

A Descriptive Study of Multicultural Education in İncirlik Schools

Türkay Bulut, Cem Can and F. Özden Ekmekçi

As Aristotle observed, we like those who resemble us and are in the same pursuits. Influenced by this view, many sociologists have conducted studies on the relationship between similarity and attraction. The majority of these studies prove that people live in conformity with those having similar physical appearances, social status, beliefs and values. Under contradictory circumstances, understanding via education is called for to avoid or eliminate social distance and hostility that are likely to occur. This is when the role of education for reconciliation becomes significant (Parillo 6).

In a culturally plural society such as the United States, the necessity of raising new generations with tolerance of diversity has led educators to form a new approach, multicultural education. This model is not only an educational reform movement, with the major goal of changing the structure of educational institutions in order to develop an awareness within the students that all the people who make up the American society are human beings with similar needs and aspirations. It also foresees that all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, are given an equal chance for academic achievement. For example, schools in the United States are on principle individualistic in their learning and teaching styles and norms. However, the results of many studies show that, unlike Anglo-Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, and American-Indians are group-oriented (Banks and Banks 10). They need the cooperative teaching style rather than the individualistic one.

The principal goals of this perspective have been summarized by Tiedt and Tiedt, according to whom all students will learn to:

Display a positive feeling of self-esteem; be aware of the characteristics of their own individual cultures.

Extend this right to self-esteem to others; compare their individual cultures to those of others.

Identify different cultural groups in their community and the United States and describe the similarities and differences of these groups; learn that different is not synonymous with deficient.

Discuss stereotyped thinking and how it leads to prejudice; apply critical skills to solve such problems in the school and community and consider how this process might extend to solving worldwide conflicts of interest. (6)

To see how theory is put to practice, we visited the US base of İncirlik, in Adana, Turkey. In this article, we present our observations on multicultural education in the two schools in the base.

Methodology

Subjects

In the schools we observed, there were 111 American children in the Child Development Center and 202 in the High School. Tables 1 and 2 present the distribution of students in terms of gender, ethnicity and/or race. The age of children in the Child Development Center ranges from 1 to 6 and in the High School from 13 to 18. We observed all the classes in the Child Development Center and six classes in the High School. The letters in the tables, indicating race and ethnicity are assigned by the US government. These data have been obtained from the questionnaires given to the parents by the school administration to be filled out on a voluntary basis during registration. Since we have no access to any data on the religion and sect of the students, we cannot provide any relevant information.

At the Child Development Center, all the teachers were female. As for the racial and ethnic distribution, one was African-American and all the others were of Eurocentric origin. At the High School, this distribution was more scattered. In other words, the teachers assigned to the school were of many different origins.

Table 1 Distribution of Children in the Child Development Center

	A	B	C	D	E	Comb.	Decline	Total
Girls	4	3	12	6	30	3	-	58
Boys	3	7	13	5	21	4	2	55
Total	7	10	25	11	51	7	2	113

A= American Indian or Alaskan Native B= Asian or Pacific Islander

C= Black, not of Hispanic Origin D= Hispanic E= White, not of Hispanic Origin

Table 2 Distribution of Children in the High School

	A	B	C	D	E	Comb.	Decline	Total
Girls	7	12	25	2	46	-	-	92
Boys	6	13	37	5	38	8	3	110
Total	13	25	62	7	84	8	3	202

Column headings as in Table 1

Procedure

Since the schools observed are located on what is formally termed “the Turkish and American Air Base in İncirlik, Adana,” the research was conducted under the permission of the Turkish General Staff. We observed the classes in a five-month period, on a weekly basis during the 1995/1996 academic year. We also joined the in-service training sessions on Multicultural Education given for the teaching and administrative staff.

During our observations on how multicultural competencies are implemented in the classroom setting, we used a standard observation matrix. Besides observing six different courses in the High School and all the classes in the Child Development Center, we took some photographs of the posters and objects displaying the activities suggested in their curricula.

The Child Development Center follows a curriculum prepared by the National Academy of Early Childhood. The academy also inspects the Center on a regular basis for physical environment, teaching materials, and nutrition. In the High School, the goals of the implemented K-12 (from Kindergarten through Grade 12) curriculum focus on preparing the students for the 21st century. Therefore, we looked at both of the implemented curricula. We studied them from the multicultural perspective for the purpose of the research.

