

## Chapter 13

# Strategic Leadership: Educating a Diverse Nation Beyond the 21st Century

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Partnerships, strategic leadership, and educational collaborative networks are paramount to underpinnings of systemic change along the education continuum. Community, political, and corporate stakeholders transcending primary, secondary, and postsecondary education markets are supporting actors in the education of a growing diversity of students throughout the 21st century. Ascendancy of academic capitalism and neoliberalism incorporated into educational institutions' strategic business model seek to establish a competitive advantage while simultaneously fulfilling higher education institutions' mission. These conditions serve as a pivotal entry point for underrepresented, minoritized students to excel academically and vocationally. A neoliberalism theoretical framework is the mechanism of disruption undergirding the education continuum.*

## INTRODUCTION

The growth trajectory of diverse populations across the U.S. has been heavily researched, debated, and written about by scholars, practitioners, and demographers. Requisite ancillary services for English language learners as well as support of cultural relevant pedagogy and teaching, career and technical education endorsements, dual enrollment, and college and career readiness are germane to policies legislated by federal and state governments. Variations of these policies have emanated from the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 to the Every Student Success Act (ESSA) of 2015. The expressed intent of these and other equity-driven policies serve as the impetus for access and equality in education for every school-aged child regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or disability.

Research suggests there have been a number of issues, concerns, and questions about educational public policy, as well as interpretation of those policies by administrators of preschool (Pre-K), primary and secondary schools (K-12), and higher education institutions (HEIs) (e.g., Castro, 2013; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Since the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, (Parker & Posey, 2015), an extant quest for state policymakers, educators, and administrators to improve and reform K-12 public schools has been at the center of political campaigns and debates (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Educators from across the P-16 (i.e. Pre-K through 4-year HEIs) spectrum will look to develop creative and strategic plans to facilitate alliances and partnerships with major actors<sup>1</sup> and stakeholders.

The U.S. is in crisis mode with political dissent surmounting over the past decade. The burgeoning of divisiveness based on age, ethnicity, race, and immigration status, presents new complexities for recreating a civil society based on heightened diversity that will require a new social contract of equality and opportunity (Fernando Torres-Gil & Demko, 2019). Demographers project that by 2024, immigrants and racial/ethnic populations will comprise 45% of student enrollment in K-12 (Hussar & Baily, 2016). Along the education continuum<sup>2</sup> (Aschenbrener, Ast, & Kirch, 2015), postsecondary education is pivotal to the economic survival, growth, and sustainability beyond the 21st century (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Therefore, the education continuum for optimal academic achievement and student success requires continuity, strategic aligned efforts, and cooperation among K-12 district superintendents, school principals, college administrators, and university presidents.

There is limited literature on strategic leadership in education favorably applying a businesslike model. Therefore, the author consulted business management academicians and theoreticians to incorporate the following business constructs: academic capitalism<sup>3</sup> (Jessop, 2017; McClure, 2014), neoliberalism<sup>4</sup>, (Olssen & Peters, 2005), and market driven<sup>5</sup> (Jaworski, Kohli, & Sahay, 2000). Ascendancy of academic capitalism and neoliberalism incorporated into educational institution's strategic business model seek to establish a competitive advantage while simultaneously fulfilling HEIs' mission. Academic capitalism, neoliberalism, and market driven phenomena preamble strategic practices in education. Neoliberalism provides a theoretical framework for interpreting the mechanisms of disruption to the education continuum in the 21st century (Hayes, 2016).

Given the concentration of diverse students and uniqueness in mission of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), throughout this chapter, the author links strategic leadership in education to these predominantly minority-serving institutions (MSIs). The actors for this subset of the postsecond-

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