

Teacher Perceptions of Multicultural Education in the United States

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Abstract

This qualitative research project examines in-service teacher knowledge and perceptions of multicultural education in the United States, both from the perspective of their own experience as teachers and as learners about multicultural education. The respondents' narratives were analyzed by comparing them to different approaches to multicultural education.

Introduction

Many educators agree on the need for multicultural education in the United States. However, few agree on what multicultural education means, how to teach it, and how to implement it in the K-12 classroom. A survey of the literature (Bruch et al., 2004; Banks, 2002; Bennett, 2003; Gollnick & Chinn 2002; Grant & Gomez, 2001; Hernandez, 2001; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Tiedt & Tiedt, 2005) indicates the complexity, and even contradictions, of creating a definition for multicultural education, much less how to teach about it, or how to implement it. The literature reveals an array of approaches to multicultural education and teaching about diversity. Because of the complexity of the issues, the usefulness and validity of diversity and multicultural education for teachers must be examined from the perspective of those who are implementing the curriculum, the teachers.

The purpose of this project is to examine some of the ideas and approaches described in the literature, then to compare them to how in-service teachers in the United States perceive multicultural education. Bruch et al. (2004) described three

approaches to multicultural education, which they called celebratory, critical, and transformative. In examining how K-12 teachers described their own perceptions of multicultural education, these three approaches provided a useful framework.

Approaches to Multicultural Education

Multicultural education as a field of study came into being in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (Hernandez, 2001). Since then, multiculturalism and diversity have become buzzwords that mean anything from ethnic food to conflict mediation. School districts have implemented programs and curricula covering a wide variety of concepts and practices that come from a variety of sources. Many Schools of Education require teachers to take a multicultural education or diversity class as part of their teacher training. There are a number of approaches to multicultural education, each based on a specific philosophy of education. Sleeter and Grant (1999) also point out that multicultural education has different definitions because people “do not always agree on what forms of diversity it addresses” (p. vii). Despite the multiplicity of programs being implemented, and the courses being taught, some teachers, program directors, and curriculum specialists express dissatisfaction about the efficacy of the programs themselves (Bennett, 2003; Brown, 2004; Grant & Gomez, 2001; Nieto, 2000).

Bruch et al. (2004) state that “a major challenge for multicultural education as a field is the gap between theory and practice” (p. 14). They propose that an integration of what they identify as the three dominant approaches to multicultural education, the “celebratory”, the “critical”, and the “transformative” approaches, would bridge this gap, improving the efficacy of multicultural programs. They suggest that this type of

education should also critique the current system, and offer means of transforming “the practices of the institutions they inhabit” (Bruch et al. 2004, p. 16). Their contention is that by integrating the three approaches, a curriculum can be created that is accessible to all students by recognizing their differences through various forms of delivery and assessment.

Each of these approaches reflects a particular philosophy of education which is connected to the delivery and implementation of multicultural education. Materials are chosen to present a particular point of view. The context in which teachers are trained provides them with a particular perspective in the conception, planning and implementation of multicultural education. The context in which they work creates a climate for particular views of diversity. These three approaches, celebratory, critical, and transformative, provide a useful framework for examining materials, context, and teacher training used in multicultural education.

The celebratory approach moves away from defining differences as deficiencies and the traditional assimilationist ideas to “highlighting the positive accomplishments and aspects of many different cultures and social groups” (Bruch et al. 2004, p. 13). However, Bruch et al. (2004) see this approach as being an essentialist perspective, which can separate groups even further. They also state that it falls short because it tends to celebrate without examining and critiquing the power relationships inherent in our society. This uncritical approach fails to bridge the gap between one’s “comfort zone,” familiar people, interactions, and ways of being, and the multiplicity and diversity that exists in a pluralistic society. This approach is often characterized by terms such

as “awareness,” “respect for others different from ourselves,” “acceptance, and “tolerance.”

