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Stimulating diverse cultural subjects in education

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Chair and Deputy Chair

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Introduction

A lot of people find diversity very important in the modern world because it helps them learn from each other and understand that everyone is unique and different in their own way. Diversity is seen as important for several reasons, both in society and in the education system. Just like how each person has their own interests, hobbies, and/or talents, people can also have different backgrounds, ethnicities, and/or cultures. When diversity has been achieved in the education system, children, whether they are in primary school or in secondary school, get to learn about and appreciate these differences. The early years of a child's life are crucial for setting the foundation for the attitudes and beliefs that they will have for the rest of their lives. Engaging in cultural diversity activities introduces the children to the concept of 'difference' in a positive light. It helps them to understand people may have different traditions, languages, and habits.

Additionally, classroom diversity and inclusion usually reflect the real world. By mirroring the diverse nature of our society, children are provided with a more accurate representation of their community and the world beyond it. It helps them prepare for future interactions in an increasingly interconnected world and it instills in them the values of inclusion and respect from an early age.

Definition of Key Terms

Diversity

The quality, condition, or fact of being different and/or diverse.

NGO

Non-Governmental Organization - an organization that is not affiliated with any government whose purpose is often to address a social or political issue.

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It generally specializes in development goals and building a culture of peace. It is also involved in education across the world.

GPE

Global Partnership for Education. They work to promote teacher environments and diversity, particularly in poverty-stricken countries that are suffering the consequences of conflict.

NAME

National Association for Multicultural Education. It aims to bring educational equity through multicultural education and anti-discrimination policies.

General Overview

Managing cultural diversity in the classroom is important as it plays a major role in the student's growth and in maintaining a healthy relationship between the educator and the student.

There are several ways teachers and administrators can ensure that both the classroom environment and the curriculum are diverse since they are responsible for the increasing cultural diversity of society. There are multiple strategies that will help to enhance all students' cultural awareness, to enhance each student's sense of identity, and to foster inclusion in the classroom community.

Ensuring cultural awareness may be promoted in the classroom, starting with the teacher understanding each individual student. Educators can take the time to learn about each student's cultural background, hobbies, learning styles, and what makes them unique. Demonstrating a genuine interest in learning about each student and their culture will help establish their trust and it allows teachers and administrators to form a bond with them so the students will feel valued. After getting to know the students, teachers can continue to maintain ongoing communication throughout the semester and/or the school year. Students can talk about whether they felt included in the classroom culture. This may help identify issues and/or ways to improve the overall experience in the classroom.

Another way of achieving diversity is incorporating it into the curriculum. Activities and lessons that include stories, music, art, and traditions from various cultures and countries can

significantly enhance children's cultural awareness. Books with diverse characters can help children to see different viewpoints. Music and art activities offer sensory-rich experiences that not only celebrate different cultures but also deepen students' understanding and appreciation of them.

Diversity also transcends the boundaries of conventional learning by fostering an environment where the richness of varied views, experiences, and identities is recognized and actively integrated into the educational fabric.

Types of diversity in the classroom

Teaching diversity in the classroom can be seen as an important part of establishing an overall school or district policy of cultural diversity. Schools can do their part to support policies and procedures that promote equality, diversity, and inclusion, but teachers can implement diversity and inclusiveness in their classrooms on a daily basis with the students. There are multiple types of diversity that can be focused on while teaching.

- Race and/or ethnicity. Although the concept of race and ethnicity tends to be learned, children are still able to see skin color and the differences between them, especially in a racially diverse society.
- Ethnicity. Aside from the differences in appearance, one's culture, and heritage make up a significant part of an individual's identity. While race is limited to several categories, ethnicities span across countries, towns, villages, and/or tribes. By understanding the students' ethnicities, their unique interests and perspectives that are shaped by their ethnic backgrounds can be recognized better by the educator.
- Language. Ethnicity could determine a student's primary and/or secondary language, and in some cases, students in immigrant families might speak another language at home than the national language of the country that they are staying in. This could lead to language barriers between parents and teachers or potential language barriers among students who may not be as skilled in the language.
- Religion. Religious beliefs can be just as broad as ethnic backgrounds, and it is important to honor each student's religious beliefs and practices. Outside of parochial schools, religion is typically not brought into a student's school life unless that student's behavior is directly affected by their religious beliefs. Teachers might further recognize that the religious students may have trouble understanding the religious beliefs they were raised to believe may not fit in with the beliefs and lifestyle of their classmates who have other religions or those who are atheists.

