

Otto Federico von Feigenblatt

# Trends and Debates in American Education

**A Hispanic  
Perspective**



Trends and Debates in  
American Education  
A Hispanic Perspective



Otto Federico von Feigenblatt

Trends and Debates in  
American Education  
A Hispanic Perspective

Octaedro 

Title: *Trends and Debates in American Education. A Hispanic Perspective*

First published: February 2023

© Otto Federico von Feigenblatt

© Ediciones OCTAEDRO, S.L.  
C/ Bailén, 5 – 08010 Barcelona  
Tel.: 93 246 40 02  
octaedro@octaedro.com  
www.octaedro.com

All rights reserved. This publication is copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of the copyright folderra.

ISBN: 978-84-19690-06-7  
Legal deposit: B 8209-2023  
Design and production: Octaedro Editorial

Printing: Ulzama

Printed in Spain

*This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother,  
Norma Isabel, in gratitude for everything she taught me  
and for having instilled the love of education in me.*





# Summary

Abstract .....	11
Biography.....	13
Acknowledgements.....	15
1. Legislative Intervention in Social Studies Education in Florida .....	17
2. Critical Racial Theory in Education: Controversies and Alternatives.....	41
3. The American Decentralized Education System: Strengths and Weaknesses .....	59
4. Higher Education for Hispanics in the United States. . .	73
5. Structural and Contextual Factors Exacerbating the Teacher Shortage in Florida.....	87



# Abstract

This volume covers a range of topics related to American education from a Hispanic point of view. Legislative intervention in the teaching of social studies in Florida, critical race theory in education, the strengths and weaknesses of the decentralized American education system, and the higher education of Hispanics in the United States, are some of the topics explored. The volume concludes with a critical interpretation of the shortage of teachers in the State of Florida at a time of great socioeconomic and political polarization in the United States of America, as a representative case of the central debates in education in the second decade of the twenty-first century.



# Biography

Dr. Otto Federico von Feigenblatt holds a Bachelor's degree in social sciences from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (Beppu, Japan), a Master's degree in International Development from Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand), a Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from Nova Southeastern University, a Doctor of Education in Leadership in Education from Nova Southeastern University, and two postgraduate degrees in Social Justice and International Relations and a Master's degree in anthropology and archaeology from Harvard University (Boston, Massachusetts). Dr. von Feigenblatt has completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of San José, Costa Rica with a focus on management and leadership. From the research point of view, Dr. von Feigenblatt is the author of more than 100 academic articles published in indexed journals, several books, and has been a keynote speaker at important academic congresses internationally. With his administrative experience in the field of education and as a consultant in more than 20 countries, Dr. von Feigenblatt has received several international awards including being knighted by King Felipe VI

of Spain with the Order of Isabella the Catholic, the Medal of the French Senate, the title of Honorary Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo, the Dr. Vicente Rocafuerte Decoration from the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Ecuador, among others. Dr. von Feigenblatt is a corresponding academician of the prestigious Royal Academy of Economic and Financial Sciences of Spain, an academician of honor of the Royal Academy of Doctors of Spain and is a numbered academician of the National Academy of History and Geography of Mexico. Britain's Brain Charity Trust chose him for the 2022 Brain of the Year Award for his contributions to the integration of mind maps in the field of education. He currently serves as Professor and Chair of the Graduate Education Department, Latin Division, of Keiser University (Fort Lauderdale, Florida).

# Acknowledgements

This volume is the result of a great variety of experiences, re-search, and dialogues and therefore it is necessary to mention some of the key people and institutions to achieve its elaboration. First, I thank Keiser University, my academic home, and in particular the Latin Division, for serving as an institutional base and for the intellectually stimulating environment I have enjoyed. I also thank my doctoral students in educational leadership for the many stimulating dialogues on various topics covered in this book. We have learned a lot together and will continue to explore the frontiers of the discipline of educational leadership.

Interaction with great intellectuals has helped me develop some of the themes included in the book. I thank Dr. Olga Lucía Ostos Ortiz from the University of Santo Tomas in Colombia for her thoughts on the future of research in Latin American universities. I am also indebted to Dr. Óscar Yecid Aparicio Gómez of the International Journal of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy for sharing his thoughts on the need for interdisciplinarity in higher education. I also thank the rectors of the Com-

plutense University (Madrid, Spain), University of Santo Tomas (Bogotá, Colombia), University of San José (San Carlos, Costa Rica, University of Yacambú (Venezuela), University of Guayaquil (Guayaquil, Ecuador), among others, for dedicating their valuable time to discuss issues related to higher education. I thank Dr. Theodore Macdonald of Harvard University for his guidance and support in my growth as an anthropologist. I also thank him for the conversations about higher education in Latin America and for the motivation to integrate methods of anthropology applied to the field of education.

