

PREPARATION OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME: A SINE QUA NON IN BRIDGING GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS

ANEKE MARCELLINUS NNANNA (Ph.D)

Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education

Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Nigeria

Abstract

The preparation of culturally responsive teachers has become an increasing call amongst nations of the world. These crops of teachers are there to bridge the achievement gap and increase students co-learning in the classroom to motivate students of colors. This paper examined the mode of preparing culturally responsive teachers in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs). Specifically, through hermeneutically interpretation it explained, Conceptual analysis of culturally responsive teachers, Steps to becoming a culturally responsive teacher, Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teachers, The need for culturally responsive curriculum in education industry, Guidelines for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in TEPs, and Reconstructing the pedagogy used in teachers' education programs (TEPs). The research paper x-rayed the preparation process in teachers' education programmes in order to further empower teachers with specific knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions in the classroom of diverse students. Some recommendations and suggestions were made immediate response from the government.

Keywords: preparation process, culturally responsive teachers, TEPs, culturally responsive curriculum, reconstructing pedagogy.

Introduction

The world today is becoming an international community especially in this time of globalization. This implies oneness in business, culture and education. There is a growing need for a curriculum that is all inclusive where pre-service teachers will be trained on how to handle cultural diversity. Teacher education has the responsibility of training culturally responsive teachers. The increasing call for preparation of culturally responsive teachers demands the recruiting and preparing a diverse teaching force that will restructure the teacher education curriculum, the pedagogy used to prepare prospective teachers, and transforming the institutional context in order to support the curricular and pedagogical changes in the institution (Villegas, 2002). Some scholars have maintained that teacher education programs have the responsibility of preparing culturally responsive teachers. To become a culturally responsive teacher, it is required that a teacher should have an indebt knowledge of cultural diversity in order to accommodate students from different cultural background. In humble support of this assertion Gay (2002) as quoted in Kea, Campbell-Whatley and Richards (2006) maintain that despite the steadily increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in schools, not all teacher education programs (TEPs) readily embrace multicultural education or culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy. This implies that there is urgent need of crop of teachers who are well prepared in the teacher education programs. To achieve these fit Kea et al (2006) suggest that this brief has a twofold purpose:

- (a) to demonstrate the need for rethinking current approaches to teacher education pedagogy and
- (b) to provide guidelines for developing culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy.

Although becoming culturally responsive requires a mastery of cultural diversity, creating space for pre-service teachers to engage critically and meaningfully with social issues (Villegas 2002), socio-cultural consciousness is essential. In the view of Kea et al (2006) socio-cultural consciousness means understanding that one's way of thinking, behaving, and being is influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, and language. Therefore, prospective teachers must critically examine their own socio-cultural identities and the inequalities between schools and society that support institutionalized discrimination to maintain a privileged society based on social class and skin color. Thus in the course of teacher education programs and pre-service teaching teacher candidates must inspect and confront any negative attitudes they might have toward cultural groups. To achieve this it involves familiarity with the needs, perceptions, and optimum knowledge of the environment of all students and this should influence teachers' selection of instructional resources. In their opinions Muschell and Roberts (2011), Perez and Nordlander (2004) and Villegas & Lucas, (2014) maintain that the instructional decisions that teachers make on a daily basis can profoundly affect learning of children who come from diverse backgrounds. More so, being a culturally responsive teacher is not only a matter of applying instructional techniques, it is primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to embody assumed traditions of particular cultural groups for language learning and teaching (Muschell and Roberts, 2011).

Conceptual analysis of culturally responsive teachers

In our world today there are a lot of barriers and differences in all the facet of life. Human beings have employed a lot of resources and capital to bridge this gap existing in different cultures of the world. Thus culturally responsive teachers are set out to bridge diverse racial and ethnicity found in our education industry. Offering a conceptual framework and practical strategies for culturally responsive teachers is important. Culturally responsive teachers are teachers who are multicultural and multi-linguistic. Culturally responsive teachers have dynamic cultural ability to handle students from different languages and cultures in the same class. Culturally responsive teachers according to Gay (2010) use the cultural knowledge, prior experience, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. These are teachers who are well grounded in ethnic, racial, cultural, economic and linguistic diversity. In responding to this, Ladson-Billings (2001); Mason, (1999); Villegas & Lucas, (2002) suggest that teacher education programme (TEPs) should include specific, structured activities aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of cultural diversity within the contexts of the community, home, and school of the diverse student population served.

