

The Dynamics of Educational Leadership Roles for Asian-American Women as Contrasted to Their Global Counterparts



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Globally, administrative jobs in education share one characteristic and that is that they are extremely complex irrespective of the nation or culture in which they are found.



Brzozowski, 2004

According to Houston (2003) and Muller (2007) women educational administrators, especially Asian women, were not subjected to the same degree of gender-bias then their American counterparts.



The research on educational leadership in the American educational system has largely excluded the voices of females and minorities.



(Benham, & Cooper,

For years this lack of research was not considered problematic, the overarching belief being that race and gender were inconsequential (Bass, 1981)...

...despite the fact that:

- The number of Asian students enrolled in United States schools has doubled every decade since 1970.
- There exists a disparity between the proportions of Asian American teachers in K-12 schools & the number of Asian-American students.
- Lower percentages of Asian Americans are entering the teaching field, even entering educational leadership



Today...

- The United States continues to grow more ethnically diverse as the nation has entered into the 21st century, this ethnic diversity has prompted concerns about how to reach and teach ethnically diverse student populations in United States schools.
- Female & minority principals may play an important role in accomplishing schools' goals. (Cox, 1994, National Association of Elementary School Principals



Recent Studies Describing the Current dynamics of Educational Leadership

- Strauss (2005) advanced the notion that changes occurring in American society can be viewed as a series of transitions experienced by one generation to another over the last 100 years.
- Strauss (2005) identified five generations since 1901 that were responsible for the significant changes noted in the American K-12 Educational Enterprise. Strauss believed the last four generations to be central to defining & understanding these changes.

The five generations identified by Strauss

- 1. G.I. Generation born 1901-1924:** This generation despite being well-educated commonly experienced the “glass ceiling” of gender bias.
- 2. Silent Generation born 1925-1942:**
 - K-12 students during the 1930's & 1940's
 - Became teachers in the 1950's.
 - Became school administrators (1970-1980).
 - This period of time was an era of educational experimentation.
 - They are presently the wealthiest of the generations & the most critical of current teachers & students.

The five generations identified by Strauss

3. **Boom Generation born 1943-1960:**

1. K-12 students during a time when there was a sense in American society of strong community and civic confidence. They believe they benefitted by their K-12 experience.
2. Entered college in the 1960's when climate was one of protests & riots.
3. The teaching profession had high prestige and dominated by women.
4. Women less likely to go into teaching field, but dominated public school parent organizations in an era of parental activism never seen before.
5. High school education was not viewed as a terminal degree, they pushed for an academic program to prepare students for college.
6. College education viewed as essential.

The five generations identified by Strauss

4. **Generation X born 1961-1981:**

- Many aspects of American life became less protective of small children.
- Often viewed as mean, hard-edged, & self-centered.
- Wave of young males became K-12 teachers, many Strauss reported to dodge the Vietnam draft, they brought social crusades into classroom.
- Drop in median age of K-12 teacher, decline in prestige due to lower pay rates for newer, less experienced teachers.
- American society has never embraced change easily, this was negatively compounded by the K-12 educational enterprise through the introduction of new educational methods & strategies such as open classrooms, & “new math” with it’s anti-basics theme.

The five generations identified by Strauss

5. Millennial Generation born since 1982:

- The U.S. Department of Education releases “A Nation at Risk” a report that claimed a “rising tide of mediocrity” in U.S. public schools. This generation was in high school & hearing that the schools they attended were failures.
- Consequently fewer of them entered teaching & those who did were not considered the brightest of their generation.

Societal perceptions in the U.S. through four generations

In four generations, U.S societal perceptions of teachers & administrators in the K-12 educational enterprise has:

- shifted from being professional, competent & highly prestigious,
- to the current sense that teachers & administrators somehow are not capable of doing the job of educating the current generation of students.

Recent Studies Describing the Current dynamics of Educational Leadership

Major reasons cited by Asian-American female educational leaders for their under-representation in leadership roles centered on gender & perceived status issues:

- Asian culture discouraged leadership roles in general for Asian females, educational leadership seen as male dominated .
- Education not a career path encouraged in Asian families, not viewed in Asian culture as highly prestigious.
- Lack of role models
- Stereo types present within Asian-American culture with regard to American educational enterprise- English language acquisition, professional & personal life pressures.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Universities and school districts are becoming increasingly aware of the lack of diversity in educational leadership and are making efforts to increase recruitment, but progress is slow. To overcome these road blocks, Asian American women currently in educational leadership positions possess the following:

- strong work ethics
- have successfully merged their cultural beliefs with those of the dominant culture
- have a strong sense of self-efficacy
- are life long learners
- have developed a strong network of support both personally and professionally

Pacis, 2004

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Education plays a vital and important role in Asian culture and yet is not a career choice actively promoted in Asian American families.**
- **Asian children in general are encouraged to seek positions in more lucrative areas such as medicine, engineering and computer science.**
- **For Asian American females with the desire to enter education and progress up the ranks to educational leadership:**
 - Role models and mentors are rare, and
 - Role models & mentors play important roles in supporting Asian American females who successfully attain educational leadership positions.
- **The road blocks on this journey are numerous:**
 - Stereotypes perceived as weaknesses in leadership.
 - Cultural expectations of Asian American women family that