Finally, I am very grateful to my alma mater, Harvard University, for giving me the opportunity to grow as a researcher during the process of completing two graduate and master's degrees, and especially for the opportunity to conduct some of the research at the impressive Widener Library.



# Legislative Intervention in Social Studies Education in Florida

## Introduction

The U.S. education system has developed organically (von Feigenblatt, 2021c; Goldin, 1999). The decentralization of its development is reflected in its current structure. The Constitution of the United States has survived the test of time and although it has undergone modifications, its original structure endures (Gillion, 2020). One of the legacies of U.S. development is that powers that are not clearly enumerated in the constitution as powers of the federal government belong to the governments of individual states. One of the most important examples of these powers is power over education at all levels. Although the Federal government has a Department of Education, its role and authority differ greatly from its counterparts in countries with more centralized education systems (von Feigenblatt, 2021b; von Feigenblatt & Acuña, 2021; von Feigenblatt, Domíngue, & Vallé, 2015).

The third chapter of this book concentrates on the issue of the advantages and disadvantages of a decentralized system of education, but the brief explanation of the decentralization of the American educational system serves

as a preamble to explore legislative interventions in education in the State of Florida. Known as the Sunshine State, Florida has a complex history. A Spanish possession until the nineteenth century, it is characterized by its ethnic diversity and by being an important tourist center (Fernandez-Armesto, 2003).

The sociocultural polarization afflicting the United States has affected all sectors of public policy (Chetty, Hendren, Jones, & Porter, 2018; Gillion, 2020; Kelin, 2020). Issues of education and in particular national identity have received increasing political attention at all levels. Florida's unique characteristics, such as a large Hispanic immigrant population and a large rural area, have turned the southern state into a battleground on issues of national interest such as the social science and civil rights curriculum (Osorio, 2021; Shumow & Pinto, 2014).

The State of Florida has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the entire country, 3.3% according to March 2022 data («Latest Statistics», 2022). Although one of the state's main industries is tourism and services, the state governments pro-free market policies have managed to facilitate a relatively rapid recovery. The fiscal facilities of the State and the conjuncture of a severe economic and political crisis in several neighboring countries have had the positive externality of promoting the investment of a large number of foreign and American entrepreneurs («Florida Realtors Market Data», 2022). Among the effects that the flow of extra-state investment has had has been a boom in the real estate sector. The economic growth of the State has resulted in significant socio-cultural and demographic changes.

Florida is not the only American state that has received a large influx of immigrants, but immigration to Florida has several characteristics that have had a great influence

on socio-political trends in the Sunshine State. An ethno-national group with great influence in South Florida is the Cuban community (Gonzalez, 2010; Sabogal, 2012; Shumow & Pinto, 2014). Important since before the great influence caused by the communist revolution on the island. The Cuban community in Florida has achieved great success in the private and public sectors (Osorio, 2021; Pentón, 2021). Proximity to the island is an important factor but the political situation in Cuba has resulted in a marked emphasis on anti-communism and anti-socialism. Among the many influential Cubans in Florida, we can mention Senator Marco Rubio, the Lieutenant Governor of Florida, Ms. Núñez, the Mayor of the City of Miami, Francis Suarez, among others (Osorio, 2021; Shumow & Pinto, 2014).

Another important group in South Florida is made up of Venezuelans who have become immigrants because of the deep political crisis in their country. Among Venezuela's immigrants are some of the Country's leading families, and they have invested in businesses and real estate in cities such as Weston and Doral (Sabogal, 2012). Venezuelan immigrants also tend to be conservative and anti-socialist because of the political crisis in their country and also because many represent the transplanted elites of their homeland. Other ethnic groups present in Florida include Haitians, Nicaraguans, Vietnamese, and Hondurans, among others. Although it is difficult to generalize about the characteristics of the immigrants from these countries, studies indicate that there is a great polarization from the point of view of socio-economic status of newcomers (Jimenez, 2017). From former hierarchs and big businessmen to illiterate peasants. One of the few things in common between the two socio-economic extremes is that

they share a conservative view from the point of view of community values (Gillion, 2020).

Thus, although they have very different opportunities in Florida and live in parallel worlds, they share a conservative vision of family and education (Gonzalez, 2010). North Florida is an agricultural region, historically linked to the legacy of the old aristocratic South before the civil war. Rural areas in the United States tend to be conservative and are regularly political strongholds of the Republican Party. Florida is no exception. A political map of Florida shows that the strength of the Democratic Party is concentrated in urban centres in central and northern Florida while South Florida, due to the large concentration of Hispanics tends to be Republican (Kelin, 2020). The result of demographic characteristics, history, and economic development has been a conservative tendency in aspects of social values and a neoliberal tendency from the economic point of view.

