Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge: A Process for Engaging in Critical Reflection on Policy

Presented by Seena M. Skelton, Ph.D.
Great Lakes Equity Center
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Great Lakes Equity Center

One of the ten regional EACs funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Great Lakes Equity Center provides assistance to state education agencies and public school districts in the areas of race, gender, and national origin equity.
During our time together we will:

- review the standards for planning and evaluating within a Cultural Proficiency Model,
- discuss the role policy plays in institutionalizing cultural knowledge and in school improvement efforts toward equity,
- discuss a process for engaging stakeholders in critical reflection on policy and practices,
- examine the Great Lakes Equity Center Policy Equity Analysis Tool (PEAT): A tool for policy review and development, and
- reflect on implications for practice.
Educational equity... when educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources, are representative of, constructed by, and responsive to all people such that each individual has access to, can participate, and make progress in high-quality learning experiences that empowers them towards self-determination and reduces disparities in outcomes regardless of individual characteristics and cultural identities (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2011)

Transformative change towards equity... persistent systemic change that disrupts and dismantles historical legacies of normative assumptions, beliefs, and practices about individual characteristics and cultural identities that marginalize and disenfranchise people and groups of people.
Our commitments for engaging in courageous conversations

- Stay engaged
- Speak your truth
- Experience discomfort
- Expect and accept nonclosure
HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

- Reflect on each commitment
- Choose one that would be the most challenging for you
- Turn to the person next to you, introduce yourself and share the commitment that you selected and why
THE ROLE POLICY PLAYS IN INSTITUTIONALIZING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS TOWARD EQUITY
THE FIFTH STANDARD FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATING SCHOOLS RESPONSE TO DIVERSITY Nuri-Robins et al. 2007

Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge:

• Drive the changes into the systems of the organization.
How can policy

Establish equity as a convention or norm in school culture
Understanding the role of policy in everyday practice
Policy: Principles, directives or rules that govern the operation of education systems.

• Examples
  • Federal – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  • District – Student Code of Conduct

...an insufficient definition
The Reciprocal Influence of Policy and Practice

Interpretations and responses to policy-as-written

+ Unwritten patterns of practice

Policy-as-practice
A Critical Practice Approach to Defining Policy

Asserts that policy is never simply implemented. Rather, it is interpreted, negotiated, and appropriated by multiple actors in educational environments (Brown, Maguire, & Ball, 2010; Levinson et al., 2009).

This positions educators as key actors in the policy process, rather than implementers or recipients (Hodgson, Edward, & Gregerson, 2007).

Local policy actors create a new version informed by their histories, contextual circumstances, and institutional and historical forces (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa, & Allen, 2005).

King Thorius, K.A., Maxcy, B.D., Macey, E., & Cox, A. (2014)

Great Lakes Equity Center 2015
Can seemingly race, gender, dis/ability, and class neutral policies produce inequities?
HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Turn to the person next to you and discuss your thoughts about this question.

How might seemingly race, gender, dis/ability, and class neutral education policies produce educational inequities?
Local policy appropriation may produce inequitable outcomes because many policies stimulate intensely rooted issues of power, privilege, status, and difference on the basis of race, language, [gender dis/ability] and class (Artiles, 2011).
Welner (2001) theorized four intersecting forces shaping policy in local schools:

- Cultural practices of the school and routine practices developed over time;
- Operational functions and organization of the school, including resource (e.g., time, personnel) allocation;
- Engrained beliefs about people including deep-seated biased attitudes and prejudices;
- Political forces stem from actors’ concerns as affected by power imbalances across educational systems.
Example: Zero Tolerance Policies

• "Zero Tolerance" initially was defined as consistently enforced suspension and expulsion policies in response to weapons, drugs and violent acts in the school setting. Over time, however, zero tolerance has come to refer to school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments (such as suspension and expulsion) for a wide degree of rule violation. Most frequently, zero tolerance policies address drug, weapons, violence, smoking and school disruption in efforts to protect all students' safety and maintain a school environment that is conducive to learning. NASP, 2001
There is documented evidence that African American, Latino/a, students with disabilities and LGBTQ students are overrepresented in a range of school disciplinary outcomes, including classroom referrals, out-of-school suspension and zero tolerance–related expulsions.

Multivariate analyses have consistently demonstrated that race remains a significant predictor of suspension and expulsion even after controlling for poverty.

No research has supported that higher rates of suspension and expulsion are due to higher rates of misbehavior from students of color.

(Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Gordon, Piana, & Kelecher, 2000; McFadden et al., 1992; Morrison & D’Incau, 1997; Petras et al., 2011; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2002; Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Rocque, 2010; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Hinojosa, 2008 ; and Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011)
Differences in referring behaviors by classroom teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White students are referred more for:</th>
<th>Black and Latino Students color referred more for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Smoking</td>
<td>▪ Disrespect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Vandalism</td>
<td>▪ Excessive Noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Leaving w/o permission</td>
<td>▪ Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Obscene Language</td>
<td>▪ Loitering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skiba, 2008 Indiana University
The Justice Department investigation into the discipline practices of Meridian Public School District in Meridian, Miss, found that black students frequently received harsher disciplinary consequences, including longer suspensions, than white students for comparable misbehavior, even where the students were at the same school, were of similar ages, and had similar disciplinary histories. As a result the Justice Department filed a landmark consent decree to prevent and address racial discrimination in student discipline in district schools.
How can policy effectively advance educational equity and institutionalize cultural knowledge?
BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT EQUITY IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN CRITICAL REFLECTION ON POLICY AND PRACTICES
Institutionalizing Equity Through Policy

Dos

- Include a Specific Commitment to Equity
- Engage in critical reflection on policy practices
- Provide guidance for Effective Practices
- Create Accountability for Efforts

DON’Ts

- Enact policies that nobody knows about
- Enact policies that don’t change practice
- Create policies without accountability for implementation

Adapted PBIS Forum (McIntosh, 2014)
Critical Practice Approach to Policy Analysis

Stakeholders actively participating in the interpretation, appropriation and implementation of policy should engage in routine policy analysis that centers equity.

Critical reflection on local policy enactment allows exploration of equity concerns precipitating and growing from policy development.
Questions for Team Reflection

What policies are in place?

What is the intent behind this policy?

What social constructions does this policy embrace?

Who benefits from the things are and who does not (Friere, 1998)?

What actions will redress the inequities we see in our policies (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010)?
What are We Working Toward?

Features of Equity-Focused Policies

Delineating a school-based process for reflection and action is vital to the creation and implementation of equity-focused policies that are responsive to the local context. However, there are also features of equity-focused policies that transcend context.
Create Access

Educate

Liberate

Rely on Research

Center those on the Margins

Provide Accountability Measures
THE GREAT LAKES EQUITY CENTER
POLICY EQUITY ANALYSIS TOOL (PEAT): A TOOL FOR POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT
Purpose and rationale

To provide a process and tool by which stakeholders can engage in critical examination of and reflection on the policies that shape and inform daily practices and thereby ensure that policy and practice are consistent with the larger goals of the community, including a focus on equity and social justice.
Policy Review Tool

Preparing to Engage in Critical Reflection

To prepare for critical reflection on policies, consider the framing questions below.

1. What is the intent behind the policy being reviewed?
2. What social constructs does this policy embrace?
3. Who benefits from the way things are and who does not (Freire, 1988)?
4. What actions will redress the inequities we see in our policies (Kozol & Waldie, 2010)?

Policy Review Directions

For each item, rate the extent to which the policy being reviewed reflects the policy review domain. Provide a rationale statement to support your rating. Propose a recommendation or a consideration related to the domain for changing, improving or enhancing the policy.

### Legal

| To what extent does the policy satisfy/ meet relevant legal mandates (e.g. state, federal laws, consent decrees, etc.)? |
| Is all of the requisite content present, and in the correct location conceptually? |

### Rationale/Explanation Statement

### Research-Based

| To what extent are the policy principles derived from scholarly research that will likely bring about effective outcomes? |

### Rationale/Explanation Statement

### Responsive to Context

| To what extent does the policy respond to the current district/school context and issues? |

### Finding

- Review Domain
- Rating
- Assessment
Policy Review Domains

- Legal
- Research-Based
- Responsive to Context
- Efficient
- Educative
- Accountable
HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

What do you see as implications for the role of administrators, faculty, staff, students and community and families?
References


EQUITY LEADERS INSTITUTE

Equity by Design:
Engaging School Communities in Critical Reflections on Policy

Erin M. Macey
Kathleen K. A. Thorkus
Savana M. Skilton

Semi-Annual Report
Year Two: Quarters One and Two
(October 2012 - March 2013)

STEM Education Needs All Children: A Critical Examination of Equity Issues – Part I

Start Time
May 9, 2013 - 3:30 pm, EST

Session Goals
Part One of this two-part series surfaces and addresses broad equity issues in STEM education. We will:
- Examine through an equity lens the relationship between K-12 STEM education and STEM-related careers;
- Explore equity issues in STEM education, including issues of access, representation, and rigor of STEM curricula and instruction for underserved populations; and
- Critically examine systemic structures, policies, and practices that affect student participation in STEM-related courses and co-curricular activities.

Session recording coming soon!
Download Presentation Materials
Want us to host a repeat session of this webinar so you can participate live? Click here.
Thank you

For questions regarding the tool and or process contact:

Seena Skelton

Email: glec@iupui.edu

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