

Select Literature Review on Cultural Diversity for Educators

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Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care - Abridged

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The word "culture" is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. The word competence is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively. A culturally competent system of care acknowledges and incorporates--at all levels--the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally-unique needs (Cross et al., 1988, p. 13).

Imagine a continuum that ranges from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency:

Cultural Destructiveness

Destruction of a culture, example Native American boarding schools - services set up to "help" Natives

One race is superior and should eradicate "lesser" cultures because of their perceived subhuman position. Bigotry coupled with vast power differentials allows the dominant group to disenfranchise, control, exploit

Cultural Incapacity

System or agencies do not intentionally seek to be culturally destructive

System remains extremely biased, believes in the racial superiority of the dominant group, and assumes a paternal posture towards "lesser" races

Discriminatory hiring practices, subtle messages to people of color that they are not valued or welcome

Cultural Blindness

Continuum midpoint: system and its agencies provide services with the express philosophy of being unbiased

They function with the belief that color or culture make no difference and that all people are the same

Culturally-blind agencies are characterized by the belief that helping approaches traditionally used by the dominant culture are universally applicable

Such services ignore cultural strengths, encourage assimilation, and blame the victim for their problems

Outcome is usually measured by how closely the client approximates a middle class, non-minority existence

Culturally-blind agencies suffer from a deficit of information and often lack the avenues through which they can obtain needed information

Agencies often view themselves as unbiased and responsive to minority needs, their ethnocentrism is reflected in attitude, policy, and practice

Cultural Pre-Competence

Implies movement. The pre-competent agency realizes its weaknesses in serving minorities and attempts to improve some aspect of their services

Such agencies try experiments, hire minority staff, explore how to reach people of color in their service area, initiate training

They respond to minority communities' cry for improved services by asking, "What can we do?"

Danger at this level is a false sense of accomplishment or of failure that prevents the agency from moving forward along the continuum. An agency may believe that the accomplishment of one goal or activity fulfills their obligation to minority communities

Another danger is tokenism. Agencies sometimes hire one or more (usually assimilated) minority workers and feel they are then equipped

Cultural Competence

Agencies are characterized by acceptance and respect for difference, continuing self-assessment regarding culture, careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, and a variety of adaptations to service models to better meet the needs of minority populations

Agencies view minority groups as distinctly different from one another and as having numerous subgroups, each with important cultural characteristics

Culturally competent agencies work to hire unbiased employees, seek advice and consultation from the minority community, and actively decide what they are and are not capable of providing to minority client

Agencies seek minority staff capable of negotiating a bicultural world

Cultural Proficiency

Characterized by holding culture in high esteem; Seek to add to the knowledge base of culturally competent practice by conducting and disseminating research; Hire staff who specialize in culturally competent practice

Achieving cultural competence Cultural competence is not dependent on one factor; attitudes change to become less ethnocentric and biased; policies change to become more flexible and impartial; practices become more congruent with the culture of the client; every level of an agency can/must participate in the process; a developmental process for the individual and for the system.

Five Essential Elements to become more culturally competent

Valuing diversity: value diversity is to see and respect its worth; people share common basic needs, there are vast differences in how people of various cultures go about meeting those needs; acceptance of the fact that each culture finds some behaviors, interactions, or values more important or desirable than others

Cultural self-assessment: The system of care must be able to assess itself and have a sense of its own culture; system leaders can then choose courses of action that minimize cross-cultural barrier

Dynamics of difference: "dynamics of difference." When a system of one culture interacts with a population from another, both may misjudge the other's actions based on learned expectation; Each brings to the relationship unique histories with the other group and the influence of current political relationships between the two groups. Both will bring culturally-prescribed patterns of communication, etiquette, and problem solving. Both may bring stereotypes or underlying feelings about serving or being served by someone who is "different." System of care must be constantly vigilant over the dynamics of misinterpretation and misjudgment; misunderstanding is a two-way process

