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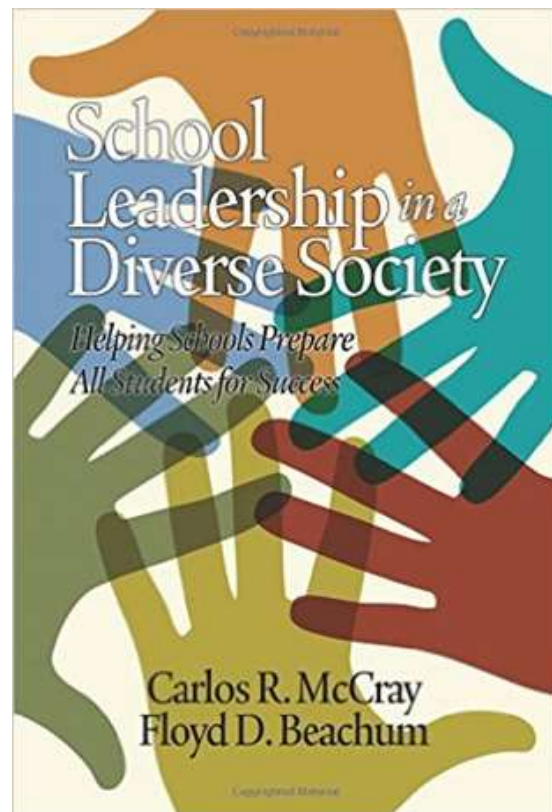
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In “*School Leadership in a Diverse Society: Helping Schools Prepare All Students for Success*,” McCray and Beachum set out with the noble goal to, “broaden the scholarly dialogue in educational leadership and to address the changing role of the American school principal in the 21st century with regard to increasing diversity in the United States” (p. xvi). They seek to do this by providing insight into the role of school leaders, by linking theoretical information with case study demonstrations. Through this process, the authors aim to reach personnel in school leadership. They urge school leaders to acknowledge the importance of recognizing diversity within their school system and providing equitably to each students, in order to facilitate their access to success.

The authors were successful in their aspiration to provide school personnel with thought-provoking topics and plausible calls to action rooted in credible historical and theoretical contexts. If anything, the title of this book may inadvertently limit its readership from the considerable population who could benefit from its contents, as practitioners and mental health



staff members are two additional categories of school personnel who should be exposed to this information, but who might not necessarily view themselves as “school leaders.”

McCray and Beachum have embraced a valiant and necessary goal within today’s school system, especially considering that the plethora of legislations recently passed with the objective of increasing student success and closing achievement gaps between various groups have been unable to make an impact on test results (Council of the Great City Schools, 2010). *School Leadership in a Diverse Society* seeks to inform and encourage a world where culturally and linguistically diverse students experience an academic success that is not limited to their test scores, but a more encompassing notion of success consisting of “students being exposed to a *holistic* [emphasis added] educational experience, which entails students’ educative process going beyond literacy and numeracy” (p. 4).

This aligns with Ravitch’s (2010) holistic view of success, which also describes the importance of internalizing proper and respectful communication interactions. Unfortunately for the students from diverse cultures in numerous American school districts, laws and initiatives that promote equality do not provide the equitable treatment that allow for each of these students, from drastically different backgrounds and possessing significantly different needs, the same opportunities to approach *any* definition of success. It is those very real needs that this book works to address.

The volume is presented in three specific sections, each of which include information regarding theories, issues, and research, followed by an authentic case study example. The first section consists of “theoretical chapters examining current and relevant issues dealing with diversity and multicultural constructs,” the second examines “the type of leadership needed to initiate, implement, and sustain multicultural

education within the school,” and the third section looks ahead to “new horizons for multicultural education, with specific concentration on the emerging concept of Culturally Relevant Leadership” (p. xxiii). While these sections are comprised of chapters packed with information, readers could gain necessary clarity and background information if the topics associated with each part were indicated in section headings. This would contribute to reader understanding, appreciation, and general utility.

