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## **Multicultural Education: Literature Review of Multicultural-Based Teacher Education Curriculum Reform**

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**Abstract:** In the context of an increasingly culturally diverse society, multicultural education becomes an essential aspect in preparing teachers to create an inclusive and responsive learning environment for the diversity of students. This paper reviews the literature related to multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform through a systematic literature review. By analyzing various sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and research reports, this study explores the concepts, principles, and best practices in integrating multicultural perspectives into teacher education programs. The systematic literature review reveals that multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform plays a crucial role in equipping prospective teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach effectively in diverse environments. The literature review results indicate that multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform plays a crucial role in equipping prospective teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach effectively in diverse environments. A well-designed curriculum can promote cross-cultural understanding, and develop pedagogical strategies responsive to student diversity. This paper highlights the importance of incorporating multicultural content, developing cross-cultural competencies, and promoting critical reflection in teacher education curricula. Additionally, this research identifies challenges and strategies for effectively implementing a multicultural approach, such as ongoing professional development, and stakeholder engagement. The findings from this literature review provide valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators in designing more inclusive and culturally responsive teacher education programs. By preparing teachers competent in addressing diversity, the education system can contribute to creating a fair learning environment and provide opportunities for all students to develop optimally.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural competence, Curriculum reform, Inclusivity, Multicultural education, Teacher education

### **Introduction**

Teacher education policies and reforms emphasize the importance of preparing new teachers for increasingly diverse schools. As a reform movement and paradigm that focuses on structural equality and cultural pluralism, multicultural education provides an agenda for teacher education to ensure that all prospective teachers are prepared with the knowledge, skills, to work effectively with students and communities who have multicultural education, cultural perspectives and experiences. live differently from their own (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Although there are many variations in the philosophical foundations and pedagogical approaches associated with multicultural teacher education (Anthony-Stevens & Langford, 2020).

The first is the notion that prospective teachers, as learners, routinely lack the cultural knowledge and

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intercultural awareness to provide responsive teaching to diverse student populations (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Evans-Winters & Twyman Hoff, 2011). Although consistent with what some consider to be the common deficit view of teachers, prospective teachers as a homogenous and culturally deficient group (Garrett & Segall, 2013; Lowenstein, 2009), there is clear variation in prospective teachers' backgrounds, social identities, and experiences. This shows that it is very unlikely that the level of multicultural awareness understood as individual awareness, sensitivity and appreciation of cultural pluralism in education will be realized evenly in society. Framed as a precursor and integral, component of multicultural competence, multicultural awareness of both one's own worldview and the worldview of others, sets the foundation for the development of practitioners' pedagogical skills and professional knowledge, as it relates to working with diverse populations (Hall & Theriot, 2016; Nieto & Bode, 2017).

The second assumption underlying multicultural teacher education reform is that higher levels of multicultural awareness are associated with better teaching, to the extent that teachers' knowledge and appreciation of cultural differences can foster positive relationships with students and the community, and efforts to foster a positive classroom climate (Day-Vines, 2000; Han & Thomas, 2010; Pedersen, 2000; Pedro et al., 2015).

Based on this assumption, researchers seek to operationalize, assess, and expand the multicultural awareness of prospective teachers, as evidenced by a number of studies that focus on measuring prospective teachers' cultural understanding (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Larke, 1990). Unfortunately, empirical support for this relationship is limited, as only a few studies have examined how and to what extent prospective teachers' multicultural beliefs relate to teaching competence.

In this article the author seeks to address two major gaps in the knowledge base about teacher education for diversity by finding literature on whether levels of multicultural awareness vary based on teacher candidate characteristics such as race/ethnicity, education, and prior experience and whether multicultural awareness shapes teachers' pedagogical competence. in the context of reforming the multicultural-based teacher education curriculum so that it can increase teacher competence in teaching in diverse environments.

