Chapter 7

The Role of Formal and Nonformal Leaders in Creating Culturally Proficient Educational Practices

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the role of formal and nonformal leaders in creating culturally proficient educational practices to create equity and access for all students. Transformative leadership is the foundation of this change process. Through the inside-out cultural proficiency journey, all educational stakeholders can create equity and access at the intersection of race, measurement, and conversations. This chapter introduces a study-in-progress with the following research question: What does it take for educational leaders to create and sustain change processes focused on culturally proficient educational practices so that all students achieve?

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the foundation for a study that is currently in progress which is examining the role of formal and nonformal leaders in education aiming for creating more culturally proficient educational practices. In 2010, one public high school near the Central Coast of California decided to embark on its cultural proficiency journey. This school context is unique as the school and its district engaged in a specific reculturing process to improve access, equity and inclusion for all students. To meet this goal, the district began deliberately attempting to build capacity with sustainable school changes at the school and community level using the five essential elements of cultural competence in the conceptual framework for culturally proficient practices (Appendix). Culturally proficient educational practices are part of the fulcrum that pushes the deep inquiry required of transforming institutions (Lindsey, 2017). With this framework, transformative leadership can facilitate these institutional changes (Shields, 2010).

Understanding that a major purpose of education is to transform students into contributing citizens to our global society, implications for educational leadership are significant. However, maintaining a focus on 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and collaboration, cannot happen without first considering the knowledge and skills that students bring to their education. As such, it is important to recognize vulnerable populations' contributions using a framework such as one focused on cultural proficiency as provided by Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2009). Observing through a leadership lens, a culturally proficient approach does not only consider the barriers to transformation at the level of the classroom, but it also reflects on the barriers' effect on the bigger systems at play where leadership and direction are heavily involved. As identified by Lindsey et. al (2009), the four barriers include resistance to change, unawareness of the need to adapt, not acknowledging systemic oppression, and benefiting from privilege and entitlement. By understanding these barriers as a discussion starting point, courageous conversations can begin to be had in order to ensure that equity is at the center of the work of teacher education and teacher educator preparation (Singleton, 2014).

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the authors aim to illustrate how formal and nonformal educational leaders are situated in culturally proficient educational practices by describing one district's perspective through one school. The researchers discuss findings from a case study that describe formal and nonformal leaders examination regarding the district, school, and individual standards, values, as well as healthy and unhealthy

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