Un Mundo Multicultural - Un Hecho Inevitable. La Búsqueda de Unidad en Diversidad

A Multicultural World - An Inevitable Fact. The Search for Unity in Diversity

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RESUMEN: Este artículo es una compilación literaria con una breve contribución de la autora, quien se identifica como Persona de Tercera Cultura (TCK). Esta contribución plantea la afirmación de que un mundo multicultural (MW), al constituir el resultado de la globalización y de la evolución natural de la cultura humana, es inevitable. El propósito de esta compilación es la apreciación de la diferencia dentro de la co-existencia de los seres humanos. Se tiene la intención de iluminar la visión de acoger diversidad y diferencias como principios fundamentales para alcanzar la unidad en diversidad. Por lo tanto, un cambio de paradigma cultural abarcado por la estrategia transformativa de clasificación cultural se encamina hacia una sociedad mundial multicultural de mente globalizada y valorable.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Personas de terceras culturas, iceberg cultural, estrategia transformativa, diferencias positivas, globalización multicultural.

ABSTRACT: This article is a literary compilation, with a brief contribution from the author, who identifies as a Third Culture Kid (TCK). This contribution deals with the statement that a multicultural world (MW) is inevitable as the result of globalization and of the natural evolution of human culture. The issue human co-existence , in which differences are appreciated, is the purpose of this assembling. A cultural paradigm shift, encompassed by the transformative approach of cultural classification, is intended to shed light on a vision of embracing diversity and differences as a fundamental principle to attain unity in diversity, therefore moving towards a valuable, globally-minded multicultural world society.

KEY WORDS: Third Culture Kids, Cultural Iceberg, Transformative Approach, Positive Differences, multicultural globalization.

INTRODUCTION

This coming together of people from all corners of the world, this global movement, intensified by circumstances, and also known as globalization, has led to an unprecedented, mega-dimensional gathering of diverse people. Seen on the pages of historical happenings of a migrating humanity, the clash of cultural groups has taken paths of unacceptance of differences.

The author's multicultural nature has been the intrinsic motivation for this article. She intends to shed light on a paradigm shift towards a constructive concept of unity in diversity and how this synergetic fusion is the key ingredient for an evolving, genuinely multicultural world.

1. BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout social-political movements in the 60s & 70s, Western society was faced with the conception of Multicultural Education (ME) derived from a reaction to the existing dispute about social class, ethnicity, gender and education. By the 90s, ME evolved toward the tackling of the educational urgencies of a society that endured a struggle with the realization that it was not a series of monocultures, but rather a mélange of numerous cultures (Gorski and Covert, 2000).

This mixture of cultures has been manifested in a certain segment of the world's population referred to as Third Culture Kids (TCK). David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken (1999) have defined TCKs as an outcome of human movement: a person who spent his/her developmental years in a variety of distinct cultural environments outside the parents' culture.

As a Third Culture Kid (TCK) myself, growing up and being educated in three different continents/countries (Germany, Iran and Ecuador), from personal experience I can confirm confirm that the level and fervor of discriminatory acts in the mid-70s through the mid-80s, based on color, nationality and religion (even if at different levels of intensity or for different reasons) were, substantially present and pursued in all

the three regions. Any kind of fact that could be classified as different, was usually a synonym for unacceptable: therefore mostly ruling out, at first, the possibility of respect for diversity. Defining ME as a method to raise respect for diversity will help broaden the panorama to a structural solution of which we are presently in need.

2. DEFINITIONS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Several definitions of ME have arisen from a variety of debates and disagreements about what the defining role of multicultural education is. The focus given in this article is one that encompasses ideas of human values, transformation and a paradigm shift towards a vision of viewing diversity as an elevating human honor. As human beings, we have the honor and privilege of wearing gowns that embellish us with high standards of beliefs and behavior towards the main focus concerning a true multicultural world: unity in diversity.

Grant (2010) tunes into the same reflections by drawing toward questions that lead to defining multicultural education in a context of assigning privileges, inclusive curriculum and advocates for terminology by means of higher values such as equity and social justice. Grant is not alone on this path. Since the 90s, multicultural education has been in a permanent state of evolution both in theory and in practice. One theoretical definition referring to the area of schooling transformation was made by Gorski (2000):

Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals and social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally (p. 1).

