Multicultural Education in the UK

The cultural and ethnic landscape has changed significantly in the UK in the past 50 years and this has had a huge influence on different aspects of society.

The 2011 census showed that the black and minority ethnic population (BME) in the UK doubled since the 2001 census and by 2011 made up 13% of the UK population.

Banks and Banks (2010) explained: 'The growth of the population of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious minorities within the Western nations is increasing at a much faster rate than are mainstream groups, the population of England has been increasing, so has the population of its minorities, even at a faster pace. It can be concluded that the composition of the UK population represents the profile of a multicultural country, not a monocultural country.'

In London alone, there are over 40 national or ethnic groups, speaking more than 300 hundred languages.

This increase in multiculturalism presents challenges for society, not least the education of all young people

This Factsheet will focus specifically on how the changing cultural and ethnic landscape influences the education system. There are many advantages as well as disadvantages of a multicultural education system and this Factsheet will explore the issues involved.

This Factsheet will be particularly useful for the topic of Education as well as Stratification and Differentiation

Multiculturalism is defined by Harper (2010) as the co-existence of multiple cultural traditions resulting from immigration, amalgamation or geographical explanation.

Although the cultural and ethnic membership varies from one school to another, the current composition of many UK schools tends to reflect that of the local population. However, Local Authority Statistics show that 61% of children from minority ethnic groups in England now enter schools where BME pupils make up the majority of the school population. The figures also confirm that the number of pupils whose first language is not English is around 17% of state primary schools and 13% of state secondary schools.

This changing composition of schools and the language spoken inside schools adds challenges in providing an appropriate curriculum that reflects ethnic, cultural and religious membership of the school and of Britain.

Multicultural education
Multicultural education should reflect the student body, as well as promote understanding of diversity to the dominant culture and be inclusive, visible, celebrated and tangible. Multicultural education is appropriate for everyone.

According to Banks (2013), 'a major goal of multicultural education is to change teaching and learning approaches so that students of both genders and from diverse cultural, ethnic, and language groups will have equal opportunities to learn in educational institutions'. Students need multicultural education in order to enter into conversations with fellow students and adults.

Multicultural education should include preparation for an active adulthood where students know how to participate effectively in society.

Banks, believes in the importance of citizenship education: 'Citizenship education must be transformed in the 21st Century because of the deepening racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious diversity in nation-states around the world. Citizens in a diverse democratic society should be able to maintain attachments to their cultural communities as well as participate effectively in the shared national culture. Schools should plan and teach cooperation, mutual respect, the dignity of individuals and related democratic values.'

So how can the government and schools address the changing multiculturalism in schools?

Multicultural initiatives in education are not new.

Many reports have been written focussing on multiculturalism in schools including:

The Macpherson Report (1999)
The Macpherson report, also known as the Stephen Lawrence Report, was an inquiry report on the murder of a young black teenager on the streets of London, Stephen Lawrence. It highlighted institutional racism, not only in the police force, but also across the full range of public services, including education. It suggested that the school curriculum should be transformed to promote racial justice and diversity by viewing citizenship education as the main vehicle to teach children value diversity and prevent racism (Osler, 2009).

Parekh Report (2000)
The Parekh Report called '*The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain'* was prepared by a commission set up by the Runnymede Trust and named after its chair, Bhikhu Parekh. The report not only focused on education but also covered a wide range of issues including the police, arts, media and sport, health and welfare, employment, immigration and asylum, politics and representation, religion and belief (Webster, 2005).

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The Ajegbo Report (2007)

The Ajegbo Report reviewed diversity and citizenship education in the National Curriculum in England and proposed that greater diversity was needed within English education (Race, 2012). As a result of the London suicide bombings in 2005 and as an official concern about terrorism, the government-commissioned Ajegbo Report highlighted that the citizenship curriculum should promote 'identity and diversity and sense of living together in the UK (Osler, 2009).

However, the recommendations of the report are still debatable, and questions were raised as to whether they were fully applied into the curriculum, since citizenship education is still non-statutory in English and Welsh primary schools (Race, 2012).

Activity: Do some research into the findings of these reports. How effective do you think they have been in improving multicultural education in schools?

They have been effective	They have not been effective

Exam Hint: It is important to support what you are writing with evidence – reports are good pieces of evidence to use. You can always look at the implementation and effectiveness of the reports which will give you evaluation marks.

