language Program Administrators: Values and Practices

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

* Indicates required question

1. Could you briefly describe your career history in education? *
2. How long have you been in your current position and what is your title?
3. Does your program have a mission statement? If so, what is it? *

   For you, as an administrator, what are its most important contents or elements? *
4. Could you describe a challenge that you faced in your position and how you solved it?
5. Among the following, which do you consider to be core principles/values in your role as an administrator? *

   - [ ] Empathy
   - [ ] Fairness
   - [ ] Respect
   - [ ] Social Justice
   - [ ] Sincerity
   - [ ] Loyalty
   - [ ] Happiness

6. Do you have any other ideas that are missing from the choices above?
7. Out of your top choices, could you briefly explain why you have prioritized those over others? *

Appendix B
Revised Survey Materials

Second Language Program Administrators: Values and Practices

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

* Indicates required question

1. Could you briefly describe your career history in education? *
2. How long have you been in your current position and what is your title?
3. Does your school have a mission statement? If so, what is it? *

   For you, as an administrator, what are its most important contents or elements?
4. Think of a challenge that you faced in your current position. Describe your decision-making process when approaching problem-solving.
5. Among the following, which do you consider to be core principles/values in your role as an administrator? *

   Check all that apply (up to 4)

   - Empathy
   - Fairness
   - Critical Dialogue
   - Sincerity
   - Loyalty
   - Happiness
   - Action-orientation
   - Democracy

6. Do you have any other ideas that are missing from the choices above?
7. Out of your top choices, could you briefly explain why you have prioritized those over others? *

Appendix C
Interview Guide

Pre-Observation

1. Tell me about how you became interested in education.

2. How would you describe the mission statement of your school? How does the mission statement impact decisions made in your day-to-day duties?

3. How did you become involved in an administrative role? Did you seek it out or was it a gradual process?

4. You must have faced some challenges over the years in being an administrator. Do any stand out for you? Let's begin with the first challenge you mentioned:

   -What was it?
   -How did you manage it?
   -Any other challenges you would like to talk about?

5. Generally, what have been some high points during your employment? Any low points that you would be willing to share?

6. Based on our discussion thus far, how would you define your values in your work as an administrator? How do your values impact your ability to make decisions or resolve conflicts? Would you say that your values are in line with the school's mission statement?

7. Is there anything that you wish you'd learned before you began work as an administrator?

Post-Observation

1. How did you feel about the meeting? Did things go the way you expected?

2. Were you able to discuss everything you wanted today? Why/Why not?

3. What do you think have been some challenges in leading staff meetings in the past?

4. Is there any advice you might like to share with yourself before the next meeting?

Appendix D
Observation Guide of SLPAs in Staff Meetings

The observation guide[5] includes a guide for researcher's notes on the administrator meeting setting (i.e., locations of furniture, chairs, boards, participant, students), the interactions between focal administrator and other participants which might encourage observable critical values, and the macro-context of the school environment, and ways it might support or constrain the participant's teaching towards social justice practices.

1. Background information

a. Date of observation: _____ Participant: _____

b. Start time: _____ End time: _____

2. Context: Setting and agenda

a. Description of the meeting observed

b. Meeting setting (space, seating arrangements, etc.)

c. Information about the participants (number, gender, ethnicity)

3. **Focal Administrator/Other Participant Interaction**: When do other participants make contributions to the meeting? How do they participate?

4. **Critical Values:** When does (if at all) the focal administrator display their stated critical values? Do they seem to consider these values when setting the agenda for the meeting, or do they manifest only through interaction with other participants?

5. **Description of specific agenda items**

[5] Partially based on Sawada, Pibum, Falconer, Turley, Benford, and Bloom's (2000) Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol and Crawford's (1987) principles of critical pedagogy.

Appendix E
Survey Materials for O‘ahu-Based K-12 Teachers

Values and Practices

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

* Indicates required question

1. Could you briefly describe your career history in education? *
2. How long have you been in your current position and what is your title?
3. Think of a challenge that you faced in your current position. Describe your decision-making process when approaching problem-solving.
4. Among the following, which do you consider to be core principles/values in your role as an educator? *

   Check all that apply (up to 4).