This brings out the significance of the explanation given by Tiedt & Tiedt (2002) which points out how ME is consistently associated with a belief in the transformation of individuals:

An education that is multicultural is comprehensive and fundamental to all educational endeavors. Given an understanding of the nature of human differences and the realization that individuals approach

concepts from their own perspectives, advocates of education that is multicultural are consistent in their belief that respect for diversity and individual difference is the concept's central ingredient (p. 15).

In general terms, ME definitions are discussed by authors such as: Hanvey (1976), Cates (2004), Seeberg and Minick (2012) and noted interest from writers such as Hofstede (2002). However, to remain focused, in practice these definitions are and need to be categorized into two approaches: One pursuit made by Ladson-Billings (1994) along with a parallel approach by Robert Kohl (1996).

Ladson-Billings assertively divided multicultural reality into the following two categories: Multicultural Festival Approach and Transformative Approach. The Multicultural Festival Approach focuses on nations' celebrations. Culture, in this case, discusses the following aspects at a visible and superficial level which delights the tourists' eyes: Food/Spices, Visual Arts, Architecture, Games, Flags, Music, Dresses/Costumes, Dances/Performing Arts and Festivals, Religious Traditions. The Transformative Approach, a thorough icon, merges into the essential purpose of ME and devises an individual as well as a collective realization that justice and peace in the world can be achieved through unity in cultural diversity.

On the same page, Robert Kohl (mentioned by Pollock et. al) presents, as a parallel approach to the aforementioned categories, the Cultural Iceberg Theory. Important to mention, however, is that Ernest Hemingway had originated and used the Iceberg Theory for his literary purposes, and, since then, it has been a basic theory applicable to sundry spheres of knowledge including cultural realities (therefore Cultural Iceberg Theory). This, in turn, awakens us to the visibility of cultural behavior and the covert areas of living cultural concepts so hidden that often even in-born individuals are unaware of their withheld presence. The Cultural Iceberg has also been suggested by L. Robert Kohl according to Pollock et. al (1999) in their book The Third Culture Kid Experience.

The two major divisions in culture that the adaptation of the Iceberg Theory points out are Surface Culture and Invisible/Deep Culture. The hidden part of the Cultural Iceberg is of a particular fascination. Culture is "a system of shared assumptions, beliefs, and values" (Heibert, 1983) and not an instinctive behavior even if the unawareness of its presence might make it seem like it is instinct-based. However,

it is learned and adopted from role model conduct of microsystem members. Despite that, as humans belonging to a particular cultural group, we are unaware of countless typical conducts that are absolutely natural to us. On hand are some of an indeterminate number of concepts that refer to unspoken rulings:

- Concept of courtesy
- Conversational patterns
- Beauty
- Non-verbal communication
- Sense of interpersonal respect
- Awareness of others
- Cleanliness
- Religiousness
- Obedience to rules
- Nationalism
- Animal treatment
- Voice volume
- Concept of time

Deep-Culture, with its aforementioned components, is the object of current studies, whereas Surface Culture is considered to be part of former lessons. This is exemplified through the proven, worldwide successful and to-be-followed model of a cutting-edge educational system established in Sweden (Nordgren, 2002). This Nordic country, acknowledging the current demands of a globalizing world, has left Surface Culture to attend to Traditional Multicultural needs whilst accentuating the integration of Deep Culture into a Modern Multicultural world.

3. MODERN MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Traditional and modern multicultural concepts are very much tied to what globalization and its implications represent. Regarding globalization, the bestselling author, Samuel Huntington (2003) in The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order talks about the vanishing idea of "The West and the Rest" with which he underlines that globalization has made the world too complex to be

envisioned into simple divisions such as economic divisions of North and South, and culturally, divisions of East and West.

In the days when the West and the Rest were defining quotes, i.e. the 60s to the 80s, traditional ME was based on Folk Culture or Festival Multicultural Approach. However, these days, educators as well as educational institutions are striving for a fresh concept of modern ME which goes beyond food and flags. A transformative concept is charged with an innovative approach towards learning about other cultures – an approach in charge of developing students' cognitive as well as affective/emotional levels. Former ideas of ME were surely limited to a getting-to-know-them spectrum, with 'them' meaning other cultures.

