Diversity and the Need for Multicultural Education

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Contents

Introduction

Multiculturalism is the central concern in the current globalized society characterized by international relations (Hussain, 2018). Due to globalization and rapid economic development, international learning has become more prominent. Intercultural communication creates new problems for higher learning institutions in the United States. Misunderstandings are prone to occur in a multicultural environment associated with the interaction between students from different cultural backgrounds whose beliefs and values vary (Jenifer & Raman, 2015). It is often likely that US residents may fail to understand and appreciate the norms, values, and roles of other cultures. For instance, while clothing in some cultures may vary based on gender, some individuals may argue that people should wear what they want, especially if it makes them comfortable with their own identity. In Islamic states, wearing other gender's clothing is taboo since strict fashion norms are based on their past religious beliefs and traditions. Thus, while some values and beliefs may differ from those of others, respecting these differences is critical.

Intercultural communication can also be obstructed, leading to communication barriers when signs and other non-verbal communication aspects are not recognized. The problem arises when there are differences in religions, language, and ethnicity, which decreases productivity and growth (VanAlstine et al., 2015). People are using the norms and values of one culture to explain individuals' behavior from another culture. Stereotyping may also still occur when some people judge others due to their varying values and cultures. Such actions may cause conflict, which may lead to miscommunication. Ethnocentrism may also act as a communication barrier, especially when people think their culture is superior to others (Hussain, 2018). Such attitudes may increase anxiety in those thought to have an inferior culture, affecting their productivity in school or the workplace.

Similar to ethnocentrism, cultural relativism may occur where people tend to judge the standards of one culture through the lens of another. Such practices may make people treat others differently because of the lack of understanding of others' cultural backgrounds. International students and workers may also experience culture shock when they have difficulty adapting to different cultures since they may lose their identity or become emotionally disappointed (Hussain, 2018). This problem may hinder socialization from taking place, making it difficult for people to see themselves through others' eyes and learn about their beliefs, norms, and values. They may feel like they do not need to or maybe too accustomed to their cultures, which may discourage them from learning about others' cultures.

My Cross-Cultural Experiences and How I Bridged This Gap

People raised in different nations with diverse cultural norms and traditions unavoidably develop distinct ways of thinking and modes of behaviors. Thus, it becomes difficult to understand other people's cultures because our understanding, meaning, and significance are given to us by society. Our attachment to culture hinders us from understanding the background of those we interact with.

As a Jamaican, our culture has been influenced by British traditions, Amerindian, and African heritage. Europeans have influenced Christian worship, arts, and public institutions. Also, African have influenced our religious life, music, and dance. We rely on traditional medicines for spiritual and verbal healing. After interacting with Guyanese, I realized that their culture reflects Amerindian, Chinese, Portuguese, and African populations. They speak English, Hindi, and other indigenous languages. Considering Jamaican cuisine, the national dish in the country is saltfish and Ackee. The dish is prepared from the country's fruits. Again, Jerk chicken is accompanied with rice or bread and peas. Jamaican patties are prepared with chicken, beef,

and veggies or seafood. Also, oxtail is made with peas and rice. Guyanese cuisine, on the other

hand, includes pepper pot made with cassareep from cassava root. Any meat is used based on a

person's preferences. Dhalphuri is prepared with split peas and taken with chicken curry.

Pholloirie is also made with split peas and consumed with tamarind or Mango Chutney.

Guyanese thick soup is called Metemgee.

The languages between the two cultures differ. Jamaican commonly speak patois,

although it is not an official language. Jamaican black English, Creole, and broken English are

also spoken. Jamaican use proper salutation based on the time of the day. The Guyanese, on the

other hand, speak Creole along with Hindi, English, and American dialect. When it comes to

norms, beliefs, and values, a handshake with direct eye contact is the common greeting

accompanied by a warm smile in Jamaica. By contrast, Guyanese greet each other with a gentle

hand or arm grab, which is often used to attract attention to the person being addressed.

