

Personal Vision for Equality for the Future of Public Education

Equality has been a significant part of the American society, especially since the time when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed his dream for the nation that had become his legacy. The public schools of the country had implemented radical changes in their attempt to equality. Most of these attempts have failed because large part of the student population still experience going to school without the having access to the essentials of a successful education. This included students of color and lower economic classes.

Audience Identification

This paper is created to address the inequalities in the different areas of education; the public school teachers and standards, in diversity and inclusion, area of High Stakes Assessment, bilingual and English Language Learners, and in public education policies. This would mean how this study is meant for school educators, administrators, teachers, and parents. This paper was created for the entire education system community.

Basic Vision of Public School Equality

The vision presented in this paper is the equality for all of the students that is founded in reality and not just as the nation's collective dream. The plan for achieving this vision would be in a financial nature wherein schools would be funded according to federal funding. Schools were currently funded through county property taxes. Thus, poorer communities would produce lesser funding for their schools because of the social class living in their area.

The proposal of this paper would pool the tax funds allocated to education from each county under the state as it would be equally divided to the schools by student. This would mean schools located in higher economic areas would not receive new laptop computers or any other kind of technology every couple of years but it would also mean each student in the country would have a textbook regardless of their location.

Problems could rise out from this as parents from wealthier sections of the state would not support such proposals while parents from lower economic areas would have little voice

and power to have a say in this decision. There was also a suggestion for the opposition of the reorganization of primary school funding could look for private school institutions that would better suit their tastes and needs.

Teachers and Standards

The discussion of providing equality in education for all students could tackle so many areas. However, the starting point of these discussions must begin with those that would be in the frontline of making this vision into a reality. An honest look into the education system would point out certain inequalities for teachers and standards. Awareness of such inequalities would prove to be significant for the stakeholders to formulate strategies to address these problems and to achieve the vision that this paper endeavored.

Current Inequalities in Teachers and Standards

The right to academic freedom has been ascribed to educators and students in educational institutions under a society that is liberal democratic (Chamblis, 1996). It marks the conduct by which the right-holder has the freedom to move in according to their own convictions to attain such ideal. There have been barriers to academic freedom because of restrictions from the liberties of ordinary citizens. Teachers have a role of assigning boundaries to academic freedom. The width of such boundaries has always received room for argument and thus hints the inequalities in education from a general point of view.

Lord Acton held a high standard when it came to the equality of education in the United States. According to him “Americans are unwilling that any should be deprived in childhood of the means of competition” (Kozol, 1991, p. 83). This was written about 130 years ago. Public schools had experienced such a “denial of the means of competition.”

In the book *Savage Inequalities: Children in American Schools*, there was a comparison between schools from different sectors of New York to exhibit the inequality that existed. Public School 24 spoke highly with enthusiasm about the teaching staff at Riverdale.

Public School 79, on the other hand, served the poorer children and the principal was forced to take the tenth-best teachers. Children from more disadvantaged families experienced going to schools that were overcrowded with more diverse needs. They were the kids that needed the best teachers; instead, they get the worst (Kozol, 1991).

According to the Department of Education, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was based on pillars such as “stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents.” Under this standard, the public education system must consider which schools needed to receive a higher level of quality teaching to compensate for the barriers and struggles that were presented by factors such as poverty. The gap would only widen when low-skilled teachers were placed in schools that required highly skilled educators to set the students on the track wherein they could have competitive advantage to other schools that were well off.

There was a separate instance wherein District 10 had received an allocation to have computers. Equal number of computers was given to all of the elementary schools. Riverdale had smaller classes and fewer students, nevertheless, they received the same number of computers make the number of computers twice the number of the student population. While students in disadvantaged schools suffer from below average classroom instruction, students in wealthier communities would receive an abundance of technology that was beyond their need. This left students from poorer communities in lack and at the unfortunate side of the educational achievement gap. Admittedly, individuals from different denominations would experience different lives as students even if they lived in the country of opportunities; they would still experience living in the land of inequalities (Lareau, 2003). While some would claim a sense of entitlement to the ideals of the great nation, others would be forced to take on a sense of constraint because of the gap that existed in the educational system.

