

4-1999

A Study of the Use of Multicultural Literature in the Elementary Classroom

Felice A. Ward
The College at Brockport

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses

 Part of the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

To learn more about our programs visit: <http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/>

Repository Citation

Ward, Felice A., "A Study of the Use of Multicultural Literature in the Elementary Classroom" (1999). *Education and Human Development Master's Theses*. 482.
http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/482

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Education and Human Development at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education and Human Development Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

**A Study of the Use of Multicultural Literature
in the Elementary Classroom**

THESIS

**Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Education and Human Development
State University of New York
College at Brockport
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education**

**By
Felice E. Ward**

**State University of New York
College at Brockport
Brockport, New York
April 1999**

Submitted By:

Felice E. Ward 5/3/99
Candidate Date

Approved By:

Arthur E. Smith 5/4/99
Thesis Advisor Date

Geneva Z. Bogy 5/6/99
Second Advisor Date

Scott D. Robinson 5/6/99
Director of Graduate Studies Date

Abstract

The first purpose of this study was to find out how teachers at the elementary level in suburban and urban schools implement multicultural literature into their classrooms. The second purpose was to find out where these teachers received instructional training on how to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

Today's classrooms are more culturally diverse than ever. It is important for teachers to be able to teach students from all ethnic backgrounds. Using multicultural literature can be a way to address diversity in the classroom.

Three Monroe County elementary schools are included in this study. Two of the schools are in a suburban setting and one school is in an urban setting.

A survey, developed by the researcher to find out the usage and level of training in multicultural literature, was given to all teachers teaching grades kindergarten through sixth grade. Forty-five teachers responded to the survey.

A descriptive analysis of the data from the surveys indicates that all the subjects used multicultural literature in their classrooms. Multicultural literature is integrated into several subject areas, student libraries, and teacher libraries. The data also revealed that teacher preparation institutions have provided very little instruction in the use, evaluation, and selection of multicultural literature. The data

indicated that the suburban school district barely provided any teacher in-services on multicultural literature. However, the urban school district did provide opportunities for teachers to receive instruction on how to use multicultural literature through the use of teacher in-services.

Table of Contents

Chapter I	Page
Statement of Purpose.....	1
Purpose	1
Need for the Study	1
Questions	3
Definition of Terms	3
 Chapter II	
Review of the Literature	4
Purpose	4
What is Multicultural Literature?	4
History	5
Teacher Preparation	6
Benefits	9
Evaluation and Selection	13
Integration	16
 Chapter III	
Design of the Study	18
Purpose	18

Methodology	19
Analysis of Data	20
Chapter IV	
Analysis of Data	21
Purpose	21
Results	21
Chapter V	
Conclusions and Implications	26
Purpose	26
Conclusions	26
Implications for the Classroom	29
Implications for Further Research	31
References	32
Appendix	35

CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers at the elementary level implement multicultural literature in their classrooms. The second purpose was to find out where teachers received instructional training on how to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

Need for the Study

More than ever, teachers today are teaching in racially and culturally diverse classrooms. Students of color will make up about 50% of the student population by the year 2020 (Banks, 1991). As the make-up of the classroom becomes diversified, there is an essential need to have teachers, who can meet the needs of all students.

Some researchers suggest teacher institutions and teacher educators are aware of the need to recognize and address the diversity in today's classrooms.

Nevertheless, only a very small percentage of teacher preparation programs require a multicultural education course in their teacher certification process (Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Phuntsog, 1995).

Furthermore, many teachers, who happen to be of European descent have had very little personal involvement with multi-ethnic experiences (Sultana, 1994). Hence, a substantial number of preservice teachers have stereotypic views about students of color who happen to attend urban schools (Aaronsohn, Carter, & Howell, 1995). Consequently, according to Schmidt (1996) research revealed that only a limited number of teachers today are aware of the need to understand and value the diversity in the classroom. Such teachers have the foresight to recognize the benefits and pursue a diverse approach to learning through the use of multicultural literature.

Using multi-ethnic literature offers all students a way to develop an awareness of the differences and similarities that exist among cultures (Cargle, 1993; Kuperus, 1992; Lambert, 1994; Thompson, 1990). Moreover, teachers can also benefit from diverse literature. According to Chevalier and Houser (1997) some preservice teachers were able to achieve multicultural self-development through the use of multicultural literature. Integrating multi-ethnic literature into the curriculum requires a commitment by teachers, who want to successfully prepare students to understand the diversity they will face in today's society.