In their multicultural education textbook, Tiedt & Tiedt (2005) present an approach to multicultural education very similar to the “celebratory” approach, offering strategies and activities that help teachers integrate multicultural education as part of any curriculum. The strategies focus on creating awareness of diversity and learning about other people’s communities, traditions, and cultures. Their goal is “to plan learning experiences that support individual self-esteem and promote cooperative activities that build empathy among students” (Tiedt & Tiedt 2005, p. 32) providing equity in every classroom for every student, rather than focusing on critiquing the inequities inherent in a pluralistic society.

The critical approach examines and challenges power and privilege, and their role in society. This approach questions the status quo and critiques power relationships within a society. Such an approach addresses what Antonio Gramsci referred to as “the struggle over ideological hegemony” (Apple 1995, p.14) in a society by examining the role of education in transmitting and maintaining societal “norms.” Bruch et al. (2004) caution, however, that an overemphasis on domination can be counter-productive, demoralizing students and creating resistance in them.

This approach is reflected in Sonia Nieto’s (2000) text, *Affirming Diversity*, which reminds the readers that they cannot ignore the many “important social and educational issues that affect the lives of students” (p.2). Keeping in mind that multicultural education must exist in such a broad context, Nieto (2004) asserts that multicultural

education must “confront issues of power and privilege in society...challenging racism and other biases as well as the structures, policies, and practices of schools” (p. 4)

According to Gramsci (1971), everyone “participates in a particular conception of the world” (p. 9). One can act in such a way to modify this conception, “that is, to bring into being new modes of thought” (Gramsci 1971, p.9). However, critiquing education and society without action “contributes to sustain a conception of the world” (Gramsci 1971, p. 9) According to Bruch et al. (2004) the transformative approach seeks to critique domination and to take action, to find ways to “transform domination for the good of all” (p. 13). This approach looks at the role of education as a means of transforming and improving society and, indeed, the world. The transformative approach focuses on not just trying to assimilate the “other” to the dominant view, but to transform society so that the “other” has an equal voice and existence. These views are often dismissed as being too visionary, not practical and, even, outlandish.

Christine Bennett (2003) advocates a transformative multicultural educational approach “based upon democratic values and beliefs and that affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world” (p. 14) in order to develop students to their highest potential, intellectually, socially, and personally. She admits that the ideals of this approach may seem idealistic, which is one of the criticisms often leveled at the “transformative” approach, but she believes that such idealism has a place in trying to bring change to society.

In examining the philosophies of education and other influences that are brought to bear on K-12 educators’ perceptions and implementation of multicultural education practices, one must also examine the context of their teacher training. The philosophy

of education at the institution where they received their training and that institution's approach to and commitment to diversity and multicultural awareness can have a profound impact on the teacher's awareness of and commitment to multiculturalism. In a study of pre-service teachers' awareness and perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity conducted in 2002, Milner et al. (2003) replicated an earlier study from 1990 and compared their findings to the earlier results. Their conclusions were that although teacher preparation programs are addressing these issues more than they were prior to 1990, there is still room for improvement. They advocate infusing diversity and multiculturalism throughout the curriculum, not offering only one or two stand-alone courses. They also state that teacher preparation programs should increase the number of "opportunities [for pre-service teachers] to interact with diverse groups of students" (Milner 2003, p. 5). Their concern about appropriate pedagogy for pre-service teachers focuses on the celebratory, learning about other cultures, and on the critical, reflecting on and understanding themselves as beings within a given power structure.

Brown (2004) addresses the issue of instructional methodology and its role in preparing teachers for teaching in a multicultural environment. Brown (2004) suggests that students, especially white students, "enter multicultural foundations courses in various stages of resistance" (p. 327). In her study she found that there is a relationship "between the instructional methods used in stand-alone cultural diversity courses and changes in the cultural diversity awareness of students" (Brown 2004, p. 335). She concluded that giving the students opportunities for self-examination in the early weeks of the class and providing them with opportunities "to actively participate in cross-cultural field experiences and to actively engage in cross cultural research" (Brown

2004, p. 336) throughout the class, resulted in better comprehension of the issues studied in the class. This study exemplifies the blending of the celebratory and critical approaches, learning about others and about oneself in power relationships to these others.

