MINDING THE MARGINALIZED STUDENTS THROUGH INCLUSION, JUSTICE, AND HOPE

Daring to Transform Educational Inequities

Edited by Jose W. Lalas
and Heidi Luv Strikwerda

Foreword by Tyrone Howard

Series Editor Chris Forlin

MINDING THE MARGINALIZED STUDENTS THROUGH INCLUSION, JUSTICE, AND HOPE

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Series Editor: Chris Forlin

Recent volumes:

MINDING THE MARGINALIZED STUDENTS THROUGH INCLUSION, JUSTICE, AND HOPE: DARING TO TRANSFORM EDUCATIONAL INEQUITIES

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We are dedicating this book to all students around the world, especially those who are historically and traditionally underserved and marginalized by our educational system's unconscious misrecognition. We are also dedicating this book to all equity-minded educators as an encouragement to continue to view education not just an ordinary human experience but a potent form of social, cultural, and political intervention in the world that must be guided by a humanizing sense of hope, love, and justice.

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SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

The adoption internationally of inclusive practice as the most equitable and all-encompassing approach to education and its relation to compliance with various international Declarations and Conventions underpins the importance of this series for people working at all levels of education and schooling in both developed and less developed countries. There is little doubt that inclusive education is complex and diverse and that there are enormous disparities in understanding and application at both inter- and intracountry levels. A broad perspective on inclusive education throughout this series is taken, encompassing a wide range of contemporary viewpoints, ideas, and research for enabling the development of more inclusive schools, education systems, and communities.

Volumes in this series on *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* contribute to the academic and professional discourse by providing a collection of philosophies and practices that can be reviewed by considering local, contextual, and cultural situations in order to assist governments, educators, peripatetic staffs, and other professionals to provide the best education for all children. Each volume in the series focuses on a key aspect of inclusive education and provides critical chapters by contributing leaders in the field who discuss theoretical positions, quality research, and impacts on school and classroom practice. Different volumes address issues relating to the diversity of student need within heterogeneous classrooms and the preparation of teachers and other staffs to work in inclusive schools. Systemic changes and practice in schools encompass a wide perspective of learners to provide ideas on reframing education to ensure that it is inclusive of all. Evidence-based research practices underpin a plethora of suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners, incorporating current ways of thinking about and implementing inclusive education.

While many barriers have been identified that may potentially constrain the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series aims to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcoming them. Adopting a thematic approach for each volume, readers will be able to quickly locate a collection of research and practice related to a topic of interest. By transforming schools into inclusive communities of practice, all children can have the opportunity to access and participate in quality and equitable education to enable them to obtain the skills to become contributory global citizens. This series, therefore, is highly recommended to support education decision-makers, practitioners, researchers, and academics, who have a professional interest in the inclusion of children and youth who are marginalizing in inclusive schools and classrooms.

Volume 16 in the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series goes to the heart of inclusion by considering educational inequalities that exist for a range of potentially marginalized students. The chapter authors still address traditionally marginalized students such as those with special needs and those from culturally diverse backgrounds and race in the move toward inclusion. This volume, however, goes far beyond these groups by considering educational inclusion of less traditional groups such as students who are homeless, foster students, those who are incarcerated, minorities, Indigenous, with language issues, and students of poverty, among others. Inclusion for these students is viewed through an equitable, or more noticeably an inequitable lens, where the concept of social justice is paramount, yet identified as difficult to observe in much of the current practice in schools.

The foreword by Tyrone Howard provides an insightful perspective of his early years of schooling in an evolvingly diverse American community. Yet, despite the inevitable challenges, his memories paint a picture of a community that accepted and responded to diversity with a strong communal focus of providing the best opportunities and a caring attitude toward all children in their schools. Of note is the extraordinarily strong relationship between schools and parents he experienced. Throughout the chapters in this volume, it becomes clear that instead of improving our community school home relationships, for many areas of society, this has resulted in a breakdown in these connections. Unlike the positive community that Tyrone experienced, when everyone lived and worked within the same town, community spirit appears to have been lost in the often disparate and disengaged school home communities.