Sometimes, a slap on the leg and innocent touching occur. Most Jamaican are Christians, and

their largest denominations include Pentecostal, Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics. In

Guyana, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity are the major religions, although there is the

incorporation of African practices and beliefs. Cultural symbols between the two cultures also

differ.

Concerning socialization, religion determines the actions of Jamaicans, whereby they

follow biblical events. On the other hand, the Guyana men and women drink and smoke,

although such practices are not openly acceptable for women. Jamaican also prohibit tipping and

put their faith in extended families and close friends. Although some of these aspects shift to a

more individualist culture, Guyana is also a collectivist society. From this interaction, I deduced

that although we may not hold the same values, culture, norms, beliefs, and values, they have a

historical and cultural significance for each community. Therefore, we should respect these differences to avoid conflict.

As a black female, my experiences in the US have been challenging. Since the early days, African Americans have often faced issues in the US, and these problems still occur today. Being a female also increases inequality. In workplaces, females face stereotypes. Women are regarded as the weak gender. This issue makes them be excluded from some jobs that require strength. Black women are also vulnerable to sexual assault.

Besides sexual harassment, black people face racial and ethnic inequality. Our black color makes us biologically inferior, and thus we are believed to possess cultural deficiencies associated with lack of opportunities in the workplaces, face discrimination, and other structural obstacles. Blacks and other people of color are linked with having little knowledge, intelligence, and innate flaws that hinder us from getting a good education or achieving the American Dream. Although this racists perspective is not common today, historically, the Whites used it to justify harsh treatments, slavery, and lynching of Native Americans.

In my opinion, things are better off compared to those years since today people have a voice and freedom. We have an opportunity to voice our beliefs and opinions. For instance, technology makes it easier for blacks and other minority groups to communicate and show the world the injustices happening in the US. Ethnic and racial groups have been able to use technology and, more specifically, through social media to communicate the challenges they face due to racisms in the current society (Carney, 2016). In the past, these groups could have secret meet-ups and communicate via letters. Today, once an injustice is noticed, it is videotaped or recorded then posted on social media. Technology has made it possible for the whole world to

see the problem. Meetings are aired online, which shows that technology is an effective tool used to enhance public interaction.

I have also encountered horrible circumstances involving culture. I remember one that occurred last year in Nigeria when I received an urgent call from Rose, a friend of mine. Her husband had been diagnosed with chronic kidney failure, and I wanted to be there for her during that devastating moment. Our friendship started when we met in Turkey in a Textile hub where she used to source high-quality fabrics for her customers, and since then, we have been close friends. With her husband in a critical state, I had to be there for her, and so I booked a flight to Nairobi's airline agencies without delay. Upon reaching Lagos, I had to escape the heavy traffic, so I requested an Uber drive. It only took a few hours to arrive at Rose's place. But things did not turn out well because her family receives news that her husband had just passed away. The news was shocking. It made me cry, knowing how my friend almost sold everything under-value to get the money needed for the husband's weekly dialysis.

What had terrified me the most was what Rose was expected to do. She was supposed to shave her hair to the scalp before entering her mourning period and dress in half ragged wrapper. Rose was also not allowed to shower, change clothes, wear shoes, or cut her nails. She even needed to be accompanied at all times when going to the toilet. After her husband's burial, it was the second phase of the mourning, which was supposed to last for one year. During this time, she was only allowed to wear black dresses with no shoes or sandals. Just when I thought the traumatic experience was over, I realized that the worst was yet to happen because she was supposed to choose a husband from within the confines of the dead husband's extended family. Through this encounter, I learned that the culture in the Southern part of Nigeria culture was

horrifying. Widows were subjected to a series of rituals after the death of their husbands. Besides being secluded for weeks, they were denied meals and were living in unhygienic conditions.

