Running Head: THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

The Challenges of Black Students in Multicultural Schools in Toronto

Name:

Course:

Instructor:

Institution:

Date of Submission:

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

Introduction

A lot of evidence has been documented by scholars concerning the black students struggling within the education system of Canada thus initiating the need for black-focused schools. It was established that the proposal regarding the black –focussed schools emanated from the Toronto's black community how were frustrated with the existing education systems. The system was faulted basically for its inability to satisfy the needs of the black students. Though the black-focussed schools is regarded a controversial issue within the black community, it is grounded on the premise of having an education system that augments the connectivity between home as well as school. Through this, it is believed that if this is well fostered then the total experience engulfing the black student will contribute to nurturing all segments to do with a curriculum that will in turn be instrumental in improving different aspects of development like the spiritual, physical, social as well academic. This is key to promoting the academic engagement coupled with achievement (Kalinowski & Brown, 2005).

Urban Growth Machine Theory

This theory perceives cities as growth machines. The theory suggests that the urban development experienced is usually driven by a cartel of the very powerful elites as well as influential actors who are anticipating fulfilling their interests. One attribute that is common with this elite is that they tend to share the pro-growth mentality that more often than not tends to foster tensions that prevail between the elite and the community groups in the society. The relevance of this theory can be tied to the mere fact that the existing racial segregations being witnesses in the education system if not dealt with; it will affect the growth of Toronto as a city. There are a lot of things being perpetrated in the school system that disadvantage the black students. The teachers are the ring leaders in promoting school

practice streaming. It has highly been observed that black students were encouraged to register for courses that did not prepare them for university education. With such activities being instigated among the blacks then the Urban Growth Machine Theory will come into force. If black students are segregated in choosing the best courses that would be helpful to them in the future, then there is a gap that has been created. The gap is what will progressively grow to separate the elite who will overwhelmingly be the whites while due to the high rate of dropouts, the black students will be the marginalized community groups. The results of this will be tensions among the elite and the community groups in which one is deemed better than the other (Logan & Molotch, 1994).

Evidence in support of the Black-Focussed schools

The first support that was publicly fostered by many domains from different areas such as the public, teachers, academics, students in addition to others like the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. It is evident that the Royal Commission back in 1994 showed its support for some consideration to be done which was oriented towards having black-focussed schools. Therefore, the commission went ahead and published this recommendation in their report. In particular, as outlined in Section 141 of the recommendations stated by the Commission that documents that with numerous support demonstrated by the school boards, black students, faculties of education and academic authorities together with communities of the blacks there was a need to join forces. The joining of forces was to set up demonstration schools as well innovative programs that are founded on the best practices geared toward developing the academic prosperity of the black students (Hennessy & Milburn, 1994). The commission's recommendations followed the idea that demonstration schools attributed mainly to the tremendous number of presentations emanating from the public, teachers and previous reports presented.

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

According to Stephen Lewis (1992), he categorically highlighted that racism was the most influencing factor on the underachievement observed in the black students particularly in the schools located in Toronto. Therefore, it is believed that anti-black racism had deepened its roots hence needed to be addressed effectively. Despite the general situation that shows that most of the minority communities tend to experience some indignities and bruises of discrimination especially in the South Western Ontario, the focus, in this case, is directed at the black community. Stephen mentioned a lot of negative things which massively affected the black students in the education system. Some of his concerns indicated that the black students were being subjected to shooting, it's the backs who suffered from unemployment after completion of studies, it is them who still were dropping out of school in nonproportional numbers. Again it was evident that within the spheres of housing that the black communities were congested in high concentrations especially in the black residences thus causing the factor of vulnerability and disadvantage to be prevalent.

There is an argument presented that irrespective of the existing multicultural policy coupled with the unrelenting effort to ensure that differences were recognized among many diverse groups, there was still a lot of evidence pointing to the aspect of marginalization within the Education System of Canada (Ghosh 2004). RatnaGhosh clearly stated that both the multi-cultural together with intercultural programs of education were fundamental theoretically in promoting the aspect of equity to every ethnocultural group. However, they despite the aim desired to achieve, the education programs have fallen short of ensuring equal participation in both the education and economic spheres.