Presented in four sections, in Part I, the book initially focuses on identifying the groups of students who are potentially marginalized; the issues they face; and the historical backgrounds that have led to the current sense of injustice for these students. Each of these chapters is grounded by the meaningful and heartfelt introduction given by the editors which outlines a motivational and inspiring approach for supporting these learners. Jose and Heidi's passionate conviction to improving lives acknowledges the struggle that will arise but dares the reader to advocate and confront critical issues to be able to maximize the inclusion of all students who are currently on the periphery of education. They posit that without major transformation, inequities will continue to increase, and injustices flourish.

The second section of the book, in Part II, focuses on teacher preparation for inclusion. Each chapter aims to break down the academic and social gap between those who are aiming to teach and support these students, with the different lives and needs of these students. A variety of learning experiences are shared to highlight the real needs of students in the margins and to provide good practice ideas for preparing teachers to support them. In Part III, the focus is on international research–based approaches to transform education to include all students on the margins. There is considerable need to motivate and engage these students, and the chapter authors provide a range of international experiences and ideas to help the reader to do this.

In Part IV, an interpretive perspective is applied across contexts with humanization and hope, to consider what must be done to improve access to and engagement in education for all students. The final chapter utilizes a personal ethnography to highlight issues of oppression, courage, love, forgiveness, humility, understanding, care, and kindness, and what it means to be a person in despair. This very personal reflection and insight into the author's life provides a strong lesson in reviewing power and privilege, racism, and unconscious bias. Through this, Heidi calls upon all readers to become Agents of Hope to ensure a more humanistic approach to caring for those most vulnerable and marginalized in our school communities.

This volume is a passionately presented vital book for all stakeholders aiming to reestablish a community spirit and humanistic approach for improving educational equality for all students. It will appeal to governments and educational systems, school leaders and school communities, and all those involved with addressing the extreme disparities that still exist in the education of many students who remain on the margins of education. It will also be of considerable use to university academics, students, and researchers who are taxed with identifying best practice ways for supporting these students in schools. The thoughtful structure of the book will allow the reader to select chapters that address specific groups of marginalized students. Within each chapter, the reader may explore options derived from research and best practice evidence-based ideas, which are presented by leading international experts in the field for supporting these learners.

Volume 16 will be an important international resource providing immediate access to a wide range of relevant and useful approaches for supporting groups of learners who still struggle to achieve equity in educational opportunities. It identifies the major issues surrounding these challenges and provides carefully structured approaches for enabling more effective decisions to be made to better support these learners. The book will challenge and emotionally charge the reader to reflect upon their own biases and life histories to better include all students who remain in the margin of education. I highly recommend and endorse this book as an excellent addition to the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series.

Chris Forlin
Series Editor

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FOREWORD

As a young boy growing up in Compton, California, I had the good fortune of attending schools that had caring teachers, dedicated administrators, and school personnel who lived and worked in the community that they served. A school district that was predominately black in the 1970s and 80s, these educators demonstrated what educational opportunity and excellence could look like for historically marginalized student populations. Compton was a community in the 1970s that was in a state of racial transformation, as an influx of black families migrating from the south emerged, which led to widespread white flight. Not only in neighborhoods but in many schools as well. Mine was a world in which teachers knew parents, attended the same places of worship, shopped in the same stores, had their children attending the same schools they taught in, and in general, there was a synergy between students, families, teachers, and leaders that was palpable. Our fate was their fate. They were familiar with what happened in our communities because they lived in our communities and knew and under-stood historical and current day realities. The school–home connection for most of us was important. We were rarely seen as others and were never seen as unworthy of the best education could offer. In other words, these educators minded the margins. They took steps to ensure that we never felt less than anyone, that we should always see the brilliance in our potential, and never see the limits in our possibilities. I would later come to realize that while the com-munity where I grew up and the schools I attended were long on care, love, and support, they were short on material resources. Dated textbooks, outdated and irrelevant curriculum, crumbling infrastructure, and aging buildings were the norm. Inequality was a reality economically. As I later went on to study edu-cation, I have learned that inequality has been part of the American landscape since its inception. Racial inequality and injustice have been prevalent in the United States from day one. For the better part of four centuries, the nation-state, that is the United States, has had racial inequity baked into its fabric, laws, policies, and ideas. Despite modest progress where issues of inclusion and recognition are concerned, the harsh reality is that in the quest to become a more perfect union, the failure to come to grips with its original sin-racism, the United States remains far from recognizing its lofty ideals of justice, fairness, and equality. Perhaps no other institution in the United States has exemplified racial inequality than schools (Spring, 2016). Often cited as the proverbial equalizer, schools have often served as an incubator of racial ideology steeped in excluding the histories, struggles, and stories of black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Schools have been the anchor in promoting an American ideology that promotes rugged individualism, survival of the fittest, manifest destiny, white

supremacy, the platitudes of capitalism, and the importance of patriarchy (Horsman, 1986). Needless to say, schools have always been sites of creating, sustaining, and reproducing ideals that have contributed to our caste system (Wilkerson, 2020).

