Chapter 9
School Leaders and Cultural Competence

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ABSTRACT

Culture is a core element in everyday living within the United States. The variety of races, traditions, languages, and religious beliefs contribute to a cultural combination that is rich and strengthens the bonds of our society. However, within school systems cultural differences, seen through the eyes of prejudice and stereotyping, can deter and hinder student achievement and teaching efforts. Incorporating cultural competencies within educator preparation and professional development programs can serve to provide equitable education and address the achievement gap with culturally diverse students. This chapter discusses current research practices and advances in cultural competence within U.S. schools and educational institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Effective teaching should incorporate a foundation of cultural competence especially since the majority of students in the United States will soon be from culturally diverse families. Students of color are projected to be half of all school-aged children by the year 2020 (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). The racial and ethnic groups have changed drastically over the past several decades. The White population has declined from 80 percent in 1980 to 66 percent in 2008. The Hispanic population has increased from 6 percent to 15 percent; the Black population has remained relatively constant at 12 percent; the Asian population increased from less than 2 percent to 4 percent; and American Indians continue to constitute about 1 percent of the population (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Campbell, 1996).

This chapter will review the impact of changing demographics in U.S schools and how it requires educational leaders to become culturally responsive. Even though the student population is changing, 83% percent of full-time teachers are

white (DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009). So in addition to the demographic shifts, there are achievement gaps between white and non-white students that are challenging K-12 educators to effectively teach within the classroom. This chapter will also address the importance of education for democracy and the effects of school leadership on student achievement. Developing cultural competence is a reality within global educational efforts and educators need to be able to respond appropriately to diverse groups in school and school communities. This chapter also discusses programs and best practices that prepare school leaders to advocate social justice and foster student success. Future trends in the educational environment could include the use of cultural competence frameworks and instrumentation. Developing cultural competence is a process that can be strengthened through the use of assessments that measure orientations toward cultural differences. Such instrumentation would assist school educational leaders in developing culturally competent educators.

The objectives of this chapter are to address the changing demographics within school systems and the resulting gaps in student achievement; and identify the cultural competencies needed by educational leaders and the vital role served through administrator and teacher preparation programs. This chapter is organized using the following sections: culturally responsive educational leaders; the achievement gap; education and democracy**;** school leadership and student achievement; culture and cultural competence; leadership preparation programs; future trends, and conclusion.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The increasing significance of culturally relevant, responsive, and competent leadership in schools is made clear given the sheer increase in the number and percentage of school children representing a diversity of racial, ethnic, and linguistic popula-

tions in the United States (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011, p. 586).

Educational leaders must acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and pair them with ethical values and beliefs to support intercultural communication and create multicultural and socially just school communities to operate successfully within the emerging global education environment (Grestl-Pepin & Aiken, 2012). "As we begin to face a new global order, leaders are challenged by changes such as increasing cultural diversity, changing demographics, economic exigencies, complexity,…social change,…classism and values tension, as well as expressions of spirituality, religion or faith" (p. xv). Culturally and linguistically diverse students are underrepresented in advanced and gifted programs while they are over represented in intellectual and learning disabilities as well as emotional disturbance categories (Huber, Hynds, Skelton, Papacek, Gonzalez, & Lacy, 2012). Some argue that all students are capable of achievement and actually achieve in a positive learning environment (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gandara, 2000; Huber et al., 2012). This argument refers to the achievement gap and recommended actions to close the gap. The achievement gap among students from marginalized groups could be due to educational leaders' lack of cultural knowledge and skills as well as cultural mismatch between home and school (Huber, et al., 2012; Sirin, Rogers-Sirin, & Collins, 2010).

Immigration and Changing Demographics

"As a result of inter- and intranational migrations, urban schools in early 21st-century Western nations serve more ethno-culturally diverse populations than ever before" (Goddard, 2010, p. 37). At the beginning of the 21st century people were moving around the world for multiple reasons. Some of the reasons were temporary (e.g., tourism or study) and some were permanent (e.g., immigration and refuge). Moving from one en-

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