

Multicultural Efforts and Affirmative Action in Brazil: Policies Influencing Education in the Americas

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Abstract

This study explores the intercultural movements toward social justice in education in the Americas, most particularly, North America, and how U.S. multicultural movements and policies influence countries like Brazil. First we analyzed the movement toward multicultural practices to understand how those are developed both in the U.S., and in Brazil. We examined multicultural education as a means to generate equal academic access for students from diverse gender, race, culture, and social class. Following, we expanded our understanding of multicultural practices by examining the Affirmative Action as a social justice movement. We asked whether policies can be interculturally adopted, and adapted, to create social justice in educational systems across different countries in the Americas.

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Multicultural Education, Brazil

1. Introduction

The purpose of this essay was to explore multicultural and intercultural education movements toward social justice in education in the Americas. Most particularly, we observed how North American multicultural movements and policies influence countries like Brazil in South America. We define multicultural education as an approach to teaching and learning that is based on social justice values and affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world (Bennet, 2007; Banks, 1995).

Multicultural education as a field began as educators and researchers recognized and challenged monocultural and Eurocentric models that historically placed people in dominant and dominated positions (Spring, 2006; McLaren 2000; Sleeter, 1991; 1996). Loewen (1995), for example, brought awareness of how history books document only what people of power wanted them to be told, at times preparing students through damaging and insidious messages. Most concerning is the way in which these messages are continuously taught and replicated in schools. Banks perceives multicultural education as an educational reform movement that seeks to create equal opportunities for all students, including those from different social class, race, and ethnicity. Multicultural education therefore creates equal opportunities by transforming the school environment—so that it reflects and recognizes the diversity of cultures which composes the nation's society.

Education in Brazil was similarly developed based on Eurocentric models. In fact, the debate over cultural pluralism and its relevance, especially in the field of education, has been a topic of significant attention in the country. Some of the debates mirror lessons provided by other countries, including the U.S. and Canada. Discussions of multicultural

practices in the P-20 educational continuum in Brazil became more public after Freire's (1970) revealing pedagogical processes that specifically oppressed students. Freire believed that education was the lever able to bring social transformation, and recognized that there were limitations in how students were being prepared for such transformation.

In the last decade, conversations about multicultural practices in education resurfaced in Brazil especially after the U.S. began controversial discussions related to affirmative action. The conversations included the limitations in the educational transition and accessibility of students of color from high school to college (Pacheco & Silva, 2007; Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2002). It was difficult to recognize that despite Brazilian's rich cultural diversity, students were not necessarily provided with equitable access into higher education. Affirmative action conversations invited Brazilians to re-evaluate opportunities for students based on social justice values of cultural diversity, gender, race, special needs, or religious beliefs (Bello, 2005) in higher education.

As we explored the intercultural movements toward social justice in education in the Americas, and most particularly, how North American multicultural movements and policies influence countries like Brazil, first, we analyzed the movement toward multicultural practices to understand how those are developed both in North America, and in Brazil. We examined multicultural education as a means to generate equal academic access for students from diverse gender, race, culture, and social class. Following, we expanded our understanding of multicultural practices by examining the Affirmative Action as a social justice movement. We asked whether policies can be interculturally adopted, and adapted, to create social justice in educational systems across different countries in the Americas.

2. Methods

In order to examine whether policies can be interculturally adopted and adapted across countries in Americas, we developed this essay using public documents, existing literature by scholars available in the U.S. and Brazil, as well as our personal experience in both countries. As Brazilian natives, and academics, with experience in universities both in Brazil and the U.S., the analysis of policies, and higher education access for student populations in Brazil merited further examination, especially after the Brazilian government recognized racial and class disparities among admitted students in universities. We triangulated documents, using a framework from Tyler, Lingard, and Henry's (1997) significant consideration of policies as emerging from the compromises between competing interests, often from the "dominant interests of capitalism in one hand, and the oppositional interests of various social movements on the other" (p. 4). We examined multicultural education both in North America and Brazil, considering educational policy as a bureaucratic process, but also as a societal phenomenon affecting "social, cultural, economic, and political change" (Tyler et al., p. vii). However, we were equally mindful to observe the tug-of-war between two different social, political, and cultural contexts.

