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Critical Reflection Part 1- Week 1

As I reflect on my childhood and undergraduate education, I never questioned the standards or why I was taught certain things. I accepted facts at face value and moved on to the next class or subject without analyzing the education I was receiving. I have a better understanding of what it means to be multicultural through this week’s readings and assignments and made connections to my personal experiences as an educator. Christine Sleeter and Judith Flores Carmona explain the purpose of curriculum, how people use different frameworks to create our standards, and the role multiculturalism plays in education. Multicultural education entails “Helping students acquire intellectual resources of diverse communities, including those that have been historically silenced, can enable creative dialogue and work, out of which we might better address problems that seem intractable” (Sleeter, C. & Flores Carona, J., 2017, p. 9).

*How covid-19 has laid bare the vast inequities in the U.S. public educatio*n by Valarie Strauss reinforced my experiences working in a minority charter school during COVID. Students were encouraged to complete online assignments, were given school laptops, and were also provided print copies of assignments if needed. Given the resources that were provided, my student participation was less than half due to various reasons such as internet reliability and adult supervision. The idea that students transition into schools from an unequal society are brought up in this article just as it was mentioned in our textbook. As a classroom teacher, I found myself limited and defeated as a result of online learning. Rather than criticizing schools, “we should train our collective gaze on the “education debt”- the damage done to particular communities by “the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society”” (Strauss, 2020).

Fry’s article gave me a new perspective of the changing complexion of suburban public schools and how it relates to the types of schools I have taught. Bradford Academy is a charter school located in a suburban area right outside of Detroit. The data given on greatschools.org states that 99% of students are Black which suggest that these students do not have exposure to other minority groups or white students. Fry (2009) states “suburban school district racial/ethnic diversification has not led to a commensurate increase in the exposure of suburban white students to minority students”. Many of these students are bussed in from Detroit which is a predominantly Black city and brought to Southfield which has a similar demographic. This article helped me understand the trends of suburban demographics and the amount of exposure to diversity these children experience.

My knowledge of ethnic enrollment in public schools has also been challenged in recognizing the decrease in white and Black enrollment while the Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native enrollment increases. My experience in Hawai’i clarifies the statements made in *The Condition of Education 2021*. Hawai’i is a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities, so I was surprised to see the distributions of student’s own race/ethnic group enrolled on school in Figure 3 (p. 3). As not all states are similar to Hawai’i, the data and graphs shown in these articles allow me to reconsider what it truly means to be multicultural. I wonder the causes are of the white and Black enrollment decreasing and if these trends will continue in the future. While these numbers suggest that races and ethnicities are being distributed throughout the country, it does not necessarily mean that these children are being exposed to the ethnicities listed, let alone taught about these cultures in the classroom.

References

Fry, R. (2009). “The rapid growth and changing complexion of suburban public schools.” Pew Charitable Trust: Washington, D.C.

Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools. *The Condition of Education 2021*. (p.1-4).

Sleeter, C. & Carmona, J. (2016). *Un-Standardizing Curriculum: Multicultural Teaching in the Standards-Based Classroom.* 2nd Edition. Teachers College Press: New York.