- ○ Empathy
- ○ Fairness
- ○ Critical Dialogue
- ○ Sincerity
- ○ Loyalty
- ○ Happiness
- ○ Action-orientation
- ○ Democracy

5. Do you have any other ideas that are missing from the choices above?
6. Out of your top choices, could you briefly explain why you have prioritized those over others? *

Appendix F
Interview Guide for O‘ahu-Based K-12 Teachers

1. Tell me about how you became interested in education.

2. How did you become involved in social justice as an instructor? Did you seek it out or was it a gradual process?

3. You must have faced some challenges over the years in being a social justice-oriented instructor. Do any stand out for you? Let's begin with the first challenge you mentioned:

   -What was it?
   -How did you manage it?
   -Any other challenges you would like to talk about?

4. Generally, what have been some high points during your employment? Any low points that you would be willing to share?

5. Based on our discussion thus far, how would you define your values in your work as an social justice-oriented educator? How do your values impact your ability to make decisions or resolve conflicts?

6. Is there anything that you wish you'd learned before you began work as a social justice-oriented educator?

Appendix G
Modified Survey Data of Administrators on O‘ahu

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Current Position	Core Values	Other Values	Key Challenge
Maya	F	*White*	*Director of Language Programs at a private English language school*	• *Empathy* • *Respect* • *Fairness*	• *Collaboration*	*Faced with high turnover rates, the decision-making process involved assessing student needs, providing additional support, and offering personalized solutions.*
Lucas	M	*White*	*Program Coordinator at a university-affiliated language school*	• *Respect* • *Fairness* • *Sincerity*	• *Honesty* • *Equity* • *Inclusion*	*Addressing a lack of collaboration, the approach involved fostering open communication, creating team-building opportunities, and ensuring shared goals.*
Alex	F	*Non-White*	*Administrator, Spanish Department at a university*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Empathy*	• *Integrity* • *Transparency*	*Dealing with limited resources for curriculum development, the strategy was to prioritize essential materials, seek external resources, and streamline content delivery.*
Chloe	F	*White*	*Director of ESL Programs at a private English language school*	• *Fairness* • *Sincerity* • *Respect*	4. *Transparency*	*Facing high turnover rates, the decision-making process focused on identifying root causes, improving staff engagement, and implementing retention strategies.*
Luke	M	*White*	*Program Director, ESL at a university-affiliated language school*	5. *Democracy* 6. *Action-orientation* 7. *Critical Dialogue* 8. *Empathy*	• *Community Engagement* • *Happiness*	*Addressing students' struggles with speaking skills, the process involved introducing interactive activities, providing targeted feedback, and offering extra practice opportunities.*

Ethan	M	*White*	*Program Administrator at a private English language school*	• *Sincerity* • *Respect* • *Empathy*	• *Creativity* • *Community Engagement*	*Facing high turnover rates, the decision-making process focused on identifying root causes, improving staff engagement, and implementing retention strategies.*
Teddy	M	*White*	*Director of ESL Program at a private English language school*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Empathy*	• *Inclusivity* • *Critical Thinking*	*Addressing a lack of collaboration, the approach involved fostering open communication, creating team-building opportunities, and ensuring shared goals.*
Olivia	F	*Non-White*	*ESL Program Director at a university-affiliated language school*	• *Loyalty* • *Fairness* • *Transparency*	• *Critical Thinking* • *Inclusivity*	*Dealing with limited resources for curriculum development, the strategy was to prioritize essential materials, seek external resources, and streamline content delivery.*
Jasmine	F	*White*	*ESL Program Administrator at a private English language school*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Fairness*	• *Cultural Awareness*	*Facing high turnover rates, the decision-making process focused on identifying root causes, improving staff engagement, and implementing retention strategies.*
Malia	F	*Non-White*	*Program Coordinator, Charter School on Oahu*	• *Sincerity* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Fairness*	• *Cultural Awareness* • *Creativity*	*Addressing students' struggles with speaking skills, the process involved introducing interactive activities, providing targeted feedback, and offering extra practice opportunities.*
Henry	M	*White*	*Director of ESL Programs at a private school*	• *Empathy* • *Loyalty* • *Fairness*	• *Community Engagement* • *Collaboration*	*Faced with declining enrollment, implemented outreach programs, and improved communication with parents.*

