

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CASE FOR REACHING ALL LEARNERS

The possible is richer than the real -Prigogine; but fate is predestined by today's decisions -Author

➔We now have what may be called a 6-hour retarded child—retarded from 9-3, five days a week, solely on the basis of an IQ score, without regard to his adaptive behavior, which may be exceptionally adaptive to the situation and community in which he lives.

-- President's Committee on Mental Retardation. (In the report, "*The Six-Hour Retarded Child: A Report on a Conference on Problems of Children in the Inner City*," August, 1969, p. 2.)

➔A swiftly rising number of American workers at every skill level are in direct competition with workers in every corner of the globe.... Today, Indian engineers make \$7,500 a year against \$45,000 for American engineers with the same qualifications. If we succeed in matching the very high levels of mastery in mathematics and science of these Indian engineers—an enormous challenge for this country—why would the world's employers have to pay us more than they have to pay the Indians to do their work?

--*The New Commission on the Skills of the American Work Force* (In the executive summary of the report, "*Tough Choices or Tough Times*," Dec. 2006, pp. 6-7.)

America's teachers should be commended for several reasons. For lack of space, however, suffice it to note that American society's penchant for personal freedom creates for teachers a clientele of challenging students and parents who are more likely to be non-conformists than pertains in most parts of the world.ⁱ Secondly, America's multicultural society raises peculiar educational challenges, with serious legal and instructional implications. Therefore, teaching in America is possibly one of the most challenging in the world. Yet, teachers do their best to accommodate such challenges. Therefore, notwithstanding the complex issues raised in this book, teachers deserve the praise of society.

Diversity is upon us, and it is increasingly being manifest in rather complex ways. In the past, diversity was conflated with multiculturalism, which was naively perceived as the inclusion of people of color. However, demographic trends indicate that in many schools around the country, Whites are the racial minorities and are benefitting from inclusion policies, as are males.ⁱⁱ Besides, there are increases in the incidence of certain disabling diseases (e.g., autism spectrum disorder [ASD]) that make the case for

the inclusion of all Americans from all backgrounds even more compelling. According to a 2009 study, over 1 in 100 American children ages 3-17 (i.e., of school age) have ASD, and whereas the odds of having ASD were four times higher for boys than girls, non-Hispanic White children had higher chances of having ASD than non-Hispanic Black and multi-racial children.ⁱⁱⁱ Individuals' right to free speech, free exercise of religion, physical and mental ability differences, and personhood (including sexuality), among other things, all contribute to America's diversity. Because diversity is fundamental to a pluralistic America, American classrooms are increasingly likely to have students who need some level of accommodation. Therefore, the obligation to address diversity issues when teaching is inevitable.

The current reality of education in America is that because of diversity issues, it is simply not enough for teachers to have a mastery of content knowledge and general concepts of pedagogy, since even the best of them are likely to fail in diverse school environments for which they are not prepared. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are teacher shortages in "challenging," diverse schools, but an oversupply of teachers in predominantly White, wealthier suburban schools. In an increasingly diverse America, teacher success and student learning increasingly depend on *cross-cultural proficiency*. One must question, however, why cross-cultural proficiency is in short supply across schools.

In his book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport noted that under apartheid rule in South Africa, "the English [were] against the Afrikaner; both [were] against the Jews; all three [were] opposed to the Indian; while all four conspire[d] against the native [B]lack."^{iv} Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* suggests that people from different cultures have different dispositions or social practices.^v As people interact with each other, such differences in cultural dispositions can potentially create distortions of each other's social realities. By several indicators, one may argue that American education has suffered at the hands of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Because of America's peculiar historical past, the multicultural nature of the society, and current educational trends, it has become critical for educators to be more conscious of the *nature of difference* and the *nature of prejudice* in order to be better equipped to teach America's diverse learners.

There are two *schools of thought* regarding the need for multicultural education. The first group, including Diane Ravitch and Dinesh D'Souza, argue that multicultural education is potentially divisive since it emphasizes human differences, as opposed to similarities that create social harmony. They also assert that multicultural education is contrived, and places emphasis on historical and sociological minutiae. On the other hand, advocates of multicultural education, such as James Banks and Molefi Asante assert that since Americans of all backgrounds have contributed to America's progress, their contributions need to be reflected in history, and that such information are legitimate components of

all-American history. They also assert that cultural differences are real and do have an impact on the way students learn and how teachers teach.

