

# Study of Multicultural Education in American Basic Education

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**Abstract:** Multicultural education represents a significant direction in the reform of American basic education. This study systematically examines the developmental trajectory, current implementation status, and safeguarding mechanisms of multicultural curricula within American basic education. Findings reveal that the United States has established a tiered and categorised curriculum standards system, developed implementation models such as subject integration, thematic teaching, and activity-based immersion, and created a safeguarding mechanism combining teacher training, textbook development, assessment, and community support. This curriculum system emphasises cultural integration and equality, prioritises practical innovation and diverse participation, and exerts significant influence on promoting educational equity and cultivating global citizens.

**Keywords:** Basic Education, Multicultural Curriculum, Curriculum Standards, Implementation Models, Safeguarding Mechanisms.

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## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalisation, cultural diversity has become a defining feature of societal development. As a nation of immigrants, the United States has accumulated extensive practical experience in multicultural curricula within its basic education sector, establishing a relatively comprehensive curriculum framework. Examining the developmental trajectory, design principles, and implementation models of multicultural curricula in American basic education, alongside analysing the characteristics of its safeguarding mechanisms, holds significant reference value for advancing educational equity, fostering cultural inclusivity, and cultivating global citizens. This study focuses on the historical evolution, implementation practices, and institutional safeguards of multicultural education within American primary and secondary education. It systematically examines these developmental experiences to provide insights for multicultural education reform.

## 2. Historical Evolution of Multicultural Education in American Basic Education

### 2.1. Sociohistorical Context

The development of multicultural education within American basic education is rooted in its unique sociohistorical soil. From the late 19th to early 20th century, a substantial influx of European immigrants brought diverse cultural traditions and value systems to the United States. During this period, America pursued an 'Americanisation' campaign emphasising assimilationist policies, demanding that ethnic groups adopt Anglo-Saxon culture. Following the Second World War, the rise of the African American civil rights movement prompted societal reflection on the hegemonic status of mainstream culture. By the 1960s, the struggle for equal rights among minority groups reached its zenith, with the enactment of civil rights legislation marking

America's entry into an era of multiculturalism[1]. As societal diversity became increasingly pronounced and ethnic cultural consciousness awakened, minority groups intensified their demands for educational equality. Against this backdrop, the monolithic educational model faced challenges, giving rise to multicultural education principles. These concepts gradually emerged as a pivotal direction for reforming America's foundational education system.

### 2.2. Development of Policy and Legislation

The evolution of multicultural education policy and legislation in the United States reflects a historical progression from exclusion to inclusion. The 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* dismantled the racially segregated education system, establishing the legal foundation for multicultural education. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 established the principle of equal educational opportunity, prohibiting discrimination in education based on race, colour, religion, or sex[2]. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided mother-tongue educational support for minority students, fostering the development of linguistic and cultural diversity. The 1972 Education Amendments Act, Title IX emphasised gender equality in education. The 1974 Equal Educational Opportunities Act further safeguarded the educational rights of minority students. The 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act expanded the scope of multicultural education. These policies and regulations constructed the institutional framework for multicultural education, driving the in-depth development of curriculum reform.

### 2.3. The Process of Curriculum Reform

The multicultural curriculum reform in American basic education has undergone profound transformations. During the 1970s, curriculum reform began to focus on minority cultures, incorporating multicultural content into social science courses. By the 1980s, multicultural curricula developed systematically, forming an interdisciplinary integrated model. In the 1990s, the emphasis shifted towards cultural understanding and appreciation, stressing the

cultivation of students' cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills. Entering the 21st century, multicultural curriculum reform increasingly emphasised a global perspective, integrating cultural diversity with international understanding education[3]. Content expanded beyond ethnic cultures to encompass multiple dimensions including gender, religion, and social class. Implementation methods became more flexible and varied, adopting innovative approaches such as thematic teaching and project-based learning to deepen students' understanding and experiential engagement with diverse cultures.

## **2.4. Evolution of Curriculum Objectives**

The objectives of multicultural education in American primary and secondary education have evolved from singular to pluralistic. Early curricula primarily emphasised the adaptation of minority students to mainstream culture, assisting them in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers. As multicultural educational philosophy deepened, objectives gradually shifted towards cultivating cultural awareness and identity among all students. Contemporary multicultural curricula aim to develop students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyse cultural biases and inequalities. Curriculum objectives now place greater emphasis on cultivating students' intercultural understanding and global citizenship competencies, guiding them to recognise cultural differences, respect diversity, and establish values of cultural inclusivity[4]. Contemporary objectives highlight social justice and equity, fostering students' awareness and capacity to participate in democratic societal development, thereby contributing to the construction of a harmonious and pluralistic society.