Much of the inequalities present in teaching and the standards of education could be rooted from the lack of shared values when it came to good teaching (Charlotte, 2000). Research had shown how there was not a unified approach by which teachers were evaluated for quality. School districts had never forged a common language to characterize a common language for everyone in the district to agree.

Another huge barrier to coherence and equality for teachers would rest in the lack of conversation for between the teachers and the administrators to provide a learning experience that would resolve inconsistencies in the system (Charlotte, 2000). Teachers were left with their guesses as to what values and assumptions about good teaching by which they judged their performance.

Potential Ways of Equalizing Teachers and Standards in Public Schools

Different generations provided different aspirations when it came to how they perceived the standard education must be shaped. However, there was a constant need to uphold the quality of education without abandoning the production of a well-balanced citizenry for a democracy (Bruner, 1977). In this generation, there was a need to radically close the gap between the diverse districts in the public education sector.

The divide that existed between the advantaged and disadvantaged school districts was too wide that it was impossible to ignore it. Changes in the public policies of education must be created in order to address this issue. There would also be a need to search for different avenue by which this change could begin with.

In a country under a democracy, the respect of the individual has been considered inherent, as people were seen to be a significant part of the social and economic system (Technology, 1996). Under a holistic perspective, each child would be seen as an expression of something sacred and must be treated in this manner. Those who promoted this perspective

had expressed how educators must see this in their students, as well as promote this perspective for the students for the students to discover.

The conventional process of education has set standards that did not really address the needs of all the students under a public education system because of the diverse needs that was inevitably present. Holistic educators posed questions such as “how could a child be a slow learner if he was learning at a pace that was right for him?” and “how could a child be disruptive if he was interested in what he was doing, instead of what others wanted him to do?” (Teachnology, 1996)

While not every school could adapt a completely holistic approach, especially under a public education system, administrators and educators must at least absorb the ideals of a holistic perspective. This would mean they would see the sacredness of each child, regardless of his race, native language and social status. The reality of public education could be seen in the way students had been stratified according to their nominal denomination and how the quality of their education would be determined by their race, social class and bilingualism.

Teacher training presented itself as a viable factor in addressing the inequalities in teachers and standards in education. It was important for pre-service teachers to be trained to cope with the heavy demand that was given on them as they enter the public education system (Robinson, 2002). There was a need to produce a high standard of academic and professional quality because of the expanding sector of public schools.

The pupil-teacher system was introduced in the year 1840 to better equip the teachers with on-hand work experience as well as raise the level of recruitment for able candidates when they graduated (Robinson, 2002). While they were still in the pre-service training, it was important for the quality of education for such new teachers to determine their skill level as they start working full time. It would be during these times that the standard for equality

and excellence must be embedded for the teachers, even before they practice their teaching profession.

The standard for the curriculum must also be reevaluated according to the diverse needs of the students from different walks of life. The main objective of efficient curriculum planning would be to present subjects effectively in terms of structure and not just coverage (Bruner, 1977). While the long problem of curriculum problems had been neglected most of the time, considering it must refer to the basic principle of teaching according to Benjamin Franklin of what was useful and ornamental (Bruner, 1977). This involved imparting skills as well as general understanding for the students.

The involvement of the parents in their children's life and education was also inherent in the closing the gap of the inequalities in education (Enerson et al., 2006). While teachers and standards were the key in providing for the students educational success, it would be beneficial to take time to consider the role of the parents in the process of upholding an educational standard for their children.

Homes that were characterized by strong support, stimulation, and exploration were seen to function effectively for the students. While economic wealth was an important factor in providing for the children quality education, parents have a powerful influence over material comforts and even levels of parental education (Enerson et al., 2006). Children who lived in child-centered homes thrived to become more successful; this idea overcomes cultural and economic barriers. Students needed at least one parent who believed in their abilities and to play an active role in their lives for them to achieve success in school.

