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THE EARLY CHILDHOOD MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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Synopsis

This article records findings and impressions gained from a self-briefing study of multicultural early childhood settings in British schools. It begins by providing background information which motivated interest in the work. It presents the issues relevant to early childhood multicultural programmes around which questions were asked of teachers and administrators in a wide range of British early childhood settings. Conclusions are then presented, founded on replies to these questions. These conclusions are useful for interpreting attitudes to the issues raised which are prevalent in Britain and may have a bearing in the Australian early childhood setting.

Background to the Study

Immigrants and their children have been responsible for 50% of Australia's population growth since 1945 (Appleyard, 1980). After Israel, Australia is the most ethnically diverse country in the world. Forty percent of the population are first or second generation migrants of the massive post World War 2 resettlement (A.B.C. Radio: "Under the Skin", May 1980). The most recent ethnic background survey carried out within Australian schools indicated that 140 different ethnic backgrounds were represented, 90 different languages were spoken at home and there were 40 different religions practised (Office of the Commissioner for Community Relations – Australia 1979).

It can be inferred from these increases in the Australian population that as a result there have been dramatic changes in the composition of Australian society, which have produced growing sociological complexities. The complexities themselves have developed, not only from the immense adjustments and difficulties which migrants experience on arrival in the host country, but also because of conflicts with the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of members of the host community.

Despite lip service to the contrary, the Australian school continues to function as an assimilationist agency. Children are expected to comply with 'standard' modes of dress, discipline, eating customs, coeducation, to attend school on their High Holy Days; in short, to conform in very many aspects in living and behaviour. While making little allowance for cultural differences, schools in fact capitalize on the natural conformist tendencies among the young, by effectively condoning peer group pressure exerted by the dominant Anglo-Australian culture. Further, the formal school system itself does not disallow the use of other languages on the school premises, but it achieves results which are not so very different through its attempts to treat all children in much the same way as if they were all of Anglo-Saxon heritage, speaking English during the full school day. This parallels Smolick's view of the "notion of equality" which is so deeply enshrined in Australia that produces a suspicion of any deviation from the average or the accepted norm. This attitude has also been analysed and documented by Partridge, 1973; Bullivant, 1973; Krupinski, 1976; Stoller, 1976; and Zubrzycki, 1976. When it is compounded with a lack of motivation, and a lack of knowledge, on the part of most teachers to gain and apply a knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of migrants, certain effects may result. These effects are manifested in a relative rigidity of the curriculum, which diminishes the child's individual identity, lessening his self-esteem and even producing an alienation from his own family and its relationship and adherence to cultural values.

From the early childhood level onwards, the teacher, (often unwittingly) is an agent of her/his society which has its own broad national frame of reference and view of the world. This world view is a picture of socio-cultural reality which puts the society's history and geography in as favourable a light as possible by filtering out through some kind of collective cultural, perceptual sieve those facts that are discreditable and which place the country in an unfavourable light. Bullivant (1973:5) examines this phenomenon to illustrate teachers' ethnocentric bias.

Because of the problem of the teachers' ethnocentricity, it would seem that investigation into methods of teaching migrant children requires some re-evaluation. Since the 1960s, recognition of "a problem" has been accepted (Price and Martin 1976, pp. 54-70) and various alternative ways of teaching migrant children have been implemented. These have had only varying and sometimes minimal degrees of success. Early childhood educators traditionally tend to incorporate a focus on the home and family in order to provide a vehicle for fostering the
child's emotional needs as well as his social ones. How effective has his incorporation been? How well equipped are teachers to deal with the family background of minority groups? Has 'schooling' become synonymous with 'enculturation'? While this process is allowed to exist, a sharper division and alienation from the family and concomitant loss of self-concept and self-identity for children from backgrounds rooted in other cultures becomes apparent.

As a lifelong resident of Western Australia I was aware that being an Anglo-Australian produces a certain cultural myopia which is difficult to dispel. In order to step outside the tunnelling effect of this monocultural background, it seemed it would be advantageous to explore and examine the problem of implementing E.C.E. programmes in the early childhood centres and schools of another country, and analyze the successes and the difficulties inherent in implementing viable programmes.

