

Cultural Diversity and the Challenges of Teaching Multicultural Classes in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

This study is a meta-analysis of the recent literature on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Extant literature on this issue has shown that teaching students coming from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds seems to pose serious threats to teachers at different levels of education. Using a quantitative content analysis, this paper examines twenty studies and book chapters in the field of multicultural education so as to identify the major challenges of the multicultural classroom. The aim is also to identify and describe the most effective competencies that teachers need to be better equipped to survive in today's "fast-changing world". The findings of this study show that teaching CLD students requires special training, extra competencies, and "culturally responsive" pedagogies. The findings can also be of help to university teachers as universities today are becoming more and more multicultural all over the world. Finally, the results can advance knowledge about the issue of teaching CLD students both in the university environment and in the field of research.

Keywords: cultural diversity, ethnicity, multicultural education, teacher competencies

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Introduction

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the rise of globalization in the last decade of the twentieth century had tremendous effects on education all over the world as cultural encounters became more frequent and immigration reached a high peak. By the end of the twentieth century, schools started witnessing an important change, for most of the classrooms turned into a “small village” with “culturally and linguistically diverse students” (Den Brok & Levy, 2005). However, multicultural classes largely differ from monocultural ones because they require teachers with “additional” competencies and skills (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

Studies in the field of multicultural education show that effective teaching of multicultural classes is unquestionably one of the biggest challenges that teachers face today (Den Brok & Levy, 2005; Howard, 1999; Jeevanantham, 2001). McAllister and Irvine (2002), for example, argue that teachers in multicultural classrooms “face increasing challenges in providing an appropriate classroom environment and high standards of instruction that foster the academic achievement of all students, particularly students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 3). Other researchers uphold that teaching multicultural classes today requires teachers with extra competencies and skills at the level of interaction, classroom management, and assessment (Chamberlain, 2005; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2012).

This review, therefore, focuses on the studies that have been conducted since the beginning of the twenty-first century on the multicultural classroom. More precisely, focus is on what these studies have found on the challenges of the multicultural classroom and the required teacher competencies to become more effective.

Rationale

This study has been triggered by several reasons. First and foremost, understanding cultural diversity is today one of the most important requirements in the educational context across the globe as classrooms are becoming more diverse and more multicultural. These types of classrooms have now become very common in some countries like the United States, Canada, and Europe. However, this does not mean that this issue is not of concern in other countries because the world is becoming “smaller” and people are moving and immigrating in all directions (Den Brok & Levy, 2005). Second, unlike monocultural classes where students have a lot of things in common, multicultural classes present more challenges and require teachers with special skills to communicate and interact more effectively with their students. Third, teachers in non-western countries should now be better prepared to cope with multicultural classes mainly at the university level where the number of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students is on the rise. Finally, in spite of the important upsurge of interest in multicultural education by numerous researchers, different aspects of the field are still either largely unexplored or need more scrutiny (Banks, 2013; Ennaji, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The primary concern of this contribution is to review the literature on multicultural education so as to shed light on the challenges that teachers face and the competencies they need to effectively operate within “culturally and linguistically diverse” classrooms. More precisely, this contribution is an attempt to identify, understand, and describe the major challenges that arise when teaching students coming from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The second main objective is to identify a set of competencies that can help teachers in countries where

multicultural education is still largely ignored (e.g., Morocco) become more effective in the multicultural classroom.

Research Questions

The present study addresses the challenges of the multicultural classroom and the competencies that twenty-first century teachers need to develop through the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the challenges of teaching the multicultural classroom in the twenty-first century?

RQ2: What competencies do twenty-first century teachers need to be more effective in the multicultural classroom?

Definitions of Terms

Culture: Culture has been largely defined by scholars from different disciplines. Samovar and Porter (2001), for instance, define culture as follows:

the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (Samovar & Porter, 2001, p. 8)

Multiculturalism: Parekh (2006) upholds that multiculturalism is not about differences of identity or “individual choices”; it is rather about differences related to other elements such as culture, history, and belief system. He defines multiculturalism as follows:

Multiculturalism is not about difference and identity *per se* but about those [differences] that are embedded in and sustained by culture; that is, a body of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of people understand themselves and the world and organize their individual and collective lives. Unlike differences that spring from individual choices, culturally differences carry a measure of authority and are patterned and structured by virtue of being embedded in a shared and historically inherited system of meaning and significance. (Parekh, 2006, pp. 2-3)

Multicultural classroom: For Tartwijk, Den Brok, Veldman, and Wubbels (2009), “Multicultural classrooms are characterized by a diversity of ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, and cultural traditions” (p. 453).