By examining materials, and the context of teacher training, the complexity and contradictions present in multicultural and diversity education in the United States become apparent. Whether trying to bridge the gap by creating an integrated approach as proposed by Bruch et al. (2004), or whether revamping curriculum in schools of education, in the end, it is how the teachers deliver their message in their K-12 classrooms that must be considered. Multicultural education is such a complex concept that its usefulness and validity for teachers must be examined from the perspective of those who are implementing the curriculum. This study sought to determine how classroom teachers from Northwest Indiana perceive multicultural education and how they act on their perceptions.

Methodology

This project uses interpretative narrative research (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006), a qualitative research methodology. There are various types of qualitative research, each coming from different disciplines and focusing on different aspects of research problems in different ways. A related type of qualitative methodology, narrative research methodology, is based in the literature tradition of collecting narratives and analyzing themes in the narratives as one does in literary analysis. In this form of research, the researcher usually relies on one broad question to elicit comprehensive narratives from the participant (Casey, 1995). In contrast, interpretive

narrative research, a research design based in the social sciences, is guided more deliberately by the researcher. Narratives are generated by using a pre-planned series of broad, open-ended questions on a particular topic. Additional clarifying questions are asked as needed during the interview process. However, as with narrative research methodology, interpretative narrative research analysis identifies patterns and themes within and among the interviews.

Unlike quantitative research, and some types of qualitative research, interpretative narrative research methodology is a labor intensive methodology that is not seeking to make broad generalizations. The primary purpose of interpretive narrative research methodology is to examine an issue situated in a particular context in a particular way. Therefore, this methodology is not appropriate for every research project, especially those requiring large amounts of data from large samples of people. The researcher chose interpretive narrative methodology for this project because the researcher was interested in investigating a specific research population and was seeking specific kinds of information.

In Spring 2003, nine in-service K-12 teachers participated in audio-taped interviews, responding to questions about how they perceive multicultural education and about the training that teachers receive in multicultural education. Each teacher also completed a questionnaire for collecting demographic information, such as age, race, gender, and years of teaching experience (see Appendix).

The interview questions focused on two broad areas. The first area of consideration is how the participants, as classroom teachers, perceive multicultural education. The second consideration is the multicultural education curriculum itself.

The teachers responded to questions about their training in multicultural education, and about the training that they perceive that teachers need. The specific questions asked are:

1. Tell me what you think multicultural education is.
2. How do you implement multicultural education in your classroom?
3. Tell me why you think there is or is not a need for Multicultural Education classes for teachers.
4. Describe the training you have received in multicultural education.
5. What should multicultural education training for teachers be like?

The answers to these questions were analyzed for patterns within and among the narratives. The narratives were also compared to the literature about multicultural education for teachers to determine if there are any areas that the teachers did not mention that other researchers found in their research, or if they mentioned issues that other researchers have not addressed.

Participants

The nine participants in this project were K-12 teachers from Northwest Indiana, who had all grown up in the American Midwest. The participants were recruited by the researcher's asking several colleagues who were familiar with teachers in the area to provide names of people who might be interested in participating in a project about multicultural education. The teachers interviewed were those who responded to the researcher's phone calls.

Eight of the participants taught in public elementary and middle schools; the other taught in a private high school (see Table 1). All but one of the participants were

teaching in their initial preparation level. The exception, initially licensed in elementary education, now has a middle school endorsement and is teaching 7th grade.