From this encounter, I learned that interaction is significant in bringing cultures together. To understand the culture other than the one we are brought in, exposure to other cultures is important. Having a basic understanding of specific cultures can increase cultural sensitivity and help us overcome stereotypes and break down barriers. When a person understands the hidden aspect of a certain culture that makes up the foundation of a society, then there is a shift of thoughts and actions to best present and align oneself with others. Cultural awareness of others' norms and beliefs allows people to better communicate and interact in a new culture, making it easier to respect and accept cultural differences.

Reflecting on Race, Ethnicity, Diversity, Stereotypes in the US and How Lack of Cross-Cultural Understanding Is a Bigger Problem in Society

Students from different countries and backgrounds, including those from America, Africa, Mexico, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, have some similarities. To them, racism in the US is a major societal problem. However, to African Americans, racisms are still alive and a widespread challenge. Although racism began in historical times, black Americans are confident that this vice got worse during the Trump administration. Thus, racial conflicts and tension have been predominant throughout America's history (VanAlstine et al., 2015). Black Americans are among the minority group that is racially stereotyped throughout their life. There have been multiple cases of alleged killings, harassment, and discrimination in the hands of police, who are supposed to be protecting them as citizens of the US (Jee-Lyn García & Sharif, 2015). Most black Americans give testimonies about racism and how it is linked with misconception and stereotyping, believing that doing so will make things right. Most of those who share their stories

reveal that black people struggle with an extensive range of this misconception that extends from annoyance to deeply hurtful perceptions.

To top it up, some teachers abuse native Americans while others stare at them regularly as though they are social misfits. People of color in the US are viewed as though they have innate flaws; they are considered biologically inferior due to their limited natural intelligence. This kind of ethnic inequality tends to justify why people of color are treated harshly (Priest et al., 2018). Black people are prejudiced against because of being part of a racial minority. Although African American community dress, speak and socialize the same way as the mainstream American culture, majority groups, their skin color makes them treated in such a manner. Besides African Americans, Asians and Jamaican roots are often stereotyped because of their personalities and hobbies, which leave them feeling frustrated and alienated. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Rayshard Brooks ignited a movement called Black Lives Matter (BLM), which aimed to reveal that black people were in danger and needed help (McCoy, 2020; Atkins, 2019). This movement has evolved both online and offline to bring about solidarity against police brutality in the US (Ince et al., 2017).

As a counter-response to this movement, All Lives Matter (ALM) was launched with an indication to support all lives instead of just black people (Gallagher et al., 2018). However, this movement came to wrongly misinterpreted BLM because the latter was created to show how black people died in law enforcers' hands (Clayton, 2018). There is no doubt that America is a blessed nation characterized by high levels of multiculturalism and diversity, which is difficult to find in other places in magnitude and scale. Due to this, stereotyping tendencies put blemishes where none should be existent. Diversity should be viewed as the makeup of the US, and a melting pot of cultures which, when brought together, can lead to the achievement of a common

goal of free-living and advancement of economic and social statuses. However, since this is not

the case, black Americans try to deal with stereotyping, racism, and discrimination by being kind

toward others and having personal confidence in themselves. This group is hopeful that the

incoming administration will help solve racism in the US.

Multicultural Education in the 21st Century

Multicultural education refers to a movement that came to be in the 1960s (Yılmaz,

2016). Based on Ozturgut (2011), multicultural education is the instruction system that focuses

on promoting cultural pluralism and recognize differences between cultures and races. This

system aims to help learners understand and appreciate cultural similarities and differences

(Arifin & Hermino, 2017). It also helps acknowledge the achievements of diverse racial and

ethnic groups and not just the mainstream society. Mostafazadeh et al. (2015) also defined

multicultural education as a current school system that applies issues and policies that education

institutions should consider improving all learners' academic outcomes despite their cultural

backgrounds, gender, religion, diversity, nationality, or class. Thus, all cultures deserve respect

and preservation and can help different people with distinct identities coexist equitably and

peacefully in a joined society. Through multicultural education, all students can gain skills,

knowledge, and attitudes needed to thrive effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to

communicate, negotiate and interact with people from diverse backgrounds to build a moral and

civil community that operates for the common good (Ozturgut, 2011).

