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Multicultural Education Program In Far Eastern University: A Basis For Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

According to Banks (2001), one of the current trends in worldwide Education is the increasing number of students of different race. In the Philippines, the number of foreigners granted permit to study has increased over the years. This study made an assessment of the multicultural education in Far Eastern University using System Analysis. Descriptive method was used to access the strengths and weaknesses of the university in the program, specifically on the different concerns on the statement of the problems. It is concluded in the study that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the teachers and students on the different aspects of multicultural education program offered by the university. Though it is not alarming or evident only to a small degree as revealed in the study, it perceived that changes are needed for better enhancement of the program. Some important topics to consider are correlations between the teaching and learning conditions of multicultural education in connection with academic performance including the communication process, environment, social interaction, ethics and moral values affecting academic performance and productivity.

Keywords: multicultural education, enhancement, program, assessment, foreign students

Introduction

Emergence of Multicultural Education

One of the current trends in worldwide Education is the increasing number of students of different race. The issue of multicultural education is of paramount importance in the twenty-first century (Banks & Banks, 2001). The typology of multicultural education used by the author has had significant Influence in the field .It can be summed up as:

- “changes in the content of the curriculum in all subjects and at all levels in order to integrate material related to the experiences and perspectives of all racial, ethnic, social class, language, gender, (and, mostly recently, sexual preference) groups.
- the acknowledgment of the diverse influence of cultural and gender on knowledge production as a means of understanding students’ ways of thinking, and the integration of these perspectives in the teaching and learning process.
- the creation of educational strategies to alter students’ racial attitudes so that they will develop democratic values, including strategies to modify students’ self-rejecting attitudes as a consequences of the status of their racial, ethnic, national origin, social class, or gender group in the larger society.
- Equitable techniques and methods for enabling students from diverse groups to achieve, as distinct from techniques which consider some individuals and groups as “culturally deprived” or “culturally different.”
- The creation of a process for changing the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse groups will feel culturally equal and empowered.

Nieto (1996) in her book “Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Education” stated that the purpose of global education is for students to “develop an understanding of their roles in the world community and identifying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to become effective and influential citizens”. Moreover, Brown and Kysilka (2002), tried to relate multicultural and global education more effectively thru emphasis on multicultural concepts applied to world community and emphasizing the planet,

its natural resources and all interconnections. They also mentioned that although multicultural and global education has many commonalities, they have different emphases. While both are involved in a process of developing attitude, knowledge, skills, and behaviors so that everyone can actively participate in a culturally diverse society. Bennett (1995), emphasized the “need for academic excellence and equity” as a foundational principle of multicultural education. Equity means giving equal opportunities for all students to reach their fullest potential as individuals. According to Banks (2001) “In order to maintain a ‘multicultural school environment’, all aspects of the school had to be examined and transformed, including policies, teachers’ attitudes, instructional materials, assessment methods, counseling, and teaching styles”. For him, schools must also help students develop attitudes and competencies they needed so that they can also function within cultures outside their own cultures. .

The School as a Social System

School is considered to be the major venue for multicultural education to be a success. Wilson, (2000) emphasized that administrative support for multicultural education is critical .A house cannot stand if the foundation is fragile. Multicultural education will be as successful as commitment to it by school administrators. Banks and Banks (1989), mentioned that in order to implement multicultural education in a school, power relationship, the verbal interaction between teachers and students, the culture of the school, the curriculum must be reformed. The institutional norms, cause-belief statements, values and goals of the schools must be transformed and reconstructed. Wilson (2000) and Banks (1996) have the same view stating that a key factor in any proposed multicultural initiative is curriculum development. Banks believes that the curriculum in the school must be transformed on order to help students develop the skills needed for them to participate in the knowledge construction process. For him the transformative curriculum changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum, enabling students to view concepts, issues, themes and problems from diverse ethnic and cultural perspective. To Gorski (2001), most people who identify with multicultural education as an important process for improving education for all students agree that transformation-large scale change is needed in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and other aspects of schools and schooling. A majority of multicultural education courses and workshops focus on these pieces of the education puzzle.

