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The need to achieve harmony in a world defined by human diversity in all its manifestations—religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, etc.—is crucial for survival of the human species and the global planet. While the world has always been diverse due to the presence of indigenous people, interactions among people from diverse backgrounds occurs more substantially contemporarily due to immigration, displacement or forced relocation, and global movement of people for commercial, social, and political purposes. In crossing borders of difference, people do not leave their cultural orientations—value systems, worldviews, cultural repertoires of practice, etc.—in their home settings. This creates a need to foster new ways of being citizens in a world marked by the affirmation of difference, the reality of transnationalism, and the ideals of global harmony. Education is vital to this process, as highlighted by Stavenhagen (2008):

In today’s globalised and interconnected world, living together peacefully has become a moral, social and political imperative on which depends, to a great extent, the survival of human kind. No wonder that education, its widest sense is called upon to play a major role in this world-wide shared task.

(p. 161)

This chapter adds to the clamor of voices describing the role that multicultural education might play in this shared global task. These descriptions are found in books (see, for example, Banks, 2009b; Grant & Portero, 2011), journals (see, for example, the International Journal of Multicultural Education and Multicultural Education Review), and international symposia sponsored by professional associations (the Korean Association for Multicultural Education, the International Association for Intercultural Education, and National Association for Multicultural Education).

The focus on understanding, respecting, and affirming diversity within the nation-state has historically been the primary focus of multicultural education (also called intercultural education² in many nations) since its inception. Indeed, all societies are multicultural “in more than one sense, since, in addition to indigenous peoples, there are also national and ethnic minorities, immigrants from different cultures and other groups demanding their right to exercise their cultural identity” (Stavenhagen, 2008, pp. 171–172). We believe that most nation-states now recognize the immorality of forced cultural and linguistic assimilation, seeking instead to affirm difference while simultaneously promoting social unity.
While some multicultural education in international and culturally diverse national contexts focuses on the value and practices of human rights education (Pimentel, 2006), we focus on **access to quality multicultural education as a human right** of its own accord, in which all students are entitled to an education that is multicultural. In this regard, we believe multicultural education can play a valuable role in the conception of human rights. We also assert that multicultural education can benefit from rooting itself in human rights principles: the right to learn about oneself, to learn about others, and to learn citizenship skills associated with a deep democracy in a global age.

### Framing the need for multicultural education

Humans understand and explain phenomena through conceptual lenses or cognitive frameworks (Bensimon, 2005). Ruiz (1984) reviews cognitive frames used to describe the need for bilingual education, explaining that bilingual education was once framed as a problem (focusing on English-only approaches to language diversity) and as an instrument to achieve assimilationist ends to get students to speak English quickly. Ruiz, however, argues for bilingual education as a human right, a means and an end to affirming language diversity.

Correspondingly, we assert that various frames exist to describe the needs for multicultural education. Changing demographics and closing the achievement gap frame multicultural education as a way to solve problems; cross-cultural competence is often framed as a means of developing human relations skills and dispositions; countering colonization and hegemony is viewed from lenses to recognize and challenge systemic and structural inequities. We believe these frames extend and can be extended by viewing multicultural education as a human right.

### The foundations of multicultural education as a human right

The proposition that multicultural education is a human right is rooted in viewing access to quality education and cultural diversity as internationally recognized rights. Inspired by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas’s (2000) scholarship on language diversity as a human right, we also draw on various international declarations on human rights and education rights, especially UNESCO’s *Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2002), and the contemporary development of a declaration of education rights advanced by Jim Strickland (n.d.).

### Access to quality education as a human right

In initial contemporary international accords, access to education has been understood as an essential human right and a vehicle for advancing human rights. Article 26 of *The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948) explained:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(p. 76)

The focus of these efforts was on situating education – free, compulsory, and lifelong – as both a means and an end to human rights.

Recently, the focus has shifted from access toward assuring quality educational experiences (Pimentel, 2006). For example, UNESCO’s Medium-Term Strategy focused on “improving
the quality of education through the diversification of contents and methods” (Pimentel, 2006, p. 11). Threats to quality education include increasing neoliberal reforms that consider education an individual good, purchased for commercial interests, not as a public good for community responsibility (Pimentel, 2006). The concern is that neoliberalism in education leads to a “two-tiered system that creates inequities rooted in social class, caste, and gender” (p. 8).