We used social justice as a framework to develop a comparative sociocultural analysis of policy and practice (Sutton & Levinson, 2001) related to the interpretations of multicultural education and affirmative action. While observing established policies, we agreed with Sutton and Levinson that policies are more than top down formal dictates, but locally developed interpretations and actions. We observed how topics such as multicultural education and affirmative action in the U.S. ignited conversations, the identification of problems, and subsequent action in other countries, like Brazil. Using a review of literature, public governmental information, and other public documents from educational organizations, we inform about the organic influence of social movements across these two countries.

3. Policies leading to Social Justice

Rawls (1971) posited that justice can only be fair when considering that people negotiate fair agreements based on the principle that everyone is hypothetically starting off the same, without our knowing their place in society, without class and social status comparisons, or knowing their fortunes (p. 12). Such an essential premise, however, is not possible considering the current capitalistic and individualistic society. In education, social justice becomes a significant issue when schools fail to deliver the promise of quality education to every child (Connell, 1993; Miller, 1979; Tyler, 1997).

Questions about the validity of normative approaches to equity and equality issues go back to Aristotle's challenge of principles based on proportionate equality (Irwin, 1999; Feinberg, 1970; Homans, 1974). These scholars claimed that resources were to be distributed proportionally based on individual characteristics (e.g. level of academic achievement or gender). Homans (1961;1974) argued that individuals expected rewards that (a) would reflect individual levels of investments and contributions; and (b) these would correspond to the level of reward others received in return for the same type of investments and contributions (Sabbagh, 2002). By the 20th century, scholars were challenging these concepts further, making us aware that a further examination of who rewards investments and contributions was warranted in order to develop social justice practices.

The examination of social justice in education gained momentum in the last quarter of the 20th century. Early scholars of

social science such as Walzer (1983), for example, highlighted the important consideration of the different approaches to social justice in education. He posited that depending on the students' age group, different social justice values were in action. Of particular attention in Walzer's examination was the use of different values – equity (proportionate distribution according to the input of the individual), or equality (equal distribution without considering individual characteristics), depending on the different spheres in which students belonged.

Walzer highlighted the paradox of different values considering that whereas education uses an equality model to offer education equally to students at elementary school age – which would allow them to become proficient in basic skills as a right for every citizen in a democratic society, the equality model then turns into an equity model when it refers to students reaching college age, with schools now stratified by economic possibilities in order to obtain education. Under closer and ethical analysis, however, scholars found that educators who provide education to students are not only sensitive to factors that affect student learning, such as student engagement, interest, or productivity, but educators also determine how or if education is delivered depending on students' personal characteristics (like gender, color, or socioeconomic status), and other complex cultural and historical contexts (Coleman, 1973; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rawls, 1971). Unfortunately, people (including educators) only care about social justice or injustice when they experience and live it, or are motivated to break social rules to improve the lives of others (Tyler, 1997).

4. Multiculturalism and Social Exclusion

For McLaren (2000), Canen (1997) and Canen and Moreira (1999) “multiculturalism” is an umbrella term that develops in different ways. Under a cultural approach it can lead to a folkloric understanding of peoples, bringing about conversations filled with exotic examples and stereotypes. On a higher intellectual level, multiculturalism can be perceived as a critical intercultural understanding of similarities and differences among individuals and groups. This latter perception, based upon post-colonial findings, rejects assumptions that homogenize individuals.

The terms multiculturalism and interculturalism have been used interchangeably, even though there are differences in their use. Gundara (2006). Multiculturalism is a descriptive term that highlights and describes the existence of ethnic, sex, linguistic, gender, social class differences (Sleeter 1991; 1996). As a term, *multiculturalism* has been racialized in many parts of the western world suggesting that minority groups continuously faced exclusion and discrimination. In a UNESCO¹ experts' seminar, for example, education in a multilingual world was discussed as providing a relevant basis in the development of bi/multilingual education showing that linguistic diversity effectively contributes to child development and the enhancement of cultural understanding.

The term *interculturalism* is often used to nurture integrated initiatives and policies to combat racism and xenophobia (Gundara, 2000). Interculturalism emphasizes past and present interactions between peoples, their cultures, and the state, as conducive to a global understanding. In this context, many countries in the Americas and both the U.S. and Brazil have not taken issues of linguistic or cultural diversity in all seriousness as conducive to intercultural understanding. Instead, a colonizer's perspective prevailed, with people perceiving cultural pluralism as a mere consequence of post-War migration, and in some ways, counter-productive to the development of societies. Social exclusion, instead of social inclusion, was constructed on the premise that people from minority groups were “culturally deprived” or “culturally disadvantaged” (Gundara, 2000; 2006).

UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) action plans reinforced the importance of multilingual and multicultural societies. Gundara (2006) highlighted that especially in industrialized countries, the educational content and provisions can benefit the development of citizens in society. He added that, “unless education is intercultural, it cannot provide equality and quality education for all” (p.3). Still, democratic nation states face a number of challenges within their education systems when social exclusion is practiced, leading to injustices.

Educators and policy makers have the tough task of turning social exclusions into social inclusions, despite systemic problems they confront. Educators are disempowered when they do not have the tools to reject deficit constructs and build social inclusiveness. So, between celebrating folkloric stereotypes on calendar-set occasions, and reverencing European colonialists in history books, P-12 teachers have no culturally-informed content or materials to foster students for multicultural discourses. In addition, a lack of political will in creating incentives to change this landscape markedly characterized the 20th century. As a consequence, educational institutions encounter difficulties in fostering intercultural or multicultural education when there are no role models or advocates towards democratic practices and social inclusion.

4.1 Social Exclusion in the United States

In the history of education in the U.S., high schools are the institutions that most focused on the goal of preparing individuals for societal participation. Spring (2005) argued that democratic principles were fundamental in organizing public high schools in the U.S., with a special focus on *social efficiency*. Three main considerations were given in the

structuring of schools based on social efficiency: a) the role of high schools in the selection of individuals for particular occupations; b) the improvement of individual skills to improve productivity; and c) school as places to provide education as a means to get a job. Social efficiency was perceived as a democratic aspect in the development of human capital when providing individuals with a vocation – regardless of their background, race, religion or gender.

However, social efficiency as a doctrine carried broader implications when it was designed to produce individuals to perform certain roles in society, and defining who should take certain roles. These decisions, made in name of education, promoted a contrast between rich and poor, and furthermore, locked students early in their career preparation into social class realities. Behind a concept of democratic education, public schools may have been perpetuating social-class and racial discrimination when schools were determining each student's place in the social and economic system. These determinations later turned into self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1968; Brameld, 1972) when less educated families perceived their children as unworthy of a college education. Coincidentally, students discouraged to acquire college degrees were often female, or of color (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gonzales, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003; Hubbard, 1999).

It is also important to consider that the U.S. is very prolific in relation to research informing about the outcomes of educational policies. New models of curricula delivery and subsequent results of such programs, for example, are frequently reported and available to the national and international public. However, it is important to note that different from countries with a centralized government, each state adopts slightly different educational goals, and methods of delivery. Cultural pluralism and multicultural education then may not have been implemented in many states in the U.S. or when implemented, it may have been developed in different ways.

4.2 Social Exclusion in Brazil

The fundamental difference between the U.S. and Brazil is compulsory education. Unlike the U.S., social exclusion in Brazil is unconcealed when students must compete for space in K-12 public education. Education is centralized, coordinated by the Ministério da Educação. Even though individual states are charged with the need to prepare children with K-12 education, not all states offer enough spaces for students. Even though generalizations cover pockets of good educational delivery, public education in Brazil still presents room for improvement. In addition, Eurocentric values, which were the foundation of education in Brazil, still permeate most of the educational institutions and the positionality of educators.

The private sector largely supplies education to students unable to go to public schools, especially those who are interested in college preparation. So, underrepresented students include those from socioeconomically depressed families, who may run the chance of not obtaining a vacancy for their children in K-12 schools. The majority of socioeconomically challenged families are Afro-descendants. Free, public transportation is also not available for students, so those living in remote areas of the countries are similarly underserved. In addition, bilingual literacy or multiculturalism is not necessarily targeted in the curriculum. Most of what has been claimed as multicultural education is regarded as a mere reproduction of a few programs observed in U.S. schools. Nonetheless, a number of Brazilian researchers (Gusmão, 2004; Lopes, 1999; Moreira, 1999; Silva, 1999; Souta & Iturra, 1997; Vieira, 1999) have been stimulating conversations related to the importance of cultural identities as oppressed by monocultural curricula.

