Need of Multicultural Education in India

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Abstract:

Multiculturalism describes the existence, acceptance, or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single influence, usually considered in terms of the culture associated with an ethnic group. This can happen when a jurisdiction is created or expanded by amalgamating areas with two or more different cultures or through immigration from different jurisdictions around the world. Multicultural ideologies and policies vary widely, ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society, to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity, to policies in which people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed by the authorities as defined by the group to which they belong. Multiculturalism that promotes maintaining the distinctiveness of multiple cultures is often contrasted to other settlement policies such as social integration, cultural assimilation and racial segregation.

Keywords: *Education, global, multicultural and present scenario.*

Introduction:

How best to serve a racially and ethnically diverse student body has been a topic of ongoing theorizing and debate for more than a century, but it has received renewed attention and effort in recent years. Through an historical lens, the beginnings of multicultural education can be traced back to the 1960's and early 1970's. This specific time period was marked with great social unrest and reform. With particular concern to public education, multicultural education was at the forefront. During this time, inequality especially among minority groups, in comparison to the white dominant culture, became a social issue, and numerous social/educational programs were developed. Several of these programs include, under President Johnson's War on Poverty initiative (1964), the Head Start program. The Head Start program was created to provide disadvantaged children a preschool experience before they entered kindergarten. In addition, several acts, such as The Coleman Report (1966), discovered that desegregation still hadn't been achieved in public schools, and were passed to address inequalities. However, most of the programs created to address social/educational inequalities, were created in a hasty manner, and proved at an institutional and systemic level ineffective Thus, multicultural education arose as an educational alternative to address social/educational inequalities, and since then "multicultural education has been transformed, refocused, re conceptualized, and [undergone] a constant state of evolution both in theory and in practice." Furthermore to give a formal definition, multicultural education is a progressive educational approach that transforms, critiques, and addresses inequalities, failings, and discriminatory practices in public schools. The core

democratic principles, in addition to educational equity, are derived from ideals of social justice to promote the development of socially aware and active citizens. Lastly, multicultural education views public schools as democratic institution, necessary for societal change and the elimination of oppression and injustice.

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Multicultural education is founded on the assumption that practices and policies that are designed within a multicultural framework will improve schools in at least two ways:
(1) By improving the academic achievement of students of color and (2) By improving intergroup relations within schools between and among students, staff, and faculty.

To date, however, there has been no systematic examination of whether the full range of multicultural educational practices accomplishes these goals.

Two different and seemingly inconsistent strategies have developed through different government policies and strategies. The first focuses on interaction and communication between different cultures; this approach is also often known as inter culturalism. The second centers on diversity and cultural uniqueness which can sometimes result in intercultural competition. Cultural isolation can protect the uniqueness of the local culture of a nation or area and also contribute to global cultural diversity. A common aspect of many policies following the second approach is that they avoid presenting any specific ethnic, religious, or cultural community values as central.

What is Multicultural Education?

As per J. A. Banks's (2004) widely used and comprehensive conceptualization of the components of multicultural education, he highlights in his definition five core dimensions that characterize multicultural education:
1) *Content integration*—infusing the curriculum with material from diverse groups;
2) *Knowledge construction*—an awareness of and focus on the way that cultural frames shape the identification and interpretation of educational content;
3) *Prejudice reduction*—the extent to which the teachers and administrators in a school actively

work to reduce prejudice and stereotyping by students in the school, such as through the inclusion of an explicitly antiracist curriculum;

4) *Equity pedagogy*—pedagogies designed specifically to increase the academic achievement of lower performing students and to create greater equity between students; and

5) *Empowering school culture*—altering school structures and processes to be more empowering for all students, with particular attention to eliminating institutionalized racism in school practices.

Benefits of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education simply relates to instructions and education designed for several different races, and is based upon consensus building, and fostering cultural diversity within racial societies. It incorporates positive racial eccentricities into classroom atmosphere.

1) *Help to eradicate prejudice and racism*: Students interviewed in a case study reflected a negative attitude that would not facilitate respect for people of other cultures, fostering of cultural diversity in the classroom, or consensus building. Nonetheless, with integrated curriculum, administrative support, social activities, and staff training, ignorance, personal detachment, and fear might be reduced on both teachers and students.

2) Brings different races together in harmony: If we learn to embrace diversity in our society, the unconscious and conscious expressions of sexism (racism) must be done away with completely. Multicultural education can help bring all cultures together in harmony.

