

A History of Multicultural Education in the USA: Origins, Approaches, and Misconceptions

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education has been an important element of the curriculum in the USA, especially since the second half of the twentieth century. However, there is no common consensus on its meaning and aims among the scholars of multicultural education. This study aims to provide readers with some major scholars' important but different analysis of multicultural education in the USA, with respect to the origins of and approaches to multicultural education. Even though various misconceptions about multicultural education thwart its development, its historical progress suggests that multicultural education has expanded its scope in accordance with the common understanding of equality and social justice, which suggests that multicultural education is to be an essential part of education system in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: *Multicultural, Misconceptions*

INTRODUCTION

Culture, in a broad sense, provides human beings with various ways in which every individual finds possible means to feel, believe, think, and act. Elements of culture allow individuals to understand others' behaviors and allow them to predict how to interact in particular situations since culture has such specific characteristics as being learned and shared. These characteristics of culture highlight the importance of education by which the idea of community life and common interest of a group of people are ensured. Culture needs to be learned refers to the idea that no one comes into the world with a notion of culture, yet he/she acquires cultural patterns of the society he/she lives in, throughout his/her life from the beginning. Cultural patterns of a group of people are learned by an individual through observations of the behaviors of others surrounding the individual and interactions of the individual with other members of the group. Consequently, culture gains the characteristic of being shared since the patterns of a specific culture provide a common set of beliefs for each member of a particular culture. Therefore, culture is something that neither can be found in an individual nor is merely outside of an individual. Yet, it is the individual development that arises from one's interactions with other members of the society, participation in social activities, internalization of common values, and formation of personal conceptions of the good in general.

If it is culture that develops individuals' ways of thinking, influences their sentiments, and determines how they interact with others, then it is to be concluded that culture provides people with a perspective through which they assess the world. Also, if it is education, not only formal but also informal, that instills the patterns of and values attached to a specific culture, then educators are to attach significant meaning to cultural elements of educational theories and their implications. It may be easy to discuss and determine how educators can integrate cultural elements into educational theories and their implications concerning homogenous societies. However, it may become more complex when discussing cultural elements of pluralistic societies and its relation to education. A pluralistic society differs from a homogenous one in a way in which a pluralistic society comprises, promotes, and provides various reasonable ways to lead people's lives. Pluralistic structures of a society consist of various worldviews within

the sense of a plurality of conceptions of the good that are constructed throughout the experiences of members of distinct groups of people.

Cultural pluralism, within a democratic sense, assumes that different political, religious, or ethnic groups can equally exist within a single society. Also, it demands that political, economic, social, and educational opportunities are equally provided for each cultural group. It is not an issue in this study to discuss and promote an insight into how political, economic, and social institutions, principles and criteria, and power relations are to be established and to be functioning in a pluralistic society. Nor is it discussed how educational goods are to be distributed among the members of pluralistic societies. Instead, the idea of cultural pluralism and its relation to education, that is, multicultural education within the perspective developed in the West, particularly in the USA shall be discussed. To do so, the roots of, the characteristics of, and approaches to multicultural education provided by different scholars are examined, while some objections to and misconceptions about multicultural education are provided. Overall, it is assumed that analyzing origins, development, and importance of multicultural education in the progress and advancements of a pluralistic society may provide how multicultural education is important for education and society in general, especially in pluralistic societies.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE USA

In a broad perspective, multiculturalism in education may be defined as a movement toward providing equal educational opportunities for everyone from different cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. However, it is not easy to identify and define multicultural education in a more specific structure. According to Levinson (2009), multicultural education is a “conceptual mess” (p. 428) since different thinkers have attached various values and meanings to the concept, which are not clarified by or derived from multicultural education itself. Different thinkers have attempted to clarify the historical development of multicultural education with its clear definition and educational concerns. However, since each thinker conceptualizes multicultural education from a different perspective and tries to divide its development into distinct historical phases but focusing on different issues that has been raised by multicultural education movement, the whole picture about multicultural education has become somehow complex and confusing for those who want to understand the multicultural education movement. For this reason, to examine various thinkers’ ideas and discussions about the roots and development of multicultural education may be helpful.