The focus of education as a human right has primarily been described as an entitlement to the individual. In 1989, however, during the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), rights to education for individuals and for human rights purposes were affirmed and extended to include cultural rights. Article 29 states:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
(c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.6

Article 29 considers education as central to development of the fullest human potential. The role of education to promote cross-cultural competencies associated with respecting differences and promoting human relations across those differences is made manifest. It also speaks to affirmation and respect for cultural rights and it values both current and heritage nations to which a child identifies. Article 30 of that same Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) states:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

These articles effectively coupled cultural and linguistic diversity with human (individual) rights to education.

**Cultural diversity: expanding the human rights discourse**

Spurred by globalization and the transnational movement of people, most nation-states now understand the need to assure both individual rights and collective rights of ethnic and national minorities, language groups, religious minorities, indigenous peoples, and migrant communities (Koenig & de Guchteneire, 2007). This gains significance as people demand full inclusion into society and recognition for their identities in the public sphere.

This shift critiques the assumption that cultural homogeneity is required for civic unity. The previous ideology and discourse focused on rights of individuals and forging a culturally
uniform national identity. This led to national policies and programs directed at achieving cultural homogenization, such as US Americanization efforts, since claims for ethnic or national recognition were described as threats to national unity.

Challenging the assumption that cultural homogeneity is required for national unity raises important questions: how can recognizing group identity also assure trust and solidarity to the nation-state, and how can we reconcile group identity with individual rights for inclusion (Koenig & de Guchteneire, 2007)? The previous focus was on individual rights and national unity via cultural homogenization, which has shifted to a triangle of individual rights, social group identities, and national unity via cultural diversity within a democratic context. The question then becomes: which public policies and institutional arrangements can be developed to assure harmony within this triangle?

At the same time, we ask, is allegiance to a nation-state a conception of citizenship no longer useful or only partially appropriate? We recognize multiple dimensions of citizenship, including legal, psychological, and political (Rusciano, 2014). But we also wonder about citizenship that speaks to, instead, the need for solidarity to global publics and citizenship as a way of living and being in the world.

Ample public policies related to the human rights of individuals have been pushed as an international value supported by international organizations. Recently, this has extended to include equality and freedom from discrimination for ethnic and linguistic minorities and recent immigrants and the need for states to play a protective role for these groups. Following up from the 1992 Declaration of the Rights of Persons to belong to National or Ethnic, and Linguistic Minorities, in 1994, the United Nations clarified:

> Although the rights . . . are individual rights, they depend in turn on the ability of the minority group to maintain its culture, language, or religion. Accordingly, positive measures by States may also be necessary to protect the identity of a minority and the rights of its members to enjoy and develop their culture and language and to practice their religion, in community with the other members of the group.

(UN doc CCPR General Comment 23: The rights of minorities, April 1994, paragraph 6.2)

The United Nations states that the nation-state has a role to play in assuring the rights of people of differing social identity groups and that these rights, and the conditions for such, are respected and advanced (Diez-Medrano, 2007). Indeed, nation-states have adopted public policies to assure these rights, including affirmative action, anti-discrimination policies, and special minority protections (Koenig & de Guchteneire, 2007). But the context for diversity in each nation-state is different, because they are dynamic and have different historical trajectories, so “accommodating cultural diversity therefore requires finding highly context-sensitive pluralistic policy designs” (Koenig & de Guchteneire, 2007, p. 14).

A vital document connecting affirmation of cultural diversity to human rights is UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2002), stating that as

> a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is to nature [and is also] essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied, and dynamic cultural identities as well as a will to live together.

(UNESCO, 2002, p. 4)
Upholding cultural diversity as an essential human right, the declaration states that the defense “of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms” (UNESCO, 2002, p. 4).

**Affirming diversity in education as a human right**

Along with others (for example, Strickland, n.d.), we assert that education needs to make manifest human rights and cultural diversity in all aspects of schooling, including policies and practices, curriculum and instruction, organizational structures, educational outcomes, assessment practices, learning standards, etc. This is most clearly expressed in UNESCO’s statement on education for indigenous people. As Stavenhagen (2008) summarizes:

UNESCO stresses the need for a linguistically and culturally relevant curriculum in which the history, values, languages, oral traditions, and spirituality of indigenous communities are recognized, respected and promoted. Indigenous communities are now calling for a school curriculum that reflects cultural differences, includes indigenous languages and contemplates the use of alternative teaching methods.

