

# Essay on multiculturalism

Business



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Has the Idea of Multiculturalism Gone too Far (and is Harmful) or has it all been Misunderstood and Distorted? Adams (1996, 56) describes multiculturalism as a concept with definitions that heavily depend on the context and the environment in which the word is used. The concept of multiculturalism has and is changing steadily due to many people and different scholars make their voices heard to a consistently mounting audience. Generally, the term multiculturalism is used to refer to an applied ideology cultural, ethnic and racial differences/diversity in the demographics of a particular location/ place.

The specified location may be school, business, organization, neighborhood, town/city or largely a nation. Today, the term multiculturalism is being widely used to illustrate a society that is exemplified by cultural diversity. Some of the components that define ones culture are religion, traditions, language, ethnicity, race, customs and values. It is important to note that culture is the means through which the society interprets and perceive the world. The concept of multiculturalism is used in three distinctive but interrelated forms. The forms are programmatic-political, the ideological-normative and finally demographic-descriptive.

When used in the programmatic -political context, it refers to particular types of programs and policy initiatives that have been designed by various governments to manage and respond to ethnic diversity. In the ideological-normative context, the term represents different ideas brought in during the process. Finally in the demographic-descriptive from is used to refer to the same meaning that has been brought out by the definition given above. It refers to the existence of racially or ethnically diverse sections in population

of a state or a society (Adams, 1996, 89). According to IOM (2003) today many people live in environment that goes beyond national borders; consequently there is a very apparent growing environment. The reasons for this are very apparent with escalating rates of immigration as more people move from country to country in search of new jobs and better living standards.

Some visit their families and friends abroad while some are forced out of their own countries because of war, others get together through intermarriage. These are only but a few reasons responsible for multiculturalism in our society. Today, the world has become a global village due to improved communication technology. The use of mobile phones and other forms of advanced communication facilities are have also added to interaction at a global level. The idea of multiculturalism has been misunderstood and distorted by some people across the world who feel that multiculturalism has made them to appear like foreigners in their own countries. It should be noted and considered soberly that the concept of multiculturalism does not just end with a recognition of varied values systems and cultural practices in a society, additionally, it encompasses developing a common commitment to center non-negotiable values that are universally accepted and recognized such as justice, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, tolerance and diversity.

In other words, it calls for unity in diversity as the world is a global family. The “ Unity in Diversity” is a policy that is being used in India and Australia. The policy puts much emphasis on individuals to abide by mutual civic obligation other than reiterating on their freedom to share and express their

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cultural values (Ackermann, 1997, 112). Another policy that is being successfully used in countries like India and Canada is addressing cultural exclusion. This strategy aims at creating understanding and respect for cultures through provision of accurate and positive images and information in the media, teaching other nation's culture and history in schools.

The policy also goes ahead to call for preparation of museum exhibitions that display respect for a diverse culture and addressing socio-economic inequalities and discrimination (Allen, 1997, 56). In Australia there is a very comprehensive policy concerning multiculturalism in education and care. Its main principles are access and equity, cultural identity and maximizing potential for the children/students to effectively participate in linguistically and culturally activities in both the national and international level. The policy statement reads “ children and students will be supported to develop the knowledge; cultural understanding and skills required fro personal growth and effective participation in multicultural Australia.” Oyserman (2008, 320) asserts that another very important policy framework that has been developed is that one seeking to address exclusion from citizenship rights and civic participation. This is aggravated by the fact that many immigrants are citizens if their destination countries and more often they are exempt from participating in many activities and rights of the citizens on daily basis.

The lack of right has denied them access to jobs and other vital services. They also end up lacking protection from abuse by the natives. There are a number of countries that have fully embraced this by going to extend of allowing non-citizens to vote, Norway, Sweden and Denmark are examples of <https://assignbuster.com/essay-on-multiculturalism/>

these countries. The recognition of dual citizenship by many nations has demonstrated the importance of multiculturalism in the society. There are four key principles that are in solidarity with multiculturalism strategy. First of all, scholars view defending tradition as a practice that can inhibit human development.

Cultural conservatism has observed to prevent or discourage individuals from adopting a dissimilar lifestyle that may be important. There are several inconsistencies among different cultures that can be streamlined through blending with other cultures. For example a traditionally lazy community can borrow a lot from a more productive society (Oyserman, 2008, 315).