- Economic background. Students come from various socio-economic backgrounds that could be determined by the environment in which they were raised, the neighborhood where they reside, and their families' income levels. These differences could show up in many ways, including personal tech devices, wardrobe, transportation, and/or holiday gifts from their family. Some students may have to take on after-school jobs or rush home to babysit a younger sibling, while other students are able to participate in extracurricular activities.
- LGBTQ+. Sexual orientation and gender identity are crucial aspects of a young person's journey. It is often during their time as a student that they come into their own understanding of who they are. These personal journeys may involve support from teachers and counselors or acceptance by people of their own age, so educators can keep an eye out if they notice any of their students struggling in any of these specific areas.
- Ability. This includes differences in students' physical, mental, and learning abilities. With this, children are able to learn that others may not think and/or act the same way that they do.
- Age. Older kids can become role models for younger students, so they can learn certain things that they may not have learned otherwise.

Benefits of diverse surroundings

There are multiple benefits to having diverse surroundings, including, but not limited to:

- Diverse perspectives inspire creativity and give birth to innovation.
- It is also more likely that people become compassionate about others when talking to other people with the aim of understanding. Hatred makes people resentful, whereas compassion usually helps them to become stronger.
- Knowing people from different backgrounds gives people the opportunity for growth and a deeper understanding of different countries and cultures.
- Diversity may add to quality by increasing the scope of coverage and the paths that can be followed to achieve a goal. Variety is always appreciated.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
November 1945	The creation of UNESCO, an organization that defines one of their goals as diversifying the classroom. They are strong campaigners for summits to promote diversity in the education system
1990	The NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education) was founded at the Association for Teachers Educators (ATE). It aims to bring educational equity through multicultural education.
2002	The GPE (Global Partnership for Education) was founded. They work to promote teacher environments and diversity particularly in poverty stricken or countries that are suffering the consequences of conflict.
2030	The Deadline for the 2030 sustainable development agenda. Among many other things, this agenda aims to ensure quality education and subsequently, a diverse and multicultural education.

Major Parties Involved

UNESCO

UNESCO, or United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is an organization that specializes in development goals, building a culture of peace, and, most importantly, promoting intercultural dialogue through education. They aim to catalyze reform in education by attempting to live up to the ambitious Education 2030 Sustainable Development

Agenda, which represents many goals, one of which is the guarantee that everybody has an equal opportunity to education. UNESCO has also campaigned to launch events surrounding the diversification of education, such as the Transforming Education pre-Summit (TES), which eventually took place in June of 2022.

GPE (Global Partnership for Education)

The GPE, or Global Partnership for Education, is an organization that specializes in addressing educational recessions in countries stricken by extreme poverty or conflict. They are characterized by their establishment of strong and resilient education systems. They also work to promote diversity in teacher environments, which also contributes to promoting diversity in education in developing countries. The GPE, however, is an NGO, which means that they get most of their funding from investors and donors, meaning they often work within the interest of their stakeholders.

NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education)

The NAME, or National Association for Multicultural Education, was founded in 1990 by the Association of Teachers Educators (ATE) and aims to bring educational equity through multicultural education. They are very vocal about their anti-discrimination statement where they are consciously and proactively inclusive of all areas of diversity, which are but are not limited to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sovereign tribal Nations status, ancestry, gender identity, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, socioeconomic status, marital status, language, disability, and/or immigration status.

