

Multicultural education from
theory to practice, using a lifelong
learning model.

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Concept

- The concept of multiculturalism is not new in education however it is today a much pointed issue mainly due its political underpinnings. Citizenship, democracy and multiculturalism are part of any educational proposal by policymakers and educators. Multiculturalism has emerged in the last few years not only as a response to the constitution of a pedagogical subject but as an interaction of the pedagogical subject and the political subject.

- In Latin America much of these concepts are not used in the same manner in the political, educational conception as in the United States. There are for instances larger gaps of research information regarding Afro- Latin Americans poor educational attainment, and little is mentioned on people's sexual orientation

- Earlier writings on Africanism in Latin America were more directed to documentation of the influences of Afro-musical rhythms in society, historical accounts of slavery, and economic labor issues as in the case of mining in Mexico and sugar plantation in Brazil Cuba, and to a certain extent Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (UNESCO 1979).

- Recently with educational reforms, regional economic integration and political changes occurring in Latin America one of the countries that have come closest to the United States in the context of developing a multicultural approach in education is Brazil. The Lula government has developed a policy of cultural integration using multicultural concepts at all levels of education including a quota system in higher education for Afro Brazilian descendants.

- The second largest country in Latin America, México, traditionally one of the most advanced in the region on the issue of cultural differences; due to its “indigenistas” policies dedicated to preserve cultural traditions from post-colonial times has no visible advances in such directions.

- This is discussed by Mexican authors (Rodriguez, M.,2005, Ibarrola, M, 2005) who believe that by promoting a discussion and developing a more inclusive multicultural policies in education and its integration to formal curriculum as well as in teacher training will benefit future students. It is also part of the discourse of democratization and participation in a global world. It is understood that with traditional forms of social exclusions by class, and income other issues such as race and gender will continue to hinder democratic participation, erode national identity and economic opportunity

The research

- This research focal point was to investigate the concept of multiculturalism as is used in two higher education teacher training programs in México.

- The research also seeks to understand the differences on the conception of multiculturalism in Mexico from one that traditionally has used “indigenismo” associated to pre-hispanics groups to one that includes a conception of cultures from larger perspectives associated to democratization and political participation. This is perhaps the most complex portion of the work since there are strong views in this matter with respect to “indigenismo.”

- Lifelong learning in this case is treated as the concept that allows not only traditional age students to participate in educational tasks being this formal or non-formal but those who were left out of a system such those who are illiterate.

Research questions

- There are three research questions that address this research.
- How Mexican educators who are in the business of teacher training or training adult educators define the concept of multiculturalism from their own practice?
- How Afro-Mexican people are represented in curriculums for teacher training or training of adult educators?
- Is there a trend in policymaking in Latin American education about inclusion of multiculturalism in education using these concepts as an integral part of political participation and integration?

Results

- Preliminary results indicate that exist plenty of information when prospective educators are asked about their knowledge of multiculturalism. Much of this information comes through instructors, readings provided by the instructors, and about collective tasks that have a grade attached to the task.

Results

- For most of the prospective educators multiculturalism and interculturalism are considered equal/ synonymous concepts, but when they are asked about why they are synonymous no specific reason is given

Results

- According to the discussion with students the literature suggests that these are similar concepts. Moreover these themes are treated as single subjects in a curricular context and for the most part disconnected of other subjects. Specialists tend to teach these courses providing for more specificity than an interdisciplinary context.

Results

- A number of participants also indicated that in Mexico still exists a strong Marxian view in terms of the philosophy of education thus promoting a more economics' view of education rather than one oriented to the larger society and its differences. In many cases this more structuralist view also prevent discussions about gender orientation

Results

- A number of discussants indicated that they personally would like to implement a more open diverse program in their place of work, but institutionally this is impossible since there is a vertical mandate in terms of policies.

Conclusions

It is important to produce knowledge not only from the experiences of intercultural universities indigenous and afrodescendents but also from the conflict, problems, demands, and initiatives that emerge from the communities. This allow for a curse of action that help to improve the capacity of response from the institutions of higher education. In turn this will help these institutions with the quality of their educational offer and satisfy their demands as well as will help institutions to produce knowledge that relate to the communities in mutual respect.

Conclusions

- Multicultural policies created with the intervention of the State. . The case of Brazil is a good example of the intervention of the State in the development pf a cultural policy. Brazil identified itself as a racial democracy. In 1995 the Brazilian state recognized a deep problem with racism in the country. Two laws were enacted at all levels of education in formal and non formal programs: a quota systems and affirmative action laws. (Arocena, 2008).

Conclusions

- This made possible a number of other programs and opening the space not only for students to participate in access to school but creating an input for curricular inclusive reforms from local communities to higher education.