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Multiculturalism in Education:

Combating Hegemony in the Wake of Globalization

As the world progresses further into the 21st Century, globalization is no longer a topic of the future; it is the imminent present. As educators, there is a need to reevaluate the current constructs of education to meet the needs of students as they prepare to leave our schools and become active and participatory citizens of a global society. Multicultural Education is a concept that was born from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s with the aims to fight against racism (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). Today, five decades later, multiculturalism continues to play an integral role in the fight against racism, but it has taken on new roles in the preservation of cultural identity as globalization expands. Art educators across the world are uniting in an effort to provide students with a multicultural, intercultural, and global education that addresses globalization and combats hegemony. Art educators have the means and the access to work with themes of cultural identity and diversity in our progressively globalized society and can become *multicultural cultivators*. By "planting the seeds," art educators can help our students' roots to be properly nourished throughout their educational journey so that when students leave our educational institutions and join the global community, they will have a strong root system to continue to learn, grow, and cultivate racial, cultural, religious, sexual, gender, and socio-economical tolerance.

As a secondary art teacher at an international boarding school that boasts having a student body representative of 50 different countries, I examine the lack of multicultural discourse being addressed in the school's curriculum, create an argument for the promotion and integration of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and global education in the classroom, and provide alternative suggestions of how teachers can implement such lessons into their current curriculum. Our school has an incredible advantage over most school settings in that we welcome and attract students from around the world. Unfortunately, the current structure of the educational institution is, unknowingly, contributing to the lack of diversity, multiculturalism and the needed conversations amongst students and teachers that would benefit not only our learning community, but shape our students into more tolerant, open-minded, intelligent global citizens after they leave our school and venture into society.

Globalization is a complex concept to define and is continually evolving, but refers to the integration and interdependency of global economies and societies (Delacruz, 2009). Being a complicated result of societies and cultures interconnecting and merging together, globalization is seen as having both positive and negative ramifications. As explained by Elizabeth Delacruz (2009) in the introduction *of Globalization, Art, and Education: Mapping the Terrain*:

"Advocates celebrate globalization as the triumph of modernization, progress, innovation and freedom throughout the world—linking these to the achievements of capitalism, democracy, technology, and Western ideology. Opponents decry globalization's oppressive neoliberal rationality and its resulting excesses, human suffering, social fragmentation, and devastation of entire ecosystems," (p. x).

There is no doubt that as technology becomes increasingly accessible and social media continues to develop that the world is getting smaller, or as author and journalist Thomas Friedman puts it, the world is getting "flatter." There are wonderful benefits to the increase in communication and social relationships that are occurring in the wake of globalization, but of great concern is the maintaining of individual cultural identities as we evolve into a new form of global society. Without active observation, discussion, and evaluation of this world wide phenomenon, all cultural identities fall risk to hegemony. As all global citizens can now reflect on the destruction and devastation of cultural heritage attributed to colonialism, we have to guard ourselves against the risk of further loss of culture as our borders blur and access to information, material resources, the global market, and democracy expands.

Sheikha Al Mayassa, founder of the Doha Film Institute and patron of the arts from Qatar, speaks about the effects of globalization and the preservation of cultural identity through art making. In a recent TEDtalk she provides a statement in reference to Friedman's metaphor of the "world being flat" and says, "The more the world is flat, the more people want to be different; We don't want to all be the same, but we want to understand and respect each other" (2010). Mayassa goes on to explain how young people all over the world are promoting awareness and striving to define multiculturalism in the 21st Century. She states, "Culture is a very important tool to bring people together; we should not underestimate it." Mayassa explains how, "Art becomes a very important part of our national identity. The existential and social and political impact an artist has on his nation's development of cultural identity is very important." Art is a powerful reflection and representation of cultural identity and heritage. Through the making of art, artists can explore, define, and express their local identity and outwardly inform the rest of the world about one's culture. Art is a universal language that can be understood by all

and presents an ideal platform for all cultures to communicate, learn about, respect, and reassert our diverse cultural identities. As outlined by Christine Balanegee-Morris and Patricia Stuhr (2001) in their article, "Multicultural Art and Visual Cultural Education in a Changing World," by embracing multicultural education in the classroom, teachers provide the constructs for students to, "identify and deal with cultural complexity and issues of power as associated with social affiliations and aspects of personal, national, and global cultural identity(ies)," (p. 6). In light of globalization, not only art educators, but all educators need to evaluate our current curriculum and ensure that education remains relevant to our students' lives. By promoting multiculturalism, interculturalism, and global education in the classroom, we can utilize the knowledge base of our students and community members cultural backgrounds and distinctions to fight issues like racism, disenfranchisement, inequality, as well as create awareness of hegemony as a possible result from globalization and provide our students with the tools to participate in the current and future social reconstruction of our global society.

As I finish my fourth year teaching at Montverde Academy I have watched the growth and development of our student body as it becomes increasingly diverse. Four years ago the school demographic was predominantly American, Korean, and Vietnamese. With the development of an extensive athletic program that heavily recruits, the school has brought in a diverse student body from multiple countries in Africa, South America, Central America, Europe, and our neighboring island countries such as Puerto Rico, Bermuda, and the Bahamas. In response to the stimulation and economic growth in China, the school's population of Chinese students also increases dramatically every year. Montverde Academy has been forced to invest largely into the growth and development of the school's Progressive English curriculum. The

school's outward identity is largely defined by the ethnic and cultural diversity of its student body.

