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**Beyond Diversity: An Academic Infusion Model (A.I.M.)  
of Multicultural Teacher Education**

*By Rita Mitchell,  
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Teacher Education Programs provide the knowledge, skills and experience that enable pre-service teachers to become effective educators. Multicultural Education should be a significant part of the academic foundation for pre-service education programs. This article examines the rationale for the utilization of the Academic Infusion Model (A.I.M.) of Multicultural Education in Teacher Education Programs.

**Rationale for the Model**

Teachers are ultimately responsible for establishing and maintaining an educational environment where students are provided opportunities to develop to their full potential. Therefore teacher quality is the most important factor in considering the effectiveness of a school. Educational administrators are faced with the responsibility of hiring qualified professionals to provide instruction in the classroom. When hiring a teacher, educational administrators will want to choose a high quality, effective teacher. Glenn (2001) lists fifteen qualities found in high quality effective teachers. High quality, effective teachers: 1.) exhibit enthusiasm; 2.) know the content area; 3.) are organized; 4.) teach actively; 5.) show a good attitude; 6.) establish successful classroom management; 7.) pace instruction; 8.) maintain good people skills; 9.) communicate clearly; 10.) question effectively; 11.) differentiate instruction; 12.) build success into the class; 13.) hold high expectations; 14.) create a pleasant atmosphere; and 15.) are flexible (Glenn, 2001). These qualities are characteristic of effective teachers no matter where they teach, but are especially essential for those in multicultural settings. Teachers with a solid foundation in multicultural education can better assist in the preparation for the social, political, and economic realities that individuals experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1992). Teacher preparation programs provide pre-service teachers with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to become practicing professionals in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education environments, teacher education programs must also provide pre-service teachers with activities that enable them to effectively teach a group of students from many different backgrounds so that those students in the public schools will receive a quality education that will prepare them for the marketplace and for a pluralistic society (Edmonds, 1998). This preparation would include activities that encourage the teacher to become culturally responsive. Culturally responsive teachers are those that a.) are socio-culturally conscious; b.) have affirming views of children from diverse backgrounds; c.)

perceive themselves as being change agents to make a school equitable; d.) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction; e.) understand the social context of children; and f.) design instruction based on the children's previous knowledge, and challenges them beyond the familiar (Villegas, 2002).

In guiding a teacher candidate to become an effective educator as described above, multicultural education should be infused into the foundation of the theoretical, philosophical and pedagogical knowledge base for pre-service teachers. Furthermore, multicultural education should be incorporated into all aspects of the teacher preparation program. Several academic models of Multicultural Education have been designed that can be utilized in the teacher preparation programs. These include: Content Oriented Model (Banks, 1994), Student Oriented Model (Sleeter & Grant, 1993), Socially Oriented Model (Burnett, 1998), NCATE Diversity Standard, and Academic Infusion Model (AIM).

The *Content Oriented Model* described by Banks (1994) focuses on the development of multicultural content throughout the disciplines. Its aim is to incorporate a variety of viewpoints by transforming the canon to develop a new curricular paradigm. This model is most often manifested as single group studies, ethnic or women's programs, and attention to single gender programs, classrooms, and schools.

The *Student-Oriented Model* of Multicultural Education (Sleeter and Grant, 1996) utilizes research on culturally based learning styles as its foundational tenet. The goal of programs based upon this model is not to transform the curriculum, but to help culturally diverse students to succeed in the educational mainstream. Bilingual and bicultural programs as well as special math and science programs for women and minorities and language arts programs for Latinos and African-Americans usually incorporate this model.

The *Socially-Oriented Model* (Burnett, 1998) seeks to reform the culture and political context of schools. The emphasis of this model is "human relations" especially as related to cooperative learning approaches and decision-making skills. In striving to reach its goal of equity in American society as a whole, this model often integrates components of the content-oriented and student-oriented models.