## **Method**

This research uses a systematic literature review approach to explore the topic of multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform. A systematic literature review is a structured and transparent method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing studies relevant to a specific research question (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). The systematic literature review process involves the following steps:

1. Identifying research questions: The research question in this review is "How can multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform improve teacher competence in teaching in diverse environments?"
2. Develop a search strategy: The search strategy involves keywords related to the research topic, such as "multicultural education", "curriculum reform", "teacher education", "cross-cultural competence", etc.
3. Identify data sources: Literature searches were carried out in various databases such as ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Additionally, relevant books and research reports are also considered.
4. Apply inclusion and exclusion criteria: Inclusion criteria include studies that discuss multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform, are published in English, and focus on tertiary level education. Exclusion criteria included studies that were not relevant to the research topic or only discussed multicultural education at the primary and secondary school levels.
5. Review study quality: Studies included in the literature review are evaluated based on the quality of research methodology, strength of study design, and contribution to the research area.
6. Extracting and synthesizing data: Relevant data from included studies was extracted and synthesized to identify important themes, patterns, and insights related to multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform.

## **Literature Review**

### **Policy Push for Multicultural Education**

In 1979, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), at the request of the National Institute of Education and AACTE, issued revised standards requiring evidence of multicultural educational

integration of all programs seeking accreditation. These standards are leading to broader adoption of multicultural coursework and diversity requirements by teacher education program units across the country (Cherng & Davis, 2019; Gollnick, 1992; Grant & Gibson, 2011). However, as Gay (2010) notes, “even for institutions that meet the standards, it is difficult to determine whether the assessments are indicative of what is actually happening in the program.” Today, with more than two-thirds of new teachers graduating, the program’s results remain elusive.

What can be gained from special efforts to incorporate diversity is limited to program self-evaluation. Although there was a surge of scholarly attention focused on diversity in teacher education during this time, a review of the literature reveals that much of this attention was theoretical or positional, reflecting the interests and recommendations of multicultural scholars and some prominent educational reformers. For example, Sleeter & Owuor (2011) review of nearly 200 articles published after the release of the NCATE standards found only 19 articles reporting original research, seven of which focused on the education of teacher candidates. Although evidence from empirical research is largely absent in the literature, Goodwin (1997) and others suggest structural changes are being undertaken by many teacher education programs as part of efforts to incorporate diversity into pre-service preparation (Ramsey et al., 2003).

However, according to Cavilla (2014), institutions seeking accreditation often point to mission statements and program unit teaching objectives as evidence of their commitment to diversity but fail to demonstrate a substantive focus on diversity across courses and field components. Some have speculated that the program's failure to incorporate diversity and multiculturalism in a more meaningful way is due, in part, to educators' assumptions that prospective teachers will have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them teach classes with socioculturally diverse students without direct instruction and planned experience (Sakallı et al., 2021). He found that some teacher educators mistakenly assumed that prospective teachers would enter culturally homogeneous schools, similar to the schools they had previously attended, and therefore put less effort into preparing prospective teachers for diverse students.

Whatever the case, these studies show that despite the push of professional standards and the rhetoric of institutional goals, issues of diversity and multiculturalism have not, for many years, been consistently addressed in the education of prospective teachers. Few, if any, empirical efforts have attempted to validate or extend these findings in recent years. Educator preparation will likely foster renewed interest in research regarding program efforts. These findings indicate the need to review existing policies and practices with the aim of improving the way multicultural teacher education is implemented.

### **Teacher and Student Demographic Gap**

The urgency behind calls for teacher education reform for diversity is paralleled by persistent and increasing disparities in the educational opportunities and achievements of students from different cultural groups. This, coupled with visible disparities in the racial and ethnic backgrounds of teachers and the communities they serve, has led many to argue that the solution lies in preparing teachers to demonstrate cultural responsiveness in all aspects of teaching.