The concept of curriculum is a commonplace feature of education. Curriculum is the source of design for the educational experience. Through a curriculum design we establish and impose cultural practices that influence and shape the lives of people over long periods of time. Those effects are greater in scope than those that are stated or intended. The curriculum, defined as an integrated academic course of study, required for a specific program or degree, within the public education system is often mismatched with student needs. Lee (2001) commented in her book entitled “Teaching Cultural Diversity through Literature”, that one problem in the time when multicultural curriculum played center stage in the schools is the teacher’s approach to the curriculum.. This idea is supported by Wlodkowski (2000), points out that implicit in a curriculum that allows students to examine subject matter from many different cultural, political and academic perspective and apply those perspectives in ways that have social merit are regular opportunities for students to understand how ethnic and cultural experience is integrated into and individual’s total experience. ACC&U’s American Commitments Projects Advice on Effective Curriculum Transformation recommended some advice on curriculum transformation:

- Ground recommended curricular changes in the larger mission or diversity statements adopted by your college or university.
- Be clear about the expected learning goals for diversity courses. Recognize that there are multiple goals for learning about diversity, and take the time to collectively identify priorities important for your students and your community.
- Build cross-departmental coalitions early in the process of developing recommended curricular changes. Involve students in curricular change efforts.
- Make faculty development that includes both study and dialogue a separate and essential commitment.
- Think about assessment early. Pilot test any newly required courses. Carefully defined criteria so that courses must meet to fulfill the requirement. Develop course approval and ongoing assessment processes to ensure that programs have continuing integrity and support.
- Explore how curriculum can be strengthened by links to student-life programming.

- Recognize both the campus community and the neighboring community as important sites for learning.
- Effectively communicate to students and faculty members why students are required to take diversity courses. Put clear language in course catalogs. Explain requirements to student in freshman orientation programs. Develop orientations for new faculty.
- Be aware of potential unintended consequences. The climate in the classroom changes radically when a course becomes “required.” Be sure faculty members are prepared for these changes. Incorporate pedagogical issues into faculty development efforts.”

Culturally Responsive Teachers

The educators of today face many challenges, constant change and reform while to sustain energy and enthusiasm hoping that they will be successful as they prepare students for the future. According to Ovando and McLaren (2000), “Today’s educators lead demanding lives in which competing agendas and ideas often create a confusion that obscures the very essence of why they became teachers, for example some reforms that emphasize that there are ‘right programs, ‘correct’ methods, and ‘perfect’ material”. The author believes that this situation gives teachers frustrations and confusions. Teachers face formidable challenges as they are trying to present equal opportunity to students with diverse population. Rasool and Curtis (2000) wrote culturally responsive teaching as described by Wlodkowski (1995) as “An approach to teaching that meets the challenge of cultural pluralism. . . (it) has to respect diversity; engage the motivation of all learners; create a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment; derive teaching practices from principles and cultures; and promote justice and equity in society”.

Brown (2004) and Pang (2001) indicate that, to be effective, educators must possess the multicultural knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that appropriately respond to issues of student diversity and cross-cultural acceptance and validation. Further, Banks (2001), Brown (2004), and Gay (2000) espouse that classroom teachers must be prepared to recognize both hidden and overt biases within the educational system and advocate for equitable access to educational opportunity for all students. King (2000) suggests strategies for teachers, beginning with a familiarity of major multicultural theorists for better understanding of today’s diverse student population. He also stresses the importance of avoiding reliance on cultural generalizations, which often leads to reinforcement of negative stereotypes. He further recommends that educators respect students for whom English is their second language, by demonstrating patience and valuing their contributions to the class. Negative perceptions and stereotypes can be challenged by presenting guest speakers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Sparks and Verner (1995) supported this idea by insinuating that curriculum and teaching strategies should be designed to help eliminate prejudices and to promote multicultural understanding through an environment within their classroom in which they “teach children to respect the cultures and values of others; help all children learn to function successfully in a multicultural, multiracial society; promote the development of a positive self-concept in those children who are most affected by racism, sexism, handicappism or other prejudicial attitudes that tend to label children differently from the norm; and lastly, encourage children to view people of diverse cultures as unique parts of a whole community”. Obviously, bilingual/ multicultural education cannot be achieved overnight because it is a long process. Administrators, teachers and other components of school system require a long-term commitment of resources, energy and time in order to create better organizational conditions as this educational innovation is introduced. Banks, Cookson, Gay et.al.(2001) suggested that making teaching culturally relevant, strategies such as constructing multicultural representations in the classrooms will help bridge the gap between students, their diverse experiences, and what the school curriculum requires.

