



Study of the viewpoint of students about multicultural education in university

Bahareh Azizi Nejad *, Educational Administration, Department of Educational Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

Masoumeh Akbari, Nursing Department, Islamic Azad University, Urmia Branch, Urmia, Iran.

Golestan Sayah, Department of Literature and Human Sciences, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

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Abstract

Multicultural education is the most important subject that including psychological needs. University is the appearance of multicultural society that include teachers and students, so they should be aware from multicultural education. The main goal of this research is the study of the viewpoint of students about multicultural education in Urmia Payame Noor University. The method of research is descriptive survey. Statistical sample is including teachers with 30 individuals and all of students with 324 individuals. The research instrument is questionnaire with 38 question and its reliability is 0.81. The analyze of data is done by SPSS and t test. The main results showed that students don't aware from multicultural education and also teachers don't attention to multicultural education in their interactions with students in classes.

Keywords: multicultural education, education, payame noor university

*ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Bahareh Azizi Nejad**, Educational Administration, Department of Educational Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail address: Bahareh19@gmail.com

1. Introduction

In present time, new unavoidable ties and bounds have emerged between individuals and cultures due to the vast physical and cyber interactions between cultures and individuals and also because of disappearance of the traditional conventional boundaries. Different cultures living along with each other and their interaction increase the possibility of challenge among people and cultures. Thus, predicting and finding an appropriate mechanism for their rapprochement and mutual understanding and interaction, enabling them to achieve a peaceful coexistence and resolve the probable misunderstandings seems highly essential.

In this regard, the present study investigates students' perspective on multi-cultural education at Payam-e-nour University, Urmia. James Nebks who criticizes multi-cultural education, studies the school as a social system in a multi-cultural context (Banks, 2009). The term "multi-cultural" is nowadays emphasized by the educational systems and it means that in spite of expanding communications between countries and approaching a global and regional system, cultural differences is of utmost importance. Cultural diversity is not limited only to countries and it can be clearly seen that different nationalities and ethnicities within the same country live peacefully observing the national culture (Pourbehi, 1994). Nebks believes that multi-cultural education is the equity of education. He also claims that all dimensions of the school system from beginning to the present should be reevaluated and revised to meet the multi-cultural education. Policies, teachers' perspectives, educational materials, evaluation methods and teaching strategies are among the factors to be revised (Macdonald, 2003). In mid and late 1980s some experts including high school teachers and researchers such as Carl Grant, Cristian Sliter, Jenó Eghi, Sonia Nito provided the multi-cultural education with better facilities and established new and deep frameworks which were in line with providing equal education opportunity and unifying development of school and transformation of the society. Training awareness of indigenous knowledge, teaching the multi-cultural perspectives to students and elevating cultural competence should be started in the universities and during higher education. Doing so requires awareness of faculty members and students since no interaction with the goal of learning and teaching won't happen by lack of awareness (Bakhshi, 2005). Ministry of education needs to unify the school and real world in order to achieve a dynamism and development and provide students with knowledge and skills enabling them succeed when they face new world issues such as globalization along with providing them with specialized knowledge in sciences. In a world where the technology rapidly develops and knowledge is daily expanded, the ministry of education must present knowledge beyond a specialized type to students to flourish the capabilities of mankind and be prepared to foster global citizenship (Attaran, 2003).

Hence, its pre-requisite is awareness and mastery of the subject. In the following, we will elaborate on few conducted researches known by the researcher. Nouruzi and Lotfabadi (2004) in a research entitled investigating high school and pre-university Iranian students' perspective on globalization and its effect on values, national and religious identity, concluded that educational programs do not meet the current challenges and needs of life skills and citizenship training. It also does not fit the life in the globalization era. Various researches has revealed the importance of teaching global, national and local issues and rights and responsibility of citizens to students and entails training right thinking and decision making methods to fulfill the citizenship role.