Electronic learning (e-learning) also held some great potential in addressing the inequalities that existed. It was seen to have the power to impact education systems because of the opportunities that it provides to improve learning experience (Anderson, 2003). As society gained better understanding about e-learning, its strengths had been increasingly

revealing itself in how it could transform the present approach to teaching and learning transactions (Anderson, 2003).

The possibilities could be endless and it could begin in adapting this approach in the present education system in a wider level. For instance, students could attend classes online and at hours that they could choose from. This would address the dilemma of working students. E-learning could also address the problem of textbooks as teachers could easily send e-books to the electronic mails (e-mails) that most students have. On the other hand, this also required for the public education sector to raise the bar for providing technologies, especially for disadvantaged schools.

In the 21st century, the nation had been experiencing such a gap between economics and education. It had been widening since the year 2000 (Fullan, 2007). Educational change has a long history of progress and failures. While educators and researchers knew what needed to be done, there was a lost sense of urgency and strategic commitment to do the work at hand in achieving the needed large-scale and sustainable reform.

According to Fullan (2007), “reform is not just putting into place the latest policy. It means changing the cultures of classrooms, schools, districts, universities, and so on. There is much more to educational reform than most people realize” (p. 7). On this note, those who were concerned in the education system must claim back the sense of urgency and commitment that would be essential for changing the school systems in order to guarantee equality not just for the quality of the teachers and the standards but for the welfare of the students in the country for years to come.

Diversity and Inclusion

The market of the public education system would cover students with an ever-increasing student population that was characterized by diversity. Diversity referred to different factors that differentiated the student population such as race, religion, socio-

economic status as well as gender. Throughout the years, the U.S. Department of Education would observe a shift in the percentages within the public schools. For some time white non-Hispanic population had decreased while there was an increase in the total minority population. While this issue was not novel since racial inequality had always been a struggle in the school systems since the foundation of the country, it would remain an issue that required attention and resolution.

Current Inequalities regarding Diversity and Inclusion

Inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream classroom had been a major area of debate in the education system. Most of the time, children from special education require specific instruction and curriculum in order to address their disabilities and different needs from students who were without disabilities (Clough & Corbett, 2001).

Not all schools provide adequate support for the inclusion of these students in their classrooms for a number of reasons. First reason, students with disabilities could be considered distracting to other students and sometimes they could even cause disruptions. Second, they need to exert extra effort and to use up school budget in addressing the special needs of students in inclusive education. Third, their staff might not be well equipped to handle classes with both students with disabilities and without disabilities. Most of the time, students were turned away or were not provided with genuinely inclusive education in public schools.

When it came to inequality in terms of diversity, the Black-White education gap provided one of the most problematic issues in the education system. There were different mindsets that were in place ever since the early days of the United States that was characterized by theories that explained why such inequalities existed in present-day America.

The deficit-deprivation theory was one of the first theories that existed to explain the gap between African-Americans and other races in the schools. The premise of this theory stated how there was a certain hierarchy of intelligence when it came to races and the whites held the top spot while the blacks held the bottom (Thompson, 2004). This reflected that African Americans did not have the capability of excelling at the same academic level of the whites because they were genetically inferior (Thompson, 2004). Evidently, this theory held no truth, as intelligence had nothing to do with the race of the person. This was a mindset brought about by the history of slavery in the country that made it natural for whites to be at the top while blacks were at the bottom. This was a mindset that many whites and some people of color still believed even today (Thompson, 2004). This mindset had brought about this black-white achievement gap in education that was rooted back to the country's history.

There was also the theory of structural inequality that stated how schools were designed to perpetuate and maintain class differences (Thompson, 2004). African Americans were originally represented at the lowest socioeconomic level, however, in the present day, families from low socioeconomic level involved people of different races as well. Schools had not fully moved on to disputing the mindset of being avenues of perpetuating class differences. Even in the present times, this could still be experienced as districts in disadvantaged areas still received little support and improvement.

