Multicultural Education and Technology Integration

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INTRODUCTION

The article includes a description of the foundation of multicultural education and a delineation of the concept and its processes. It will also include a depiction of multicultural instructional strategies, and the transformations academic institutions must undergo to adopt the multicultural philosophy. Finally, the article will include a discussion on how technology can be integrated into multicultural education to assist educators.

Situating Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education

Multiculturalism is a modern philosophy with multifaceted goals, which are to promote equity pedagogy, social justice, acceptance of diversity, and social reconstruction in public organizations such as educational institutions. The foundation of multiculturalism can be traced to philosophies such as Marxism and Critical Theory. These doctrines question the status quo, and seek to close the gap between the dominant social group and the subordinate or marginalized group.

Karl Marx, the founder of Marxism believed that all institutions rest on an economic base, and that human history is essentially the struggle for economic and social control. The philosophy embodies the idea that the bourgeois (dominant group) control educational and governmental institutions to serve themselves while alienating the proletariat (subordinate group). This inequality in education suggests that the dominant class have better access to superior education opportunities than the subordinate classes. This ethos is inherent in multiculturalism, an ethos that endorses equal education for both the marginalized and non-marginalized or, in Marxist terms, for the bourgeois and proletariat.

Similarly, critical theory philosophy addresses the issues of multiculturalism in American classrooms by recognizing that knowledge does not need to be imparted from a single perspective, but from multiple viewpoints. Critical theorists advocate that students need to share their stories to develop a link to "the larger histories of their respective economic classes and racial, ethnic and language groups" (Ornstein & Levine, 2006, p. 117). Specifically, academic institutions can integrate multicultural education into their teachings by drawing on student's cultural heritage. Advocates of this philosophy state that students who are allowed to explore their identities and learn about others are better able to deal with discrimination as well as refrain from it.

Multiculturalism as a philosophy sprung out of the doctrines discussed. However, a review of literature indicates that the definition of multiculturalism is usually depicted in terms of ethnicity (Tierney, 1994). Tierney also states that when defining multiculturalism, we must avoid depicting the term in relation to racial identities, with more emphasis on equity for African Americans, thus, providing a narrow definition of multiculturalism. In a general sense, multiculturalism can be depicted as an ideology that embodies the underlying principles inherent in philosophies and theories that include cultural diversity, equity pedagogy, critical theory, and cultural pluralism. Hartman and Gerteis (2005) describe multiculturalism as "a response–or a set of responses-to diversity that seeks to articulate the social conditions under which difference can be incorporated and order achieved from diversity" (p. 222). Therefore, the goal

of multiculturalism is to address differences in order to make social conditions equal. Similarly, Sims, Per-rnell-Arnold, Graham, Hughes, Jonikas, Jo, Onaga, and Sardinas, (1998) state that multiculturalism enables the individual to examine their culture, and provides a means of understanding other cultures.

Despite the different rhetoric used to describe this ideology, the overarching theme encapsulated in these definitions is the notion that multiculturalism endorses inclusion and equity in all aspects of life, especially in education. The multiculturalism ideal is aptly summarized by Clery-Lemon (2003), who asserts that the doctrine provides a means for educators to promote equity pedagogy, democratic education, and social justice. Moreover, the multicultural philosophers assert that all individuals should be treated fairly, regardless of race, linguistic diversity, disability, gender, religious orientation, social class, and sexuality. These ideals must be reflected in the school system, curriculum, and in teachers' behaviors in and outside of the classroom. A secondary theme is social reform that entails using education to change society as whole and actively combating injustice.

Multicultural Education Theoretical Framework

Multicultural education can be characterized as a strategy to drive multiculturalism forward and infuse it into the curriculum and education system. Multicultural education emerged as a result of "the civil rights and equal education movements in 1960s" (Clemons, 2005, p. 289). This was a time in educational history when there was an explicit campaign for desegregating schools. Multicultural education is defined as an approach that brings individuals who have been segregated in education to the forefront so that minorities can identify themselves in the education they receive. Moreover, multicultural education is a means of fostering respect for our differences and endorsing inclusion. Advocates of multicultural education assert that multicultural education is essential because teachers need to be equipped to teach an ever-increasing diverse student body.

A review of literature reveals that the leading scholar in the field of multicultural education is James A. Banks and his depiction and philosophy of multicultural education is chosen as the theoretical framework for this article. However, competing concepts of multicultural education will also be addressed. Banks (2004) offers a cogent description of multicultural education, defining the concept in terms of dimensions, which are now discussed in detail:

- Content integration refers to how teachers integrate examples, information, and data from different cultures or social background into their daily teaching practices.
- Knowledge construction refers how educators can assist students to develop an awareness of "implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspective and influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed" (p. 5).
- Prejudice reduction focuses on students' attitudes towards discrimination and how these attitudes can be changed by adapting teaching strategies and resources.
- Equity pedagogy addresses the modification educators make in their teaching activities to accommodate students from diverse cultures, social and racial backgrounds. Moreover, it entails infusing these differences into the curriculum.
- An empowering school culture and social structure refers to the reform of school system to eliminate discrimination, advocate fairness, and create an egalitarian society.

Banks (2004) asserts that the primary objective of multicultural education is to modify all academic institutions "so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality" (p. 3). The underlying theme of Banks' multicultural education is to enforce parity through institutional change. This description of multicultural education encapsulates the idea that all aspect of educational organizations should change in order to foster equality in schools. This equality pertains to all students, specifically those who have been disenfranchised because of their race, physical disability, gender, linguistic ability, and sexuality.

Similarly, an equally prominent multicultural theorist and supporter, Christine Bennett, defines multicultural education as an instructional strategy as opposed to a philosophy. Bennett (2003) affirms that this approach to teaching is founded on democratic doctrine and principles that uphold "cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world" (p. 14). Bennett affirms that the conditions of

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