The necessity of being sensitive to cultural diversity is particularly emphasized in the curricula as follows:

Both administrative and teaching staff will approach the students from diverse family, religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds in an equally respectful manner. (*Multicultural Education as a Part of School Improvement*)

For the classroom observations, we also utilized a matrix prepared by the California State Department of Public Instruction (see Appendix 1) to assist the staff in identifying competencies for a multicultural program. Moreover, we took photographs of objects and posters in the classrooms and at the school yard. Since we could not take their photographs in the classroom, these are the only means to reflect students' activities.

Findings

In the multicultural approach, the teaching process begins with the development of each student's concept of self and expands to an understanding of others. Eventually, Multicultural Education engages in larger issues and problems of the world as depicted in Figure 1. Teachers first help each student develop his/her individual culture, *I-culture*. In the next two steps, teachers introduce diverse cultures starting from those available in the classroom throughout the nation and the world. Otherwise, the developed self-esteem formed out of the I-culture could turn into egocentrism. The final step to be attained is the level where the concern with larger problems and issues is evoked.

To exemplify how the teaching process depicted in [Figure 1](#) is implemented in the classroom setting, we utilized the matrix for multicultural competencies mentioned above. In the matrix, there are four kinds of learning, namely understanding concepts, acquiring values, developing skills, and demonstrating personal and social behaviors. Each type of learning includes topics in line with hierarchical steps ([Appendix 1](#)). We observed six curriculum areas in the High School. These are Reading, Oral and Written Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Foreign Language, and Practical Arts and Vocations. In all these curriculum areas, the same matrix is taken into consideration by the teachers in determining the course objectives.

Although we observed instruction in all the above stated courses, only the reading course has been taken as the focus of this study since it is in this course that the diverse cultural elements are thought to be reflected best. For this purpose, we observed the instruction in the reading class of the 8th grade and analyzed the textbook utilized, taking the adopted matrix as a criterion. As a result of our analyses, we found that the topics in the matrix were covered in the classroom as well as in the textbooks and the teaching materials. One textbook that is used is *How We Live Now: Contemporary Multicultural Literature*. The stories in it seem to reflect all the diverse characteristics found in the cultural mosaic. This way, each individual belonging to a different social group could replace

himself/herself with a character in the fiction. For the development of I-culture, we can give an example of a short story by Rosario Morales entitled "I am what I am." It begins with the lines "I'm what I am and I am US American I am Puerto Rican I am New York Manhattan and the Bronx ..." and finishes with the punch line of "I'm what I am Take it or leave me alone" (Repp 15).

In addition to short stories, other literary genres included in the book are also utilized to help the students develop an understanding of others. For example, "Para Teresa" is a poem, by Ines Hernandez, on the conflict between two Chicana school girls and their assimilation into the predominantly white world (Repp 240). Another literary work that introduces the multicultural structure of the society is an essay by Simon Ortiz. This essay, which is entitled "Language We Know," is about the difficulty of maintaining one's cultural heritage, values, philosophy, and language while becoming truly American (Repp 499).

The multicultural character of American society is reflected not only in the textbooks and the teaching strategies but also in the classroom settings and extra-curricular activities. In [Figure 2](#), we see a poster displayed in the yard of the High School with the aim of developing self-esteem, uniqueness and positive feelings about oneself. [Figure 3](#) is taken from the Child Development Center. In the photograph, we see the door frame of a classroom, on which there are human figures painted in different colors. We see the reflection of the same topic in [Figure 4](#) taken from a classroom. Students' hand prints in different colors are presented on the corner board with their names written. We believe that the messages in these two photographs imply the concept of tolerance towards the people of different colors. This strategy is also adopted in the other displays. For instance, in all these displays, there are reflections of real-life situations, free of gender stereotypes, rather than imaginary heroes and heroines of cartoons in the classroom setting.

The tolerance demonstrated in the choice of posters and books is also reflected by the teachers themselves with positive attitudes towards students' cultural heritage and physical appearances. They never allow their students to form biases against each other's cultural issues. Each classroom also has its own multicultural bookshelf equipped with books related to people of various cultures ([Figure 5](#)).

During the interviews, the teachers stated that they are careful with their choice of vocabulary in their classroom talks in order not to form any sexual bias. For example, while introducing the occupations, they avoid assigning any traditional male or female roles. The teaching materials are selected taking this criterion into consideration as seen in [Figure 6](#).

