Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Education

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When I hear the term cultural diversity, the first thing that comes to mind is the United States. America is a melting pot- where people from different nations or ancestral backgrounds live together. Cultural diversity refers to the interaction and co-existence of these various cultural or ethnic groups within a society like the American society. Enculturation is the initial understanding of the world. It is “the process of learning one’s native culture,” while acculturation is “adapting to a new culture when exposed to it.” (*Learning a Culture -- Enculturation and Acculturation*, n.d.) We borrow parts of these new cultures that stick with us. Ethnocentrism, however, prevents people from appreciating diversity. Recognizing and challenging ethnocentrism is important to appreciating cultural exchange. Cultural diversity isn't about completely accepting another culture, where one culture replaces another. It is about mutual respect, where our unique backgrounds come together to create a stronger community.

According to Gollnik and Chinn, education becomes multicultural if the teacher and the school follow certain aspects. First, the teacher, as an enthusiastic learner, should place the student at the center of teaching and learning by incorporating their voices and engaging them in the classroom dialogue. Second, the teacher should support the students and believe they can learn and achieve high academic achievement. Third, acknowledging the students’ experiences through culturally responsive teaching helps encourage participation and create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Fourth, teachers should confront stereotypes, address inequity, and promote human rights. Therefore, developing and delivering a multicultural lesson is essential. The curriculum itself should have hidden messages about multiculturalism that invite critical thinking. Critical thinkers get to understand the perspectives and biases of others without necessarily agreeing with them. The use of critical thinking is that it “challenges the status quo, encourages questioning of the dominant canon and culture, and considers alternatives to the inequitable structure of society… investigates racism, classism, and sexism.” (Gollnick & Chinn, 2021)

References

Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (2021). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (11th ed.). Boston Pearson.

*Learning a culture -- Enculturation and Acculturation*. (n.d.). Home.snu.edu. Retrieved April 20, 2024, from <https://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/encultur.htm?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR1N7mvwRCRes5EXha9jo8yEiIVDUvuzDugOGH7kWrlKQgutlW-7JIF5kXA_aem_AfH1FRlx0ub0TgDHVEC7JfEGVxly4b0BAtVhEZc5AnzwbUsIAM5gHt6lApo2r8Ts5XqNEKJ8pLKjQtckPxZzq8rS#:~:text=Enculturation%20is%20the%20lifelong%20process>