## **3. Design and Implementation of Multicultural Education in American Basic Education**

### **3.1. Curriculum Standards Framework**

The American multicultural curriculum standards framework exhibits a tiered and categorised structure. The basic framework established by the federal Department of Education provides guidance for state-level curriculum standard development, emphasising the core principles and fundamental requirements of multicultural education. Individual states formulate specific curriculum standards based on regional cultural characteristics and student needs, stipulating precise requirements for multicultural content across different educational stages and subject areas. These standards encompass three dimensions: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They explicitly define the multicultural knowledge framework, intercultural communication competencies, and culturally inclusive attitudes students must master[5]. This framework emphasises the hierarchical and progressive nature of multicultural education objectives: lower grades focus on cultural awareness and perception; middle grades prioritise cultural understanding and appreciation; while upper grades concentrate on developing critical cultural analysis and innovative capabilities. The formulation of the curriculum standards fully considers regional variations, reserving scope for schools to develop school-based curricula.

## **3.2. Curriculum Content Development**

### **3.2.1. Integration of Ethnic Cultures**

The development of American multicultural curricula emphasises the incorporation of ethnic cultural elements. Content encompasses the historical and cultural traditions of minority groups including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, highlighting each ethnic group's contributions to American societal development. Literature courses feature works by writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, while art curricula introduce artistic forms and aesthetic characteristics across different ethnicities. History courses present the historical experiences and social movements of various ethnic groups[6]. Curriculum design prioritises dismantling ethnic stereotypes, revealing the rich cultural substance and contemporary evolution of diverse ethnicities. Teaching practice emphasises cultural interaction and dialogue, guiding students to explore inter-ethnic relations and comprehend cultural conflict and integration. The selection and organisation of content demonstrate respect for and equitable treatment of ethnic cultures, fostering positive inter-ethnic attitudes among students.

### **3.2.2. Language and Religious Education**

Language and religious education form essential components of the multicultural curriculum. Regarding language education, the curriculum adopts a bilingual teaching model. While ensuring English proficiency, it prioritises minority students' mother tongue learning and cultural heritage. Content encompasses linguistic knowledge acquisition, practical language skills development, and cultural exploration to foster linguistic confidence. Regarding religious education, the curriculum covers the fundamental doctrines, cultural traditions, and societal influences of major religions, guiding students to understand the value systems of different faiths[7]. The curriculum design adheres to religious neutrality, avoiding religious bias, and cultivates students' understanding and respect for religious diversity. The provision of language and religious education content enhances students' cross-cultural comprehension abilities.

### **3.2.3. Gender Equality Education**

Gender equality education occupies a significant position within the multicultural curriculum. Course content addresses gender issues, revealing the impact of gender stereotypes and discrimination on societal development. History courses highlight women's contributions to social change, while literature courses showcase the lived experiences and emotional expressions of diverse gender groups. Curriculum design prioritises cultivating gender equality awareness, guiding students to reflect on traditional gender concepts and establish mutually respectful gender relationships[8]. Instructional content encompasses understanding gender roles, gender rights consciousness, and gender equality practices, fostering scientifically grounded gender perspectives. Implementation emphasises creating gender-friendly learning environments, encouraging equal participation of students of all genders in diverse learning activities, and nurturing independent personalities and self-identity.

## **3.3. Curriculum Implementation Models**

### **3.3.1. Subject Integration Model**

The subject integration model within American multicultural curricula for basic education embodies innovative interdisciplinary teaching approaches. Educators

incorporate multicultural elements into language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies instruction, transcending disciplinary boundaries to construct a multidimensional cultural learning framework. In language arts, multicultural literary works are selected; social studies explores cultural differences and societal change; arts curricula appreciate diverse cultural art forms; and science courses highlight contributions from scientists of various ethnicities. Teachers design activities tailored to each subject's characteristics, employing diverse resources and methodologies to foster students' multifaceted understanding of cultural significance[9]. This integrated approach emphasises the interconnectedness and systematic nature of knowledge, helping students construct comprehensive cultural frameworks and develop the ability to synthesise multidisciplinary insights when analysing cultural phenomena.

### **3.3.2. Thematic Teaching Model**

The thematic teaching model provides a platform for in-depth exploration within multicultural curriculum implementation. Educators design a series of teaching activities centred around specific cultural themes, guiding students to conduct thorough research into cultural phenomena. Thematic content encompasses ethnic cultural traditions, religious beliefs and customs, gender equality issues, and more. Teachers create problem-based scenarios, organising students to gather information, engage in discussions, and undertake investigative research. The teaching process employs diverse methods such as case studies, role-playing, and fieldwork to facilitate students' active construction of cultural knowledge[10]. This approach emphasises cultivating students' research skills and critical thinking, encouraging them to explore the underlying causes of cultural differences and develop unique cultural perspectives. This model transcends the limitations of traditional classroom teaching, offering students opportunities for profound cultural learning.

