# *Educating for Inclusion: Community Building Through Mentorship and Citizenship*

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ABSTRACT: Schools are powerful instruments of socialization. Societal conditions due in part to demographic shifts and immigration require the adoption of initiatives to address educational equity. Community building may enhance the inclusion of those who experience pedagogical silencing in all levels of schooling. Both mentoring and citizenship education share the goal of community building through relationship development. The intersection of mentoring and citizenship behaviour is discussed in the context of three studies: the University of Central Lancashire's peer mentoring scheme, Florida's HOMES project to enhance immigrant student achievement, and the CASA Latina ESL study of community building in the classroom and student empowerment. The overarching theme of this paper is examining the value of community building via mentoring and citizenship development to promote educational equity.

RESUME: Les écoles sont de véritables lieux de rencontre. Dues en partie aux dérives démographiques et à l'immigration, les conditions dans le milieu social exigent de nouvelles initiatives afin de mettre en place un système éducatif équitable. Le renforcement de l'esprit communautaire peut faciliter l'intégration de ceux qui ne s'expriment pas en classe et ce, à tous les niveaux scolaires. Le suivi par un conseiller pédagogique et l'enseignement de la citoyenneté partagent, tous deux, le même but; celui du renforcement de l'esprit communautaire grâce à la construction des relations. La rencontre des deux processus; suivi par un conseiller pédagogique et enseignement de la citoyenneté, est abordée à travers trois études dont la première est le regard que pose l' Université de Central Lancashire sur le projet de suivi par un conseiller pédagogique, la deuxième est l'intention qu'a Florida's HOMES, d'améliorer les conditions de l'étudiant immigrant afin qu'il réussisse et la troisième est l'étude de la CASA Latina ESL sur le renforcement de l'esprit communautaire en classe et sur les responsabilités de l'étudiant. Le thème général de ce papier est d'examiner la valeur du renforcement de l'esprit communautaire en

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mettant en place le suivi par un conseiller pédagogique et l'enseignement de la citoyenneté dans le but de promouvoir l'équité dans l'enseignement.

## *A Global Context*

Increasing immigration rates and demographic shifts continue to have a significant impact on the globalized educational experience. Educational institutions assume an important function in the communication of value and respect for cultural diversity; and, as an institution of considerable social influence, educational outcomes are primarily defined in terms of a standards-driven agenda focusing in recent times on globalized competition. This focus in many cases may work in direct opposition to the diverse multicultural and multi- linguistic demographics of society (Kincheloe, 2002). Tye (2003) suggests that teachers who instil a global perspective in the classroom may increase student awareness and understanding through the development of a sense of global citizenship. I would suggest that it is important for educators to recognize that the educational community can confront racism at a structural and institutional level.

## *Education – Inclusion Versus Exclusion*

### *Schools as Instruments of Socialization*

As social beings our lives interconnect to form communities, and in relation to schools, Manzer (1994) suggests that schools enable the individual as well as the community to possess and perpetuate the knowledge necessary to meet their collective needs. He further states that schools have a unique dual capability; on the one hand, schools may provide the opportunity for individual students to self-actualize, while alternatively through processes which marginalize or exclude, schools may in fact work to restrict the development of the student through pedagogical silencing. The educational institution as a social structure classifies people as *successful* and *unsuccessful*, and this can have a significant impact on the self-identity and self-efficacy of the student (Young 1987). For example, Corson (1995) suggests that minority children when deprived of linguistic cultural reinforcers of their values by the educational system have less understanding of who they are, what their potential might be, and where they fit as individuals and as group members. Vigilance must be maintained to ensure that barriers are identified and challenged, however at the core there remains the need to ensure each student's identity is allowed to remain equal, while different, in the context of the educational

system. The construct of self-identity provides the lens or perspective, the epistemological assumptions by which each person determines her or his response to other people, as well as the multiplicity of societal influences. Educational theorist, John Dewey (1938) has suggested that it is necessary for education to be based on the actual life experience of the individual to accomplish its purpose or goals. Educators must be the contextual analysts, and further they need to be cognizant of the diversity and uniqueness of the context each stakeholder brings to the educational activity (Kincheloe, 2002). Perhaps one of the first methods necessary to transform pedagogical silencing is to recognize its power.