Origins of multicultural education. Payne and Welsh (2008) argue that multicultural education takes its roots from the culmination of the struggles of human beings in human history, from Hammurabi Code to Magna Carta, the British Bill of Rights, philosophers such as Locke and Montesquieu, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and various reform movements in different countries, such as Russia and China. The authors also argue that multicultural education occurred in the U.S. in 1960s because of the fact that it is a natural outgrowth of the democratization process started with the creation of a democracy, a democratic union (Payne and Welsh, 2008). Gollnick (2008) argues that multicultural education is not a new concept in education in the USA, but is a new name for some educational concepts that have been discussed since the 1940s, such as intergroup and intercultural education. Furthermore, Gollnick (2008) discusses that during the 1960s, while such ideas were abandoned as intergroup education, a new emphasis on racial and ethnic differences emerged by which education programs in black and other ethnic studies were demanded. Banks (2008) too emphasizes the historical roots of multicultural education in the USA. According to Banks (2008) leaders of the civil rights movement, who struggled with discrimination and racism through advocating freedom and democracy, embraced the ideals of American democracy stated in such developments as Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. In general, it may be concluded that multicultural education originated as a response to gradually increasing cultural diversity and became a distinct part of civil rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century in the USA (Sleeter, 1996; Dhillon and Halstead, 2003). Moreover, as discussed by Banks (2010), considering the fact that the USA has been experiencing the largest immigration from various countries around the world since the beginning of the twentieth century and that the population percentage of minorities is expected to reach half of the whole society by 2050, multicultural education seems more likely to become an essential issue in educational theory and practice.

Development and characteristics of multicultural education. Fullinwider (2003) provides an account of the roots of multicultural education and of its being institutionalized as follows. He claims that the movement of multicultural education in the USA came into existence with the confluence of three educational movements

(Fullinwider, 2003). One of the three was the integration of African-American students into school during the 1960s and 1970s. Within this integration period, since minority students in general performed lower than their fellows after desegregation, various ideas about the difference between majority and minority students' educations emerged. For example, according to Fullinwider (2003), while some educators were trying to project the failure of schools' being unprepared for different norms onto students simply by labeling them as deficient, some other educators were arguing that schools and teachers need to be prepared for differences and to learn how to teach different students with various cultural backgrounds efficiently. Another contribution to multicultural education was occurred within the same period out of the tension between cultural assimilation and cultural pluralism (Fullinwider, 2003). The last contributing movement, according to Fullinwider (2003) occurred with the idea that minority students' underachievement is related to their differences in linguistic and class backgrounds because they come to school with a language other than English. As a result, this movement brought bilingualism into the educational discussions in order to improve minority students' academic success. Fullinwider (2003) discusses that these three fundamental streams became united in a single movement and gained a distinct definition in the 1970s which later became institutionalized in the curriculum in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, for example, Hollins (2008) discusses about what the next step is in the development of multicultural education. Hollins (2008) argues that since learning theories lead curriculum development, instruction, and teacher education, multicultural education itself needs a learning theory in order to survive. Such theory, according to Hollins (2008), must clarify whether learning is to be culture-free or/and culture-specific and must provide general principles based upon the relationship between culture and learning. Similarly and during the same period, Gollnick (2008) analyzes the ideas of those who argue that multicultural education in the curriculum and school settings is more than recognition of and promoting cultural diversity within the following five points: Multicultural education values (1) cultural diversity, (2) human rights and respect for human dignity, (3) alternative life choices, (4) social justice and equal opportunity for all, and (5) equity distribution of power among members of all ethnic groups. Banks (2004), however, examines the development and evolution of multicultural education within four distinct phases in the history of multicultural education as follows. The first phase begins with close attention to the history of minority groups. Thinkers in this phase were interested in including ethnic studies into curriculum focusing on the history and culture of ethnic minorities. In the second phase, educational attention was toward the needs of minority students in order to provide educational equality for all. With the expansion of the understanding of multiculturalism and multicultural education, the third phase emerged in which such groups as women and disabled people, rather than only ethnic groups, demanded equal representation in the curriculum and school structure. The last phase focuses on theory, research, and practice in multicultural education based on race, class, and gender. As Payne and Welsh (2008) argue, multicultural education has extended its scope from the field of education to a broader sense. Multicultural education is no longer only an approach focuses only on educational practices and equal educational opportunities for all students, but also is an approach that aims to contribute the progress and advancement of the whole society.