Our goal as educators must be to eradicate deficit-based ideas about those on the margins and to radically imagine a student-centered educational system that has love, justice, and equity at its core. Where the teaching of all students is the standard, and anything less is repudiated and rejected. Connections and empathy need to be a staple in reimagined schools. The reimagining of educational systems needs to be equity centered in that it recognizes that one size fits all approaches do not work for those on the margins. In his infamous "Talk to Teachers," Baldwin's (1963) suggests that educators must be prepared to "go for broke" to meet the needs of minoritized students and to realize the intense and brutal resistance that they will experience when educators are prepared to do so. To that end, going for broke in today's context entails understanding how COVID-19 has had devastating effects for millions of Students of Color in 2020 (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2020). As disproportionate numbers of the pandemic have taken an incredibly devastating and deadly toll on black, Hispanic, and Indigenous communities, our response must be immediate and comprehensive. Not only has the pandemic robbed many of lives and livelihoods, family members, and loved ones, but school shutdowns have denied millions of students on the margins the opportunity to receive the education they need to build a brighter future. A recent report by McKinsey and Company revealed that Students of Color could be six-to-twelve months behind academically, compared with four-to-eight months for white students. While all students are suffering, those who came into the pandemic historically disadvantaged, with the fewest academic opportunities and material resources are on track to emerge from the pandemic with the greatest learning loss, and will be left even further behind. Now is the time to rethink our approaches about he we support and educate our most vulnerable students, reimagine how we know and understand our students, reconsider how we care about them, and most importantly think boldly and imaginatively about how we act on their behalf. In this moment, there must be a willingness to put equity at the center of learning and teaching for all students. Going for broke also means to recognize the ongoing racial unrest that resurfaced in 2020. The deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd appears to have ignited a new and younger generation of school-aged freedom fighters, who are demanding justice, fighting against racial inequality, and demanding that schools and society do better. In this book, an impressive group of scholars, thinkers, practitioners, and doers have responded to the call by placing an unapologetic emphasis on some of our most vulnerable student populations. This work is unapologetic in its advocacy on how we can and must meet the needs of historically underserved students such as English language learners, students with special needs, students who are experiencing homelessness, youth who are in foster care, Latinx students, African-American students, students living in chronic poverty, and others.

The educators that I had in Compton often saw something in us that we did not see in ourselves. They challenged us to be better, encouraged us to dream big,

and to not be defined by the circumstances that we saw around us such as inequality and uneven opportunity. When those educators saw us, they saw themselves. Thus, our success would reflect their success, and our shortcomings were their shortcomings. There was a connectedness that was irreplaceable. Again, they minded the margins. Much in the way that Jose Lalas and Heidi Strikwerda have assembled a group of scholars who offer thought-provoking works, evidenced-based research, and culturally meaningful practice to inform those working in today's schools that they must mind the margins. As growing inequality persists, racial stratification intensifies, and the pervasiveness of students struggling with mental health challenges remains, a new way is needed, a new mindset is required, and a new way of creating a humanizing pedagogy is required. This book offers hope, direction, insight, and evidence of how it can be done and how it is being done. The question is do we have the will, courage, and conviction to do better for our students on the margins?

Tyrone C. Howard, University of California, Los Angeles

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INTRODUCTION TO MIND THE MARGINS: THERE IS NO TEACHING WITHOUT TRUE EQUITY

Jose W. Lalas and Heidi Luv Strikwerda

ABSTRACT

In this introductory chapter, we articulate learning as the creative process of intentionally providing opportunities for growth in the learners' cognitive, social, affective, and academic development and achievement facilitated and nurtured by true equity. The authors' true equity framework entails providing the historically marginalized groups of students hope and justice, recognition and redistribution of resources needed to achieve their career and academic interests, motivation and engagement, consideration of the ways race and language matter in addressing inequities, and the critical consciousness required in interpreting, conceptualizing, analyzing, and interacting with the world in order to reach their career and academic achievement. The chapter recognizes and attempts to cover the social and cultural identities and needs of students who may be on the margins based on their race, ethnicity, religion, language, ability/disability, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and citizenship status. The authors believe that if we are truly committed to improving education for all children, we have to "mind the margins and it is imperative that we move the discussion about the impact of education from celebrating the academic gain of a few, to equity through inclusion of all, by attending to the needs of the many marginalized students who are often discounted.

