

Chapter 1

Educational Reform: Systemic Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

Currently the central thrust of education is focused on inclusion and how it affects the values of democracy. This chapter will explore the complexity of educational reform and establish a desired state for strategic thinking for systemic inclusion. It will explore authentic inclusion and how leadership and understanding the intersectionality of students can affect outcomes and change the gap of what the educators know and can do to achieve systemic inclusion. It will also explore reframing inclusion through policy and communication to elevate inclusion so every student can have the access and opportunities to fulfill their educational dreams.

INTRODUCTION

Currently too many children continue to be marginalized from education and consequently from the wider society (Bridge 47, 2020). Since the establishment of the first high school in 1821, reform efforts have struggled to address the evolving societal demands of equitable access and opportunity for all (Ravitch, 2010). Educational reform since the Compulsory Education Act in 1919 has moved from a

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focus on government responsibility to standard based curriculum, student deficits, teacher qualifications, and research-based instructional practices (Koetzsch, 1997). Currently the central thrust of educational is focused on inclusion and how it affects our democracy. When schools fail to educate all children, an educational, social, and economic underclass is formed, which has serious consequences for society as well as the individual (Belfield & Levin, 2007). Inclusive education is based on the principle that public schools should provide for all children, regardless of any perceived difference, disability, or other social, emotional, cultural, or linguistic differences (Stelitano et al., 2020).

This chapter considers educational reform challenges involved in creating a more inclusive public educational system in a democratic society. The chapter will explore the complexity of educational reform and why inclusion is a critical aspect in our educational system. It will then address the formal and informal educational systems of various inclusive models and how they affect classroom-based instruction and educators' perceptions.

Even with pro-inclusion policies, achieving inclusion is a daunting task and one of the biggest problems facing education today (Osgood, 2005). Eurocentric educational practices have produced problems associated with low expectations, intergenerational poverty, structural obstacles, insufficient understanding, biased thinking, and under prepared educators (Billingsley et al., 2018).

Public education emerged to assimilate immigrants into a common American culture, hoping to unify the nation against external threats and internal divisions. The obstinate goal of assimilating minority children for democracy produced various systems of oppression seen through marginalization and microaggressions in education (Freire, 1970). Barriers raised from marginalization and microaggressions can be seen in inflexible or irrelevant curricula, didactic teaching methods, inappropriate systems of assessment and examinations, and inadequate preparation of and support for teachers. These barriers for marginalized populations frame a need for pedagogical initiatives and educational structural change (Rouse, 2008).

Additionally, the chapter will identify and explore the structural and perception gaps, specifically the obstacles and barriers for inclusion. It will recognize and discuss how to interrupt bias in our current educational system through the identification of policies, practices, and formed beliefs, with the hope that the reader can begin seeing the educational structures needed for an inclusive action-oriented voice.

Next, the chapter will establish a desired state so strategic thinking for systemic inclusion can begin. It will explore authentic inclusion and how leadership and understanding the intersectionality of students can affect outcomes and change the gap of what the educators know and can do to achieve systemic inclusion (Crenshaw, 1991). It will also explore reframing inclusion through policy and communication to elevate inclusion so every student can have the access and opportunities to fulfill their educational dreams. Lastly, the chapter will address possible approaches to perform a structural and perception analysis to begin the reframing of Inclusion. Inclusion approaches and change strategies will also be discussed for a highly exacting implementation (Reeves, 2021a).

BACKGROUND

Since the establishment of brick-and-mortar educational institutions, educational reform efforts have struggled to address the evolving societal demands and student needs (Ravitch, 2020; Sumner, 2017). The US education system has had a major impact on almost every facet of society, and when society

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