Research Questions

1. What is the basic level of multicultural literature usage in a sample of suburban and urban elementary classrooms in Western New York?
2. Where did teachers receive instructional training on how to use multicultural literature?

Definition of Terms

Multicultural literature is defined in this study as literature about people of color-- African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans (Harris, 1995)

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers at the elementary level implement multicultural literature in their classrooms. The second purpose was to find out where teachers received instructional training on how to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

What is Multicultural Literature?

A multicultural perspective is a relatively new approach in the area of education. Before the late 1970s, multicultural education was not even listed in the *Education Index* (Tiedt & Tiedt, 1990). It has only been within the last few years that materials have been published under this heading (Tiedt & Tiedt, 1990). Multicultural literature evolved from multicultural education.

There is not just one generic definition for multicultural literature. According to Diamond and Moore (1995) multicultural literature is, “literature

that focuses on specific cultures by highlighting and celebrating their cultural and historical perspectives, traditions and heritage, language and dialects, and experiences and lifestyles” (p. 43). However, Bishop (1993) states that most frequently the term “multicultural literature refers to books about people of color in this country— African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans” (p. 43 as cited in Diamond & Moore, 1995). On the other hand, Sleeter and Grant (1992) have developed a broader definition, “... to recognize, accept, and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender, race, handicap, and class” (p. 137). Developing a definition for multicultural literature depends upon one’s interpretation of literature that is culturally diverse.

What is The History Behind Multicultural Literature?

A Eurocentric (White) perspective has dominated the educational arena in the United States. According to Banks (1991) and Taxel (1997) multicultural literature grew out of the Civil Rights Movement coupled with the Women’s Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These two movements created an awareness about the inequalities and lack of social justice for people of color. Consequently, this led to empower people of color by recognizing and questioning

the inequalities that existed in their children's schools. Through this awareness parental involvement became instrumental in literature selections becoming multicultural and elevating the level of social consciousness (Finazzo, 1997).

What are Educational Institutions Doing to Prepare Teachers to Teach a Diverse Student Population?

Teaching institutions and teacher educators pass on knowledge to people aspiring to be teachers. These institutions and educators are supposed to provide the necessary education that future teachers can build upon in order to become successful teachers. Educational philosophies and method courses are essential components to educating teachers. Preservice teachers need this knowledge in order to reflect, examine and integrate this information into what will make them teachers. What education professes to value is not always taught. The need for a multicultural approach to education has been acknowledged and ignored for the most part in teacher programs (Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Phuntsog, 1995). An important element is missing from the core curriculum. This absence hinders many teachers from having the necessary skills to meet the needs of all students. Many

teachers and preservice teachers have not been adequately prepared to teach in culturally diverse classrooms (Aaronsohn, Carter, & Howell, 1995; McMahon & Reeves-Kazelskis, 1995; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995).

Today, public schools are racially and culturally diverse. By 2020, students of color will make up about half of the student population (Banks, 1991). Some researchers suggest that teacher institutions and teacher educators recognize the need for multicultural education (Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Phuntsog, 1995). However, they have yet to implement courses that could rectify this weakness in teaching certification programs. A weakness in teacher preparation programs is exacerbated by the lack of commitment to cultural diversity (Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Phuntsog, 1995). Even recently accredited teacher education programs are not dealing with diversity. Gollnick observed (as cited in Melnick & Zeichner, 1995), “Of the first 59 institutions which sought national accreditation for their teacher education programs under the 1987 standards, only eight (13.6%) were in full compliance with the minimum multicultural education requirement for teacher education programs” (pp. 4-5). McMahon and Reeves-Kazelskis (1995) further state that, “Of the 48 state departments ... only nine included multicultural education requirements in their teacher certification process” (p. 5). Some professional educator organizations such as *The Association of Teacher Educators* and *The National Association for Educators of Young Children* see the need for

today's educators to become more culturally aware (McMahon & Reeves-Kazelskis, 1995).

