EDUCATING *ALL* LEARNERS

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EDUCATING
ALL LEARNERS

Refocusing the Comprehensive Support Model

Edited by

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*To my wife, Pauline; to my children, Charles, Gina, and Kris-
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FOREWORD

Working in developing countries in Latin America and Africa without financial resources and infrastructure, I saw the results of providing students with and without disabilities services that are not comprehensive. For instance, in countries where educators did not work with families, deaf students who had learned to sign could not return home because they could not communicate with their parents. In addition, where there was no collaboration between community agencies and educational programs, students with developmental disabilities who had completed educational programs could not be reintegrated into their communities because no provisions had been made for their lodging or employment. These problems were especially acute in countries where national and local governments had neglected to establish a plan for rational, orderly expansion of general and special education services.

The situation in the United States is not nearly as problematic as what occurs in many countries. However, even though we are the richest country in the world, the educational services for students with and without disabilities leave much to be desired because they do not result from a collaborative effort on the part of educators, community agencies, families, and local, state and national governments. What makes matters worse, is that educators, parents, community workers, and politicians each blame the other groups for the state of affairs.

Educating All Learners: Refocusing the Comprehensive Support Model tackles this problem. The contributors suggest that instead of pitting one group against another, a better method is to have all of these groups work together in an integrated, collaborative, multifaceted approach to assist **all** students to succeed. And, they describe in detail the roles that each of these groups can play in a comprehensive approach to improving the education our children receive.

The comprehensive support model that emerges from the 13 chapters of this book provides a road map for all concerned individuals who want to solve problems of educational inequality. Applying the comprehensive sup-

port model will help insure that **all** children in developed and developing countries receive the education they deserve.

In the end, this book provides a paradigm shift from the traditional way of looking at the role of education, family, community and government. It is an important book for this day and age–undergraduate and graduate students, parents and special educators, experienced and inexperienced scholars, minority and majority communities, and policy makers and lawmakers will find this book very useful. I recommend it highly for anyone interested in making a difference in the educational lives of **all** children.

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PREFACE

The die is now cast! The paradigm has shifted! General and special educators are feeling the pressure to educate **all** learners in spite of their abilities, disabilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, racial identities, cultural differences, linguistic differences, and national origins. In direct response to demographic shifts in power, new ways of learning and teaching are now advocated to prevent misidentification, misassessment, miscategorization, misplacement, and misinstruction. It is now clear that we must educate **all** learners!

Our book, *Educating All Learners: Refocusing the Comprehensive Support Model* (CSM), makes it imperative to maximize the fullest potential of **all** students. It focuses on the premise that "we should leave no child behind." The objectives are to teach the unteachable and to reach the unreachable. In order to meet these objectives, this book advocates the use of the CSM to incorporate efforts of the "self," family, school, community, state, nation, and world. No one entity could do the job alone–all entities must collaborate and consult with each other in honor of the popular African concept of "It takes a whole village to raise a child." For inclusive education to work, general and special educators, parents, students, community leaders, and governments must understand their roles in building bridges and partnerships. We can no longer divorce any component from the whole process to properly educate our populace!

Educating All Learners has 13 chapters. We invited scholars and educators from across the nation and globe to contribute their unique perspectives. Chapter 1 presents the conceptual framework of the book. Chapter 2 discusses the role of the "self" in the educational process. In Chapter 3 and 4, the roles of families and schools are analyzed. Chapter 5 recognizes the homeless, a segment of the population that is frequently ignored in educational plannings and fundings. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the impacts of teacher preparation and professional development in educating the child. In Chapter 8, community involvement in the educational process is synthesized. Chapters 9 and 10 evaluate state and federal roles in educating *all* learners. In Chapters

11 and 12, the impacts of technology and global education are described. And Chapter 13 summarizes future prospects of educating *all* learners in an increasingly complex society.

Rarely have other books addressed the comprehensive nature of the educational process. We believe *Educating All Learners* is a book for the new millennium. The blame game must be resisted! The "self" must be ready or be made ready; the school must be ready or be made ready; the community must be ready or be made ready; the state must be ready or be made ready; the nation must be ready or be made ready; and the world must be ready or be made ready. These are the central foci of the book. Hopefully, students, parents, school professionals, teacher educators, community leaders, policymakers, politicians, and development planners will find this book useful. As we move toward practicalizing "inclusive education" and "inclusive society," we need books that can advance this movement. Persons interested in advancing our society through "education" will find *Educating All Learners* to be very informative.

We thank the contributors for their dedication to excellence–their chapters contributed to the quality of this book. We especially thank Dr. Herbert Grossman for writing the Foreword of this book. In sum, we give special thanks to our family members, friends, and well-wishers for their wonderful support during the writing of this book.