McCray and Beachum provide a wealth of theoretical information regarding diversity in leadership, as well as some crucial insight to the development of diverse public education and the administration/interpretation of various assessments. All of this culminates in Chapter 6, where the authors propose a framework of “Culturally Relevant Leadership” for “personal change,” “organizational improvement,” and “cultural collision and collusion” (p. 90). Within this framework, they incorporate pertinent ideals from Advanced Change Theory (Quinn & Snyder, 1999), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), Community Uplift Theory (Beachum, Obiakor, & McCray, 2007), and the three tenets of Culturally Relevant Leadership that the authors have employed throughout the book; liberatory consciousness, pluralistic insight, and reflexive practice.

These terms, once explained, introduce readers to critical steps required for successful leadership roles or practitioner positions in any institution. One particular strength of this publication is embedded in McCray and Beachum’s rightfully wide definition of “diversity.” In addition to addressing difficult issues and situations that arise as a result of racial diversity (including special education classification, discipline rates, and hiring practices), the authors also tackle economic inequality, same-sex dating, languages other than English, and the bullying or mistreatment that can occur when *anyone*

finds themselves to be marginalized in *any way*.

The actions, outlined as propositions for leaders (and practitioners) within diverse settings, are relevant, practical, and carry the potential to aid in the construction of a strong community that values achievement. These suggestions comprise a vast array of recommendations, including:

- Removing deficit mindsets
- Developing an awareness of local issues
- Acknowledging any cultural disconnect between school leaders/practitioners and the local community
- Working to include school families and community members/organizations in school decisions
- Providing programming based on the interests, needs, and motivations of students and their families
- Supporting students/staff alike with positive reinforcement and constant feedback
- Creating a constructive, affirming school climate

I can attest to the utility of these recommendations through viewing their implementation in my own school. They have been effective in promoting positive atmospheres, high-quality lesson planning/implementation, staff development, and school growth, although the results the state is seeking in regards to test score performance and the elimination of achievement gaps has yet to be completely realized.

Determining and implementing an appropriate curriculum and pedagogical process is an important aspect of a school leader's position. Entwining concepts, such as the five dimensions of "multicultural education" (Banks, 2001); the "pedagogy of self-development" and the goals of "self-realization and self-actualization" (McCray &

Beauchum, 2011); the six types of "alternative capital" possessed by "students of color," (Yosso, 2005); and the history of the public education system provided the readers with a great deal of information to process in the first chapter. There is a helpful chart (p. 17) that demonstrates the relationship of these theories and concepts, and the placement of such a graphic earlier in the chapter might make the written connections between these theories easier to digest.

Reader scaffolding could be made available through the determination of specific sections presented chronologically and topically, with concise definitions and explanations provided the first time terms are introduced. Frontloading the readers with these definitions and contexts would support their knowledge development throughout earlier portions of the book, while cutting down on confusion and repetition. For example, the pedagogy of self-development (with goals of developing self-realization and self-actualization) is first referenced on p. 5, but the terms are not defined explicitly until p. 15. They are then defined, once again, on p. 18. Other terms are also utilized before definitions are provided, which could hinder reader comprehension and internalization.

The historical information regarding the development of diverse schools and high-stakes assessments is exceptionally useful, and it provides context essential to the process of understanding the demands and expectations that currently exist in public education. A more chronological presentation of history and a discussion of assessment development alongside curricula development would add to the clarity of presentation regarding this educational progression.