Nowadays, educators are focusing more and more on adopting the transformative approach, deepening into the reflective part of the contents of the cultural iceberg which has lead, and is leading towards, developing a standard of World Citizenship and globally-minded people (Skelton, Wigford, Harper, Reeves, 2002).

Dewey (cited by Aleman, 2001) expounded that Multiculturalism is a way of thinking, a way of learning, which places it on a platform of modus operandi. In order to survive in this post-modern world, educational institutions fall into a need to reformulate the traditional concept of culture by creating a paradigm shift into the post-modern terms of multicultural approach. When institutions follow the idea of Dewey, a multicultural concept becomes the developed term of culture. That is to say that multiculturality is the development of culture. It is adjusting to the needs of the interdependent world which this globalizing planet is calling for. This, of course, does not undermine the importance of each unique nation's cultural richness and behavior, which is the foundation of the existence of a multicultural society and the essence that allows for the creation of and evolution towards a multicultural world based on the principle of unity in diversity.

4. EVOLUTION OF A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

When talking about the evolution of a multicultural world, we would need to expand our horizons from biological to economic points of view, from socio-philosophical to historical perspectives. The simplistic human world is turning, day by day, into a complex

multicultural world. In his book The Moral Animal, Robert Wright (1994) had the vision and explained eloquently how biological evolution facilitates social evolution. He stated:

There is a parallel between human evolution (progress in civilization) and biological evolution because biological evolution also evinces ever greater levels of complexity. Biological evolution leads to diversity...whether this rush to complexity and ever greater levels of integration is progress and not nightmare, is certainly open to question. Many social theorists are not so sanguine about where things are going while still others challenge the orthodox conviction that the world is headed toward globalization and integration (p. 23).

Wright elucidates further that the process of globalization from a biological point of view demands that human beings evolve. He is convinced that there is a repetition of happenings. Past events underwent the same process of what is occurring in the current world. Because humans biologically evolve, says Nordgren, it is therefore natural and inevitable to evolve into a global world. Current objectives are not adjusted to the needs of a globalized world. Educators and educational institutions need to reconsider their educational objectives in order to be part of the natural evolution of globalization (Nordgren, 2002).

At the conference of Biological Matrix of Human Life, Maturrana, social theorist, shares Wright's idea. Maturrana (2005) considers globalization from a socio-philosophical point of view as "a flow of present change." He further explains that globalization "is not a forced process, but just one that is as natural as life itself." He draws a possible calm and peaceful picture of globalization by considering it a normal transition in human society. Simultaneously, at the same conference, Castells (2005), a sociologist, mentioned that globalization is a system of global theory of an interactive network which he described as an establishment of social structures that is led by human beings becoming a global network, in which each person and every material presentation is interconnected. External network existence does not evidence any kind of progress which directs our thought towards the suggestion that globalization is not just an option, but rather a fortress of survival.

Harvard historian Coatsworth (2004) connects with globalization from a historical point of view by considering it as a provider of welfare. Coatsworth compares cycles of globalization in the Western

hemisphere through the discussion of historical events of the opening of the transoceanic conquest (1492-1565) and the largest involuntary/ forced migration of Africans to the New World (1650-1790). He mentions how Muslim conquerors played the part of international messengers of discoveries in one country and diseminators of these disvoveries+ other nations. Through their conquests from the Middle East to Spain and as far as India, the Muslims contributed vastly to the expansion of discoveries and inventions as global traders.

A minor insight into the different perspectives shows how the process of globalization/global movement has historically been present and socially analyzed through human and collective evolution. This global movement has been the essential and primary beginning of a multicultural world. From my TCK perspective, a multicultural world is a circled fact: third culture kids are the result of the global movement as well as the undeniable statement that the world is moving towards a globalism that is in dire need of capturing a focal factor in order not to fail; adaptation and unfolding of the authentic form of unity in diversity per se.

