

ARISE PROJECT

TOPIC: ***THE EDUCATION CRISIS: IT'S MORE THAN THE MONEY!***

Vincent E. Cobb II

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ABSTRACT

The educational crisis in the United States has reached an all time high, contributing to disparities between whites and people of color in areas of academic performance, college admission and income. Poor resources, inadequate facilities, unqualified instructors, and mediocre skill sets mix to create a myriad of problems that make inner city schools unfit for instructing our future leaders. My research focuses on the intrinsic problems of academic challenges that cause inner city youth to fall behind and what makes international students successful. For example, The case is even worse when you contrast inner city student academic performance with the performance of students overseas. Previous studies have shown that international students out-perform American high school students by a 75% margin and that they dominate in nearly every aspect of college level and academia. International students have built up especially strong reputations in the areas of math and science - disciplines that American students typically shy away from. This research explores the possibility of what makes effective education and makes international students perform at such advanced levels in areas where the average American student struggles. Researchers and scholars claim that money is a strong influence on academic performance because of the lack of investment inner city students aren't able to rise to the occasion. For example: Several factors have been proposed to explain this disparity in educational interest, including study habits and methods, teacher quality, student attitudes toward education. However, while most researchers believe that money is not the sole solution to the education gap between the races, my hypothesis is that the study habits and methods of inner city students have reduced and demented their educational experience of just memorizing information and not finding relevant applications to real world issues that motivate the passion to learn. Through my research I will prove through observation, assessment and interview that international students are more successful because of their honed critical thinking skills and experience to apply information that they are taught in interesting ways whereas American

born students are coached to learn information to “pass the test”. In my observation of academic progress in a 6 week simulated college prep program and interviews of 10 male students of different backgrounds will show the basic study method that each group adapts to retain new information. Findings reveal that 74% of students that come from inner city schools do not make it to college, while 87% of students from suburban schools make it through college. Findings also indicate that culture, expertise of instructors, and the organizational structure of school districts needs fine tuning to create an environment where students feel that they are being benefited by the information they are being taught or that it is later useful.

Most complaints of inner city school students is, “ill never use this information in life so why do I need to learn it? In the ever-evolving world of technology, in the next 10 years a college degree will be even more critical for survival. Findings indicate that teaching according to state mandated exams or “teaching the test”, such as the Regents, does more harm than good because it does not guarantee that the basic ideas have been retained. Also the rate of international students entering this country, there will be no white majority in the next 50 years, which means international people will be in the majority and if America ever hopes to maintain its leadership status, they must begin with the education gap and the contributing problems. While most international students come to America for college, their loyalty is still very much with their country, which could make America a very different place in the coming years.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH-

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public education is a main source of opportunity for many of the marginalized people in this country. There is a demographic that is constantly left to suffer under the perils of continual neglect in health care, adequate schools and financial bondage. One of the central purposes of an education is to provide an opportunity for one to lift them to a level of meaningful success and to provide a better life for themselves and generations that follow. This is the American idea and what is term as a process in the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, America are faced with gaps in educational outcomes that deter those chances. While gap have indeed improved over the last century, poor and minority students are still well behind their suburbia counterparts. There is also compelling evidence that the positive trend has reversed its course that proves educational outcomes are slowly becoming more equitable. Recent studies on the education gap by the Education Trust and Heritage Foundation have monitored what they call “high flying” schools- “schools that help students reach high levels of achievement, regardless of traditional disadvantages. The policy brief three major inconsistencies with findings of these reports:

- (1) The research on this project are filled with methodological assumptions, bending the statistics to lie as the number of the high flying schools are smaller the actual numbers reported in the study.
- (2) The numbers do not address the main issues of socioeconomic disadvantages.

(3) these reports do not focus on equality of outcome as directly correlated with socioeconomic disadvantages.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Policy makers focus on measurable student outcomes through test performance but enforce policies that makes educators accountable for things only within their control.
2. Policy makers focus on school improvement that effects homes and communities in attempts to building social capital and takes on the disadvantages of poverty stricken families.
3. All educational researchers agree that schools and communities are direct causes and effects that influence the achievement gap, therefore the problem is a community issue and just not schools.

THE EDUCATION GAP: ITS MORE THAN THE MONEY!