For several reasons I was attracted to Britain to focus my study in multiculturalism. Immediately after World War 2 we were a society composed of 85-95% British stock. It was unusual to find a child of non-British extraction in our classrooms. Consequently, we inherited a great deal of British culture with its social values, as well as inheriting similar problems. Like Britain we certainly have problems concerning race – though these can hardly be deemed to be similar, and certainly we have questions arising from a complex immigration programme; though once again, the emerging issues are quite different. Nevertheless, there is acknowledgement that the problems are comparable. The United Kingdom provides a laboratory situation where problems can be studied. It seemed it would be possible to learn from the successes and mistakes in dealing with this problem, even if they were not contextually analogous.

Problems for the Migrant Child in Australian Society

Due to intensive immigration policies from 1946, immigrants have arrived from a wide and interesting variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds; Australia has become a truly multicultural society. Advances in communication and the need for a viable economic and foreign policy have made inevitable the need for increasing intercultural links. Traditionally, and in spite of her significant Aboriginal population, Australia could be accused of having had grandiose delusions of preserving a 'racial purity' with her persistent commitment to a 'White Australia Policy'. No doubt evidence, as seen through the media, billboards, subways and bus shelters, betrays a certain reticence to accept the final refutation of 'White Australia Policy' values by a proportion of the populace, even though such a policy has long since been abandoned at governmental level. It is evident that this persistent desire to preserve the somewhat enigmatic 'White Australia' is an ethos deleterious to harmonious compatibility of all Australians.

Pressures from the mass media also exert an influence on children to conform to a uniform set of needs, language, means of expression in short, a whole way of life. The increasing bureaucratic organization of the community, a factor which tends to accompany changes in industrialization and technology, does little to enhance individuality and the separate needs of differing cultures. The children of immigrants in fact are exposed to a 'counter culture' which denies and discourages expression of their culture of origin. Often this results in immense pressures for the child, with parents insisting on adherence to the old tradition, with customs practised in the home and often in activities outside the home. The result is that in many cases, parents become alienated from their children who are trying to understand and cope with their evanescent sub-culture, yet endeavouring to make a successful adjustment into a 'new' society which covertly and often inadvertently denies them this right.

It seems to follow that children need an education which allows them to take their place in this multicultural society. This education might present some objective view of the strains and tensions inherent in a multicultural society yet might still strike a balance between preserving cultural and personal identities. Ruth Johnson (1978:64) has this to say in her Western Australian-based study:

Immigrant children are considered by many researchers in the field of migration as assimilating quickly to the host culture because youth is associated with mental flexibility and greater linguistic ability, and because more advanced educational opportunities exist in the receiving communities than in some of the parents' emigration countries. Pressures emanating from the school, peers and from the community at large, make an indelible mark on the young who are at the threshold of learning another culture, and rewards are generally greater for those who quickly forget the 'old' and acquire the 'new'. Attracted by compensations and stimulated by outsiders to shed parental values and
modes of living, many immigrant children—usually called second-generation immigrants—indeed strive for achievement in challenging fields of endeavour. Their path, however, is strewn with many difficulties because of conditions prevailing in the immigrant home: conditions which often stand in strong opposition to influences from outside. Caught between two conflicting sources of power, the second generation immigrant is forced to make vital decisions as to the adoption of either culture and this often leads him to a state of flux and indecision in his search for a cultural identity. The continual absence of such an identity has serious repercussions which may manifest themselves in mental disorders, delinquency, prolonged restlessness and an accentuated lack of occupational stability.

There exists in the literature (Salmon, 1913; Murphy, 1965; Kleiner, 1959; Johnston, 1979) evidence to show a correlation between migration and mental illness. The effects on all members of families, however, are different, depending on the reason for migration and subsequent aspects of such shifts. Morrison's list showing variables affecting migration is significant.

**Figure 1:** Variables Affecting Migration — D. Morrison, 1973:

**Variables operating prior to migration —**

1. Personality of migrant
2. Life experiences
3. Cultural background
4. Reasons for leaving old environment
5. Reason for moving to new location

**Variables operating during migration —**

6. Stress of move

**Variables operating after migration —**

7. Mental health/illness of migrant
8. Attitude of environment to migrant
   a. state policy
   b. pressure to acculturate
   c. economic opportunity
9. Homogeneity of immediate environment
10. Fulfilment of expectations and aspirations
11. Personality of migrant

It would seem that the state of marginality is a common one (Kovacs, 1955:35; discusses the 'marginal man'. Those who fall into this category are kept at a social distance from the numbers of the receiving society as a result of social discrimination; they are kept at a low economic level through economic discrimination; they are disadvantaged and despised through legal and political discrimination; furthermore, they may find themselves under attack as the cause of the receiving society's problems, as a result of scapegoating.) Having cut ties with his homeland and yet still not truly accepted into the new society, the migrant feels alienated. He has a sense of powerlessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement (Kovacs, 1975:3).

