



Multiculturalism in Today Society

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Abstract

Cultural diversity in U.S. schools has deepened considerably during the last two decades. The aging of the mainstream population and influx of immigrants to the United States since Immigration Reforms Act of 1965 have resulted in a rapid rise in the percentage of ethnic, cultural, language, and religious minorities in the nation's schools where One of out of three U.S. students is an ethnic minority. Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institution so the male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are number of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school[4]. This paper describes different meaning of multiculturalism. The paper discusses the approaches can be used to teach multiculturalism education. The paper discusses reasons why multicultural education is needed in U.S. The paper mentions that teachers must have a better understanding of other cultures so that they can provide an optional education for all of their students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds [5]. Furthermore, because we live in a culturally diverse society, it is critical that students not only develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures, but that they also possess skills that will enable them to function within diverse societies whether at home or abroad [14].

1. Introduction

People have been shaped by membership in one or more cultures and that these cultural roots or origins influence people's values, behavior, and perception of events. consequently, all people must become aware of their individual cultural heritage and become sensitive to the cultural perspectives and values of those whose origin differ.

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Multicultural education relates to education and instruction designed for the cultures of several different races in an educational system. This approach to teaching and learning is based upon consensus building respect, and fostering cultural pluralism within racial societies. Multicultural education acknowledges and incorporates positive racial idiosyncrasies into classroom atmospheres. According [12] the various definitions of multiculturalism affect and some instances impede multicultural education efforts. Some educators define multiculturalism narrowly by focusing on racial and ethnic issues while expressing concerns that broader definitions weaken efforts to eradicate racism from education or serve to misuse the term culture. Others adopt a border perspective that expands the definition of culture to include gender, socioeconomic status, sexual or affectional orientation origin. Although both approaches have pro and cons, "universal" and "focused" multicultural approaches are not necessarily contradictory.

2. Common Heritage

As stress colleges have an obligation to help the human race remember where it has been and how, for better or worse, it got where it is. All students must be introduced to the events, individuals, ideas, texts, and value systems that have contributed consequentially to human gain and losses. An understanding of this past from which all of us spring should be required of all students. Multiculturalism, is a call for inclusion in the curriculum. It is important that students know where their ancestors fit into the historical picture. It generates a sense of pride. It engages students in the study of the past. But it is also important that students know how Irish canal builders, white Protestant, New England Women mill workers, chineses railway construction crews, Jewish garment workers, and enslaved black agricultural workers made possible the industrial development of the United States. America is in an era of transformation. The traditional family is changing. Women are more politically inclined. By the twenty first century, it is predicted that racial and ethnic groups in the United States will outnumber whites for the first time. The "browning of America" will alter everything in society from politics and education to industry, values, and cultures. The demographics of America have changed tremendously with in the past decade. The increases by ethnic groups between 1980 and 1990 are as follows: African American 16 percent; Asian/others 65 percent; and Hispanic 44 percent [9]. Little by Little, educational experts across America are recognizing that these vast demographic shifts demand a new way of providing educational techniques on how to teach the culturally different. The multicultural thrust will be a key element in the restructuring of the educational system in America in preparation for the twenty first century. There is a need for a new paradigm in addressing the issues related to implementation of multicultural concepts in the education curriculum at all levels. The culturally diverse population of this country should be utilized to strengthen to fiber of America. Although, the federal government has allocated millions of dollars for the development of educational programs to effectively address educating an increasingly culturally diverse population. Unfortunately, much of the funds were awarded to individuals who meant well, but were not clearly aware of the magnitude of the problems associated with implementation of multicultural thrust in the curriculum. Therefore, the real issue has been circumvented and ignored in search of a rationale to justify not embracing diversity by providing education that is multicultural. As [9], their task group, explain that learning to establish fruitful associations with students who are culturally and psychologically different from oneself is an endeavor made imperative by the greatly changing ethnic composition of United States and the continuing internationalization of American's interests and concerns. Foreign travel is not the only means for broadening