Table 1

ID #	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Years teaching	Grade Level	Subjects taught
1	50	F	White/European	28	1	Core
2	39	F	White/European	15	2	Core
3	24	F	Asian/Indian	1	1	Core
4	50	F	White/European	2	3-5	Hearing Impaired
5	52	M	White/European	29	9; 12	World History; Economics
6	54	F	White/Jewish	30	6-8	Music
7	35	F	White/European	3	2	Core
8	35	F	White/European	3	7	Family & Consumer Sciences
9	54	F	White/European	16	1	Core

Results

After reading and comparing the narratives, it became apparent that Bruch et al.'s (2004) three approaches to multicultural education would provide a useful framework for analysis. A careful reading of the transcripts illustrated that while all of the teachers view multicultural education from the perspective of "celebratory," none of them talked about it in a way that demonstrated an awareness of multicultural education as transformative. Most of the teachers talked about the need for multicultural education that promotes awareness and acceptance for them as teachers and among their students. There were only a few instances in which teachers alluded to a critical perspective of multicultural education. These comments focused on attitudes toward people who are different than themselves, or on the attitudes the teacher her/himself has of multicultural education.

Awareness and Acceptance

The two first grade teachers taught in urban schools with a fairly equal distribution of whites, black, and Hispanics. They both see multicultural education as making “sure to address all the cultures, to address diversity not only in our community but of the world. We would have to make sure that people are aware of...how we’re like and how we’re different.”

They both approach diversity in their 1st grade classes through social studies and literature, relying on folk tales, holiday celebrations, and songs to teach their students about different ethnicities and races. One of the teachers said that she promotes “acceptance of everyone.” The other first grade teacher stated that in her class, “we are just all one big happy family.” When I asked her what she thought multicultural education training should be for teachers, she focused only wanting to know more about the “celebratory” aspects - foods, religion, traditions, music, art, and common words. Because she was focusing so intently on these “cultural” aspects, I asked her if I substituted the word “diversity” for multicultural education, would she answer the question any differently and she said “no.”

One of the 2nd grade teacher’s responses were similar to those of the 1st grade teachers. She told me that she does

whatever I can throughout different holidays or different months, say October is Hispanic Awareness Month, so we talk about words that are Spanish words, we talk about the students in this class that speak Spanish at home, and they try and communicate to us, you know, show us the different words mean the same thing in English.

The two teachers who taught middle school also focused on the “celebratory” aspects of multicultural education. The one who was a music teacher said that she saw multicultural education as “trying to teach to a variety of children from various backgrounds, various ethnic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, and as a music teacher trying to bring that out in them.” She advocated using music and the arts to teach teachers about other cultures. This respondent did say that she found that taking time to get to know the children and something about their backgrounds and cultures does help create a sense of belonging in the child:

Some of my students from Africa are very shy about their culture because it is not the dominant. I try to take a little more time to talk to them and share, because I want them to feel like they belong. Sometimes at the middle school level, kids can make them feel inferior because of their cultural background. I as a teacher want to learn more and more about the various cultures, because I believe that is what the music is about. It’s mostly cultural.

The other middle school teacher talked about respecting where her students come from and treating them all the same. In talking about teaching her students respect for one another, she said

I believe that they need to be aware of the fact that not everyone is the same, especially in our community. We have such diverse people...so you can’t expect that everyone is going to have the same beliefs as you, and you can’t expect everyone to have the same upbringing that maybe you had.

Her view of multicultural training for teachers is to have them focus on their community,

finding out certain ethnicities in your area and making yourself aware of them and doing a little homework to make sure that you understand where they may be coming from... to find out who are the people who are in their community or the community they are interested in going into, and finding out about that culture in general, not necessarily just the country they came.

Another white teacher, who returned to teaching about 25 years after getting her degree, works with special needs students in an urban school which has a predominately African-American population, and which has an Afro-American-centric curriculum. She feels that students in this school are not getting a multicultural education, because the focus is “that we don’t really need to look at President’s Day, that our focus should be on Martin Luther King Day.” Her idea is that multicultural training for teachers should be

taught possibly by people from different cultures, from different backgrounds, because they bring a unique philosophy, a perspective from their own personal background. I would like this taught using authentic sources as opposed to reading what a historian has gleamed [sic] from information...sources such as, possibly, diaries from the time or newspaper articles, pictures, because that brings the cultures more to life, and we’re able to identify and compare and contrast how we are alike and how we are different. I would love to see actual, live people involved in the presentation, whether it be teaching the teacher or the teacher in the classroom with the student, presenting different ways, and different tastes, sights and sounds of the culture.