George Dei, who is a Canadian academician, has suggested that racism has been the steering wheel to the formation of Africentric schools. Therefore, Dei has been very influential in voicing his undivided support for the establishment and growth of the black-

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

focussed schools. He reiterates that schools to do with Afrocentric were primarily a response to curb various negative impacts the education system had engulfed the black students. Some of the notable impacts were the high rates of school dropouts among the blacks, low motivation levels, teachers having little or minimal faith with some of the black students. Also, lack of the desired respect accorded to the authorities and ultimately the absence of any commitment shown by communities towards the community (Anderson, 2009). Dei, therefore, believes that myriad of many people holds the opinion that through engaging in teaching students with the confines of racial identity; the students would be largely engaged with the education system in place. He says that the present school system views the universe via the European eyes. Whereby he recounts that in 1979 after attending a meeting in Toronto for the organization of parents of the Black children, he was able to affirm that parents were discounted with the system and raised the concern that the system was failing their children. Surprisingly in 2009, parents in Toronto were being confronted by the same issue and still voice out that the system in place was failing their children and were thus suggesting that a new approach was key if things were to be turned from worse to the better (Anderson 2009).

Therefore, according to Cairns (1998), there was a pressing need for a mechanism to be adopted which would foster higher achievement levels regarding graduation rates among the black students fraternity. He thus argues that the development of the schools based on the races would form a transitional bridge toward ensuring that there is integration in the long run. He believes in spite of schools being segregated; the system promotes the overall integration of the community of the Blacks into the mainstream society. This would be achieved in the long term if adopted. He states that such schools would be regarded as a channel of integration and thus would help mitigate the resultant threat of black community's separation, especially in the long run. Perhaps Cairns is arguing that supposing the black

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

communities are left to survive through the existing system; separation would be apparent as a result of the low graduation rates being witnessed presently.

Dei conducted an intense research in which he indulged the black students together with the parents pertaining the school system currently in use. It emerged that black students were feeling that the reasons attributed to the large numbers of students dropping out of school were associated with the levels of disengagement as well as the absence of representation particularly by African models in the schools they were learning. Thus, they believed the formation of Africentric Schools dominated by African teachers as well as councilors would be imperative in ensuring that they understand effectively in addition to better relations with the existing staff. On the other hands, the parents strongly believed that the Africentric schools will aid their children to excel in their learning thus foster improved sense of identity as well as the inclusion (CBC 2008). They therefore unanimously agreed that the existing system of education had failed miserably in meeting the needs and expectations of their children, and thus this called for the adoption of alternative approaches that would be necessary so that they save the dreams of the black child in Toronto (Dei, 1996).

Reasons for the Black students Disengagement

A lot of findings have indicated that the black students were slow learners, coupled with psychological issues, learning disabilities, issues of adjustment and more so pathological problems. The also had the syndrome of attention deficit (James & Brathwaite, 1996). Due to the above-mentioned reasons, school authorities came to the conclusion that the black Canadian youths were not succeeding in their education. Therefore, the author suggested that such factors could not justify similar school experiences for the blacks' youths who were performing poorly in school.

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

The first reason is that the school boards in association with researchers also identified another creeping issue that contributed to the black students having much trouble in achieving academic success. It was not only based on issues to do with the adjustment but also because they were undergoing discrimination founded on the race and cultural diversity within the education system (James & Brathwaite, 1996). Researchers, academics, and parents came to a common conclusion after critical analysis that systemic racism and its associated discrimination were the root-cause of the underachievement issues experienced by the black students.

The reason to do with student disengagement is the education process in Toronto schools. The education is said to be subjecting minority groups to a disadvantage due to discrimination and systemic racism. The structure of the school is termed to be discriminating simply because it is very biased since it upholds teaching from only one perspective that is the Eurocentric perspective.

The fourth reason is that the hidden curriculum is an issue of contention. This is because the students tend to experience diverse cultural realities both at home and subsequently in schools and this highly increases the chance of children failing.