Furthermore, the majority of teachers and aspiring teachers are predominantly white (Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Phuntsog, 1995). Many of these teachers and yet-to-be teachers have had very little experience with multi-ethnic experiences. Sultana (1994) who found that teachers come from a homogeneous group, states "For a majority of this population multicultural education is an unknown and unfamiliar concept" (p. 7).

According to Aaronsohn, Carter, and Howell (1995) a considerable number of preservice teachers have preconceived notions about the inner city student population. They tend to think that these students are out of control, disruptive, and disrespectful. Many of these teachers tend to have stereotypic views about the students they teach or will teach, based on race and social class, and these attitudes are reflected through the use of bias behaviors within the classroom and school setting. Although these notions are prevalent, Aaronsohn et al. concluded that undergraduate and graduate students had different levels of negative attitudes towards inner city students. Consequently, some of the most damaging results from these attitudes are that many of these undergraduate students believe that inner city students "... don't want to learn as much as kids in

suburbs... less than 5% of preteachers indicated they expected to see ‘kids just like any other kids’” (p. 6). On the other hand, graduate students tended to view inner city schools much like the ones they had attended. However, a common misperception about these students was that there was, “‘...lack of values’ in families of low income” (p.7).

Schmidt (1996) did a case study on a teacher’s attempt to implement a multicultural literacy approach to learning in a kindergarten class. The subject of the case study reported that, “many of her colleagues embraced the assimilationist perspective which expects minorities to fit into the dominant ‘American’ culture...” (p. 27). Schmidt (1996) further concluded that research revealed that few educators are aware of the need for understanding and appreciating cultural diversity in the classroom. As the cultural diversity of the student population expands, there is an essential need to have teachers who can meet the needs of all students. Teachers who have the ability to acknowledge the diversity are showing all students that each is a valued member of the classroom.

What are Some Specific Benefits of Multicultural Literature?

As children become “readers,” there are certain documented benefits such as vocabulary growth and their ability to utilize a variety of reading strategies.

These benefits allow children to come to appreciate literature as a source of pleasure, entertainment, and information. Literature can also be used to develop an awareness of today's social and moral issues (Harris, 1990; Thompson & Meeks, 1990). Literature has the ability through the written word to let us experience feelings, recognize friction, seek solutions and to explore new places and people we may or may not know. However, literature in itself cannot fix all the problems in today's society. Harris (1990) quoted children's author Eloise Greenfield:

My attempts and those of other writers to offer sustenance will necessarily be largely ineffectual. Not only do we as human beings have limitations- so also does the written word. It cannot be eaten, or worn; it cannot cure disease; it cannot dissipate pollution, de-fang a racist, cause a spoonful of heroin to disintegrate. But at the right time, in the right circumstances, falling on the right mind, a word may take effect. (p. 538)

Most teachers may acknowledge that multicultural literature exists. They are not aware, however, of the substantial benefits that students can receive from its use. Roney (1986) and Norton (1985) states (as cited in Garcia & Pugh, 1992), "... that culturally pluralistic materials enhance language and cognitive development in the language arts..." (p. 151). Several researchers have found that multicultural literature offers all children the opportunity to develop an awareness about other cultures (Cargle, 1993; Kuperus, 1992; Lambert, 1994; Thompson, 1990). Through this awareness, students can develop an insight into the

differences and similarities among cultures. Multicultural literature can be used as a vehicle to show students an accurate picture of cultures. Kuperus (1992) conducted an action research project that studied the multicultural awareness of twenty-three third graders. Reading and interacting with children's literature were the methods used in this project. The research found that these students were positively affected in the areas of knowledge and attitudes toward different cultural and societal groups through their interactions with the literature. However, the researcher also discovered that changing her predominantly White middle class students' stereotypic views of Native Americans was a difficult challenge. She found that the media and literature were the main sources for these misguided attitudes.

A teacher's awareness of the benefits of multicultural literature is only the beginning. Now, teachers need to introduce students to the enriching world of multicultural literature (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). Teachers are entrusted with the monumental task of building the students' educational foundation. However, it is also a major responsibility of teachers to prepare students to successfully interact in a diverse society. Multicultural literature is an effective way to introduce students to the diversity they will encounter today and tomorrow (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). According to Lambert (1994) if teachers believe that their students are not interested in multicultural literature, they will be less inclined to use it in

the classroom. However, teachers need to decide if it is their non-acceptance of diverse literature that is hindering students' interest in multicultural literature.