Since colonialism is part of the US past, there is a great need to realize, understand, and

integrate indigenous practices, values, and knowledge into the classroom. Embracing different

perspectives and views can help learners to appreciate their values. Multicultural education can

give students this opportunity to examine their own cultural and social biases, break them down,

and change their perceptions and attitudes within society, schools, and workplace settings (Dey, 2016).

The number of international students in modern society is increasing, making education institutions to be culturally diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation. Such diversity creates an education gap that needs to be filled by adopting and assimilating practices that benefit all cultures, which makes the implementation of multicultural education significant in solving racial and language discrimination in education. Through multicultural education, vices like stereotyping, bullying, racisms, and intolerance are reduced. According to Pagani et al. (2011), this education system of education encourages intercultural interaction, clarifying some misconceptions that students have towards some cultural groups and eliminating the stigma they put on to these groups.

In the US, Blacks and people of color are underrepresented and marginalized. Such problems are linked with poor representation of their culture in books. Multicultural education can help correct information in textbooks to encourage learners to be fully familiar with their own cultural groups and gain accurate representation as deserved. Multicultural education can also allow learners to improve their critical thinking skills on topics sounding social and cultural issues, including sexism, ableism, and institutional racism (Ozturgut, 2011). For example, the multicultural curriculum may constitute black Americans' history and how they encountered slavery to the point where civil rights and BLM came to be. Such exposure can help students to become change agents by applying knowledge to reality to transform society.

In US society, inequitable practices have occurred against the minority. These marginalized groups were denied access to better healthcare, education, among other opportunities (Schoorman, 2017). Multicultural education can create a contemporary need for political and

social change to reflect all. This kind of education advances equity by allowing diverse cultural

students to have equal chances and support systems as white learners for better academic

achievements.

Recommendations or Solutions to Lack of Cross-Cultural Understanding

Increasing cross-cultural understanding is important in a society that is already diverse.

The following recommendations show how multicultural education can be incorporated into a

school curriculum, higher education activities, and society at large.

Educator Training and Preparation for the Multicultural Classroom

Education institutions should establish programs to train tutors and lecturers

independently based on college content area and state (Yılmaz, 2016). Such programs should

decide on areas that are crucial and the ones that should be taught to enhance teachers' career

progression. Cultural diversity and competence are common amongst these programs and should

be discussed, although there should be a shift in the curriculum to focus on multicultural

education in both students and content interaction (Miftah, 2016). This training is expected to

occur over time, and therefore, the topic of tolerance and culture should be incorporated with

other class coursework.

Establishment of School-Wide Activities to Support Multicultural Themes

Schools should be designed in such a way that they offer an environment for the minority

groups to learn their history and culture. The majority group should learn festivities, music, and

belief systems of their peers' culture and backgrounds to increase understanding and create

inclusiveness. Also, high education activities such as guest speakers, United Nation Day, Black

History Month, or multicultural fairs that intend to teach understanding and respect should be

introduced as well. Besides this, participation in sports and other labeling and grouping practices

should be evaluated to ensure that all students across racial and ethnic lines participate in those activities to create a school culture that empowers learners from diverse gender, ethnic, and racial groups.

Introduction of Multicultural Teaching Practices

All students have distinct learning styles, which means incorporating multicultural education techniques into the classroom may enable them to be more successful (Yılmaz, 2016). The aim is to allow learners to succeed economically once they move into a multicultural world where they will interact with a diverse workforce. Thus, teaching them to be more comfortable in such a workplace by integrating their skills in class is important in global workplaces and the economy.