(p. 168)

We appreciate Du Preez and Roux’s (2010) acknowledgement that the meanings of both human rights and local cultural values need to be negotiated via dialogue since it “would be precarious to accept human rights values as univocal and not subjected to diverse interpretation” (p. 23–24). In this context, the broader universal values serve as “a kind of ‘floor’, an ‘irreducible minimum’, a mere threshold, which no way of life may transgress without forfeiting its claim to be considered good or even tolerated. Once a society meets these basic principles, it is free to organise its way of life as it considers proper” (Parekh, 1999, pp. 130–131). This is termed minimum universality (Parekh, 1999). These human rights values are understood as both legal and moral constructs.

**Asserting multicultural education as a human right**

Multicultural education can assure access to quality education, affirm cultural and linguistic diversity, and promote broader human rights aims. We posit seven rights that multicultural education addresses when implemented authentically and robustly. We describe these seven rights separately but acknowledge their interconnectedness (Yuval-Davis, 1999). We also acknowledge that multicultural education is constrained unless public policies also attend to broader issues of social segregation, poverty and homelessness, unemployment or underemployment, etc.

We suggest that two rights cluster around psycho-cultural rights: Seeing oneself reflected in the curriculum and epistemological justice. Three rights cluster around socio-cultural rights: freedom from discrimination, learning about and from others, and having a more universal understanding of reality. Finally, cultural-democratic rights include a human rights education and seeing oneself as an active agent in democratic development. See Figure 3.1.

**Psycho-cultural rights**

*Right to see oneself in the curriculum*

We begin discussion of the human right to a multicultural education with the individual’s right to see her or himself in the curriculum. Historically, a major purpose of education has
been to subordinate the individual while promoting the political and economic interests of the State (Pimentel, 2006), resulting in the loss of cultural identity, via deculturalization (Spring, 2012), among vast majorities of students. Stavenhagen (2008) expresses, “the state model of a culturally homogenised nation does not fit the reality of a multilingual, multiethnic population” (p. 164).

Banks (2009a) argues that assimilationist ideals result in students’ losses of connection with their families, communities, and cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identities, while being racially marginalized in national civic culture. According to Banks (2009a), teachers and schools in multicultural democratic nations can work together in a process of developing balanced and thoughtful attachments and identifications with their cultural community, their nation, and with the global community in order to become globally competent. According to Banks, “strong, positive, clarified cultural identifications and attachments are a prerequisite to cosmopolitan beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and the internalization of human rights values” (p. 39).

Education can play an important role in addressing losses created by assimilationist policies. Multicultural and human rights-based education in which each student sees her or himself in the curriculum can address historical educational inequalities. Education must respect and positively represent each student’s individual cultural background “so that each person can make the most of it in their personal journey and in their interaction with others. . . . They learn about their past, understand their present, and acknowledge their power to fight for their future” (Pimentel, 2006, p. 15).

Pedagogical strategies to reflect all students in the curriculum require that teachers learn about students’ cultures and specific (local) cultural repertoires of practice (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). This requires teachers to make meaningful connections with students. Pimentel (2006) states that, “Teachers become educators when they get fully aware of the surrounding world’s influence on every individual. . . . [T]hey must be open to the reality of the learners, get acquainted with their ways of being, adhere to their right to be. Educators choose to change the world with learners” (p. 14).
Epistemological justice

A second multicultural education and human right is learning that is inclusive of one’s own cultural worldview. This is the right to epistemological justice.

The dominant epistemology is largely Eurocentric, fueled by Western ideals, which has deleted or significantly distorted knowledge systems of social groups throughout the world and over history. This results in restricted epistemological lenses through which we understand phenomena and embodies epistemological racism. Charlot and Belanger (2003) state:

Social justice is not possible without cognitive justice, without recognizing the presence of different forms of understanding, knowing and explaining the world. All forms of knowledge have to be present and valued in relation to one another. Faced with the endless map of knowledges, the conclusion is that it is impossible to have a single general theory about the meaning of education and knowledge. Education needs to be a central task of the political system, and political power should help, not only by funding it, but also by having as a priority the fight against the obscuring of non-Western knowledge and local forms of education.