Lambert (1994) states that using multicultural literature might not be sufficient to develop an interest in multicultural literature. Therefore, teachers will need to discover other ways to stimulate and interest students in diverse literature.

The benefits of multicultural literature can be experienced by students, as well as teachers. Chevalier and Houser (1997) conducted a one semester study involving predominantly European American preservice teachers. Multicultural literature was used to encourage multicultural self-development among these students. Multicultural self-awareness occurred in four stages: struggle, resistance, heightened awareness, and resolution to change. The findings of this study revealed that some preservice teachers were able to obtain the level of multicultural self-development through the use of diverse literature. Chevalier and Houser (1997) suggested that patience and effort are two important elements that can aid teachers in their own growth. Teachers will then be able to promote the growth of multicultural awareness in their students.

Criteria for Evaluating and Selecting Multicultural Literature

Historically, in children's literature people of color have been portrayed negatively (Diamond & Moore, 1995; Harris, 1993). Sims (1982) states (as cited in Diamond & Moore, 1995), "that by the late 1960s and early 1970s the negative images of blacks in children's literature were more subtle, focusing on stereotypes that Sims said included matriarchal family and the 'super Negro'" (p. 47). Micklos (1996) further reports that children of color were almost nonexistent in children's literature. The scarcity of non-white characters in children's literature is not only applicable to African Americans, but other ethnic groups as well. A committee called the *Asian American Children's Book Project*, "found a total of 66 books... of the 66 titles, most were about Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans... with the exception of one or two, the 66 books were 'racist, sexist, and elitist and that the image of Asian Americans they present is grossly misleading'" (Harris, 1993, p. 113).

One reason for the infusion of inaccurate stereotypic portrayals is that much of children's literature is written from the mainstream point of view (Banks, 1991; Reimer, 1992). The most damaging stereotypes involve racial, religious, or ethnic prejudices (Tiedt, 1990). Several researchers remind teachers to select

multicultural literature that depicts an accurate portrayal of ethnic groups (Harris, 1990; Kuperus, 1992; Thompson, 1990).

While teachers are aware that multicultural literature exists, they do not place a high value on using diverse literature in the curriculum. Many teachers are aware of their lack of knowledge in the area of evaluating and selecting this type of literature. Therefore, they doubt their ability to select multicultural literature that is free from stereotypic images (Banks, 1991; Diamond & Moore, 1995; Harris, 1993). Teachers need to be aware that there are good authentic, enriching literature written by and about people of color (Harris, 1993; Harris, 1991).

There are specific characteristics that should be applied when evaluating and selecting multicultural literature:

1- Characters who authentically reflect the distinct cultural experiences, realities, and world view of a specific group.

2- Character representations portrayed in a true-to-life and balanced manner.

3- Settings representative of an environment consistent with a historical/contemporary time, place, or situation of the specific culture.

4- Themes developed within the story or selection that are consistent with the values and beliefs, customs and traditions, needs, and conflicts of the specific culture.

5- Informational literature presented in a detailed and accurate manner.

6- Language characteristic of the distinctive vocabulary, style, patterns, and rhythm of speech of the specific cultural group.

7- Literature that is free of stereotypes in language, illustrations, behaviors, and character traits.

8- Language that reflects a sensibility to the people of the culture; offensive, negative, or degrading vocabulary in descriptions of characters, their customs, and lifestyles is absent.

9- Gender roles within the culture portrayed accurately and authentically reflecting the changing status and roles of women and men in many cultures.

(Diamond & Moore, 1995, pp. 44-46)

According to Bank (1991),

A teacher who is sensitive and knowledgeable, regardless of his or her ethnic or racial group, can learn any subject effectively. However, it is important for students to be exposed to the points of view and perceptions of members in various ethnic groups... selecting sensitive and powerful teaching materials... (p. 505).

Banks (1991) suggests that an effective way to select excellent books on ethnic themes is to seek out and evaluate new works by authors who have a reputation of writing sensitive books for children.

It is also important to ask for, and to listen to students' perspectives on multicultural literature. Students need to become active critics in the literature that they read (Diamond & Moore, 1995). Therefore, they will be able to develop the ability to recognize the differences between authentic multicultural literature and literature that is embedded with stereotypes.