The fifth reason is that the black youth is highly affected by the minimal interactions they are being accorded by their educators as opposed to their white counterparts. If then the teachers became the agents of propelling discrimination then it is a disadvantage to the minority who are negatively affected, and thus this is will in did affect their excelling levels due to the stigma instigated by the tutors.

Research indicates that most teachers hardly perform in the classrooms in a manner that may be deemed to be a racially equitable way. Dei found out that a lot of comments out to the fact that teachers are doing minimal to ensure that they encourage the black students

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

(Dei, 1997). According to Dei (1996), he elucidates that racial stereotypes have been trickled down to the educators over the years thus leading to low teacher expectations that are continuing to affect the minority students hence the effect is low-performance levels in their schools. Thus, Dei sums it up clearly be indicating that the absence of encouragements from the educators has led to experiences undermining the black students by ruining their self-esteem as well as their self-confidence. Hence, the teachers indulge themselves into the streaming school practice. This means that black students were highly encouraged to register themselves in courses that did not prepare them in any way for university education. Also, the act of branding the black students as possessing learning disabilities was considered as a way of streaming.

Conclusion

The paper having integrated the works of many authors in the research together with Urban Growth Machine Theory, it has become apparent that there is the undeniable importance of segregating the schools to fit the existence of minority who seems to be in great suffering. After a critical analysis of our text, I can establish that the environment that the black students are facing in the education institutions is not conducive to promote success and if not checked with bringing imbalance in the economic sector of Toronto city. The marginalization that is openly being executed by a teacher in the presence of the white students is not doing any better in saving the situation. Rather it is magnifying the situation. We have noticed that lack of motivation, poor interaction, selective curriculum, entrenched stereotypes against blacks to be the domineering factors promoting the poor performance of black students. Therefore, I recommend that the students be segregated so that attention is accorded to the black students, hence, help in boosting their confidence and esteem so that they can compete on equitable fronts with whites. The need to have their black teachers who

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

will inspire them and guide them to choose courses that will benefit them in the university. I, therefore, support Focused black schools for the African minority in Toronto because this will ensure that the tensions between the elite and the community groups is reduced since the black community will be equally represented on all fair grounds of the economy.

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

References

Anderson, S.(2009) 'Africentric Schools', *U of T Magazine*, [online] Autumn. Available at:

    Cairns, A. (1998). Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations In Canada

    Will Kymlicka Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998, Pp. Viii, 220. *Canadian*

    Journal of   Political Science, 369-369.

CBC. (2010) *The ational: Toronto's Afrocentric School*. Available from

    http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/Shows/The_National/1242568525/ID=1590429453

Dei, G. J. S. (1996).Rethinking 'African-Centered' Schools in Euro-Canadian Contexts. In

    K.S. Brathwaite and C.E. James (Eds.), *Educating African Canadians,* (pp. 295-301).

    Toronto: James Lormier and Company Ltd., Publishers.

Dei, G. J. S. (1997). Afrocentricity and Inclusive Curriculum: Is There a Connection in a

    discourse, (pp. 203-225). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Ghosh, R.(2004) *Redefining Multicultural Education,* Toronto, Ontario: Nelson Thomas

    Learning.Group.

Hennessy, C., & Milburn, G. (1994). "Ring Some Alarm Bells in Ontario": Reactions to the

    Report of the Royal Commission on Learning. *Canadian Journal of Education /*

    Revue Canadienne De L'éducation, 228-228.

    http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/leading-edge/afrocentric-schools[Accessed 1

    November 2015].

James, C. E. &Brathwaite, K. S. (1996). The Education of African Canadians: Issues,

    Contexts, and expectations. In K. S. Brathwaite and C.E. James (Eds.), *Educating*

    African Canadians,(pp. 13-31). Toronto: James Lormier and Company Ltd.,

    Publishers

THE CHALLENGES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

Kalinowski, T., & Brown, L. (2005, February 4). Province rules out black only schools.

Toronto

Lewis, S.(1992) *Race Relations Report,* Toronto: Ontario Government.

*Star.*Retrieved November 1, 2015, from

http://www.diversitywatch.ryerson.ca/media/

Logan, J., &Molotch, H. (1994). Urban growth machines and the politics of local economic

development:.*International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 137-146.