

Foreword

As America has been thrust into discussions about the value of life, an opportunity window to rethink our approach to schools has emerged. Where issues of access, empowerment, and fidelity with respect to law enforcement and the Black community has taken a national stage, a window of opportunity has opened to revisit our conception of schooling practices and the educational lifespan of the individual. This special issue of the *Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals* captures this window of time. The emerging scholars in this special issue seize the opportunity to promote and apply critical conceptualizations from seminal scholars in education to current educational topics to promote access, empowerment, and fidelity within the practice of education from Pre-K through Post-Secondary Education.

This special issue of the *Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals* is divided into three themed sections: a) access, b) empowerment, and c) fidelity. Under the *access* theme, scholars examine the factors that impede equality of access to education throughout the educational lifespan of the individual. The *empowerment* theme approaches the ways in which urban students and communities can enjoy an education that considers their culture and perspectives as asset-based and enriching to the learning environment. Scholars in the *fidelity* theme focus on the direct practices that improve teacher outcomes. Altogether, this special issue addresses the reconceptualization of the structure, actors, and actions of change within the urban school.

Contributors to the *access* section each explore how historically under-resourced and neglected areas have impacted educational progress for marginalized groups. Tracey Creech asserts that the limited access to library and media services in urban schools diminishes both the

quality and depth of educational output for students in lower socioeconomic situations. Creech strategically notes that the problem of access to library materials cannot be simply solved through increasing printed volumes or electronic resources. Ultimately, Creech recommends a strategic approach to increasing access that also involves employing qualified staff that are able to strengthen student agency in accessing print and electronic resources. Where Creech addresses access for lower socioeconomic students in K-12 schools, Dymilah Hewitt highlights the historical plight of African American veterans attempting to gain access to higher education. Noting the racialized legacy of the G.I. Bill, Hewitt elevates the discussion to explore how current practices of predatory for-profit colleges have exploited African American veterans seeking higher education. Through a lens grounded in critical race theory, Hewitt provides recommendations that provide opportunities for stakeholders, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to play a greater role in strengthening the transition from service to higher education.

In the *empowerment* section, the emerging scholars in this section offer a timely homage and application of dispositional frameworks to strengthen the quality of education for urban students. The recognition and assessment of the relevance of race and racism in American education provides an impetus for Monica Allen to discuss the ways in which institutions and educators can be empowered to create multi-leveled, multi-tiered change in urban schools. Utilizing the scholarship of Ladson-Billings (1998), M. Allen posits that the internalization of critical race theory at an institutional and classroom level has the power to equalize educational expenditures and effort. Where M. Allen applies critical race theory to empower decision-makers to better serve marginalized African American students, Kelly Rhyne revitalizes a bold approach to conceiving and constructing curriculum. Rhyne skillfully integrates the scholarship

of Dubois (1903/1994) and Asante (1998) to assert that African American students, particularly high achieving students, are presently being educated from a European perspective that cannot appreciate their nature. The recognition of this incongruence in the educational experience, Rhyne recommends an educational curriculum and pedagogical approach that is grounded in the ethnic and racial identity of the learner, the Afrocentric Curriculum. As Rhyne asserts the virtue of an Afrocentric curriculum, Joseph Allen provides empowerment to teachers on the improvement of their delivery style and its fulfillment of responsive practices. Joseph Allen examines the intersection of culturally relevant pedagogy and communication theory to provide insight to the coding and decoding that exists in the teacher-student dynamic in urban settings. Altogether, the work of M. Allen, Rhyne and J. Allen empowers institutional leaders and classroom teachers with an opportunity to create favorable educational conditions for urban students.

As previous sections within this issue strategically capture the issues and practices that impact access and empowerment for urban students, the *fidelity* section explores the key actors and means needed to implement change in schools. Where teacher educators, school leaders, and teachers may be conceptually aware of culturally relevant pedagogy, Tamera Moore strategically provides recommendations for implementation that integrates teacher education and K-12 education. Moore effectively identifies areas where teacher preparation and K-12 professional development can serve as malleable factors in implementing culturally relevant pedagogy to assist teachers in impacting student outcomes. Where Moore effectively identifies the role of the teacher education program in impacting the cultural relevance of teachers entering K-12 schools, John Williams explicitly targets how the implementation of culturally relevant classroom management education can increase teacher effectiveness and decrease

teacher attrition in urban schools. Williams, in addressing the integrity of culturally relevant classroom management education for future teachers, suggests a redefinition of the inputs by which new teachers are evaluated as accomplished teachers. The assurance of fidelity of teacher effectiveness in the classroom is captured in Torriann Dooley-Kennedy's assessment of the role of instructional coaches. Dooley-Kennedy effectively positions the instructional coach as an ultimate resource in building the competency and efficacy of practicing teachers at the school site level. As instructional coaches become a growing trend in school systems, Dooley-Kennedy advocates their role as integral to the sustainability of teachers over time and their impact on student achievement.

As a whole body of work, this special issue of the *Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals* addresses educational equity for K-20 African American students. Articles in the issue explore programmatic, pedagogical, and integrative approaches to impact the educational lifespan of African American student. Across this country, as value of Black lives are being discussed in streets, forums, and newsrooms, it is the desire of these scholars and this journal that the window of opportunity, created by the recognition of race and reality, provide a launching pad for rethinking and re-conceptualizing K-20 educational approaches and practices.

Dr. Derrick Robinson

Editor

References

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- DuBois, W. E. B. (1903/1994). *The souls of black folks*. New York: Dover Publications.
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