5. THE PRINCIPLE OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY – A KEY INGREDIENT TO ACHIEVE A VALUABLE MULTICULTURAL WORLD

The search to make cultural heterogeneity work - considering the diversity of colors, shapes, skills, characters, traditions, beliefs, attitudes, historic baggage and roles together - as a multifunctional team towards a common, value-filled goal of efficient co-existence is, beyond question, not a mono-factor pursuit. In other words, peacefully reaching successful co-living as a multicultural world society implies a notorious challenge for humanity.

Furthermore, Mukherjee (2014) recaps a universal agreement that one of the fundamental challenges of our times is that of managing cultural diversity. In her book Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies, the Indian Experience, she illustrates how ethnic conflict resolution is dependent on a new paradigm to our understanding of Multiculturalism and decentralizing from conventional frameworks.

Following Mukherjee's line of argument, unity in diversity is the sine qua non to a successful multicultural society. As expounded above,

humanity has been on the road towards a multicultural world. It is a trip that, figuratively speaking, has no turning back. This does not suggest anything negative. On the contrary, it is a journey, which, if managed within a framework of adapting diversity the way it could be intended, would bring nothing but favorable constructive progress to humanity. Pineschi (2012) specifies how the importance of preserving diversity is also of major concern when reaching legal points of view:

The protection of cultural diversity is an essential aspect of the human dimension of cultural heritage. At the international level, the indivisibility of the protection of cultural diversity ("a defining characteristic of humanity") and the respect for human dignity, on the one hand, and the strict interconnection between the protection of fundamental freedoms and the defense of cultural heritage and cultural diversity, on the other, are generally recognized (p. 29).

A dignifying co-existence of the human race was opened at the beginning of the 19th century. Baha'u'llah (1819-1892), the founder of the Baha'i Faith, manifested the concept of unity in diversity through a comparison to the human body:

There is, indeed, no other model in phenomenal existence to which we can reasonably look. Human society is composed not of a mass of merely differentiated cells but of associations of individuals, each of whom is endowed with intelligence and will; nevertheless, the modes of operation that characterize man's biological nature illustrate fundamental principles of existence. Chief among these is that of unity in diversity (p. 2).

Evidently the issue does not lie in differences or diversity per se. It lies in the way and manner in which humanity deals with these differences. Page (2007), in his book The Difference, asserts that each human being has unique preferences. He divides these preferences into two categories: a. Fundamental preferences (Outcomes) and b. Instrumental preferences (Procedures): Fundamental preferences refer to the goal that needs to be reached and instrumental preference is the path chosen to attain that goal. Page, through a thorough explanation, leads us to see that the diversity of preference existing in each human being is not of negative connotation. He believes that we all head towards common values and pursue them in diverse ways. This diversity of actioning (instrumental preference) is what enriches

collective outcome, therefore streaming into the consistently assertive conception of positive consideration of differences (Page, 2007).

Looking a fraction further into human rights and cultural diversity, according to Lenzerini and Borelli (2012), there is no place for a reductionist approach when it comes to cultural diversity. People in multicultural communities are all entitled to have equal rights. These are given by the myriad connotations of the principal elements of human dignity which are linked to universal respect for human rights.

6. CONCLUSION

When we look at today's increasingly globalized society and the advances we have certainly made since even the 80s in reducing discrimination and doing away with the view that that which is different is erroneous, we can appreciate the evolution that society is most likely undergoing is towards a multicultural world. Here too we can observe how former techniques of multicultural education, such as the festival approach, are simply outmoded for the deeper understanding of other cultures required today's world. Only techniques such as the Transformative or Deep-Culture Approach can afford us the next step in the further appreciation of others that is so crucial to building a valuable multicultural world.

However, we cannot forget the importance of safeguarding the uniqueness of each and every nation; the uniqueness which is itself our humanity. Unity in diversity for the creation of a multicultural world is not only the natural progression of our civilization, but a necessary step in safeguarding our future. If we remember this maxim, the transition is all the more likely to be the peaceful transition the aforementioned authors discussed. To understand one another deeply, and to appreciate the uniqueness of every nation and individual whilst coming together is the bedrock of a multicultural world and the best way to avoid the bigotry, distrustfulness, and divisiveness of the past.

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