Integrating Multicultural Literature into The Elementary Classroom

The integration of multicultural literature into the curriculum takes a commitment by teachers who want to successfully help students develop an understanding of the diverse cultures that make up today's society. There are ways in which to use multicultural resources that can help teachers integrate a pluralistic approach to learning into the curriculum.

Teachers act as models and guides when they integrate multicultural literature into the classroom. The classroom will become an open forum for engaging discussions, thus allowing students to read, reflect, and become actively involved in the text (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995).

An effective way to integrate multicultural literature into the classroom is through a study of an ethnic group using traditional folk literature. This literature should represent aspects of the culture in several ways. Usually, folk literature is written by authors from specific cultures. This allows the authors to give an insider's perspective; therefore helping others to appreciate traditions, values, beliefs, and life experiences from their cultures (Diamond & Moore, 1995; Yokota, 1993).

Multicultural literature includes informational books, folktales, biographies, poetry, fantasy, fiction, and picture books. These types of books can be integrated

into the content area by extending and enriching thematic units, thus making learning stimulating and interesting (Diamond & Moore, 1995).

The integration of a specific theme into content areas is a current trend used in teaching today. Aforementioned research by Kruprus (1992) was a year-long study with third-graders from a very homogeneous group. The students used paired reading, book discussions, and written responses as a way to utilize fiction and nonfiction multicultural books that related to the third-grade social studies curriculum. As a result of this approach, she found that her students displayed a positive growth in attitudes and awareness of multi-ethnic groups.

One of the most utilized instructional tools used by teachers is the textbook. Garcia and Sanchez (1990) found that textbooks have come a long way. Publishers of textbooks are trying to portray cultural groups more accurately. He finds that textbooks do describe some element of the minority experience, to what extent he does not address. However, he further implies that there are still textbooks that have stereotypic information. He concluded that, while these books are multicultural, little is known about how teachers use these books and how they promote multiculturalism. It is not enough to use textbooks that are embedded with a multicultural emphasis. Teachers need to recognize the strengths and weakness of textbooks, but they must also use a variety of materials that will help students gain an awareness of the diversity that surrounds them.

CHAPTER III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers at the elementary level implement multicultural literature in their classrooms. The second purpose was to find out where teachers received instructional training on how to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

Research Questions

1. What is the basic level of multicultural literature usage in a sample of suburban and urban elementary classrooms in Western New York?
2. Where did teachers receive instructional training on how to use multicultural literature?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects were all classroom teachers at the elementary level teaching grades kindergarten through sixth. Thirty-eight of the subjects were female and seven were male. Forty-three of the subjects were Caucasian and two were African American. Twenty-nine of the subjects were from the same school district, but they were from two different suburban schools. Sixteen of the subjects were from one school in an urban school district.

Materials

A thirteen question survey (Appendix) was used to obtain data from the subjects. The surveys administered to each school were color coded. The color coded surveys enabled the researcher to identify and organize surveys according to schools. A cover letter was used to introduce the researcher, explain the reasoning behind the research, give a specific definition for multicultural literature, and give instructions on how to return the survey to the building contact person.

Procedures

The researcher met with the principal at the school in which she teaches. The researcher explained the purpose of the research and obtained permission to proceed with the surveys in her school. Since the researcher was fairly new to the school district and to the area, her principal suggested one suburban and urban school in which to administer the survey. This principal also contacted the principals at the other schools and obtained their permission to have the survey conducted in their schools. A contact person in each building was asked for their assistance in administering and collecting the surveys. All people contacted agreed to help with the survey.

The surveys were put in all classroom teachers' mailboxes. The surveys were returned to the contact person one week later. The completed surveys were forwarded to the researcher by the contact person at each school.

Analysis of Data

A descriptive analysis of the data was completed to find out how multicultural literature is used in the elementary classroom and also to find out where teachers received instructional training on how to use this type of literature.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers at the elementary level implement multicultural literature in their classrooms. The second purpose was to find out where teachers received instructional training on how to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the basic level of multicultural literature usage in a sample of urban and suburban elementary classrooms in Western New York?

The first five questions of the survey elicited background information about the subjects. The following table presents a display of the responses to the seven survey questions (items # 6 - 12) about the use of multicultural literature.