3) Builds interaction between diverse cultures: Additionally, research indicates that ethnic students are inexplicably poor, being expelled or suspended, and fail to achieve their potential. Consequently, both teachers and students need to prepare themselves for the challenge of communicating and interacting with diverse races. Reduction of personal detachment and ignorance are possible advantages to a Multicultural system of education.

4) Creates tolerance between two groups: The greatest advantage of a multicultural curriculum is that it encourages understanding and tolerance between groups. Students can relate to one another in class, thereby creating harmony and co-operation.

5) It eradicates cultural barriers: Multicultural education is an emerging discipline that aims to provide educational opportunities to learners from diverse ethnic, cultural groups and social-class. It seeks to help students acquire skills and positive attitude to negotiate, communicate and interact with individuals from diverse cultures to create a moral and civic community.

The main shortcoming to multicultural education is that it may be difficult to teach students from different races, especially if they speak their native language.

Disadvantages of Multicultural Education

In a multicultural classroom, students from various ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds study together from the same curriculum. While this kind of cross-cultural learning is beneficial in many ways, there are some disadvantages for both students and teachers. Students from different cultures are often English language learners and may have assumptions that teachers do not expect, presenting a different set of challenges than a mono cultural class does.

1) *Language Barrier*: Teaching hinges on meaningful communication between instructors and students. This is much harder to achieve when the students have imperfect mastery of the language in which the class is being taught. In a multicultural classroom, many of the students may understand only some of what the teacher says and may lack the vocabulary to ask detailed questions. Some students may be too embarrassed to speak at all. Teachers may struggle to figure out how thoroughly their students understand the material and may not be able to persuade the students to seek additional help.

2) *Cultural Behaviors:* The basic systems for presenting arguments vary across cultures. Americans are taught from an early age to be direct and specific; in academic writing and discussions, they are taught to state their premise, support it, refute the other viewpoints and conclude strongly. People from other cultures may have been raised to be non-confrontational, submissive or otherwise indirect. Teachers may find that students with these mindsets struggle to write persuasive essays in the American style or to participate fully in class discussions, because doing so requires that they rewrite cultural training.

3) *Family:* Teachers of multicultural classes may be at a disadvantage when it comes to communicating with their students' parents. Even if the child has a solid command of the English language, his parents may not, making it very difficult for teachers to be certain that they are well-informed about and participatory in his education. Teachers of multicultural classes may also find that some parents have different expectations than others regarding the importance of a classroom education, particularly for girls.

4) *Teacher Preparedness:* Given that students from different cultures have different values, assumptions, expectations and behavioral patterns, teachers in multicultural classrooms must be prepared to handle the conflicts and miscommunications that can stem from this. Cultural beliefs are deeply ingrained but unspoken, and people often are not aware of their own cultural rules until those rules are violated. Teachers can easily break rules their students cannot even articulate, or may unknowingly demand that the students break them themselves, creating a deeply uncomfortable situation for the student.

Why multicultural education is essential in today's scenario:

1) *Developing Ethnic and Cultural Literacy*: In some cases, exploring and engaging diverse cultures is valued for the content of that knowledge. Students "learn about the historical backgrounds, languages, cultural characteristics, contributions, critical events, significant individuals, and social, political, and economic conditions of various majority and minority ethnic groups," including those that may have traditionally been excluded from texts and lessons.

2) *Personal Development*: Another value of multicultural education is that—especially when those otherwise-underrepresented groups are brought into texts and lessons—students are offered more opportunity to see positive representations of aspects of themselves, leading students to "greater self-understanding, positive self-concepts, and pride in one's ethnic identity." Educators stress that these personal development benefits directly translate to academic achievement benefits as students are more inclined to be motivated to work hard and succeed.

3) *Attitudes and Value Clarification*: Another intention of multicultural education is to better prepare students for living in a diverse community. For this purpose, the "intent is to teach youths to respect and embrace ethnic pluralism, to realize that cultural differences are not synonymous with deficiencies or inferiorities, and to recognize that diversity is an integral part of the human condition and U.S. life."

4) *Multicultural Social Competence:* Closely related to the previous purpose, another sub-intention of multicultural education is to teach students concrete techniques for interacting with people who are different from themselves. This idea extrapolates(extend the application of a method or conclusion to an unknown situation by assuming that existing trends will continue or similar methods will be applicable) to a whole range of important academic and analytical skills and is achieved "by teaching skills in cross cultural communication, interpersonal relations, perspective taking, contextual analysis, understanding alternative points of view and frames of reference, and analyzing how cultural conditions affect values, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, expectations, and behaviors."