Against the backdrop of the wider society, schools weave and support the dominant group's values by creating a social structure which defines social identity and validates what we consider to be civilization (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Young, 1987). However, at issue, is determining whose values schools are teaching. Are these values truly those of the majority? And, in a democratic society is there a need to promote only the values of the majority at the expense or marginalization of minority groups? And finally, is the educational system, at all levels, ready to embrace a multicultural, multi-linguistic population and move beyond an *awareness* of the issues, to *actualization* by the adoption of curriculum and programming which may lift hegemonic constraints to embrace inclusive student learning outcomes? Given current demographic shifts and immigration I would argue there is a compelling need to adopt curriculum and educational programming which recognizes and pedagogically supports intercultural education.

### *Community Building: Mentorship and Citizenship*

To prepare students to participate and contribute as global citizens, schools should consider community building as a critical element in the socialization process (Cogan & Derricott, 2000; Lynch, 1992). Communities can be defined as human relationships derived from a feeling of belonging in the context of a diverse range of societal groupings. As individuals we belong to many different communities based on family, culture, ethnicity, race, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, and so forth. Membership in these communities has a profound effect on the epistemological lens an individual uses to participate in the wider society; this lens or perspective has an influence on the level of engagement in society by providing a context for the concepts of personal identity (where, and how do I fit into this society?); social responsibility (what are my responsibilities to the

society?); and societal role based on perceived levels of influence or power (do I have a *voice*? Am I heard?).

An individual's response to the community may be enhanced by the application of the mentoring model in the educational setting, impacting not only on the academic engagement of the learner, but also on society as a whole in creating cohesion through a process of support and valuation. Mentoring has its roots in community and mutual self-help; the definition of mentor as guide, coach, and tutor can be traced to the African tradition where "Jegna" in Ethiopian Amharic languages means mentor (Cropper, 2000). While mentoring has been generally perceived as a method for providing support to one individual by another in terms of a personal relationship developed over time, it has also recently been identified as a mechanism that can potentially support marginalized individuals within organizations. To fully engage youth in the learning process, and to develop global citizens of the future, the educational system should explore the processes of citizenship development through character education and the support mentoring programs may provide in this regard.

Citizenship education provides a framework to describe the nature of the community, the roles and relationships within a culturally diverse society, and the personal duties, responsibilities, and rights of each citizen (Cogan & Derricott, 2000; Galston, 2003; Schaeffer, 1999). During the 1960s and 1970s educational initiatives involving citizenship were a strong force, and while there has been a regression in the years since, this issue has again been brought to the fore as an important aspect of education in creating a durable civic culture, especially in immigrant nations (Lynch, 1992). Galston (2003) supports this view in his assertion that higher levels of civic knowledge may favourably influence perceptions of new immigrants.

Citizenship can be developed through a variety of means including the integration and contextualization of curriculum, through peer support, and also through the vehicle of educational leadership and positive role modeling of its educators. Definitions of citizenship education are broad-based and incorporate the principles of honesty, integrity, empathy, and compassion; these principles are also found to be the key outcomes cited in character education programs (McIntyre Wilber, 2000; Vess & Halbur 2003). Vess and Halbur define character education as any deliberate approach by the school and/or community (including parents) to assist youth to become caring, principled, and responsible members of society. Character (citizenship) education may involve direct and indirect instruction and/or training, empathic development in the individual, and

community building. I would suggest that mentorship and citizenship or character education initiatives support a goal of community building through the development of caring relationships which can have profound implications for promoting inclusion for the individual at a structural level within the educational institution.