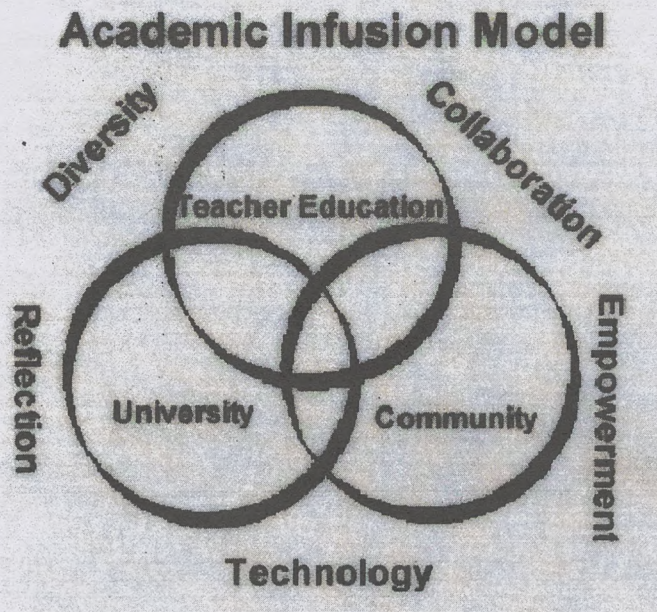
In addition to these models of multicultural education, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has established a "diversity" standard to evaluate the degree to which teacher education programs prepare candidates for success as teachers in multicultural settings. Teacher Education Programs all over the United States will at some time before the end of this decade take an evaluative look at "diversity" as a program factor. NCATE outlined a new standard addressing diversity in January 2000, with revisions approved in March 2002. The overview of the standard is:

The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools (NCATE, 2002)

This standard reaches well beyond its predecessor that viewed diversity from a “numbers” rather than “experience” basis. In the more detailed explanation of the 2002 NCATE diversity standard it is stated that: “One of the goals of this standard is the development of educators who can help all students to learn and who can teach from multicultural and global perspectives...”(NCATE, 2002). The underlying assumption of this statement, the premise of this paper, and the philosophy of the writers is that educators who teach from such multicultural perspectives have been taught in such a manner. In other words, to be an effective multicultural teacher, one should have multicultural experiences as a student (undergraduate teacher candidate or graduate in-service teacher) that provides knowledge, develops skills, and examines dispositions, beliefs, and attitudes related to diversity.

Although much research has focused on models of multicultural education, these models have not specifically focused on collaborative efforts between teacher education programs, the university campus, and the community. The Academic Infusion Model (A.I.M.) outlines a framework for providing such multicultural experiences in teacher education programs. A.I.M. is based on the premise that multicultural education is an aspect of societal environments – school and community, and should therefore, be promoted in and supported by these environments. The college/university campus, the school systems, and the community need to establish and maintain programs that place emphasis on multicultural issues (Edmonds, 1998). Figure 1 illustrates the teacher education program, the university, and the community as the primary environments that are connected for the pre-service teacher.

**Figure 1: Academic Infusion Model**



The **Teacher Education Program** enhances the learning environment through classroom and laboratory activities, while presenting a variety of perspectives. Pre-service teachers examine interpersonal relationships and attitudes as well as content. The **University Environment** provides opportunities for collaboration and creating forums for sharing information. The university also assumes shared responsibility for teacher preparation in content knowledge. The **Community** has shared responsibility for PK-12 student development through support programs for children and teachers. The community provides an authentic educational setting for application and development of skills, and expands the cultural experiences for teacher candidates beyond the campus.

As the diagram illustrates, the responsibility for professional development is an overlapping one that includes the Teacher Education Program, the University, and the Community, which includes neighborhood and parent organizations as well as P-12 schools. Based upon a model implemented at the University of Minnesota-Duluth (2002), five components complete A.I.M.'s framework. Diversity is the key component of the model, but the other four components, collaboration, reflection, empowerment, and technology, are essential "action" tenets that address the "how to" of providing multicultural experiences in teacher education.

### **Components of Academic Infusion Model (A.I.M.)**

Two facets of **diversity** are incorporated into the A.I.M. model, diversity of perspectives and diversity of individuality. Diversity focuses on the infusion of pedagogical strategies that encourage student involvement and facilitates a respect of diverse perspectives. Race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, religion, mental and physical ability are aspects of individuality that are acknowledged as resources that enhance curricula, not as factors to be neutralized. The **collaboration** component of A.I.M. seeks to expand the community of practice beyond the departments, schools, and colleges that house teacher education programs on college and university campuses. The college or university as a whole as well as the PK-12 school community along with community-based agencies are viewed as essential partners in the multicultural education of teachers. Effective preparation strategies would include candidates observing and participating in team-teaching, cooperative learning experiences, effective communications administrators, professional colleagues, mentor teachers, and parents. **Reflection** is another essential and on-going element of the A.I.M. model. It is important for both self-assessment and program assessment. Candidates must be required and provided time to reflect upon their own attitudes and beliefs as well as the impact of providing authentic learning experiences to students. The assessment of group dynamics in addition to products and performance maintains "people" versus "information" focus and stresses long-term, life-long learning as opposed to a short-term "store-display-delete" syndrome. Teachers operate as decision-makers on a daily and ongoing basis yet many teachers preparation and teacher-in service programs follow a training rather than **empowerment** model. Empowerment provides tasks that require decision-making while fostering creativity and initiative within a

professional context. Knowledge of recent research, political endeavors, and current instructional programs empowers candidates to make informed decisions that benefit students as they operate as change agents and advocates when and where appropriate. The fifth component of the A.I.M. model is **technology**, the chalk and slate for effective twenty-first century teachers. As a basic instructional tool for teachers and students, technology can provide opportunities to learn about others, their concerns, and their contributions (video conferencing, global telecommunications). Assistive technology allows many with mental and physical limitations to participate more fully in a mainstreamed educational program.