There seems to be a need for teachers to become sensitive to and aware of the above factors. It may be necessary to proceed upon a path of education which will not only help ameliorate disadvantage but which will strengthen each individual family member to feel a sense of worth, effectiveness and a part of an important functioning unit, even within the limited process of schooling. This will eliminate a feeling of shame, and foster a feeling of pride in carrying forward and manifesting the culture to which he belongs.

Morrison's list of variables gives evidence of the great complexities involved. It suggests the factors that need to be considered in designing a useful and sensitive curriculum. Ideally teachers should take into account all possible local variations of clients' needs and the types of learning centres or classrooms in which they are taught. Thus, in a pluralistic society, it is hardly likely that there is one set of global goals or one curriculum which would adequately cater for the diverse sub-groups comprising it. Multiple goals and decisions leading to differential curricula should be considered. Galbally makes the following recommendation (1978:106):

> Our schools and our school systems should be encouraged to develop more rapidly various initiatives aimed at improving the understanding of the different histories, cultures, languages and attitudes of those who make up our society.

**Approaches to Early Childhood Education Programmes in the Multi-Cultural Classroom in Britain**

Administrators, headmasters, headmistresses and teachers working in
and attached to nursery schools and infant schools were interviewed. In every case this was followed by observations of teachers in action, of children's behaviours, and of the conditions for learning presented in centres. In most cases this involved two, three or more visits to the one school, each visit lasting a full school day. Teachers' attitudes and teaching skills were evaluated. A focus of observation was on the spontaneous interaction between teacher and children, children and children, and parents and teachers in order to assess the degree of fertility in each situation for meaningful learning and exchange to take place. The design of the questionnaire was influenced by a study presented at a National Conference in Tucson, Arizona (1972), entitled “Early Childhood Education and the Chicano”. This study highlights requirements necessary for developing a high degree of integrity in second language programmes for the immigrant pre-school child. The questionnaire then was administered by an Australian researcher using factors analyzed in an American context which were applied within the British setting. As a result the questionnaire has the value of approaching the issues from a multicultural point of view.

British schools were visited over a four month period to cover as wide a range as possible — from Bristol in the west, to Scotland, the Midlands — Sheffield, Leicester, Nottingham Birmingham — the fringe areas of industrial London, and the less privileged centres in Inner London. These are cities which attract very heavy migrant populations and where there is a very high unemployment rate. For example Glasgow has a 25% unemployment rate in some industries; industries which in their work force contains a high population of migrants.

Factors, Questions and Conclusions

Presented below in point form are the individual factors isolated as important considerations in structuring an E.C.E. multicultural curriculum. It was from these factors that questions were drawn and presented to British educationists. Summarized after each factor are reflections and conclusions gleaned from the answers supplied to the questions asked.

1. There is a need for developing in the child a positive self-concept through his experiencing regular success, recognition, praise reinforcement and respect for his language and culture.
   - Acknowledgement of the necessity for the development of self-concept was noted throughout. This was, however, variously reflected in the programmes, with teachers at one end of a broad spectrum being constantly aware of its necessity, while others merely paid lip service to its importance. Significantly, as in the case in any early childhood centre or school, the emotional climate fostered by the teacher's attitude and temperament affected the child's feelings of success and responses to learning. An issue requiring further research is the question of teachers' attitudes to other ethnic groups (viz. Sealy, 1980, pp.24-31), and more particularly, other races. Teachers were not likely to admit to ethnocentric biases, though these were often apparent in observations of their teaching techniques and in their individual modes of replying to the questionnaire. It was quite evident that a hidden curriculum directly affects self-concept development.

2. There is a need for the physical environment where children are educated to reflect the cultures represented by the children working within it. For example, pictures, books, art, music, activities, cooking and recognition of certain significant days important to each culture can reflect this orientation.
   - It was noted that a high percentage of teachers affirmed that they supported a child feeling pride for his culture of orientation. Nevertheless this was reflected in only 48% of the programmes observed. Indeed it was evident that the teachers' support alone was insufficient to foster that pride. Recognition of language differences, music, cooking, etc. were observed to varying degrees in the centres that did display acceptance. This differed in intensity and presentation in the programmes observed.

