

Multicultural Training for Student Teachers

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In response to demands to make public education relevant to all children, educators are beginning to think seriously about and plan for multicultural education. Teacher trainers are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibility to prepare student teachers for the reality of cultural diversity. By such preparation, these student teachers will be able to implement a multicultural approach in the classroom.

Teacher trainers are attempting to facilitate the intern’s understanding of what it means to initiate and maintain an approach that acknowledges and responds to the wide range of differences in our society. The purpose of multicultural education is to make individuals aware of the diversity reflected by individuals, groups, and communities. It encourages an understanding and appreciation of similarities and differences among cultures.

Responding to this purpose means revising methods, modifying philosophies, and augmenting existing materials which presently tend to reflect a unicultural perspective. The charge to teacher training institutions is captured by Banks and Grambs:

... It is no longer defensible to send beginning teachers into schools with the same naiveté—to make the same mistakes that generations of teachers before them have made. The challenge of Black Power is not one to be taken up only by the social studies program with a few lessons here and there on black heroes. The total institution must be staffed by persons aware of how differences are valued, how these differences have been internalized by the individual student, and how the school can reinforce creative differences without demeaning any. This task is one for every teacher, and every person the institution employs. Reeducation of teachers can and should be shared by the school system and the college or university, and planned with individual teachers to meet their needs (1).

Reeducation implies planning experiences for student teachers that focus on specific objectives. The author recently directed a workshop series which sought to provide a concentrated experience emphasizing multicultural education. The objectives for the workshop were (a) to provide experiences that would help student teachers develop an educational philosophy consistent with multicultural reality, (b) to expose students to the historical and cultural dimensions of

ethnic groups, (c) to provide criteria for use in evaluation of materials, and (d) to encourage the planning of classroom learning experiences that would reflect various cultural perspectives.

The objectives were drawn from assumptions of the author’s previous research (2). These assumptions were that if teachers perceived ethnic groups favorably, they were more likely to develop the skills for teaching a multicultural curriculum. In determining whether or not perceptions of the student teachers involved in the workshop changed, the *Survey on Groups* instrument (3) was used. The student teachers were administered the instrument at the beginning and end of the workshop.

Procedure and Workshop Experiences

The workshop was held for a two-week period at a large midwestern university. Two-hundred and ninety-nine student teachers who planned to intern during the following academic year participated. Pre- and post-tests were administered to all of the students. Activities during the two-week workshop included (a) administration of the *Survey on Groups* instrument, (b) attendance at a lecture entitled “The Need for Multicultural Education,” (c) participation in a meeting in which multicultural guidelines for classroom observation and assessment were described and distributed, (d) observation for four days in settings where they would be doing student teaching and using multicultural guidelines for observing and assessing classrooms, (e) attendance for four days in a daily three-hour period of lectures, films, and discussions on the cultures of several ethnic groups, and (f) administration of the instrument *Survey on Groups* in small group situations.

Findings

The statistical analysis tested the following hypothesis: The perception of ethnic groups held by the student teachers enrolled in the multicultural workshop would be altered.

The means for the sample on the pre- and post-test are presented in Table 1. The data presented show the results of testing on both the anti-irrational and pro-irrational scales. The *t* value of 2.17 was statistically significant for the pro-irrational scale at the .05 level. The obtained *t* value of 2.76 was statistically significant for the anti-irrational scale at the .01 level. The findings of this research indicate that the perceptions of ethnic groups held by the students participating in the workshop were altered and the hypothesis is supported.

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	Pre-Pro Irrational	Post-Pro Irrational	Pre-Anti Irrational	Post-Anti Irrational
N=299				
\bar{X}	62.87	65.31*	33.53	35.50**

TABLE 1

Means for the Total Anti and Pro Scales Pre-Post

*.05 $t=2.17$

** .01 $t=2.76$

It is necessary to examine the differences in the subscales to determine where perceptions of the students were altered. There was no statistically significant difference obtained on the black anti-irrational or pro-irrational subscales. Therefore it can be concluded that the change in perceptions of blacks held by the students remained fairly constant.

Table 2 presents the means for the Jewish subscale. The mean of 19.06 for the pretest on the pro-irrational scale and that of 20.41 on the post-test produced a t of 2.58. The results were significant at the .01 level. This indicates that the perceptions of Jewish-Americans held by the students did change on the proscale and contributed to the change reported in Table 1.

	Pre-Pro Irrational	Post-Pro Irrational	Pre-Anti Irrational	Post-Anti Irrational
N=299				
\bar{X}	19.06	20.41*	13.21	13.82

TABLE 2

Means for the Jewish Subscale Pre-Post

*.01 $t=2.58$

The means for the other minorities subscale are presented in Table 3. The mean of 9.77 for the pretest on the anti-irrational scale and that of 10.67 for the post-test produced a t of 3.68. The results were significant at the .01 level and it can be concluded that the change in perceptions of other ethnic groups held by the students did change on the antiscale and contributed to the change presented in Table 1.

The data suggest that while students' perceptions of blacks remained fairly constant, their perceptions of Jewish Americans became more pro-irrational. However, the data also suggest that the perceptions of other minorities were more anti-irrational. Therefore, the

	Pre-Pro Irrational	Post-Pro Irrational	Pre-Anti Irrational	Post-Anti Irrational
N=299				
\bar{X}	21.67	22.51	9.77	10.67*

TABLE 3

Means for the Other Minorities Subscale Pre-Post

*.01 $t=3.68$

change revealed in Table 1 can be attributed to an alteration of perceptions toward Jewish-American and other minority groups.

Summary of Results

The study was designed to determine changes in the perception of ethnic groups held by student teachers participating in a workshop on multicultural education. The hypothesis tested was: The perceptions of ethnic groups held by the students enrolled in the multicultural workshop would be altered.

The data did establish significant differences between the pre- and post-testing in the perceptions of ethnic groups held by students on both the pro-irrational and anti-irrational scales. The workshop involved several aspects of training, and it is difficult to determine specifically which aspect—the lectures, films, discussions, classroom experiences, or personal contacts—contributed most to the change.

It is important for teachers to be made aware of the need for multicultural education. This can best be accomplished when the teacher perceives cultures of ethnic groups positively.

The findings of this study and the previous research by the author support the belief that perceptions can be altered through training. It is, therefore, appropriate and necessary for teacher training institutions to assume this responsibility. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide learning experiences for teachers in training that will be consistent with the objectives of multicultural education. The extent to which training can be effective depends on the type, duration, and the intensity of the training. A workshop approach is not adequate if it is to be the only source of training. It can, however, serve as introductory, supplementary, or enrichment instruction. An integrated approach to the preprofessional as well as professional years appears to be most practical.

References

- 1 Banks, James A. and Jean D. Grambs. *Black Self Concept*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1972, p. 209.
- 2 Baker, Gwendolyn C. "The Effects of Training in Multi-ethnic Education on Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Ethnic Groups." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1972.
- 3 Schuman, Howard and John Harding. "Prejudice and the Norm of Rationality," *Sociometry* 27 (1964): 353-371.

The questionnaire consists of 48 pairs of generalizations with each item referring to a characteristic of an ethnic group. One-third of the items included in the survey dealt with blacks (referred to as Negroes), one-third with Jews, and one-third with a variety of other minority groups (American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Japanese, Chinese, and Mexican Americans).

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