
MULTICULTURAL ISSUES RELATED TO EDUCATION

N.Nishalini

Student Teacher, Sri Aurobindo Mira College of Education

M.Sakila Banu

Student Teacher, Sri Aurobindo Mira College of Education

Abstract

Classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural and this leads to new challenges for teachers. Traditionally, students coming into the multicultural classroom are at a deficit because they must learn how to navigate unfamiliar people, their cultures, and language. Thus, teachers have the added responsibility of leading students through this unfamiliar territory towards achievement. This requires specialized learning techniques, practice, and education in order to effectively accomplish. Teachers who unite classrooms with activities both inside and outside of the classroom stand a better chance at boosting student achievement and ameliorating the negative effects that have been observed in multicultural classrooms in the past.

Introduction

Culture, schooling, and education are in democratic multiculturalism approaches of teaching, learning and education programs. Though there may be several advantages of multicultural education there are some serious drawbacks too. According to the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), multicultural education provides:

- 1) Helps students develop positive self-image
- 2) Offers students an equitable educational opportunity.
- 3) Allows multiple perspectives and ways of thinking.
- 4) Combats stereotypes and prejudicial behaviour.
- 5) Teaches students to critique society in the interest of social justice.

But this is not possible at all situations. So we can see how teachers and students are affected because of multicultural education and teachers role in overcoming this problem.

Reasons for Multicultural Education

There are multiple reasons to study in a multicultural situation. Though some students adapt multicultural education since it develops their self-confidence, to meet diverse range of people, to make friends, to study and learn differently and to get to know about different culture but there are also some reasons who adapt multicultural education due to scholarship which include lists of international scholarships to study abroad in a particular country, scholarships to study a particular subject, and scholarships targeting particular groups of students, low education fees and due to large amount of people migrating from one place to another for their livelihood.

Culture and Education

Education can have a profound impact on culture similarly culture can also have a profound impact on education. Societal culture is the combination of beliefs, customs, religions, arts, etc that exist in a constant state of flux in a society. Large societies most likely have multiple different cultures within them. Culture, as a whole, may also be defined as "the shared way of life of a group of people." Two definitions of the field include: the ways in which behaviours are shaped and influenced by social and cultural forces" and " members of various cultural groups who have different experiences that lead to predictable and significant differences in behaviour." Many psychologists namely VYGOTSKY, BRONFENBRENNER have suggested that environment and culture plays a major role in the growth and development of a child. Definitely if a child or an adult studies in a multicultural society it may come across several hurdles to attain success.

Possible Multicultural Issues Faced by Teachers

The teachers have to handle many situations inside a classroom including religious differences, gender-equity issues, children who have disabilities, children coming from single parent or same-sex households, and others and one of the main issues inside a classroom that affect the classroom environment is multicultural. This issue on hardly affect not only students but also teachers. One of the major difficulty the teachers face in culturally diverse students is reconciling or accomodating differing cultural orientations some of the issues faced by the teachers are given below,

Teacher issues - Professional education of teacher does not always include multiculturalism and teaching in a multicultural classroom can affect a teacher's confidence in themselves.

Language issues - With students having a language other than English as their mother tongue teacher may find themselves having to choose their words carefully especially when slang or profession specific language or concepts is used. Words such as plagiarism may not always be understood.

Contextualising issues - a lot of examples that are used in the delivery of content often relate to their (teacher) culture or living place. Not all students can understand these examples since they are not related to the culture where they are living. Language used also often has a close association with their culture.

Teaching and learning issues - Non-domestic students often prefer the face-to-face delivery of content instead of using a mediator. They often depend of the teacher and like to be told what to do/learn, not challenge the information given, instead of being an active learner and sharing their opinion or experience with the group or debating the content. It can be hard to decide the level of content to be delivered to a multicultural group which can 'lead to a tendency to teach to the lowest level of domestic student'.

