

**A STUDY ON MULTICULTURAL ATTITUDE OF STUDENT TEACHERS OF MANGALORE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to develop a viable survey questionnaire for assessing prospective teachers' attitudes and perceptions concerning multicultural education issues and to test the efficacy of the instrument for identifying attitude differences among the prospective teachers. If attitudes about multicultural education can be accessed through a questionnaire, the results may be beneficial for helping to prepare teachers to serve diverse student groups. The investigators assumed that prospective teachers with positive attitudes and opinions are more prone to behave appropriately and constructively in actual teaching situations involving students of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, backgrounds, abilities, economical levels, etc. and, generally, in dealing with multicultural issues in classroom settings. This demographic imperative has implications for teacher education programs. Programs need to prepare teachers who can effectively instruct students of diverse backgrounds and cultures. A broader implication for teacher education programs is the need to prepare teachers who can teach all students to live and function in diverse communities and contribute to social prosperity at the national and global levels. The skills, attitudes, and knowledge learned through multicultural education are important for all students. Teacher educators play an instrumental role in identifying and implementing appropriate strategies for realizing multicultural education objectives. To adequately perform their tasks, teacher educators must identify ways of assessing the effectiveness of the activities and programs they employ for actually promoting multicultural education aims.

**Introduction:**

Multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Culture is a system of values, preferred way of alternatives adopted by members of given community in almost all matters coming in their way of living- eg. What to eat, how to dress and how to treat different categories of people like respecting elders, teachers, guests. What interest, attitude and goals to pursue in life. Culture in other wards concerned with preferences in beliefs, ideas, practices and ideals. Culture comprise of whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise society or social group. It not only includes art and literature but modes of life, fundamental rights of human being, value system and tradition. Assimilation of humanism, secularism, toleration and universality are essentials of Indian culture. Indian culture is composite in nature that means harmonious blend of various ideas, customs, manners and values. It is the product of assimilating, borrowing and sharing interaction between two or more streams of thoughts. Indian culture is the colour composite collage of patterns through which runs the threads of unity.

Culture is learned that it helps the individual to adapt himself to his natural and social setting. That is why it varies from one group to another. It is manifested through institutions, thought patterns and material objects. Thus culture is way of life is what one adopts and also influences others. Our history reveals that how many religious, ethnic groups which came to India and settled down here underwent the process of cultural assimilation and integration tolerating each other beliefs and practices in a secular manner. In spite of this cultural diversity basic cultural unity has been maintained. Indian conception of secularism there shall be no state religion and state shall treat all religions equal. We believe in sarva dharma samanvaya having equal regards for all faiths & needs. Secularism helps in emergence of healthy pluristic out look which foster growth of Science, art, philosophy band even religion. It promotes material needs and promotes reverence.

Multicultural education concentrates on the need of including notions of race, class, and diversity while teaching. "Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender; sexual orientation; social class; and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks and Banks, 3). If done correctly, students will develop a positive perception of themselves by demonstrating knowledge about the culture, history, and contributions of diverse groups. This way, multiculturalism is a tool for instilling students with pride and confidence in their unique and special backgrounds.

This theory concentrates on the need of including notions of race, class, and diversity while teaching. Multicultural educators seek to substantially reform schools to give diverse students an

equal chance in school, in the job market, and in contributing to building healthy communities.[1] Multiculturalism supports the idea that students and their backgrounds and experiences should be the centre of their education and that learning should occur in a familiar context that attends to multiple ways of thinking.

Multicultural education has become one of the most widely discussed concepts in education today. Yet, at times it is also one of the misunderstood. We all recognize that culture is learned from infancy through a process of conscious and unconscious learning. Sometimes it is taught directly, such as when parents educate their children to greet visitors politely or observation of things that go on around them, including what their culture considers right and wrong. All these learning experiences take place in the home, school, and community. The role of the schools is of particular importance because they are one of the few places where young people of diverse backgrounds may be found daily in large numbers. Our schools, then, have a unique opportunity to provide understanding of the world's cultures and the points of agreement between the religions of the world, recognizing that every person, male and female, is a precious member of the human family, can schools do to promote cultural harmony through multicultural education?

Multicultural education, as defined by Patricia G. Ramsey and Leslie R. Williams, is a process-oriented creation of learning experiences that foster educational equity, an awareness of and respect for the diversity of our society and world; and a commitment to create a more just and equitable society for all people. These learning experiences are relevant to all children and their families, all pedagogical, curricular and administrative decisions and every aspect of local and national educational policy. They must accept following factors.

