

# Theory of cultural determinism essay sample

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In a world experiencing rapid change, and where cultural, political, economic and social upheaval challenges traditional ways of life, education has a major role to play in promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Through programs that encourage discussion between students of different cultures, beliefs and religions, education can make an important and meaningful contribution to sustainable and tolerant societies. (UNESCO) The issue of multicultural education is of paramount importance in the twenty-first century (Banks & Banks, 2001). Diversity in schools and universities has become progressively more reflected.

Students of color comprised thirty-five percent of students in grades 1-12 in 1995. It is anticipated that students of color will make up about 48 percent of the nation's school-age youth by the year 2020. Poverty is also becoming an increasingly important issue that affects quality of education. Also important to consider is the fact that although the nation's students are becoming increasingly diverse, most of the nation's teachers are White, middle-class, and female. Specifically, about 87 percent are White, and 72 percent are female (Banks & Banks, 2001). These demographic, social, and economic trends have important implications for education (Banks & Banks, 2001). Multicultural education is intended to decrease race, ethnicity, class, and gender divisions by helping all students attain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need in order to become active citizens in a democratic society and participate in social change (Valdez, 1999). It is imperative that teachers learn how to recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies (Gay, 2000). If this is done, then school achievement will improve.

## II. Definition of Key Terms

**Discrimination.** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, esp. on the grounds of race, age, or sex. **Recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another.** **Mobilization.** A process whereby a group of people have transcended their differences to meet on equal terms in order to facilitate a participatory decision-making process. In other words it can be viewed as a process which begins a dialogue among members of the community to determine who, what, and how issues are decided, and also to provide an avenue for everyone to participate in decisions that affect their lives. **Multicultural Education.** A social or educational theory that encourages interest in many cultures within a society rather than in only a mainstream culture.

**Pluralism.** A state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization **Racism.** The belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another, that a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics. **Racial separatism** is the belief, most of the time based on racism, that different races should remain segregated and apart from one another. **Sexism.** a form of discrimination based on gender. While many people use the term specifically to describe discrimination against women, it can also affect men, intersexuals, and transsexuals, along with individuals who eschew traditional gender roles and identities, such as people who identify as genderqueer. **Stereotype.** A standardized image or conception shared by all members of a social group.

### III. Legal Bases of Multicultural Education

#### 1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Intercultural Education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a Human Rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

#### 2. UNESCO

In the UNESCO Constitution, the founding member states declare as indispensable the “ wide diffusion of culture and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace” and commit to the development of “ the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives”

#### 3. 1987 Constitution, Article XIV, Sec. 1-5:

Section 1. The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

Section 2. The State shall:

- (1) Establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society;
- (2) Establish and maintain, a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels. Without limiting the natural rights of parents to rear their children, elementary education is compulsory for all children of school age;
- (3) Establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the under-privileged;
- (4) Encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs; and
- (5) Provide adult citizens, the disabled, and out-of-school youth with training in civics, vocational efficiency, and other skills.

#### IV. Goal Objectives of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a concept which arose near the end of the 20th century, to accommodate the needs of increasingly diverse communities. Determining what multicultural education is is a tricky task as proposals on it range from a simple shift in the curriculum to the adoption of a brand new teaching discipline. However, the general objectives of multicultural education remain the same among its advocates.

### 1. Establishing Respect

An objective of multicultural education is to teach students how to respect individuals of different racial, ethnic, social-class and cultural groups. This is achieved by introducing students to other religions and traditions and the history of other ethnic groups. This way, students develop understanding of the feelings and beliefs of people of other groups. A reason to be afraid of others is knowing nothing about them and this is what multicultural education is trying to eliminate.

### 2. Living in a Multicultural Society

One of the educational system's goals is to help students form their participation in society as responsible adults. Therefore, in communities that become more and more diverse, multicultural education becomes a necessity. Students must learn how to cope with people of different backgrounds on every occasion, such as in the workplace or the neighborhood. In addition, students must learn about the values of meritocracy and tolerance, which are the foundations of a multicultural society.