The effects of tracking had also played a part in the inequalities of the system. This system had been used to prepare students for their socioeconomic future (Thompson, 2004). Those who were tagged as "gifted" were usually prepared for college and higher paying jobs. On the other hand, those who were identified for special education students or those who were considered to have lower academic tracks were prepared for less prestigious and lower-paying jobs. Apparently, students from minority populations were commonly considered for lower academic tracks (Thompson, 2004).

There was also the problem of exclusion and rejection. Most of the time, schools did not want to be overloaded with students of different colors. The pressure given to those students who were included in schools was so high that they develop learning disabilities in the process (Blythe & Milner, 1996). This would further lessen their chances for educational success. Most of the time students from the minority population would be the ones found outside the school system because of outright racism (Blythe & Milner, 1996).

The fact that inequality was deeply rooted in the school's system would affect student achievement. According to the labeling theory, if a student was often told that he was stupid and could not do work, the label would be a self-fulfilling prophecy and create his notion of himself (Ballentine & Spade, 2007). Teachers and other who had created such a label response to this effect as if they were accurate in his they had perceived his abilities when in the first place; they were the ones who had planted this perception in the student's mind.

Teacher expectations had existed based on the student's race, class, religion, gender and socioeconomic background (Ballentine & Spade, 2007). This was studied to widely impact a student's self-perception and achievement level. The schools played a significant role in molding the individual's sense of "self" and could one's sense of competence, intelligence and likeability.

Potential means of Providing Greater Equality in the Areas of Diversity and Inclusion

It was important for students to claim their right to academic freedom. If they choose to be included in general education classrooms from public schools instead of attending special education schools, they must be allowed to do so. Schools must be able to provide for their needs and to provide for them the quality of education other students get. They must allow them the experience of a regular schooling life and if addressing their specific needs was required for this to happen; this must be implemented (Clough & Corbertt, 2001).

Teachers must also be equipped to handle special education students even if they were considered general education teachers. Administrators must always be prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities with the law's minimum requirements.

Multicultural education was birthed in the United States as the minority's response to the failure of certain compensatory programs to address the needs and close the gap in the areas of diversity and inclusion. Minority groups insisted that the curriculum and the educational policy must address the issues of racial inequality, minority cultural identities as well as how the power was distributed within the schools (Ng, 1995). In this light, legislation involved ethnic studies and bilingual programs that served to promote the government's commitment to the promotion of multiculturalism to address racial inequality in public schools.

The process of providing equality started with the stakeholders such as the educators and the administrators. Pre-service teachers received education to gain sensitivity and awareness to meet the needs of the minority students. Programs such as English as a Second Language and Transitional Programs were created for this purpose (Ng, 1995). The understanding of cultural differences was also promoted among educational institutions. Cultural pluralism was also stressed as it advocated the recognition for ethnic and cultural diversity as well as the acceptance for the citizens for them to uphold their rights to retain their cultural identity (Ng, 1995).

Cultural education was an important approach to providing greater equality for areas of diversity. It included each aspect of multicultural education that was composed of concerns for cultural and linguistic continuity, ethnic and race relations, and the rights of these citizens (Ng, 1995). The goal of educating the stakeholders in education would be to change policies and practices that were considered discriminatory as well as eradicate individual behaviors and attitudes that reinforced prejudice perceptions.

It was also necessary for an inter-agency collaboration to take place in order for this to happen. Different departments in the government like the, Social Services and Education Departments, because of budgetary constraints (Blythe & Milner, 1996). There were also differences in their personality, training and perspective. To illustrate this, social workers were more considered for the individual while teachers have to think about the group such as the class or the school as a whole.

Without any form of willingness to accept each other's viewpoints as valid, cooperation would unlikely take place. Joint training (initial training and in-service training) could be helpful in establishing coherence between different agencies in order to work as allied agencies to promote cooperation (Blythe & Milner, 1996). Addressing the need for them to work together will benefit their schools and the students more than looking out for their agencies' welfare.

It was also important to raise student's awareness when it came to ethnic and racial issues (Ng, 1995). They needed to become aware of the impact of racist behavior and how factors related to this were existed to the fact that racism still existed. This would enable a flexible system to meet student's individual needs better. Students needed to gain more understanding towards minority groups and have a regard for diverse cultures. This would enable them to respect all students as people should be respected.

