Title: Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity  
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DOI: DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12002

Focus: Culturally- X Pedagogies and Curriculum

Key Terms

Cultural competence: the ability to understand and respect values, attitudes, and beliefs that differ across cultures

Key Concepts

We’ve become acclimated to traditional schooling structures and culturally responsive teaching interjects to remind us that curriculum should be a component of instruction not the primary focus. It is necessary to question the structures of schooling by first recognizing they were built upon inequities that disproportionately impact students of color and perpetuate discrimination. We must examine, critique and dismantle structures that do not promote the success of all students by redefining our understanding of truth and knowledge. To improve the performance of underserved students, we must provide accurate information from various cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds; this endeavor benefits all students regardless of their positionalities and leads us to fostering a grander idea of community. By utilizing students’ personal/ cultural strengths, intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments we begin to construct a sense of agency, efficacy, and empowerment. Reframing our educational approach around cultural competency allows us to remove barriers and uplift the success of students who have experienced unjust treatment.

Teaching is overwhelmingly saturated with white women who may find it difficult to speak on matters they have not experienced. The populations they serve are likely Asian, African, Native, and or Latino American causing friction and creating challenges that impede impactful teaching and learning. It is not uncommon for teacher to feel restricted by curriculum/ performance standards, stunted by a lack of support, and experience struggle discussing difficult subjects further contributing to a lack of critical discourse within the classroom. While these do not absolve the responsibility to educate, we need to investigate factors that limit educators and unpack assumptions that resist change.

Culturally relevant teaching provides a viable pathway to mediate the differences reflected in the classroom to reorient discussions away from discomfort to strengthen our community. Educators should work to provide a variety of resources, explanations, and other engagement opportunities that allow students to challenge deficit perspectives and replace them with a positive and more inclusive mindset. Making cultural competence the cornerstone of one’s educational philosophy is a catalyst for students of all backgrounds to be able to achieve success. When discussing these matters, we should be reminded that a person can only be reached from where they are. This entails intentionally implementing accessible language, ideas and frameworks to provide a bridge extending outside your circles; It is critical to define the terms you share, avoid vague or politically charged words. We should adamantly reject the idea that race is too sensitive to share with students and counteract the implicit narrative that cultural diversity and quality academia are exclusive.