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The widening education gap in America between whites and blacks are alarming as statistics indicate that it is more likely that whites will live better lives, better jobs, better families etc. This disparity speaks to the uneven playing field that propagates off of privilege and advantages of class, race and gender. The poor resources that are invested in the city schools is a deep contrast of the kind of resources, services and investment that is constantly made in suburban schools. Many claim that these investments are result of high taxes that allows schools more options and simply comes down to the economics of life whose basic premise is “if you have the money then you’ll get the best services but if you don’t have the money then you get what is left”. If America is to ever maintain its international leadership status, America will have to understand the importance of education for all youth and the gamble of newly proposed “vouchers” established by the United States government in Bush’s lead tactics of “No Child Left Behind” Act. The “No Child Left behind Act” is a cosmetic policy that allows people of color lucky enough to be admitted into a suburban school to receive quality services, resources and education. Social scientist, educators and policy makers agree that we can not actually believe that money is going to solve the problem but there is an intrinsic handicap that goes far beyond of making schools look better and getting better books. Other things that effect quality education is the socioeconomic status that constantly put pressures on young students to make ends meet so their families can survive, to raise families that their grandmother is too sick to care for. The innocence of growing up for young

people of color has been shattered by a grim reality that to survive in America means sacrifices of opportunities whose constant pressure to avoid homelessness and broken homes means growing up fast. In my research I will show my findings through my internship experience and the interesting information that goes beyond the common claims of poor resources, lack of funds, teacher quality but centralizes around learned study habits and methods.

Many would argue that these crises on the home front is nothing more but an indication of our nation's leaders priorities in promoting life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There are so many withstanding barriers for young people of color in achieving any meaningful success when they are immersed in a world of constant struggle just getting by in America. International countries have such high perceptions of America which has now become a trend of transfer students from other countries who come to America for college to get an education. Studies have shown that international students from places like Ghana, China, West India and West Africa perform much better at the college level in areas of math, science, engineering than American born students. As international students take advantage of the opportunities these international students become the face of our future. International students excel in these areas by 60% compared to the success rate in education of all American students regardless of race, class or gender (measurable by test performance and basic skills test). This interesting study allowed me to delve into some research of my own through an internship that I took at the Lemoyne College Upward Bound Program.

The Lemoyne College Upward Bound Program is a college prep program for high school age (14-19) students from the Syracuse Area. There is an interesting enrollment of both international students, suburban students and heavily populated by inner city school students of the Syracuse City School District. The program is a simulation of the college experience as students are housed in dormitories at Lemoyne College where they begin their days with a full day of classes 6:00am -5:00pm. There is a variety of classes that can be taken in math, science, reading, writing, computer applications etc. Upward Bound provides students to learn the basic skill sets needed to traverse the college experience. This program often proves very beneficial which has a high success rate of about 97% who are admitted into 4 year colleges or universities with the help of the program. I was hired as a tutor counselor who were directly responsible for the students in assisting with homework, class work, tutoring and tracking their academic and social progress in this six week long experience on Lemoyne College campus. Students of the Upward Bound program take trips to colleges and get a taste of what college requires and the pressures of deadlines, team work, retaining the material and applying it to be successful in the program. In my internship experience I took the time to do some research on a group of 10 male students that I had direct control over. These young men were very diverse group as there were international students, inner city students and even students from the suburban school districts. I interviewed all the students as well as did some

background checks and research on the curriculums, statistical success rate and demographics of their education experience.

The break down of the group of male students was: 3 international students, 5 inner city school students and 2 suburban students. As the six week program progressed, I took consistent observation in the study habits of all students in the group which were consistent in many ways which effected how each student retained information. Students of the Syracuse City School District had different learning styles but their method of retaining information was the same. The inner city school students learned the information through memorization mainly, when I worked with the students of the inner city school district, they were intent on knowing verbatim what the text said so they could set the standard in their mind of this factual information that only made sense in the context of getting an answer for the test they knew was coming up. I worked with the international students who learning styles were also different but the basis that was consistent with all three international subjects was that they were more interested in application of the newly retained information. This kind of method sparked critical thinking that required them to make connections on why the information was valuable to them and what else could it be applied to. The suburban subjects had a mix of memorization of information while a basic standard that they could always revert back to when they didn't understand how to come up with an answer. While the suburban students went back to the basics of what they knew was true for a certain problem, they connected the themes through putting them

together by the new information or text that they memorized to come up with their answers. In my case analysis international subjects had more difficulty in understanding theoretical readings or retaining the messages of what authors would try to convey through the reading. Suburban subjects had more difficulty in the area of foreign languages and science and would require extra help in those areas. Inner city subjects struggled most in the area of math, science and reading. In assessing the study habits of each group and finding the common study method I begin to find information on the school districts of each subject group's educational structure.