The focus of this examination concerns the intersection of mentoring and citizenship education, and the fact that these initiatives share a similar goal of community building through the development of relationships; this review will examine the efficacy of mentoring and citizenship education to promote inclusion and to assist non-traditional learners who experience marginalization in schools. Support for this view is discussed in the context of three studies which illustrate facets of educational community building practice: a) the peer mentoring scheme at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) which elucidates the positive results mentoring initiatives at the post-secondary level can provide for the individual and the organization as a whole, as well as the impact of mentorship and power in relationship development; b) Florida's Palm Beach County Schools "HOMES" project which investigates the implications of community building in the elementary sector to foster and enhance immigrant students' achievement through mentoring as well as the influence community based support services have in fostering student engagement and enhancing the perceived relevance and a sense of belonging within the educational community; and c) the study done at the CASA Latina ESL Program for adults which demonstrates that creating a sense of community in the classroom can lead to student empowerment. The critical lens used in reviewing these mentoring and citizenship education initiatives includes examining power differentials in terms of the impact of cultural capital and cultural legitimation in the classroom.

## *Mentoring for Inclusion*

### *a) The University of Central Lancashire Peer Mentoring Scheme.*

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) peer mentoring program for new students participating in a Social Work access course proved to be an effective strategy for combating racism. Enrolment in the UCLAN Social Work Department (Faculty Health) was comprised of a high percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Cropper (2000) states that the UCLAN *mentoring scheme* illustrates how mentoring is able to contribute to change, both for the individual as well as at a structural level by operating as a truly "inclusive tool" (p. 597).

The focus of the mentoring program involved a peer support scheme that was created to study the current educational climate and context for black students, and issues related to educational exclusion and inclusion. These issues were explored from a mentoring theory and practice, with an analysis or rethinking of mentoring in the context of black feminist theory and practice. Assessment tools used during the study included focus groups, interviews, and questions.

An impetus for this study was widespread reports that the educational experience of many students from non-traditional backgrounds had been less than positive, and that the discrimination these students experienced, both covert and overt, had strong implications for the development of personal identity. The crux of the matter Cropper (2000) identified was the fact that educational institutions were not reflective of the diversity of the community in which they exist.

In her discussions Cropper (2000) cautions that strategies for inclusion must be carefully analyzed to determine what affect power differentials may have given the structure of institutional racism. In other words, what role does power and identity play in determining who will integrate and/or assimilate? What value is placed on the positive contributions made to the learning environment by alternative cultural and racial experiences? Pedagogical silencing by current trends in curriculum and traditional ideologies has perpetuated the status quo, and Cropper cites the reason for this failure as the lack of recognition for the life experiences and cultural context of learners. Furthermore, she believes that the outcome is often marginalization. At the core is the belief that inclusionary/integrative strategies alone do not address the internal barriers learners may face once they enter the system. Beresford and Wilson (as cited in Cropper, 2000) postulate that assimilationist/integrationist notions of inclusion may only maintain and reinforce social divisions and inequalities, rather than actually challenging them. This may in fact support the *cultural capital* of the dominant group, conferring power differentials, and thereby marginalizing the "other."

Cultural capital and cultural legitimation are two integrated concepts that may explain why schools are able to reproduce the culture of certain groups at the expense of others. Cultural legitimacy refers to the strength and authority, or power, possessed by dominant and subordinate groups (Bourdieu, 1985; Young, 1987). This legitimacy has consequences for the school as an agency of social and cultural reproduction. Again, the question arises, which core cultural values are transmitted through the educational system? This politicized struggle to either conserve or transform the social

world is based on the knowledge of the social world framed within a context of categories or position (Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Dei (2002) suggests that transformative learning as a form of education involves a deep and profound shift in the lens or perspective with which an individual views and interacts with their world. Furthermore, this shift involves understanding not only ourselves, but also our relationships with other humans including the complexity and interlocking power structures relating to class, race, and gender (Sullivan as cited in Dei, 2002).