In relation to the preparation of students in high schools, Brazil followed the U.S. model of a modified curriculum in public high schools—from a classic to a vocational curriculum. Classic preparation was still a prerequisite for college admission, so its inclusion in high schools was demanded as being one of the curricular options for students in order to provide them with enough chances for college preparation. Nevertheless, the vocational route was emphasized—especially during the 1970s, when a military, dictatorial government was in place. It resulted in the demise of a classic academic pedagogy of education that encouraged inclusiveness of individuals, now substituted by knowledge-specific curricula that unfortunately resulted as a tool to sieve individuals in their admittance to college.

At the college level, the Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação (ANPEd), a national association for graduate studies in education, began discussions that combined cultural diversity and inequalities around the turn of the century. McLaren (2000) and Canen (1997, 1999) urged Brazilian academics to reveal existing tensions related to ethnocultural debates. They called attention to the need for *universal justice* policies conducive to the preparation of students historically placed in the margins. Such policies should not only be couched in policies observing through the curricular preparation of students, they affirmed, but also through the improved preparation of teachers.

One of the incentives for the infusion of a multicultural agenda in Brazilian schools is the Programa Nacional de Direitos Humanos (PNDH) guideline for schools to,

Apoiar a inclusão nos currículos escolares de informações sobre o problema da discriminação na sociedade brasileira e sobre o direito de todos os grupos e indivíduos a um tratamento igualitário perante a lei. (PNDH,

Anexo I, para. 124)

Support the inclusion in school curriculum of information pertaining to the problem of discrimination in the Brazilian society, and the rights of groups and individuals for an egalitarian treatment in face of the law (authors' translation).

The turning point regarding the application of multicultural education in the U.S. or in Brazil, as stated earlier seems to lie in the process of preparing teachers through in-services and training programs for a hybrid, conscious, multiculturally-committed pedagogy, in which educators enable themselves, and their students, to build cultural identities. Possibilities in bringing multicultural education into the Brazilian educational pedagogy and curriculum have been modestly attempted through the establishment of curriculum guidelines provided by the Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (PCNs) generated by the federal government.

5. Affirmative Action as an Opportunity for Social Justice

President Lyndon Johnson's Executive Order 11246 of 1965 brought to light the inequalities practiced in relation to equal employment opportunity. The Executive Order prohibited employment discrimination based on race, creed, color, or national origin (Sec.101), requiring employers to take "affirmative action" against discrimination. This issue became a public inflammatory issue after 1970, when further implementation and revisions made to the Secretary of Labor's Order No. 4. Revised Order No. 4 required that institutions, which included American universities, have a proportional representation of women and minorities, not only as employees, but in the admission of its students. People were angry and divided when required to set goals and monitor exclusionary practices. People were divided between prejudices favoring white Americans and accusations of reverse discrimination by the same white Americans when universities were required to "count" by gender and race, instead of admitting students based only on academic competence (Gaertner & Dovidio 1986; Kluegel & Smith, 1982; 1983; Sears, 1979; 1980; 1988).

The upheaval generated by the universities' examination of gender and racial "quotas" spanned beyond the original push for equal employment opportunity in the workplace (Edsall & Edsall, 1991), triggering questions related to the entire P-20 system as asymmetrical in providing equal educational opportunities for students. It was increasingly evident that academic competence in relation to college admission meant that most students being accepted were, in their majority white, perpetuating unfair and exclusionary practices (Kuklinski, Sniderman, Knight, & Piazza, 1997). Kuklinski et al., for example, recognized that prejudiced attitudes still pervade the white population especially when recognizing that resistance to affirmative action is likely to be an extension of this prejudice.

5.1 Affirmative Action in Brazil

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso similarly recognized in 1995, that racism and inequalities had to be acknowledged and human rights respected, especially toward Afro-descendants in Brazil. The Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, a federal organization, recognized in 2001 that from the total number of students in universities, 97 percent were white, 2 percent were African-descendants, and 1 percent was Asian-descendant (Henriques, 2001). To put this fact in perspective, it is important to recognize that among those living in poverty, 70 percent were Afro-descendants.

