

FROM 'MELTING POT' TO 'SALAD BOWL'

By CHO YOUNGDAL

Unprecedented global mobility and population movements have increased the diversity of cultures, languages, race and religion in all nations, involving privileged transnational elites, displaced refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants. This diversity is accelerated by the proliferation of information communication technologies which facilitate global interaction across cultures, languages and identities. The overall effect of these extraordinary developments is the spread of multiculturalism to all parts of the world, beyond those societies which already have long experience of racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious pluralism.

A group of leading international researchers from the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) now concludes that education systems around the world need to put multicultural diversity at the forefront of their concerns. The researchers call on education systems around the world to embrace multicultural education within the specific contexts of their national setting. Teacher education, pedagogy and curriculum development, education administration as well as policy and research need to address the growth of multiculturalism across the globe. The overriding goal should be to foster a strong commitment to equal and enriched educational opportunities for all. Without this, there will be a gross waste of human capital and skill in all societies from the continuing failure to achieve equal educational outcomes for all. In other words, all children need to develop intercultural capabilities to negotiate across different identities, social justice, multilingual skills and anti-racist dispositions.

For the need of education in multicultural diversity, the international leading researchers recommend the following measures. All countries must recognize their responsibility to develop appropriate educational responses to the ethnic and cultural complexity within their borders, support constructive research examining critical issues regarding diversity and equity in education and reform twenty-first century teacher education according to the cultural and social heterogeneity of local, national and global communities.

Putting those recommendations into righteous practice, we need to adopt more democratic ways of developing multicultural education policy. Here, we can easily think of a policy trend which accepts and embraces various races and ethnicities into the mainstream culture of the society: the so-called 'melting pot' policy. In this trend, the various groups that pass through a melting pot are assimilated into the mainstream culture of the society and transformed as if they were born in the given society. Of course, in order to resolve misunderstandings among various cultures and peoples and to make the melting pot functioning well, it is necessary to under-

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stand other cultures, because culture is an instrumental part of human behaviour.

However, the melting pot policy neglects the fact that each cultural group has the right to be recognized as a group in itself with its own identity and each cultural group has the right to demand acknowledgement of this identity. We must recognize that each ethnic or racial group has its own sense of value and its own process of knowledge formation. This idea led to the realisation that a community can prosper if it recognizes and embraces the culture of each of its cultural groups. This notion is likened to the 'salad bowl' metaphor, where each vegetable has its own unique taste and the combination forms a meal of delicacies. A similar line of thought can prevent schools from forming 'cultural borders' but promote the notion of an encompassing school culture as a 'cultural boundary'.

Based on this conception of multicultural education policy, multicultural education can be an important solution to the various issues of our diversified society. With the salad bowl approach, multicultural education can cultivate the democratic values and attitudes of students from multicultural backgrounds which is guaranteeing the human right to be taught for all in a democratic society. Moreover, multicultural education contributes to the integration of different peoples in a diversified society and the relief of social conflicts. The salad bowl approach can also facilitate the combination of multicultural grounds in a society and thereby pave the way for the creation of a healthier and more encompassing culture. Acceptance and integration of various cultures will provide a society with a new starting point for creating a new heterogeneous culture.



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