Is the educational system supportive of the status quo? Or, is it an agency of social justice and empowerment? The mentoring scheme introduced at UCLAN was activated as a strategy to support minority students, and to provide individual support to manage the pressures and difficulties they may face. Cropper (2000) suggests that in addition to being positive role models, minority lecturers acting as mentors may also share similar experiences of "institutional life" with minority students, particularly that of institutional racism.

Cropper (2000) presents a critique of mentoring theory and practices including the black feminist approach which states that to truly understand the impact of discrimination there is a need to identify the intersectionality of power and differences; the relation of differences with respect to personal identity, and the differences framed in both personal and political contexts, what Cropper refers to as a "personal and community empowerment context" (p. 602). Additionally, while mentoring may provide support for the individual, it is imperative that those in power do not view mentoring a panacea for structural inequalities – this may in fact support and maintain the status quo. An example utilized in the UCLAN peer mentoring model to alleviate this effect was to provide mentor induction training which fully addressed the wider social context and issues impacting on mentees' lives. However, it may be suggested that peer mentoring may in fact offer more potential for power sharing in that the reflexivity of the relationship comes through the sharing of personal biographies; this shared exercise may raise consciousness and become an empowering activity for both participants. Nonetheless, the net effect of the mentorship reciprocal learning process may assist to build social and emotional competence in both mentor and mentee (Goleman, 1998).

Mentoring may also offer a manner in which inclusion can be actualized, moving to an approach that allows the *voice* of the "other" to be heard. Mentoring programs can promote a welcoming environment for the non-traditional learner by providing student support, as well as allowing for the implementation of equitable practices to ensure equity of

educational opportunity. One of the main purposes of the peer-mentoring program at UCLAN was to allow students to develop their skills and knowledge in a relationship of mutual support. Feedback from mentees on the program's success indicated that they felt that they had received valuable support that assisted them in their transition to university. They reported that the mentor's willingness to share experiences was personally motivating, and that one of the major benefits of the program was the development of a network of contacts and supports for the mentee throughout the organization – what I would characterize as development of community. And, at a structural level, the program provided a voice for minority students by establishing a communication mechanism whereby the institution was informed and able to respond at a structural level to individual needs.

Cropper (2000) suggests that mentoring may act as a catalyst for "positive change." In the evaluation of the UCLAN program, mentoring was found to present marked differences for minority groups and individuals facing exclusion. The study established the importance of role modeling, and the need to develop mechanisms for members of marginalized groups to cope with the challenges of oppression on an individual basis. Specifically noted were outcomes indicating greater knowledge of the culture and system of the institution, as well as positive results relating to the construct of self-confidence; self-identity being a critical element of student empowerment and self-confidence.

### *Positive Outcomes of Community Building: Student Engagement and Empowerment*

*b) Community Building and Student Engagement – The "HOMES" Project.* In a project implemented by Florida's Palm Beach County Schools the relationship between community building and student engagement was examined. This project sought to enhance the educational achievement of immigrant students (particularly ESL students) through community based support services (Schoorman, 2001). The project was designed to address the needs of an increasing immigrant population which was often marginalized in the school system. A contextualized evaluation of the project was done to investigate patterns of institutional discrimination, inflexible bureaucracy, and disengaged and over-worked educators. From the learners' perspective, consideration was given concerning the struggle these students face in negotiating the language barriers, as well as the

perceived or actual powerlessness to engage in the school system the students and/or their families may experience (Schoorman, 2001).

The "HOMES" project was a system-wide effort to establish community-school collaboration; these collaborative efforts took the form of mentoring and tutoring services, guidance counselling, home visits, multilingual workshops for students and their families, and college outreach programs (Schoorman 2001). Eight after-school programs were set up in the community, and tutoring was made available to approximately 600 language minority students each day through these facilities. Mentoring programs were also set up in these after-school programs and included a corresponding mentor training program comprised of three sessions offered on an annual basis.