Rios and Stanton (2011) analyze the seven characteristics of multicultural education outlined by Nieto and Bode as follows. Multicultural education is (1) an antiracist approach that focuses on racist and discriminatory problems in order not to accuse anyone but to provide hope for biased-free society. Multicultural education is to be recognized as elements of the curriculum as reading and writing since it is (2) basic education. Therefore, since it is basic education, multicultural education is (3) important for all students. Also, it is a dynamic (4) process that evaluates and revises its educational materials and program in accordance with the dynamic nature of multicultural social structure. Multicultural education is (5) pervasive. Schools that recognize these principles require multicultural education at every level of their curriculum, reflects multicultural characteristics in physical aspects of schools too, and multicultural education eventually becomes a way of thinking rather than a segregated program. The last two characteristics of multicultural education are (6) social justice oriented and (7) critical pedagogy. For the two authors, multicultural education is not in favor of status quo. Instead, it promotes students' development in taking action in social changes. Multicultural education encourages students and communities to realize, share, and overcome social difficulties and injustices. Thus, Nieto and Bode's (as cited in Rios and Stanton, 2011) approach to multicultural education consisting of these seven characteristics view multicultural education as a basic education for all students which reflects pluralistic elements of society at every level and which is responsible for social advancements toward justice. Their discussion stresses the importance of adopting multicultural education as a basic part of the curriculum.

Approaches to multicultural education. The concern that centers multicultural education among the basic elements of curriculum has occurred in different ways focusing on diverse aims in the USA. According to Banks (1994), four approaches have evolved since the 1960s in order to integrate ethnic content into the curriculum. (1) The contributions approach, according to Banks, offers to add ethnic heroes into the curriculum while the mainstream curricular values and aims remain the same in its structure. This approach has limited characteristics since it only

promotes teaching some cultural events and heroes of minority groups. Yet, it does not help examining the social difficulties and ways to eliminate racism, poverty, or oppressions. It restricts the study of cultures within, for example, celebrating birthdays of some important characters of minority groups such as Martin Luther King Jr. or celebrating African American History week. In this approach, students do not comprehend the whole view of cultural diversity in and its meaning for society. Another approach identified by Banks (1994) is (2) the ethnic additive approach which is applied by the addition of a chapter, book, or course to the curriculum without changing any aims and structures of the curriculum. The most salient limit of this approach, according to Banks (1994), is the fact that the cultural aspects of minority groups are added to the curriculum by the mainstream writers, which does not help restructuring the curriculum because the subjects for study are determined by the mainstream-centric criteria. Thus, it does not help students to view society from the different perspectives of distinct cultural groups. (3) The transformation approach, different from the prior two, promotes students' understanding of social concepts, issues, and struggles from different cultural groups' standpoints. For example, while studying the American Revolution in the history of the U.S., says Banks (1994), this approach provides students with the different views of Anglo Revolutionaries, the Anglo Loyalists, African Americans, the British, and Indians in order to help them comprehend the whole event in the history. The main point in studying such topics, according to Banks, is not to stress how different groups contributed to the mainstream society and culture of the U.S., yet is to emphasize how the common culture and society of the U.S. originated from the interactions and contributions of various racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. Last, (4) the decision-making and social action approach can be seen as a further step of the prior one. This approach, while including all the aspects of the prior, promotes and encourages students to make decisions and take actions while studying a concept, issue, or problem. For example, focusing on a problem such as how to overcome prejudices in school requires students to gather data, to analyze and synthesize values, knowledge, and beliefs, to hypothesize possible actions, and to decide how and what to do in order to accomplish desired ends. Thus, the main aim of this approach is to develop and improve students' critical thinking and decision making skills and to provide them with a sense of political efficacy and social responsibility.

