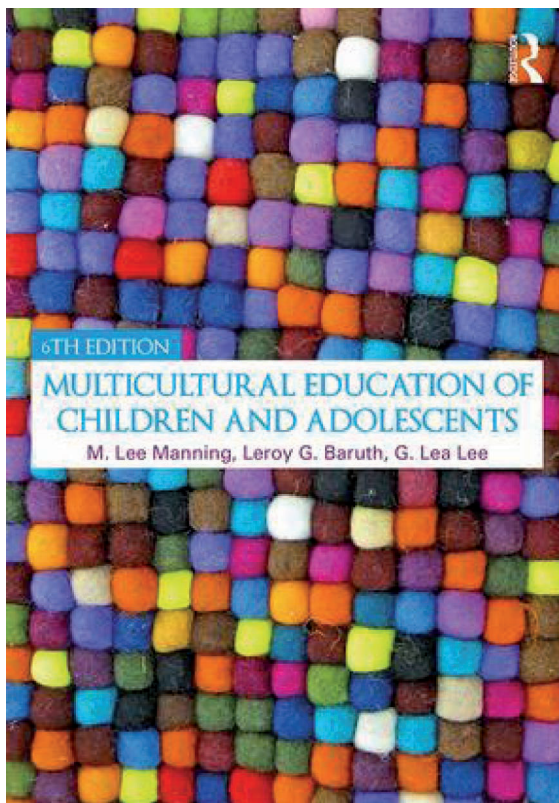


Book review

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Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents,
6th edition, by M. Lee Manning, Leroy G. Baruth and
G. Lea Lee

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I am writing this review while reflecting upon a joint report compiled for a Newton Fund/British Council Research Workshop entitled *Implementation and Challenges of Multicultural Education: What can Thailand Learn from the Experiences of the UK?* (Arphattananon, 2018; Race, 2018). The research workshop brought international mentors and early career researchers together from Thailand, England and Scotland in June 2018 to talk about multicultural education at Mahidol University in Thailand. It is in this context that I examine *Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents*, and as with most good books on the subject it goes way beyond a textbook for professional practitioners who advocate increasing multicultural education practice for children and adolescents. The book contains three parts: 'Multicultural Education and its Response

to the United States' Increasing Diversity'; 'Understanding Learners and their Cultural Backgrounds' and 'Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Society'.

It is worth highlighting the book's definition of multicultural education: 'Multicultural education is both a concept and deliberate process designed to do the following: teach learners to recognize, accept, and appreciate differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, special needs, and gender' (p. 5). It is also designed to 'instil in learners during their crucial development years a sense of responsibility and a commitment to work toward the democratic ideals of justice, equality, and democracy' (p. 5). That comprehensive overview gets the book off to a good start, and I never felt at any time reading it that the complexity of what the authors are trying to underline here should hinder the delivery of professional multicultural practice to children, adolescents and all groups (Joppke, 2018). The three categories of knowledge, skills and attitudes shape the effective multicultural educator (p. 15). This is an important idea when considering how a teacher/lecturer is trained to develop these categories within initial teacher training, let alone continuing professional development. It can be the sheer lack of diversity training that can hinder the professional practitioner before they walk into the classroom for the first time (Race, 2015). Chapter 10 of this book, 'Institutional Practices', is useful when addressing wider systemic issues in relation to teaching difference. 'An environment that promotes acceptance of diversity does more than pay lip service to the concept or have goal statements that are merely rhetorical' (p. 217). When considering the three categories of the effective multicultural educator, the following behaviour relating to practice is significant: 'Immersing students in a variety of written and oral language activities that are meaningful, relevant, and functional in a pluralistic society' (p. 220). Ironically, when reflecting on a book focusing on children and adolescents, it is they who are the greater resource, and a child-centred approach has always been most relevant when considering teaching and learning within the classroom and the effective multicultural educator ideal (Banks, 2017; Neito, 2017).

Potentially, the most debatable issue that the authors raise in this book is the role of parents, families and caregivers in relation to culturally diverse backgrounds (Chapter 11). What I mean by this is the increased educational role these groups are being asked to develop in relation to children and adolescents. What the authors highlight in relation to these issues is that communication is key to developing school–children–parent engagement. Human communication is deemed as vital: 'Through verbal expression, or what they [the teachers] say; through body language or nonverbal expression or how they behave; and through emotional responses or how they show what they feel' (p. 254). It is cultural psychology based around effective communication that all professional practitioners need to be taught. The authors wisely list guidelines for minimizing parent and teacher misunderstandings that include: 'Use a tone of voice that expresses respect and courtesy, because a call from school can raise anxiety levels. Discuss the child's positive points before discussing the problem to be solved ... Use language that the parent understands and a tone that does not sound condescending. Respond with empathy' (p. 255). It is new ways of understanding that need to be encouraged through communication if parental engagement is to be increased in relation to children and adolescent learning (Stanley, 2017). Moreover, it is useful in these possible scenarios to highlight positive parental experiences, if indeed these exist with some parent(s). Nobody wants any teacher–parent approach like this to fail and to be perceived negatively in the wider community.

As an advocate of multicultural education (Race, 2015; 2018) the objectives of the Thailand workshop mentioned in the opening paragraph of this review was

not only to bring people from different continents to learn from each other but also to disseminate education research and knowledge to different multicultural audiences. The second part of this book, 'Understanding Learners and their Cultural Backgrounds', does this and reassuringly deconstructs the term 'Asian', going on to explain the 'model-minority' stereotype and then listing several practices that impede Asian American learners' educational progress (Chapter 6). It is wider and constructive professional practice issues that this book analyses. To become *more effective* at being a multicultural educator, more has to be done for teachers who can then pass on culturally diverse knowledge to children and adolescents. The greatest compliment I can pay the authors of this book is that through diversity training and continuing professional development, we can start to increase understandings of multiracial children and adolescents not only in America but around the world (pp. 303–7). We can then begin to develop inclusively our own professional practice and simply recognize, accept and appreciate cultural differences in all educational settings.

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