Emily	F	*Non-White*	*Language Program Coordinator at a University-affiliated institution*	*8. Respect* *9. Fairness* *10. Sincerity*	• *Honesty* • *Transparency*	*Addressing a lack of faculty engagement, initiated a mentorship program and team-building activities.*
Jayson	F	*Non-White*	*Program Manager at a Hawaiian charter school*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Empathy*	• *Inclusivity* • *Critical Thinking*	*Limited funding for resources, prioritized critical needs and sought alternative funding sources.*
Kainoa	F	*Non-White*	*Director of Language Programs at a Hawaiian charter school*	• *Fairness* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Respect*	• *Critical Thinking* • *Inclusivity*	*High teacher turnover, focused on enhancing teacher retention strategies and increasing professional development.*
Jacob	M	*White*	*ESL Program Coordinator at a private language school*	• *Sincerity* • *Respect* • *Empathy*	• *Cultural Awareness*	*Declining student engagement, developed new interactive learning activities to re-engage learners.*
Iris	F	*White*	*University ESL Director*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Fairness*	• *Community Engagement* • *Inclusivity*	*Cultural barriers in the classroom, facilitated workshops for teachers to improve cultural competency.*
Michael	F	*White*	*Director of Education at a private ESL institution*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Loyalty*	• *Leadership* • *Collaboration*	*Language barriers, employed bilingual staff to assist in bridging communication gaps.*
Samuel	M	*White*	*Program Director at a community college*	• *Loyalty* • *Fairness* • *Transparency*	• *Accountability* • *Student-Centered Learning*	*Staff burnout, introduced wellness programs and time management workshops.*
Casey	M	*White*	*Manager of ESL Programs at a private language school*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Fairness*	• *Student Empowerment* • *Diversity*	*Parent dissatisfaction with curriculum, implemented feedback channels and revised the curriculum.*
Eddie	M	*White*	*Director of Language*	• *Sincerity*	• *Resourcefulness*	*Student diversity in learning*

			Programs at a private institution	• *Critical Dialogue* • *Fairness*	• *Collaboration*	*styles, customized lesson plans to accommodate various needs.*
Kailani	F	*Non-White*	*ESL Program Director in a local charter school*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Empathy*	• *Innovation* • *Empowerment*	*Administrative disconnect, worked closely with faculty to realign goals and improve communication.*
Abby	F	*Non-White*	*Executive Director of Language Programs in a Hawaiian school*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Fairness*	• *Cultural Sensitivity* • *Inclusivity*	*Lack of resources, applied for grants and developed partnerships to secure additional funding.*

Appendix H
Modified Survey Data of K-12 Teachers on O‘ahu

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Current Position	Core Values	Other Values	Key Challenge
Kaiulani	F	*Non-White*	*English Teacher in Public Middle School*	• *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Democracy* • *Empathy*	• *Collaboration*	*Kaiulani faces systemic inequities in education, particularly the marginalization of Native Hawaiian voices*
Makana	F	*Non-White*	*English Learner Specialist at Elementary School*	• *Action-orientation* • *Democracy* • *Fairness* • *Sincerity*	• *Respect*	*Makana addresses barriers in inclusive education, particularly for English Learners*
Nalani	F	*Non-White*	*English teacher at Public High School*	• *Action-orientation* • *Democracy,* • *Fairness* • *Sincerity*	• *Integrity* • *Transparency*	*Nalani bridges theory and practice by teaching students to recognize and analyze systemic inequalities and empowering them to take action*
Leilani	F	*Non-White*	*Kumu at Hawaiian Charter School*	• *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Democracy* • *Fairness*	5. *Transparency*	*Leilani challenges the erasure of Indigenous knowledge systems and incorporates Hawaiian values into her teaching*
Kaleo	M	*Non-White*	*Art Teacher in Elementary School*	9. *Action-orientation* 10. *Critical Dialogue* 11. *Democracy* 12. *Empathy*	• *Community* • *Engagement* • *Happiness*	*Kaleo integrates Indigenous and Western epistemologies by teaching Hawaiian culture alongside science*
Moana	F	*Non-White*	*Special Education Teacher at Public High School*	• *Democracy* • *Empathy* • *Fairness* • *Loyalty*	• *Diversity* • *Equity* • *Honesty* • *Inclusion*	*Moana fosters social justice awareness in a private school with limited diversity and inclusivity*

