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A Time to Intervene: A Historical Overview of Pedagogical Responses to an Unjust Society

Akirah Bradley

This historical retrospective chronicles the evolution of cultural and ethnic difference in education from the 1920s to the present day. It presents one educator's perspective on the history of constructing programs and curricula that incorporate cultural diversity. Specifically, this article focuses on the history of racial climate in the United States, where pedagogical interventions have been used to respond to racial unrest in society. Highlighting five specific historical education movements, the author seeks to unearth the roots of incorporating and infusing cultural pluralism in the higher education curriculum and encourages the field of higher education to adopt current pedagogical practices that emphasize intercultural relations and intergroup dialogue.

For over 70 years, institutions of higher education have implemented a variety of pedagogical interventions and approaches in response to increasing cultural diversity in the United States (Banks, 2005). As the number of people of color continues to increase throughout the nation, universities can anticipate an increase in racial diversity on college campuses (Banks). In the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that people of color made up 28% of the nation's population. They also predicted that in 2025, the percentage of people of color would jump to 38%. In March 2004, the Census Bureau released a new estimate which calculated that by 2050, people of color would actually make up 50% of the nation's population (Banks). Past and present statistics of the increasing racial diversity in the United States underscores the fact that there has been, and continues to be, a critical need to promote and encourage all students' understanding of cultural and racial diversity.

The United States has a perennial history of race-based exclusion, which permeates the nation and perpetuates the distortion of people's understandings of all cultures and races. Cordier (1946) asserts that a person's understanding of his or her culture and the cultures of others "is prejudicial and emotionalized and, as such, breeds social conflict. Some of it is objective, thus contributing to social understanding and cooperation" (p. 360). People have unintentionally internalized

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biases and prejudices about others who are racially and culturally different from them. The lack of multicultural education in society contributes to the perpetuation of these biases.

This article brings perspective to the development of programs and curricula that focus specifically on cultural diversity. Within the racial climate of the United States, various pedagogical interventions have been used to respond to racial unrest throughout history. Education in the classroom about cultural difference has evolved from the following movements:

1. Intercultural Education Movement 1924-1941
2. Intergroup Education Movement 1940s-1950s
3. Legislating “Change” Movement 1950s-1960s
4. Ethnic Studies Movement 1960s-1970s
5. Multiculturalism Movement 1980s-1990s

The article will conclude with current pedagogical practices that are beginning to shape a new movement initiated through programs, such as Intercultural Relations, that promote intergroup dialogue.

Intercultural Education Movement: 1924-1941

The Influence of Immigration

Between 1924 and 1941, schools became increasingly diverse, as a variety of European ethnic immigrants arrived, hailing primarily from the Southern and Eastern regions of Europe. The passing of the Johnson Reed Act of 1924 drastically reduced the number of immigrants allowed to enter into the United States (Montalto, 1982). During this time, educators failed to recognize the cultural plurality that immigrant students brought with them to the classroom. Societal forces, such as racism and cultural assimilation, precluded them from altering their teaching styles to satisfy the needs of these new students. By forcing all students to adopt the White, Christian, middle-class behavioral norms and values held by those in the nation’s dominant groups, educators were in fact stripping students of their ethnic identity. This process of assimilation is also known as *Americanizing* (Banks, 2005).

There were American citizens that both supported and opposed this notion of *Americanization*. Some made arguments that immigrants must assimilate into the American culture as soon as possible, while cultural pluralists argued that the presence of diverse cultures could only enrich America. Despite these disagreements, the nation looked to its instructors for assistance in educating the immigrant students (Banks, 2005).

Rachel DuBois, The Heart of the Movement

While many educators brought focus to these concerns, Rachel DuBois took

special interest in multicultural education, devoting decades of her life to tackling prejudice and discrimination. DuBois, known as a pacifist radical teacher in the 1920s and 1930s, took on the challenge of educating students against Americanization, helping them to build an appreciation for diversity (Shafali, 2004). This marked the beginning of the Intercultural Education Movement (ICEM) that later segued into the Intergroup Education Movement (IGEM).

