Chapter 3

Possibilities and Constraints of Minority Students in the United States

ABSTRACT

The access to technology has been a problem for most minority students—what some call "the second digital divide" or differences in the use of technology. Access to adequate equipment and reliable high-speed connections remain a concern, but gaming can be a great tool to bridge this divide. The way that technology is employed in learning for minorities is an even bigger and more important issue. In the United States, among black men aged 25 years and older, 45% have attempted college but only 16% have earned college degrees. Technology can be a great contributor in meeting the possibilities of increasing graduation numbers. Gaming and education technology can be used to enhance minority skills in preparation for college and university. Considerable success has occurred when games are specifically designed to address a specific problem or to teach a certain skill. The development of instructors for minority students can be extremely positive in meeting the social economic divide. Tailoring technology and software based on different learning styles and cultural experiences could better guide the instructor. Community college can be within reach of minority students, providing them with the opportunity to succeed in education sciences and technology. The instructor in this new technology can be created by public policy, legislation, and research.

INTRODUCTION

In urban school districts across the country, student performance is flat, poor and minority students are experiencing staggering inequality, and the picture is especially troubling for black students (Camera 2015). Student achievement gaps need to be aggressively addressed. For example, the percentage of blacks age 25 and older with a high school diploma or more was 72 percent in the 2000 census, compared to 85.5 percent for whites. In addition, the percentage of blacks with bachelor's degrees or more was 14, compared to 27 percent of whites (National Education Association, NEA 2015).

Closing achievement gaps is a critical issue. The performance of blacks is systematically different from that of other racial and ethnic groups. Decreasing gaps in student achievement means that we must *increase* the learning gains of blacks. This will require the creation of public policies and legislation that support public schools committed to identifying and setting high, worthwhile, and attainable goals for students and ensuring that teachers and students are supported in these efforts (NEA 2015).

Camera (2015) reported a statement by Jacqueline Cooper, interim president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, that uncovered a few silver linings: In Newark, New Jersey, and Memphis, Tennessee, for example, black students were more likely to be in advanced math courses than white students, and in Nashville, Tennessee, black students were more likely to take college entrance exams. "This report shows that no single educational model is a silver bullet for black families," Cooper said. "Instead, city and state leaders need to develop plans tailored to the needs of the families they serve, and the best plans are likely to include a blend of educational solutions … that will give low-income and working-class black families high-quality options for their children."

It seems important to consider the individual and societal costs for the pervasive underperformance of ethnic and racial minority students. The personal and social costs of educational underachievement for these groups are considerable for individuals and their families as well as for the economic viability of the nation. During the most recent recession, the unemployment rates were particularly staggering for those without a college education. Moreover, African-American unemployment went from 8.6 percent in 2007 to 15.8 percent in 2009 (5.8 percent to 12.9 percent for Latinos), with the unemployment for whites remaining under 10 percent from 2007 to 2009 (Reidenbach & Weller, 2010).

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