The following items taken from the first and the second chapters of the Child Development Center's program clearly present how sensitive the administrators are to sexual discrimination:

- 4b- The teaching staff will encourage the participation of the students in the classroom activities without making any sexual discrimination.
- 5a- Teaching materials which include sexual stereotypes and negative connotations in terms of multiethnicity, race, and gender will not be utilized. (*Guide to Accreditation*)

This sensitivity is not only observed in the classroom setting but also in other parts of the school premises. In [Figure 7](#), for instance, we see a banner right above the door of the office belonging to the school nurse. On this banner is written "All boys and girls can learn." The purpose of such a banner is to reinforce the development of self-esteem among girl students.

[Figure 8](#) exemplifies another subculture of a multicultural society in which we see a poster depicting the disabled on the wall. It is believed that the disabled are part of the cultural mosaic in a society, and this should be brought to the attention of children in the early years of their childhood so that they can be aware of the needs and expectations of the disabled.

One other observation we made in the Child Development Center was related to the introduction of the racial and ethnic minorities in US society. In the classrooms, there are many toys in different colors ([Figure 9](#)) and many posters and ornaments belonging to diverse groups.

Along with the exposition of the above-mentioned physical diversities, the teachers also try to introduce the traditions, customs, dishes ([Figure 10](#)), festivals ([Figure 11](#)), languages, religions ([Figure 12](#)), and well-known American characters ([Figure 13](#)) coming from minority groups.

In our interviews with the staff, we have learned that they have a multicultural calendar on which the important days of minority groups are marked. During our observations, we witnessed the recognition of cultural and ethnic values by the celebration of the festivals and the important days in the histories of these groups. The multicultural activities of November on that calendar are given in [Appendix 2](#).

Conclusion

We observed that the classroom settings, the course contents, the textbooks, and the related activities were all designed in conformity with the goals summarized by Tiedt and Tiedt (6). Moreover, in the real-life application of these principles, the teaching and administrative staff were multiculturally correct. The multicultural curriculum they followed evidently reflects on their part an awareness that the American society embraces a sampling of many cultures.

As we concentrated in this study on our observations of the teaching aspect, we do not know to what extent the goals were achieved, i.e., how much the students

benefited from and/or were affected by this multicultural education. What is more, we are not unaware that when prejudice and discrimination are reduced toward one group, they are either put into new forms or directed toward another group (Banks and Banks 3). We hope nevertheless that scholars will follow on and report on what the multicultural approach in education has meant for students, both in İncirlik and in US schools in general. Or is it too early yet; do we have to wait until the generation who has been the recipient of this education starts climbing the echelons of power to appreciate the implications of such an approach?