Table 1

Percent Responses to Survey Items Six through Twelve

Pieces of multicultural literature used

Question #6 How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use as read alouds?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	Over 9
Suburban	3%		7%	17%	14%	59%
Urban		6%	13%	6%	6%	69%

Question #7 How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use in social studies?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	Over 9
Suburban			10%	21%	24%	45%
Urban	13%	13%		13%	13%	50% *

Question #8 How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use in language arts?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	Over 9
Suburban	3%		14%	17%	10%	55%*
Urban	6%			13%	13%	69%*

Question #9 How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use in math?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	Over 9
Suburban		34%	17%	24%	14%	10%
Urban	6%	31%	25%	19%		19%

Question #10 How many pieces of multicultural literature are in your students' library?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	Over 9
Suburban						100%
Urban						100%

Question #11 How many pieces of multicultural literature are in your teacher's library?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	Over 9
Suburban	10%		10%		7%	72%*
Urban						100%

Question #12 To what degree is multicultural literature utilized in your basal?

<u>Schools</u>	N/A	Very little	Some	Great deal
Suburban	14%	31%	41%	31%
Urban			25%	75%

Note. * All items do not total 100% due to calculation factors.

The information gathered and examined reveals that multicultural literature is used in suburban and urban schools. The data showed that multicultural literature is utilized in several subject areas. The data indicated that in the category of using over 9 pieces of multicultural literature, teachers teaching in an urban setting had the highest percentage in all areas. The minimum integration of multicultural literature occurred in the area of math.

However, all suburban and urban teachers integrated over 9 pieces of multicultural literature into their student libraries. Furthermore, the urban teachers also successfully included over 9 pieces of multicultural literature into their library. The data also suggested that 75% of the teachers who teach in the urban

setting used basals that included more multicultural literature as compared to only 31% of teachers who teach in the suburban setting. Furthermore, 14% of teachers who teach in the suburban setting used basals that included very little multicultural literature.

Research Question 2

Where did teachers receive instructional training on how to use multicultural literature?

Forty-five surveys were administered. Nineteen teachers did respond and 26 teachers did not respond to question thirteen. The data revealed that 58% (11 responses) of teachers stated that they had some exposure to multicultural literature while in college. This exposure typically took place in a children's literature course. However, only 11% (2 responses) of the teachers had taken a multicultural education course. Fifty-three percent (10 responses) of the teachers had taken district in-service and 26% (5 responses) had taken out of district conferences pertaining to multicultural literature. The data showed that teachers who teach in the urban setting attended more district in-services on multicultural literature. However, teachers who teach in the suburban setting rarely had the opportunity to attend district in-services on multicultural literature.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers at the elementary level implement multicultural literature in their classrooms. The second purpose was to find out where teachers received instructional training on how to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

Conclusions

The data clearly indicated that teachers who teach in suburban and urban schools use multicultural literature. Multicultural literature is integrated in several subject areas at the elementary level. However, using a literature/math connection is a relatively new concept. Consequently, many teachers did not use multicultural literature in the area of math. All teachers included multicultural literature in their student libraries at suburban and urban schools. Furthermore, many of these teachers also included multicultural literature in their libraries. Seventy-five percent of the teachers who teach in an urban setting used basals that ranged from

some to a great deal of multicultural literature. However, some teachers who teach in suburban schools are still using basals that include very little multicultural literature.

Most teachers in this study are exposing their students to diverse literature. Several of these teachers in both suburban and urban schools seem to place some value on using multicultural literature. They have integrated multicultural literature into various areas. Teachers who have used over nine pieces of multicultural literature in a variety of areas seem to be making a great effort to expose their students to multicultural literature. However, it is disturbing to find that some teachers who teach in an urban school choose not to use multicultural literature as read alouds. It is also unsettling to find teachers who teach in an urban school and are not using multicultural literature in the subject area of social studies. Typically, social studies has been one of easiest area to integrate this type of literature. Furthermore, it is surprising to find that some teachers that teach in suburban schools still use basals that include very little multicultural literature. While many teachers seemed to have identified positive value in the realization that students can benefit from the use of multicultural literature, others have a long way to go.

The data also revealed that teacher preparation institutions have provided very little instruction in the evaluation, selection, and the use of multicultural

literature. Furthermore, beyond some exposure to multicultural literature in a children's literature course, teachers have not received adequate instructional training on how to integrate multicultural literature into the classroom.

