

## **Multicultural Versus Global Education: Why Not Two Sides of the Same Coin?**

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Teachers currently find themselves adrift in a seemingly endless sea of school reform literature and policies. Moreover, the often acrimonious, and increasingly politicized public debates about educational issues (phonics versus whole language, immersion versus English as a second language, basic skills versus problem solving) contribute to the feelings of helplessness and frustration experienced by many classroom practitioners, especially those working in large, urban settings. As if teaching weren't demanding enough, these practitioners face additional challenges, including poverty, violence, overcrowding, and huge bureaucracies, which drain precious energy from the primary goal of opening students' minds. Teachers are increasingly being mandated to address societal issues and complex global problems in their classrooms. These issues, such as poverty, crime, drugs, family dynamics, etc., are far beyond the school's means to solve. Yet, they create a high level of stress for both teachers and students, with an undeniable impact on what does, or doesn't, happen in class. Unfortunately, two of the major disciplines teachers have to confront are often at odds in United States society. Those disciplines are multicultural education and global education. This paper will seek to describe the background of these two disciplines as well as propose ways to have them cooperate rather than work at cross purposes.

### **Multicultural Education and Ethnic Diversity**

According to the United States Census Bureau, the total U.S. population will grow by 20% by the year 2000. During that same time, however, the number of African Americans in the U.S. will increase by 17%, Hispanics by 53%, and Native Americans by 71%, while the number of Asian Americans will more than double (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1993). Students of color will make up about 46% of the nation's student population by the year 2020 while White students made up 73% of the nation's population as recently as 1982. Hispanics will constitute about 25% of the nation's student population in 2020 while they made up 9% of the student population in 1982. (Pallas et al, 1989).

Most new immigrants to the United States are coming from Spanish speaking Latin American nations and from Asia rather than from Europe. Between 1981 and 1990, 87% of the legal immigrants to the United States came from non-European nations while 10% came from Europe. Most Asian immigrants came from China, Korea, the Philippines, and India while Mexico and nations in the Caribbean were leading sources of immigrants from the Americas. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994).

The national boundaries of the United States have obviously remain fixed while the ethnic population has increased dramatically. The result is more people, representing greater ethnic diversity, living in closer contact with one another. Demographic data alone provide a mandate for multiethnic education. Multicultural education, therefore, has developed within the United States from an overdue recognition of the significance of ethnic diversity. It advocates that educational institutions must help prepare students for living in a nation characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity. This focus has been primarily on ethnicity within the United States. It has been defined as a reform movement designed to change the total educational environment so that students from diverse racial and ethnic groups, both gender groups, exceptional students, and students from each social class group will experience equal

educational opportunities in schools, colleges, and universities. A major assumption of multicultural education is that some students because of their particular racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural characteristics, have a better chance to succeed in educational institutions as they are currently structured than do students who belong to other groups, or who have different cultural and gender characteristics. (Banks, 1997). Multiethnic education on the other hand, is concerned with changing the total educational environment so that students from diverse racial and ethnic groups will experience equal educational opportunities. Multiethnic education is an important component of multicultural education.

### **Global Education and Global Interrelatedness**

Global education is concerned with issues and problems related to the survival of human beings in a world community. International studies is a part of global education, but the focus of global education is the interdependence of human beings and their common fate, regardless of the national boundaries within which they live. Many confuse global education and international studies with ethnic studies, which deal with ethnic groups within a national boundary, such as the United States. Each year the destinies of all peoples become ever more closely intertwined. Human issues become global issues as people search for employment, acquire resources, access oceans and their resources, move around the world, grow in population, maintain and share water, use and abuse air, and of course, struggle to understand each other. It is obvious that the bus that students take to school may have the name of an American manufacturer on it, but it contained parts which were manufactured all over the world. Students need look no further than their own homes to see the interdependence of world trade; no further than their neighborhoods to see the results of international migration and multiculturalism; no further than the news to see the causes and effects of global economics, ecology and ethnic conflicts. Recently, the United States hosted the Olympic Games (with 197 participating countries), just one of the more obvious nods to globalism. Our cultural, political, economic, scientific and technological systems are inextricably linked with others all over the planet. While domestic debate continues over the nature of these connections, few can doubt their existence. As these connections increase, educators, utilizing a global model, can provide a context that allows students to analyze and understand the impact of world events.

### **Relating These Concepts to the Rest of the World**

Multiculturalism and globalism are obviously not uniquely American. Most Western societies are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse. Ethnic revival movements have arisen in many nations including several Western European nations (Banks & Lynch, 1986). This type of revival movement occurs when an ethnic group organizes efforts to attain equality within a society. It may try to eliminate discrimination, to legitimize its culture within the nation, and try to shape a positive identity. Ethnic revival movements tend to arise in nations that are already ethnically diverse but where ethnic stratification exists. Some countries have had immigrants arrive from former colonies. Many immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe have settled in other nations in search of jobs. Many nations in Europe are faced with the challenge of educating diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups. (Gill, Mayor, & Blair, 1992).

