The Urgency of Instituting a Multicultural Curriculum on College Campuses

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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It was his devotion to multicultural education that first sparked my interest. His enthusiasm for the topic was contagious, and I adopted this area of study for my thesis.

He has served as a teacher, advisor and friend. Art, thank you for bringing out the best in me!
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Statement of the Problem: By the year 2000 there will be a considerable amount of new developments in technology and international competition. The demography and the changing ethnic and racial composition of the American labor force will be dramatic. The white males that were once thought of the mainstay of the American workforce will comprise only 15% of the net additions to the labor force between 1985 and the year 2000. We need to recognize the changing composition of our labor force and prepare our students to function effectively within a changing society.

Justification: The issue of multiculturalism is a very pending issue in our society today. It is evident in every aspect of our lives. It is represented in politics, business and even education. We read about it in the newspapers, see it on T.V., and hear about it on the radio.

Extracurriculurly there are several avenues that a student can take educate themselves. Attend lectures and forums sponsored by Student Association, Black Student Association and Student Center Development Board, or have Student Leadership Development Board plan a diversity workshop for your organization. You can always attend a tea at the international house or attend UniverCity events. Volunteer at Student Voluntary Services or at the minority house.

Although there are several options to educate yourself extracurricularly, the options are scarce within Ball State Formal educational structure.
Currently there are only two multicultural classes on BSU's roster. One is an educational psychology class (Ed Psy. 350) that you have to be an education major to take and the other is an intercultural communication class (Speech 290).

The challenge to become knowledgeable about ethnic and national perspectives may seem overwhelming at first, but it is a challenge that we are obliged to meet.

**Summary:** The following transcript is of a presentation designed to educate the Ball State community about the urgency for instituting a multicultural education at Ball State University. This seminar was presented to a group of student leaders representing many of the major organizations on Ball State's campus.
The issue of multiculturalism is a very pending issue in our society today. It is evident in every aspect of our lives. It is represented in politics, business and even education. We read about it in the newspapers, see it on T.V., and hear about it on the radio.

Multiculturalism is a very broad topic. Today I want to dedicate this discussion to multicultural education. My goal is to arouse your interests and concerns about the urgency of instituting a multicultural curriculum (M.C.) at Ball State University.

After participating in today's seminar, I am confident that each one of you will be motivated to instill a multicultural education program within your organization, as well as do your part to see that a M.C. class be added to the general studies program. Many of the respected universities across the nation have already adopted such polices, and we will have to consider similar actions if you want to compete in today's workforce.

Let's talk a little about some of the theories that govern multiculturalism. One of the basic theories of the topic of multiculturalism is the "Melting Pot" theory. This is a theory that focuses on assimilation, not diversity. In the melting pot, ethnic and racial differences are standardized into a kind of American Mulligan Stew.

The melting pot is, of course, only a metaphor. In real life, many ethnic and racial groups retain their individuality and express it. At the workplace
as well as within our educational institutions. the melting pot has been more than a metaphor. The corporate culture has demanded a great deal of conformity and employees have been forced to abandon most of their individualism at the company door. Now these days are over and the focus is changing.

By the year 2,000 there will be a considerable amount of new developments in technology and international competition. The demography and the changing ethnic and racial composition of the American labor force will be dramatic. The white males that were once thought of the mainstay of the American workforce will comprise only 15% of the net additions to the labor force between 1985 and the year 2000.

In ten years, people of color will make up 25% of the U.S. population—the first time in our nation's history. The workforce is slowly becoming older, more female, and more disadvantaged. Almost two-thirds of the new entrants to the labor force between now and the year 2000 will be women. I project that sometime in the next century, whites will become the new minority population in the United States. These statistics are very real, and we need to prepare our students to be functional in the professional society.

Obviously minority individuals will be the new majority. They will comprise a far greater share of the new workforce and college entrants than they do today. On the other hand, there are some practical barriers that will inhibit this diverse workforce from reaching their full potential.

In the past there has been a serious weakness in the American corporate
culture. Managers have practiced a uniform management style, not situational, management by diversity or better yet multicultural management. With an increased number of minorities entering the workforce, there is an urgent need to manage different people differently. On the same note we need to educate different people differently.

People of color cannot produce to their maximum potential as long as they are managed with the standard management techniques. Therefore, we need additional management techniques to include those different needs and motivators to reach a diverse workforce and capitalize on its potential.

Many managers in today's workforce feel that they have been fair because they have treated people of color the same as whites. These managers honestly feel that they are being just, but in reality they are putting people into a mold that they cannot possibly fit.

This is why equal opportunity is seldom equal if it means the same. Equal employment opportunity should mean treating different people appropriately, not always the same.

In the past, attempts have been made to dismiss the very differences that may be the greatest assets of an organization. We as the managers of major corporations, need to adopt a broader perspective. Multicultural management techniques obtain increased productivity by utilizing those differences. We have to build into our way of doing business the flexibility to recognize, deal with and capitalize on diversity.
The goal of multicultural management is to manage a diverse workforce in such a way that we get even better productivity than we got from a homogeneous workforce.