### **Implications for Research**

Results from preliminary pilot studies utilizing the A.I.M. model have been encouraging. The researchers are currently involved in the development of assessment instruments for systematic collection of data to validate the model as a whole as well as each individual component. Since all components of A.I.M. require continual self-critique if its goal of curricula transformation is to be actualized, initial efforts have focused on "introspection" as a facet of reflection. Readers are invited to begin, or to continue their individual journeys, in multicultural education by reflecting upon the 10 statements posed by Paul Gorski (2001) listed below.

#### **10 (Self-)Critical Things I Can Do to Be a Better Multicultural Educator**

This list emerged from a presentation entitled "Self-critique as Self-development: A First Step for Multicultural Educators" conducted for *Every Teacher, Every Student*, SERC's 4th annual conference, in Meriden, Connecticut. Many of the items in the list require us to step out of our comfort zone and focus on a real shift in thinking.

1. I can engage in self-reflective writing or journaling to explore my own process of identity development and how I react to different events or people.
2. I can invite critique from colleagues and accept it openly. Though it's easy to become defensive in the face of critique, I can thank the person for their feedback, remembering that people may experience me differently from how I see and experience myself.
3. I can understand the relationship between INTENT and IMPACT. Many times, especially when I'm in a situation in which I experience a level of privilege, I have the luxury of referring and responding only to what I intended, no matter what impact I have on somebody. I must take responsibility for impact, recognizing that I can never be totally aware of the biases and prejudices I carry into the classroom and how my students or colleagues experience me.
4. I can reject the myth of color-blindness. As painful as it is to admit sometimes, I know that I react differently when I'm in a room full of people who share many dimensions of my identity than I do in a room full of

people who are very different from me. I have to be open and honest about that, because those shifts inevitably inform the experiences of people in my classes or workshops. In addition, color-blindness denies people validation of their whole person.

5. I can recognize my own social identity group memberships and how they may affect my students' experiences and learning processes. People do not always experience me the way I intend them to, even if I am an active advocate for all my students. If I appreciate this, I will find deeper ways to connect with all my students.
6. I can build coalitions with teachers who are different from me (in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, first language, disability, and other identities). These can be valuable relationships of trust and honest critique. At the same time, I must not rely on other people to identify my weaknesses. In particular, in the areas of my identity that I experience privilege, I must not rely on people from historically underprivileged groups to teach me how to improve myself (which is, in and of itself, a practice of privilege).
7. I can invite critique from my students, and when I do so, I can dedicate to listening actively and modeling a willingness to change if necessary.
8. I can reflect on my own experiences as a student and how that informs my teaching. Research indicates that my teaching is most closely informed by my own experiences as a student (even more so than my pre-service training). The practice of drawing on these experiences, the positive and the negative, provide important insights regarding my teaching practice.
9. I can challenge myself to take personal responsibility before looking for fault elsewhere. For example, if I have one student who is falling behind and misbehaving, I will consider what I am doing or not doing that may be contributing to their disengagement before problematizing their behavior or effort.
10. I can *celebrate* myself as an educator and total person. I can, and should, also celebrate every moment I spend in self-critique, however difficult and painful, because it will make me a better educator. And that is something to celebrate!

From the Multicultural Pavilion:

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural>

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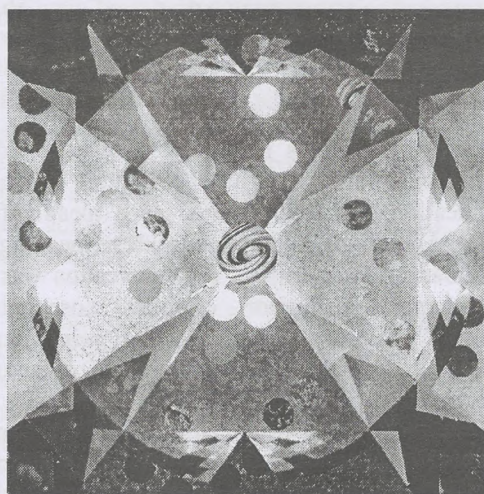
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