perspectives. Faculty and students in many areas of the country can find culturally diverse groups very near their campuses, and many unused opportunities exist near home for intercultural acquaintance and understanding. A long term program devoted to world interdependence at schools can begin with the idea that the way to increase student awareness of diversity can be a start with the faculty. The program thus has an immediate effect on the curriculum. The program should allow students and teachers to explore the similarities and differences in human experience, and it shows the broad range of human contributions to historical development. As [11], Explains students perceptions of racial problems differ widely on their back grounds. At University of Washington, a student-initiated task force on racism sampled-seven hundred students through structured questionnaires. The findings echoed those at numerous other schools: there were major differences in the responses of whites (and to a lesser degree, of Asians), who were generally satisfied with the school's racial politics, and those of African-Americans, Native American, Latinos, who felt consistently alienated. Sixty-two percent of blacks said they would witnessed or experienced racial discrimination on campus, compared to 28 percent of whites. Three quarters of white students felt comfortable at the school, compared to a little more than half the blacks. As [6] explains researchers have clearly established that there is no single or dual learning style for the members of any cultural, national, racial, or religious group. A single learning style does not appear even within a family of four or five. Attention to cultural and language differences can be done appropriately or inappropriately. Bi-and trilingualism in our increasingly interdependent world are valuable for, and should be required of , all students. An emphasis on bilingualism for only non-English speaking students denies English speaking students skills required for successful interactions internationally. Today, many adults need to speak several languages fluently and to appreciate cultural similarities and differences to succeed in their work. Building on the language and culture of selected groups and not of others suggests bias and bigotry. Parents should teach their children to appreciate and respect their native cultures; schools should teach children to appreciate and respect all cultures. Parents and schools should stop promoting one culture over another with the inevitable result of dividing the children and diminishing their sense of belonging to the dominant culture that is uniquely American-intentionally a combination of the best of all its citizens. Furthermore, an important goal of multicultural teaching must be to help students to understand how knowledge is constructed. Students should be given opportunities to investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline the way the knowledge is constructed. According to [10]"expresses that academic culture has grown weak and fails to provide colleges and universities with a shared set of beliefs and values that go beyond differences that divide people". Furthermore, [1] expresses "There are class conflicts in educational knowledge and its distribution." In regard to his statement, perhaps the most critical issue in education today concerns the increased need for multicultural education in the nation's schools and the increased responsibility of teacher educators to prepare people to teach in multicultural classrooms. Back in 1960's and 1970's, multicultural education was rather popular topic. It was then that the results of the desegregation of schools and the civil rights movement were having an impact. Since that time, during the 1980's, there has been great decline in interest about and commitment to multiculturalism. It has been reduced from a major focus to a mere whim, something that is "nice' to do if one is so inclined. Multicultural education became nonessential in minds of many. There seemed to be an underlying assumption that all was well, that there was no need for talk about culture and cultural differences, and that all problems related to race and culture have been solved. Of course, this has been to be a false assumption. Here at the beginning of the

century, everyone gets aware of the rising number of reports about racial violence on college campuses and the rising number of reports about racial violence in society. Everyone is aware of the growing concern about at-risk students and the growing number of school dropouts. New reports indicate that nearly a quarter of all young black men in America are in jails and prisons and that American society is in danger of losing an entire generation of black men and their ability to lead productive life. These problems and others lets everyone to know all the issues and concerns have not been remediated and that American people must do something concrete and specific about them immediately.

3. Why Multicultural Education

In response to these problems, multicultural education must once again be brought to forefront of educational thought and action. It can no longer be treated as a whim or be considered "nice" to do. It has become absolute necessity, and teacher educators must respond to this need. Teachers, must be taught to understand and appreciate the many cultures that exist in our society. They must be taught to value cultural diversity and to acknowledge that through their expectations, actions, words, and deeds as classroom teachers, they must be able to foster acceptance and respect for all children. Moreover, all students must be provided an educational experience that will help them learn more about themselves. The true historical backgrounds and major contributions of all cultural groups must be addressed positively in America's school curriculums. the primary reason youngsters need to study multiple cultures to learn how to develop multiple perspectives. Ethnic contributions must become an integral part of the general curriculum experienced by all student. According to [8]multicultural education goes beyond an understanding and acceptance of different cultures, it recognizes the right of different culture to exist as separate and distinct entities and acknowledges their contributions to the societal entity. Furthermore, reports state that the number of children in public schools increased from 26.7 to 28.7 percent in a four year period., with Hispanics registering the greatest gains. At the same time, the elementary and secondary school teaching force was only 8.9 percent Black and 2.5 percent Hispanic. The rate of increase for the black and Hispanic school-age population was twice that of black and Hispanic teachers and indicates a severe shortage of minority teachers when compared to growing number of minority students. Where as, by year 2000, one-third of all school children will were members of a minority group while the number of minority teachers will have fallen to less than 5 percent blacks and 1.9 percent Hispanic. Moreover, as [3] states, since it has been predicted that by the year 2000 approximately one-third of the school age students in United States will be people of color and nearly one half of our students will be of color by the year 2020. It is essential for every educational program to equip its perservice/in-service teachers to the needs of students from diverse cultures. These needs include the acquisition of "knowledge, skills and attitudes" necessary to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse nation and world [11]. As [13] states that, studies shown that, there are three major reasons why multicultural education is necessary. First, ethnic pluralism is a growing reality that influencing our lives. Second, we all acquire knowledge and beliefs about ethnic and cultural groups, some which may be erroneous, and lastly, some knowledge and beliefs may limit one's perspective and negatively impact opportunities made available to members of a particular ethnic or cultural group. Consequently, it is essential that all members of our society develop multicultural literacy, or an understanding of "racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and their significance in United States society and throughout the world [13]. Additionally, the societal goals of multicultural are to reduce prejudice and discrimination against

