

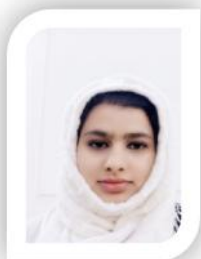
## A STUDY OF CULTURAL PLURALISM AND ITS ADVANTAGES FOR EDUCATION

### Article Particulars

Received: 1.11.2017

Accepted: 1.12.2017

Published: 23.12.2017



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### Abstract

*Cultural pluralism has been a dominant feature in man's very recent history; and yet there has been a general failure to consider its meaning and to examine its implications for culture in general and education in particular. Cultural pluralism is a term used when smaller groups within a large society maintain their unique cultural identities, and their values and practices are accepted by the wider culture provided they are consistent with the laws and values of the wider society. The idea of cultural pluralism in the United States has its roots in the transcendentalist movement and was developed by pragmatist philosophers such as Horace Kallen, William James and John Dewey. The philosophy and ideology of pluralism is not new but one whose time has come for actualization. Education is providing experience for students, teachers, counselors and the community to nurture and practice pluralistic thought. The philosophy of pluralism is not restricted to the "plurist" educational movement but is being extended to encompass teacher in service training and community-based involvement and inputs. Teachers and community at large are acquiring an awareness of cultural pluralism through subtle methods of dialogue and participation. This research paper seeks to analyze the knowledge of cultural pluralism and its implications for education.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, Pluralism, Education, cultural pluralism.*

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### Introduction

Culture is the general knowledge of an individual about his identity and connection with the country and people he lives in. Culture is the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behavior, values, music and arts of a particular society. But according to Edward B. Taylor, culture is not only the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes etc. but also the human's ability and capability in their society. Pluralism refers to the society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious and social groups maintain participation in and

development of their traditions and special interests while cooperatively working toward interdependence needed for a nation's unity. While discussing cultural pluralism, we should first understand the term 'pluralism' which means many. Pluralism refers to "a state of affairs in which a multiple city of groups or institutions are operative within society. Cultural pluralism is a situation where there are different ethnic or social groups that exist in the society and try to develop their own culture (Merriam Webster dictionary).The idea of cultural pluralism has its roots in the transcendentalism supported by the transcendentalist movement. Transcendentalism is an American literary, political and philosophical movement of the early nineteenth century. The transcendentalists operate with the sense that a new era was at hand. They were critics of the contemporary society for its unthinking conformity. Cultural pluralism was developed and improved by cultural pluralists namely William James, Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne, Louis Adamic and Leonardo Coviello. Cultural pluralism originates when two or more cultural groups occupy a single geographical area, and participate in some common activity/activities, borrow elements of culture from each other, but continue to maintain their respective cultural autonomy. It is the coexistence of many dissimilar things or patterns of activity. In other words we can say cultural pluralism is a system where different culture-groups coexist and share a common cultural platform without losing their respective identity. In India, past traditions as well as present circumstances favor the growth of a novel type of nationhood which promotes a common national culture, but at the same time ensures various communities freedom to maintain and develop their own cultural and religious traditions, so long as they are not detrimental to the unity and general welfare of the nation. This is cultural pluralism.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Thomas C. Hogg and Marlin R. McComb (1969) studied "cultural pluralism and its implications for education". The study revealed that cultural pluralism and its attendant conflicts in America were increasing under the impact of industry. Pluralism plus conflict appeared to be part of the new quality of industrial, social and cultural life. Stuart C.Rankin (1971) studied "Educational Goals in a Pluralistic Society". The study reflects that education is purposive, that goal setting is a central fiber in the fabric of curriculum. Gloria W. (2000) studied "criteria for cultural pluralism in the classroom". The study revealed that culturally pluralistic curriculum plays a paramount role in influencing the attitudes of the students.

### **Society and Cultural Pluralism**

In a society that supports cultural pluralism, diversity is not tolerated, but frequently supported by law. Subgroups that wish to maintain a unique identity, such as Amish, are allowed to do so because their own arching values of the larger group. The rights if

the groups are protected because the nation as whole recognizes the fundamental right of individual to maintain strong identities based on common heritage.

Cultural pluralism is the idea that smaller culture is readily accepted by a major culture in the sense that smaller culture keeps their identity, religious practices and morals or values. It is made clear within the smaller culture and/or members not to assimilate or become multiculturalists. They want to focus more on integrating themselves into the dominant culture without losing any culture of their own. They want to keep their heritage intact for future generation to come and pass down for example ancient rituals and to keep those in practice. Although sometimes cultural pluralism does not work in the sense that the smaller culture may have a few beliefs or practices that the government or law does not agree with.

Depending on how one looks at it, cultural pluralism can have a great benefit on one's society in the following ways:-

- The introduction of new food, fashion and art.
- New experiences.
- New ideas on how to solve societal and political problems.
- Religious ideas and social mores.