As another and an earlier example, Gibson (2008) distinguishes and analyzes four different approaches to multicultural education in the USA by which multicultural education is invoked (1) to provide culturally different students with equal educational opportunities, (2) to teach students to understand the concept of culture, value differences, and acquire individuals' rights to be different, (3) to maintain and extend cultural pluralism, and (4) to create successful and competent individuals in two different cultures. Then she discusses the fifth approach and argues that the first four approaches restrict the concept of culture into ethnic definitions that continue to lead to unintentional stereotyping. What she argues is that members of a particular ethnic group may hold different sets of values even though there may be a culture that is shared by all members of an ethnic group. In other words, members of an ethnic group may share various sets of cultural values that enable them participate in common societal activities. Therefore, for her, similarities as well as differences can be found within both minority groups and the whole society that consists of those minority groups. She argues that similarities among different groups may provide an insight to overcome dichotomies between mainstream and minority cultures. Simply, Gibson's view of multicultural education aims to provide all students with an insight that the culture of a pluralistic society consists of multiple-sub-cultures and with skills that enable them to function in various sub-cultures of the whole society.

Sleeter and Grant (as cited in Rios and Stanton, 2011) also outline different approaches to multicultural education as follows. The business as usual approach focuses on learning based on the values of mainstream culture and standardization in which students of non-dominant groups are underrepresented especially in advanced courses. Teaching the exceptional and culturally different approach aims to assimilate non-mainstream group students into the mainstream culture through special intensive courses within support programs such as English fluency, written literacy, and Euro-American history and values. This approach views non-mainstream group students as deficient and requires assimilation in order for them to succeed. Different from these two, the human relations approach recognizes the non-dominant cultural group and values their diverse values and experiences. This approach aims to promote tolerance, effective communication, and acceptance not only in the school but also in the larger society. Also, it focuses on the roles of diverse cultural groups' contributions to the larger society. The single-group studies approach, however, while focusing on a single cultural group and its common historical and cultural characteristics that define the identity of the group, assumes that students realize the equally deep and valuable characteristics of other cultural groups. Yet, since this approach provides a specific course focus on a single culture in an elective course, it is less likely that this approach reaches all students to help them develop such deep understandings. In the multicultural education approach, however, traditional academic concepts are addressed from various perspectives by focusing on diversity, cultural pluralism, and multiple perspectives. What is notable in this approach is that structure, assessment, and curriculum development processes are open to community members who want to participate. The last approach outlined by the two authors is named as multicultural social justice education. This approach not only embraces the principles of recognizing and respecting differences, but also promotes cultural pluralism, social change, and justice as central elements. Educational practices in this approach focus on justice-oriented topics such as racism and

oppressions. Students are assumed to develop skills in analyzing social problems, developing possible solutions to the problems, and participating in social discussions in democratic ways.

Beyond the categorical classifications mentioned above, Levinson (2009) examines concerns about multicultural education and identifies different perspectives to multicultural education within the works of three distinct groups, which are political and educational philosophers, multicultural educational theorists, and educational policy makers and practitioners. Briefly, for different philosophers within the first group, multicultural education (1) is used to respond to minority groups' claims about preserving their group cultures, (2) is invoked to support students' development of autonomy through providing them with different values and promoting their own conceptions of the good, and (3) is applied to promote the civic good through focusing on such values as tolerance, respect, open-mindedness, civic reasonableness, and civic equality. The second group advocates multicultural education to promote (1) societal transformation and reconstruction by which racism, discriminations, and social prejudices are eliminated and (2) equal educational opportunity for all students. The last group uses multicultural education (1) to increase the self-esteem of students of minority groups, (2) to help students see themselves in the curriculum, and (3) to enable students to be integrated into a multicultural world by promoting their skills in working in a global economy.