DuBois became the founder and first Executive Director of the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education. She was the pioneer of teaching and incorporating intercultural education in the college curriculum. In 1933, DuBois taught at Boston University in what many believe to be the first international education course in the country (Kelly, 2005; Montalto, 1982; Shafali, 2004). This was a true start in infusing the curriculum with cultural diversity. “With tremendous energy and optimism, Rachel DuBois offered a vision for tackling the social changes engendered by the waves of Irish, Italian, and Jewish migration to the eastern coast of the United States and African-American migration to the north” (Shafali, p. 5). As a result of all of her work, Rachel DuBois became well known for her leadership in initiating the ICEM.

According to Montalto (1982), the growth of this movement was fostered by the high death rate of World War I. He stated:

People had been taught to worship state, to nurse old wounds, to identify with national destiny, and to hate their neighbors. Nationalism had become ‘the religion of the schools,’ as pernicious an association of dogma and education as that developed by the old theistic schools. War had been the direct result of such a twisted education. (p. 98)

World War I, in combination with the divisive national issue of European ethnic migration, produced a desperate need for intercultural education. As society became increasingly heterogeneous it also became increasingly racially stratified (Vickery, 1953). During this time society created and perpetuated stereotypes and biases between different ethnic groups. The by-product was an increase in privilege of the nation’s dominant group, European Americans (Whites), and the continued oppression of all others. The ICEM was one of the most pivotal post-war pedagogical interventions combating the inequities toward new immigrants entering the United States.

Intercultural educators designed programs and curricula for schools and universities to assist in developing knowledge that challenged the status quo of Western European education. These educators began to highlight achievements and cultural celebrations of various ethnic groups (J. Banks, 1996; Montalto, 1982; Zimmerman, 2004). Intercultural education sought to explain the different ways in which various cultures could understand and respect the unique traditions of one another. With this in mind, the ICEM hoped to educate and develop a new outlook for

society that would make it possible for all cultural groups to peacefully exist, live, and build community together (Cordier, 1946).

In the late 1930s, DuBois and other intercultural educators soon focused on affirming identities of students of color, particularly African American students. Around this time, the movement began to fade, as the Commission on Intercultural Education was demoted to the mere status of a committee in 1938. By 1941, the ICEM was over; however, educators' drive towards a just society continued. This gave way to the (IGEM) (Kelly 2005; Montalto 1982).

Intergroup Education Movement: Early 1940s-1950s

Societal Contingencies that Stimulated the Movement

The IGEM was spurred by many events that occurred in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. The year 1942 marked a turning point for the country; the United States entered World War II, and racial prejudice intensified across the nation. In turn, racial unity for the oppressed became all the more imperative (Vickery, 1953). In addition to World War II, the migration of roughly two million African Americans from the South to the North in the 1940s exacerbated the racial tension and prejudice that already existed in U.S. society due to racial stratification. After World War II, European ethnics began to assimilate into mainstream U.S. society as they flocked to suburban neighborhoods far away from the urban areas where people of color lived. White ethnics were able to receive financial assistance through the Veterans Administration and Federal Housing Authority. This assistance allowed them to have access to well-paying jobs, better education, and homeownership. People of color were left behind in schools that were stripped of finances; they became less equal and self-segregated as White ethnics eased into the mainstream of U.S. society (Banks, 2005).

The combined effects of World War II, the integration of European ethnics into the mainstream, and the migration of African Americans spurred the shift towards the pedagogy of the IGEM (Banks, 2005; Zimmerman, 2004). Vickery (1953) stated, "The times called for action, for making moral values and ethical principals more vital forces in human affairs, and for applying the knowledge painstakingly accumulated by scholars to the solution of intergroup problems" (p. 292). The IGEM responded to this situation using pedagogical interventions in the classroom, as instructors attempted to alleviate the strife between racial groups, ameliorate human relations, diminish racial prejudice, gain multicultural understandings, and cultivate an umbrella of American culture (J. Banks, 1996). This movement shifted away from the ICEM focus on acceptance of immigrants and instead centered on the equality of African Americans and other people of color.