Garibi et al conducted a study investigating the students' multiple-week curriculum and its implications on the new outlooks of higher education. The main questions posed by this study were as following: what is a multicultural curriculum? How necessary is it? What are its implications on new outlooks of higher education? It is a qualitative library-documentary research as well as descriptive-analytic one. Data gathering was carried out using documents and other document related sources. The research utilizes a theoretical description analysis and deduction to investigate the collected data. The findings of the research not only determined the concept of the curriculum but also showed that valuing the multicultural education and related curriculum is an unavoidable necessity in the present national and global conditions which can lead to different fundamental changes in the society. In fact, the results of this study

were indicator of the fact that considering different cultures and cultural backgrounds in teaching and education can improve social adaptability and capability of peaceful co-existence and form compatible identities. At the end, the researcher proposes some suitable recommendations and strategies to curriculum developers and educational experts in higher education to design the curriculums more efficiently through getting acquainted with multicultural curriculum.

Aragiyeh (2013) in his study “the typology of inter-disciplinary approaches and its implications in designing multicultural curriculum in higher education” states that some of the subjects currently discussed in the world of higher education include the issue of higher education internationalization and making provisions to attract international students. It entails different factors such as acceptance of cultural pluralism in universities, paying adequate attention to the inter-cultural experiences, expanding international interactions.

Nevertheless, studying Iran’s higher education points out that higher education system in Iran lacks suitable patterns and approaches regarding multi-cultural curriculum, the identification of other cultures and inter-cultural experiences. The above mentioned issues viewed as cultural obstacles have posed challenges in the internationalization of higher education curriculum in Iran. The present study analyzed the identified approaches in inter-disciplinary programs using qualitative research method (comparative analysis). The findings of the study revealed that the inter-disciplinary studies can give a special cohesiveness to the experts’ multi-cultural curriculum studies and play an effective role in the face of cultural obstacles of internationalization higher education curriculum as well as offering comprehensive views.

The results of the research by Feray (2000) indicated that teachers of social studies are not adequately acquainted with the concepts and objectives of multi-cultural education. Gersegi (2008) found that teachers are faced with the problem of racism and are not yet ready to teach using a multi-cultural curriculum. Fujikan (2003) defines global education along with global issues such as environmental changes and inter-cultural clashes. He also refers to embedding global issues in the curriculum to enable citizens to respond to the global issues. In fact, he believes that the main objective of training a global citizen is preparing students for living in a changing society.

2. Methodology

The method utilized by this research is a descriptive survey one. The population of the study includes 30 faculty members of Urmia Payam-e-nour University and 324 students. The instrument of the study was a questionnaire prepared by the researcher using Likret’s method which consisted of 38 questions. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as 0.81 using Crone Bach Alpha which is a desired reliability. Sample t-test was used to analyze the obtained data.

3. Results

The first question of the study involved the extent of students’ familiarity with the concept of multi-cultural education. It was revealed that the familiarity and acquaintance of students with the concept of multi-cultural education was very low and no significant difference was observed among their perspectives. The difference between observed t (45.44) and significance level confirmed the results.

Table 1. The results of sample t-test regarding students’ perspective

T	df	Sig.	Mean difference
45.44	323	0.00	13.85

The second question of the study deals with students' opinion about the extent to which the faculty members of the university include the concept of multi-cultural education in their curriculum. The results of t- test regarding this question revealed that instructors pay little attention to the principles of multi-cultural education. As it can be seen in table 2, the difference between observed t (45.44) and significance level approves the results.

Table 2. The results of sample t-test regarding students' perspective

T	df	Sig.	Mean difference
51.41	323	0.00	23.83

4. Discussion and Conclusion

With regard to different proposed aspects of multi-cultural education, paying attention to this issue has been emphasized in different scientific boards (Davidman & Davidman, 1997). Noting the obtained data, the findings of the current research showed that the students of Payam-e-nour University are not adequately familiar with the concept of multi-cultural education. These results are in line with those of Hakimzadeh et al. (2000) and Sajjadi (2005). It was also found that the faculty members do not pay much attention to multi-cultural education during education process or their interaction with students which was in agreement with the results obtained by Feray (2000), Jenks (2001) and Gersegi (2008). Accordingly it is proposed that some workshops can be hold for the faculty members regarding the issue of multi-cultural education and the university course book authors can try to imbed different aspects of multi-cultural education into books.

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