Multicultural education: According to Banks and Banks (2010), “Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (p. 3).

Methods

This study focuses on research related to the challenges that teachers face and the competencies they need for effective teaching in the multicultural classroom. The main objective is to understand and describe what the literature has found so far about these obstacles and competencies. The ultimate goal is to present what recent studies offer as solutions to these problems all over the world and their suggestions in the field of research.

Sampling Procedure

In this review, twenty articles and book chapters from the literature have been selected as a sample for data gathering and analysis. Most of the selected sources are articles from well-known journals and books on multicultural education. Different criteria have been used in the selection of these documents. The criteria used in the selection process are the following:

- Articles from Google Scholar data base: (Keywords, date of publication, and subject area have been used in the search for sources).
- Indexed journals: Only articles from indexed journals have been selected for quality and reliability reasons.
- Articles cited in several studies.
- Chapters from books by scholars in multicultural education.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data relies on two main criteria. First, the findings of the selected documents are used to explore and understand the main challenges that research has found so far in the field of multicultural education. Second, frequencies are used to identify the major competencies that twenty-first century teachers need to develop to be more effective in the multicultural classroom.

Findings

The findings of this study are divided into two sections. The first section is about the findings on the challenges of the multicultural classroom. The second section is on the additional competencies that the multicultural classroom requires today for effective teaching.

The challenges of the Multicultural Classroom

Since its beginning in the 1960's, research on multicultural education has highlighted the numerous obstacles that infest the multicultural classroom (Banks, 1993). However, studies conducted in the beginning of the twenty-first century show that these challenges are increasing. A brief analysis of these studies indicates that the most important obstacles that multicultural education teachers face today include the following: (1) ethnicity, (2) racism/inequality, (3) different epistemologies/ways of knowing, and (4) different learning styles.

Challenge 1: Ethnicity

Ethnicity has been identified by several studies as one of the central obstacles that can severely damage teacher-student interaction and communication in the multicultural classroom (Den Brock & Levy, 2005; Den Brok, Levy, Rodriguez, & Wubbels, 2002; Den Brok, Levy, Wubbels, & Rodriguez, 2003; Gay & Howard, 2000; McAlister & Irvine, 2000). These studies used different "indicators" to measure the effects of ethnicity on students' perceptions. Some of these indicators included parents' and students' country of birth, "the length of residence in the country", and the "language spoken at home" (Den Brok & Levy, 2005, p. 76).

In 2005, Den Brok and Levy reviewed the literature on the effects of students' and teachers' ethnic backgrounds on three areas: (1) how students perceive their teachers' behavior, (2) how teachers treat individual students, and (3) and students' achievement. The reviewed studies were conducted in different countries such as the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, and some other countries from Asia (e.g., Singapore, Brunei, and Taiwan). The authors concluded that ethnicity might have serious effects on both interaction and achievement

if inadequately treated by teachers. Figure 1 below summarizes the strong connection between students' ethnic background, teachers' ethnic background, students' perception, and students' achievement:

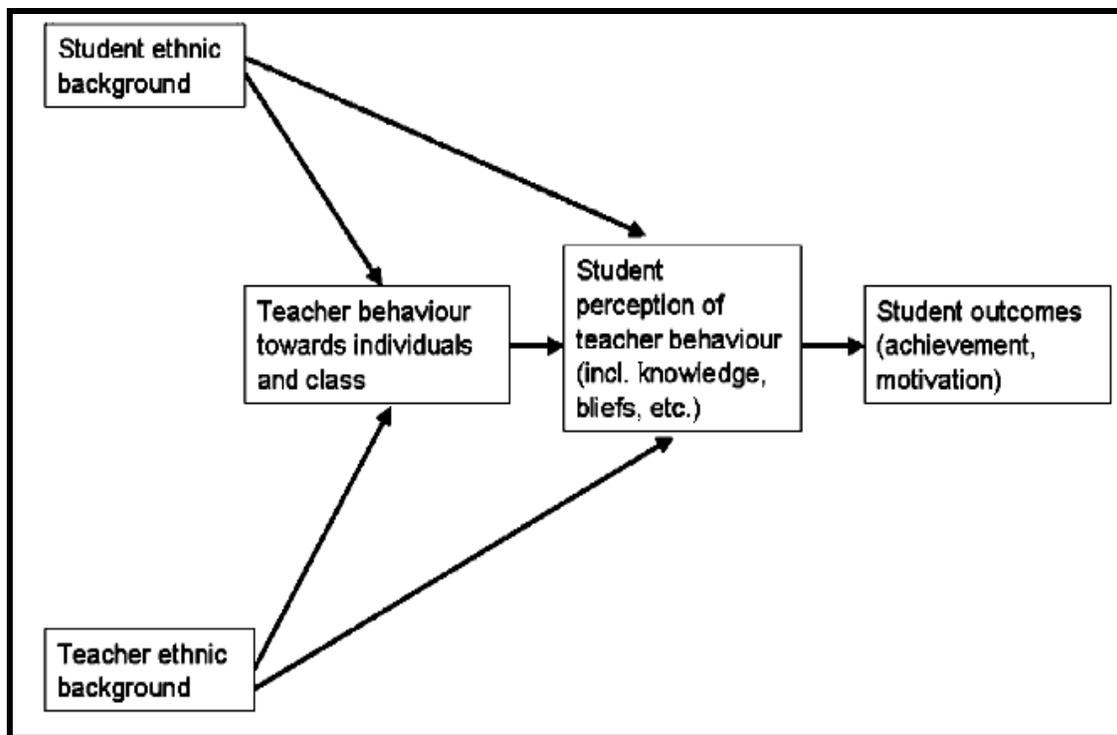


Figure 1. Effect of Ethnicity on Students' Perceptions and Outcomes (Den Brok & Levy, 2005, p. 75)

Obviously, then, the effect of ethnicity on both students' and teachers' perceptions plays an important role in the multicultural classroom. In other words, teachers need to be aware of the role of ethnicity in the classroom to avoid its negative impacts on the teaching-learning process.

Challenge 2: Racism and Inequality

At least a quarter of the studies in this review stress the serious impact of racism and inequality on the multicultural classroom (e.g., Banks, 2013; Gay & Howard, 2000; Howard, 1999; Sleeter, 2001; Sleeter, 2005; Wells, 2008). Up to 1990, students of color in the United States had been considered as “problematic”, “lazy”, and “mentally deficient”. Yet, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a major change in the United States as schools became more “culturally responsive” and teachers started to take students' cultural differences and “equity” into consideration (Schmeichel, 2012).

Surprisingly, some of the studies in this review have discovered that in spite of all the efforts that have been made so far, racism “is still persisting” as a major obstacle in the multicultural classroom. In 2001, Sleeter found out that the “presence of whiteness” at all levels of education in American schools was “overwhelming”. Sleeter (2001) observes that “In predominantly white programs, not only are classmates mostly white, but so are professors and teachers in the field” (p. 102). In the author's opinion, changing the curriculum, using alternative

programs, preparing teachers “for culturally diverse schools”, and shifting the focus of research about teacher preparation can lead to better results in the future (Sleeter, 2001).

In a study on “good teaching” and “equity”, Schmeichel (2012) also warns against the persistence of racism and inequality in American schools. Schmeichel (2012) concludes that “While culturally responsive scholars strived to situate that difference positively, their work simultaneously situated white, middle class beliefs, behaviours, and cultural strategies as the norm, the centre of the continuum” (p. 222).

Challenge 3: Different Epistemologies/“Ways of Knowing”

Most of the studies in this review recognize the tremendous effect that culture has on people’s “ways of knowing” or epistemologies. Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008), for instance, state that each culture guides the ways people know and learn. These “ways of knowing” include “how people organize their world cognitively through language and other symbol systems” (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 3). They also include how people “approach learning and problem solving, how they construct knowledge and how they pass it on from generation to generation” (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 3).