The first two chapters each promote "multicultural education" for either "CDL" (culturally and linguistically diverse learners) (p. 3) or "other marginalized students" (p. 25). The reference to "other marginalized students" is not explained or defined, and readers may benefit from a more collective grouping of these students in relationship to

the argument for multicultural education. There are several references to an argument against multicultural education that present it as a curriculum that others believe might waste time and detract from teaching academic subjects. These concerns are not addressed through specific examples or a counter-arguments, which would have helped inform educational leaders in their move to adopt or promote this kind of curriculum. Explicit examples of curriculum maps, unit plans, and lessons – comparing and contrasting multiculturalism to competing curricula – would provide school personnel with a stronger foundation that they could use to steer their institutions in this direction. The theory behind multicultural education that McCray and Beachum offer provides a good foundation, but the only example that is presented references a movie taking advantage of a “teachable moment” that happened to occur, and does not provide educators and school leadership with any concrete examples that truly present the essence of a multicultural curriculum.

Chapter 6 provides readers with solid, applicable, and viable strategies for revitalizing and re-focusing public and diverse academic communities towards unified goals of success. The case studies included throughout the book supply some context for theory and application, and could especially support expansive thinking of undergraduate or graduate students who are preparing to enter education as practitioners. These case studies provide experienced insight into the wide array of complicated issues that regularly present themselves within diverse school systems, and they offer invaluable practice in the art of considering numerous angles, facets, and powerful positioning that accompany such convoluted situations. This preparation could make great strides in preparing teachers adequately for public school jobs, and retaining them within a school district where they could successfully implement positive change.

The case study examples dispersed

throughout the book contain valuable and insightful information regarding real conflict in school communities. These chapters each conquer a different aspect of diverse school leadership, but they are not necessarily more effective in their existing arrangement. The final case study (chapter 7) references an event that had already been resolved in the second case study (chapter 5), which dampened the ability of readers to fully engage and participate in the proposed problem-solving that this chapter is intended to support. A concept introduction is another consideration for the order in which these book chapters are presented. The concept of “Aestheticism,” which the authors define as “overt discrimination that many individuals face on a daily basis as result of physical appearances that are not directly related to their race, ethnicity, religion, or gender” (p. 109), is first introduced and referenced in chapter 2, but then defined and exemplified in the chapter 7 case study.

The questions at the conclusion of the case study chapters (3, 5, and 7) could be effectively utilized in both teacher education courses and public school personnel professional development. Some of the questions reference laws and initiatives that McCray and Beachum encourage their readers to study before proposing a specific course of action in response to the outlined questions for consideration. An appendix with some of the legal language could provide readers with easier access to the legal documents. Discussion of outcomes for any of the case study situations would have made this book an even stronger tool for current and future education personnel, as it could provide them with effective exemplars that demonstrate legal and successful application of theories and action plans.

McCray and Beachum appear to have put a great deal of effort into convincing education personnel that change is both necessary and possible. Change is needed to equitably provide for all students and avoid reinforcing the status quo. Although this is

another message that desperately needs to be heard, it also calls for incredibly difficult tasks to be accomplished. The authors themselves acknowledge a long history of educational inequalities, deficit mindsets, prejudices, and other injustices that have been ingrained in the American education system. Their quote, “We find it very difficult to believe that school leaders cannot protect students from this type of harassment,” (p. 28) regarding a situation where a school opened as a safe haven for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students, however, seems to contradict their demanding calls to action for change in the face of such deep-set adversity. McCray and Beachum provide strong theory, but their proclamation that “multicultural education is a curricula approach that promotes cultural pluralism by ensuring that all CLD learners are free from harassment and discrimination regardless of any target characteristic” (p. 36) is incomplete without strong ties to practice and proven examples.

While this book could benefit from some re-structuring for clarity and authentic examples for implementation, it provides a strong theoretical and historical background into our current public education system. It highlights the sources for some of the problems related to low levels of diverse student success, and promotes a theoretically sound notion of “Culturally Relevant Leadership.” The ideas associated with this leadership proposal are built on a solid foundation, and anybody employed in a school system or preparing for such employment would benefit from exposure to this information. Authentic examples or school profiles that explain the implementation of this leadership style through specific curricula adoption, lesson planning, teaching styles, and school meeting or event facilitation could drastically contribute to the feasibility of practicing McCray and Beachum’s pertinent “Culturally Relevant Leadership.”

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About the Reviewer

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