Multicultural Education Curriculum

There is a gap in the current higher education syllabi because the curriculum only favors the mainstream community. The introduction of the new syllabus that incorporates multicultural competence and cultural sensitivity is important. Such a curriculum will help teachers to be fully knowledgeable about the culture and use examples and teaching methods that consider various cultures (Miftah, 2016). This effort will lead to equity pedagogy, which will facilitate learners' academic achievement from diverse social class, gender, cultural, and racial groups. Teachers will also have to check their biases and avoid any deliberate or unintentional bias that attacks specific culture. Through this, students will feel welcome, safe, and comfortable during their time on campus (Maddah, 2018).

The Imposition of Policies That Promote Multicultural Education

Previous policies did not do much in addressing racism and prejudice amongst minority groups (Yılmaz, 2016). As such, new policies should be created and followed up to encourage multilingual and multicultural education that is supported by the constitution. Such policies will help fight against monocultural ideologies and enhance indigenous communities' growth by appreciating their languages and culture, and other ideologies. Maddah (2018) also claimed that punishment should be imposed for racial behaviors and activities made in public to hurt others.

Conclusion

Multiculturalism is a major concern in today's globalized societies. The societal problems of lack of cross-cultural understanding include failure to understand and appreciate other people's cultures, norms, and values. It may also lead to communication barriers, cultural shock, ethnocentrism, relativism, and stereotyping, where some people may judge others based on varying cultures, thus causing conflict. As a Jamaican, my cross-cultural experience is that individuals are raised in different nations with diverse cultural norms and traditions. For example, there is a great difference between my culture and that of Guyanese in terms of cuisine, language, or even how people socialize. As a black female, I learned that minority groups are harassed and discriminated against in the United States because of their inferior ethnicity. Through technology, these racial injustices can be reduced since we can share and interact through social media. While reflecting on race, diversity, ethnicity, and stereotype, cross-cultural misunderstanding is a real problem in the US because people of color are considered inferior and

thus discriminated against. This led to the formation of the movement BLM to fight for black people's rights.

In the 21st century, there is an increased number of international students in many institutions, thus making them culturally diverse. Thus, through multicultural education, people can understand and appreciate the differences, which help address issues related to diversity, ethnicity, gender, stereotypes, and sexual orientation. Due to these challenges, it was recommended that educators should be trained in multicultural classrooms. The institutions should as well establish school-wide activities to support multicultural themes and also introduce multicultural teaching practices. Similarly, a multicultural education curriculum should be encouraged, followed by the imposition of policies that promote multicultural education.

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of ASEAN economic community. *Asian Social Science*, *13*(4), 78-92.

Arifin and Hermino reports on the importance of multicultural education for students in the

schools relate with diversity in the era of ASEAN Economic Community. The ASEAN,

which groups eleven countries, is a very diverse region, with different dynamics that are

owned by their respective countries. Regardless all those differences, these eleven

countries share a similar emphasis on human resource development as a key in

developing the whole nation to enter the knowledge-based economy and global

environment.

Atkins, A. (2019). Black lives matter or all lives matter? Color-blindness and epistemic injustice.

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This article discusses the misconceptions of those who use 'All lives matter' to oppose 'Black lives matter' . they use the term because they think. Black lives matter means "Only Black Lives Matters". Exposing the fact that 'Black lives matter' really means 'Black lives matter, too'.

Carney, N. (2016). All lives matter, but so does race: Black lives matter and the evolving role of

social media. *Humanity & Society*, *40*(2), 180-199.

This article demonstrates the ways in which youth of color played an active role in debates that

erupted on Twitter following the tragic deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in

2014. this article examines Twitter as an emerging public sphere and studies the hashtags

"#AllLivesMatter" and "#BlackLivesMatter" as contested signs that represent dominant

ideologies.

Clayton, D. M. (2018). Black lives matter and the civil rights movement: A comparative analysis

of two social movements in the United States. *Journal of Black Studies*, *49*(5), 448-480.

