Responding to Cultural and Demographic Inequalities

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While I cannot claim much knowledge of the socioeconomic circumstances of the United States, it is worth mentioning that having a free K-12 education in the US is a privilege that is not universally granted. Education in Egypt, for example, is not free, and everyone, regardless of their income, must pay tuition. While public schools are more affordable than private ones in Egypt, they still pose a significant financial burden for lower-income families, who are often deprived of education as a result. There are public libraries in the US with some resources, whereas there are hardly any in Egypt.

Despite the above-mentioned benefits (compared to other countries), low-income families in the US are still disadvantaged. They have limited to no access to school materials like textbooks, technology, and the Internet. Extracurricular activities often require participation fees that these families cannot afford. Additionally, lower-income students tend to lack parental guidance for pursuing education beyond just the high school degree.

All students should have access to education regardless of their socioeconomic status. Their circumstances, however, are in the way of their education. Teachers should realize their students' harsh realities and try to reach out to their families, if possible, to better understand their situation. Teachers should design assignments that are low to no cost and with abundant resources that can be found easily in the local public libraries. Integrating the themes of social injustices and inequity into the curriculum to increase awareness is necessary to provide students with the skills and understanding to help themselves individually and, ideally, the community in which they will serve. The curriculum should also represent the voices and experiences of all students and highlight the importance of equity. Students should be allowed to express themselves in the classroom, and teachers should have high expectations of their students’ success and support them to reach that end. Engaging the issue of equity in the curriculum, however, is not just about creating curriculums that meet the diverse needs of working-class students but also providing the physical capital (safe classrooms, technology, access to the internet, and a vast array of other physical resources that students require for success). Teachers must, in their way, advocate for their schools to receive funding in order to provide these students with productive environments for learning.

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