In the same manner, teachers must avoid stereotyping students, as this would influence how the minority group would be perceived by the majority (Ng, 1995). With regards to the faculty, teachers and the schools must take a proactive role in relating with the immigrant parents (Ng, 1995). There should also be a visible amount of teachers in the faculty who are of different color as well.

While the traditional educational system promoted the achievement of the middle class students by using school curriculums that were built on the aspects of European culture.

This system had also embedded underachievement for students who did not classify in that group (Gay, 2000).

Reforms would continue to fail if they continue to carry curriculums that promoted students of color and of low socioeconomic class to be deficient. The curriculum needed to be based on a culturally response and holistic approach that would includ cultural knowledge for the contributions of ethnic groups to the development of the U.S. history life (Gay, 2000). This would provide learning encounters that would be relevant and effective as it would further transform negative perceptions of their groups.

High Stakes Assessment

The current era of education could be defined by accountability, high stakes testing, and centralized regulation and militarization of schools (Lipman, 2003). There had been certain areas in the nation that have been described to have the worst education in the nation.

High stakes assessment was characterized by the competency examinations that were given to students as the only measure by which decisions about the students, teachers and schools were made. This did not take into account performance from the past of from the future. These tests would determine if students would be retained or accelerated as well as if certifications and diplomas would be given. The aggregate scores for such testing also determined whether schools had sufficient yearly progress. While some schools had responded to these in a positive manner, there had been setbacks brought about by the rigidity and assessment-based measure for academic achievement.

Current Inequalities Caused by the NCLB in the Area of High Stakes Assessment

There had been sources of discontent with regards to the education system of the country. There had been disheartening trends in the SAT scores, poor performances by the students in comparison in a worldwide scope and low educational achievement of the

minority groups. There was also an evident widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, as well as increasing per-pupil expenditure (Hakim, 2000).

High stake testing and school accountability had been accompanied by centralized regulation of teachers and schools as well as the militarization of the system (Lipman, 2003). There was also the emergence of the highly selective college preparatory programs. While the No Child Left Behind act was created to provide for results, this placed a lot of pressures for the schools to produce good scores when it came to the assessment. The problem was the numbers mattered more than addressing the needs of the students. Pillars such as freedom for the states and the communities as well as more choices for the parents were neglected to give way to the importance of high stake assessments.

The No Child Left Behind act emerged out of the problem of the “one-size-fits-all” approach. However, the area of high stakes assessment had been rearing a similar dilemma for the students. There existed the erosion of political support for generous funding of public education (Hakim, 2000).

High Stakes Assessment, instead of closing the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged, had played a part in worsening the situation. The stakeholders in education had been overly dependent on the results of these tests that they neglect the other things. It also served as a defining factor for disadvantaged students who did not perform as well the advantaged students. Instead of giving them assistance and empowerment, it had provided for them more space to catch up to and further discouragement.

The inequalities brought about by such tests could be seen limited because of how the coverage of the test determined what the students knew. If subjects or topics were not covered by the tests, assessments would not care about them if students excelled in those areas or not. The single test score from the examination was the single determinant for student achievement. This would narrow the statewide curriculum that would reflect the

nature of a one-size-fits-all system. Students also exert so much time and effort for the assessments that they study for the test and not to learn anymore. These assessments also could not give adequate information in how instruction could be improved and how equality could be implemented.

Potential Remedies to Inequalities in the Area of High Stakes Assessment

High stake assessment examinations must involve a number of sources for assessment in terms of critical decisions made for the educational lives of the students such as promotion, graduation and certification (Lipman, 2003). The measures must be made according to the advance student learning. They must work with the teachers regarding their instructional design in order to have indicators for the students' future. In this manner, high stake assessment would exist not only to gauge if schools were meeting the standards, this would also help schools meet these standards.