Other researchers think that different epistemologies and ways of knowing are the result of people’s different world views (Hofstede, 1991). For Madjidi and Restoule (2008), worldviews can be divided into two broad categories: the western world view and the indigenous world view. The main characteristics of each world view are summarized in the following table:

Table 1 Western and Indigenous Worldviews (adapted from Madjidi & Restoule, 2008)

Western Worldview:	Indigenous Worldview:
- Linear	- Cyclical
- Objective	- Subjective
- Secular	- Spiritual
- Industrial	- Nature/context-based
- Fragmentary	- Holistic

The results of several studies make it clear that when the teacher is unaware that the multicultural classroom is not homogeneous and approaches the students as if they all had the same “ways of Knowing”, some of his/her students feel at a loss and become less motivated (Banks, 2013; Samovar, Porter, MacDaniel, & Roy, 2012). Often, these students develop feelings of inferiority and carelessness as they find themselves in a learning context that is totally strange to how they have been socialized within their families and communities.

Challenge 4: Learning Styles

Different scholars in this study emphasize the importance of understanding students’ learning styles in the multicultural classroom (e.g., Banks, 2013; Samovar, Porter, MacDaniel, & Roy, 2012). Tileston and Darling (2008), for instance, note that “Context speaks to the culture of

the students. How do they learn best – individually or in groups? What world view do they bring from their culture, and what kind of classroom will best reflect that culture? What is the role of socialization in their culture?” (p. 9).

In Gay’s (2002) study, it is argued that most teachers have just a superficial knowledge of their students’ learning styles. For Gay (2002), teachers’ ignorance about these cultural factors often stems from their sources of information: “What they think they know about the field is often based on superficial or distorted information conveyed through popular culture, mass media, and critics” (p. 107).

Teacher Competencies in the 21st century

The studies in this review unanimously agree that teaching multicultural classes can challenge even veteran teachers. Throughout these studies, the authors reason that to teach in these classes, teachers need not only to have a clear understanding of intercultural communication, but also to be equipped with an “arsenal” of competencies and skills (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Competency 1: Understanding Yourself

Four studies uphold that to become effective in the multicultural classroom, a teacher is required to start by understanding himself/herself (Chamberlain, 2005; Gay & Howard, 2000; McAlister & Irvine, 2000; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2012). To understand the self, teachers’ “cultural biases” and “ethnic prejudices” should be thoroughly analyzed before asking students to do so (Gay & Howard, 2000).

Often, multicultural teachers do not know that understanding cultural diversity starts by, first, understanding their cultural background (Chamberlain, 2005). In general, a major mistake that teachers make is that they start by their students’ cultural background and fail to understand their own. Chamberlain (2005) explains the effects of such mistake as follows:

Too often, we think that understanding cultural differences begins by looking at the culture of our students. However, if we are not able to understand our own culture, we will view our value system as the normative and ‘right’ way of understanding and acting, and others as ‘abnormal’ and ‘deviant’. (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 205)

Competency 2: Developing Intercultural/ Competence

In this review, most of the studies (14 studies) stress the pivotal role that intercultural/multicultural competence plays in the multicultural classroom. Developing intercultural/multicultural competence requires teachers (1) “to become aware of culture clashes”, (2) “to develop knowledge of dimensions of cultural variability,” (3) “to become knowledgeable about how culture influences the teaching/learning process”, (4) “to hold high expectations for all students”, and (5) “to resist the blame game” (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 206). Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2012) explain that this competency is related to developing different ways of “perceiving”, “believing”, “evaluating”, and “doing”. These scholars think that interculturality/multiculturally competent teachers can:

- Recognize, when planning lessons and other classroom activities, the cultural differences in how students see, know, and interrelate with knowledge and the classroom environment.
- Understand how their own culture might differ from those of their students.

- Plan activities that will help students to understand cultural differences, the causes of cultural conflict, and the relationship between cultural differences and social inequalities. (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2012, p. 348)

These findings support the advances of intercultural communication researchers who generally uphold that intercultural/multicultural competence cannot be gained overnight (Hall, 1959; Hall, 1976; Samovar & Porter, 2003; Scollon & Scollon, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Adler, Rosenfeld, and Towne (1995), for instance, acknowledge that intercultural communication competence is not an easy task even for those communicators who possess some important skills such as “genuine concern for others”, “the ability to empathize”, and “self-monitoring”.