3. There is a need to promote in children a knowledge of the similarities and differences in cultures, emphasizing the similarities while fostering a positive attitude towards and enjoyment of the differences. For example, this could be attained through celebrating various holidays, enjoying reading material, folk-lore, music, art, games and introducing the foods of various cultures.
   - It was intriguing to note throughout the questionnaire, that teachers and administrators generally believed that the similarities between the dominant (English) culture and those of
immigrant families should always be emphasized. That differences should also be stressed was not often advocated. There was a tendency amongst many respondents to suggest that differences between cultures should largely be hidden away.

4. There is a need to develop and enhance the child’s potential to contribute to his culture of origin, as well as to the dominant one.
   - Most respondents agreed with the main thrust of this factor, but saw difficulties with its practical realization.

5. There is a need for a cultural or racial match between some teaching staff and children in schools to be achieved.
   - It was enlightening and heartening to observe that due to educational policy, there was a relatively high proportion of cultural or racial matching between the staff at infant and nursery school level. In most cases such staff were aides and special helpers given to centres with high migrant populations. In every instance where a ‘match’ was observed, beneficial interaction was promoted by the adult caregivers and the children. Obviously this is a policy to be emulated in the Australian scene. Feelings of alienation and sometimes distress felt by non-Australian children on arrival in the educational setting could be avoided by having an adult caregiver familiar with the child’s language, customs and values.

6. There is a need to emphasize positively the child’s culturally different home experiences in the school environment.
   - Replies on questions to this factor acted as a gauge in assessing the degree of “bridging” between the home and the school. It would seem that home visiting may often provide the vehicle for promoting the weaning process from the home to the acceptance of a larger social milieu. Most teachers subscribed to the value of home visiting but few felt they had the time and opportunity. Some teachers, on the other hand denied its value, while a few believed it had certain disadvantages. Most administrators were unsympathetic to its practice, maintaining in some instances that the familiarity fostered by the home visit could be deleterious to sound educational practice. It was asserted that a certain ‘distance’ by the teacher from the child’s home was desirable.

7. There is a need to develop for all the children the motor sensory, social and cognitive skills through a programme aimed at balanced growth. This requires individual checklists to maintain the integrity of that programme.
   - Most centres catered for the children’s motor sensory, social and cognitive needs, but the degree to which appropriate challenges were given to cater for uneven development within the total class group and within the child himself was not always evident. Check-listing was not seen to be a ‘popular’ method of keeping records of children’s development, but in the few cases where this was apparent and developed the resulting programme tended to be stimulating, challenging and individualized.

8. There is a need to develop skills in the language of the dominant culture. Some further research would need to be done as to what degree the child’s language of origin should be encouraged. A sensitive approach which takes the child’s and parent’s desires into account is necessary. The teacher at least needs to know certain greetings and common expressions in order to prize each child’s individuality by valuing the language of his culture.

Language skills may be acquired by starting the child at the level at which the child experiences success, then guiding him toward more challenging tasks, so that he may begin to take risks and initiate his own direction.

It would seem that the starting point is at the concrete level moving to the abstract discreetly, and that each language learning experience, especially in the beginning, should be contextual and situational.

Encouragement of verbal expression should develop at first from a one-to-one basis, realizing that verbal contributions in groups present an immense step and feeling of success when attained.
   - In dealing with the development of language skills it was indeed quite apparent that further research would need to be carried out by skilled educators and sociologists as to the degree to which the child’s language of origin should be encouraged. Only 3 out of 33 trained teachers believed in
the value of bilingualism, with English as well as the child's first language encouraged.

- Many teachers expressed acceptance of the advantages to be gained from learning greetings and common expressions in the mother tongue of the children present in their group. The reactions from children were extremely positive and sometimes exuberant whenever their language of origin was used by the teacher, even in this restricted way.

- Most teachers subscribed to the notion that language, at the basic level, should be taught by using concrete experiences proceeding discreetly to the abstract, according to the child's level of competence. They believed that basic survival skills in language learning should be contextual and situational. Belief and practice, however, did not always go hand in hand, and where the forced feeding style of language instruction of the Berlitz Engelman type was implemented, results were most difficult to assess.