Kaimana	M	*Non-White*	*Kumu at Hawaiian Charter School*	• *Diversity* • *Equity* • *Honesty* • *Inclusion*	• *Community* • *Empowerment* • *Responsibility*	*Kaimana, as a novice in social justice education, is learning to apply it in his support role at the elementary level*
Aolani	F	*Non-White*	*History Teacher in Public High School*	• *Action-orientation* • *Democracy* • *Fairness* • *Sincerity*	• *Advocacy* • *Cultural Heritage* • *Sustainability*	*Aolani works to decolonize the curriculum in a Hawaiian immersion setting by integrating Hawaiian language, culture, and history*

Appendix I
Modified Survey Data of U.S. Continent Administrators

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Current Position	Core Values	Other Values	Key Challenge
Sasha	F	*White*	*Director of English Conversation School*	• *Action-orientation* • *Critical Dialogue,* • *Empathy*	• *Collaboration* • *Respect*	*Balancing program growth with maintaining educational quality.*
Jorge	F	*Non-White*	*Director of Spanish Program at Public University X*	• *Democracy,* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Action-orientation* • *Empathy*	• *Collaboration* • *Fairness* • *Equity* • *Inclusion*	*Faced issues with faculty burnout and low morale. Focused on ensuring support structures were in place and used inclusive decision-making practices to address concerns.*
Max	M	*White*	*Language Program Coordinator at Public Regional College*	• *Loyalty* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Sincerity* • *Empathy*	• *Integrity* • *Transparency*	*Facing budget cuts but prioritizing essential program improvements.*
Leila	F	*Non-White*	*Dept Chair of Linguistics at Public University A*	• *Democracy* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Action-orientation* • *Transparency*	6. *Integrity* 7. *Transparency*	*Faced with low student engagement, prioritized curriculum redesign and implemented interactive teaching methods to foster deeper participation and learning*
Taylor	M	*White*	*ESL Program Director at Public University C*	13. *Democracy* 14. *Inclusivity* 15. *Action-orientation* 16. *Critical Dialogue*	• *Collaboration* • *Respect* • *Inclusion*	*Focused on advocating for diverse learning communities while navigating institutional budget cuts. Emphasized collaboration with stakeholders to ensure program continuity.*
Morgan	F	*Non-White*	*Director of ESL at Small Private University B*	• *Democracy,* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Action-orientation* • *Collaboration*	• *Empathy* • *Fairness*	*Worked with limited resources but emphasized building a diverse and inclusive faculty. Created a democratic atmosphere.*

Harper	F	*White*	*ESL Curriculum Developer at Educational Center*	• *Loyalty* • *Empathy* • *Action-orientation* • *Fairness*	• *Empowerment* • *Fairness* • *Inclusion*	*Managing the transition to hybrid learning materials for ESL students.*
Avery	F	*Non-White*	*ESL Program Director at Public University Y*	• *Democracy* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Action-orientation* • *Fairness*	• *Transparency* • *Inclusion* • *Equity*	*Managed the challenges of institutional resistance to new pedagogical models.*
Riley	F	*Non-White*	*Director of Spanish Program at Community College*	• *Empathy* • *Fairness* • *Action-orientation* • *Loyalty*	7. *Innovation* 8. *Empathy* 9. *Equity*	*Faced resistance to implementing DEI initiatives. Focused on maintaining a balance between institutional priorities and personal values.*
Cameron	M	*White*	*Program Manager for Italian Language School*	• *Democracy* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Action-orientation* • *Respect*	• *Respect* • *Integrity*	*Struggled with limited institutional resources.*
Jalen	M	*Non-White*	*Assistant Director of ESL Program at Public University Z*	• *Democracy* • *Critical Dialogue* • *Action-orientation* • *Empathy*	• *Empowerment* • *Fairness* • *Equity* • *Inclusion*	*Managed competing priorities between student-centered approaches and institutional demands.*
Jordan	M	*Non-White*	*Program Manager for Foreign Languages at Small Liberal Arts College X*	• *Democracy* • *Action-orientation* • *Fairness* • *Critical Dialogue*	• *Innovation* • *Respect* • *Faith*	*Overcoming resistance to new technology integration in language programs.*
Lena	F	*White*	*Director of ESL Program at Private College*	• *Loyalty* • *Action-orientation* • *Respect* • *Empathy*	• *Collaboration* • *Fairness* • *Equity*	*Navigating challenges in curriculum adaptation for diverse students.*

