



## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: A NEW APPROACH

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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. As per today's need of it are Developing Ethnic and Cultural Literacy, Personal Development, Attitudes and Value Clarification, and Multicultural Social Competence. 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.

**Key Words:** Education, Global, Multicultural & Present Scenario

### **Introduction:**

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.

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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.

### **Need of Multicultural Education:**

Perhaps the most meaningful way to come to grips with the rather expansive scope of approaches and practices that make up the notion of “multicultural education” is to consider some of the various reasons that educators incorporate those approaches into their classrooms. While we will save the most important motivation—increasing instructional effectiveness—for last, here we will briefly review some of the other reasons that teachers incorporate multicultural education into their classroom.

### **Purposes of Multicultural Education According to Today’s Perspective:**

- ✓ **Developing Ethnic and Cultural Literacy:** In some cases, exploring and engaging diverse cultures is valued for the content of that knowledge. As Gay explains, in this way, 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.
- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **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.”
- ✓ **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 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.

### **“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 crosscultural 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**

- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Knowledge Construction:** The extent to which teachers help students understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by a variety of cultural and social-class groups.
- ✓ **Prejudice Reduction:** Focuses on student’s racial attitudes and how they can be modified.
- ✓ **Equity Pedagogy:** Teachers use a variety of teaching styles consistent with learning styles of cultural and ethnic groups.
- ✓ **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 counteracting 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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