What the Studies on Multicultural Education Reveal

Custodio (2003), in his findings cited that differences due to a diversity of cultures will always exist, and education at the end of this century is called upon to advance with creativity in this respect, thus contributing to make the new millennium favor a plural world in which all will feel they are all citizens and social actors. The author further note that the universities in the Philippines need to respond to this challenge of the 21st century. Based on the findings of the study of Nagappan (2005) entitled “Teachers Teaching Students from a Multicultural Background: A Case in Malaysia”, showed that teachers are generally prepared and have a positive attitude towards teaching students of a multicultural background. They also seem to be

aware of the role of culture in teaching and learning and the need to understand aspects of multi-culture to maintain racial harmony in Malaysia. However, what seems to be of concern is that almost 50 percent of the teachers perceive that they do not have the opportunities to infuse aspects of multi-culture in teaching and learning and that there are obstacles to integrate aspects of multi-culture in teaching and learning in classrooms. The researcher suggested room for improvement in many areas to better prepare teachers and to enable them to teach students from multicultural backgrounds in schools like reviewing of the subject syllabi so they can provide enough opportunities for students to learn aspects of their own culture and of those of others. Besides this, pre-service and in-service teacher education programs also need to be assessed whether they adequately prepare prospective and serving teachers to teach students of a multicultural background. Another recommendation was teachers need to be provided with opportunities to learn about aspects of their own culture and those of others. This will enable teachers to handle students of multicultural background in their classroom. To sum it up, the study suggests that systematic and comprehensive planning to provide such opportunities to teachers teaching in Malaysia schools.

Gwyneth (2004) in her dissertation entitled “Bangladeshi and Mexican Immigrants Who Leave Early from Postsecondary Education in the United Kingdom and the United States”, studied was to improve the understanding of the educational experiences of Bangladeshi immigrant students and Mexican immigrant students who leave postsecondary education prior to completion of a program in two traditionally immigrant-magnet countries. Based from the result of his study, he found out that there were similarities and differences in both Bangladeshi and Mexican student immigrants in their experiences in postsecondary education. Common experiences included family (psychological) support of college attendance and the positive experiences at the postsecondary educational institutions where students and faculty were friendly and supportive. The interviews of Mexican and Bangladeshi immigrants indicated that the two groups participated in postsecondary education for different reasons. The Bangladeshis enrolled to improve their English fluency for immediate job opportunities or as part of a designated college track assigned to them in secondary school, whereas the Mexicans attended college with career goals in mind. Institutional support, such as registration procedures and counseling availability, was satisfactory to the Bangladeshis, compared to the Mexican immigrants who perceived institutional support to be inadequate. The Bangladeshi immigrants left postsecondary education early due to family economic needs while the Mexican immigrants left for a variety of reasons including economic needs, cultural pressure, and inadequate counseling at the college.

In a study of Sandler (2003) determined that pre service teachers’ attitudes about cultural diversity had improved, and that pre service teachers were more likely to agree with statements that emphasized cultural inclusion and respect for diversity in the classroom. However, the study also indicated that pre service teachers are not quite sure about how they felt when integrating their learning environments with curricula, assessments, and programs that support multiculturalism in the classroom. Middleton (2002) has also examined changes in attitudes, beliefs, and commitments toward diversity of pre service teachers after completing a required course in diversity. These findings indicate that there was a significant overall difference from pretest to posttest on self-reported personal and professional beliefs toward diversity on all four sections of the course. However, those changes were not always toward increased diversity beliefs and commitment. The three sections in which professors collaborated to plan lessons and activities showed an increase in their personal beliefs about diversity while the fourth section showed a slight decrease.