Competency 3: Becoming Empathic

The majority of the studies in this review deal with empathy either directly or indirectly. Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy, (2012) define empathy as “the ability to assume the role of another and, by imagining the world as the other sees it, predict accurately the motives, attitudes, feelings, and needs of the other” (p. 354). Accordingly, empathic teachers are not only required to step into the shoes of their students and see things as they see them, but also need to communicate in ways that do not cause “dissonance” with these students.

For Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2012), there are at least four elements that can help a teacher become “an empathic communicator”: (1) to “communicate a supportive climate”, (2) to “attend to a student’s nonverbal behavior as well as his or her verbal communication”, (3) to “accurately reflect and clarify feelings”, and (4) to “be genuine and congruent” (p. 355).

In 2000, McAlister and Irvine also conducted a qualitative study on teachers’ perception of empathy in the multicultural classroom. The findings reveal that empathy is crucial to teacher-student interaction. They also conclude that empathy plays a facilitating role in classroom management.

Competency 4: Understanding Immediacy

Several scholars have highlighted the importance of understanding immediacy and its central role in communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse students (e.g., Den Brok & Levy, 2005; Samovar, Porter, MacDaniel, & Roy, 2012). Most of the scholars have tried to answer the following question: Why do teachers need immediacy to teach effectively in the multicultural classroom? In answering this question, these scholars conclude that teachers need to understand that students who come from different cultural backgrounds communicate differently.

For Hall (1959), people from “high-context” cultures and people from “low-context” cultures communicate in different ways because they are placed at the opposite ends of a continuum. Hall (1976) further explains that high-context cultures (Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Latin Americans, and Arabs) do not need much information to communicate effectively. The people in these cultures are often “homogeneous”, and share history and traditions (Hall, 1976). High-context cultures “tend to be more aware of their surroundings and their environment and can communicate those feelings without words [because] so much information is available in the environment that it is unnecessary to verbalize everything” (Samovar & Porter, 2001, p. 81). High-context people also leave a lot of things “unsaid” because there is enough information in the context where the interaction takes place. Therefore, there is no need for these people to

verbalize everything in explicit or direct ways. In contrast, low-context cultures tend to be “less homogeneous” and often do not share a common history. When people from low-context cultures communicate, they try to be “direct”, “explicit”, and “say what is on their mind” (Samovar & Porter, 2001, p. 81). In low-context cultures, information is contained in verbal messages since “everything needs to be stated, and if possible stated well” (Samovar & Porter, 2001, p. 81).

More recently, the role of immediacy in the multicultural classroom has been studied more deeply. Some studies have pointed to the strong role that immediacy plays in creating a positive atmosphere with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2012). For Den Brok and Levy (2005), teachers should be aware of how to use immediacy with their students if they want to be effective: “In class, strong immediacy is reflected in teacher behavior that is supportive, friendly and occasionally emotional, and leads to the formation of close bonds with students” (p. 74).

Competency 5: Adopting an Integrated Approach to Instruction

Several studies refer to the importance of adopting “an integrated approach” in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Studies carried by several scholars indicate that using different teacher strategies, contextualizing learning, and respecting the “assets that students bring in the classroom” (Banks, 2013) are effective ways of instruction in this context (Chamberlain, 2005).

Some scholars of multicultural education suggest using “culturally responsive” or “culturally relevant” approaches to instruction because they take into consideration students’ differences (Banks, 2013). According to multicultural theorists, culturally responsive approaches use a variety of teaching strategies (scaffolding, for example) that take into consideration students’ linguistic, cultural, racial, religious, and even physical differences (Banks & Banks, 2010; Banks, 2013, Nieto & Bode, 2010).