Appendix J
Transcription Key

CA Transcription Conventions (see Jefferson, 2004)

,	continuing intonation
.	falling intonation
?	rising intonation
¿	slightly rising intonation
↑↓	raised pitch or lowered pitch
wo:rd	elongation
=	latching (continuing sound without break in between)
[word]	overlapping speech
(0.2)	length of pause in tenths of seconds
(.)	micropause
°word°	quiet/soft speech
word	stress
WORD	loud speech
>word<	fast speech
<word>	slow speech
((word))	transcriptionist comment
(word1/word2)	alternative hearings
$word$	smiley voice

Appendix K
Office of Research Compliance Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I® SYSTEM

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

DATE:	April 01, 2022
TO:	Crookes, Graham, PhD, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Second Language Studies Holden, Daniel, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Second Language Studies
FROM:	Rivera, Victoria, Dir, Ofc of Rsch Compliance, Social&Behav Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Implementing Critical Pedagogy into Administrative Matters in Language Schools
FUNDING SOURCE:	Elizabeth Carr Holmes Scholarship
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	2020-00792
	Approval Date: April 01, 2022 Expiration Date: October 01, 2070

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On April 01, 2022, the request for IRB approval of changes to your exempt project noted above has been reviewed and approved. The proposed amendments will be added into your current project file. The proposed changes do not alter the exempt status of your project. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) 2.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program by phone at 956-5007 or email uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

2425 Campus Road, Sinclair 10
Honolulu, HI 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-5007 • Fax: (808) 956-9150
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

Full Accreditation

Appendix L
Example Consent Form

University of Hawai'i
Consent to Participate in a Research Project
Daniel Holden, Principal Investigator
Title: Implementing Critical Pedagogy into Administrative Matters in Language Schools

Aloha! My name is Daniel Holden and you are invited to take part in a research study. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Department of Second Language Studies. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a research project.

What am I being asked to do?
If you participate in this project, you will be asked to fill out a survey.

Taking part in this study is your choice.
Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of this research is to identify administrators with a social justice (or critical) orientation, and ask them about their views, values, and practices in order to better understand how this orientation impacts their responsibilities. After conducting an exploratory analysis, a set of guidelines for future administrators with an interest in critical issues will be drafted.

What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?
The survey will consist of multiple choice and several open-ended questions. It will take 20 minutes. The survey is accessed on a website to which I will provide you a link.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?
I believe there is little risk to you for participating in this research project. You may become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the survey questions. If you do become stressed or uncomfortable, you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop taking the survey or you can withdraw from the project altogether.

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this survey. The results of this project may help aspiring administrators in language programs to better implement critical issues into their responsibility from a top-down perspective.

Confidentiality and Privacy:
I will keep all study data secure in a locked password-protected hard drive in a locked desk in my home office. Only my University of Hawai'i advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

Future Research Studies:
Even after removing identifiers, the data from this study will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Appendix L
Example Consent Form

University of Hawai'i
Consent to Participate in a Research Project
Daniel Holden, Principal Investigator
Title: Implementing Critical Pedagogy into Administrative Matters in Language Schools

Questions:
If you have any questions about this study, please call or email me at [808.425.8285 or dholden9@hawaii.edu]. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Graham Crookes, at [808.956.6046 & crookes@hawaii.edu]. You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. to discuss problems, concerns and questions; obtain information; or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit http://go.hawaii.edu/jRd for more information on your rights as a research participant.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to: Daniel Holden at dholden9@hawaii.edu.

Keep a copy of the informed consent for your records and reference.

Signature(s) for Consent:

I give permission to join the research project entitled, "*Implementing Critical Pedagogy into Administrative Matters in Language Schools.*"

Please initial next to either "Yes" or "No" to the following:

____ Yes ____ No I consent to participating in an online suvery.

Name of Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Mahalo!

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