In the spirit of celebratory multiculturalism, this teacher, too, strives for awareness for herself and her students without critiquing the root causes of some the inequities experienced by her students.

Attitudes

One of the 2nd grade teachers, a white woman, has been teaching for some years at an urban school with students who are predominately black and Hispanic, and poor. This respondent stated that she views multicultural education as “looking at things from all aspects.” She said that she has reached this awareness by working with students whose lives are so different from hers: “They live entirely different lives than we do.” This teacher recognizes the importance of “celebrating” her students’ cultures and heritages, while infusing it into her curriculum: “I do try and make sure that we don’t just do it just during black history month.” Much of her talk, however, focused on the need for awareness of aspects of her students’ cultures, such as food, celebrations, inventions and contributions by people of their race or ethnicity - “an awareness of all the variables.” While on one hand she said that “nothing is worse than having a teacher who has a bad attitude toward a race of child and has to teach that child,” she never stepped out of her view of the children as “other.” At one point she was talking about an in-service in which she learned about children in poverty and she stated, “to me their values are messed up...they make decisions that don’t fit with my perceptions and my ideas of what should or should not be done...I need to understand...that’s where they are. That’s what they do.”

One aspect of her understanding about the students in her school is that they do need to learn to live in two worlds (Delpit, 1994). She tries to teach the students that

“there’s different rules for different situations. They may need to fight at home, in their neighborhood, but we can’t do that here.” While she is striving to understand the children, she is not questioning how they got where they are or how to transform the power relationships that has created these situations.

Another 2nd grade teacher, whose parents are from India, had talked about teaching children about awareness and the other “celebratory” aspects of diversity. However, in the end, she did begin critiquing her own experience and relating it to that of her students:

I never had Indian friends, never learned the language, never went to Temple. Didn’t do any of that. And I look back at it now, I wonder if I would have had an opportunity to express that in school besides just expressing it at home. It wasn’t that I was ashamed, I just never had opportunities to do that. I wonder if some of the kids who I have now, if they are able to express it if they’re gonna hold onto that identity a little bit more... if you can make a child identify with part of themselves or part of their family, that’s just going to be better academically for them across the board. They can relate that to everything or to a lot of things at least, and so I think it’s very important...it’s something that will help our world, hopefully. It’s something that will help kids relate to each other. It will make them more proud of themselves and I just don’t know how it could go wrong.

The responses of the final teacher in this study were a bit different, and demonstrated a disapproving attitude toward multicultural education. He is a white male high school social studies teacher who had been teaching for almost 30 years. At the time of the interview, he had been teaching at a private school for 10 years. The school

where he teaches has a diverse student population. His responses indicated that he considered multiculturalism as negative. He stated several times that he does not notice the differences in people, and is not aware of any problems at his school:

I think it was mistake to hyphenate people...we've lost our American identity as being the multi-, what's the word I want, melting pot. So, I think I don't know what the word means, and I'm glad I don't. It just seems that it separates people. Or we're trying to make an excuse for bringing them altogether. And right here in this environment, we don't have that...I know of some schools have ethnic tension. We don't have that here...And if we had it in the lower grades or with parents or anything, I never noticed it.

This respondent feels that as a history teacher, his teaching is multicultural by the nature of its content. However, again his view of multiculturalism is reflected in how he talks about his textbooks and how they have changed:

I'm more traditional... you see some books who have maybe a paragraph on George Washington, and two, three pages on Harriet Tubman. I'm not saying that's bad, but they went overboard the other way. Now, when this says multicultural, diversity, I think of, you know, it's negative. It seems to be negative unless you come with a plan that makes it positive.

If this teachers' approach can be characterized in any way, it seems to be along the lines of the celebratory approach, however reluctant on his part.