Curriculum and Programs

Intergroup educators such as Hilda Taba, John T. Robinson, Elizabeth Hall Brady, and William Vickery believed that it was their responsibility as educators to assist students in reducing prejudice, unlearning biases, and improving intergroup relations by infusing perspectives from different cultures into the curriculum (C. Banks, 1996). By 1946, with the work of these educators, intergroup education was introduced in 22 states and inspired the creation of over 4,000 programs across the nation (Zimmerman, 2004). This statistic may give the impression that educators across the nation were jumping on the bandwagon to implement these programs. However, this brand of education did not in any way permeate the majority of U.S. schools. The movement was concentrated on the East Coast and in the Midwest. Many of the programs were located in schools in the vicinity of New York and Chicago and were sponsored by professional and civil rights organizations throughout the country (C. Banks, 1996; Zimmerman, 2004).

The Demise of the Intergroup Education Movement

As funding from organizations depleted, racial crisis faded as well, and some key leaders of the movement moved onto other academic pursuits. Thus, the IGEM slowly faded away in the late 1950s (C. Banks, 1996). Scholars believe the movement perished because of the realization that assimilation into the dominant culture was viewed as the only way to be fully accepted into mainstream U.S. society. "The myth of the melting pot required that 'good' Americans not cling to their ethnic or racial past" (C. Banks, p. 269). In the years to come, however, many individuals challenged that concept, and the movement, which I term the *Legislating "Change" Movement*, gained momentum as the IGEM came to a close.

Legislating "Change" Movement: 1950s-1960s

Although literature does not name a particular movement for this time frame, it is important to include the significant markers in society between the IGEM and the Multicultural Education Movement (MEM). For the purpose of this article, I refer to the 1950s and 1960s as the Legislating "Change" Movement. During these years, there was a visible increase in the attention that the U.S. government gave to issues surrounding inequitable democracy.

Migration of African Americans and Immigrants to the North

The increasing number of African Americans moving from the South to the North during these decades resulted in a boost in the number of African American students enrolling in institutions of higher education. This was due to intense discrimination and degradation of the African American culture in the South. Concerns were raised when African American students entered the universities in the North because professors did not know how to adequately teach students from different cultures. Additionally, many immigrants from the Caribbean, East

Asia, and Latin America migrated to the Northeast region of the United States during the 1950s. The immigration of these groups, in addition to the migration of African Americans, raised concerns and fears of White Americans similar to those raised during periods of earlier mass immigration.

The McCarran Act, 1952

In 1952, the U.S. Senate responded to the large percentage of people immigrating from the Caribbean, East Asia, and Latin America with the McCarran Act, which was a strict reinforcement of the 1924 Johnson Reed Immigration Act. The McCarran Act supported the notion that the growing number of people of color in the United States was an issue; according to government officials, the optimal solution to this issue was to limit immigration. This new legislation joined a long history of prejudicial and discriminatory law, which clearly indicated that people of color who were not fully assimilated into White America were not welcome in the United States (Banks, 2005). This act, however, did not stop people of color and the educational leaders that supported them from fighting for an equitable democracy.

Brown v Board of Education, 1954

There have been several court cases worth noting that led up to the 1954 court decision that ended school segregation throughout the United States. One such case was the 1947 *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, considered a historical milestone for the Mexican American and Latino communities in California. The decision was made on April 14, 1947, that school districts could not segregate school children in California due to their Mexican descent or nationality of origin. After this ruling, Governor Earl Warren (CA) began fighting against laws that segregated Asian American and Native American school children (Arriola, 1997).

In 1954, victory rang from Topeka, Kansas, and throughout the country with the decision from the U.S. Supreme Court to desegregate public schools in the historic case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This decision empowered the African American community and all other racial groups to move forward with force in pursuit of full inclusion in U.S. society. The results of the case renewed the energy and hope of many fighting for equality at this time, fueling the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Banks, 2005).

Ethnic Studies Movement: 1960s-1970s

In the 1960s, as non-European students began to protest against their cultures' inaccurate portrayal in history books, the Ethnic Studies Movement arose. Non-European ethnicities, such as African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans were the heart of this movement. Students demanded to see their cultures and races reflected in a positive way (Kelly, 2005). Soon courses specific

to non-European ethnic groups were created. Kelly explains that the Ethnic Studies Movement faded in part due to the decrease in funding and the attacks by society that the movement was too political and had a narrow approach. The Multicultural Education Movement (MEM) soon flourished, acknowledging the importance of all cultures including European Americans.

