

Chapter 82

Revolutionizing Education

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ABSTRACT

The chapter discusses equity and educational reform as it relates to minority students in the United States. Historical information is presented along with a synopsis of the current state. Recommendations to equalize learning opportunities and reform education are presented. Students in schools all across America have been shortchanged. They are drowning in a bottomless ocean with the waves and currents pulling them further and further into the depth of a sea of confusion, a sense of hopelessness, and an emptiness that has shattered their dreams.

BACKGROUND

Common Core Curriculum Standards

The Common Core Curriculum State Standards refers to a high-quality of academic standards in the area of English Language Arts Literacy. The standards collectively outline the learning goals of pertinent concepts knowledge and foundational levels that student should be able to master at the end of each grade level. Through the collaborative efforts of educators, chief school administrators as well as other experts in the field of education, the Common Core provides a framework for educators and heavily emphasizes college and career readiness for students. The standards also focus on the application of content knowledge through the development of higher order thinking skills.

Culturally Relevant Resource

A contributing factor to the foundation and development of an individual's culture indicative of shared realities and lived experiences that is central to students lives. A culturally relevant resource reflects the diversity of the student population within a given classroom and is used as a critical tool by which to create equitable learning experiences, introduce concepts and ideas to students while demonstrating appreciation, respect and value of their culture as well as assist the process of reframing perspectives.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7706-6.ch082

Curriculum

In the context of this study, the term curriculum refers to an in-depth instructional guide incorporating all educational foundations, standards and benchmarks relevant to the sixth grade level within a sequential order, inclusive of all resources and materials necessary for educators to successfully implement lessons. The curriculum is a detailed plan of instruction with categorical elements that define learning experiences and opportunities as well as multiple measures of assessment for students.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Students in schools all across America have been shortchanged. They are drowning in a bottomless ocean with the waves and currents pulling them further and further into the depth of a sea of confusion, a sense of hopelessness and an emptiness that has shattered their dreams. They are victims of a broken system that is in dire need of repair. From the core of its inception, the American school system has been plagued with multiple facets of systemic oppression, ranging from the inequitable distribution of funds and resources; lack of authentic and relatable curricula programs; lack of quality teachers well versed in culturally relevant pedagogy to the development and implementation of disciplinary measures that quite frankly mimic the nation's incarceration system. Throughout the course of history, specific mechanisms have been strategically employed to inhibit and stagnate the growth of minority students in multiple ways, propelled by a mission grounded in inequity and instability. The educational sector primarily focuses on instructional concepts and core knowledge that directly coincide with the standards enforced by the federal and state departments of education. By strictly controlling instructional content and limiting the information students are exposed to, systems of schooling have perpetuated an environment of inequity.

Government enforced standards dictate the concepts and core knowledge taught to students and are measured by the implementation of federal and state mandated assessments designed to predetermine student rates of success. Subsequently, failures among minorities are typically highlighted and utilized to negate student self-worth and foster a damaging inferiority complex, as they are deemed as "at risk for failure" and associated or labeled as "special" children along with other negative connotations. While enriched in cultural knowledge, minorities lack the resources and support systems needed to be successful within the classroom environment. Standardized concepts intentionally fail to acknowledge, appreciate and consider the value that students' culture, lived experiences and social circumstances add to the overall learning process. Thus, minority children remain unfulfilled and hunger for knowledge and skills that are interconnected with the experiences of their everyday lives. They are unengaged and unmoved by the traditional learning process. Dealing with issues that deeply affect their well being, they search for coping mechanisms to cover scars and attempts to heal wounds on the surface. Crime, mental illnesses and violence then permeates the core of society and with each day that passes, more children find themselves lost in the complexities of an inherently broken system.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the multi-faceted definitions of equity and equality in depth, along with a comparison as to how the terms converge with another. Additional emphasis is focused on the principles of social justice theory through an analysis of the work of Paulo Freire. The chapter then shifts to current inequities in education including an exploration of funding formulas, core standards, the increased use of negative associations, teacher qualifications as well as school culture

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