### **Creating Two Sides of the Same Coin**

The United States needs individuals who understand cultural diversity and speak languages in addition to English. Both global and multicultural education must work toward that end. The most important force for cooperation between the two is the similarity of goals and content. Both movements work to improve intergroup and global understanding and

relations, to improve intercultural communication, to reduce stereotyping, and to help students comprehend human diversity without losing sight of the traits that all peoples share.

No person belongs to only one group. Each individual belongs to many groups involving factors as gender, age, economic status, social class, region of residence, national origin, religion, and cultural or ethnic group affiliation. Multicultural and global education should help students recognize how their values have been developed and help them understand the impact of world trends and events on members of different groups. A knowledge of groups provides information that help us better understand individuals. This provides an important link between global and individual concerns (Cortes, Metcalf, Hawke, 1976).

Both multicultural and global education should compare and contrast ethnicity in the United States with ethnicity as it operates in other parts of the world. We should look at how Americans of different ethnic groups maintained, modified, or lost aspects of their heritage. How and why are Americans who belong to ethnic groups similar to, or different from, their counterparts who still live in the original cultures? What transnational connections still exist between foreign cultures and United States ethnic groups?

Both multicultural and global education should look at how group stereotypes, which get in the way of intergroup relations develop. We need to involve our students in ways in which group images are formed. If students learn to understand the process of stereotyping, they should become more thoughtful citizens of the world (Smith, 1976). A good way to do this would be to extend the school curriculum into the community. Families, peer groups, churches, the workplace, media and television are all components of external curriculum. Sometimes this curriculum helps individuals to better understand other ethnic groups as well as global connections.

In another vein, both multicultural and global education should work together to help students understand what it means to see things from a particular point of view. Both areas need to help students develop the ability to identify points of view, whether they come from individuals, ethnic groups, regions, nations, or international organizations. World events provide an excellent way to combine multicultural and global thinking by analyzing the effects of different perspectives. The analysis of perspective in world events should include multicultural dimensions. Ethnicity and national identity have not always worked together in a positive fashion, for example. Looking at examples of situations where we draw from history and from contemporary global and national events can help students examine the role and importance of perspective.

When multicultural and global education operate independently, they sometimes compete with one another and with other subjects for time in the school curriculum. Cooperation between the two, therefore, makes sense when developing new curriculum.

While multicultural educators focus primarily on ethnicity within the United States, global educators emphasize worldwide phenomena. Some educators in both camps pay little attention to the relationship between ethnicity and world affairs. Multicultural educators must consciously include global perspectives in their courses and global educators must consciously include ethnicity as a component of global education.

### **A Call for a New Curriculum**

A truly multicultural/globalized curriculum not only includes the who, what and where information- it focuses heavily on the why's. It incorporates the analysis, evaluation and synthesis of worldviews. It helps students develop an appreciation for the views of others,

even when there is disagreement. It empowers students to develop a sense of where they stand on important issues, events and people. It promotes a climate of critical inquiry, and encourages the formulation of possible solutions, and assists students in seeing that complex problems may have more than one solution, or in some cases, no solutions at all. The multicultural/globalized curriculum I am proposing does not ignore basic skills and fundamental information, but provides students with a rich, complex and rewarding context in which to utilize skills and information.

A multicultural/global education is one that seeks to prepare students for "leadership, membership and follower-ship" within one's community, state, nation and world. It examines the various interrelationships among individuals, between individuals and groups, and among groups. Utilizing various levels of analysis, students develop a deep appreciation for the complexity and dynamic nature of events, and are able to formulate informed opinions about them (Lamy, 1995).

According to educator Robert G. Hanvey, Center of War/Peace Studies, there are five important dimensions to the development of global perspectives that could easily be extended to include multicultural perspective as well:

Dimension 1: Perspective Consciousness- One's individual view of the world is not universally shared...others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one's own.

Dimension 2: State of the Planet Awareness- Students explore prevailing world conditions and developments, including emergent trends such as economic conditions, inter- and intra- nation conflicts, resources and health, migrations, environmental issues, etc.

Dimension 3: Cross-Cultural Awareness- Awareness of the diversity of ideas and practices to be found in human societies around the world, as well as within US society. Also, how such ideas and practices compare and contrast, and how one's own society might be viewed from other vantage points.

Dimension 4: Knowledge of Global Dynamics- Knowledge of key traits and mechanisms of global systems (economic, ecological, political, technological, etc.) which directly impact how the world constantly changes. This approach produces deeper understanding of complex situations and helps students see their own roles in world events.

Dimension 5: Awareness of Human Choices- Heightened awareness of our own cultural perspective, of how others view the world, and of global dynamics and change, brings with it problems of choice. Individuals, societies and countries are constantly solving problems and making choices. How one makes choices, and the results of those choices, are important elements in global education. (Hanvey, 1978)

## Summary

You would not think combining two such positive issues regarding education would be an issue in the United States. Recognizing that it is an issue, however, and confronting it head-on, will do much in and of itself to dissipate any future problems. Two positives should not equal one negative. Educators on each side must commit to work together to create new opportunities for students based on their particular knowledge base. These two bases when combined, will go a long way in creating a new discipline of integrated studies where multiculturalism and globalism complement each other and the lives of the students they touch.

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