This article discusses the comparative analysis of the BLM Movement and the civil rights

movement (1954-1965) social movements. They both have evolved out of the need to

continue the Black liberation struggle for freedom. The article includes a comparative

analysis in the *New York Times* newspaper during a 2-year period for both social

movements to examine the issue framing of each. Clayton argued that the civil rights

movement framed its issues in a more inclusive manner than BLM. Clayton believed that

BLM should take a lesson from the civil rights movement by boldly taking on an issue

like police brutality of African Americans and expanding the boundaries of something

that is politically unacceptable to being acceptable.

Dey, S. (2016). Importance of Multicultural Education. Retrieved from

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ation_by_Dr_Sudhiranjan_Dey/link/59182eee4585152e19a1f9c8/download

Dey reports that Cross cultural differences can and do impede upon from diplomatic relations

among countries to important revenue making marketing communication of business

organizations and even interpersonal relationships in personal and professional lives

Managing others cross-culturally could be enhanced by learning to become more aware

of "different rules of the game" or different cultural frameworks. The aim is to promote

how to easier build the bridge between different cultural "rules" to build better

communication and better relationships.

Gallagher, R. J., Reagan, A. J., Danforth, C. M., & Dodds, P. S. (2018). Divergent discourse

between protests and counter-protests:# BlackLivesMatter and# AllLivesMatter. *PloS

one*, *13*(4), e0195644.

This article discusses the shooting of various Black namely, Michael Brown by White police

officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, the protest hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has

amplified critiques of extrajudicial killings of Black Americans. In response to

#BlackLivesMatter, other Twitter users have adopted #AllLivesMatter, a counter-protest

hashtag whose content argues that equal attention should be given to all lives regardless

of race.

Hussain, S. (2018). Managing Communication Challenges in Multicultural Organizations.

    International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications (IJMJMC), *4*(2),

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Hussain reviews the literatures on the concept of multicultural organizations. It include the

    various dimensions of communication in a multicultural organization, argues the possible

    challenges of communication in a multicultural organization. And proposes the ways,

    how multicultural organizations manage their communication challenges.

Ince, J., Rojas, F., & Davis, C. A. (2017). The social media response to Black Lives Matter: how

    Twitter users interact with Black Lives Matter through hashtag use. *Ethnic and racial*

    studies, *40*(11), 1814-1830.

This paper focuses on the social media presence of Black Lives Matter (BLM). Specifically, we

    examine how social media users interact with BLM by using hashtags and thus modify

    the framing of the movement. We call this decentralized interaction with the movement

    "distributed framing".

Jee-Lyn García, J., & Sharif, M. Z. (2015). Black lives matter: a commentary on racism and

    public health. *American journal of public health*, *105*(8), e27-e30.

This article discusses the recent non indictments of police officers who killed unarmed Black

    men and popular and scholarly discussions on racial injustices in our legal system,

    racialized police violence, and police (mis)conduct. What is glaringly absent is a public

    health perspective in response to these events. Jae-Lyn Garcia and Sharif goal were not only

    to reiterate how relevant structural racism is in our society, but how critical antiracist

    work is to the core goals and values of public health.

Jenifer, R. D., & Raman, G. P. (2015). Cross-cultural communication barriers in the workplace. *Internafional Journal of Management*, *6*(1), 348-351.

This article discusses today's changing business scenario increasing number of firms extends their business abroad. Cultural awareness shapes how business firms behave in cross-culturally reflected international markets. It is broadly recognized that cultural factors act as invisible barriers in international business communications. Understanding cultural differences is one of the most significant skills for firms to develop in order to have a competitive advantage in international business. Organizations should focus on eliminating the cross cultural communication barriers. Understanding of cultural diversity is the key to effective cross-cultural communications. Firms which fail to understand the cross cultural communication barriers face several issues in many aspects of international business communication. It impacts free trade policies, localization and standardization strategy decisions, etc.