In the study conducted by Blue (2003), about an “Ethnographic Account of a Campus Climate from the Perspective of African-American students”, her data revealed that although the informants recounted some experiences that made them feel disconnected from the campus, their predominant perception of the campus climate was that it was caring and nurturing. Primarily, their transactions with faculty members shaped their perceptions and made their educational experience meaningful. They perceived the faculty as authentic and available to them. Consequently, they utilized them as informal mentors, friends, and confidantes. Such an environment allowed these students to be fully present as learners. In a dissertation entitled “Multicultural Pluralism towards a Normative Theory of Ethnic Relations” by Sata (2006), the author concluded based from the result of his study that in the context of multicultural pluralism, minority rights provide for both a process of multicultural appreciation and for the strengthening of the unity of the polity. An emphasis on minority rights need not occur at the expense of national unity or loyalty because instead of being mutually exclusive, group and national loyalties can be mutually reinforcing. The most important promise of today’s increased emphasis on pluralism and divided sovereignty is that it provides for a greater discursive space for minority rights and the multicultural pluralist conception of ethnic accommodation that is based not on discretionary domestic policies and ad-hoc compromises to maintain international stability, but on considerations of justice.

Another study entitled “Multicultural teacher preparation: Experiences that Affect the Perceptions and Behaviors of Teachers in their Ability to Embrace Diversity” by Howell (1999), his study revealed that graduates from one teacher preparation program feel that they were exposed to little or no multicultural education in their course work, and had been inadequately prepared to teach a diverse population. Many of the teachers were employed in school districts which incorporate superficial approaches to multicultural education. Teachers expressed a desire to become a part of a network where they could learn how to incorporate multicultural education into the curriculum. It seemed that what prepared teachers best to work with diverse populations was actually living in the community among diverse people; it was there that people started to understand issues, events and people from a variety of perspectives. King (2004), on “Pre-Service Teachers’ Perception and Knowledge of Multicultural Education”, examined an education program and its job in promoting and facilitating tactics that embrace multicultural education ideologies. The author disclosed strong evidence that schools should increase their efforts in training about cultural sensitivity, the use of strategies that reduce prejudice and discrimination in classrooms and empower students, and training that facilitates positive communication with parents of minority students in order to better meet the needs of child. These efforts might include teacher modifications related to teaching and assessment, as well as using a curriculum that represents various cultures and groups. In addition, efforts should include dialogue in school that addresses cultural assumptions, bias, and accepting the perspectives of others. School training should be provided for school personnel, including available training for new teachers who have entered the profession of education as a second career. In sum, the goal is to ensure the success of minority students by preparing effective teachers who understand the importance of integrating multicultural education into teaching practice. On the other hand, a study on “Factors influencing the Acquisition of English in Language Minority Students Receiving English-only Instruction” by Novell (2001) shown on her gathered data indicating students’ English proficiency upon entry to a school or program. The study found out that gender has significant impact on oral and academic proficiency rates in English, while age, native language and ethnicity play lesser roles. Ahmad (1992) made a study on adjustment problems of foreign graduate students in selected universities of Metro Manila. The findings showed that adjustment problems exist in various facets of the individuals; some to a greater and others to a lesser degree. The strongest problem was homesickness. The questionnaire yielded numerous suggestions from the survey population and these were made a part of the measures presented to the six chosen universities in the form of remedial actions. One of the recommendations by the researcher was that a yearly evaluation be carried out to check on the effectiveness of the remedial programs.

These studies seem to indicate that instructional methodology may make a difference in the effect of diversity courses. Without hesitation, it is critical to note that this is an area that requires more in-depth examining.