Competency 6: Using Nondiscriminatory Assessment Strategies

Two studies in this review stress the need for teachers to develop assessment techniques and strategies to avoid discriminatory assessment practices in the classroom. For example, Gay and Howard (2000) think teachers should learn how to design “equitable” and “culturally appropriate” tests for diverse students. Gay and Howard (2000) explain the need for teachers to change their testing strategies as follows:

Instead of relying exclusively on pencil and paper assessment techniques, teachers need to learn how to use other means such as dramatizations, role-playing, interviews, observations, peer feedback, audio and visual journals, and conversions of learning from one form or genre to another (e.g., from words to pictures, essays to poetry, writing to speaking). (Gay & Howard, 2000, p. 14)

Chamberlain (2005), on the other hand, argues that in assessing students, a great number of teachers fail to spot problems arising from cultural and linguistic differences. Such mistakes have dire consequences and lead to more serious problems such as “overreferral”, “misidentification”, and “overrepresentation”. Chamberlain (2005) thinks that testing personnel should develop “nondiscriminatory assessment strategies”. For these strategies to be developed, the author highlights the following measures:

By becoming aware of different ways that assessments may be biased ..., assessment personnel can make conscious decisions not to discriminate based on faulty or incomplete data. It is particularly important that assessment personnel become skilled at determining when underachievement is attributable to a disability and when it is attributable to something else, including cultural incongruence in the classroom and second-language acquisition. Chamberlain, 2005, p. 208)

Obviously, the findings of the above studies explicitly show that assessing students remains one of the darkest sides of twenty-first century education. Put differently, the issue of preparing teachers for testing culturally and linguistically diverse students seems to be one of the urgent requirements of twenty-first century education.

Discussion

This study analyzes extant literature on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. The analysis shows that since the teachers of such students face several challenges, they need extra competencies and special training.

First of all, although teaching CLD students is fraught with dangers, this review reveals that “good teaching” is possible if some measures are taken. One of the major requirements of the multicultural classroom is that teachers should change their old mindsets. Some scholars, such as Schmeickel (2012), postulate that teaching CLD students ought to stress “justice” and “equity”. Other scholars advise teachers to shift from focusing on “students’ deficits” to stressing “students’ gifts” regardless of their linguistic or ethnic backgrounds. This shift can help teachers focus on “knowledge construction” and reduce bias and prejudice (Banks & Banks, 2010). Tileston and Darling (2008), for instance, explain that teachers “need to stop focusing on the deficits and look at the gifts – the life experiences – that our students bring with them. When we know this, we can make more informed decisions about how to teach them” (p. 7).

Second, to prepare teachers for the multicultural classroom, serious measures need to be taken at the level of training. Firstly, some scholars think that the best place to start this preparation is with pre-service teachers. Rego and Nieto (2000) argue that “If prospective teachers are taught at colleges and universities that continue to value only the knowledge, scholarship, and contributions of those in the dominant culture, they will have limited perspectives to bring to their teaching” (p. 423). Secondly, for training to be more effective in the multicultural classroom, it should also encompass in-service teachers (Rego and Nieto, 2000).

Third, the findings indicate that one of the most essential requirements to achieve better teaching in the multicultural classroom today is school reform (Wells, 2008). Different studies made it clear that better students’ achievement cannot be realized without radical school reforms with a multicultural perspective. Nieto and Bode (2010), for instance, advance five conditions to systematically reform schools:

1. School reform should be antiracist and antibiased.
2. School reform should reflect an understanding and acceptance of all students as having talents and strengths that can enhance their education.
3. School reform should be considered within the parameters of critical pedagogy.
4. The people most intimately connected with teaching and learning (teachers, parents, and students themselves) need to be meaningfully involved in school reform.

5. School reform needs to be based on high expectations and rigorous standards for all learners. (Nieto & Bode, 2010, p. 409)

Moreover, although several multicultural classroom issues have been addressed since the 1960's, the solutions advanced by several studies have sometimes been of little help to teachers in different contexts. In different studies, there is ample evidence that the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students continue to present serious challenges to most teachers in different areas such as communication, interaction, classroom, management, and testing.

Finally, the analysis indicates that research in multicultural education is still suffering from some weaknesses. Indeed, in spite of the immense impact of globalization and immigration on education across the world, research in the field of multicultural education has been widely conducted only in some countries like the United States, Canada, and Europe (Den Brok & Levy, 2005). As a result, other challenges and teacher competencies remain unknown or unexplored. In other words, more research is still needed in these areas.