(Charlot & Belanger, 2003; as cited in Chan-Tiberghien, 2004, p. 191)

Epistemological justice can be viewed from an endless number of perspectives, including border epistemologies (Carter, 2010), epistemological diversity (de Sousa Santos, 2007), global competency (Banks, 2009a), decolonizing epistemologies (Smith, 2013), spirituality (Tisdell, 2006), and the human right to pursue the good life (Tai, 2010). Embracing ways of knowing that are produced in communities throughout the world opens infinite possibilities for global cognitive justice.

Banks (2009a) argues that people have a right to access a variety of epistemological orientations and any expanded “learning” repertoires that result. For Gordon (1995), this is not merely about adding more information but reconstituting the conceptual systems that govern models of humanness and modes of being while recognizing and respecting each individual’s (culturally influenced) knowledge system.

Resulting from community activism, universities have established academic programs and research centers to acknowledge, document, and extend these differing epistemological systems. Chan-Tiberghien (2004) relates, “Valuing and celebrating diversity – biological, cultural, cognitive, economic, and political – through critical pedagogy, cognitive justice, and decolonizing methodologies becomes a counter-hegemonic alternative” (p. 194).

Social-cultural rights

Freedom from prejudice and discrimination

Another right shared by multicultural education and international human rights is education free from prejudice and discrimination. This has been a fundamental concern to international human rights organizations. The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination asserts:

States undertake to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and must adopt effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combat prejudices, which lead to racial discrimination and promote understanding, tolerance and friendship amongst nations and racial or ethnical groups.

(Stavenhagen, 2008, p. 162)
Likewise, a central goal of multicultural education has been to combat prejudices and discrimination. Contemporarily multicultural educators recognize other levels at which prejudices operate (Scheurich & Young, 1997), including institutional structures that privilege some and oppress others. On the social level, discourses and ideologies of the dominant group shape differences. Philosophically, prejudicial frameworks dominate ontology, axiology, and epistemology.

A central tenet of multicultural education is that reduction of racial and cultural prejudices is both possible and desirable (Bennett, 2001). Sleeter and Grant (2009) express that while anti-racism is most associated with a human rights approach to education, it is also consonant with all other approaches to multicultural education including social justice approaches. Banks (2004) describes five dimensions of multicultural education, including prejudice reduction. Nieto and Bode (2008) include anti-racism as central to their definition of multicultural education. Additionally, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has re-centered racism as a primary explanation for educational inequalities (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).

Vandeyar (2003) provides an example of the resurgence of anti-racism work extending multicultural education in debates occurring in post-apartheid South Africa: “At the heart of these debates has been the concern that racism still survives in institutional practices across the country. This has led to . . . [a] shift from multicultural education to anti-racism education . . . from a preoccupation with cultural difference to an emphasis on the way in which such differences are used to entrench inequality” (p. 196).

Learning about and from others

Learning about and from others is another human right supported by multicultural education. Stavenhagen (2008) explains that in learning about others, we help students attain “intercultural citizenship [which] takes us beyond cultural diversity to creative interculturality” (p. 162). UNESCO defines interculturality as “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” (Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Article 4.8, p. 5).

We believe that students have the right to learn about one another, and that teachers must participate in this process with students. Pimentel (2006) describes Freire’s (1973) pedagogical perspective in which all people share power over education, rather than replicating one dominant philosophy:

Teachers and learners share equally the experience of learning through questioning, reflecting, and participating; as a result, this process contributes to the enforcement of infinitely diverse human potentials, instead of refuting, weakening, distorting, or repressing them . . . the role of the teacher is crucial . . . sharing the experience of being in “quest.”

(Pimentel, 2006, p. 14)

Unfortunately, as Nieto and Bode (2008) express, “monocultural education is the order of the day in most of our schools. Because viewpoints of so many are left out, monocultural education . . . deprives all students of the diversity that is part of our world” (pp. 48–49). This affects all students, including indigenous peoples, students from non-majority cultural backgrounds, and white students.

A right to learn from one another extends beyond borders of the local community to globally connected learning as well. As Stavenhagen (2008) asserts, “A truly multicultural society
cannot exist simply as a collection of self-contained culturally distinct collectivities; these communities must be open to the rest of the world and their members but be free to interact with others” (p. 175).