Works Cited

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Figures

Figure 1

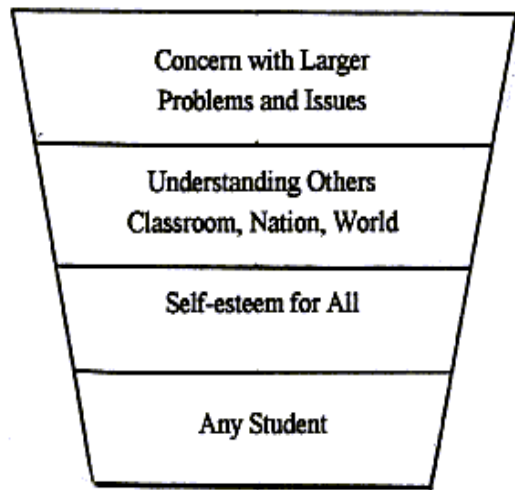


Figure 2

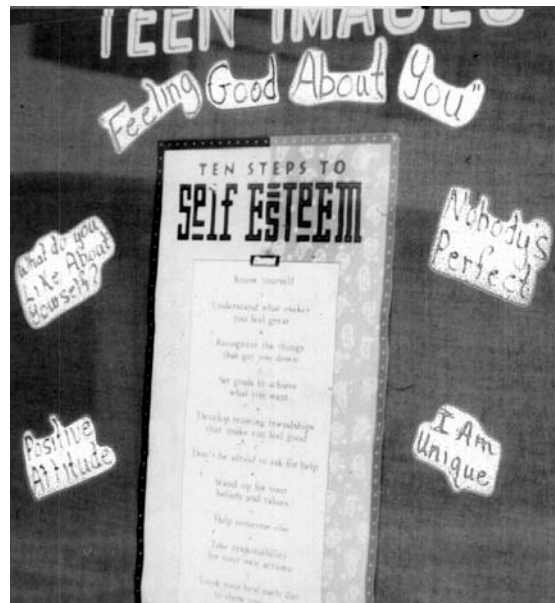


Figure 3



Figure 4

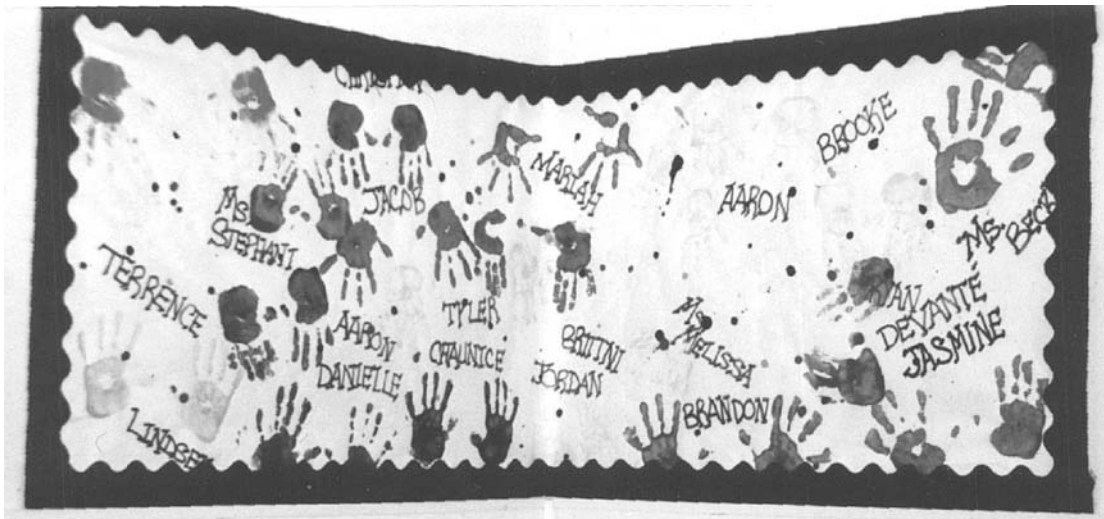


Figure 5



Figure 6

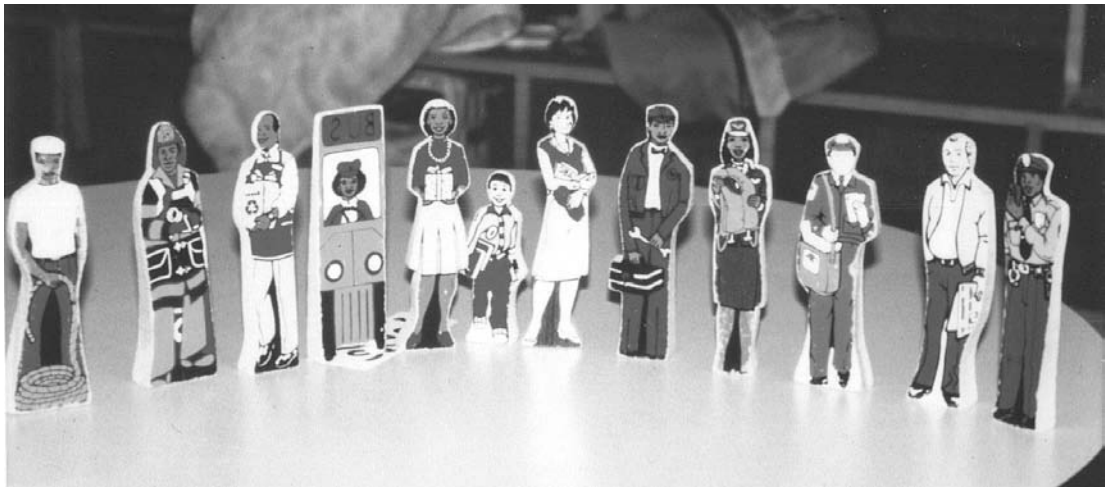


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

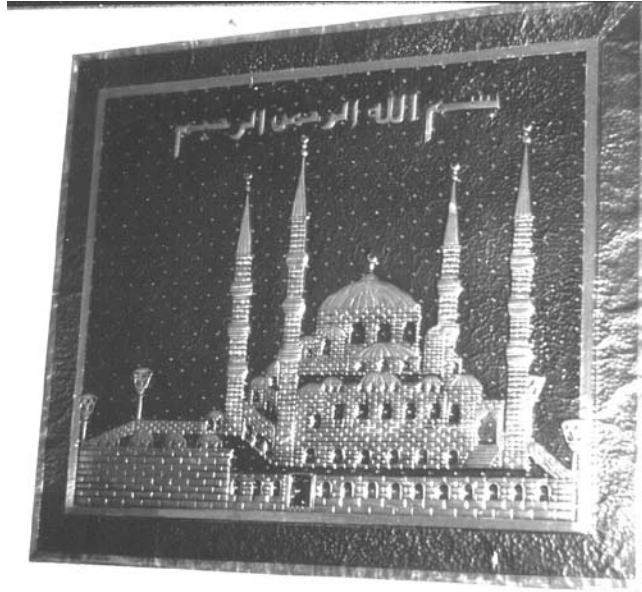


Figure 13



Appendix 1

A Planning Matrix For Multicultural Competencies

Kind of Learning	Topic	Academic Activities										Other Activities			
		R	O & W	M	S & S	S	H	F L	P E	P A	A	CC	S	A	C
I. Understand Concepts	A. Self B. Life-style C. Culture D. Changes in individuals and groups E. Cultural contact as agent in change F. Personal heritage G. Similarities/differences among individuals and groups H. Competence I. Occupational diversity J. Stereotypes/prejudice/discrimination														
II. Acquire Values	A. Self-esteem B. Appreciation of self and others C. Respect for values/dignity/worth of self and others D. Respect for similarities/differences E. Acceptance of cultural pluralism F. Acceptance of diversity of life styles G. Desire to bring about equity/reduce stereotypes H. Positive attitude toward school and life														
III. Develop Skills	A. Analyzing influence of heritage B. Analyzing similarities/differences C. Distinguishing between myths/stereotypes and facts D. Recognizing prejudiced behavior E. Identifying biases in media F. Interpreting personal heritage G. Clarifying personal values H. Using skills of conflict resolution														