While Levinson (2009) differentiates distinct approaches to multicultural education based on differences in theoretical and practical perspectives of various thinkers, Dhillon and Halstead (2003) outline various concerns held about multicultural education within different strands. According to them, multicultural education consists of a wide range of educational issues, such as political, social, moral, cultural, and religious. Dhillon and Halstead (2003) argue that one strand examines the concept of culture itself at three levels in which culture (1) is invoked to describe the fundamental beliefs and values of a group, (2) refers to the group's traditions, customs, and patterns of behavior, and (3) implies the activities or achievements valued by the group. Another strand consists of political theorists' and philosophers' discussions over multiculturalism. Dhillon and Halstead (2003), for example, place Kymlicka's ideas about public recognition of ethnic minority cultures into this strand. Concerns within this strand focuses mainly on the role of the state, power relations between cultural groups, and implications of such concerns to the development of multicultural education. One other strand is distinguished from others by its concern about the rights of minority groups to preserve and transmit their beliefs and values to the next generation throughout education. Another distinct strand focuses on the right to make fundamental decisions about the education of children, for instance, parents' right to educate their children in their own culture and religion, children's right to develop their own understandings of culture independent of their parents' constraints, and the role of the state to protect such rights. Briefly, Dhillon and Halstead (2003) distinguish educational concerns about cultural differences and the role of culture in education by examining such fundamental concepts of multicultural education as culture, power, pluralism, and rights.

Taking a liberal vision of multicultural education as an example provides an insight into how political and educational philosophers conceptualize multicultural education and define their approaches. Dhillon and Halstead (2003) claim that a liberal vision of multicultural education takes its roots from the tension between similarities and differences. They argue that more emphasis on similarities may lead to cultural insensitivity and oppression, while more emphasis on differences may cause stereotyping, separation, and social rejection. A liberal perspective on multicultural education, however, is built upon two fundamental values, liberty and equality. In accordance with these two values, multicultural education emphasizes two basic principles, which are "respect for difference" and "equal need of all children for education for life in a pluralist society" (Dhillon and Halstead, 2003, p. 151). On the one hand, the prior principle leads educators to respond to students' cultural values and beliefs, such as religious belief, cultural identities, and linguistic diversity. The latter, on the other hand, stresses the idea that regardless of their cultural differences, all children equally need to develop basic principles and values, such as tolerance, mutual respect, and cross-cultural understanding in order to live in a pluralistic society. To help students develop such values and principles, a liberal vision of a multicultural curriculum reflects the cultural diversity of students, emphasizes how to live and interact with others, encourages them to engage in others' cultures, critically analyzes the available conceptions of the good way of life, encourages students to develop their own understanding of the good, and provides them with an insight of how people equally and freely live in a democratic pluralistic society. According to Koppelman (2011) an analysis of goals and aims of multicultural education suggest five major student outcomes, which also show the role of a liberal vision in the development of multicultural education. Koppelman (2011) argues that students are to (1) understand themselves as unique and respect others' uniqueness, (2) learn the cultural richness of their society, (3) reduce biases and prejudices by engaging in cross-cultural communication, (4) become critical thinkers and able to analyze and resolve the social problems in their society, and (5) embrace social justice for the wellbeing of the whole society.

However, a liberal vision of multicultural education in general is criticized by proponents of different approaches. While critics on the left argue against a liberal vision of multicultural education, arguing that it does not pay enough attention to power-structures in a society and thus cannot understand the roots of cultural oppressions,

racism, and inequalities, critics on the right argue that what is highly needed from education is to provide students with a high level of literacy in the dominant culture in order for them to succeed in a competitive job market, which cannot be ensured by multicultural education (Koppelman, 2011). Religious fundamentalists, however, criticize a liberal vision of multicultural education for rejecting their right to determine the good way of life for children (Koppelman, 2011). Beyond these criticisms, however, a liberal vision of multicultural education in general embraces cultural diversity, rejects domination of any culture over others, and respects individuals' understanding of the good way of life.

Misconceptions about multicultural education. Banks (2008) identifies three misconceptions about the meaning and aims of multicultural education. One of the most challenging and damaging misconception, according to Banks (2008), is the idea that multicultural education is for others, such as African Americans, Latinos, the poor, and women. Similarly, Rios and Stanton (2011) classify three myths and misconceptions about multicultural education. According to them, one myth is that multicultural education is only for non-dominant group students. Banks (2008) argues that understanding multicultural education as the study of the others marginalizes and prevents it from becoming a part of mainstream educational reform. According to him, only if multicultural education is seen essential for all students, then multicultural education is more likely to become institutionalized in schools at every level. According to Rios and Stanton (2011), since multicultural education enables students to develop positive human relation skills and to effectively communicate with others, it is to be seen for all rather than for some. Democracy, the authors argue, requires citizens who are aware of the whole picture of their society, understand its problems, and actively participate in democratic processes of resolving social difficulties. In this respect, since multicultural education helps students acquire the skills that democracy demands, it is to be placed in schools targeting all students (Rios and Stanton, 2011).