**Developing a more universal vision of reality**

All of the rights embodied in multicultural education converge to provide students with a more universal understanding of reality. Seeing oneself in one’s education, learning from an epistemologically just approach that is free from discrimination, and learning about and relating to others are all necessary to provide students with a more universal understanding of reality (revisit Article 29 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Section C, described earlier). This document speaks directly to the right of the child to a multicultural education that provides a more universal vision of reality than that which results from a monocultural education. Learning from and about multiple perspectives increases knowledge, enhances insight, and leads to better decision-making for self and others.

Carter (2010) states, however, that “diverse knowledges must not be temporalized or historicized against a Eurocentric timeline of development” (p. 437). Likewise, Agada (1998) advises:

> multicultural content . . . needs to go beyond adding or substituting Afrocentric or Hispanic materials for Eurocentric materials in lesson units. To reflect the notions of relational knowledge, the interdisciplinary curriculum model ought to enable an appreciation of disciplines and subjects as perspectives or lenses for observing reality.

(p. 88)

Adichie (2009) cautions against the dangers of a single story, where viewing individuals, their cultures, and home countries from one stereotypical story that is told over and over again robs both the storytellers and the story’s characters of reality. In his seminal *Talk to Teachers* (1963), Baldwin summarized the immense value to all in a curriculum that would not teach a single story, but would provide a more accurate and complete understanding of reality:

> If, for example, one managed to change the curriculum in all the schools so that Negroes learned more about themselves and their real contributions to this culture, you would be liberating not only Negroes, you’d be liberating white people who know nothing about their own history. And the reason is that if you are compelled to lie about one aspect of anybody’s history, you must lie about it all. If you have to lie about my real role here, if you have to pretend that I hoed all that cotton just because I loved you, then you have done something to yourself. You are mad.

(p. 44)

**Cultural-democratic rights**

**Human rights education**

The role of education to teach about and foster human rights has been evident since the earliest international agreements dedicated to achieving world peace. Human rights education acknowledges the right to an education but also aims to promote broader purposes of personal fulfillment, interdependence, and freedom (Pimentel, 2006). The ultimate goal of human rights
education is empowerment (Pimentel, 2006), teaching students about their rights and defending themselves from abuse, about their obligations to others and being diligent about protecting the rights of others, and about human agency and how meaningful changes in pursuit of social justice can be carried out peacefully in collaboration with others (Pimentel, 2006).

UNESCO Bangkok and the UN Special Rapporteur collaborated to develop *A Manual on Rights-Based Education*, to bring human rights standards into educational practice (Pimentel, 2006). The manual, with human rights law as its foundation, addresses the quality of education, expressing that it should be “learner-centered and relevant to learners, as well as respectful to human rights, such as privacy, gender equality, freedom of expression, and the participation of learners in the education process” (Pimentel, 2006, p. 14).

Multicultural education also has a focus on human rights education. This includes teaching students democratic social participation skills via civic education. The focus of these efforts rests on the core principles of democracy, strategies for extending these principles, and respect for human rights (Banks et al., 2005).

Diversity is an important facet of this work around human rights education. Gundara (2000) says,

> One of the ways to build bridges of understanding between and among people of various cultures and religions will require an increased appreciation of human rights and the base on which these are built, notably the concept of a shared acceptance of the premise of human dignity. In a period when alienation and cynicism are rife, the role of formal education as utilitarian is not enough.

(p. 134)

It includes teaching the interdependent nature of being in this world. In essence, human rights education stresses a relational way of being and shared responsibility as well as an interdependent construal of the self (Tai, 2010).

**Knowledge of themselves as active agents and history makers**

Education and teaching are the seeds that will empower the growth of students into active change agents and history makers. Gundara (2000) highlights the role of teachers and education in empowering young people to resist marginalization through developing a voice in society:

> Without any concept of value through dignity, the alienation felt by the world’s excluded youth will continue to grow... [as] the result of experiencing injustice, marginalization or the lack of a voice... and teachers can obviously deal with this issue by developing suitable curricula and teaching strategies.

(p. 134)

Sleeter and Grant (2009) present and critique various approaches to multicultural education and express that a multicultural social justice approach “goes the furthest toward providing better schooling as well as creating a better society... based largely on social conditions that persist and that limit and often damage or destroy the lives of many people” (p. 229). The multicultural social justice approach engages all people — learners and educators, white heterosexual males and disenfranchised people, privileged and unprivileged — in a concerted, critical effort to analyze the circumstances of their lives and develop social action skills in powerful coalitions that gain strength by working together, across “race, class, and gender lines” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009,
p. 216). By engaging students in this process of social action in schools and communities, students see power in building alliances across difference.