There was so much at stake for such assessments and there must always be a guarantee that they were valid and reliable and created for an intended purpose, assessing a particular population. Assessments must be strictly aligned to what students were really taught in order to truly measure the progress of the student (Lipman, 2003).

There must be a stress in utilizing multiple assessments in order to get a higher level of proficiency for the students' capabilities. Assessments should also be used to improve the educational outcomes for all of the students involved and not just those who scored high. They must still be provided with equal benefits.

Bilingual/ELL

Current Inequalities Faced by Bilingual/ELL Students

Students who were bilingual needed to recognize their valuable educational asset, which was their ability to move in and out of two languages. However, the problem was this was being devalue and treated with indifference by the state education system (Blythe &

Milner, 1996). Education systems would not consider bilingualism as an asset. Other American students have to undergo formal training to learn a second language. However, minority groups who were fluent in their native language and spoke fluent English were not regarded with the same level of respect and accomplishment.

On the other hand, English Language Learners (ELLs) were often seen as a burden for the teacher since there were different approaches that accompanied not being fluent in speaking English. Most of the barriers to educational success would be directly caused by the inability of the student to speak and understand English perfectly. Gaps existed because of communication struggles for the students. They have extra work to add on to their schoolwork because they had to learn the English language at a faster pace in order to catch up with the school's lessons.

The labeling theory was also applied in this form of inequality. Students who were ELLs were often perceived to be slow learners just because they could not cope with English speaking classmates. Since they had to juggle learning the language and the lessons at the same time, they have a difficulty making good grades in school. They would be labeled to be slow or dumb students because of this (Ballentine & Spade, 2007).

When other students hear ELL speak English, they would find it funny and label them to be dumb or weird students. This would have a deep impact in the development of the student as they get pressured to learn the language and perform well in school. Learning the language and adjusting to the school system may be hard enough, it would not help if they would be treated in a demeaning manner. In reality, if Americans move to another country that spoke a foreign language and did not understand English, they would feel inadequate as well. It was the wrong perceptions of ELLs that further widened the gap.

Potential Remedies of Inequalities Faced by Bilingual/ELL Students

Students must be aware of the rich achievement of bilingualism as there would be students from the minority population who were employed and helping non-English speaking members of their families overcome difficult social predicaments (Blythe & Milner, 1996). This remained to be unrecognized by the education system.

To address the issues of inequalities there was a need to provide recognition to the bilingual achievements instead of leaving them marginalized and ignored by the structures outside of their communities (Blythe & Milner, 1996). The recognition of this educational asset must be embedded in the students in a positive perspective, instead of being looked at as a flaw or a mark of belonging to the minority group.

Key stakeholders must work with new respect and a sense of humility when it came to their relationships with communities that had bilingual students. The appreciation for this cultural strength must begin with them as they recognized what contributions it brought to the fabric of the public education school system (Blythe & Milner, 1996). This would definitely pave the way for the construction of trust and the promotion of motivating for the students. This would also reverse the exclusion that they experienced as well as restore their right not only to be educated but to excel as well (Blythe & Milner, 1996).

Multicultural education was also applicable when it came to language proficiency and student achievement. Under the perspective of this curriculum, school knowledge must be restructured and rearticulated to address issues of minority failure and cultural characteristics (Ng, 1995). In this manner, language proficiency would be a priority to support the success of minority groups and transform it as an investment on their future, instead of a liability for the schools.

The application of a constructivist learning perspective in education was also important. Under this approach, students were encouraged to develop their own meaning of the world and as they do so, they create ideas and embed learning in real life experiences and engage in hands-on learning (Mercuri & Rhea, 2006). Learning English must be perceived as an empowering experience and students must not strive to learn the language in order to be accepted because they were pressured.

Under this perspective, they would talk to learn through social interaction and experience different dimensions of learning (Mercuri & Rhea, 2006). Cooperative learning was also essential to the success of ELL programs. Students must use language in order to gain an understanding of different ideas and concepts. Thus, the load became lighter. They would not have two different curriculums to study from; instead, they experience learning while they master the language (Mercuri & Rhea, 2006).

