Chapter 1

Improving Access and Educational Equity:
Minority Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, Social Justice, and the Educational System

James Sunday Etim

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4352-7331

Winston-Salem State University, USA

ABSTRACT

Many economically disadvantaged and minority students are in low performing or failing schools. These poor and failing conditions has undermined the goal of ensuring equal education opportunity for all learners, a hallmark of the educational system. This chapter considered several research questions related to student performance and school suspensions. Several data sources, including data from the National Center for Education Statistics and the North Carolina Department of Instructions Schools Report Card, were used in the study. Data showed that two minority groups, Black and Hispanic, are not performing as high as the White and Asian race/ethnicity in the areas of English and Mathematics in Grade 8, that a disproportionate percentage of students who are Black received out of school suspensions, and low percentages of Black and Hispanic students were enrolled in academically gifted and talented programs when compared to White and Asian students. Based on these findings, suggestions were made to improve the situation and to improve access and educational equity.

BACKGROUND

Social justice is in part rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Grant & Gibson 2013). Article 1 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Article 21 proposes that "Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country," and Sections 1 and 2 of Article 26 declares that "Everyone has

the right to education" and "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". Our concept of social justice is also guided by the work of John Rawls (1971) who saw "justice as fairness" and espoused the "difference principle". According to Zajda, Majhanovich, and Rust (2006), " Social justice as a construct is an attempt to answer the following question: How can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone?" (p. 5). An extension of this construct into the field of education would seek to answer these questions: How can we make schools more equitable? How can we make resources for education more equitable so that all learners benefit from instruction? How can we ensure that those currently excluded from high quality programs (that help prepare students for college and beyond) are brought into these programs so that they receive education that will provide them a sustainable income? How can we transform our schools to be avenues to teach social justice and allow students to question the disparities that they see and experience and are occurring in schools? How can we improve educational opportunities for students in low performing and failing schools?

Many economically disadvantaged and minority students are in low performing or failing schools (Lupton, 2005; Schneider et al., 2006, p. 179). Madrid (2011), Carnoy and Garcia (2017), and Taggart (2018) wrote of the achievement gaps between Latino and white students, indicating several variables at play including sociocultural variables, psychological variables, and school/institutional variables. Writing on the school variable, (Taggart, 2018) reported that "research has shown that attending schools with predominantly Latina/o or minority populations has negative consequences for Latina/o students' grades" (p. 460). Carnoy and Garcia (2017) indicated also that gaps "between higher- and lower-income students persist, with some changes that vary by subject and grade" (p. 1). Gorard (2000) writes that correlational studies point to the fact "that school outcomes are strongly linked to the social and economic composition of the intake. Put simply, schools with a high proportion of children from poor families will not generally have high raw-score public examination results" (p. 16) According to Bodvin, Verschueren, Haene, and Struyf (2018), "Both low socioeconomic status and ethnic minority (LSES & Eminority) students experience on average more barriers during their school career compared to high SES and ethnic majority (HSES & Emajority) students, respectively, due to unequal opportunities" (p. 216). These students also have the tendency to be in less resourced schools and with a large percentage of teachers who are not fully licensed (Darling-Hammond & Glass, 2003). These poor and failing conditions has undermined the goal of ensuring equal education opportunity for all learners, a hallmark of the educational system (Darling Hammond & Glass, 2003). Nielsen (2013) pointed to the significant disparities in educational opportunities, attainment and achievement that exist among different student populations. According to Nielsen, English learners, low income, and some racial ethnic minority students have less access to quality learning opportunities, materials, and teachers. However, given the demographic changes occurring, Nielsen indicated that "the imperative for the K-12 education system to address these disparities and better prepare students to thrive in adulthood is greater than ever before" (p. 76). The paper begins with data on the racial composition of schools, presents data on poverty and economic disadvantage by racial group at the national level and then discusses the End of Grade Tests in North Carolina. These then will form the background to answering the following questions in this paper-

1.   What does the data show on the performance of economic disadvantaged and minority students in North Carolina's End of Grade assessment tests?
2.   What does the data show on the rate of participation of minority students in several programs that prepare students for college at the national level?

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/improving-access-and-educational-equity/319758

Related Content

Agency at Play for Collective Impact in Human Services Systems: A Case Study of Digital Games for Change as Design Justice Interventions

Prithi Yadav, Manuela B. Taboadaand Nicole Vickery (2022). *Social Justice Research Methods for Doctoral Research (pp. 159-181).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/agency-at-play-for-collective-impact-in-human-services-systems/293622

Strategies to Mitigate COVID-19's Impact on Indian SMEs

Neeta Baporikarand Mukund Deshpande (2021). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement (pp. 1-16).*

www.irma-international.org/article/strategies-to-mitigate-covid-19s-impact-on-indian-smes/282509

A Review of Political Participation between Youth and Elderly People in Zimbabwe: Youth and Elderly Political Participation

Obediah Dodo (2019). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement (pp. 1-14).*

www.irma-international.org/article/a-review-of-political-participation-between-youth-and-elderly-people-in-zimbabwe/241856

HIV Education for Learners in Zambian Catholic Schools: A Social Justice Perspective

Joseph Chita (2021). *Research Anthology on Instilling Social Justice in the Classroom (pp. 1359-1369).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/hiv-education-for-learners-in-zambian-catholic-schools/270157

Using a Rule Developing Experimentation Approach to Study Social Problems: The Case of Corruption in Education

Attila Gere, Petraq Papajorgji, Howard R. Moskowitzand Veljko Milutinovic (2019). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement (pp. 23-48).*

www.irma-international.org/article/using-a-rule-developing-experimentation-approach-to-study-social-problems/236663