Possible Solutions

Implementing a diverse curriculum

Many subjects within a normal school curriculum tend to have a large impact on students' exposure to a diverse and multicultural education due to the increasing diversification of classrooms worldwide. It only seems fair that this diversity is expressed within the curriculum across many subjects. Such subjects could include but are not limited to Literature or the Humanities (History and Geography). These subjects rely heavily on source material, which can be of any origin. In literature, for example, novels or poetry could be from a diverse portfolio of authors from all across the world

or authors who identify as LGBTQ+ or who have a form of disability in order to represent global attitudes to the subject. History, on the other hand, can simply be diversified by implementing a more broad range of historical periods from different parts of the world into the curriculum. It can also be ensured that the history surrounding men and women is equally discussed. On the topic of geography, ensuring that a range of different approaches to the social world by different cultures are discussed and the natural geography of many places worldwide are taught in lessons, making sure that the geography is not limited to the country of origin. Languages can also be a great way to expose students to a more diverse world. Promoting bilingualism, also known as allowing pupils to learn a second language as part of the curriculum, can allow them to develop a greater understanding of different cultures and may even promote multicultural interactions once they have grown up.

Celebrating diversity

A celebration of diversity is a great way of bringing diversity to the classroom, which is filled with people from east to west. Such celebrations may include some sort of cultural day. Such days could have initiatives like students can wear something traditional from their own country. Promoting diversity through celebration could also include events like Purple Friday, an event used to commemorate the LGBTQ+ community with an initiative, in this case, wearing purple. Such events could also be used to collect money for charities. In this case, the student may bring a small set fee on the day of the celebration, which will amount to a charitable sum when accounting for all students. This money could be donated to an organization that is promoting diversity, chosen by the school. For example, a foundation supporting people who are disabled or housing for the less fortunate. Other events may include, student-led cultural events or sharing personal narratives or experiences in the form of a speech or talk.

Promoting inclusive teaching strategies

The way diversity is introduced to the classroom depends highly on the manner in which the educators teach. This is why techniques like culturally responsive teaching may include adjusting teaching styles, language, and material to support the diversity of the classroom. Teaching courses can also adapt to being more inclusive. Teachers can be trained to acknowledge the backgrounds of all of the students in their class by promoting communication with them and subsequently, teachers

could mold their lessons around the diversity present in the classroom. Teachers can also catalyze discussions while keeping an inclusive mindset, ensuring all students of different ethnicities and/or gender identities have the same representation in the classroom. The representation of cultures is also very important, ensuring textbooks or classroom decorations reflect the diversity in the classroom. Teachers could also work to put together more elaborate school field trips to more exotic countries, which can allow students to learn about different cultures by actually visiting the place in question. Funding for such trips could come from government subsidies.

Promoting critical thinking

Allowing students to think critically about the diverse world and differences within a culture can allow them to gain a more diverse understanding of the world. Encouraging debates or discussions on current world issues relating to diversity and multiculturalism, such as but not limited to immigration, global conflicts, and human rights, can help them understand the complexity of the modern world. Critical thinking could be put into place by promoting awareness to questioning bias and/or stereotypes. Schools could implement teaching methods such as perspective taking, which includes activities like "imagining walking in another student's shoes." Exercises like this can allow students to truly understand and explore life from another cultural perspective, which may be vital to developing empathy and understanding for the people they learn with. Students could also be taught how to appreciate a more open-minded view of the world's diversity, this could open them to new ideas, possibly improving their attainment in different subjects.

Using technology

The use of technology has supported many schools throughout the last few decades. There's no secret that technology in schools can be used to promote diversification in education. Taking advantage of modern technology as it progresses is the only way to move forward in education. Promoting websites related to linking peers from other countries, like ePals or Global Pen friends, can be a starting point for promoting diversification while utilizing technology. Schools could also take advantage of the newly developing VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) to set up virtual field trips, for example, where a student could learn about another part of the world easily from the comfort of their own school or home. Utilizing popular online podcasts or following international news channels can also be a way to promote diversity in the classroom.

Preparing for a diverse future

The world is an ever-changing place. With the rise of globalization, it is important that students are ready for what is to come in a more diverse future. As mentioned previously in this report, schools could promote different language classes allowing students to interpret and understand different cultures and possibly interact with a multitude of different people in the future. Schools could also implement or modify the existing classes that focus on teaching about the world of work to include teaching about diverse workspaces and cultural awareness in different industries, which allows students to flourish in the future workforce.

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