Keywords: equity; hope; learning; marginalized students; motivation-engagement nexus

School reform policies that are not driven by a sense of educational and social justice are bound to fail. Excellence and equity are not meaningful alternatives, because without equity there can be no excellence. –Peter Cookson (1994, p. xi), from School Choice: The Struggle for the Soul of American Education.

INTRODUCTION

This book is a labor of courage, hope, love, and sense of educational justice, conceptualized with conviction, to inform PreK-16 educators that improving the lives of all children and youths, especially the most vulnerable, can be done, and must be done! We thought deeply and committed ourselves to compose a book that does not only provide research-based knowledge but also inspires educators to arise, advocate, struggle, and be ready to confront critical issues that affect children, schools, and humanity from a socially, culturally, and educationally just perspective.

The coeditors' commitment to equitable teaching, educational justice, and critical hope combined with the scholarly and advocacy experiences of the book chapter contributors comprised the "heart, soul, and mind" of this book. The *heart* – because the message that we have planned this book to embody is the respect and care for the autonomy of all students and the love, hope, and joy that teachers and all educators must exude and exhibit as they commit to their responsibility of teaching as a political human act. The *soul* – because the advocacy message of each chapter of the book reflects fervor, passion, energy, and enthusiasm in lifting the engagement of the most vulnerable students with equity and true generosity. The *mind* – because the content of each book chapter dedicates the theory, discourse, reflection, and practical strategies to benefit those students who are on the margins. As Paulo Freire (1998) has taught us: "Teaching is a human act." Yes, education is not just an ordinary human experience; it is a form of social, cultural, and political intervention in the world that must be guided with a humanizing sense of ethics, democracy, and civic courage (Freire, 1998).

Marginalized Students: Why Are They the Most Vulnerable Students?

"Mind the margins" is the brief designation we want our book to be called. We want it to be easily remembered, we want it to be a handy phrase for all to use as a reminder to each other that it is unconscionable for anyone to be deserving of the label "marginalized." But why are some students on the margin? Who are they and why are they marginalized?

Interestingly, but sadly, those students on the margins are the ones whose cultural and social identities are disproportionately affected by the deleterious and most often, fatal COVID-19. This pandemic highlighted people's inequalities in the areas of health care, job opportunities, access to technology, parent involvement, and home resources. More black and brown minority groups have died from COVID-19 because of possibly underlying health conditions, overcrowded living conditions in inner cities, and emotional trauma and depression. Many students from low-income families, mostly black and brown minority students, have needed subsidized free lunches, lacked reliable computer devices and connectivity, elevated trauma and anxiety, and exhibited the dire need for social, emotional, and mental health counseling. The COVID-19 pandemic has, most considerably, accentuated the weaknesses of the school system in addressing the needs of the students on the margin and highlighted disparities in access to digital devices, the Internet, and high-quality education.

We agree with Paulo Freire when he wrote that "there is no teaching without learning." With this, we can theorize that those students who are on the margins, labeled as students whose test scores revealed "standards not met" and "standards nearly met," according to some standardized measures, have not learned the fabricated and common content academic standards that are expected to be learned by students according to their age and grade level. For example, if in the region anywhere or county of Riverside, CA, a group of students from low-income families showed over 60% "standards not met" in English Language Arts (ELA), we can interpret it based on the percentage of performance alone, that six out of 10 students, perhaps, have not learned the expected ELA subject matter content standards. If this group of students have not learned the content based on the particular test results, can we interpret this case then that teaching was either not effective or it was absent? Was learning the subject matter content the problem or teaching it the issue? As commonly asked in education, is it a skill, a will, or both?