Public Policy

Policy debates existed over educational choices. There were a number of issues to be considered when it came to policies about the educational system because of how significant education was to the nation's welfare and to the citizenry's future. Due to social stratification within and across communities, there would be fundamental questions when it came to enrollment decisions such as where the individual students would attend school (Crain et al., 1999). The inquiry in this issue would be rooted on the argument for the equity in the educational system. There existed public policies that addressed the problem of equal opportunity and school desegregation.

Another issue involved the consequences of expanded choice for schools and classrooms. This would involve policies that addressed competitive pressures and change. Such policies were questioned if they brought about to improve governance, curriculum, pedagogy and student achievement of the schools (Crain et al., 1999).

Lastly, there was also the issue of the consequence of choice regarding the whole public school system. How would increased competition and expanded opportunities affect the students from that sector (Crain, Breir, & Kallaway, 1999). The NCLB Act and the High Stakes Assessment served to be cases wherein this issue was widely applicable. The structure and operating of existing schools as well as the need for improvement must be gauged whether they would serve as an improvement or fundamental threat to the public schools.

Current Inequalities Caused by Public Policies

High Stake Assessment was created and brought about by Education reforms created to raise the level of accountability and provide a common standard for the public schools around the country. In reality, this reform was widely rooted in economic and social processes. It existed in the regime of accountability and educational differentiation. It was birthed out of the dissatisfaction in the level of student achievement that the United States education system had been producing.

On the contrary, the debate about equity and the common sense that were built around these policies were seen to “exacerbate existing educational and social inequalities and contribute new ones” (Lipman, 2003, p. 3). Instead of closing the gap as intended by the No Child Left Behind Act, the high stake assessment had widened it. Disparities were sharpened in terms of curriculum and teaching.

Schools that served low-income students, mostly districts that catered to students of color and of lower economic status, had experienced a greater beating because of one-scored assessments (Lipman, 2003). They did not impact student development in terms of improving the quality of their education. Instead, this assessment-based reform had undermined the support given to students to develop their abilities for social critique and to gain their culturally centered identities (Lipman, 2003).

How could students focus on their self-perspective and self-esteem if they were too busy studying for the examinations that would determine their future? How could they focus on quality learning if all they needed to do was pass the examination and they would be guaranteed of a brighter future ahead of them? These were disturbing questions that needed to be addressed as they were bound to bring about a higher level of inequality amongst the students. The quality and effectiveness of diversity and inclusion could not be gauged by a single examination; however, this was what the high stake assessment brought under the NCLB.

In the United Kingdom, the Education Reform Act had also been perceived to worsen the situation instead of becoming a mode of educational success. Instead of providing growth, it had provided disincentive to teacher creativity (Blythe & Milner, 1996). Schools had been turned to follow the concept of the “education market place” wherein they were seen as enterprise. Similar to the United States, how could school districts appear to provide better services to their markets? This would be by getting the students to score high in the assessment examinations. The motive would be observed to shift from empowering the students into benefiting the school as a business (Blythe & Milner, 1996). In the same manner, teacher creativity would also be stifled because they would be forced to a certain standard of education that could not be flexible enough to address the individual needs of the students.

The curriculum of disaffection served as another similarity between the government of the United States and the United Kingdom. Instead of creating a curriculum that promoted creativity and empowerment, the government seemed to “order” the teachers to deliver in a certain manner in their classrooms. This was perceived as the de-skilling of the teachers by which their instinct to be creative and original would be replaced by the standard curriculum that was required by the state (Blythe & Milner, 1996). The products that would be produced

by such teachers could not reflect the principles of equality and academic freedom in the country. Teachers would have been too busy preparing the students for assessments that they would not have time to actually consider what was relevant for the students' needs.

Potential Revisions to Public Policies in Order to Provide Greater Quality

Present-day America offered more than two options for the education of the children. Public schools and private schools were the only choices available to the parents. Socioeconomic class was the major determining factor for this choice. If parents could afford private schools, they would choose to send their children to them instead of the local public schools.