Community impact was analyzed and revealed that the project team played multiple roles within the community including the roles of: community magnets, advocates, road maps, door knockers, and cultural brokers (Schoorman, 2001, p.7). Funding for this project was ultimately endorsed on the contingency of increased academic performance by the students with Limited English Proficient (LEP). Unfortunately, this goal was not met. However, there were several other successful outcomes identified, and plans for the future of the program include the adoption of different methods of evaluation and student tracking. A matter of critical consideration was a planned focus on the positive impacts of the program in the community due to increased student retention rates.

The most significant among the achievements noted was the fact that all the process-oriented goals were achieved. These goals included setting up a network, facilitating parent workshops, and the development of a tutoring and mentoring program. Findings concerning the success of the parent workshops indicated that the sessions had provided a foundation to empower families in their integration into what they may have perceived as a new and threatening culture. Acting as "cultural brokers" team members closed the gap between home and school, mediating the cultural differences between the family and the school – providing a voice at the structural level. An important result of mentoring in an educational setting is the correlation between student success and positive parental attitude towards the educational system, and their perceived capacity to support their children (Ciolan, 2001; Schoorman, 2001). Both family and educational settings can be cultural bastions that push and pull the student as she or he attempts to define her or his own identity. The issue of identity is important to all students, however, for those in minority or marginalized groups, this may have significant implications if there is a perceived conflict

between the values promoted by the institution, and those of the family community, especially in light of Neufeld and Maté (as cited in Bethune, 2004) findings that many youth continue to rely heavily on parental support. I would suggest that this has significance when applied to the educational experience, lending credence to the importance of the development of learning communities that include the family.

With regard to power differentials within the educational system, and challenging the status quo through response to structural inequities, the findings of the "HOMES" project are similar to those of the of the UCLAN peer mentoring scheme. Mentoring and community building through the processes of relationship development may assist the individual; however, there must be a corresponding emphasis on achieving response at the structural level to issues of oppression and marginalization.

### *Empowerment and Social Inclusion*

#### *c) The CASA Latina ESL Program.*

Enhancing social inclusion is directly related to power differentials within the structure of society, and recognition of the oppression of minority groups, and cognizance of these issues is a first step in understanding the impact of power. Stern (1997) reported in a study at the CASA Latina ESL Program, that by creating a sense of community in the classroom, students felt empowered to bring about long-term social change.

The CASA Latina ESL program worked with a transient Latino migrant worker population who experienced a bi-national lifestyle, dividing time between the United States and Mexico or Central America. Stern (1997) characterized these individuals as existing in survival-mode, and suggested that the ESL classes became a haven of support and community for these students. Interested in empowering her students to bring about social change, Stern developed programming to encourage socialization and networking, both inside the classroom, as well as in the external community. Socialization objectives were accomplished through recreational activities to provide outlets for relationship building within the group. In the classroom students were also encouraged to take on "teacher roles" in organizing themselves into work-teams, distributing work, and maintaining the classroom. Beyond the classroom, principles of inclusion were carried over into the staffing of the centre as well, with many former students holding staff positions such as bookkeeper and workshop leader.

Although the program proved successful, Stern (1997) wanted to extend the empowerment of these students. Following a workshop on the

rights of undocumented workers, the students felt empowered to speak out against what they perceived to be an unjust firing of an instructor at a sister organization. Although the decision of the students was not politically favourable for the CASA Latina Centre, the staff did agree that the students had a right to voice their concerns about the situation. In the end, the students who had attended the workshop drafted a handwritten letter of protest, and although the teacher was not rehired, these students had been empowered and used their own voice to protest what they had perceived to be an injustice. In summarizing the outcomes of this project, Stern (1997) suggests that educators and other professionals and service providers should continue in their efforts to promote social justice and furthermore, wherever and whenever possible, groups must work together in coalitions that act and speak against oppression. She asserts that the struggle against oppression may be daunting, however, in a just society, the fight against societal exclusion must continue.