- Learning through osmosis, where the child was merely exposed to English speech in the hope that it would be 'caught', was still prevalent. Where this technique was used to the exclusion of all others it appeared often that there were many children who were consistently quiet and would not initiate speech. When language instruction was goal-directed, contextual, situational, on a one-to-one or small group basis, which included sensory involvement and was therefore experiential, a true direction showing growth and expansion of vocabulary was noted. If checklisting were enlisted as an added technique, great improvements were recorded, with areas of deficit then focused on for further attention.

- The value of a discretionary use of one-to-one, small group and larger group interactions was evident. Teachers generally were aware of the potential of each and the 'risks' and tensions that larger group work imposed on the child, irrespective of its value.

9. There is a need to ensure that the child's parents continue as model figures for him. Many parents feel a sense of helplessness, inadequacy and profound regret when they perceive their children to be absorbed by a culture counter to their own. For the child, when life styles at home are sharply different from the patterns of activity at pre school and school, a kind of cultural shock may occur on entry into this new world. This period of transition from home to school is a critical one. Schools ought to develop programmes for working closely with parents, and for involving them intelligently in the educational process.

It is imperative, however, that the teacher is aware of relevant factors which result in the non-involvement of parents. These were cited in the submission to the Federal Interim Committee on Education (Melbourne, 1973:21) and read as follows:

**Figure 2**

(a) Fear of school because of parent's record of failure and unhappiness as a student.
(b) Parents with an institutional background do not know their parental role.
(c) Money and time committed elsewhere, to such things as drink or shift work or minding young children.
(d) Large family with low income.
(e) A sole parent, perhaps emotionally disturbed and under strain anyway.
(f) Language barrier.
(g) Ignorance of the parental role, indifference to the needs of the children.
(h) Rejection of the parent by society.
(i) Transient nature of employment or tenancy.
(j) The inability to read or write.
(k) Let government do it — an attitude common to migrants from the welfare states.

Given the above factors, it would, nevertheless, where possible, be useful if the teacher could:

(l) Express respect for the child's home through positive teacher—child—parent interaction.
(2) Invite parent involvement in the programme.
(3) Allow parents to share in policy and decision-making of the programme.
(4) Make regular home visits, provided these are done with a great deal of sensitivity.
(5) Judicious use of parent as teacher in the classroom.
(6) Reinforcement of parents as important transmitters of information learning.

It was extremely pleasing to note that in the ‘most successful’ schools and where parent involvement was a major part of the programme, the responses and morale of all children, parents and teachers were high and learning appeared to flourish. The level of recognition of the child’s parents when they called at the school or nursery was noted in observations. A great deal of self consciousness and low self-esteem on the part of the parents could be diminished by teachers being aware of the style of approach they made to children’s parents. When teachers failed to acknowledge parents adequately, children also exhibited behaviours suggesting poor self-esteem.

The exercise was a very interesting and valuable one. It has provoked much thought concerning the ideal or model programmes for a multicultural classroom as well as underlining many of the difficulties of management and programming. Most importantly it has shown that by combining the best and most positive aspects of each programme, a very humane and worthwhile curriculum can be designed.

Implications for Teacher Education and The Role of the Teacher

The task of the teacher and the teacher of the future is to question the values presented and imbibed by her as a member of her particular sub-culture and socio-economic group. Throughout her lifetime the teacher has become skewed to a particular world view, her own existential frame of reference. To deny her own essential ethnocentric bias is to deny her own essentially unique nature, yet such a denial seems necessary if the teacher is to appreciate her role as educator of children who have their own unique natures.

The teacher must therefore examine the values, mores and folkways which her have always been considered ‘the norm’ or ‘the desired end’ in the education of children. An examination of the cultural tradition, and the root causes of mores should be questioned from the following points of view. Are they necessary for the maintenance of links between men and women? Are they destructive to the chances of other people being accommodated into the society?

It should be recognized that the existence of the essentially unique nature of each person’s life experience makes it difficult to see others’ uniquely idiosyncratic life story. It is as though the teacher has to internally strip his/her own cultural and personal identity in order to perceive beyond her national perceptual screen. Only then can she begin to appreciate the cultural reality of the immigrant child and cherish it. The teaching of sociology and anthropology therefore has a vital role to play in pre- and post-service teacher education courses. An awareness of cultural barriers can be awakened in order to appreciate the difficulties with which immigrant children are constantly confronted. It follows that trained teachers should be able to teach from a variety of perspectives and possess the skills necessary to avoid imposing their own culture, either explicitly or by implication. Such topics should not be options within the course — too often the audience would consist of the converted. Most teachers, if not all, will be teaching children of widely differing cultural backgrounds. Teacher education must be sensitive and relevant to these needs. Locations for teaching practice should be chosen so as to provide the widest possible opportunities in this respect.