Institutionalization of cultural knowledge: system of care must sanction and in some cases, mandate the incorporation of cultural knowledge into the service delivery framework; practitioner must be able to know the client's concepts of health and family as well as be able to effectively communicate. The supervisor must know how to provide cross-cultural supervision; the administrator must know the character of the population the agency serves and how to make services accessible; the system must provide cultural knowledge to the practitioner; information about family systems, values, history, and etiquette are important

Adaptation to diversity: system's approach may be adapted to create a better fit between needs of groups and services

Teachers for Multicultural Schools: The Power of Selection

Teachers with a set of attributes and ideology can offer a multicultural curriculum; goals of these curricula emphasize students' personal development

Program elements that do predict which candidates will be effective with children in poverty

Self-knowledge-a thorough understanding of one's own cultural roots and group affiliations. An individual who says, "I'm not a member of any culture group, I'm just an American," is not sufficiently grounded to teach a multicultural curriculum. Teachers encourage students to search for more knowledge about their own and classmates' roots by sharing their own.

Self-acceptance-a high level of self-esteem derived from knowing one's roots. Teachers foster self-confidence and pride of group identity by demonstrating a confident acceptance of their own.

Relationship skills-the ability to work with diverse children and adults who are different from oneself in ways that these others perceive as respectful and caring; the teacher shows "we can all live together"

Community knowledge-a knowledge of the cultural heritages of the children and their families. Teachers who make home visits and have continuing experiences in the community's churches, stores, businesses, and parks can offer a multicultural curriculum that derives from the specific life experiences of the children in their classes.

Empathy-a deep and abiding sensitivity and appreciation to the ways in which children and their families perceive, understand, and explain their world. The teacher truly understands what parents in particular culture groups may want for their children without lowering standards and expectations.

Cultural human development-an understanding of how the local community influences development. The teacher knows more than what is supposedly universal for all 7-year-olds or all 13-year-olds. What does it mean for a toddler, child, preadolescent, or adolescent who is of a particular language, racial, cultural, or economic group to "grow up" in this community?

Cultural conflicts-an understanding of the discrepancies between the values of the local community groups and the traditional American values espoused in schools. The teacher expects, prepares for, and deals with issues that arise from differences in religion, gender roles, and values.

Relevant curriculum-a knowledge of connections that can be made between general societal values and those of the culture groups in the community, and the skills needed to implement this knowledge. The teacher connects specific content goals to specific uses in the students' lives.

Generating sustained effort-a knowledge and set of implementation skills that will engage youngsters from this community to persist with schoolwork. The teacher's daily instruction is organized around and rewards effort rather than perceived ability.

Coping with violence-skills for preventing and deescalating violence and the potential for violence. The teacher demonstrates forms of conflict resolution based on criteria other than power

Self-analysis-a capacity for reflection and change. How can I use my experiences to continue to learn, grow, and change? Teachers engage in systematic self-reflection. They develop and implement plans for professional development that impact on their classrooms

Functioning in chaos- teachers who overcome or manage school bureaucracies

Learning these elements

Substantial teacher development comes from using the lives of children as a rich source of study; star teachers are constantly involved in learning more about their children, their families and communities,

Much teacher development comes from the process of sharing their own interests, experiences, and talents with their students

The most important source of teacher development is their ideology; that is, what they believe about the nature of teaching and learning, the nature of development, and the nature of the setting. They bring this ideology with them, but it is imbedded in a casing of prejudices, biases, preferences, beliefs, values, and perceptions. As they begin and move through their teaching experiences, some resist any new input. Such teachers have one year of experience 30 times. Others seek to reconcile their ideology with their experiences and have 30 years of growth- much of it on a steep learning curve.