### *Promoting Equity in Education*

These studies illustrate the need to create space for the recognition of difference within the school system, to recognize that inclusion and diversity are partners, equity is not sameness, and integration is not assimilation. Lock Kunz (2001) suggests that there are still persistent expressions of cultural marginalization in present day society. And, as Galston (2003) suggests, given the dramatic demographic shifts anticipated through increased immigration, curricula to address resulting social inequalities is paramount. Therefore, to achieve social equity, I believe there needs to be an acknowledgement that racism still exists in society, and policies and practices must be developed and implemented to eradicate this injustice. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the significance of the construct of power in creating social reality and ensuring distributive justice.

The disparity of the distribution of educational resources results in differential educational outcomes for students and learners (Dei, James, James-Wilson, Karunmachery, & Zine, 2000). As a dynamic interchange between the individual and the collective, the reciprocity of the learning outcomes found in a mentoring relationship may energize schools to foster the creation of communities – communities of learning. A community of learning integrates the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development of the student. These inclusionary practices involve the partnering of the learner with the educators, parents, guardians, and communities to foster

interdependent relationships in which the rights of the individual are congruent with the responsibilities of engagement in society.

The educational system needs to support social change that will actualize cultural awareness, moving beyond the political rhetoric to programming and curricula that support a system of equity of opportunity for all participants. The recognition of social inequity in the educational system requires a focus on the defense of human rights, promotion of educational responsibility, and enhancement of every student's life chances (Dei et al., 2000). Inclusivity in the educational context must be broadly defined to include all human experience in the education of every student, not only the way people are portrayed, but also how they are treated. A holistic approach envisions the outcomes of education as the interplay of these elements within society's collective experience.

Mentoring programs and citizenship education share two core elements, both involve interpersonal and intrapersonal goals. Interpersonal goals reflect the development of citizenship behaviours through character education involving the qualities of honesty, integrity, compassion, and empathy, or what Jongewaard (2001) refers to as universal citizenship, a set of citizenship characteristics necessary for life in today's society. It follows that these citizenship behaviours interact and impact on the intrapersonal development of self-identity that may be enhanced by supportive mentoring relationships. Citizenship, developed through character education resonates with the core principles of relationship and community building espoused by mentoring programs. Mentoring involves the active support of the individual while providing a communication mechanism at the structural level of the organization. The results of these community building endeavours will yield students equipped for success in cross-cultural interactions.

Educational equity and social class are inextricably linked, and the development of an understanding of how schools contribute to inequity may lead to positive change. Distributive justice and equity of educational opportunity are significant predictors of "life chances." Corson (1993) refers to these life chances as the options or range of choices available to the individual as a result of education, and the bonds created between people as a result of membership and participation in society's education. Identity is linked to schooling which reflects on the student's personal and "social self" in determining the willingness to engage in learning and the production of knowledge for change (Dei, 2002).

Dei (2002) postulates, transformative schooling is not only supportive of diverse knowledge, but also of diverse ways of knowing. Multicultural

education incorporates the ideal of equity of educational opportunity regardless of gender, social class, ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics (Banks, 1993). The recognition of cultural power differentials in the classroom and in the educational system as a whole may lead to the development of pedagogical solutions which support inclusion and ultimately combat oppression and marginalization of those individuals and groups outside the dominant cultural group. Communities of learning which actively recognize and support not only shared norms, beliefs, and values, but also respects differences, may provide learning environments which promote personal growth and social justice through processes of reciprocal learning.

At the heart of community building is the need for people to connect, to feel a sense of belonging and citizenship (Williams, 2003). Mentoring in our schools may be used to develop citizenship. Multidimensional citizenship requires development of the capacity to think critically, respond with sensitivity and understanding to perceived differences, negotiate conflicts and protect and defend human rights (Cogan & Derricott, 2000). Community building as a result of citizenship behaviour and mentoring initiatives involves the development of relationships and invites the participants to put their learning into action. Education that is just and caring needs to actively attend to the contexts and outcomes of the learning experience – the interdependent constructors of social justice and academic excellence (Shields, 2004). In addition to meeting the needs of today's youth, community building in the educational setting through mentorship and citizenship may foster sustainable intercultural connections through a shared vision of educating for inclusion.

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