One of the *criticisms of multicultural education* and its related term, diversity, is that the concepts are not clearly definable, since human expressions are highly varied. However, many schools in the United States subscribe to Banks and Asante's idea and have a multicultural policy. In some school districts, superintendents and school boards have advisory committees which may include interfaith advisory councils and even equity committees that ensure that the needs of students from all backgrounds are considered during policy-creation.

OUT OF THE MANY, ONE: AMERICA'S DIVERSITY AND SCHOOLING

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. -The Preamble to the United States Constitution

➔ *Would it have a different effect if it were: We the [diverse] people of the United States...?*

Understanding the nature of difference

In their book, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*, Derald and David Sue illustrate the complexity of operating from diverse perspectives. They note, for example, that whereas a European American may believe that Latino or Asian Americans need to be helped to become their own independent individuals, that idea could be potentially viewed as bad counseling, since this perspective potentially pathologizes the values of strong extended family system.^{vi} On the other hand, however, how does one help the Latino or Asian American student to operate successfully in a Western, individualistic society?

Due to the complex scenario raised above, many fields of study recognize the need for the *management of differences*. For example, the fields of psychology and counseling do recognize that cultural differences can pose significant challenges during cross-cultural counseling.^{vii} This challenge is no less in the field of education since teaching is a cultural activity. For example, basing their 1999 book on the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS), Stigler and Hiebert comparatively analyzed dozens of videotapes of eighth grade classrooms from Germany, Japan, and the United States and concluded that because teaching is a cultural activity, the way teachers teach is vital for student achievement.^{viii}

The United States is a multicultural nation of immigrants. In big cities like New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Dallas, there are sections like "Little Italy," "China Town," "Little Havana," and the like. Being a multicultural nation presents a paradox and a bifurcation: the possibility of operating with synergy and becoming stronger as a nation, or becoming divisive and weak. Sociologically speaking, the term "multi-cultural" hints at the possibility of cultural conflicts that need to be resolved by different cultures. It is therefore no wonder that from its historical infancy to the present, differences among various groups of people in the United States have been the subject of discussion. For example, Gerald Gutek noted that from 1870 to 1914 when immigrants were arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe, China, and Japan, the notion of *Americanization* was widespread. There was therefore an obvious pressure on the new, immigrant populations to assimilate into the American culture (often by Anglicizing their names and learning to speak English). This issue is reflective of the notion of *nativism*, whereby early in its history, those born in the United States felt more vested in the nation than the new, "multicultural" immigrants, and treated them as inferior.^{ix}

In the context of schools, some immigrant students, especially those from mono-cultural countries, are likely to arrive with their own perspectives of people from different countries. These students were themselves in the majority cultures and are encountering issues of diversity for the first time. Therefore, although these immigrant students are viewed as a part of minority learners, they may behave or view themselves differently—from the majority psychological point of view—and may not be fully aware of their position as minorities in a new culture.

The concept of *difference* is one of the fundamental challenges in human psycho-sociology. In the American psyche, one of the primary ways *difference* is consciously recognized is through the artificial framework of *racialization* of people. Historically, this is manifest in the use skin color and sensory aversion to dark pigmentation, until this characterization becomes confounding. Gordon Allport illustrated this as follows:

A Hindu woman traveling in a southern state (in the United States) was denied a hotel room by a clerk who noticed her dark skin. The woman thereupon took off her headdress and showed that she had straight hair—and obtained accommodations. To the clerk it was skin color that cued his first behavior. The Hindu lady, with her keener sense of "small differences," forced the clerk to alter his perception, and reclassify her.^x

Allport, however, raised the complexity and the irony of skin color as a means of separation and subsequent discrimination. He noted that many Whites actually "aspire to a Negroid complexion" and use sun-tan lotions and sun-bathing vacations to become as "black as a Negro"—a tribute to a successful summer vacation.^{xi} He argued, therefore, that pigmentation is not the problem, but rather the social stigma

it carries in the American psyche. He noted that within the American society, there are several other factors (such as gender, religion, or ethnicity) that are used to establish *difference*—the notion of the *other*. When the idea of the *other* has been established, it generally leads to the formation of *in-groups* (with shared similarities using any given criteria) and *out-groups* (to indicate *difference*). Once the out-groups have been identified, many possible mechanisms may be used to suppress them, ultimately to the point of their extermination.

