

PART 1: Define Cultural Diversity

If culture represents an aggregate manifestation of a society's values, behavioral norms, communication, and language, then cultural diversity must refer to the extent to which a society includes and integrates multiple cultural influences, languages, customs, beliefs, and values. In my opinion, cultural diversity must begin with socialization, understanding the social norms of others that are different from their own. As socialization progresses, the different cultures would begin to assimilate as part of the mainstream and simultaneously adapt, enculturate, and acculturate. However, I believe the concept of diversity innately implies richness and strength in the amalgamation of differences and therefore, the harmonious coexistence of differing entities plays an equally important role in the establishment of cultural diversity. That is, the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual groups. I see awareness, understanding, and respect as keys to experiencing true cultural diversity and preventing the spread of ethnocentric views.

I grew up in Hawaii, considered a "melting pot" of different cultures. For the most part, I think people of Hawaii preserve their respective heritages and strive toward structural assimilation of other groups, not necessarily with one dominant group as the ideal. They take pride in a multicultural makeup and identity of its own.

PART 2: Define Multicultural Education

Multicultural education must reflect, respect, and respond to the multicultural demographic of its learners, some with multiple backgrounds of their own. I think it begins with a recognition on the instructor's part of his/her own background, microinequities, and biases. I think culturally responsive pedagogy goes beyond social justice and simply placing students at the center. It requires a deeper awareness of their cultural norms, values, and behavior. Doing so will allow not only students to engage at their highest potential but educators to achieve higher levels of competence. Teachers must customize and align curriculums, teaching strategies, and content with the cultural landscape of the classroom. With increasing cultural diversity in the classroom, I believe the idea of multicultural education cannot be ignored and is an absolute necessity.