### 3. Providing Equal Opportunities

Multicultural education allows educators to alter their method of teaching so that students of different cultural groups can participate more actively. This way, teachers acknowledge and value student differences and allow everyone to get an equal opportunity to reach their full potential.

Researchers Geneva Gay and Kipchoge Neftali Kirkland refer to this aspect of multicultural education as "cultural responsive teaching."

### 4. Promoting Pluralism

Diverse cultural backgrounds mean different views on specific subjects, such as historical events or elements of social structure. For this purpose, an objective of multicultural education is the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the presentation of educational subjects and in educational media and materials. This is part of what Paul C. Gorski calls “ the transformation of schools and schooling,” which is one of the goals multicultural education must achieve to affect social change.

#### V. Areas of Multicultural Education

James A. Banks (1979), a leading scholar in the field, argued in the early development of the field of multicultural education that “ educators should carefully define concepts such as multiethnic and multicultural education and delineate the boundaries implied by these concepts”. His later work continued to emphasize this point (2006). Banks has historically advanced a definition of multicultural education as a broad concept and extrapolated on five dimensions (1991, 2004, 2006). He formulated the five specific dimensions as content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (2004). 1. Content integration deals with the infusion of various cultures, ethnicities, and other identities to be represented in the curriculum. 2. The knowledge construction process involves students in critiquing the social positioning of groups through the ways that knowledge is presented, for example in scientific racism or the Eurocentric view of the “ discovery” of America. 3.

Prejudice reduction describes lessons and activities that teachers implement to assert positive images of ethnic groups and to improve intergroup

relations. 4. Equity pedagogy concerns modifying teaching styles and approaches with the intent of facilitating academic achievement for all students. 5. Empowering school culture describes the examination of the school culture and organization by all members of school staff with the intent to restructure institutional practices to create access for all groups (Banks, 2004). While highlighting the interrelatedness of the five dimensions Banks promotes deliberate attention to each. Another leading scholar, Sonia Nieto, offered a definition of multicultural education in 1992 that continues to influence discourse in the field (Nieto, 1992, Nieto & Bode, 2008). Nieto's definition of the characteristics of "multicultural education in a sociopolitical context" addresses the context of communities, and the process of education, in terms of elasticity rather than as a fixed and static form (2008, p. 7).

She focuses on seven characteristics of multicultural education: "antiracist, basic, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process and critical pedagogy" (Nieto & Bode, 2008, p. 44). \* Antiracist education makes antidiscrimination explicit in the curriculum and teaches students the skills to combat racism and other forms of oppression. \* Basic education advances the basic right of all students to engage in core academics and arts; it addresses the urgent need for students to develop social and intellectual skills to expand understanding in a diverse society. \* That multicultural education is important for all students challenges the commonly held misunderstanding that it is only for students of color, multilingual students, or special interest groups. Rather, all students deserve and need an education that is inclusive and rigorous. \* The pervasive nature



of multicultural education emphasizes an approach that permeates the entire educational experience, including school climate, physical environment, curriculum, and relationships.

In education for social justice teachers and students put their learning into action. Students learn that they have the power to make change as apprentices in a democratic society. \* Multicultural education as a process highlights the ongoing, organic development of individuals and educational institutions involving relationships among people. It also points to the intangibles of multicultural education that are less recognizable than specific curriculum content, such as expectations of student achievement, learning environments, students' learning preferences, and cultural variables that influence the educational experience. \* Critical pedagogy draws upon experiences of students through their cultural, linguistic, familial, academic, artistic and other forms of knowledge.

It also takes students beyond their own experiences and enables them to understand perspectives with which they disagree, as well as to think critically about multiple viewpoints, leading to praxis, or reflection combined with action (Freire, 2000). Nieto's emphasis on critical pedagogy draws on the work of Freire (2000), linking multicultural education with wider issues of power, including socioeconomic and political equality, in what May (1999) calls "critical multiculturalism."

VI. Approaches/strategies in implementing Multicultural Education Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant connect the role of sociopolitical power to define multicultural education. Sleeter and Grant's article in Harvard Educational

Review (Sleeter & Grant, 1987) provided an extensive review of the literature on multicultural education and explained five approaches. This work became a cornerstone of the field, upon which Sleeter and Grant (2006) continue to build. A brief overview and analysis of the five approaches articulated by Sleeter and Grant is provided here. 1. The goal of the first approach, which Sleeter and Grant call Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different, is to equip students with the academic skills, concepts, and values to function in American society's institutions and culture.