The oft-referenced “demographic gap” between teachers who share the same language, and middle class and diverse student populations remains a serious challenge for teacher education (Gay, 2013). Students from racial and ethnic minority groups now make up a proportional majority in public schools. Enrollment in preservice teacher education programs across the country indicates that disparities in the demographic composition of classroom teachers and the students they teach will likely continue into the future (Kennedy, 1988). Teachers' success will be determined by their ability to work effectively across racial, ethnic and cultural differences. This shows the importance of developing multicultural competence in teachers.

In the field of teacher education, multicultural training is often considered essential to ameliorate a range of negative impacts stemming from “cultural mismatch” between teachers and students. Proponents argue that by reducing social distance and increasing sensitivity in teacher interactions with students, increased multicultural awareness can contribute to more positive outcomes for students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Rehfeldt, 2020).

### **The Importance of Multicultural Awareness**

In both theory and practice, multicultural education encompasses a range of political orientations and

pedagogical examples (see Banks, 1993). Despite these differences, the general consensus suggests that multicultural awareness is critical to a teacher's ability to promote positive outcomes for all students. The term multicultural awareness refers to a teacher's awareness, comfort, and sensitivity to issues of cultural pluralism in the classroom (Carpenter, 1994; Squires, 2013).

Frameworks for multicultural education and training describe intercultural awareness as an integral dimension of cultural competence, encompassing the professional skills, affective dispositions, and behavioral characteristics that practitioners need to be effective in diverse populations (Lowenstein, 2009; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Milner (2006) research on teacher candidate development points to experiences that increase cultural and racial awareness as one of three "important and necessary interactions" to increase prospective candidates' knowledge and understanding of diversity.

The idea that multicultural awareness can precede other forms of intercultural competence, such as perspective taking, acceptance of differences, and demonstration of anti-racist behavior, is consistent with process models of intercultural sensitivity and multicultural development (Race et al., 2022; Reynolds, 2021; Shahjahan et al., 2022; Vassallo, 2022), which theorizes a positive relationship between understanding and individual sensitivity towards diverse cultural perspectives and the successful development of cultural competence. This interest in considering the multicultural attitudes and beliefs that prospective teachers bring to pre-service training is also consistent with the argument that teacher education programs should utilize key "leverage points" in teacher training to identify and recruit candidates whose worldviews and cultural perspectives better reflect those of world and cultural perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Scholars whose work advocates screening prospective educators through recruitment argue that individuals whose personal experiences and backgrounds align with those of their students may be better positioned to understand and respond to students' needs (Nieto & Bode, 2017). Furthermore, the researchers criticized the erroneous assumption that "being older and living in the city qualifies one to be a teacher in the city." Given the current demographic composition and the projected number of those who will teach, these findings encourage ongoing efforts to understand the development of multicultural competence in all teacher candidates. Overall, theory and evidence underscore the need for research to examine how, and to what extent, multicultural awareness in teacher candidates is a step toward improving recruitment, assessment, and instructional design in teacher education for diversity.

### **Factors That Shape Multicultural Awareness**

Although support for multicultural teacher education has long existed in reform, policy, and practice, little research has explored the factors that contribute to candidates' multicultural beliefs. There are two factors that are important in forming multicultural awareness. One widely understood factor influencing the formation of multicultural beliefs is race. Previous qualitative studies suggest that teachers of color provide unique benefits to nondominant students through cultural perspectives, discursive practices, and approaches to engaging with families and school communities (G. Ladson-Billings, 2014; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

Findings from qualitative and quantitative studies indicate that the cultural experiences and backgrounds of minority teaching candidates differ from those of white teaching candidates in ways that may influence their initial orientations toward diversity and their developmental trajectories with respect to multicultural education (Winter et al., 2022). For example, in his study of teacher candidates enrolled at a large state university in California, Pan (2021) found that minority teacher candidates, defined as non-whites, were brought along by them.