A similar process has been described by Paulo Freire (1985) who “viewed empowering pedagogy as a dialogical process in which the teacher acts as a partner with students, helping them to examine the world critically, using a problem-posing process that begins with their own experience and historical location” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 213). Likewise, the Declaration of Education Rights (Strickland, n.d.) exists “to ensure that all young people can participate meaningfully in their education and gain the tools to build a just, democratic and sustainable world.”

Human rights in education include the right of people to participate in decisions that affect them (Strickland, n.d.). It includes being an active agent to change socially unjust institutional structures, policies and practices “in an effort to challenge current state policies that discriminate against, or simply ignore people based on their socio-economic status, race, gender, dis/ability, religion or sexual orientation” (Grant, 2008, p. 9).

Conclusion

We argue that contemporary understandings of human rights and education converge in productive ways with contemporary but especially critical multicultural education principles. They both share a belief that cultural diversity is essential for human rights, democracy, and social justice. As articulated by UNESCO’s (2005) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: “cultural diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels (p. 1).”

The next step is moving these human right principles to actual educational practices. We believe that multicultural education could become THE premiere pedagogical framework from which this move from principles to practices might occur. This will require teacher training around multicultural education, reducing institutional resistance, changing the ideology and dialogue of ministry and state education officials, and building alliances with teacher associations and unions. Consider descriptions of what this might look like in actual practice as Nieto and Bode (2008) describe, as well as the recent publications by Au (2009) and Quijada Cerecer, Alvarez Gutiérrez, and Rios (2010).

Fortunately, there are important models of what a multicultural and human rights-oriented approach to education might entail. At the heart of these are robust, authentic, and deep connections with indigenous, minority, and immigrant communities, who are seen as vital actors. These include the Atuarfitsialak program in Greenland, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, the Maori of New Zealand, and the Student Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (India) (Stavenhagen, pp. 169–171).

The goals of such programs must lead to interculturality, enlightened cosmopolitans, intercultural citizenship (Stavenhagen, 2008), and cosmopolitan citizenship (Chan-Tiberghien, 2004). Globalization should be used to facilitate development of such citizenships. Conversely, such programs must also include a critical eye toward critiquing the impact of globalization for narrow neoliberal purposes (Chan-Tiberghien, 2004).

We wish to reiterate that multicultural education is not the only mechanism necessary to achieve human rights. As we have described earlier, students move across a range of social institutions and many schools remain sites of exclusion and discrimination. But multicultural education may be an initial (even if partial) entry point to preserving and extending students’ educational human rights.
We sought to answer the questions, can education that is multicultural be considered a human right? Given the ways in which the two converge, we see tremendous possibility in the ways in which multicultural education advances universal human rights. The convergence of these two, in the words of Fitzsimons (2000), bring together “the conditions of possibility for education [and educators] at the intersection of the discourses of the integrated world order on the one hand, and those of the forces of difference on the other” (p. 515).

Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper, adapted herein, appeared in Multicultural Education Review (2011), vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 1–35.
2 See Portero (2011) for an extended discussion on the origins and uses of these two terms.
3 A comprehensive discussion of these frames can be found in Rios & Stanton-Rogers, 2011.
4 See Pimentel, 2006, for a historical overview of the development of education as a human right.
5 191 of 193 countries have ratified; the USA and Somalia have not (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).
6 Environmental justice and ecological literacy as well as environmental sustainability have recently become even more prominent given UNESCO’s Decade of Sustainability focus.

References

Multicultural education and human rights


Key concepts and ideas from the chapter

1. We need new ways of being citizens in a world marked by the affirmation of difference, the reality of transnationalism, and the ideals of global harmony. Education is vital to this process.

2. We focus on access to quality multicultural education as a human right of its own accord, in which all students are entitled to an education that is multicultural.

3. Multicultural education can benefit from rooting itself in human rights principles: the right to learn about oneself, to learn about others, and to learn citizenship skills associated with a deep democracy in a global age.

4. Human rights converge in productive ways with contemporary but especially critical multicultural education principles. They both share a belief that cultural diversity is essential for human rights, democracy, and social justice.

5. Important models of what a multicultural and human rights oriented approach to education exist. At the heart of these are robust, authentic, and deep connections with indigenous, minority, and immigrant communities who are seen as vital actors.