Reimagining the Way We Understand Learning

Learning occurs as the conditions related to this process become conducive to the learners' creativity, conditions that are carefully and intentionally created and nurtured to allow opportunities for growth in the learners' cognitive, social, affective, and academic development and achievement. Although educators have the propensity of talking about student academic achievement and view it as the goal of schooling, we believe that achievement will never happen without engagement! Students are learning when they are engaged. Based on our years of classroom experience as teachers, there is really no learning without student engagement and that students will engage only if they have the motivation to do so (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2020).

It is common knowledge now that the understanding of learning has evolved from a perspective that involves changes on observable behavior of students resulting from environmental factors that influence them, and to a profound extent, learning consists of the construction of knowledge by the students themselves driven by the students' own existing knowledge and their active and concrete social interaction with the environmental set of contexts. Context as an influencing factor plays a huge role in this book as we cover the social and cultural backgrounds of diverse students, how they learn, and how we facilitate their learning. This book views learning as a continuum or range of social and cultural experiences that students already have embodied from their social interaction with their environment. We recognize, respect, honor, and value these inherent social and cognitive capacities of students that they use in their acts of knowing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying real-world situations with its complexity and diversity. Thus, this book is composed from a socially and culturally situated pedagogy, a view of learning facilitated by teaching as a form of equity to motivate and engage diverse students and a vehicle for social and educational justice to benefit the students who are on the margins (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2020).

Who Are on the Margins?

In respecting, valuing, and honoring the autonomy of all students, this book specially highlights educational equity, justice, and engagement through inclusive pedagogy to meet the needs of students who are deemed to be "on the margins." Each chapter puts equity at the center of learning and teaching for all students that is applicable in multiple contexts, through a domestic and international lens. It focuses on meeting the needs of the historically underserved students such as the students from low-income families, English language learners, students with special needs, students who are homeless or foster students, and other diverse students including African-Americans, Latinx students, and students from international settings. This book recognizes and attempts to cover the social and cultural identities and needs of students who may be on the margins based on their race, ethnicity, religion, language, ability/disability, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and citizenship status.

Many students from low-income families include students of color, English Language learners, and students with disabilities. In the United States alone, approximately 20% of children in the United States lived in poverty, according to the US Census Bureau (Taylor, 2019), and it was estimated that one in five children grow up in a low-income household. Students in poverty face many challenges because of their family's financial situation affecting their lives both in and out of school and creating physical and cognitive developmental concerns. These students may not come to school with proper supplies or have the ability to participate in many extracurricular activities for financial reasons. They may not get adequate sleep and nutrition, get bullied, and as a result, may have very low self-esteem (Berliner, 2013).

Like students from low-income families, many English language learners, African-American students, Latinx students, and other students from diverse groups in international settings may also be included as students on the margins because of their naturally consistent lower performance in school subject matter content, inappropriate and inequitable program offerings in schools, and low performance in standardized achievement tests as typified on their "standards not met" and "standards nearly met" performances in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which is a high stakes assessment commonly used in California, USA, that demonstrates the pernicious achievement gaps in ELA and Mathematics across ethnicities and levels of economic inequalities (Flint, 2018).

Because many school institutions often train teachers to become mechanically formed technicians aimed to breed knowledge, instead of critical, intellectual, and cultural workers who embrace and facilitate the meaning-making of their students (Saltman, 2018), education is often not used to educate, but rather to reproduce societal structures and systems. Jean Anyon cautioned us with her classic studies (1980) on social class, hidden curriculum, and school knowledge that imply that not all schools are equal and that schools provide students with different knowledge, abilities, and skills based on their families' social class and the quality of resources they have access to. Henceforth, the "heart, soul, and

mind" of this book articulate our belief driven by a moral imperative, one which is solely focused on the true equity work that must be generated and can be accomplished to break this continual cycle of complex and inequitable apparatus for the "miseducation" of those continually found on the margins.

There Is No Teaching Without Learning, Motivation, and Engagement

Since we believe that learning is a process that involves the students' social and contextual interaction with their environments, diverse students who are on the margins must be actively engaged in school by attending regularly, avoiding chronic absenteeism, participating in school activities actively, feeling a sense of school belongingness, and not dropping out of school. It is also imperative to true equity work for one to think about *student engagement* as a requisite to any school reforms and innovations that offer effective learning. What does student engagement really mean? Is it synonymous to motivation? What factors influence student engagement?