The teacher should be obliged to question the body of knowledge and the way it is transmitted, to determine whether or not it is founded on sound ethical foundations. Traditionally education has been very much the domain of historians, philosophers and politicians. The education of immigrant children and their families has often rested on the whims and policies of the parties in power, who have often had a vested interest in keeping a country monocultural.

We have had virtually no theoretical perspectives on research to suggest explanations of how curricula, which are no less social inventions than political parties or new towns, arise, persist and change and what the social interests and values involved might be (Young, 1971:24).
The teacher should then ask: How useful is the curriculum in helping an individual grow and learn, allowing him to cherish both his culture of origin and that of the new host country? It is important that the teacher does not assume that the curriculum has incontrovertible ethical and philosophical foundations, for:

by taking the assumptions of the academic curricula for granted, the social evaluations of knowledge implicit in such curricula are by implication being assumed to be in some sense ‘absolute’ and therefore not open to enquiry (Young, 1971:40).

It follows that the teacher should be equipped to be appreciative and evaluative. (Mead, 1938:37) has this to say concerning curriculum content and the effect on minority status children:

in our education system the phenomena of ‘high status knowledge’ and knowledge of having ‘a hierarchical arrangement of cultural views of experience’ has exerted pressure to change beliefs, habits, knowledge, ideas and allegiances that children bring with them.

In dealing with the question of language instruction, researchers have considered the desirability of the child becoming competent in the formal language of the host country. Whorf et al have examined the hypothesis of the language barrier. This in itself should alert teachers of second language instruction not to conclude that a child will understand simply because a translation has been effected. We are warned that language itself is a way of perceiving, enabling the grasping of concepts. The effect of ‘a translation’ may be to ‘disrupt’ one’s way of perceiving, and given time, understanding and kindness will allow a re-orientation for considering and understanding the world by the child.

Contrary to popular opinion in some circles, teachers should not abrogate responsibility for encouraging the child’s language of origin to be his lingua franca. The standard language becomes an important tool for survival and of determining one’s life chances. As Grams (1948:366) points out:

the object of the school is the complete mastery of the standard language . . . Doing less than this is likely to serve the existing hegemony rather than the educational needs and interests of migrants and of the working class.

It follows that it is a responsibility of education systems to free the child from his own dialect, in order to become competent in dealing with societal and individual needs and pressures. However, in freeing the child from his own dialect (Corson, 1981:133) has this to say:

This freeing is aimed at making the child master of his language, not at destroying his relationship with it.

Because it is extremely important not to destroy the child’s self-concept in the process of education to the standard language, mother tongue tuition can be seen to be a valuable short-term strategy to provide cushioning against the shock of immediate and total exposure outside the home to a strange, complex and incomprehensible language. Having a cultural or language match between teacher and young children has proven to be most helpful. As the child progresses through the system, total or exclusive teaching of his mother tongue is not supportable. If schools do not prepare pupils for adult life and work in a society by teaching the standard language then they fail:

It is through language that a child is offered a rich and complex way of organizing experience. It gives the individual not only a detached understanding of the world, but some purchase on it and a capacity to bend it to his purpose (Pring, 1976:15).

In helping a child to become master of his language, bilingualism could be an asset. Every opportunity should be taken to acknowledge its value. The A.M.M.A. statement (1981:12) suggests that complementary help for children’s adult relations and families, who are insulated and isolated, would help the process while imparting values which sustain a careful regard for other cultures.

Accommodation of ethnic minority groups must be seen as the desired process. The older concepts of assimilation and, to a lesser extent, integration, have lost credence in a world where equality of rights and privileges (including that of practising one’s own culture) is the respected ideology. Whereas newcomers are expected to make adjustments of language and lifestyle to settle in the new country, the host community in turn makes changes in its customs and culture, so that a policy of mutual adjustment emerges. As children grow to take their part in the new society, they will inevitably take jobs where they will be working face to face with the new generation (or second generation) Australian. The aim of multicultural education would be to prepare children to take their full place in such a community. Children from all backgrounds
will one day be voting and decision-making citizens, whose views will affect policies which are nationally and locally determined and which affect people of all cultural backgrounds.