The concern about racial discrimination in Brazil turned into a decree set by the Programa Nacional de Direitos Humanos (PNDH), Decreto No. 4.229, in May 13, 2002. The Decreto No. 4.229, required to:

Adotar, no âmbito da União, e estimular a adoção, pelos estados e municípios, de medidas de caráter compensatório que visem à eliminação da discriminação racial e à promoção da igualdade de oportunidades, tais como: ampliação do acesso dos afrodescendantes às universidades públicas, aos cursos profissionalizantes, às áreas de tecnologia de ponta, aos cargos e empregos públicos, inclusive cargos em comissão, de forma proporcional a sua representação no conjunto da sociedade brasileira" (PNDH, Anexo I, para. 191)

Adopt at a national level, throughout states and municipalities, measures in order to compensate for, further eliminate racial discrimination, and promote equal opportunities, such as: expanded access of Afro-descendants in public universities, professional institutions, the areas of technology, and public career positions, including positions in committees, proportionate to their representation in the overall Brazilian society (authors' translation).

Simultaneously, the term *ação afirmativa* was being adopted in the local scientific community. Martins da Silva (2007), however, added that *affirmative action* as a term, in fact, had no legal effect or impact since the term was absent in the human rights decree—it was borrowed from U.S. discourses. Nonetheless, Brazilian researchers continued to borrow the term.

Pacheco and Silva (2007) recognized that the omission of a problem is the most effective way of ignoring a problem

exists. The PNDH decree materialized existing disparities experienced by Afro-descendants when compared to their white counterparts, and for the first time since the slavery abolition laws, Afro-descendants were recognized as long-needed beneficiaries of this sociopolitical reform. Heated discussions occurred in Brazil in relation to college access, especially after President Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva determined that universities should use “quotas” in 2004. Policies to guarantee vacancies to underrepresented undergraduate students at public universities in Brazil were the focus of those quotas (initial adoptions were at Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense, and Universidade do Estado da Bahia, in 2003) and was an affirmation of the existing inequities in higher education not just for economically disadvantaged students, but for minorities, such as Afro-descendants and Native-Brazilian descendants, in their vast majority among the poorest individuals in society. The Projeto de Lei 3627/04 defined that at least 50 percent of university admissions should be granted to students coming from public high schools.

As we mentioned earlier, education can be perceived as a commodity in Brazil, and students who attend public schools are often not as well prepared as those who can afford private education. Coincidentally, many of the low-socioeconomic students are children of color. On the other hand, families with higher economic means could choose from an array of college preparatory schools, thus creating a pattern of consumerism and elitism. However, the best and most sought universities in Brazil are federally owned (i.e. public and free). Therefore, ironically, through a competitive entry exam, better prepared students (the ones prepared in private high schools and in their majority whites) were often the ones accepted at public federal universities. As a consequence, students prepared in public high schools historically presented fewer chances for admission in free federal universities. Their only option is to, once again, resort to private institutions of higher education. Roberto Martins, president of the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA), sadly recognized that 67 percent of the illiterate children in Brazil are Afro-descendants, and only 3 percent of the students who complete public high schools are, in fact, Afro-descendants (IPEA, 2003), evidencing the high attrition rate of these students to persist in school. When President Lula da Silva enforced the admittance of 50 percent of public high school students into universities, he indirectly acknowledged the asymmetrical P-16 system and the abysmal absence of social justice in providing equal educational opportunities for college access.

Among the 50 percent of vacancies guaranteed to students coming from public high schools, a percentage of these vacancies were to be designated to Afro-descendants and Native-Brazilians, proportionate to the region in which universities were operating. On the other hand, Pacheco and Silva (2007) were optimistic that the issue of including historically underrepresented students in college was finally being handled rationally and scientifically. From the Projeto de Lei 3627/04, a nationwide program to defeat racial discrimination and promote equal opportunities was created so people of color could have competing chances to later succeed academically and professionally.

As a result of the 2004 decree, public and private universities enrolled over 3,000 African Brazilian and Native-Brazilian descendants in subsequent years. This policy, however, did not improve the conditions of public P-12 schools. Public schools still do not meet the needs of students and their families, especially due to the conditions in which these schools operate, including teachers who are often ill prepared and poorly paid. There is still much to be done in the optimization of Brazilian schools, and services rendered to their students as future citizens.