### **Advantages of Cultural Pluralism**

A culturally pluralistic society is characterized by greater tolerance for groups that differ from the dominant society, resulting in less prejudice and discrimination toward minorities. This view diminishes ethnocentrism: the tendency of people to view divergent customs, people and beliefs through the lens of their own culture and to make judgments based on those standards. Cultural pluralism also promotes "intellectual dualism". In other words it exposes the voting public and society's policy makers to multiple perspectives, which can improve critical thinking on decisions related to leading issues. Finally, if successful, cultural pluralism helps to preserve the unique traditions, identities and languages of the many cultures within a society.

### **Cultural Pluralism and Education**

Millions of ethnic groups mainly built the society and most of them born in the reality of having a cultural diversity. Moreover, cultural pluralism had been common part of the society. Many variations in culture were mostly seen in different countries which particularly were in the field of education (Agcaoili, 2008). Basically cultural pluralism in every nation is normal. Everyone is used to this and it became a part of the society. On the other hand, cultural pluralism in education is helpful in a way that students, having different cultures, interact with one another. Furthermore, it is expected that students with the same culture became friends and also, it is possible that students that have different culture can be friends (Ward, 2007). Cultural pluralism is everywhere. Hence it would be advantageous or acceptable to all if there would be no conflicts

farm. Also, it is one of the ways of school to bind different groups and develop a tight relationship between them. From preschool to colleges, schools play a vital role in molding the attitudes and beliefs of the youth of our society. The curriculum and teachers within the schools serve as a primary instrument for facilitating and implementing this molding process. The importance of having a curriculum that is capable of responding to the diverse needs of a pluralistic society is essential because such a curriculum has one of its primary goals the enhancement of individual self esteem by helping members of various racial and ethnic groups to retain and value their cultural identity.

### **Educational Goals of Culturally Pluralistic Curriculum**

The development of curriculum or the modification of an existing curriculum to be consistent with the goals of a culturally pluralistic society, places a tremendous responsibility on the teachers. The teachers must be able to evaluate the curriculum to decide if it meets criteria for a pluralistic society and to determine what curriculum changes are needed.

### **The Culturally Pluralistic Curriculum**

1. Reflects the pluralistic nature of our society, both past and present.
2. Present diversity of culture, ethnicity and custom as a strong positive feature of our own nation's heritage.
3. Provides a balanced responsibility of cultural groups.
4. Shows that every cultural group has many individuals, such as education. Scientists, artists, writers, architects and others who have made important contribution to society.
5. Present a wide representation of many cultures in the world.
6. Help students to gain knowledge and appreciation of many contributions to our civilization made by members of various cultural groups.
7. Examines the societal forces and conditions which operate to optimize or minimize the opportunities of minority group individuals.
8. Include an equal representation of all the cultures.
9. Provide experiences that help to build positive attitudes of a student's own cultural group and acceptance of other cultural groups.
10. Make certain that cultures are not presented separate or in isolation from each other. A pluralistic curriculum should provide experiences that show how people of one culture have adopted food, clothing etc, from other cultures.
11. Present the cultural, sexual and racial groups in our society in a manner that will build mutual respect and understanding.

12. Portray people –boys and girls, men and women – whatever their culture as displaying various human emotions, both negative and positive. Individuals of different cultural groups should be described working and playing together.
13. Present members of various cultural groups in positions of authority.
14. Examine the societal forces and conditions which operate to minimize or maximize the opportunities of minority group individuals.
15. Portray cultures other than from a 'special occasion' point of view.
16. Present wide representations of many cultures in the world in the total curriculum from kindergarten to twelfth grade.
17. Examine the real problems and real people of the various cultures and not just heroes and highlights.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, having analyzed cultural pluralism and its educational implications, I believe it is important to make a final thought. From my point of view, as educators we can foster a positive classroom environment based on diversity. The curriculum plays a paramount role in influencing the attitudes of the students. As educators we must make certain that the curriculum respect the dignity of all people. Culturally pluralistic curriculum must be consistent with goals of our culturally diverse society. Such curriculum should be characterized by mutual understanding and respect, equal witness of all cultural groups and recognition of important contribution to society which each of these groups has made. Promoting diversity in the classroom is vital to make students feel included in the group instead of alienated. It also helps students learn about and respect their peer's culture and backgrounds.

### **Suggestions**

1. In cultural terms, the schools must provide each student with a set of relevant cultural experiences so that successful and meaningful cultural adaptations might be made.
2. In educational terms, through a premise of individual 'cultural worth' the schools must establish means for cultural expression in the widest variety of school contexts – classrooms , assembles, clubs and curricula.
3. Schools should make a revision of curriculum including redirection of language and other art programs as well as technical expression (rather than training) programs, an expression of the technical concept beyond training simply for placement in economic technology. Such means as these require special training and recruitment of teachers and administrators and their sensitization to cultural pluralism.

4. Through consciously sought “cultural feedback” the school must restructure its organization and activities and attempt to become a centre of community interaction.
5. Children have the right to develop their talents, interests .So schools should challenge students by providing different experiences.
6. Finally, schools must go just becoming a reflection of cultural diversity. It must participate in and prepare youth for a culturally pluralistic life and society; and such an educational strategy must become a measure and clearly articulated set of goals in the educational process.

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