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States and Multicultural Education Policies: A Multinomial Logit Analysis

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Introduction:

This study looks at the factors that contribute to the adoption of multicultural education policies in the fifty US states at both the state legislature and bureaucratic levels.

The demographics of the US are changing significantly. According to Frey (2011), "The 2010 census showed that among infants, almost half—49.8 percent—are minorities, and a quarter of these are Latinos." Furthermore, it is now projected that by 2023 Whites will become a minority in the student populations nationwide and by 2042 Whites will be a minority within the general US population. In fact, according to the 2010 census there are already 11 states that have a minority-majority student population while an additional 10 states have minority student populations of 40% or more (See Figure 1).

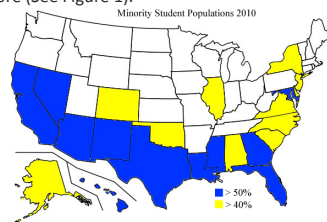


Figure 1. States with significant minority student populations (Source: Education Week Education Counts 2010).

The literature in education provides significant evidence of academic achievement gaps, especially among low-income and minority students. Additionally, multicultural education has been found in the literature to provide benefits for all students while specifically addressing achievement gaps of minority student populations. For example:

- African American and Hispanic students have lower achievement in reading and math than white students (Vanneman, et al 2009).
- Multicultural education has been found to improve both teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Webb 1990, Akiba 2010).

Furthermore, Gollnick (1995) conducted an extensive study of federal and state multicultural education policies and found that state legislated policies were the most effective. Therefore, this study seeks to understand what states are legislating multicultural education policies and what factors are contributing to this legislation.

Multicultural Education:

It has been defined as an idea, reform movement, and process.

- Idea: "All students should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks 1993)
- Reform: Five approaches to multicultural education (Sleeter and Grant 1988)
 - Five approaches:
 - 1) Teaching the exceptional and culturally different
 - 2) Human relations
 - 3) Single-group studies
 - 4) Multicultural education
 - 5) Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist
- Process: Educational equality "can never be fully achieved in a human society" (Banks 1993).

Methods:

For this study I initially use the literature for Adoption of Innovations, where innovation is defined as something new in the form of a program of policy. This is a method used frequently in the literature to determine the causes of state policy adoption.

Examples of Adoption of Innovations used in Education:

- State Boards of Education (1950)
- Compulsory School Attendance (1966)
- School Choice (1997 and 1998)
- Charter Schools and School District Takeovers (2002)

However, I have three alternatives for my dependent variable: adopted legislated policies, adopted bureaucratic policies, or none at all. As a result I am using a multinomial logit analysis, as opposed to an event history analysis, which accounts for more than one dependent variable.

Multinomial logit is "used to analyze the choice of an individual among a set of j alternatives", furthermore, multinomial logit "focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis and uses the individual's characteristics as explanatory variables" (Hoffman and Duncan 1988, p. 416).

Therefore, for this study my Dependent Variable is whether states either legislated, bureaucratically adopted, or did not adopt a state level multicultural education policy involving curriculum. My Independent Variables include: political, demographic, education, economic influences of each state to test hypotheses associated with the adoption of multicultural education policies.

Research Question:

RQ1: What factors facilitate the adoption of multicultural education policies at the state level?



Source: <http://www.funderstanding.com/category/curriculum/multiculturalism/>

Findings:

- Between 1978 and 2010 only 14 states adopted a state level multicultural education policy (See Figure 2).

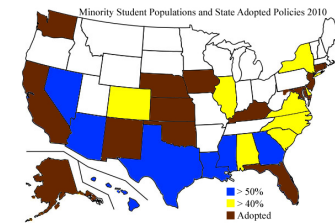


Figure 2. States with legislated multicultural education policies.

Multinomial Logit Analysis Results:

The analysis of various explanatory variables or characteristics of the 50 US states demonstrated that of the variables selected, none of them had explanatory power as to why or why not states adopted multicultural education policies at the state level.

Logistical Regression Analysis Results:

For this reason, I tried another approach by transforming my legislated and bureaucratically adopted policies into a binary variable and running a logistical regression. The only variable which appeared to have any significance was the Southern States variable with a significance of .072.

This is interesting as one might expect the 11 southern states as a region to have adopted multicultural education policies as part of their response to the Civil Rights movement from the 1960s forward. Yet only one of the 11 states have a state level policy: Florida, which was adopted in 1992.