Since colleges have inadequately prepared teachers to use materials that are effective in addressing the needs of a diverse student population, teachers will have to seek out ways in which to learn how to use, evaluate, and select multicultural literature. Those who teach in suburban schools will have to look outside their district for this type of instruction. The suburban school district in this study hardly provide any teacher in-services on multicultural literature. The urban school district provided the opportunity for teachers to receive some instructional training on the use of multicultural literature. However, some of those teachers chose not to study multicultural literature.

Whatever the reasons, a lack of opportunities within the school district, personal choice, or inadequate teacher preparation training, several teachers are using multicultural literature without sufficient training. This condition limits the potential benefit of multicultural literature in a diverse student population.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

The result of this research indicates that some progress has been made in the acknowledgment and recognition of benefits and utilization of a multicultural approach to learning. However, research also indicates that there is still a long way to go before teachers and students can successfully develop an appreciation for the similarities and differences in our culturally diverse society.

Many teacher institutions have for the most part neglected to provide instruction on how to successfully teach a diverse student population. Several teacher preparation institutions do not require a multicultural education course in their certification program (McMahon & Reeves-Kazelskis, 1995). Furthermore, if multicultural literature is introduced at the college level it usually happens in a children's literature course. This course may or may not include instruction on how to evaluate, select, and use authentic multicultural literature. Consequently, teachers will have to pursue other options to obtain methods in multicultural instruction. Teachers will have to seek out workshops that may be in another district, staff development courses that might be in another district, out of district conferences, and books that teach multicultural strategies that they can incorporate into their classrooms.

Furthermore, teachers need to develop a multicultural awareness that allows them to make a commitment to teaching using a pluralistic approach to learning. These teachers will be able to recognize and utilize the cultural diversity that exists within and outside the classroom.

Many teachers are also aware of the benefits gained from using literature in the classroom. However, teachers need to introduce authentic multicultural literature to their students. Then their students can develop an awareness of how multiethnic cultures have similarities and differences. Students will have a common starting point which fosters growth. This growth will allow students to acknowledge one's own culture and other cultures that they will encounter today and tomorrow.

Teachers need to become active participants in the pursuit of pluralistic approach to learning. Teachers can learn how to select quality multicultural literature, textbooks, and educational resources. Moreover, teachers need to remember that it is just not enough to select appropriate literature. Teachers should also learn how to integrate these resources appropriately into the curriculum that will allow students to receive and produce beneficial results.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A multicultural approach towards learning is a relatively new area of research in education. There has been some research conducted in the areas of multicultural perspective in teaching institutions, multicultural literature, and its integration into the curriculum. However, there is a great deal of research that is needed to answer the following questions:

1. What instructional methods are most effective for making students aware of diversity within and outside the classroom?
2. What instructional methods are most effective for integrating multicultural literature into the curriculum?
3. How are teachers evaluating and selecting multicultural literature?
4. What effective strategies do teachers use to integrate multicultural literature into the content area?
5. Is multicultural literature used at the middle and high school levels? Is multicultural literature integrated into the high school Regent English courses?

REFERENCES

- Aaronsohn, E., Carter, C. J., & Howell, M. (1995). Preparing monocultural teachers for a multicultural world: Attitudes toward inner-city schools. Equity & Excellence in Education, 28 (1), 5-9.
- Bank, J. A. (1991). Teaching strategies for ethnic studies. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bishop, R. (1992). Multicultural literature for children: Making informed choices. In V. Harris (ED.), Teaching Multicultural Literature in Grades K-8, 37-53. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Cargle, M. K. M. (1993). Multicultural literature in elementary schools (Clearinghouse No. IR 054 560). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 357 752)
- Chevalier, M., & Houser, N. O. (1997). Preservice teachers multicultural self-development through adolescent fiction. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 40 (6), 426-435.
- Diamond, B.J., & Moore, M. A. (1995). Multicultural literacy: Mirroring the reality of the classroom. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Dietrich, D., & Ralph, K. S. (1995). Crossing borders: Multicultural literature in the classroom. The Journal of Educational Issue of Language Minority Students, 15, 1-8.
- Finazzo, D. A. (1997). All for the children: Multicultural essentials for literature. Albany, NY: Delmar.
- Garcia, J., & Sanchez, T. (1990). Multicultural textbooks: How to use them more effectively in the classroom (Clearinghouse No. EA 021 915). Boston, MA: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 320 262)

Garcia, J. & Pugh, S. (1992). Children's nonfiction multicultural literature: Some promises and disappointments. Equity & Excellence, 25 (2-4), 151-155.