In a country that is seeking competitive advantage in a global economy, the goal of managing diversity is to develop our capacity to accept, incorporate, and empower the diverse human talents of the most diverse nation on earth. **This is our reality and we need to make it our strength!**

There are many situations in the workforce that multiculturalism plays a role. One instance is the staffing of our corporations. When hiring we need to be careful not to stereotype. We need to look beyond the physical appearances and analyze the individuals strengths, talents, weaknesses and communication ability.

- Just because a person has glasses doesn’t mean that they are an introvert.
- A blonde woman isn’t always dingy.
- Any other examples?

These are just a few of the common stereotypes that often come into play.

- How many of you have unfairly place people into stereotypes only to find out that you were way off base?
- Or how many of you have been unfairly placed into stereotypes?
- Examples
As we place others into stereotypes we need to keep in mind that others are placing us into them as well. Simply by getting to know someone helps dispel stereotypes. Taking a few minutes just to chat with an individual is a way of educating yourself.

Another issue that we might face when we enter the working world is managing a diverse workforce. How many of you would like to eventually hold some sort of management position? In order to do this affectively, we need to understand our employees and co-workers. If you have employees of different races, religions, and backgrounds, you need to find out more about them. You can do formal research or simply inquire about their native culture. Many individuals have unique customs and beliefs that could affect your professional environment.

Diversity awareness can play a role in things as simple as planning a company party. Do you have a Christmas party or a Holiday party? Do you have kosher food available? Is there an appropriate selection for vegetarians.

**ACTIVITY—Separate into four groups and have the members read through each situation (See Appendix). Give the groups five minutes to discuss the various scenarios. Have a spokesperson from each group present their findings.**

The key to all of this is education. The challenge to become knowledgeable about ethnic and national perspectives may seem
overwhelming at first, but it is a challenge that we are obliged to meet.

Extracurricularly there are several avenues that a student can take to educate themselves. Attend lectures and forums sponsored by SA, BSA and SCPB, or have SLDB plan a diversity workshop for your organization. You can always attend a tea at the international house or attend "UniverCity" events. Volunteer at SVS or at the minority house. These are just a few of the ways that you can expand your cultural awareness. Multicultural education makes our lives so much richer. By sharing a meal or a simple conversation with our international students and professors we can literally take a trip around the world without ever leaving home.

Although there are several options to educate yourself extracurricularly, the options are scarce within Ball State Formal educational structure. Currently there are only two multicultural classes on BSU's roster. One is an educational psychology class that you have to be an education major to take and the other is a Intercultural Communications class.

What I would like to see is a M.C. communications class added to the the general studies curriculum. I believe that it should be listed as an option under global studies for the first two to four years and then make it mandatory after that.

In president Bush's educational platform he cited three main goals. First, he wanted to focus on competent writing skills--that is why we have the writing competency exam. Second, he wanted computer literacy--that is why many classes basic are requiring student/computer interaction. And
thirdly, he also wanted to focus on an external international awareness in order to function the global marketplace. Well, I propose that he add a fourth item to his agenda and bring the focus a little bit closer to home. I suggest that we target the diversity and cultural differences right here within our own country. It is our civic responsibility to prepare our fellow students to work together in an ever changing society.

Speaking of change, sometimes it is difficult because we have become comfortable. But this comfort can be dangerous.

(Transparency)

So far I have discussed the urgency of multicultural awareness, discussed some of the theories, as well as highlighted some of the problems with today's management techniques. M.C. education is a very important issue, and we as the future movers and shakers of the professional world need to rise to the occasion and educate ourselves and our fellow students on how to function in a diverse society. If we don't, they'll be moving and shaking all right. We'll be moved and shaken right out of our jobs due to incompetency.
ACTIVITY:

**SITUATION I:** You are a first semester freshman at Ball State University. You come from a small conservative town that consists of a mainly white, anglo-saxon, Protestant population. Your roommate is a very nice young girl, but she has a muslim-like faith and is very strict in her practice. She wears dark clothing, veils, and prays five times a day. How do you think that you would handle this situation?

**SITUATION II:** Your family is Catholic. You are not strict Catholics, but you generally follow your belief. Your brother has been away for a year and a half. The day after he returns he announces to the family that he is getting married and that his fiance is arriving the next day. The pinnacle of the situation is that she is Jewish.

How do you handle the situation?
Be sure to explain your reasoning.
What different type of reactions could you experience?

**SITUATION III:** Your company is trying to close a business deal with a company in India. If the presentation is good, the deal will most likely be closed. As the company president, you have to decide who to send. There are three individuals that have been working on this deal since the beginning.

Your top executive: A woman who has the best qualifications in the entire company. She is reliable as well as persuasive. She has experience closing several important business deals.

An energetic employee: This man is motivated, but lacks persuasive skills. He has worked on a few accounts, but is not experienced in international business.

Another executive: This man has had much success with closing business deals, but is not as good as the female. He is persuasive and dependable.

Who do you send to India?
Be sure to explain why.
SITUATION IV: Your fraternity or sorority is going through open rush and you are hoping to select twenty-three new members to meet quota. Unfortunately, there were only twenty people that signed up, and you need to take as many of them as possible. One of them is a non-traditional student. (About age 32) This individual has excellent leadership qualities, is motivated, and meets all of the other requirements of your chapter.

What do you do?
Be sure to explain you reasoning.