But teachers' experiences do not automatically lead to positive growth

Characteristics of success

Is likely to be sensitive to, aware of, and working on one's own racism, sexism, classism, or other prejudices

Currently lives in the city and plans to continue to do so

Expects that the school bureaucracy will be irrational and intrusive

Preparation

What can be taught are effective teaching behaviors that are built on an already functioning belief system

Reviews of college student learning and teaching provide overwhelming evidence that what students expect and value will determine what they will derive from their teacher education

Equity Pedagogy: An Essential Component of Multicultural Education

To be effectively implemented in schools, colleges, and universities, multicultural education must be broadly conceptualized and its various dimensions. Multicultural education has focused primarily on content integration, though there are four other elements.

Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Content integration consists of using examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to teach key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in a subject area or discipline

Knowledge construction process, students are helped to understand, investigate, and determine how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways that knowledge is constructed within it

Prejudice reduction dimension focuses on helping students to develop more positive racial, gender, and ethnic attitudes (Banks, 1993c)

Equity pedagogy consists of "techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups" (p. 6)

Empowering school culture and social structure describes the process of "restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience equality and cultural empowerment" (p. 7). For a comprehensive discussion of the dimensions and their interrelationships, see Banks (1993c)

Definition of Equity Pedagogy

Equity pedagogy is a set of teaching strategies and promotion of specific classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society.

Helping students become reflective and active citizens of a democratic society is at the essence of our conception of equity pedagogy.

The implementation of strategies such as cooperative learning and culturally relevant instruction within the context of existing assumptions and structures will not result in equity pedagogy. Instead current assumptions about teaching, students, learning, and the nature of U.S. society must be interrogated and reconstructed. Equity pedagogy also requires the dismantling of existing school structures that foster inequality.

Equity pedagogy assumes an integral relationship between knowledge and reflective action. Equity pedagogy creates an environment in which students can acquire, interrogate, and produce knowledge.

Equity pedagogy challenges teachers to use teaching strategies that facilitate the learning process. Instead of focusing on the memorization of knowledge constructed by authorities, students in classrooms where equity pedagogy is used learn to generate knowledge and create new understandings.

Practice of Equity Pedagogy

Implementing equity pedagogy requires teachers to understand how students perceive social interactions with their teachers, what they learn from them, and the extent to which students perceive their teachers as caring persons.

Peer relationships are an important part of the social context of the classroom, and teachers need to understand these interactions.

Equity pedagogy requires teachers to deal with the dynamics of peer interactions.

Equity pedagogy is student focused. It incorporates issues, concepts, principles, and problems that are real and meaningful to students.

The teacher who embraces equity pedagogy frequently gives students detailed feedback on poorly prepared assignments and asks students to "revisit" their work.

Teacher Characteristics

Teachers who successfully implement equity pedagogy draw upon a sophisticated knowledge base. They can enlist a broad range of pedagogical skills and have a keen understanding of their cultural experiences, values, and attitudes toward people who are culturally, racially, and ethnically different from themselves

Reflective self-analysis requires teachers to identify, examine, and reflect on their attitudes toward different ethnic, racial, gender, and social-class groups. Many teachers are unaware of the extent to which they embrace racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors that are institutionalized within society

Reflective self-analysis cannot be a one-time event. Multicultural awareness can result only from in-depth work on self. It requires the unraveling of myths that perpetuate social class, gender, and racial privilege.

A strong background in their subject area and a sophisticated understanding of pedagogy.

Multicultural knowledge includes key concepts in multicultural education such as culture, immigration, racism, sexism, cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, ethnic groups, stereotypes, prejudice, and institutional racism (Banks, 1991, 1994a). Teachers will use their understandings of these concepts to weave them into classroom discourse, help students describe their feelings and experiences, and draw linkages among different topics.