Overall, these findings suggest that preservice teachers' racial and ethnic backgrounds may be associated with meaningful differences in group multicultural awareness. Other research focuses on how racially identified candidates *are preservice* shape their interactions with students. A study of 88 preservice teachers using regression analysis and structural equation modeling found that teachers' views about how race, including how their racial identity may shape their interactions with students, was related to teachers' overall understanding of diversity and multiculturalism (Jones & Killick, 2013). The research shows that teachers' implicit attitudes and assumptions about race influence the quality and feedback they provide to students in the teaching environment, as well as the form of social support to individuals (Harber et al., 2012). The second factor that plays a role in forming prospective teachers' multicultural beliefs is previous experience with diversity. Constructivist perspectives on teacher development suggest that intercultural exposure and engagement with communities outside the community can serve as a catalyst for critical self-reflection, through which individuals can learn to

devalue their own racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives (Sakallı et al., 2021). Other factors can also shape a candidate's multicultural awareness. Previous research argues that teaching and learning is a complex sociocultural process, which is influenced by an individual's social identity (Olmedo, 2004). For example, we know that gender norms can influence the way teachers relate to their students (Thorjussen, 2021).

Graduate students, who often return to college after gaining work experience, may bring with them more varied life experiences than undergraduate students. This article has a number of limitations regarding the importance of understanding how and to what extent multicultural awareness varies, as well as how it relates to later evidence of pedagogical proficiency in pre-service teaching. can only give one view. Although the questions that constitute our measure of multicultural awareness are statistically related, we recognize that it is difficult to measure these concepts using a survey format.

### **Multicultural Based Teacher Education Curriculum Reform**

To realize the goals of multicultural education, reform of the teacher education curriculum is very important. Teacher education curricula must be designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to teach in diverse environments (G. Ladson-Billings, 2014; G. J. Ladson-Billings, 2005). Several important aspects in multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform include:

1. Integration of multicultural content into the curriculum (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Milner, 2003). This content includes knowledge about the history, culture, and contributions of various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups. This aims to increase understanding and appreciation of diversity.
2. Development of cross-cultural competence (Chen et al., 2022; Smith, 2020). Prospective teachers must have cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and pedagogical strategies that are responsive to student diversity.
3. Critical reflection and perspective transformation (Anthony-Stevens & Langford, 2020). Curricula should encourage prospective teachers to reflect on their own biases and assumptions, and develop more inclusive and equitable perspectives.
4. Field experience and teaching practice in diverse environments (Gorski, 2009). Prospective teachers must have the opportunity to apply and hone their multicultural skills in real situations.

### *Challenges and Strategies in Implementation*

Although multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform is very important, its implementation faces several challenges. Some of the main challenges include:

1. Resistance to change. Some prospective teachers and lecturers may be reluctant to adopt a multicultural perspective due to bias or discomfort with the topic.
2. Lack of resources and support. Implementing curriculum reforms requires adequate resource allocation, including staff training, instructional materials, and institutional support.
3. Lack of models and best practices. Although there is a wealth of research on multicultural education, there is still a gap in identifying best practices and effective strategies for implementing them.

To overcome these challenges, several strategies have been proposed in the literature, such as:

1. Continuous professional development for lecturers and prospective teachers. Training and workshops on multicultural education can help raise awareness and prepare educators to implement curriculum reforms.
2. Stakeholder involvement (Parkhouse et al., 2019). Collaboration with local communities, community organizations, and field practitioners can provide valuable insights and ensure that curriculum reform is aligned with community needs.
3. Continuous research and evaluation. Further research is needed to identify best practices, measure the effectiveness of reforms, and continue to refine multicultural education approaches.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of the systematic literature review revealed several main themes related to multicultural-based teacher education curriculum reform, including: Integration of multicultural content in teacher education

curricula (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). This content includes knowledge about the history, culture, and contributions of various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups. Several studies show that the integration of multicultural content can increase cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding among teacher candidates (Gay, 2013). Development of cross-cultural competence (Causey et al., 2000). Cross-cultural competency includes cultural awareness, knowledge of cultural differences, and skills to communicate and teach effectively in diverse environments. These studies highlight the importance of developing cross-cultural competence through field experiences, simulations, and critical reflection.