Another misconception, according to Banks (2008), is the idea that multicultural education is against the West and Western civilization. Similarly, another myth classified by Rios and Stanton (2011) claims that multicultural education tends to replace core American knowledge and that it stresses the necessity of common cultural knowledge. Also, some thinkers believe that multicultural education routes against the democratic ideals of the West and, different from a multicultural curriculum, needs to have Western-centric curriculum (Banks, 2008). Some thinkers especially during the 1970s, for example, argued that while education is seen as the tool for cultural transmission, schools are understood as institutionalized mechanisms for enculturating different cultures into a national one (Gollnick, 2008). Banks (2008), as a response to this misconception, argues that multicultural education is in fact a thoroughly Western movement emerged out of Civil Rights movement based on Western ideals such as freedom, equality, and justice. Banks (2008) further asserts that most of the thinkers of color in multicultural education are Western.

One other criticism against multicultural education, which is another misconception according to Banks (2008), is opponents' claim that multicultural education is harmful for the unity of the nation and it will divide the nation. Some thinkers argue that multicultural education is causing polarization and separation between ethnic groups and a return to the melting-pot approach may overcome the consequences of multicultural education (Payne and Welsh, 2008). According to Banks (2008), although the USA is politically one nation, it is socially divided along racial, sexual, and class lines, which also is gradually widening. However, says Banks (2008), multicultural education is invoked, rather than to disunite, unify the deeply divided nation, that is the USA. For this end, multicultural education promotes negotiation and discussion among the nation's diverse groups and it aims reconstruction of social structure through the equal participation of diverse groups within the nation. Some others saw both melting pot and cultural pluralism, according to Hollins (2008), aiming at one ideal, that is, the development of a single American culture throughout directing social change to an increasing national unity. The basic belief lying under this misconception is that if all members of American society share the same culture, speak the same language, and embrace the same values, then everyone can be connected and defined as Americans. However, according to Rios and Stanton (2011), multicultural education aims to expand the knowledge of the nation in order to provide students with contemporary issues, higher level of critical thinking, and effective communication skills that enable them to be competitive in contemporary diverse and global social structure.

Another myth about multicultural education analyzed by Rios and Stanton (2011) is the idea that multicultural education is more about political correctness and about helping minority students feel good rather than helping all students to learn academic skills. Rios and Stanton (2011) argue against the myth that multicultural education is more rigorous than traditional teaching approaches because it requires, for not only students but also teachers, a lifelong learning that provides them with new notions of worldviews. In addition, the authors argue that multicultural education enhances students' academic achievements since it promotes students' communication and critical thinking skills that contribute to their abilities to comprehend rigorous content (Rios and Stanton, 2011). Accordingly, students who see themselves in the curriculum and thus who develop a stronger sense of self, perform better, attend higher education institutions, and effectively engage in civic practices (Rios and Stanton, 2011). According to Rios and

Stanton (2011), multicultural education is not just about helping students feel better, but it is about enhancing students both academic and social knowledge and skills. Therefore, since multicultural education provides students with such skills as critical thinking, deep understanding, and intellectual discussion, it helps students easily comprehend different but all subjects of the curriculum, which also signifies the importance and necessity of multicultural education.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is not an easy task to fit multiculturalism and multicultural education into a single definition. Levinson (2009) argues that multiplicity of meanings and concepts attached to multicultural education is a result of the work on multicultural education done by various thinkers who are not interested in reading each other's work. As Sleeter and Grant (2008) mention multicultural education refers to different meanings for different thinkers. Thus, neither multiculturalism nor multicultural education has a single definition since there is no consensus on these concepts among the scholars of multicultural education. Yet, there are some characteristics of multicultural education that identify its origin, progress, concerns, and aims. Multicultural education has a historical character that it takes its roots from different movements aimed at providing equality and justice for every member of society. It may be said that multicultural education came to existence as a result of cumulative human experiences that lead societies to more democratic and egalitarian structures. In the USA, even though it traditionally takes its roots from the period of the Declaration of Independence, it distinctly emerged from the Civil Rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century. Since that period, it has shown considerable progress toward a more justice-oriented movement.