- i. To be guided by the principle of unity in diversity. Recognize that our similarities are more basic than our differences.
- ii. To overcome both misconceptions about culture and dispel cultural ignorance.
- iii. As the student's progress year after year in school, move from emphasis upon understanding and appreciation of material culture only to comprehending and appreciating nonmaterial culture in your nation and the world. Stress should be on respect for various cultures, including your own.
- iv. To help the students to make choices as to the most beneficial aspects of the cultures of their society including the universal human values and moral values they uphold.
- v. Schools are one of the few places where young people of diverse backgrounds come together day after day, so if the schools fail to help to harmonize the society, what will be the consequences?

In addition to these points, your schools should link with more global programs for schools that, among other things, study various cultures such as the Associated Schools Project of UNESCO. Students should gradually come to realize that regarding cultures as superior or inferior can lead to hurt feelings, frustration, and conflicts. Ethnic and cultural issues should be infused into school subjects such as mathematics, computer classes, art, crafts, drama, home economics, music, languages, and history.. Teachers should use their creative energies and draw upon the inner feelings of students as they are exposed to the fine, beautiful aspects of the cultures of humanity. Cooperative learning with heterogeneous groups helps students to understand viewpoints different from their own and appreciate the cultures of the group members when solving problems. Recognizing students' ethnicity and cultural experiences can help lead toward a more peaceful classroom. In the schools' efforts in reaching out to their communities through community education they need to listen carefully to the people they are trying to educate and understand the cultural traditions of the community so that the Multicultural education program fits in with the people's interests as opposed to forcing an outside agenda on them.

But we are all aware that people who do not uphold the principle of the oneness of humanity and do not possess a modern scientific view of race can cause millions to suffer racial injustice. If at any time people feel the need to set themselves apart from and above others because of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, economic status or any other reason, the consequence is often disunity, conflict, violence, and even war. Hitler Germany was a disastrous example. Such attitudes must be replaced by modern scientific knowledge rather than ignorance, by mutual understanding, by sincere friendship, and by recognition of and respect for the positive qualities and accomplishments among the entire world's people rather than just the qualities and accomplishments of our own group. This, again, is one of the prime tasks of multicultural education.

According to the study done by Basanti Dey Chakroborthy(2008) recognizing the factors affecting multicultural awareness and competence of pre-service teachers in early childhood teacher education programme reveals that “Multicultural Education is extremely valuable and should be taught at an early age and should be part of every student’s life. Multicultural education helps to become better person, to develop insight into other culture and get to know each other. Multicultural education will work towards eliminating stereotypes and discrimination in the classrooms. This will help the children to be tolerant of others and help teachers in dealing with children and parents effectively.”

#### **Need for the Study:**

It is assumed that in addition to the need of well informed content and cultural diversity, the nation needs teachers who are fair minded, critical thinkers, who care about the welfare of their



students and humanity in general, and who act in ways that encourage all students to learn and develop to their highest potential. (Sleeter, 1995).

The purpose of this study was to develop a viable survey questionnaire for assessing prospective teachers' attitudes and perceptions concerning multicultural education issues and to test the efficacy of the instrument for identifying attitude differences among the prospective teachers. If attitudes about multicultural education can be accessed through a questionnaire, the results may be beneficial for helping to prepare teachers to serve diverse student groups. The investigators assumed that prospective teachers with positive attitudes and opinions are more prone to behave appropriately and constructively in actual teaching situations involving students of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, backgrounds, abilities, economical levels, etc. and, generally, in dealing with multicultural issues in classroom settings.

This assumption is supported by Larke (1990) who contends that studies show "... a high correlation exists among educators' sensitivity (attitudes, beliefs and behaviors toward students of other cultures) knowledge and application of cultural awareness information and minority students' successful academic performance."

Scholars (Banks, 1989; Benett, 1995; Derman –Sparks & A.B.C task force, 1991; Haberman & Post, 1998; Irvine, 1994; Nieto, 1996; Sleeter, 1995, and Tatum, 1992) in the field of multicultural education have emphasized the need for culturally responsive teachers in schools.

Haberman and Post(1998) in their article “ Teachers for Multicultural schools: the power of selection” emphasized on the following qualities of the teacher. Self Knowledge, Self acceptance, Relationship skills, Community Knowledge, empathy, Cultural human development, generating sustained effort. This will enable the teacher to be aware of the diversity among young children, so that they will be able to develop right kind of attitude and skills to address the issues negatively affecting the school children.

Hence the investigator decided to conduct study on this subject matter to find out the perception of student teachers on Multicultural Education. The fundamental question of the investigators interest was

- Do the student teachers have acceptable level of multicultural attitude?