Secondly, respecting cultural diversity and differences is necessary for an individual to acquire a global citizen status. Adams (1996, 12) explains that there is a fear that cultural diversity leads to conflicts due to loss of culture and national identity. This notion is not true as tensions violence can be ignited by opposition and suppression of cultural identity, political, economic and social segregation on the foundation of culture.

The dangers to the cultures of the poor, weak and marginalized communities can be prevented by addressing the disparities in economic and political powers in our society. Arvizu & Saravia-Shore (1992, 34) see the fourth strategy as that which lies in the fact that diversity flourishes in a world that is globally interdependent world. Due to today's massive global interactions, the systems can only function better if they are managed and governed by links of mutual communication, values and commitment. Societies can develop cultural freedom through coming up with complementary and multiple identities as being both global and state citizens. In many countries

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today, complementary and multiple identities exist and individuals have developed a sense of belonging to a group within it and to the country. Drawing an example from the United States of America multiculturalism is a political and social movement and a stand that holds disparities among different groups and individuals and changing this into a prospective source of renewal and energy/ strength as opposed to rivalry r bitter conflict.

Value has been attached to multiculturalism in many countries round the globe and particularly on the diverse perspectives that various people have developed and maintained through assortments of background and experience originating from gender, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation and fro differences in class in our society. Forero (2003) reiterates that the concept has for a long time strived to uphold the ideas of equity, equality, freedom upon which, many countries around the world are based. The idea of multiculturalism ha carried forth respect fro individuals and groups regardless of the existing differences, serving as a very important principle for development and growth of many countries. Examples of countries that have comfortably embraced multiculturalism are: Netherlands, Britain, Canada and the United States of America that has people countries all over the world living together in peace and harmony like brothers. Supporters of the concept have viewed multiculturalism in many different positive ways. The terms that have been used include: “ assimilation”, “ mosaic” and “ melting point”.

In assimilation, different people have taken up a culture and behaving like the culture is theirs. They end up practicing the same cultural beliefs making them to stay together with others in harmony. In some other cases, mosaic,  
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means a situation where there are various cultures in a particular place however, the individual cultures are permitted to carry on with their own beliefs with no interference or being looked down upon. The melting point idea is due to the fact that different immigrant cultures come together and get amalgamated without the intervention of the state (Lega, 2004). The misconception and misunderstanding of the concept of multiculturalism has been aggravated by the fact a lot of people seem to confuse comprehension of the word race and culture; they think that the words mean one and the same thing.

Race has no basis and under no circumstance can it be interchangeably used with culture. Race has no important meaning and can not be used to categorize the differences that exist in various people. To this effect there are benefits of multiculturalism in the society today. A mix of many cultures has brought in new ideas from all over the world. Rodriguez (2008, 225) observes he people can now easily access various information from their friends who come from a separate cultures and gain different experiences like in sports and other social events. The concept has additionally resulted to globalization which has turned to be very beneficial to our today's society.

There is increased flow of knowledge and investment. The free movement of people across borders has led to more knowledge and information being transferred across. There also is a flow of cultural goods. Cultural industries have emerged in many countries that employ many people and therefore playing a very important role in building of various economies. Consequently, infrastructure has been improved to ensure that these goods are exported.

Through this, many business incubators have been established to promote medium and small sized companies to market their produce (Lega, 2004). To encourage this initiative, local governments have to step up and sponsor though. There is also a need for international funds to be mobilized in solidarity with the same purpose. The diverse ideas and beliefs that we get from those originating from other parts of the world makes us develop a sense of respect to others. This is due to blending the foreign and native cultures and learning from each other.

Multiculturalism has brought a lot of creativity among different societies and without it; there would be no correcting of our mistakes for we can correct them only through willingness to learn from each other. On the other hand, there are those who feel that multiculturalism has gone too far and is harmful. They argue that the cultural identity and socio-economic equity of native or indigenous people has been threatened and affected in various ways. There is insufficient recognition of the cultural significance of the territories and land of indigenous people live. In the end, the traditional knowledge of indigenous people gets distorted and misappropriated. It is believed that the global flow of culture, people, ideas, goods and capital has made traditional practices and values of indigenous people to be abandoned.

Due to this the economic basis on which the survival of the indigenous culture depends on has been dismantled (Smith , 2000). To sum the whole debate, multiculturalism has brought encouraged learning from each other the whole world over. The flow of people and culture across borders has encouraged innovation and globalization. However there are some concerns about the concept as it is thought to erode native cultures.

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