Another unique feature of the State of Florida is the high number of Northern pensioners residing in the Sunshine State. Many of those pensioners come from northern states with much more liberal tendencies and because of their high purchasing power, they settle in upscale urban regions, such as Broward and Palm Beach counties in northeastern South Florida. These enclaves have a distinct socio-political culture from the rest of Florida and due to the decentralized school system of the United States; the sociocultural difference is reflected in the composition of the school boards of the districts located in those enclaves. The result of the socio-political characteristics previously exposed has been a socio-political polarization between the Florida Department of Education and the various school districts, which reflect the demographic composition and socio-political trends of the regions

where it is located. Polarization is reflected in moments of crisis and in debates on issues related to traditional values. At the same time, the faculty also does not reflect the demographic characteristics of the parents and students that make up their school districts. The nature of the teaching career and the requirements to obtain teacher certification in the State of Florida results in a group with sociocultural characteristics that are not very representative of the population they serve. Teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree from a recognized university, one year of supervised experience as a teacher's aide, and pass three state-wide exams in order to receive professional certification. Many teachers come from other states and by the nature of their profession tend to have a higher level of education than the general population.

For all the above, Florida has become a battleground in education. The centrality of education-related issues is evident in the attention given to education by the governor and legislature («Civic Education Curriculum», 2021; «Individual Freedom», 2022; «Parental Rights in Education», 2022). Governor DeSantis in collaboration with the Republican majority in the Florida legislature has passed two laws directly aimed at public education («Individual Freedom», 2022; «Parental Rights in Education», 2022). One of these is entitled the Fatherhood Rights in Education Act and the other is the Individual Liberty Act. The next section of the chapter explores the importance of each of the laws and the potential impact they can have on social studies education.

# Index

Abstract .....	11
Biography.....	13
Acknowledgements.....	15
1. Legislative Intervention in Social Studies Education	
in Florida.....	17
Introduction .....	17
CS/CS/HB 1557 Parental Rights in Education Act .....	22
CS/HB 7 Individual Freedom in Education Act .....	28
Conclusions .....	34
Bibliography .....	35
2. Critical Racial Theory in Education: Controversies	
and Alternatives .....	41
Recommendations .....	53
Bibliography .....	54
3. The American Decentralized Education System:	
Strengths and Weaknesses.....	59
Introduction .....	59
Strengths.....	60

Weaknesses . . . . .	66
Conclusions . . . . .	68
Bibliography . . . . .	69
4. Higher Education for Hispanics in the United States . . .	73
Introduction . . . . .	73
Demographic Changes . . . . .	74
The Role of Spanish in Higher Education . . . . .	80
Challenges and Opportunities . . . . .	82
Tentative Conclusions . . . . .	84
Bibliography . . . . .	85
5. Structural and Contextual Factors Exacerbating the	
Teacher Shortage in Florida . . . . .	87
Introduction . . . . .	87
Structural Factors . . . . .	88
Contextual Factors . . . . .	96
Strategic Blunders . . . . .	99
Conclusions . . . . .	101
Recommendations . . . . .	103
Bibliography . . . . .	104

[www.octaedro.com](http://www.octaedro.com)



# Trends and Debates in American Education

## A Hispanic Perspective

The volume covers a range of topics related to American education from a Hispanic point of view. Legislative intervention in the teaching of social studies in Florida, critical race theory in education, strengths and weaknesses of the decentralized American education system, and the higher education of Hispanics in the United States, are some of the topics explored. The volume concludes with a critical interpretation of the shortage of teachers in the State of Florida at a time of great socioeconomic and political polarization in the United States of America, as a representative case of the central debates in education of the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Dr. **Otto Federico von Feigenblatt** holds a bachelor's degree in social sciences from Ritsumeikan University of Asia Pacific (Beppu, Japan), a Master's degree in International Development from Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand), a Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from Nova Southeastern University, a Doctor of Education in Leadership in Education from Nova Southeastern University, and two postgraduate degrees in Social Justice and International Relations and a Master's degree in anthropology and archaeology from Harvard University (Boston, Massachusetts). Dr. von Feigenblatt has completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of San José, Costa Rica with a focus on management and leadership. Dr. Otto Federico von Feigenblatt is a corresponding academician of the prestigious Royal Academy of Economic and Financial Sciences of Spain, honorary academician of the Royal Academy of Doctors of Spain, and full member of the National Academy of History and Geography of Mexico. Britain's Brain Charity Trust chose him for the 2022 Brain of the Year Award for his contributions to the integration of mind maps in the field of education. He currently serves as Professor and Chair of the Graduate Education Department, Latin Division of Keiser University (Fort Lauderdale, Florida).

ISBN 978-84-19690-06-7