Support and personal issues - Students may have fled their home country or may have come here as a migrant. Whatever the cause of their arrival they may all experience unfamiliar environments causing home sickness, culture shock and grief for "lost" friends and maybe family. As such students can be faced with isolation leading to depression and affecting their study results.

Group work - Language difficulties and different expectations of group work by domestic and non-domestic students can make doing a task as a multicultural group daunting and difficult.

Possible Multicultural Issues Faced by Students

Language issue- language plays a major role in communicating with people that too inside a school environment communication with his/her classmates, friends and teachers are very important. Since by using an unfamiliar language or a language with a different slang the student feels difficult to communicate.

New environment-As many psychologists suggested a suitable environment will provide a good education to students. The student might take enough time to adapt himself in a new environment and to mingle with people of different culture. Sometimes he/she can also be affected by some diseases due to change in environment.

Low academic results-As stated above due to lack of communication and due to lack of adaptability in the new classroom environment the student suffers to score good mark and directly affects the student academics initially. This situation can further change or may not.

Hesitation in classroom activities- The student may less actively participate in classroom activities like group discussions, group activities, group work and cultural activities. This less/none participation of students in classroom/school activities affect the overall development of the child. It's very difficult for him to shine in other fields except academics.

Depression- consider if there are bullying or any type of harassment prevails in the classroom/school environment this may further affect the students studies and development and leads to depression.

Teachers Role in Overcoming Multicultural Issues

Teacher strategy -For teachers to be able to assist their multicultural students as best as possible teachers need to know about their associated backgrounds, the struggles these students may have with the English language, possible learning difficulties and how best to deal with these students with tolerance or discrimination. Background information about culture specific rules in regards to behaviour, non-verbal communication and personal space can be handy information to have for every teacher as well as policies on how to manage diversity.

Language strategy - It is important for the teacher to know if the problem is related to the student's limited English language or their ability to comprehend. Slowing down the delivery of

teaching will provide students with an opportunity to digest what is being said. Having the content as a handout will provide students with a reference in case they require clarification. Jargon, acronyms and local jokes are best to be avoided.

Teaching and learning strategy - International students can contribute professionally and culturally to any class. Ensure the students understand that asking the teacher a question is not seen as challenging the teacher's knowledge or authority. Material should be made relevant to all students regardless of where they were born.

Support and personal strategy - teachers should be sensitive to any additional pressures which may be put on immigrants and be aware of any risk factors, e.g. isolation from other family members, lack of socialisation from mainstream culture, adjusting to climate change, mental health issues. To be able to provide a holistic experience for the international student support services need to be available and need to be known to teachers so that they, due to their direct contact with the student, can guide the student in the right direction.

Additional tutorials either in the specific topic or supporting topics, such as study skills, can be offered to international students.

Group work strategy - Working in small groups may provide a safe environment for non-domestic students and more time may need to be allocated when group work is to be done by a group of multicultural and domestic students.

Teaching the benefits of Multicultural education-If students are suffering due to multicultural education it is the teacher's duty to overcome their difficulties by teaching them the values and benefit of such education system to the students. The only motive of teachers should not only make the students shine in their academics but also to bring a overall development.

Conclusion

Thus, education in the multicultural classroom should focus on the value of multiculturalism and skills that contribute and encourage students to have trust amongst one another and their teachers. Education must quickly adapt to a new cultural and educational environment, and teachers should develop their academic skills. The students should understand the importance of multiculturalism so they are able to make smart decisions and practice in the future. Acclimation and awareness of multiculturalism in the environment are important because this practice and awareness introduces new thoughts and ideas to students. Also, teachers can reduce issues in the multicultural classroom through improving their teaching approaches and learning. Flexibility is more important than knowledge in dealing with multicultural issues. Therefore, teachers should explore the issues in the multicultural classroom as they arise and deal with these problems. Also, teachers should try to find, create, or design manners to raise and improve the academic achievement of students, and to build an effective or strong relationship with students.