Allport indicated that the formation of in-groups and out-groups may breed prejudice and discrimination, and makes the distinction that whereas *prejudice* is a passive feeling or mental state of affairs, *discrimination* is an active process. Prejudice, when acted out during discriminatory practices, becomes the potential fuel for the following series of processes:^{xii}

- ***Antilocution***: When in-groups verbally express antagonism against out-groups. In school, this occurs when teachers talk ill or so-called “share” negative information about students, thereby inducing prejudice in other teachers.
- ***Avoidance***: When in-groups avoid out-groups, even when it is inconvenient to the members of the in-group. In school, this may take the form of some students avoiding others—especially among different racial groups.
- ***Discrimination***: When in-groups find means of excluding members of the out-groups. Examples may include mis-placement and tracking of students who have no educational advocates, or under- or mis-advising capable students about college prospects.
- ***Physical Attack [and Verbal / Psychological Violence]***: In some tough neighborhood schools, physical violence may deter some students from coming to school or going home safely. *Psychological violence* may occur when students are deprived of cultural or historical inclusion in the curriculum or classroom experiences, thus creating for them a feeling of cultural inferiority.
- ***Extermination***: When in-groups find means of eliminating out-groups. Examples may be the ethnic cleansing measures of Hitler against the Jews, the Arabic Sudanese against the Native African Sudanese in Darfur, Sudan, and the decimation of Native American tribes in the U.S.

Teachers, students, parents, and administrators all need to understand the notion of *difference*, whatever form it may take in school. Although not all of Allport’s hostile actions in the series above may be acted out—depending on the intensity of the hostile attitude—practicing teachers understand that it is very easy to have *categories* in schools—via racial differences, good or bad students, well-behaved or ill-behaved students, and honors-caliber or low-performing students. Out-powered students (generally in the minority) who belong to the out-groups may experience different forms of discrimination, physical and

psychological attacks, and even eventual departure or drop-out from school. Rather surreptitiously, *differences*, whether psychological or tangible, can become the fuel for various discriminatory practices in education, leading to the extermination of the dreams of America's children—and ultimately, America's future.

Naturally but unspoken, teachers try to avoid working with students with whom they are not very comfortable—because they do not know or understand them well. For these teachers, such students belong to their out-groups. In order to bridge these *differences*, teachers need to begin with themselves: examine their own differences and prejudices, and therefore become mentally equipped to notice discriminatory practices in their schools when they occur. From this viewpoint, they would be ready to understand and help their own diverse learners.

Why the need for diversity awareness?

In 1969, Wilson Riles, a member of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, noted the following: "Several years ago... they didn't have [the] term 'dropout'.... You simply got out and joined the working class.... Why are we concerned about it today? Because the society cannot absorb large numbers of unskilled people.... There are no dropouts; there are push-outs. The system is calculated to eliminate those who don't make it in the system." (Committee Report, p. 25)

➔What is your personal assessment of his statements, especially the second half? Forty or more years later, to what extent are his statements valid or invalid? What factors are at play?

There are significant differences among U.S. citizens because of differences in their race and ethnicities, countries of origin, religious persuasions, socio-economic status, immigration status, family customs and traditions, and even physical and intellectual (dis)abilities. Besides these factors, different groups or individuals are further varied in terms of the degree of assimilation of the proverbial "American values." Diversity is very visible in the schools. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2007) observes the following:

America's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse; more than one-third of the students in P–12 classrooms are from minority groups. The families of an increasing number of students are immigrants, many with native languages other than English and from diverse religious backgrounds. Growing numbers of students are classified as having disabilities. At the same time, minority teachers are less than 15 percent of the teaching force. As a result, most students do not have the opportunity

to benefit from a diverse teaching force. Teacher candidates need to develop proficiencies for working with students from diverse backgrounds and with exceptionalities to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn. Regardless of whether they live in areas with great diversity, candidates must develop knowledge of diversity in the United States and the world, dispositions that respect and value differences, and skills for working in diverse settings.^{xiii}

Atwater and Riley tell the story of an American teacher who went to teach in the Philippines. Because this teacher viewed the Filipino culture as “foreign,” he prepared himself culturally in order to be effective in the classroom. This same teacher, however, on returning to teach in an American urban school, failed as a teacher.^{xiv} The problem was that this urban school was not viewed as a new cultural frontier, but an extension of the American culture. Therefore, he did not prepare for the urban sub-culture.

The great majority of the graduates from America’s colleges of education are middle-class White females,^{xv} although this demographic has shifted a little through a more aggressive, diversity-oriented recruitment in some alternative teacher certification programs.^{xvi} Although teacher candidates do their best to teach in predominantly-minority schools, they generally encounter significant cross-cultural challenges in their initial years. If these challenges are not addressed quickly, they contribute to the high **teacher attrition** rates in diverse schools.^{xvii} Unfortunately, these teachers, their students, and society pay a social, economic, and academic price if they are not prepared to teach in diverse schools. From one perspective, these teachers would have wasted their time acquiring an education that does not prepare them for real-life students in the marketplace. The students lose content-readiness since their culturally-unprepared teachers oftentimes leave their jobs in the middle of the semester and may not have a content-ready teacher for a long time. Ultimately, the nation and its citizens suffer by having under-educated citizenry.