IV. Demonstrate Behaviors (personal and social)	A. Working to reduce inequities B. Confronting prejudiced behavior C. Cooperating with diverse others D. Using community persons as resources E. Using persons in school as resources F. Working to resolve conflicts G. Participating/involving others in life of school H. Using interpersonal skills														

R= Reading

O&W= Oral/Written
Language

M= Mathematics

S&S= Social Studies

S= Science

H= Health

FL= Foreign Language

A= Art, Music, Drama
Dance

PE= Physical Education

PA= Practical Arts
and Vocations

CC= Co-curricular

S= Staff development

A= Administrative

C= Community

Planning for Multicultural Education as a Part of School Improvement. Sacramento, CA:

California State Department of Public Instruction, 1979. 26.

1996 November

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 Sholem Asch, 1880 - 1957	2 Haile Selassie crowned Emperor of Ethiopia, 1930. Father Junipero Serra, Spanish explorer 1713 - 1784	3
4	5 Shirley Chisholm, first black woman elected to House of Repre- sentatives (NY), 1968 Guy Fawkes Day (Canada)	6	7 William Harrison defeated the Shawnee Prophet at Tippecanoe (IN), 1811 Marie Curie, 1867 - 1934	8 Edward Brooke, first black U.S. senator in 85 years, elected (MA), 1966	9 W. C. Handy , 1873 -1958 Benjamin Banneker, 1731 - 1806	10 Martin Luther, 1483 - 1546
11 Remembrance Day (Canada)	12 Dr. Sun Yat-sen, 1866 - 1925	13	14 Freedom for Philippines, 1935 Jawaharlal Nehru, 1889 - 1964	15	16 Chinua Achebe, 1930 - Brother and Sister Day (India, Nepal)	17 Opening of Suez Canal, 1869
18 First Thanksgiving, Pilgrims and Massasoit, Chief of Wampanoags, 1777	19 Indira Gandhi, 1917 - 1984	20 Atahualpa, Inca of Peru, filled room with gold for Pizarro, 1532		22	23	24
25 St. Catherine's Day (Canada)	26 Sojourner Truth died, 1883	27	28	29	30 Shirley Chisholm, 1924 -	

Appendix 2