It is essential that a multicultural education, from pre-school onwards, permeates the whole curriculum. It is insufficient to relegate a component, often known as ‘ethnic studies’ to a corner of the syllabus or to a half hour period per week. Such an education should only include becoming acquainted with customs, ritual and religion of the ethnic groups that comprise the nation. Most desirable is that interpersonal relations should be conveyed by long-term and consistent modelling and that knowledge gained should be by first hand experience.

Teachers at pre-and post-service level could be guided by techniques as to how to approach parents, particularly those who are least likely to enter the school premises. Since it is beneficial for the child to feel there is an ongoing support (bridge) between home and school, parents need to feel unafraid of approaching the school and being involved in the educative process.

Yet it is important to appreciate that within each ethnic group there are individuals who will have quite different views about the extent to which they want to assimilate with the indigenous community. A certain sensitivity needs to be fostered by teachers as to the wishes and desires of minority groups. The A.M.M.A. statement (1981:5) advises:

There will be some who aspire to complete social, linguistic and cultural integration. Others will want to maintain as complete a separation as possible and by retaining their own language, religious observances, dietary and social customs preserve their distinct, discrete cultural identity. Between these extremes, there will be a wide variety of ways in which individual members of ethnic minorities will seek to adjust to the world of school, work and the daily transactions of living, while maintaining their own language, customs and culture in their own homes and communities. Such patterns of accommodation must remain a matter for unfettered individual choice.

It follows that teachers should not attempt to impose or indirectly reinforce any one cultural pattern through the curriculum, whether be overt or hidden.

Educational materials throughout the curriculum should come to reflect society, nationally and internationally. Pictures, stories, illustrations, posters and art works should show people of different racial origins living and working together.

A British paper suggests:

a crowd scene in which no black man or woman appears is almost invariably incomplete, it contains an important omission (A.M.M. A., 1981:8).

This raises the question of the Aboriginal in the Australian setting, who has been traditionally omitted from the curriculum or merely superimposed in the curriculum in an artificial manner. It would appear that the student teacher requires belief in and inculation of this aspect of Australian culture in order to transmit knowledge meaningfully and authentically.

Aboriginals and Immigrants, including the new wave of Asian refugees, should be depicted in educational materials not simply in their work roles as stockmen, market gardeners or manual workers. Aboriginal and Asian teachers, lawyers, doctors, shopkeepers, bank managers should also be depicted. Extrapolating from the British model, it should not be considered either naïve or improper to present Aboriginals or the children of Asian refugees with models on which, if they so choose, they should form their career aspirations. It has been noted that it would form ‘an acceptable essay in social engineering’ for white pupils to perceive non-whites in these roles. It has been pointed out that for children, merely to see a reflection of society as it really is, can be a desirable, though limited objective; to achieve that alone could reinforce stereotypes, an exercise which is obviously not desirable.

It is evident, that in order for the children of ethnic and racial minorities and their parents to be treated with sensitivity, appropriateness and caring, education for a multicultural society is pertinent to children, teachers, parents, administrators, employers and the wider community in a much more genuine and far reaching way.

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DISCREPANCY IN ATTITUDES TO AUSTRALIA BETWEEN EDUCATED AND NON/LOW-EDUCATED LEBANESE IMMIGRANTS.

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Introduction

Educational experience prior to immigration usually influences the overall ability to adjust in a new culture, including formulation of attitudes, perception and indeed the ability to acquire a new language. The latter in particular can serve quite accurately in determining the degree of acculturation and a potentially successful interaction with the host culture.

Indeed an attainment of a high level of education (including the acquisition of a new language) does not imply a complete cultural integration. One can, however, safely state that the Lebanese immigrants who have attained a high level of education are better adjusted, more easily accepted by the host society and less vulnerable to exploitation than other members of their community.

Methodological Procedures

The research survey, which was administered in either Arabic or English, was conducted in 100 households in the Melbourne metropolitan area. 10 of these however, were non-responses due to a change of address, death or other uncontrolled circumstances. The sample was randomly selected from a total of 200 addresses which were obtained from various sources between May and August 1977.

The following criteria were set for selecting the sample: any household member who was 18 years and over qualified to represent his family. Secondly, the respondents should have immigrated to Australia after World War II. In all the sample consisted of 20 females and 70 males, these characteristics are outlined below.

All of the interviews were conducted by the same researcher, thus making any possible bias constant. The method of personal interview was adopted because of the compelling advantages it enjoys in data collection over other methods. It permits, for example, a greater flexibility in phrasing questions and answers.