Not surprisingly, teacher attrition is higher in minority and low-income schools due to lack of resources. Since poor school districts cannot afford to fail too many students owing to inadequate fiscal resources, many struggling minority students are moved on through the educational system without necessarily acquiring basic literacy skills for a good future. It is in this light that Wear called this kind of educational enterprise for minority students “pathways to nowhere.”^{xviii} When unprepared teachers leave the classroom, society loses, as her human resources (teachers) are underused. School districts (and ironically the poorer ones) therefore spend inordinate sums of money to keep on recruiting new teachers only to lose them again in a few years. Human resources estimates such as that of Fitz-enz indicate that it is very costly to lose good employees and have to keep on recruiting new ones, train them, and help them become optimized for their new positions.^{xix}

High school dropouts are more likely to end up as less productive citizens and consumers of free social services. Worse still, it costs about twice the average annual salary of a minimum wage worker to house a prisoner per year in the federal penal system.^{xx} It is in the light of such educational needs that certain colleges of education are refocusing their candidates' expertise to better meet the needs of urban and minority students.^{xxi}

ⁱ Charles B. Hutchison (2005). *Teaching in America: A cross-cultural guide for international teachers and their employers*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

ⁱⁱ See: Lorenzo L. Esters & David Shulenburg. (2009). Addressing the American Male Imperative in Higher Education: Implications for Public and Research Universities. An Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Discussion Paper. Retrieved, November 11, 2009, from <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1995>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Michael D. Kogan, Stephen J. Blumberg, Laura A. Schieve, Coleen A. Boyle, James M. Perrin, Reem M. Ghandour, Gopal K. Singh, Bonnie B. Strickland, Edwin Trevathan, & Peter C. van Dyck. Prevalence of Parent-Reported Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children in the US, 2007. *Pediatrics* (Online edition). Retrieved October 5, 2009 from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2009-1522v1>.

^{iv} Gordon W. Allport (1958). *The Nature of Prejudice* (Abridged). Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books. (Pp. 3-4).

^v Bourdieu, Pierre (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

^{vi} Derald Sue and David Sue. (2002). *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*. New York: John Wiley.

^{vii} Helms, J.E. (1984). Toward a theoretical explanation of the effects of race on counseling: A African American and White model. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 12(4), 153-163.

^{viii} James W. Stigler and James Hiebert (1999). *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*. NY: The Free Press.

^{ix} Gerald L. Gutek (1986). *Education in the United States: An historical perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

^x Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, p. 132.

^{xi} Ibid, p. 134.

^{xii} Ibid.

^{xiii} National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards. Teacher Education Standards. Available at: <http://www.ncate.org/public/unitStandardsRubrics.asp?ch=4>

^{xiv} Atwater, M. & Riley, J. P. (1993). Multicultural science education: Perspectives, definitions, and research agenda. *Science Education* 77(6): 661-668. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

^{xv} National Center for Educational Statistics. (2003). *Digest of Educational Statistics 2002*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

^{xvi} Linda Brannan and Robert Reichardt (2002). Alternative teacher education: *A Review of Selected Literature*. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). Retrieved December 21, 2007, from http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/TeacherPrepRetention/5021RR_4007_AltLitReview.pdf.

^{xvii} Linda Darling-Hammond. (1999). *Solving the Dilemmas of Teacher Supply, Demand, and Standards: How We Can Ensure a Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teacher for Every Child*. NY: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

^{xviii} B. Wear. (2002). High Schools Called “Pathways to Nowhere.” *Education Week* March 6, p. 16. As cited in Randy Moore, “A’s and F’s.” *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 34 (3) 6-7.

^{xix} J. Fitz-enz. (1997). It Costs to Lose Good Employees. *Workforce*, 76, 50-51.

^{xx} Based on 2001 U.S. Department of Justice estimates. (See Chapter 1 for more on this, and other related data.)

^{xxi} L. Brokaw. (2004). Paving the Way for Teachers to Stay: A Tufts Program Brings New Ideas to the Challenging Job of Training, and Keeping, Urban Teachers. *Tufts Magazine*, Fall 2004, 24-29.