Research Design and Methodology

Design

The researcher used the descriptive analytic method because to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the university in the multicultural education, specifically on the different concerns on the statement of the problems.

The Case

Respondents were composed of the first year and second year foreign students in the university from the second semester of SY 2007-2008 and selected faculty members from the Institute of Arts and Sciences.

Data Collection

Instruments used to gather data and information in response to the problem raised in the study consisted of questionnaires which were validated by the experts in the field of education and then pre-tested before they were administered to the respondents.

Interviews

To supplement information, the researcher also conducted unstructured interviews to some of the respondent teachers and foreign students, Interviews were also conducted to the two academic offices in the university, the Academic External Relations Office (AERO) and the Registrars’ Office which cater to the

needs of the students. School records such as hand-outs, memorandum of agreements, programs and other related documents were referred to in order to verify the veracity of respondent's perceptual assessment.

Data Analysis

Data were statistically treated, using percentage, ranking, weighted mean, t-test, Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation and a Likert 5-point scale with the following interpretations:

Scale	Mean Range	Descriptive Interpretation	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.5-5.00	Very Much a Problem	VMP
4	3.5-4.49	Much a Problem	MP
3	2.5-3.49	A Problem	P
2	1.5-1.49	Not Much a Problem	NMP
1	1.00-1.49	Not a Problem	NP

Findings

The study revealed that majority of the foreign students in the university is Chinese and Korean students and that the greatest numbers of foreign student respondents are taking up nursing followed by business management and marketing. As of the respondent teachers, the majority of them teach in the sciences and languages departments. It is also revealed in the study that detailed admission requirements are provided by the university registrar to foreign students and assistance is extended to them. But foreign students considered post-enrollment procedures a problem in the areas of 1) assistance extended registration in a new semester and 2) information about possible scholarship grants in the university. Overall, the foreign student respondents view teachers good if not with high regard in their experiences at the university. The overall implications of the responses of the foreign students on "Course Information Requirements" show that there is a problem in disseminating information specifically for foreign students by the university. They also showed difficulty to relate with other students, but displayed their satisfaction when it comes to the facilities of the university that are available to them. Foreign student services posed as a problem although not considered much a problem. They also considered Special Language Program for them is a problem. Over-all, the variables on the experience of the foreign students in the university is a problem. Respondent teachers identified the special language program as a problem indicating the need to review and restructure this particular program. There is a significant difference between the ratings of teachers and foreign students on variables affecting multicultural education. Though it is not alarming or evident only to a small degree, foreign students, as revealed in the study, perceive that changes are needed for better information dissemination and a clear distinction between the foreign and local students. Teachers, in general, consider that variables affecting multicultural education as not much of a problem while foreign students consider those same variables as problems. This was validated by the T-test results rejecting the null hypothesis of no significant difference between ratings of respondent foreign students and teachers for multicultural education.

Conclusion

The researcher concluded that views of alienation and lack of attention and distinction contribute to the difficult relation between local and foreign students. Students do view a lack of opportunities for them but this may be just a form of alienation experienced by foreign student because of difficulties in communication and culture. The special language programs of the university are inadequate as being perceived by both student and teacher respondents as problem. Likewise, the post enrolment services for foreign students is need to be enhanced so they will not feel disconnected from the campus and to create also a climate that is caring and nurturing. The problem for special language program implies a need for more communication tests and a program to break the communication barriers for those foreign students with different languages such as the Chinese and Koreans, who are the majorities of enrollees at Far Eastern University, and whose languages are far distant from the influences of the English language. Further studies should be done by the school on Multicultural Education and the effectiveness of the communication between foreign students and people in the university. There should be also studies in English communication approaches. More communication and social interaction are also vital in teaching them how to learn. The employment of good educators, good study habits and healthy exercises are but a variety of activities to improve the lives of its foreign multicultural

students.. Some important topics to consider if someone like to study the same topic are correlations between the teaching and learning conditions of multicultural education in connection with academic performance including the communication process, environment, social interaction, ethics and moral values affecting academic performance and productivity

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