Critical reflection and perspective transformation (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Garmon, 2004; Milner, 2006). Prospective teachers need to be invited to reflect on their own biases and assumptions, and develop more inclusive and equitable perspectives. Several studies suggest that critical reflection can help prospective teachers challenge stereotypes and promote social justice (Merryfield, 2000). Field experience and teaching practice in diverse environments (Picower, 2009; Solomona et al., 2005). Meaningful field experience in culturally diverse environments is an important aspect in preparing prospective teachers to teach in similar environments. These studies emphasize the importance of guidance and reflection during field practice to develop multicultural competence.

Challenges and implementation strategies (Howard, 2003). The literature review identified various challenges in implementing multiculturally based teacher education curriculum reforms, such as resistance to change, lack of resources, and lack of best practice models. Some proposed strategies include ongoing professional development, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing research and evaluation. Although there has long been interest in developing the multicultural awareness and pedagogical proficiency of new teachers to meet the needs of demographically and culturally diverse students, there is little research examining whether individuals enter teacher education programs with this level of awareness, different multicultural groups, and whether multicultural awareness has anything to do with demonstrated teaching proficiency.

First, the authors found that multicultural awareness, as a resource and key element of cultural competence, is possessed unequally by teacher candidates from different racial/ethnic groups as well as those with previous experience. The authors found that there were racial/ethnic differences in levels of multicultural awareness, and that previous experiences in school settings serving minority populations positively, but differentially, influenced multicultural awareness. Second, the authors found that multicultural beliefs were related to prospective teachers' ability to foster a strong classroom environment. Although this analysis does not allow us to link classroom environment to student achievement due to the scope of students' teaching roles, existing research on classroom-level factors suggests that teacher competence in establishing a positive classroom climate influences a variety of student outcomes. Factors that shape multicultural awareness can not only better educate existing teacher candidates, but also better inform efforts to recruit teachers who have a higher level of multicultural awareness.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic literature review highlights the importance of multiculturally based teacher education curriculum reform in preparing prospective teachers to teach in culturally diverse environments. Integration of multicultural content, development of cross-cultural competencies, critical reflection, and meaningful field experiences are important aspects of curriculum reform. Although there are challenges to implementation, such as resistance to change and lack of resources, several strategies have been proposed in the literature, including ongoing professional development, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing research and evaluation. The findings from this literature review provide valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators in designing more inclusive and culturally responsive teacher education programs. By preparing teachers who are competent in dealing with diversity, the education system can contribute to creating a fair learning environment and provide opportunities for all students to develop optimally.

## **Recommendations**

The various studies that have been presented in this literature highlight the importance of integrating multicultural approaches in teacher education curricula. From our review, we conclude that multiculturally based teacher education is not only relevant, but also urgent to prepare educators who are able to face the complexity of increasingly diverse classrooms. Below are some recommendations that can be considered to enrich teacher education practice.

Support the integration of multicultural approaches in the overall teacher education curriculum. This may include modifications in courses, modules, and field practice that incorporate multicultural perspectives. Increasing the diversification of learning materials must also be considered. Encouraging the improvement of learning materials that reflect the diversity of students' cultures, languages, and experiences can include the use of resources that are inclusive and culturally representative. Developing teachers' cultural skills by providing training and professional development focused on cultural skills for prospective teachers and practitioners already in the field. This can help improve teachers' understanding and responsibility for student needs and diversity.

Community collaboration and partnerships. Encourage collaboration between educational institutions and local communities to support learning experiences that are centered on students' cultural and social contexts. This can strengthen ties between schools and communities and expanding the resources available for teacher education. Continuous research and evaluation. Promote further research and evaluation of the effectiveness of multicultural-based teacher education programs. This can assist in the discovery of best practices as well as enrich understanding of the impact of these approaches on student learning. Implementation of these recommendations will provide a solid foundation for teacher education reform that prioritizes inclusion, equity, and empowerment in the context of increasingly diverse societies.

## Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare the scientific, ethical, and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

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