Multicultural Education Movement: 1980s-1990s

According to J. Banks (1999), a leading scholar in the Multicultural Education Movement:

Multicultural Education, as defined and conceptualized by its major architects during the last decade, is not an ethnic- or gender-specific movement, but is a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically-polarized nation and world. (p. 5)

This movement invites White students and students of color to personally learn the truth about people of various cultures and their contributions to U.S. History. Students are introduced to the concept of multiculturalism as an inclusive movement of all identities including but not limited to race, class, gender, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation.

Banks (1999) explains the movement through a curriculum transformational lens rather than a curriculum infusion lens. The transformation lens occurs when every subject concentration is infused with diverse racial and ethnic perspectives rather than channeling all multicultural education into a single course or program designed to highlight accomplishments of non-European Americans. Transformation occurs when even general education courses, such as math, science, history, english, and art, are interlaced with multicultural viewpoints. Furthermore, these courses should be saturated with a collection of voices and literature that represents a variety of cultures.

Educators in the MEM believe that all of the previous movements failed to directly recognize structural and institutional racism, privilege, and injustices. The main focus of the intercultural and intergroup education movements was combating racism, prejudice, and discrimination on an individual level. Throughout the MEM, educators were strongly urged to address deep-rooted systemic racial inequities (Banks, 2005).

Conclusion

In 2005, Banks noted the thoughts of Santayana, a Spanish citizen raised and educated in the United States:

To ignore history is to doom oneself to repeat its mistakes. As our na-

tion grapples with diversity on an unprecedented scale we have much to learn from where we have been, which will help to decide where to go next. (p. 5)

This powerful quote by Santayana challenges educators to continue to research and understand the history of diversity in education on all levels. It is extremely important for higher education professionals to have an understanding of a history that displays where U.S. society fell short in its support of all students. By reviewing history and setting a vision for education in the future, society can learn the value of becoming multiculturally competent and inclusive of all cultures, which will create a rich educational foundation.

Current Status of Multicultural Education

Education is on the verge of a new movement, Intergroup Dialogue, which stems directly from the MEM. Across the nation, colleges and universities are beginning to establish programs that transform their curricula and are recognizing that cross-cultural and intercultural understanding is essential for today's students (Humphreys, 1998). The practice of teaching through intercultural dialogue began around 1988 when the University of Michigan began an interdisciplinary program, Intergroup Relations. This course included participation in intergroup dialogues, which produced, and continues to produce amazing results on college campuses (Behling, Brett, & Thompson, 2001).

The increased curricular inclusion of Intergroup Dialogue programs indicates that they have become innovative and useful pedagogical practices. These programs are effective because they give students of all ethnicities an opportunity to learn experientially from their peers. In the classroom, the instructor facilitates the creation of ground rules and discusses values among small group of students from varying identities and experiences. These discussions begin to build trust among the students participating in the program. Participants are able to hear the experiences and the narratives of their peers and can challenge one another on the ideas of oppression, privilege, and power in society (Schoem, 2003).

Additionally, undergraduate diversity requirements are on the rise on campuses throughout the nation. Some universities have a mandatory course that begins to educate students about racial difference and racism in the United States while others allow students the freedom to choose among a variety of courses that fit into a diversity requirement. Conversely, there are numerous universities across the nation that do not have or require such programs. This article shines light on the history of education where schools and colleges were similarly resistant to change and multicultural inclusiveness. Universities that have not begun to transform their curricula, offer opportunities for students to dialogue, or infuse programs that help to develop multicultural competence should pay attention to the history shared throughout this article.

It is imperative for higher education faculty and administrators to analyze the history of pedagogical interventions in response to socio-political crisis for three reasons. First, a historical analysis of previous movements provides educators with insight into the strengths and weaknesses of prior interventions. Second, a historical overview can strengthen the current movement of Intergroup Dialogue by encouraging proactive measures and assessment of reactive approaches to socio-political conflicts. Third, future implications of this research will allow educators to analyze current pedagogical practices while constructing a culturally inclusive curriculum in preparation for the future.

By the year 2050, the United States will no longer be a predominantly European American country, as it is estimated that 50% of the population will be people of color (Banks, 2005). As the face of this nation changes, educators must continue to transform the classroom by infusing multiculturalism into the curriculum and into the ways in which faculty teach and approach social justice. Through this transformation, educators of all levels will incorporate the rich diversity of this country into their classrooms.

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