### **Basic Assumptions of the Study:**

This study was carried out with the following assumptions.

- I. Multicultural Education Is The Current Trend In Education
- Ii. We Acknowledge The Existence Of Diversity Of Learning Spaces.

- iii. Student Teachers Have Sensitivity And Consciousness Of Multicultural Education.
- iv. Student Teachers Are Specially Trained To Implement Multicultural Trend In The Schools.

### Objectives of the Study

- To collect and analyze the perceptions of Student teachers on Multicultural attitude.
- To find the significant difference, if any between the means of scores of male and female student teachers in Multicultural attitude.
- To find the significant difference, if any between the means of scores of urban and rural student teachers in Multicultural attitude.

### Hypothesis of the Study:

The present study has been conducted with the following hypothesis in the view.

- There is significant difference among the Multicultural assimilation among the student teachers.
- There will be significant difference between the means of scores of perceptions of male and female student teachers in Multicultural attitude.
- There will be significant difference between the means of scores of perceptions of urban and rural student teachers in Multicultural attitude.
- There will be significant difference between the means of scores of perceptions of Multicultural attitude of student teachers with respect in food habits, culture and language.
- There will be significant difference between the means of scores of perceptions of Multicultural attitude of student teachers with respect to marriage and caste.

### Methodology:

The present study is a descriptive survey study. In order to know the level of Multicultural attitude of the student teachers, the questions were explored on the social behaviour, language, food, religion, customs, traditions and caste. The investigator tried to understand appropriate opinion of student teachers towards diversity and multiculturalism through open ended questions. The conclusion was based on the analysis of student teachers responses to these questions.

### Variables of the Study:

Dependent variable: Opinion of Student teachers on Multicultural trend.

Independent variable: Questionnaire on Multicultural assimilation.

### Population and Sample Used

Qualitative approach with a small sample was used to generate data from a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to student teachers of B.Ed. course. The participants were surveyed on their personal exposure to diversity and factors that facilitated their multicultural awareness and competence. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the responses to objective questions in the survey. Content analysis was to analyse open ended survey questions. The survey was conducted on 150 B.Ed. students.

### **Tools Used for the Study**

The investigator used the following tool.

A self constructed Questionnaire for the multicultural attitude of student teachers which was based on general daily culture like Language, food, clothing, traditions, habits, caste & religion.

### **Major Findings of The Study**

This Descriptive study on the Multicultural Assimilation of Student teachers reveals that,

- i. It was found that student teachers appeared to have a very few misconceptions about Multicultural trend. About 74% of student teachers possessed an average Multicultural attitude
- ii. A stereotype culture was found in the area of food, culture and language.
- iii. But lot of indifferences were found regarding religion, caste and marriage.
- iv. Male teachers revealed greater multicultural assimilation than the female student teachers.
- v. Urban student teachers revealed greater multicultural assimilation than the rural student teachers.

### **Educational Implications of the Study**

The present study is modest attempt to explore the teacher's opinions towards Multicultural education. In the light of the research findings the investigator suggests the following implications.

- The study would help in influencing the current teacher education programme to inculcate Multicultural Education
- The findings of the study would give a feed back on realization for the need Multicultural Education
- The study would help to notice the lack of the Multicultural Assimilation among student teachers.

- Orientation could be arranged for teachers in order give them awareness to transmit multicultural trend.
- The study also reveals the difference in multicultural assimilation of male and female teachers.

### Conclusion:

We think our teacher education is integrative and ecliptic. We want to be more open and flexible. Our emphasis is to make teacher education liberal, humanistic and responsive to the demands of inclusive education. There is increasing recognition of the worth and potential of indigenous culture as a source rejuvenating teaching and learning. Multicultural Education and culture specific pedagogy is the current is the current trend. Therefore the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education -2009 programme stresses to help the potential teachers to develop social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities. We need to broaden the curriculum to bring harmony and peace amongst our students who are the future citizens of our country. Therefore it is the need of the centaury to update our teachers to adopt multiculturalism amongst them to guide their students. The investigator believes that there is a need for evaluation at the beginning and end of teacher education program to assess entry and exit level on multicultural assimilation through various activities.

### Suggestions for Further Study

It hoped that the present study would encourage, stimulate and even provoke further researchers in the following way.

- The study can be carried out to seek the opinions of rural and urban school teachers
- A study can be carried out on entire population.
- Perception studies can be conducted at all levels of teaching like pre-primary, primary and high school levels.
- A comparative study can be carried out to seek the opinions of the students.
- A comparative study can be carried out to seek the opinions of male and female teachers.

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