In places such as South Africa and Ghana students are taught through applications of the material. Students do not just memorize the information but they are able to go out and apply it to real world issues which makes learning expand beyond the classroom. A subject from my international group expressed that application was necessary for survival in everything they did. Most from Ghana would have to go home and support the family through working where they had to measure things, apply some scientific knowledge in ensuring best produce or quality product. The information was precept built on precept where they found interesting ways to connect and even advance the traditional ways of doing things for a more productive work. Students from inner city subject group were more concerned about making it through school, enthralled with the constant pressure of passing the test or making it to graduation. I find that the critical thinking skills of inner city students are stunted because of the constant

pressure and emphasis to pass the test without developing basic skills that constantly uses the new information. While suburban students were just more interested in getting good grades as it was a reflection on their future and their likelihood of getting into a good college. Through these observations and assessments, I believe that learning information to pass a test is lethal and not using learning as a lifestyle finding new applications of new information being taught is partly responsible for the low success rate of inner city students. Many inner city students struggle in college because they don't have the basic information needed because they never learned it and applied it therefore it has to constantly be re-taught or reinforced. Every year that inner city students matriculate to the next class level they have to relearn the material because they have such a habit of learning just to pass the test or to get by that college doesn't reinforce or ret each but builds upon what is determined as common knowledge- or things previously taught that is assumed we know. One student of my inner city subject group said, "its like you learn this stuff but you'll never need it in life, so you learn it to get a passing grade and go to the next level". To the inner city student education is only about getting to the next level so they can ultimately graduate while international students understand that the information they have now will be needed later at some point because they developed such a habit in their home lands of applications that they connect interesting themes and works that constantly refreshes them in knowing the information and not just using it to pass the test. Suburban students are so preoccupied with getting good grades because it is rewarding and makes them feel smart and in step with their high

achieving counterparts but many times at the college level they have a degree of struggle that takes tutoring services to assist.

It is obvious that students of inner city schools lag behind in so many ways in the education gap but my research has shown that its not only money, teaching staff, curriculum but it is the study methods and attitudes of education of the students that have effected their academic success. However these are the methods that teachers constantly reinforce, in one of my classes on my six week internship, I noted in my study that 10 times I have heard the teaching staff say to the students, “memorize this for the test...” . While memorization is valuable in study habits and methods it should not be used to just pass the test but the basic idea should be retained through relevant applications. Therefore my recommendation even for Upward Bound and even Syracuse City School District is to include in their instructional time a place where students are asked to find relevant applications or how the information relates to their everyday interactions or will eventually apply, this is what I like to term “application check”. This application check period will help students connect ideas as international students have been so successful at and consequently perform at a higher level than their counterparts.

I believe that there are many factors that contribute to the education gap that go far beyond just money and the part of town you live in but there is an intrinsic problem with how students retain information they are given. The saying goes, “reading is fundamental” but with the new age technology of television, computers and other things, reading is no longer necessary; and if reading is not

constantly practiced or seen as important then students wont apply the reading skills which makes it hard for them in school. Schools need to focus on application as pivotal to the educational experience. Application skills is a learned and tedious skill to grasp that takes much practice because many times what is being taught is useful in some way but it takes a person to really scrutinize and be engaged in their academics to make personal connections that keep themselves motivated to want to learn more. I believe that we can create many opportunities by promoting education as a lifestyle and a campaign that really promoted that through mainstream television can possibly spark a trend of scholars engaged in the crave for knowledge which will consequently improve their academic standings to narrow the gap just a little more. Applications is just one of many issues that are presented with the achievement gap but this research shows that it takes the part of the student, teacher and community on all sides to guarantee the academic success of students.