It is very tempting and natural to think and use the terms motivation and engagement interchangeably. However, these two terms are different: student engagement may occur because of motivation; engagement is action and motivation is the intention to do something; engagement is defined by observable, action-oriented behaviors while motivation is considered an internal process that carries an intention. According to Reschly and Christenson (2012), student engagement is action-oriented and has been found to be helpful in preventing student dropout and fostering high school completion. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) asserted their view of "engagement as the outward manifestation of motivation" (p. 22). The common unifying factor about motivation and engagement is the notion that both are influenced by context, individual differences, and link to student outcomes.

What does engagement really mean? There are different theoretical models of describing student engagement (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004); the most current research-based formulation is offered by Finn and Zimmer (2012). According to Finn and Zimmer (2012), there are four types of student engagement: academic engagement, social engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective engagement.

Academic engagement refers to observable behaviors in the classroom and at a student's home that are directly connected to the learning process such as attentiveness and completing assignments in class and at home or supplementing learning through other academic extracurricular activities. This engagement reflects ongoing participation, focus, hard work, involvement, concentration, and/or effort in doing academic-related work at school, home, and community. *Social engagement* refers to observable appropriate behaviors that a student demonstrates in school and in his or her interaction with the teacher and his or her classmates in the classroom such as attending school regularly, coming to school and class on time, exhibiting kindness and caring attitude toward other students, and not withdrawing from classroom participation in class activities or disrespecting other students. This engagement reflects appropriate interaction

with classmates and the teacher, attention to relevant class activities, following directions, and speaking politely.

Cognitive engagement is the thorough, thoughtful, and purposeful effort to comprehend complex ideas in order to achieve mastery of the subject matter. Student behaviors linked to cognitive engagement include: asking critical questions, concentration in understanding challenging academic concepts, willingness to participate in dealing with difficult tasks, reading more references than the assigned material, revisiting content area materials and following through on topics that are learned previously, using self-regulation, self-monitoring, and other cognitive strategies to guide learning, and examining ideas, concepts, and events carefully by using research and other authentic sources. *Affective engagement* involves an emotional response characterized by feelings of belongingness and being involved in school as a positive and caring place where activities are relevant and worth pursuing. Affective engagement provides students the enthusiasm, enjoyment, satisfaction, and pride to participate in school activities and to be resilient in dealing with peers and the challenges in doing school tasks. Affective engagement refers to the student's emotional feeling of belongingness in the school community of learners, teachers, administrators, and parents and understanding that school prepares them with knowledge, skills, abilities, and disposition for current and future out-of-school tasks and challenges.

Agentic engagement refers to the student-initiated constructive contribution into the current active classroom instruction they are receiving (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2020; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Student behaviors connected to agentic engagement include: offering input, expressing a preference, making a suggestion, asking a question, communicating what they are thinking and needing, recommending a goal, communicating their level of interest, soliciting resources, seeking ways to add personal relevance to lessons, seeking clarification, and generating options. Thus, the motivation-engagement nexus describes the interaction between motivation as the internal intention to do something and engagement as the external action defined by observable academic, social, cognitive, affective, and agentic behaviors.

Equity Influences Student Engagement?

Commonly, most educators' understanding of equity connects to the issues of access and attention to student instructional needs. Established theorists and practitioners have explained equity as a general response to meet the needs of students as they need them (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016; Fullan, 2016). Others view equity as a prerequisite to having excellent schools by stating, "without equity, how can schools truly be excellent (Burris & Garrity, 2008, p. 158)." Even others assert that in order to realize equity in working with students requires a shattering of inequities by having an equity heart, will, and know-how-to lead (La Salle Avelar & Johnson, 2019). But, what really is equity? Is it a philosophical stance? Is it a set of program standards? Is it an approach to teaching and learning? Is it a set of classroom strategies and resources? In reality, people are probably using this term without embracing the "true" meaning of "equity." In

defining "true equity" we want to look beyond theorizing and district boardroom and conference conversations, to an inward approach that is deeply felt by all practitioners to impact classroom instruction, influence school-wide climate and culture, and drive policy development decisions.

We would like to put forth the stance that "true equity" is needed to foster transformative solutions in addressing the disparity in student achievement and institute coherence in meeting the program and instructional needs of all students regardless of their social, cultural, and class identities. We define "true equity" as the relevant and responsive educational attempt that is culturally and socially situated to meet the program or instructional needs of students, when they need them, relative to their academic backgrounds and social and cultural identities (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016; Lalas, Charest, Strikwerda, & Ordaz, 2019).