In early phases, multicultural education used to be concerned with specific minority groups' educational opportunities. However, the horizon of multicultural education has been gradually expanded from ethnic orientation to a broader perspective including women, disability groups, sexually oriented groups, and different social classes. An analysis of the historical development of approaches to multicultural education signifies that focus of approaches to multicultural education have been moving from a single group culture based perspective to a broader sense in which the whole society is seen as a wholeness of various sub-cultures or unity in diversity. It also, stresses that as the targeted groups of the approaches have broadened, the issues and concerns of multicultural education have also expanded. For example, while early approaches to multicultural education focused only on recognition of other cultures, most recent approaches concentrated on extensive issues such as equal participation, justice, social reconstruction, power relations, and rights of individuals as well as parents and the state.

Different approaches to multicultural education developed throughout its history signify that the target populations of multicultural education as well as its desired outcomes have expanded along with the definition, understanding, and implications of multicultural education. As discussed, there is a clear progress in the scope of multicultural education which originated with the focus on a segregated group of students and has continued targeting all students. Also, multicultural education has expanded its aims from recognition of others' cultures to providing equal and free participation in a democratic society. Although there was an understanding that multicultural education is for some students, it aims to favor all students rather than only those who are classified as minority students. As Banks (2008) argues, a major goal of multicultural education is to provide not only some but all students with required skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function not only within their own cultures but within and across other cultures. To reach these ends, most multicultural education theorists understand the major goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools, colleges, and universities in a way that they enable students to acquire needed skills and values to become well suited to ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse societies (Banks, 2008).

However, some misconceptions about multicultural education have raised inappropriate concerns about the education and the unity of pluralistic societies. Briefly, misconceptions about multicultural education may be summarized as follows. Multicultural education is (1) for others or minority groups only, (2) against Western civilization and values, (3) harmful for the unity of society, and (4) not good enough to develop skills into students in order for them to be academically and professionally competitive. Obviously, misconceptions about multicultural education thwart its positive development. However, from the clarifications of thinkers mentioned above, it is possible to draw a general conclusion that multicultural education embraces cultural differences and pluralism, aims social reconstruction, values linguistic diversity, respects human rights, and provides equal opportunity in education, which is much broader than simply an ethnic based approach to inequalities. As shown, multicultural education is for all students in order to develop their skills for appropriately functioning in democratic societies. In fact, multicultural education is to be seen as a part of a notion that there is a progressive social change as an outcome of cumulative human endeavor to establish a more democratic and just society based on fundamental principles such as equality, freedom, and justice. It may be concluded that multicultural education has shown a historical progress toward a more egalitarian educational movement aiming at social reconstruction and justice.

In the final analysis, multicultural education is necessarily to take its appropriate place in the curriculum in order to develop required members of pluralistic democratic societies. Multicultural education is to be seen as a necessary component of curriculum. As Banks (2008) discusses, multicultural education (1) enriches a nation and enables its citizens to realize and resolve personal and social problems, (2) provides citizens with experiencing other cultures, and (3) promotes them to benefit from total human experience. Banks (2008) emphasizes that a person fully understands his/her own culture only if he/she can view his/her own culture from others' cultures perspectives. He argues that those who perceive the world only from their own cultural perspectives are missing important parts of human experience and are capsulated by their own culture (Banks, 2008). Education is not to develop such capsulated individuals for contemporary democracies. What is to be among the aims of education is to help individuals become self-aware, responsible, participant, and rational members who analyze and evaluate social issues from critical perspectives and who tend to arrive at consensual agreements with others who hold different world views. To make this possible, multicultural education is to be an essential element of curriculum at every level of education system, especially in pluralistic societies.

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