Martin Luther King: “Now is the time” - His Dream to Influence Education Today

Jordi Prieto Borràs¹

1) Universitat Rovira i Virgili (España)

Date of publication: June 23rd, 2017
Edition period: Edition period: June 2017-October 2017

To cite this article: Prieto Borràs, J. (2017). Martin Luther King: “Now is the time” - His Dream to Influence Education Today [Review of the book]. Social and Education History 6(2), 223-225. doi: 10.17583/hse.2017.2606

To link this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/hse.2017.2606

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The terms and conditions of use are related to the Open Journal System and to Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY).

Martin Luther King Jr. is considered the most influential leader of the American Civil Rights Movement. Did his struggles, life and ultimate sacrifice actually overcome low expectations, stereotypes and lack of investment in services provided to African Americans and other ethnic minorities? Did the situation improve over the last 50 years? Which are the barriers faced by African American to achieve educational success? These are some of the questions Herbert deals with, pushing those on comfort positions to take a stance and lay down effective measures to ensure that implemented laws that declare freedom and equality between races are enforced and respected by institutions and individuals.

On the first chapter, she describes how a loving middle-class family provided models of commitment with community, religion and faith based on love and justice and encouraged Dr. King to notice and respond to social injustices, often getting over painful experiences. Besides, they could provide education in a fee paying college that granted access to high quality educational resources and environment in a time when, as it is argued in chapter 2, even US Supreme Court endorsed the legal term “Separate but Equal”, what meant that every facility had to be provided for both Black and White without stipulations about the quality of provision. They just needed to be available for both separately.

Despite the 13th and 14th Amendments (ratified in 1865 and 1868 respectively), which abolish slavery and state freedom, citizenship and equal
protection, “Separate but Equal” doctrine ended in poor service provided to black communities due to lack of funding, resources, expectations or teacher training.

Dr. King’s entire education was provided within a Christian environment: his primary, high school and college were segregated where only Black pupils attended. However, his higher education was attained in interracial institutions; still faith based. He is presented as an example of values, solidarity with those less fortunate than himself, and always trying to be the best. That leads in chapter 3 to a discussion of pros and cons about topics as the right of parents to have their religious convictions respected by the state; election of faith-based schools based on the reputation of the institution; or the need to regulate curriculum control to prevent radicalization and foster tolerance and empathy.

Why the focus is on integration and not in equity if integration leads to low expectatives, tracking and leaves victims frustrated at not having voice when it prevents perpetrators from reflecting on the impact of their behaviours is a wonder. Herbert presents the notion of “Separate and Equal” reflecting the possible benefits of separating children according to their race ensuring equal investments, resources, culturally responsive teachers, richness of the educational environment, quality of the curriculum, high expectations and outcomes.

Chapter 4 analyses barriers to an effective education that overcomes social justice: the lack of ability of parents that may be illiterate, the need of recruiting teachers that reflect the diverse community with roles in decision making, need for accountability on the effects of educational programs regarding inclusion or exclusion (even in its subtle forms such as low expectations that lead to self-fulfilling prophecies). They all add up to confine ethnic minorities to unskilled or semi-skilled labour unless students develop resilience and enough motivation to climb that wall of constraints. Exclusion of the educational system contributes clearly in the over-representation in the criminal justice of ethnic minorities. Chapter 5 explores this complex relationship. Also, which curriculum should be delivered in prison education and how should it be implemented to provide realistic probabilities of gaining employment. Herbert comes up with some recommendations to elicit change. Finally, she presents a model to support
minority groups within prison based on self-identity, esteem, competence and resilience.

Now is the Time stated Martin Luther King on his “I Have a Dream” speech delivered at Washington in 1963. That’s the starting point, in Chapter 6, for Herbert to urge to tackle teacher and staff training ensuring they are able to understand this cultural issues, assess themselves and their unconscious biases caused by stereotypes and engage with learners and their families understanding their needs to grant full learning opportunities.

Jordi Prieto Borràs
Universitat Rovira i Virgili
jordi.prieto@urv.cat