6. Conclusion

If the leaders who frame the political agenda and shape public opinion remain uniformly white, the common good gets shortchanged; it isn't really common. — Elizabeth Anderson (2002)

Affirmative action movements did not occur only in U.S. or Brazil. India and Malaysia, for example, observe quotas for a number of public and private colleges and economic activities as early 1970's. Similarly, Canada, Ireland, Namibia, and South Africa, concerned with equal opportunity employment, adopted employment and skills equity policies in the 1980's and 1990's (Tomei, 2005). For Brazilians, the formula for the adoption of affirmative action may have been a combination of providential coincidences: it was necessary that people ignited the issue within the Brazilian context after learning about affirmative action movements in the U.S., coupled with a president that was formerly (and after his presidency) a sociologist and political science professor in national and international institutions such as the College de France, Paris-Nanterre, Stanford, and UC Berkeley. Mills (1959) would indubitably identify this experience as proving his theory of sociological imagination, linking the individual, the situation, and the time in history.

In reviewing multiculturalism and social exclusion, the Brazilian educational system seems to be following the same ideologies and patterns of those present in North American educational systems. The differences lie in the cultural aspects of each country and the way education is perceived by governmental leaders and agencies which may adopt policies according to their own interest and needs. Monocultural domination is still current in both countries, characterized by a European and post-colonialist “pristine” ideology and it still may be exploitative and repressive

toward minority groups who are still perceived as limited, or challenged. One of the problems faced by proponents of multicultural education in the Americas is that languages, histories, and cultures of minority groups are not perceived as having equal value as those of dominant nationalities.

The purpose of this study was to explore the intercultural educational movements towards multicultural education and affirmative action in the U.S. and how these influence other countries in the Americas. In the case of Brazil, we could see the positive influence the U.S. and North American contexts exerted in Brazil. The recognition of racial discrimination by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was a landmark of similar magnitude to the abolition of slavery. The recognition of existing racial discrimination was a long needed acknowledgement of social injustices currently in place. We challenge that even to date, the majority of the population may not completely understand what social discrimination is in Brazil.

The quota system implemented by President Lula da Silva was questioned and contested, but its implementation opened our eyes, and allowed the opportunity for a number of afro-descendants to be considered for admission in public higher educational institutions. It was hard to understand and articulate that higher education in Brazil is free only for those privileged students who can afford to pay for education. Nonetheless, it seems that the affirmative action movement ignited discriminatory reactions both in the U.S. and in Brazil. In both countries, the population and their leaders seemed to encounter much difficulty in confronting false normalcies (like certain groups are lazy or uninterested in education) and subtle discrimination (Pacheco & Souza, 2007). Araújo (2007) exemplified that when small enterprises were granted lower taxes in Brazil, no one seemed to react negatively. Similarly, when adult Brazilians with disabilities were granted 5 percent of job opportunities, or when women were granted 4 month of maternity leave, the population perceived those as benign positive interventions, even though it was a form of benign discrimination. Araújo asks then, why affirmative action as a benign intervention, ignited such public anger and court lawsuits from the white population?"

White anger, affirmed Kivel (2002) is the most revealing form of racial discrimination. Social justice in this case is being achieved through a human rights call for groups largely underrepresented and misrepresented for fair treatment and equitable share of the benefits of society. In education, social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equality (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Perhaps the anger is not only targeted at people because of their color, but in the way race trumps self-interests (Jacobson, 1985, Kluegel, 1982; 1983) or interferes with a society of capitalism and consumerism.

When schools proposed to educate workers for the global economy, they became training sites for future consumers (Spring, 2005). Schools, in this way, trained teenagers to become part of an ideology of consumerism, inviting students to become effective as providers and consumers of goods and services, with a clear message of an established social order that determines who is most deserving of these goods and services. History books, for example reinforce this message when whites are portrayed as heroes confronting the resistance of the enemy, often misguidedly represented by peoples of color.

Even though whites are increasingly perceived as minority, some people have not freed themselves from racial issues that were crafted by design in each of their nation's history. We reiterate the idea that teachers (from preschool through college) are our best hope to dispel patterns of social exclusion. Instead of focusing on surface culture – clothes, food, festivities, crafts, language, literature and folklore, teachers can begin the integration of cultures with notions of courtesy and respect toward different culture, an accurate examination of historical accounts of racial and gender discrimination, and preparing students for civic participation and national and international diplomacy. Vested interest in the students' future, instead of "blaming the victim" behaviors is among a few of the significant changes teachers can make in the lives of students. Perhaps Bennett (2007) summarized it best when defining multicultural education as the acceptance and appreciation for cultural diversity, respect for human dignity, and responsibility for the world community.

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Note: 1. UNESCO Seminar of Experts in March, 2006.