

Deficiency Perspective and Race on Urban Education

Kevin Nunez

University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract

Contemporary urban education is being largely affected by the deficiency philosophy that Hoover mentions. The reason for this is because deficiency philosophy is greatly ingrained in urban education's political economy, ideology, and schooling. In order to resolve this, we need to flip things around and have urban education's political economy, ideology, and schooling adopt the vindicationist philosophy.

Keywords: Urban education, deficiency, vindicationist, political economy, ideology, schooling.

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What is urban education? Many would say urban education is simply education that occurs in an urban environment. However, there is much more to urban education than just that. Urban education has three important factors to it which are political economy, schooling, and ideology. There are many different ways political economy, schooling, and ideology affect urban education, however, for all intent and purpose I will discuss how race affects students and teachers in terms of these different factors. My reasoning for this is due to how strongly race affects urban education in America. Many believe that a student's race is a strong indicator on how successful a student will be in their academic career and in life. Many believe that a person of color will be completely unsuccessful in academics while they believe students of non-color will successfully achieve high academic records. In reality a person's race does not affect a person's ability to acquire lower to upper levels of literacy. The reason why many people believe this is because of the deficiency philosophy view they have adopted due to societies political economy.

According to Hoover deficiency philosophy support views that genes, language, history, and the culture of people of color are deficient due to them having inferior genes and lower intelligence. Deficiency philosophy has multiple aspects to it. Some of these aspects include the perspective that Blacks have cognitive deficiency, cultural deprivation, and difference rationales. Furthermore, this philosophy has had a negative effect on the educational policy and curriculum of lower schools to colleges. Deficiency philosophy has been used as an "anti-Black ideology" to justify the exploitation of miseducated minorities, particularly Black individuals. An example of such exploitation includes the enslavement of Black people during the early days

of America and the segregation of Blacks from Whites in schools. The consequences of this philosophy are not only damaging but reveal a lack of information about minority cultures since such ideas could lead to unfortunate effects to educational policy and curriculum. Furthermore, Hoover mentions that in a workshop they participated in they encountered a teacher who believed that their Black students do not have any ideas, concepts, or vocabulary, so it was impossible to teach these students. In contrast to deficiency philosophy Hoover discusses a completely opposite philosophical viewpoint known as vindicationist philosophy. Vindicationist philosophy considers students of color to be capable as well as or better than any other students if taught appropriately. Consequences of vindicationist philosophy include students from low income communities being able to achieve and go above the national norms. Hoover then proceeds to recommend that all faculty teaching needs to adopt a vindications perspective to counteract the negative effects of the deficiency philosophy has had on the curriculum of educational institutions.

The current political economy urban education has follows the deficiency perspective in one way or another. A clear example of this is the example from before where a teacher stated that their “Black students don’t have any ideas, concepts, or vocabulary. There’s nothing there, so how can I teach them” (Hoover, 1990). In order to combat this and change the political economy of urban education, I agree with Hoover’s perspective on how all academic faculty need to adopt a vindicationists perspective in order to counteract the effects of deficiency perspective. Furthermore, by adopting the vindicationists perspective it also changes current ideology of urban education due to teachers’ theory of impact.

Tozer begins his discussion through the introduction of the theory of impact. Tozer defines the theory of impact as an explanation of how something might cause a result. Ideally the theory of impact would be testable to see if the theory would really work in practice. Tozer exemplifies the theory of impact by giving it a connection to urban education. Tozer states that the conviction embodied in most educational programs happen if teachers' study material in social foundations of education they will become effective teachers. Tozer backs up his claim by stating that teachers will become effective teachers only if they understand their students well, each student being understood based on relevant context. Furthermore, Tozer mentions that studying the social foundations of education will help teachers understand that students are not just genes but are a matter of culture. By bridging the cultural gap between school and students, teachers will be able to help students learn more effectively than otherwise, regardless of income and ethnical diversity.

The ideology of urban education and teachers have been affected by the long-standing deficiency perspective. Many teachers become teachers due to their theory of impact where they believe "the idea that there is a direct link between teaching and social change" (Tozer et al., 2009). Teachers will begin to think that their ideology of there being a link between teaching and social change is impossible to realize due to deficiency philosophy. Once teachers have begun to adopt this ideology of students of color being deficient then they are likely to quit teaching in urban education. In order to stop this, teachers need to stop having a deficiency ideology and need to begin to have a vindicationist ideology in order to realize their theory of impact and continue teaching in urban education.

Additionally, schooling is affected by deficiency perspective for several reasons. The first obvious reason is that students of color affected by urban education's political economy of deficiency perspective are less likely to succeed in school since no one believes in them and they will not receive the school experience that they require. The second reason is that since deficiency perspective affects the ideology of teachers, schooling is affected since teachers will begin to treat student of color more harshly since they feel that they need to be reprimanded more due to their "lower understanding" of what they are doing. Schooling is also affected since teachers who had their theory of impact crushed will likely leave the school and never interact with the students in their day to day lives. To fix this the solution is once again to adopt a vindicationist perspective in urban education's political economy and ideology so that the schooling for teachers and student can become a much more enjoyable and healthier experience.

Ultimately, urban education is more than just education in an urban environment. Contemporary urban education is plagued by deficiency philosophy which consequently affects political economy, ideology, and schooling. To change this and create an environment where urban education is successful urban education in its entirety needs to adopt a vindicationist philosophy to get better results for student of color and students with lower income. While I say that this change needs to occur it does not mean that it is already not occurring. I believe that urban education is currently undergoing through some changes from deficiency to vindicationist philosophy, however, it is occurring slowly. While it may not be happening as quickly as I and others would like it is best to recall that big changes occur slowly. If we do not realize this then we may end up causing the changes to occur even slower, like Tozer mentions, since many of us could give up since the change is not happening as quickly as we want it.

References

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