His negative feelings toward multicultural education were also reflected in his reaction to a half-day in-service on diversity. His responses highlight Bruch et al.'s

(2004) concern that the critical approach can be counterproductive and create resistance:

We sat there for half the day and we rolled our eyes. It was bad. Because it seemed like it was just anti-white. The phrases that were used. And I thought it was dumb... because in our school system, there's basically two school systems. We have the southern...County where most of the white people are and where the money is... and then we have this area here which is poor and schools are poorer and smaller. So if anybody needs diversity it's those people down there, it's not us up here. So I think there's a little resentment because we are being preached to...I don't know if it's the way it was presented, when you talked about multicultural, it is anti-American, or anti-white and I kind of resent that...I don't think that's helpful and that's why I always thought that the hyphenated Americanism we've had all these years, I think that's been bad.

Discussion and Implications

The responses by these teachers about their perceptions of multicultural education support the assessment of researchers (Milner et al., 2003; Bruch et al, 2004; Brown, 2004) that there is a gap between theory and practice which reflects a disconnect between how multicultural education is viewed by in-service teachers and multicultural education specialists. Teachers' simplistic view of diversity allows them to comfortably celebrate diversity without having an awareness of, much less critiquing and transforming, the social injustices and educational inequities that exist in our society.

In analyzing the narratives and comparing them to the three approaches for multicultural education, celebratory, critical, and transformative, it was evident that the teachers perceive multicultural education from the celebratory perspective. Overall, their responses indicated that they were more interested in learning strategies to promote awareness in their students rather than learning how to become more aware of the underlying issues that create some of the inequities in our society and in their schools. Nowhere did any of the teachers mention anything that indicated even an awareness of the transformative nature of multicultural education.

From this research and the review of the literature, several approaches to teaching multicultural education to teacher present themselves. The first is that schools of education need to focus on integrating diversity and multicultural education across the curriculum. Secondly, education courses need to offer more classroom field experiences and community projects to provide interaction opportunities. Thirdly, more attention needs to be given to using diverse materials, strategies, and methodologies. Finally, reflective teaching practices should be central to all education teaching. All of these strategies will help teachers learn to make the connections between how social and cultural issues, such as race, ethnicity, language, and gender, impact and are impacted by education and society, and how they as teachers can not just “sustain a conception of the world” (Gramsci 1971, p. 9) but can actually effect change.

Integrating diversity and multicultural education across the curriculum

As Milner et al. (2003) and Brown (2004) suggested, integrating diversity and multicultural education across the curriculum in schools of education would help teachers move beyond the celebratory perspective. In her study, Brown (2004) found

that there is a relationship “between the instructional methods used in stand-alone cultural diversity courses and changes in the cultural diversity awareness of students” (p. 335). Integrating diversity and multicultural education into the curriculum would also decrease some of the resistance that is often manifested to these topics. Students would begin to see these topics not as special add-ons to the curriculum, but as a “normal,” integral part of all education.

The need for integration is supported by the respondents’ saying that they had had little or no training in multiculturalism, or at least what they recognized as diversity training. In a follow-up question, participants were asked if they had had training in some specific issues, such as working with: students in poverty; English as a Second Language students; special needs students. Several of the participants responded affirmatively, although they had not mentioned these workshops and in-services when I asked them if they had had multicultural education training. These stand-alone courses and workshops did not provide participants with the strategies to see them as parts of a larger whole.

Field experiences

Brown (2004) concluded that providing the students with opportunities “to actively participate in cross-cultural field experiences and to actively engage in cross cultural research” (p. 336) throughout the class, resulted in better comprehension of the issues studied in the class. She also states that teacher preparation programs should increase the number of “opportunities [for pre-service teachers] to interact with diverse groups of students” (Brown 2004, p. 5). When setting up classroom observations and experiences for students, particular attention should be paid to placement in diverse

settings. Pre-service teachers who have experienced little diversity in their own schooling will especially benefit by interactions with diverse groups of students. They will also have the opportunity to observe what works and does not work well in a diverse setting. However, these opportunities for interaction should not be limited to classroom observations.