The positive attribute of this approach is that it spurred the movement toward modifying instruction and curriculum, commonly called differentiated instruction. Critics, however, claim that it has a tendency to emphasize an assimilationist perspective that positions students as holding deficits. 2. The second approach, Human Relations, consists of developing positive relationships among diverse groups and individuals to fight stereotyping and promote unity. Reducing prejudice and hostility are admirable goals, but according to its critics this approach tends to simplify culture and identity and avoids analyzing the causes of discrimination and inequality. Without a critical perspective, the Human Relations approach runs the risk of falling into the trap of feel-good tactics that are too soft on academic achievement. 3. Single-Group Studies is the third approach in the Sleeter and Grant analysis. The goal is to engage in an in-depth, comprehensive study that moves specific groups from the margins by providing information about the group's history, including experiences with oppression and resistance to that oppression. The hope is to reduce stratification and create greater access to power.

While there are many positive components to this approach, viewing it as a beginning or entry level approach to multicultural education may be the most appropriate appraisal of it. Criticism of this approach cites the unintentional effect of keeping groups such as people of color, women, people with disabilities, and working class people segregated and out of the mainstream curriculum. Other potential pitfalls are the possibility of promoting cultural separatism and the tendency for this approach to be implemented as a mere add-on. 4. The fourth approach to multicultural education is self-reflexively dubbed multicultural education. Sleeter and Grant use this seemingly redundant title to clarify this approach since so many other practices, such as those described in the first three approaches, are sometimes referred to as multicultural education. They cite Gollnick (1980) to explain that the multicultural education approach promotes a range of goals: the value of cultural diversity, human rights, respect for differences, alternative life choices, social justice, equal opportunity, and equitable distribution of power. There are several criticisms of this approach that are discussed later in this entry. The most severe criticism argues that multicultural education promotes “ particularism” and weakens social unification and academic rigor (Ravitch, 1990). Some scholars within the field of multicultural education point to the need for more attention to social structural inequalities and for teaching students the skills to increase contact among different races and cultures. Also, having teachers who are themselves members of minorities would be encouraged.

## VII. Samples of Projects on Multicultural Education

In a research project, entitled “ Educating Teachers for Cultural Diversity,”

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Melnick and Zeichner (1997) seek to highlight several exemplary teacher education programs, and to direct more substantive attention to issues of diversity in preservice teacher education programs. Among the institutions participating in the study, they uncovered four different approaches to dealing with the institutional aspects of teacher education for diversity:

1. Programs such as the Madison Plan at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and MSU IDEA at Michigan State University, which hire more new faculty of color in order to diversify their faculty composition.
2. Institution such as Multicultural Education Infusion Center at San Diego State University, which initiate systematic staff development for teacher education faculty to help them examine their own attitudes about diverse people and learn about various aspects of teacher education for diversity and ways to infuse it into their institutions and programs.
3. The partnership agreements between predominantly white teacher education institutions and other colleges or universities with significant numbers of faculty and students of color. Examples of these partnerships include the American Indian and Latino Immersion Project at Indiana University in Bloomington.
4. The creation of a consortium, where a group of institutions combine their resources to hire staff with expertise in teacher education for diversity to provide part of the teacher education program, usually field experiences and a few courses and seminars related to teaching diverse students.

VIII. Benefits of Implementation of Multicultural Education Multicultural education simply relates to instructions and education designed for several different races, and is based upon consensus building, and fostering cultural diversity within racial societies. It incorporates positive racial eccentricities

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into classroom atmosphere. It helps to eradicate prejudice and racism. Students interviewed in a case study reflected a negative attitude that would not facilitate respect for people of other cultures, fostering of cultural diversity in the classroom, or consensus building. Nonetheless, with integrated curriculum, administrative support, social activities, and staff training, ignorance, personal detachment, and fear might be reduced on both teachers and students. It brings different races together in harmony. If we learn to embrace diversity in our society, the unconscious and conscious expressions of sexism (racism) must be done away with completely.