Partly as a result of the these reports; various initiatives have been introduced into schools to encourage cultural interaction:

- In 1997, the Labour Government decided that schools needed to reflect the increasing diversity of modern Britain by setting up a unit in the education department to address ethnic minority educational achievement (Tomlinson 2005).
- The Department for Children, Schools and Families was created in 2007, guided by The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures places on schools a duty to promote community cohesion, in addition to diversity, human rights and equity.
- The Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) requires local authorities to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities, as well as develop race equality policies in a proactive rather than a reactive way (Fry et al. 2008).
- In 2002, Citizenship was introduced as a statutory subject in the English National Curriculum, following the recommendations of the Crick Report in 1998. It is taught as part of the school curriculum to all pupils aged 11–16 years old in maintained schools in England.

The teaching of Citizenship may include:

1. The inclusion of non-Western Cultures in the mainstream curriculum (e.g. in History, Literature, Religious Education).
2. Multicultural events and cultural awareness days
3. Guest speakers contribute to the curriculum as well as extra-curricular activities
4. School twinning projects and school trips

Activity: Think about your own school and list the different multicultural educational initiatives that are included within the curriculum and extra- curricular activities.

However, there is also a need to preserve cultural distinctiveness by allowing different communities to retain their own identities.

Many schools now provide opportunities for different communities within schools to retain their own identity including:

- Allowing dress that reflects their culture
- Providing religious facilities within schools
- Creating multicultural projects

Challenges to multicultural education

1. Lack of a definition of culture

All cultures are different. Holding cultural parties, listening to music, or sampling foods related to different cultures may not be sufficiently promoting multiculturalism. Fullinwider suggests these activities fail to address the deeper values and ideas behind cultural customs through which true understanding is reached (Fullinwider, 2005). Levinson adds that such practices could lead to 'trivializing real differences; teachers end up teaching or emphasizing superficial differences in order to get at fundamental similarities'.

2. Multicultural education ignores minority students

Although, multicultural education has positive approaches in helping students there are ways in which it does not fully benefit all of those who need it. For example, it generally ignores the minority students' own responsibility for their academic performance.

In addition, multicultural education theories and programmes are rarely based on the actual study of minority cultures and languages. The idea of multicultural education often lacks the exploration of minority communities yet in the actual school environment exploration of minority students has occurred. The inadequacy of the multicultural education solution also fails to separate minority groups that are able to cross cultural and language boundaries and learn successfully even though there were initial cultural barriers. Students who belong to minority groups and are able to excel are left in the same classroom setting with those who are struggling.

Teachers tend to incorporate more multicultural education in schools with a higher share of ethnic minority students. However, there is no reason why only schools with ethnic minority pupils should focus on multicultural education. There is a need for White students in mainly white schools to become more familiar with ethnic diversity. While ethnic minority students learn in many contexts about the mainstream society in which they live, for White students the school context might be the only places where they can have meaningful encounters with other young people from other ethnic and religious groups.

3. Teacher population of schools does not reflect the student profile of the schools

- According to Boyle and Charles (2011), 'in all of England's school regions (with the exception of London) over 97% of the teachers are White (London has 83% White teachers). For example, in Liverpool, where a large historical Black population lives, from a teaching workforce of 4439, only 22 of those teachers are Black'.

- Banks and Banks (2010) suggest the ethnic composition of a multicultural society should be reflected in its schools' pupils, teachers and curriculum. However, in British context, the teacher profile of schools is far from this representation.

- Fullinwider also brings to light the challenge of whether or not teachers believe in the effectiveness of a multicultural education.

Although multicultural education has positive intentions, in many ways it lacks aspects that are crucial for the development of minority students.

Measuring the impact

It is difficult to measure the extent to which schools are successful in raising awareness of multiculturalism:

- Schools are now more able to manage their own education and to tailor the curriculum to suit their own students.

- It is difficult to make comparisons between schools.

- It is difficult to evaluate the impact of multicultural approaches.

- There is, as yet, no legal requirement for schools to include multicultural strategies in their policies.

Exam Hints:

1. What is meant by multicultural education? Make sure you can explain this in your own words!

2. Outline three ways that multicultural education is implemented in schools. You could include: citizenship, non-Western Cultures in the mainstream curriculum e.g. in History, Literature, religious education, multicultural events and cultural awareness days, guest speakers

3.Evaluate the effectiveness of multicultural education in British schools

You need to look at both sides of the argument here:

- *It is effective – introduction of citizenship, non-Western Cultures in the mainstream curriculum e.g. in History, Literature, religious education*

- *It is not effective – teacher populations not reflecting pupil population, lack of definition of culture, lack of awareness of different cultures*

For any question that asks you to evaluate, you must always write a conclusion.