Unfortunately, amongst all of the cultural diversity there is a lack of acknowledgement or promotion of multicultural discourse within the constructs of the school's curriculum. In her article, "Culture and Education: Polishing the Lenses," Melanie Davenport (2000) sheds light on this common issue in American schools: "Assimilationist tendencies in American education compelled students to shed their own cultural identities and adapt to the dominant culture, which resulted in unequal outcomes of schooling for many children from other cultures," (p.367). Although Davenport is speaking in the past tense, the ideology of assimilation is the hidden backbone of the foundation of Montverde Academy's education structure. As an educational institution, we must recognize the needs of our student body and reevaluate our approach to educating our youth as they prepare to enter the global commons. Montverde Academy is the ideal construct to model world views, politics, and cultural diversity as well as promote tolerance and acceptance of all global citizens because it is a small microcosm of the global community. Instead of forcing our students to assimilate to the American way of learning, we should embrace global education ideologies and practices. Davenport provides five dimensions that result from global education as:

"a) perspective consciousness, the awareness that one's own world view is not universally shared and that it is shaped by influences that may escape detection; b) state of the planet awareness, the recognition of world conditions and emergent developments intra- and inter-nationally; c) cross-cultural awareness, the appreciation of human diversity and how one's own culture might be viewed by others; d) knowledge of global dynamics, the awareness of the world system and interrelatedness of events, choices, structures and outcomes worldwide; and e)

awareness of human choices, the recognition of the responsibilities and decisions facing humans as participants in the world system" (p.365).

Through multiculturalism, interculturalism and global education practices, we can better assess and meet the needs of our students, prepare them to be active and engaged global citizens, promote tolerance and acceptance of various world views, and maintain individual cultural identities. The educational infrastructure should reflect the needs of contemporary society, and it is time to update Montverde Academy's educational approach in the wake of globalization.

Art is the creation and reflection of local, national, and cultural identity. Many art educators provide a curriculum that introduces students to contemporary artists and art practices and therefore, by the nature of contemporary art, addresses multiculturalism and global education ideologies. Art educators realize the importance of educating our students to become multicultural cultivators, but we also realize that ideally, all teachers across the curriculum should be participating in creating a holistic multicultural global education as a means to foster social change (Stuhr, 1994). Here is a list of suggestions provided by other art education researchers that promote multiculturalism, interculturalism, and global education within the classroom:

1. As explored by Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, and Wasson (1992), curriculum development should promote and encourage, "an open exchange of ideas between learners, teachers, and community" in order to facilitate "individual growth; empower the individual, other individuals, and groups of individuals; foster critical thinking; and encourage social action" (p.24).

2. Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, Wasson, (1992): General education teachers should address "…issues such as graffiti and vandalism (on schools and public buildings),

school censorship (books, films, video), U.S. involvement in war, natural catastrophes, and the environment," (p.18) as a means to promote social action.

3. Become actively involved in the local community as a resource to learn about cultural identity (Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, Wasson, 1992; Davenport, 2000).

4. In Flavia Bastos' (2006) article, "Border-Crossing Dialogues Engaging Art Education," she presents how *dialogical inquiry* can help enrich the multicultural education practice in the classroom. Bastos (2006) concludes, "meaningfully situating cultural exchange in the context of its participants, dialogue is a means to venture into unfamiliar borders, but fundamentally, a process of gaining re-signified insights about ourselves" (p.24). By simply providing our students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with one another we can facilitate multiculturalism in our teaching practice.

5. Utilize technology as a way to discuss and create awareness of global youth culture, which is shaped by globalization in relationship to the development of new digital media (Delacruz, 2009).

6. As outlined by Sonia Nieto in her article, "Language, Culture, and Teaching Critical Perspectives for a New Century," we can utilize methods of critical pedagogy, which is "based on the experiences and viewpoints of students. The most successful education is that which begins with the learner and, when using a multicultural perspective, students themselves become the foundation for the curriculum," (p.46).

7. Provide a framework for our education, as outlined in Davenport's (2000, p.365) article, "Culture and Education: Polishing the Lenses," to teach students that: a)you are a human being, b)your home is planet earth, c)you are a citizen of a multicultural

society, and d)you live in an interrelated world (Anderson, Nicklas, & Crawford, 1994).

8. As outlined by Paul Gorski (2006), in his article, "Complicity with conservatism: the de-politicizing of multicultural and intercultural education," there are a series of important questions to continually ask ourselves as educators devoted to creating a multicultural classroom:

    - As an educator, do I put aside personal bias, educate myself on various cultures, and model to students on a daily basis what equality and equal opportunity means for all students?

    - Am I utilizing resources and creating stimulating lessons that relate to multiculturalism?

    - As I reflect on my teaching practice, is there any way I am supporting existing stereotypes and hierarchies?

    - Am I continually and actively learning about inequities and making connections with these issues in a global framework? (pp. 173-175))

As stated by Paul Gorski (2006, p.165) in his article, "Complicity with conservatism; de-politicizing of multicultural and intercultural education," "The implementation of small changes within a traditional classroom or school system does not constitute multicultural education. Instead, multicultural education is broad based (Nieto, 2000), calling 'for reform of the entire classroom and school itself' (Grant & Sleeter, 1998, p.163)." In order to provide students with an equal opportunity to education, not only individual teaching practices, but entire school infrastructures need to reassess how to address the educational needs of our increasingly culturally diverse student populations. As globalization continues to spread and

evolve, educators need to actively participate and facilitate learning about and the maintaining of cultural identities. We cannot be complacent with our teaching, but we need to be active participants in ensuring we prepare our students for a global society and do our best to create awareness and social change in the fight against hegemony. It is time to apply the educational goals and motivations of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and global education to not just the art curriculum, but to every aspect of education so that as educators we take the responsibility of cultivating responsible, intelligent, tolerant, and active participants in our current and future global society.

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