Multicultural education can help bring all cultures together in harmony. It builds interaction between diverse cultures. Additionally, research indicates that ethnic students are inexplicably poor, being expelled or suspended, and fail to achieve their potential. Consequently, both teachers and students need to prepare themselves for the challenge of communicating and interacting with diverse races. Reduction of personal detachment and ignorance are possible advantages to a Multicultural system of education. It creates tolerance between two groups. The greatest advantage of a multicultural curriculum is that it encourages understanding and tolerance between groups. Students can relate to one another in class, thereby creating harmony and co-operation. It eradicates cultural barriers.

Multicultural education is an emerging discipline that aims to provide educational opportunities to learners from diverse ethnic, cultural groups and social-class. It seeks to help students acquire skills and positive attitude to negotiate, communicate and interact with individuals from diverse cultures to create a moral and civic community. The main shortcoming to

multicultural education is that it may be difficult to teach students from different races, especially if they speak their native language.

#### VII. 1. To the Filipino Learner

As a consequence of globalization, many people have been forced to examine some of the challenges related to education and globalization currently facing the global community because ethnic tensions threaten the abilities of social justice and global governance. These challenges involve: understanding how to take advantage of our ethnic varieties through education; forming ways of responding to diversity which permit a pluralistic and equitable society; eliminating ethnocentrism within our schools in order to attain equality in education; and developing educational paradigms that correspond with the expanding diversification of the whole world, including the advocacy of multicultural education and movements toward multiculturalism.

#### VII. 2. To the Philippine Society

Multicultural education is intended to decrease race, ethnicity, class, and gender divisions by helping all students attain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need in order to become active citizens in a democratic society and participate in social change (Valdez, 1999). Discrimination has been known as a development issue. Any forms of discrimination hinder an individual to fully develop into his/her potential. Discriminations such as racism, sexism and such can be change through education and social reform. By eliminating or decreasing discrimination and abuse, people of any culture, race, gender and social status, can contribute to the development of the society.

## IX. Teacher's role in the effective implementation of Multicultural Education

Self-awareness is essential. As teachers understand your own culture and the biases you may have about other cultures, you will be able to maintain positive relationships with those of different backgrounds. This process includes investigating your own values, practices, and beliefs surrounded by culture. Knowledge about others' cultures is also essential. Learn the values, practices, and beliefs of other cultures in order to understand the similarities and differences with your own. Everyone has a culture, not just people whose backgrounds are different from yours. Multiculturally competent educators provide a variety of perspectives on the subject matter they teach. Thus they foster students' critical thinking skills and also enable students to better understand the subject. A multiculturally sensitive classroom provides every student with opportunities to achieve his or her potential.

It allows students to understand and appreciate their own culture while recognizing its similarities and differences to other cultures and perspectives in society. Important components of a multicultural classroom include (1) explicit awareness of cultural influences in society, (2) academic content that is relevant to cultural groups, and (3) skills to communicate effectively across cultures. A common myth is that only schools with notable ethnic or racial differences need to embrace multicultural competencies. All teachers can prepare all students to become multiculturally competent citizens in a diverse society. Developing a multicultural approach to education is an ongoing process, not an instantaneous accomplishment. There is no limit to how multiculturally competent a teacher can become because improvement is always possible.

## X. Conclusion

Ultimately, the goal of multicultural education is to contribute to the transformation of society and to the application and maintenance of social justice and equity. Educators, educational theorists, researchers, activists, and everyone else must continue to practice and apply multicultural teaching and learning principles both inside and out of the classroom. In a sense, multicultural education uses the transformation of self and school as a metaphor and point of departure for the transformation of society.

Ultimately, social justice and equity in schools can, and should, mean social justice and equity in society. Only then will the purpose of multicultural education be fully achieved. (Gorski, 2010) As Socrates said, “ We are all citizens of the world.” People share the universe, globe, countries, cities, and schools. By teaching multiculturalism from pre-kindergarten on, the doors open for all of us to benefit from one another, to feel positive about one another and to live in peace.