Reconstructing the pedagogy used in teachers' education programs (TEPs)

In every academic discipline pedagogy is very vital. Considering issues of preparation of culturally responsive teachers, the system of preparing pre-service teachers cannot be relegated because teachers are central in achieving the goal, aim and objective of education. Anyacho (2011) states that the public is demanding results and holding teachers accountable when the results are not meeting expectations. The teacher therefore has to become more

expert, and more professional. There are some people who believe that anyone can teach. But teachers are having increasing success in demonstrating that those persons employed as teachers should know something as well as the subject matter they are going to teach. However, the problem here is that in preparing teachers or in teacher education programmes the culture of the community is not considered. According to Catapano and Huisman (2010), Koerner and Abdul-Tawwab (2006) teacher education programs do not always include consideration of aspects related to community in their programs, and existing research and literature do not often mention either the communities surrounding schools or the need to connect pre-service teachers with them. In the preparation of curriculum the community and school environment is very vital in preparing curriculum. That is why there is need for teachers who are culturally responsive. Calls to develop teachers as 'agents of change' have become common in policies and literature worldwide, often linked to the agenda of social justice (Florian, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009) teachers have to be established and prepared for their roles of prime agents of educational change. Villegas (2007) observes that given the salient role that schools play in shaping students' life chances and the obligation that teachers have to teach all students fairly, teacher education can ill-ignore the conspicuous pattern of disparities in the distribution of school benefits across groups.

Guidelines for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in TEPs

Considering issues of diversity in the world today culturally responsive pedagogy should be an inherent part of course conceptualization. Consequently, the course description and objectives should reflect how the course will contribute to the development of awareness and skills related to diversity and relevant to the focus of the course. The course text, readings, and materials listed on course syllabi should include the interests and contributions of diverse populations and reflect multiple perspectives. Additionally, where feasible, multiple ways to access course materials should be made available (e.g., materials on reserve at the library, course packets, information on instructor's Web page, etc.), course requirements, projects, and activities for each chapter or topic presented should discuss the implications for ethnically and linguistically diverse learners. Information and activities related to diversity should be infused throughout the course, as opposed to being an isolated single session or segment of the class. This does not preclude sessions that are designed specifically to highlight issues of diversity, but it does suggest that this should not be the only means by which issues are addressed. It is important to provide varied activities through which students gain knowledge or skills, as well as demonstrate competence. For example, consider the format in which course content is presented (e.g., lecture, large group discussion, small group activity, reading assignment, simulation, performance activity, etc.). If care is not taken to balance the types of activities used, students whose cultural practice repertoires do not match those favored by the instructor may be placed at a disadvantage. Transformation begins with one course and then a focus on the entire curriculum. These changes in the curriculum should reveal that learning effective cultural pedagogy is not just course or curriculum development, but rather a change in students' thinking, behavior, and ultimately teaching

The need for culturally responsive curriculum in education industry

Morey and Kilano (1997) propose a framework for infusing attention to diversity throughout the teacher education curriculum while encouraging self-analysis and reflective thinking using three levels of curriculum transformation. Exclusive, the lowest level represents traditional mainstream perspectives of diversity. Inclusive, the next level, represents a

mixture of normative and nontraditional diversity perspectives. The highest level, the Transformed curriculum, represents a structural transformation.

The Exclusive level: focuses on minor aspects of diversity at the lowest level. Teaching about diversity is restricted to one part of the course. Gender and diverse groups are discussed in relation to stereotypes, and activities are limited to the four “f’s—food, folklore, fun and fashion.” The content encompasses traditional mainstream experiences and stereotypes. Extracurricular reading materials focus on authors who perpetuate and confirm those myths. Instructional strategies are mainly lecture, basic question and answer, and other basic didactic methods. Instruction is teacher-centered, with assignments that focus on content while avoiding social dynamics. Exams are usually objective (e.g., multiple-choice and fill in the blanks).

The Inclusive level: adds diversity content but retains the traditional, original structure. That is, diversity is discussed throughout the course and compared to the dominant norm. Reading materials include authors with varying, significant, diverse viewpoints. Social views are discussed but not elaborated upon. There is a wide array of assessment methods, and various speakers add flavor to the content. Although the instruction remains teacher-centered, a variety of methods are used to relate new knowledge. Students are encouraged to construct their own knowledge and use critical thinking skills in conjunction with peer learning.