All in all, in spite of the rich body of literature on teaching CLD students and the promises it brings to teachers and schools, some nagging questions remain unanswered about two main issues: (1) To what extent are these findings valid and pertinent in other countries where no studies have been conducted up to now (particularly countries that are different from Europe and North America)? (2) How can these findings help educators cope with the recent political and religious events that are turning the world into a more divided and more complex world (terrorism, racism, Islamophobia, and religious conflicts)? Indeed, the recent events in France, Belgium, Germany, and the United States of America show that education today needs to adopt a multicultural approach to education since minorities, such as Muslims and blacks, see that their cultural specificities are marginalized and not seriously taken into consideration as a component of the social fabric of the countries where they live.

As a matter of fact, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, some scholars have tried to emphasize the serious impact of the strong upheavals that are shaking the world today on both education and research (Banks, 2013; Schmeikel, 2012). They have, thus, tried to raise the attention to the recent challenges that multicultural education is facing, too. For these scholars, the challenges of the multicultural classroom will get trickier, for the required competencies will be more difficult to acquire due to these current events. To respond to some of these obstacles, Banks (2013) concludes:

Multicultural education will continue to evolve and change in complex ways. Its major focus in the future will be to describe the ways in which cultural, racial, ethnic, language, and religious diversity is manifested in nations around the world and to develop powerful concepts and theories that can explain teaching and learning related to diversity across nations. (p. 80)

Conclusion

The principal focus of this review was to determine the main challenges and the essential competencies needed to effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Most of the studies reviewed in this article stress that teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students is not an easy task for any teacher. Some of these studies admit that teachers "can not be expected to perform miracles" (Phuntsog, 1999, p. 99) since they "can't teach what

[they] do not know” (Howard, 1999). The findings support the assumption that when a teacher steps into the multicultural classroom, s/he steps into a mine zone where s/he has to be very cautious about the language, the type of interaction, the material used, and the way of assessing students. Ignoring or underestimating students’ linguistic and cultural differences is likely to lead to miscommunication or misinterpretation in the classroom. These factors, in turn, may not only lead to serious conflicts between teachers and students, but may also end in poor assessment of the students’ true level. Furthermore, one of the major findings is that good teaching is possible in the multicultural classroom when the following requirements are met: (1) teachers should be aware of the main challenges of these classes, (2) teachers should be well trained and equipped with adequate competencies, and schools ought to be radically reformed with a “multicultural perspective” (Nieto and Bode, 2010).

Implications of the Study

The findings of this meta-analysis study reveal that good teaching in the multicultural classroom is possible if some measures are taken into consideration. First of all, teachers and schools should understand the main tenets of multicultural education. These tenets are summarized by Banks and Banks (2010, p. 23) as follows:

- Content integration.
- Knowledge construction.
- Prejudice reduction.
- Empowering school culture.
- Equity pedagogy.

Second, teachers should shift from focusing on “students’ deficits” to “students’ gifts”. Third, there is an urgent need today to prepare teachers for the challenges of the multicultural classroom. Studies have shown that preparation at classroom level is not enough; in other words, more training is needed at two levels: (1) pre-service training for prospective teachers, and (2) continuous training for in-service teachers (Rego & Nieto, 2000, p. 423). Above all, curriculum development and teaching are required to focus more on justice and equity (Schmeickel, 2012; Wells, 2008).

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Like any other study, this contribution has its limitations. First, this study is a meta-analysis. In other words, it is basically theoretical and not practical in its approach. Second, most of the studies in this review are based on quantitative approaches. Third, the majority of these studies were conducted in Western countries such as Europe and North America. In addition, some studies focused only on some aspects of the multicultural classroom or dealt with multicultural education in a theoretical or general manner.

However, some of the above limitations might be overcome in future research. For example, using qualitative or mixed methods approaches can yield better results about several issues on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Also, conducting more research on the multicultural classroom in other countries (including Muslims/Arab countries – such as Morocco – where culture, language, religion, gender, disability, and ethnicity are now important factors in the classroom and within society at large) will undoubtedly enrich our knowledge and provide us with new insights in the field.

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