oppressed groups, to provide equal opportunity and social justice for all groups, and to effect an equitable distribution of power among members of the different cultural groups. The multicultural education approach attempts to reform the total schooling process for all children, regardless of whether the school is an all white suburban school or a multicultural urban school. The curriculum and instructional program are changed to produce an awareness, acceptance, and affirmation of cultural diversity. The approach helps all students succeed in school and helps them understand and value diverse U.S. cultures and life-styles.[3]. school districts should look for teachers who have been trained to work specifically with students from diverse backgrounds, whose primary language is one other than English. for instance, Bethany college prepares its teachers for the relatively new Cultural and Linguistic Academic Development (CLAD) California teaching credential. Moreover, many teachers have limited knowledge about cultures that differ from theirs. This is believed to be particularly true about Euro-American teachers in regard to their knowledge of the African American, Native American, Asian American, and Hispanic culture. In order to better prepare our "monocultural for the multicultural classroom" , in addition to self-awareness exercise and establishment of a safe environment, other learning experiences must be designed to heighten awareness and the understanding of diverse cultures At Bethany College, the student in the teacher education program not only take two classes that address multicultural issues and teaching strategies for English as a Second Language (ELS) students, but they must also take an educational foundations course which addresses bilingual education [13] .Multicultural education and social reconstructionist Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist extends that multicultural education approach by educating students to become analytical and critical thinkers capable of examining their life circumstances and the social stratification that keeps them and their group from fully enjoying the social and financial reward of this country. Or, if they are members of dominant groups, it helps them become critical thinkers who are capable of examining why their group exclusively enjoys the social and financial rewards of the nation. this approach teaches students how to use social action skills to participate in shaping and controlling their destiny. The phrase "education that is multicultural" means that the entire education program is redesigned to reflect the concerns of diverse (race, class, gender, and handicap) groups. Its orientation and focus are on the whole education process. Social reconstructionism seeks to reform society toward greater equity in race, class, gender, and handicap. As noted before, this approach extends the multicultural approach, in that the curriculum and instruction of these two approaches are very similar. There four practices unique to education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist that should be a part of the program in the schools in which the approach is being implemented. First democracy must be actively practiced in the schools. Students must be given the opportunity to direct a good deal of their learning and to learn how to be responsible for that direction. This does not mean that teachers abdicate the running of their classroom to the students, but rather that they guide and direct students so they learn how to learn and develop skills for wise decision making. A second approach is that students learn how to analyze their own life circumstances. Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist teaches students to question what they hear about how society works from other sources and to analyze the experiences of people like themselves to understand more fully how society works so they can make informed choices when pursuing their own life goals.A third practice is that students learn social action skill increase their chances for success with the first two recommended practices. In this approach school is seen as a laboratory or training ground for preparing students to be more socially active. A fourth practice is coalescing, or getting the poor, people of color, and white women to work together for the common good of

society. The coalescing of groups across the lines of race, class, gender, and exceptionality is important because it can energize and strengthen the fight against oppression [2,3]. As [7,4] report that, literacy education makes it possible to broaden one's awareness of other people's individually, their needs, their hopes and dreams. It will help the individual to get along with diverse people in the world. The ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the college Some multicultural education programs are specifically designed to increase cultural and racial tolerance and reduce bias. These are intended to restructure and desegregate schools, increase contact among the races, and encourage minorities to become teachers [3]. Furthermore, an important goal of multicultural teaching must be to help students to understand how knowledge is constructed. Students should be given opportunities to investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline the way the knowledge is constructed. Students should be given opportunities to create knowledge themselves and identify ways in which the knowledge they construct is influenced and limited by their personal assumptions, positions, and experiences.

4. Conclusion

Since the United States is one of the most demographically diverse nations in the world, we must enable our future teachers to have better understanding of other cultures so that they can provide an optimal education for all of their students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, because we live in a culturally diverse society, in order for our students to be truly educated and feel at peace with those whose traditions and heritages differ from theirs, it is critical that our students not only develop an understanding and an appreciation of other cultures, but that they also possess skills that will enable them to function within diverse societies whether at home or abroad. Only then will our society be able to achieve unity with all mankind and live harmoniously in our culturally pluralistic and increasingly global society.

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