Charter schools had emerged in the 1990s. Their existence provided parents with an expanded stock of available educational opportunities (Hakim et al., 2000). Instead of being fully dependent of public schools, charter schools provided a viable option. Charter schools were also public schools in the manner by which they were tax supported. They were also required to meet a certain measurable gain in student achievement or at least to come close to it. However, they operate independent of many district and state regulations. They would not have a population assigned to them as students needed to apply for admittance. They were designed to cater students that chose them. Most of the time, they served disadvantaged students. The Department of Education in New Jersey had described its potential:

Charter schools hold the promise of creating a new kind of publicly funded schools – one that breaks the traditional mold in an effort to help children achieve at higher levels. The charter school program enables teachers, parents, community leaders, private entities and institutions of higher learning to take the lead in designing public schools that will provide unique and innovative approaches towards achievement of high academic standards. (Hakim, 2000, p. 3).

Teachers needed to rise up to the challenge. While there would be an evident pressure to produce high scores from the students during high stake assessment examinations, as front liners in this sector, they must maintain a certain standard for themselves as educators (Blythe & Milner, 1996). They must uphold the rights of the students because it was what they have trained for. Teachers must not shy away from the challenge but meet it by being better educators in wholistic point of view. According to UK's Education Act of 1988, "education system which puts a premium not on the educability of the child but on the price of the education', with 'the challenge to the teacher the financial cost of keeping him or her in school, not the human cost of keeping him/her out" (Blythe & Milner 1996, p. 46).

Education policies must be rooted in based on cultural politics and must be directed towards the regulation and containment of the academic achievement of minority student communities (Lipman, 2003). The current policies were observed to support the exclusion of students who were undesirable to the community, however, where would inequality be present in that? While some school systems would experience improvements as well as additional opportunities from such policies, they still reproduce as well as intensify the existence of economic and social inequality as well as racial exclusion and containment (Lipman, 2003).

It was time to see the this "reform" served as an implication of the NCLB national education agenda for accountability and high stakes tests and how it laid the groundwork for privatization when public schools failed (Lipman, 2003). In the end, it required the participation and an active dialogue between those most affected by such reforms such as the committed teachers, families, students, and communities of color.

Conclusion

The American society had principles based on equality. This included an ideal that every citizen had the right to quality education. The vision for equality must not remain as a nation's dream and vision forever. Steps must be taken in order to make it into a reality. The proposal presented in this paper involved a practical mode of fulfillment. It would require a radical reform in the federal funding for the education system. This referred to funds that were equitably distributed to each school, according to the student population and not according to the tax contribution of a certain district. This would require sacrifice on the part of the wealthier schools, however, it would also mean stepping closer to eliminating the gap in student achievement across the nation. The paper had widely discussed why there was such a need to implement such a radical change in the funding and why there existed a sense of urgency to address the educational gap that existed because of inequalities in the different areas of education.

When it came to teachers and standards, it could be perceived how inexperience, different assumptions, disunity in perceptions and standards had brought about inequality in how students were educated. Disadvantaged schools could not afford good teachers. This proposal would pave the way for disadvantaged students to get what they badly needed, quality instruction from highly skilled teachers.

Public schools were also characterized by diversity. There was a need to provide different facilities and training in order for schools to be equipped in handling diversity and inclusion. This required for them proper funding in order to avoid neglecting these important areas. Schools also needed to refresh their perception of bilingualism as well as of English Language Learners. While disadvantaged schools critically needed adequate funding, they must also recognize the intangible assets that they have in a culturally diverse student population.

High stakes assessment was also a major issue in this paper. In relation to federal funding, another look at the existing public policies would reveal the problematic system by which public education operated under. There was an existing need to reform high stake assessment dependency and provide for avenues that would empower the students, instead of forcing them into a one-size-fits-all model of education.

Public policies needed to be reviewed in terms of its effectiveness in closing the gap of educational achievement. Studies have shown that instead of lessening the inequality amongst the student population, assessment-based approaches were seen to promote the disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged students. These policies were also seen to stifle academic freedom in light of the need to rejuvenate this principle for public education.

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