The Transformed level: curriculum challenges traditional views and encourages reconceptualization and new ways of thinking. The instructor engages in critical pedagogy and issue-oriented approaches. Instruction is student-centered, and students self-evaluate through projects and related assignments that contribute to real-life change. Students learn from each other, and concepts and personal experiences are analyzed. Transformed courses represent a paradigm shift that presents content from a diverse perspective. Self assessment and reflection techniques are employed that encourage sharing, diverse perspectives and equity in participation, and critical problem solving. Instruction centers on content-related vignettes that require application and examination of values. Designing a transformed curriculum is a developmental process.

Morey and Kilano (1997) maintain that After TEPs examine their existing curricula; they can determine the current level of cultural involvement and begin an initiative to evolve to a transformed level. If current programme is exclusive, moving through to the inclusive and then the transformed may be the best option. The following suggestions can assist in the development of a transformed curriculum

- Require pre-service students to demonstrate multicultural competence via assignments, projects, lesson and unit plan development, and instructional delivery.
- Utilize discussion groups between pre-service and in-service teachers who are regarded as excellent culturally responsive teachers in urban schools to dialogue about complicated equity issues that arise in practice
- Advocate student volunteerism in a local culture as a “service learning” experience.
- Create opportunities for pre-service teachers at ethnically encapsulated university settings to engage in multicultural conferences and student and instructor exchange programs.

Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teachers

Villegas and Lucas (2002) encourage teacher educators to critically examine their programs and systematically interweave six salient characteristics throughout the coursework, learning experiences, and fieldwork of prospective teachers to better prepare culturally responsive teachers to work successfully in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Below is a brief description of the six characteristics.

- a) An affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds significantly impacts their learning, belief in self and overall academic performance. By respecting cultural differences and adding education related to the culture of the students, programs become inclusive.
- b) Commitment and skills to act as agents of change enable the prospective teacher to confront barriers/obstacles to change, and develop skills for collaboration and dealing with chaos. As agents of change, teachers assist schools in becoming more equitable over time.
- c) Constructivist views of learning contend that all students are capable of learning, and teachers must provide scaffolds between what students already know through their experiences and what they need to learn. Constructivist teaching promotes critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and the recognition of multiple perspectives.
- d) Learning about students' past experiences, home and community culture, and world both in and outside of school helps build relationships and increase the prospective teachers' use of these experiences in the context of teaching and learning.
- e) Culturally responsive teaching strategies support the constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning. As teachers assist students to construct knowledge, build on their personal and cultural strengths, and examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, an inclusive classroom environment is created. There are several implications for culturally responsive TEPs.

Steps to becoming a culturally responsive teacher

Deady (2017) identifies five steps of becoming a culturally responsive teacher viz:

- Assess your own behavior
- Get to know your students
- Make your classroom a judgment-free zone
- Adapt your teaching
- Include all cultures in your teaching

I. Assess your own behavior

It's important to bear in mind that your attitudes are influenced by your own culture. If your students' cultures differ from yours, you need to be sensitive to the differences in attitudes that may arise in the classroom. The first step to creating a culturally responsive classroom is being aware of your own actions and working to shift your mindset into ones that are culturally inclusive and open minded. This also applies to your interactions with students' families and their communities. Being sensitive to how certain cultures may stress different ways of learning is a key first step towards building a positive, respectful relationship with families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

II. Get to know your students

Be proactive when it comes to learning about the different cultural backgrounds of the students in your classroom. Do your research, either online or by talking to your teaching colleagues. As a teacher, you cannot create a culturally responsive classroom if you don't take the time to get to know your students as individuals. Establishing set times to sit down with a student can give them a chance to speak about themselves in a more personal setting. Some students may not feel comfortable talking about their life outside of school with the whole class listening.

Be sure to show a genuine interest in each student's understanding of content and their general well-being. Creating a culturally responsive classroom is all about creating an environment in which students of all cultures feel comfortable and ready to learn.

If there is a student in your class who has recently immigrated from another country, for example, sit down with them to ask if there were any activities or traditions they enjoyed at school in their home country. This will not only help put your new student at ease, it can also breathe life into your lesson activities.

III. Make your classroom a judgment-free zone

Students must be able to look at situations regarding culture with an unbiased opinion and be comfortable asking questions to further their understanding. If a conversation arises about a current event or behavior a discussion should be welcomed, but be sure the discussion is directed towards learning, not criticizing.