Teachers who are skilled in equity pedagogy are able to use diversity to enrich instruction instead of fearing or ignoring it. They are able to use diversity successfully because they understand its meaning in both their own and their students' lives. They are able to analyze, clarify, and state their personal values related to cultural diversity and to act in ways consistent with their beliefs

Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly

The academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters

Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching

1. *Acquiring Knowledge Base for Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different ethnic groups

i. Culture encompasses many things some of which are more important for teachers to know than others because they have direct implications for teaching and learning these are ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns

For example, a) asking which ethnic groups give priority to communal living and cooperative problem solving and how these preferences affect motivation, aspiration, and task performance; (b) how different ethnic groups' protocols of appropriate ways for children to interact with adults are exhibited in instructional settings; and(c) the implications of gender role socialization in different ethnic groups for implementing equity initiatives

ii. The second requirement for developing a knowledge base for culturally responsive teaching is acquiring detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups

For example, this is needed to make schooling more interesting and stimulating for, representative of, and responsive to ethnically diverse students

iii. Knowledge about leading multicultural education scholars and their major premises, principles, and proposals

2. *Culturally Relevant Curricula*

Convert knowledge base into curricula, such as

a. Adapting formal standards and lessons by integrating controversial issues; contextualizing issues within race, class, ethnicity, and gender; including multiple kinds of knowledge and perspectives; conducting deep cultural analyses of textbooks and other instructional materials, revise them for better representation of diversity

b. Assessing images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artifacts that are used to teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values. The most common forms of symbolic curricula are bulletin board decorations; images of heroes and heroines; trade books; and publicly displayed statements of social etiquette, rules and regulations, ensure that the images displayed in classrooms represent a wide variety of age, gender, time, place, social class, and positional diversity across ethnic groups

c. Analyzing knowledge, ideas, and impressions about ethnic groups that are portrayed in the mass media. Television programs, newspapers, magazines, and movies; culturally responsive teaching includes thorough and critical analyses of how ethnic groups and experiences are presented in mass media and popular culture

3. *Caring and Building a Learning Community*

Pedagogy, specifically cultural scaffolding in teaching these students - that is, using their own cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement

Partnership with ethnically diverse students, a partnership that is anchored in respect, honor, integrity, resource sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence

Action that demonstrates high expectations and uses imaginative strategies to ensure academic success

Students of color grow up in cultural environments where the welfare of the group takes precedence over the individual and where individuals are taught to pool their resources to solve problems

Culturally responsive teachers understand how conflicts between different work styles may interfere with academic efforts and outcomes (individual vs. group)

Help students to understand that knowledge has moral and political elements and consequences, which obligate them to take social action to promote freedom, equality, and justice for everyone

4. Cross-Cultural Communications

Determining what ethnically diverse students know and can do, as well as what they are capable of knowing and doing, is often a function of how well teachers can communicate with them

Culturally encoded (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1985) in that its expressive forms and substance are strongly influenced by cultural socialization. Teachers need to be able to decipher these codes to teach ethnically diverse students more effectively

Knowledge about the linguistic structures of various ethnic communication styles as well as contextual factors, cultural nuances, discourse features, logic and rhythm, delivery, vocabulary usage, role relationships of speakers and listeners, intonation, gestures, and body movements

In contrast, the communicative styles of most ethnic groups of color in the United States are more active, participatory, dialectic, and multimodal. Speakers expect listeners to engage with them as they speak by providing prompts, feedback, and commentary

Communal communication styles can be problematic in the classroom. Uninformed and unappreciative teachers consider them rude, distracting, and inappropriate and take actions to squelch them

Many African, Asian, Latino, and Native Americans use different approaches to organize and transmit ideas: one called topic-chaining communication. It is highly contextual, and much time is devoted to setting a social stage prior to the performance of an academic task. This is accomplished by the speakers' (or writers') providing a lot of background information, being passionately and personally involved with the content

5. Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction

Matching instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse students

For example, a topic-chaining communication style is very conducive to a storytelling teaching style. Cooperative group learning arrangements and peer coaching fit well with the communal cultural systems of African, Asian, Native, and Latino American groups