In addition to these classroom motivations for multicultural education, many educators and scholars point to extra-classroom purposes, including the broader quest for educational equity and excellence and personal empowerment for social reform. These "social change" motivations focus on the long-term impact of developing students who will, through their lives, help to improve society by eradicating such social ills as racism, sexism and classism. Such teachers see themselves as those engaged "in the ongoing struggle to advance social justice for the various groups who fail to get their adequate share of resources and decision-making power in the larger society As mentioned previously, while all of these various motivations for multicultural education are important to understanding what it is and why it is important, the ultimate purpose of multicultural education explains why we stress its methods to new corps members—multicultural education can

be a means of increasing your effectiveness as an instructional leader in your classroom.

Teaching with multicultural competence:

The ''Teaching with Multicultural Competence differed from the ''Teaching with Tolerance and Cultural Sensitivity'' approach in that they focused less on self-reflection for personal awareness and more on skill development.

These are characterized under three domains:

1. The centering of multicultural competence,
2. A principal focus on pragmatic skills, and
3. A lack of attention to educational inequities.

"Multicultural Education as Education for Equity and Democracy"

Multicultural education, as an educational alternative and strategy, recognizes and attempts to reform the inequalities that exist. The central purpose of multicultural education is "to improve race relations and to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in cross cultural interactions and in personal, social, and civic action that will make our nation more democratic and just." To further clarify, multicultural education is a form of democratic citizenship education that recognizes the plurality of our society, and attempts to bring historically marginalized groups to the forefront of public education, to further develop active democratic citizens. Furthermore, multicultural education is not just for individuals that characterize diverse backgrounds, however multicultural education is citizenship education for everyone.

Multicultural Education: Integration in Schools.

1) *By content Integration*: The extent to which teachers use a variety of information from diverse cultures and groups to convey key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in subject area.
2) *By knowledge Construction*: The extent to which teachers help students understand how knowledge in created and how it is influenced by a variety of cultural and social-class groups.
3) *By prejudice Reduction*: Focuses on student's racial attitudes and how they can be modified.
4) *By equity Pedagogy*: Teachers use a variety of teaching styles consistent with learning styles of cultural and ethnic groups.
5) *By empowering School Culture:* Restructuring and reorganizing culture of schools to include and empower "diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social class groups.

All these dimension are integral to fostering multicultural education and democratic theories of equality into schools, because they focus on curricular and pedagogical approaches to public education. With concern to the curriculum, the five dimensions focus on the structure of learning, and how multicultural instruction can be developed into the course of study. In terms of pedagogy, the five dimensions focus on techniques, strategies, and approaches teachers can use to facilitate

learning through multicultural education. In particular this initiative will focus on multicultural education as an educational alternative and strategy, in creating culturally responsive classrooms through curricular, pedagogical, and classroom reform.

Conclusion

Until recently, multicultural education focused primarily on the equity pedagogy as a means of counter acting the problems created by the assimilation or "melting-pot" perspective of multicultural education. Today, with the rapidly increasing interconnections among all nations in the world, particularly as we face global issues related to the ecosystem, nuclear weapons, terrorism, human rights, and scarce national resources, the scope of multicultural education must be broadened to include global perspectives. Institutions of higher education are models for the communities and nations in which they are located and can serve as the loci for embracing for the global perspectives of multicultural education. The four major interactive principles and dimensions of the global perspective of multicultural education that allow the global perspective to be a more useful in promoting core human values than the "melting-pot" perspective are multicultural competence, equity pedagogy, curriculum reform, and teaching for social justice. Institutions of higher education whose leaders embrace the global perspective of multicultural education will not only reap the benefits of multicultural education but also become pillars of academic

excellence, models for democratic pluralistic societies, and attractions for international economic and human resources as they promote good human relations within their own nation and with other nations in today's increasingly interdependent world.

The school system, as a democratic institution, theoretically is supposed to foster democratic ideals of equal educational access and opportunities for all students. However in practice students representing diverse backgrounds are often left out of that sphere. Multicultural education serves as an alternative and solution to the existing educational programs because it seeks to address inequalities that exist in our society, and furthermore critically analyze those inequalities to promote social justice. Several ways in which multicultural education can be incorporated into education to create culturally responsive classrooms is through the curriculum, the basic educational structure of schools, and through culturally relevant teaching and pedagogical techniques that cater to positive classroom climate. To conclude, multicultural education in fostering the creation of culturally responsive classrooms in schools, further allows for the development and reform of individuals, schools, and hopefully in the long run communities and societies.

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