New Perspectives on Cultural Diversity

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What we’ll discuss today:

• The diversity of diversity
• Challenges faced by diverse students
• Patterns of Cultural Awareness
• Working with English Language Learners
• Strategies for Successful Interactions
The diversity of diversity

• **Ethnic Diversity**
  • Includes students of different ethnic backgrounds both domestic AND international
  • Environment plays a critical role in cultural values (more so than ethnicity)
  • Every individual is at a different level of acculturation

• **Language Diversity**
  • Cultural background AND environment affect language proficiency
  • Even multilingual students have some deficiencies
  • Many dialects of the same basic language (English too!)
The diversity of diversity

- **Socioeconomic Diversity**
  - Economic status very much an influence on one's culture and values
  - Students of lower income families often have greater pressure to succeed
  - Lack of resources creates a strain on their learning
  - Different types of poverty
  - Not always about “pulling yourself up through your bootstraps”
The diversity of diversity

• Other factors that influence a student's culture and values:
  • Religious/Spiritual beliefs
  • Sexual Orientation
  • Geography
  • Family’s occupation
  • Technological proficiency
  • Age/Generation

• Every student brings their own unique experiences
When everyone is special, no one is special.

Wrong!
Challenges Faced by Diverse Students

- Cultural isolation
- Self conscious
- Increased pressure to succeed
- Lack of knowledge navigating mainstream culture
- Lack of acceptance by the mainstream culture
- Seen as the beneficiaries of entitlement programs
Challenges Faced by Diverse Students

- Developing language proficiency
- Increased pressure to navigate multiple worlds
- Cultural value conflicts
- Feel inadequate compared to peers, esp white peers
- Lack of financial resources a significant barrier
- Lack of diverse role models
Challenges Faced by Diverse Students

- Racism
- Discrimination
- Prejudice

- Experienced from:
  - Everyday encounters
  - Educators who are culturally intolerant or unaware
  - Students who culturally intolerant or unaware
  - Staff and patients in clinical settings
Challenges Faced by Diverse Students

• Cultural Conflicts in the classroom
• 3 majors sources:
  1. Differing definitions of health
  2. Alternative views of appropriate relationships with teachers
  3. Varied ideas about suitable learning approaches

• Conflict occurs when educators impose their values on the students without acknowledging or considering their perspectives

• Differences in behavioral patterns and communications styles of students seen as deficiencies by educators
Patterns of Cultural Awareness

• 5 “levels” of cultural awareness (Yoder 1996)

• **Generic**
  • Low level of cultural awareness
  • Does not acknowledge cultural differences
  • Assumes the needs of diverse students are the same as majority students
  • “Everyone is the same”
  • “I don’t see color”
Patterns of Cultural Awareness

• Non-tolerant
  • Unwilling to tolerate cultural differences
  • Creates barriers for diverse students
  • Most damaging to students

• Mainstreaming
  • Higher level of cultural awareness
  • See the special needs of diverse students but consider them a deficiency
  • Push for assimilation of ethnic students into mainstream
  • Believe only way to succeed to is conform and drop their cultural behaviors
Patterns of Cultural Awareness

• **Struggling**
  • Working to become more culturally aware
  • Acknowledge the difficulties diverse students face
  • Willing to adapt teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse students
  • Willing to experiment and take chances

• **Bridging**
  • High level of cultural awareness
  • Culturally adaptive teaching strategies
  • See more diversity on campus as positive
  • Encourage students to maintain their ethnic identities and function biculturally
Strategies for Successful Interactions

• 5 successful strategies of the bridging approach

1. Incorporate student’s cultural knowledge
2. Encourage students to preserve their cultural or ethnic identity
3. Provide (or be) a successful ethnic role model
4. Facilitate negotiation of barriers students face
5. Advocate for systemic change
Strategies for Successful Interactions

• Acknowledge and help students deal with their barriers
• Help students develop academically
• One negative encounter can devastate a student
  • Don’t be that one!
• Develop your cultural sensitivity
  • Be aware of your cultural perspective and privilege
  • Respect other’s values
  • Be open minded
  • Adapt your communication and teaching techniques
  • Don’t be afraid to ask questions
Working with English Language Learners

• ELL students fight 2 concurrent battles:
  • Learning content
  • Developing language proficiency
• ELL students face greater anxiety due to language
• Very rarely are there adequate supports for ELL students
• Current teaching methods are narrow and often difficult for ELL students
• Current testing methods are a significant barrier
Working with English Language Learners

• 2 key strategies for working with ELL students:
  • Linguistic modification
    • Decreases the language burden
    • Allows students to focus on content
    • Reduces unnecessary language complexity
  • Diversifying teaching methods
    • ELL students often learn better through tactile and kinesthetic learning methods
Working with English Language Learners

• These strategies are not designed to give an unfair advantage
• Designed to level the playing field
• Focus is on content, not communication
• Clinical settings, labs, group study is the appropriate place for developing communication skills
• The Cummins Model
Top 10 List!

1. Check your own prejudices (We all have them)
2. Acknowledge the barriers faced by diverse students
3. Recognize that every student has different needs
4. See differences as strengths, not deficiencies
5. Teach students how to navigate the mainstream world…
6. ...but encourage them to function biculturally
7. Connect diverse students with diverse role models
8. Be an advocate for students when they face discrimination
9. Level the playing field
10. Commit to increased cultural awareness
Sources


• Bosher, Susan, Bowels, Melissa. (2008) The Effects of Linguistic Modification on ESL Students’ Comprehension of Nursing Course Test Items. *Nursing Education Perspectives*. 29, 165-172
Sources


Sources