Community action projects in which students interact with members of a community different from their own can be valuable learning experiences. Working at a soup kitchen can give middle-class students a different perspective of what it is like to come to school after sleeping all night with one's family in the car. Engaging with students of different religious faiths in a community service project, such as a Habitat project, can help students of all religious faiths understand one another better.

Integrating community service projects into the educational experience for teachers gives them various perspectives with which to critique society and its role in education, and to become aware of how they can engage in transformational activities.

Diverse materials, strategies, and methodologies

By examining materials and the context of teacher training, the complexity and contradictions present in multicultural and diversity education become apparent.

Whether trying to bridge the gap by creating an integrated approach as proposed by Bruch et al. (2004), or whether revamping curriculum in schools of education, in the end, it is how the teachers deliver their message in their K-12 classrooms that must be considered. Introducing teachers to a multiplicity of materials, strategies, and methodologies will help them see the need to go beyond the folk tales and holiday

celebrations that many of the teachers in this study mentioned as their way of integrating multicultural education into their curriculum.

Reflective teaching practices

Brown (2004) concluded that giving the students opportunities for self-examination in the early weeks of the class was an important part of developing multicultural awareness. Such self-examination is part of engaging in reflective teaching practice, or praxis, which according to Paulo Freire, is “the action and reflection of men [sic] upon their world in order to transform it” (Freire 1970, 24). Reflective journals of field experiences can be a tool for engaging in praxis, as students record their experiences, reflect on what went well and what could be improved, and make changes based on these reflections. These changes may be as basic as deciding to use a book that better addresses diversity issues, to making a change in how one addresses a seemingly hostile parent. A cycle of reflecting and making adjustments to one’s teaching based on this reflection can bring about change in the classroom which supports diversity within and outside the world of the classroom.

Conclusion

Multicultural education is such a complex concept that its usefulness and validity for teachers in the United States must be examined from the perspective of those who are implementing the curriculum. Therefore, an original objective of this project was to interview teachers from a variety of races and ethnicities, not just white teachers. Responses from black and Hispanic teachers in Northwest Indiana would probably have created a different picture. However, I think this study has significance as it stands because, according to figures presented by Gollnick & Chinn (2000), by 2020, one-half

of the students in American schools will be “minority.” As a contrast to this figure, at the present time, between 80% and 90% (figures vary according to which source one views) of all teachers in American schools are white, and 75% of these teachers are female. Knowing how white, female teachers view multicultural education and diversity gives insight into the work that needs to be done in university teacher education programs and with in-service training to move these teachers from viewing multiculturalism from a just “celebratory” viewpoint.

Schools of education need to develop curricula that help internalize the three approaches to multicultural education (Bruch et al. 2004). Teacher training should teach teachers to be aware of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences, so that they can celebrate each child and help each child learn to value who they are and where they come from. They should learn the importance of critiquing society and questioning their own beliefs and values. Finally, teachers should learn to see themselves as change agents, to take their critique and implement changes in their teaching, in their schools, and in their communities. Hillel stated over 2,000 years ago: “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?” Teachers need to learn to view multiculturalism as a means of critiquing and transforming our society in order to ensure that every child in American schools receives the education they deserve. For every child they teach, the time is now.

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Appendix**Personal Information:**

Age: _____ Gender: _____

Race: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Other pertinent information: _____

Education:

Universitie(s) attended/degree conferred/date: _____

What grade level and subject area did your initial teacher training prepare you for?

Teaching Experience:

How long have you been teaching? _____

How long have you been at your present position? _____

What grade level and subject area do you teach now?

What other grades and subjects have you taught and for how long?

Write any additional information on the back.

I understand that Lynn W. Zimmerman will use this questionnaire and the accompanying taped interview as part of her research in multicultural education at Purdue University-Calumet.

I understand that my confidentiality will be respected. My name and any identifying characteristics will not appear in the final product.

I also understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact Information:

Name of interviewee: _____ Tape #: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____