Encourage students to ask questions and challenge the status quo. Make critical thinking the norm and teach your students to value each other's differences. It's common for many students to not want to speak up, but encouraging them to voice their opinions and questions what is happening in the world around them is one of the best ways to help them understand and overcome some of their preconceived notions.

IV. Adapt your teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach that is student-focused. It identifies not only the differences between students but the unique strengths of each child to encourage their academic achievement and sense of belonging in the classroom. As a teacher, there are some important questions you should ask yourself, including the following:

- Are there any activities in your classroom that don't benefit all students?
- What activities seem to engage all students and get them participating?
- What actions have you noticed seem to get the best reactions out of your students?

It's important to honestly assess your current teaching practices and modify your instruction and curriculum to consider all students' backgrounds and readiness levels. Research on culturally responsive teaching has shown that students are more engaged in learning and learn more effectively when the knowledge and skills taught are presented within the context of their own experiences and cultural frames of reference.

As a result, it's critical to learn how to adapt your teaching strategies and techniques to the needs of students of all cultural backgrounds in your classroom. Incorporating learning

strategies that have a sense of familiarity for foreign students, for example, can not only help them better connect to the classroom environment, but feel more comfortable sharing their own experiences with classmates.

Make learning as interactive as possible. Educational games are not only fun for students they also require active listening and provide a greater chance for memory retention. Puzzle-solving, making connections, storytelling and visuals and repetition are all tools that can be used in the classroom and are commonly seen across a lot of cultures

V. Include all cultures in your teaching

In your lessons, choose content that reflects the different cultures of your students. Lessons should incorporate multicultural information and approaches whenever possible. If a teacher continually references people from a specific cultural background or uses people of a particular nationality or ethnic background exclusively in class examples, students may feel as if their cultural background is being sidelined and can consequently feel disengaged from their learning. Now more than ever, teachers should be looking to making their classrooms a space in which students of all cultures feel supported to learn and succeed. By embracing implementing culturally responsive teaching principles effectively, your classroom can, over time, become a more positive learning environment for all of your students - it all starts with you!

Conclusion

It is important to note that approaching diversity in schools is a challenging and time-consuming process and it requires much dedication and energy because teachers should work not only with students but also with parents, administrators, and policymakers in order to promote culturally responsive teaching and create culturally sensitive language learning environment in which differences students bring with themselves are welcomed and accepted (Muschell & Roberts, 2011). Unfortunately, many of the teachers have little or no experience in culturally sensitive settings and bring limited and inaccurate knowledge of their students' cultural backgrounds (Castro, 2010; Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2008;) and it creates great challenges and problems for both instructors and students. ...

References

- Anyacho, B.A. (2011). *Problems and Prospects in Curriculum delivery in Nigerian Schools*. Rapid Education Publishers.
- Catapano, S. and Huisman, S. (2010), Preparing teachers for urban schools: evaluation of a community-based model. *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, v7 n1 p80-90
- Deady, T. (2017) Criticality of the rare earth element: current and future sources and recycling. *Open access journal resources* (ISSN 2079-9276)
- Florian, L. (2009) The inclusive practice project in Scotland: teacher education for inclusive education. *Journal of teaching and Teacher Education*. Volume 25, Issue 4, May 2009, Pages 594-601**
- Gay (2010) *Culturally responsive teaching: theory, research and practice*. New York and London, Teachers College, Columbia University,
- Kea, C., Campbell-Whatley, G. D. and Richards, H. V. (2006) *Educating culturally responsive teachers*. New York, State University of New York Press

- Koerner, M. E. and Abdul-Tawwab, N. (2006) Using Community as a Resource for Teacher Education: A Case Study. *Journal of [Equity and Excellence Education](#)* 39(1):37-46.
- Morey and Kilano (1997) *Handbook of research on promoting cross-cultural competence and social justice in teacher education*. USA, IGI Global.
- Muschell, L. H. and Roberts, M. (2011) Bridging the cultural gap: one teacher education program's response to preparing culturally responsive teachers *Journal of [Childhood Education](#)* 87(5):337-340 .
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94–106. doi:10.1177/0022487101052002002
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.
- Villegas, A. M. (2002) *Educating culturally responsive teachers*. New York, State university of New York press
- Villegas, A. M. (2012). Collaboration between multicultural and special educators: Pulling together the threads in the conversation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63(4), 287-290.
- Zeichner, K. (2009). *Teacher education and the struggle for social justice*. New York: Routledge.