Cultural characteristics provide the criteria for determining how instructional strategies should be modified for ethnically diverse students

Teachers need to develop rich repertoires of multicultural instructional examples to use in teaching ethnically diverse students

For instance, using illustrations of ethnic architecture, fabric designs, and recipes in teaching geometric principles, mathematical operations, and propositional

The Dream Keepers

Characteristics of teachers successful with African American students, based on results from qualitative study

Experience, none had fewer than 12 years of teaching experience; inexperienced can also be effective according to results in subsequent study

All had a transformative moment, such as Civil Rights movement, Peace Corps experience, religious crisis, etc.

Some life experience, to look closely at own life

Strong identification with profession; desire to embrace students; rarely express pity for students

Teachers had strong conceptions about societal relations to take place in class community; used deliberate pedagogical strategies to achieve conception – emphasis of collective responsibility and collective rewards

Knowledge is flexible and contestable, just because it appears in textbook did not feel obligated to accept it

All emphasized a) student learning, b) developing cultural competence, c) cultivating sociopolitical awareness

For example students learn in many ways; explore multiple perspectives; students grounded in own culture, such as history, literature, arts; examined issues, raised questions about what students were learning in school

Not reducing instruction to lowest common denominator, or teaching to test

Culturally congruent, is meant to signify the ways in which the teachers altered their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures to resemble more closely those of the students' own culture.

Cultural relevance moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture; culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture

Significance of teacher expectations, seeking improvement versus doing maintenance, and assuming responsibility versus shifting responsibility

Culturally Relevant Conceptions of Self and Others

Like coaches, who see the goal; perceive teaching as an art, not a technical skill

Teaching as humane way to give back to the community

Teacher sense of order and classroom engagement

Student cultural background are central

Teachers believe students come to school with knowledge

Culturally Relevant Practices

Working to develop commonalities with all students

Small acts of civility and kindness

Work against the norm of competitive individualism

Advocate the kind of cooperation that leads students to believe they cannot be successful without getting help from others or without being helpful to others

Using students' existing language abilities, while still teaching standard English

Culturally Relevant Conceptions of Knowledge

Curricula is not basics, for example, forming a thesis and supporting it; students bring knowledge and also produce it: critical of knowledge and creating knowledge for example in social studies, Age of Discovery can it be discovery if it belongs to someone else?

Students challenged to view knowledge as vehicle for emancipation, to understand significance of their cultures and to recognize the power of language

Use of materials that resemble students; teacher excitement and enthusiasm for subject-matter

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Lewis, effective teacher, taking a graduate level course and sharing experience with students, Devereaux trained in direct reading instruction

Both Lewis and Devereaux victims of violent crime

Both minimize school/district protocol to benefit students, such as permitting students to take textbooks home for use

Culture a point of affirmation and celebration; content clear relationship to student heritage

Teachers treat students as if they already know something; encouraged to build on own experiences and knowledge

Students are allowed to ask their own questions and search for their own answers

Teachers help their students understand that societal expectations for them are generally low

Political nature of their work, such as teachers participating in union (disposition toward advocacy)

Methods used promote success, do not suggest students are incapable of learning

Classrooms where students engage in serious academic work

Teachers have in-depth knowledge of content

Good teaching directly related to good relationships

Teacher Power and Responsibility

Culturally relevant teaching is about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society... by challenging the system... they [teachers] practice subversive pedagogy.

Changing Teaching Practices

Recruit who have interest and desire in working with African American students; offer alternative route to certification

Examine own cultural background and have candidates experience other cultures

Prepare candidates to lead change, rather than support the status quo

Have candidates experience prolonged immersion of other cultures, such as African American culture

Place candidates with effective mentor teachers

Culturally Relevant Schools

Self-determination by teachers, students, community, such as deciding on curricula (community)

An accurate and fair representation of culture in the school curricula (just)

Help students understand the world as it is and prepare them to change the world

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