### **3.3.3. Activity Infusion Model**

The activity infusion model achieves an organic integration of multicultural education with extracurricular activities. The school organises diverse events such as cultural festivals, arts performances, and community service initiatives, creating opportunities for students to experience and exchange cultures. Activities incorporate cultural displays, culinary workshops, and traditional games, enabling students to personally appreciate the appeal of different cultures[11]. The school invites community members from diverse cultural backgrounds to participate in these events, sharing cultural experiences and fostering mutual understanding. This model emphasises contextual creation and practical engagement, leveraging the campus environment to cultivate a multicultural atmosphere. It nurtures students' cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within their daily academic and social lives. This highly practical teaching approach stimulates students' interest in learning, encouraging the development of positive cultural attitudes and behavioural habits.

## **4. Safeguarding Mechanisms for Multicultural Education in American Basic Education**

### **4.1. Teacher Training System**

The teacher training system for multicultural education in American basic education exhibits systematic and professional characteristics. Teacher training colleges offer compulsory courses in multicultural education, strengthening prospective teachers' cultural awareness and teaching competencies during pre-service training. Teacher certification programmes incorporate multicultural education competence as a key assessment criterion, requiring educators to possess intercultural communication skills and cultural sensitivity. In-service teacher training adopts a tiered, progressive model, regularly organising specialised seminars, workshops, and symposia to enhance educators' multicultural teaching proficiency. Training content encompasses cultural theory, pedagogical innovation, and curriculum resource development, emphasising the integration of theory and practice[12]. Education authorities have established professional development assessment mechanisms, incorporating multicultural education training into teacher evaluation systems to incentivise ongoing professional growth.

### **4.2. Textbook Development System**

The American multicultural textbook development system is characterised by multi-stakeholder participation and rigorous review. Textbook authoring teams comprise experts from diverse ethnicities, genders, and cultural backgrounds, ensuring content diversity and representativeness. The development process employs an open mechanism, extensively soliciting feedback from teachers, students, parents, and communities. Content selection criteria emphasise cultural equality and inclusivity, avoiding cultural bias and discrimination. Textbook design prioritises diverse presentation methods, employing multimedia resources such as text, images, audio-visual materials, and digital content to enhance appeal and practicality. State education departments establish review standards and appoint specialised committees responsible for evaluating and approving materials to guarantee quality[13]. A dynamic adjustment mechanism governs textbook usage, enabling timely revisions based on implementation outcomes to meet evolving educational demands.

### **4.3. Assessment Methods**

The assessment of multicultural curricula employs a multidimensional, developmental evaluation model. Assessment content encompasses students' mastery of cultural knowledge, development of intercultural competencies, and cultivation of cultural attitudes. Methods combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, utilising classroom observation, portfolio analysis, practical activities, and questionnaire surveys[14]. Schools establish student cultural literacy development portfolios to document their learning trajectories and developmental progress. Evaluation involves multiple stakeholders, including teacher assessments, student self-evaluations, peer reviews, and parental participation. Evaluation outcomes are utilised to foster student development and inform teaching improvements. The system emphasises formative assessment, focusing on

students' progress and breakthroughs in cultural learning to encourage sustained exploration of cultural significance.

#### 4.4. Community Support Networks

Community support networks provide crucial safeguards for implementing multicultural curricula. Schools establish partnerships with communities, inviting local cultural organisations to participate in curriculum design and delivery. Community members serve as cultural education volunteers, offering students cultural experiences and guidance. Schools leverage community resources to conduct cultural practice activities, organising student visits to community cultural institutions to experience multicultural lifestyles. Parent committees actively participate in planning school cultural events, establishing platforms for home-school cultural exchange. Community media promote multicultural education principles, fostering a societal atmosphere supportive of cultural diversity[15]. The establishment of community support networks facilitates constructive interaction between schools and society, broadens the reach of multicultural education, and creates a favourable external environment for curriculum implementation.

### 5. Conclusion

The multicultural curriculum in American basic education has undergone prolonged development, forming a comprehensive curriculum system and implementation mechanism. Curriculum design emphasises cultural integration and equality, while implementation models stress practical innovation and diverse participation. Safeguard mechanisms demonstrate systematic and professional approaches. This educational practice holds significant importance for promoting ethnic integration, upholding social equity, and cultivating global citizens. Future research should focus on the emerging characteristics of multicultural education in the digital age, explore innovative teaching models, deepen curriculum evaluation reforms, and strengthen international comparative studies to provide insights for constructing inclusive education systems.

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