Harshad V. Vyas
Senior lecturer in Education,
North East London Polytechnic

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

Movement of populations across and into nations is not a new phenomenon. Indeed histories of nations dwell on this phenomenon in various ways, or at least make some reference to it. What is perhaps more recent is at the most at conceptualizing it, and thereby removing it from a historical perspective. These attempts at conceptualization are very interesting indeed, not least because of the range of paradigms which they bring about. What I want to attempt today is to offer an analysis leading to some paradigms and then look at some implications for a professional concern like teacher education. The logic of the analysis and implications would suggest that the relevance of this discussion cannot remain confined to teacher education alone.

We can say, that there are different modells' of multicultural societies. I think there are at least two assumptions implicit in this modells. One is that, although my preference is to look at groups as 'cultural groups', they are being viewed, perhaps rather too generally, as 'immigrant labouring groups', that is as key elements in the economic life of a particular society. The second assumption - an extension of the first, is that this is a pre-dominantly Eurocentric view of looking at societies. These assumptions help us,

I think, in moving away from saying that ancient Rome was multicultural and stress contemporary concerns.

The Evolutionary model refers to the way in which the society develops from a monocultural one into a multicultural one in a natural way. In case of Britain, for example, when ex-British empire became the new Commonwealth, citizens of the Commonwealth countries thought of going to Britain in the same way as they would have thought of in going to any other country of the Commonwealth. In the context of such an attitude prevailing, when post-war economies of Western European countries needed labour, the immigration to Britain from early nineteen fifties to mid-sixties (i.e. when the first sets of immigration controls were introduced) appeared to follow the law of demand and supply. I am suggesting here that Britain represents the Evolutionary models of a multi-cultural society mainly as a result of these fifteen years althought the official recognition by politicians of the multicultural character of the British society had to wait much longer.

The Interventionist model describes the United States situation much more vividly then in some other societies. This model can be seen as an extension of the

idea of the U.S. society as 'a melting pot' which had been prevalent for a very long time. The appearance of books like 'The Unmelting Pot' provided substantial evidence on inequalities suffered by the blacks and other minorities in the United States. In the interventionist model of a multicultural society legislation becomes a key element in informing/guiding institutions with regard to how minorities shall be treated. U.S govermental legislation about bilingual education programs, affirmative action and equal opportunity programs are all illustrations for this model.

Where two or more cultural groups enjoy parity of status in society and this principle is also enshrined in the constitution of a country, that might be described as **a Structural model of a multi-cultural society.** The situation in Ganada, Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana appears to illustrate this model. It is quite possible that from the point of view of the Swedish minority, in Finland is also an example this kind of society. Where a society accepts one or more minorities within itself but maintains the stance of superiority with emphasis on the integration into the mainstream culture, values and ideology, that kind of multicultural society can be described as **Relational.** In this situation, minorities exist on the majority's terms, however subtle and unstated. Finnish minority in Sweden as well as other minority groups like the Chilean and Armenians provide an illustration of this. It may be suggested that this model also describes the situation of 'migrant workers' in some EEC countries.

The last model in my analysis is named a **Hierarchical model** of a multicultural society. In such a society the state appratus is constructed on the priciple of superiority on of one group or a ruling cultural group. The superior status of the ruling group defines the progressively inferior status of other groups in society. This is backed by legislation, governmental policy, and appropriate enforcement. The multicultural society of South Africa illustrates this.

Australia has considerable multicultural experience but I have difficulty in deciding which model is an appropriate descriptor mainly for two reasons. One is that having been a part of the British empire, Australian society has probably retained some of the influences from Britain. On the other hand, the society has also developed in its own way, e.g. less social class conscious than the British. I want to leave the question of how best to describe the multicultural society of Australia for open discussion.

When these models are used as starting points for understandig any particular multicultural society, scope becomes available of identifying a paradigm which such model must generate. This is in essence a mode of thinking. To take a concrete example, because Britain has been an Evolutionary type of multicultural society, a proper recognition of cultural minorities in Britain had to wait until the govermental recognition of the idea. Until than, the prevailaing paradigm about the cultural groups was in terms of specific needs and no more. In Fijian society - an example of multicultural society of the Structural type - Fijian, Indians and Whites are accepted for what they are and this is reflected, for example, in Fijian school textbooks.

Given that there is a considerable degree of interest and awareness about multicultural societies and formal schooling is a feature of most societies, there is need for sustained research activity in this field. Exchange of scholars and experience has always been beneficial but the need for this is much more urgent in this field than ever before. I am conscious that I have omitted one important area in my analysis, the discussion of concepts associated with descriptions of multicultural societies, e.g. race, ethnicity, cultural pluralism, marginal status, and so on. To do so would have involved me in a much bigger enterprise than I had envisaged but I have to admit, that my definitions of these have remained implicit in the models I have formulated. Much more importantly, these concepts should be matters of open discussion

where individual experience of cultural groups and societies can be brought to bear. To conclude, I hold the view that conceptualizations about multicultural societies are in need of continual reapprisals and that the best hope for this may be through exchange of experiences among research institutions of all kinds.