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CONTENTS

EDUCATING *ALL* LEARNERS

Chapter 1

THE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT
MODEL FOR ALL LEARNERS:
CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEANING

FESTUS E. OBIAKOR, PAULINE HARRIS-OBIAKOR, AND RAMEL L. SMITH

Issues of educational reform, redesign, and reconstruction have been at the forefront in the United States (Boykin, 2000). During the pre Civil Rights era, education was designed for the dominant culture, and the curriculum was dominated by Anglocentric values and themes formulated to acculturate immigrants into the homogenous society. In fact, schools became gatekeepers to eliminate those who failed to assimilate into the American mainstream. To a large measure, learners were disallowed to reach their maximum potential by being indoctrinated into a style conducive to traditional Eurocentric institutions. Boykin argued that the goals of school were to socialize a labor force that met the demands of the dominant society. However, current demographic changes have witnessed some shifts in powers and paradigms on how issues of *quality* and *equity* are addressed. We are now in a technological and informational age, and it seems clear that our world is getting smaller. To compete in this age of change, America must revamp its educational policies and practices to facilitate a comprehensive approach that operationally integrates the "self," families, schools, communities, and government agencies.

With legislative reformations and great technological advances, it would appear that the United States' traditional educational problems would have been resolved. To the contrary, there is a plethora of evidence to suggest that savage inequalities still exist (Kozol, 1991). Schools appear to have deviated from the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* and almost regressed back to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* era. Kozol explained how several of the

nation's school systems are shamefully equivalent to systems during the Jim Crow era. Though certain school districts have made great strides to meet educational and social needs of students from different ethnic groups, apparent problems continue to exist. As a result, efforts must be proactively made to correct educational inadequacies and inequities (Boykin, 2000; Kozol; Obiakor, 1994). One suggested method throughout this chapter and this book is the Comprehensive Support Model (CSM) designed to educate all of our children and empower all of our citizenry. The flexibility of the CSM is ideal for a society with great heterogeneity and puts together energies of individual students, families, schools, communities, and governments. In this chapter, we discuss the conceptualization and meaning of the CSM as they relate to the education of all learners. Embedded in our discussion are cases that enhance the functions of the CSM.

THE CSM: OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

With the multidimensional nature of problems that confront America's children and youth, it seems logical to tackle these problems in an integrative manner that combines collaborative strategies with multifaceted interventions. In an effort to look for magic solutions, the *blame game* has flourished. In reality, students are not only to blame; parents are not only to blame; schools are not only to blame; and local, state, and federal governments are not only to blame. In this chapter (and throughout this book), we are not interested in placing blame, but in recommending ways for removing obstacles that keep children from reaching their potential. We propose the CSM because it has its roots from the "whole village" African concept of educational service delivery that values all societal entities (Obiakor, 1994).

Based on the CSM, the "self," family, school, community, and government are collaboratively involved. The "self' is involved because without the personal powers of persons involved in learning, self-responsibility may not be maximized. The family is important because it is the cornerstone of the student and the bridge that connects the student with the school. The school is a part of the CSM because it has teachers and professionals who have the power to shift their paradigms regarding demographic changes. The community is an important part of the CSM because it provides a variety of opportunities and choices for children and youth, parents, schools, and governmental entities to come together. In addition, local, state, and federal governments are important because they generate equitable policies that strengthen the multiple voices of the citizenry. Evidently, a reasonable gov-

ernment cannot divorce itself from happenings in families, schools, and communities.

The CSM is sequential, yet it is a mutually inclusive phenomenon. Its elements are operational, especially when:

1. The development and use of identification, assessment, and instructional strategies function within the context of cultural competence.
2. The creation of a collaborative system of community support for families has its guiding principle in the eradication of social stereotyping based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, and socioeconomic status.
3. The development of an awareness and appreciation for the many family forms that value individual differences and strengths.
4. The thwarting of conditions leading to violence in the home or the community cultivates a sense of safety for children and families.
5. The advocacy for economic policies and human services attest to being pro-family by virtue of proven outcomes.
6. The promotion of culturally competent practices in schools and in the larger society respects differences in worldviews and learning styles among individuals.
7. The advocacy for expanded services provides for affordable quality childcare to meet the varied needs of all families and children (e.g., infant and adolescent 24-hour care and weekend care).
8. The development of collaborative community approaches to problem solving involves students, parents, schools, and community leaders.
9. The recognition that the focus of the problem in situations of risk is not only in the individual but also in institutional barriers in the environment.
10. The reconfiguration of curricula eliminates the hidden curriculum and other culturally insensitive curricula variables.
11. The reinstitution of rites of passage and service opportunities cultivates a sense of belonging and resiliency in youth.
12. The broadening of visions in educational reform includes economic reform and the investment in human capital.

The intensity and integrity in which the aforementioned steps function determine the efficacy of this model. The CSM enhances reciprocity and creates a win-win situation for everyone involved in the educational process. Each possible entity of the CSM is dependent on another entity within the system. It is operationally essential that each entity in the CSM execute its part with fidelity; therefore, each individual or group must be motivated as well as properly trained.