Related to this is the required necessity to know who the students are, how they learn, and what motivates and facilitates their engagement in school's academic and other nonacademic activities (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2020). Equity functions (1) to attend to the needs of all students, especially those who are traditionally and historically "marginalized" populations of students, (2) to aim to redress disadvantages in terms of opportunity and social mobility for the traditionally underserved populations, (3) to provide a fair and open access to all, and more importantly, (4) to recognize differences and redistribute resources and services, particularly to those in greatest need.

Equity also guides school leaders in understanding and responding to the inevitable inequality in schools brought about by the existing categories of difference or social identity in our society, in general, and schools, in particular, that may include race, ethnicity, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability and disability conditions, and citizenship status (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). As inequality, when not addressed appropriately, persists and turns into inequities, it is imperative that equity work focuses on repairing harm, restoring voice, dignity, and agency, and increasing democratic participation for all. We aim for this "mind the margins" book to inspire all educators to focus their passion and energy in honoring and advancing the value of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Finally, by putting equity at the center of the learning experiences of marginalized students, it fosters students' caring relationship with the school personnel and their peers, gains a sense of belonging to the school community, and nurtures the feeling of being cared for by teachers at school. It emphasizes how equity plays a vital role in recognizing the common practices and/or resources possessed by individuals that may put them at an advantage over others. Lalas et al. (2019) presents the important role of equity in nurturing hope, sense of belonging, and student engagement. As a result, when equity is appropriately applied it transforms and provides learning conditions that foster and nurture the opportunity for all students, especially those who are on the margins, to experience effectiveness in one's capacities, sense of satisfaction in their personal choices and interests, and caring, responsive, interpersonal relationship with others.

According to Blankstein and Noguera (2016) the "current approach to educating children has left us with millions who leave school disinterested in

learning and unprepared for work, college, or the challenges of life in the 21st century" (p. 13). As inequities continue to reside and prevail in areas with pervasive poverty through high levels of crime, high dropout rates, achievement gap, and drug use, feelings of despair driven by no means of escape, and as a consequence, hopelessness expands throughout these communities, impacting the educational environments conducive for learning, and deplete students' desire to persevere through challenging tasks (Strikwerda, 2019). For these reasons, it is evident that if we do not address the educational disparities in the learning opportunities that are currently afforded, the predictable outcome will result in failure, hopelessness, and pervasive poverty in these low-income schools.

Hence, we believe that true equity entails providing the historically marginalized groups hope and justice, recognition and redistribution of resources needed to achieve their career and academic interests, intentional motivation and engagement, and the critical consciousness required to act upon the transformation of their world.

Equally important in providing true equity is the role of language and race. Race and language matter in working with all students because they are essential in recognizing their students' social and cultural identities as relevant ways to support their learning. In order for educators to be properly guided by their moral and intellectual compasses in addressing inequities, it is imperative to consider one's personal biases and the way these may influence one's perception of others. Critical consciousness provides the key social, cultural, economic, and political awareness in interpreting, conceptualizing, analyzing, and interacting with the world that are needed in order to reach their career and academic achievement. Hope is the element of equity that makes it possible for one to engage in the struggle, to believe in the possibilities of tomorrow, and to actively participate in their quest for for social and educational justice. Fig. 1 illustrates the key true equity-related elements that we attempt to capture in the content of our book.

We acknowledge that the path of putting equity at the center of everything we do to address inequities for all students, including the marginalized students, is not going to be "a walk in the park" as it challenges the status quo and often, goes "against common sense" (Kumashiro, 2015). In creating this book anchored in the true equity framework, we understand that these acts of knowing and *daring to transform inequities with inclusion, justice, and hope* is a small first step forward in raising critical awareness of what equity is, in articulating the inevitable inequalities to understand why equity work is imperative, and in guiding instructional perspectives on how to motivate and engage students. Moreover, it is our intention to influence the development and understanding of what providing true equity actually entails for the lives of marginalized students. Therefore, it is our prevailing belief that without a true understanding of equity to motivate transformative solutions to current academic and career challenges of what all students and school personnel need, instill coherence by utilizing the "right drivers in action" (Fullan, 2016), and provide hope and justice to historically marginalized groups, the critical recognition, advocacy, and resources,