Harris, V. J. (1990). Benefits of children's literature. Journal of Negro Education, 59 (4), 538-539.

Harris, V. J. (1993). Teaching multicultural literature in Grades K-8. Christopher- Norwood, MA: Gordon.

Kuperus, C. G. (1992). Using interaction with children's literature to positively affect the global and multicultural/multiethnic knowledge and attitudes of third-grade students (Clearinghouse No. SO 022 949). Michigan State University, MI: An action research project. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 144)

Lambert, J. C. (1994). Teacher perceptions of student interest in multicultural tradebooks (Clearinghouse No. SP 039 538). Chicago, IL: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwestern Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 381 541)

McMahon, R., & Reeves-Kazelskis, C. (1995). Effects of children's literature on preservice teachers' opinions about multicultural education issues (Clearinghouse No. SP 036 638). Biloxi, MS: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 394 941)

Melnick, S. L., & Zeichner, K. M. (1995). Teacher education for cultural diversity: Enhancing the capacity of teacher education institutions to address diversity issues (Clearinghouse No. SP 036 487). East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 392 751)

Micklos, J. J. (1996). 30 years of minorities in children's books. The Education Digest, 62 (1), 61-64.

Phuntsog, N. (1995). Teacher educators' perceptions of the importance of multicultural education in the preparation of elementary teachers. Equity & Excellence in Education, 28 (1), 10-14.

Reimer, K. M. (1992). Multiethnic literature: Holding fast to dreams. Language Arts, 69 (1), 14-21.

Schmidt, P. R. (1996). One teacher's reflections: Implementing multicultural literacy learning. Equity & Excellence in Education, 29 (2), 20-28.

Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (1994). Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class, and gender. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Sultana, Q. (1994). Evaluation of multicultural education's understanding and knowledge in freshman level preservice teachers (Clearinghouse No. SP 036 298). Nashville, TN: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 389 672)

Taxel, J. (1997). Multicultural literature and the politics of reaction. Teacher College Record, 29 (3), 417-448.

Thompson, D. L., & Meeks, J. W. (1990). Assessing teachers' knowledge of multi-ethnic literature (Clearinghouse No. CS 212 653). Sarasota, FL: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Reading Forum. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 328 916)

Tiedt, P. L., & Tiedt, I. M. (1990). Multicultural Teaching: A handbook of activities, information, and resources. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Trzyna, G. D., & Miller, S. (1997). A case study of learning in an integrated literature-history class: Personal narrative, critical reflection, and Kris's way of knowing
Albany, NY: National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 405 590)

Yokota, J. (1993). Issues in selecting multicultural children's literature. Language Arts, 70, 156-167.

Appendix

Survey

Please circle or write the appropriate response.

1. **M** or **F**

2. Number of years teaching **0** **1-5** **6-10** **11-16** **over 16**

3. Grade level that you are presently teaching **K** **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

4. Your Ethnic Background

Caucasian **African American** **Asian American** **Hispanic American**
Native American **Other**

5. Ethnic makeup of class: Please write the number of students that are members of the following ethnic groups. _____ **Caucasian** _____ **African American**

_____ **Asian American**

_____ **Hispanic American** _____ **Native American** _____ **Other**

6. How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use as read alouds during the year?

0 **1-3** **4-6** **7-9** **over 9**

7. How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use in social studies?

0 **1-3** **4-6** **7-9** **over 9**

8. How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use in language arts?

0 **1-3** **4-6** **7-9** **over 9**

9. How many pieces of multicultural literature do you use in math?

0 **1-3** **4-6** **7-9** **over 9**

10. How many pieces of multicultural literature are in your student's library?

0 **1-3** **4-6** **7-9** **over 9**

11. How many pieces of multicultural literature are in your teacher's library?

0 1-3 4-6 7-9 over 9

12. To what degree is multicultural literature utilized in your basal?

none very little some a great deal

13. List the training you had in the use of multicultural literature?

college

out of district conference

district in-service

Additional Comments:
