

Strategies for Incorporating Intercultural Intelligence into Higher Education

Authors : Hyoshin Kim

Abstract : Most post-secondary educational institutions have offered a wide variety of professional development programs and resources in order to advance the quality of education. Such programs are designed to support faculty members by focusing on topics such as course design, behavioral learning objectives, class discussion, and evaluation methods. These are based on good intentions and might help both new and experienced educators. However, the fundamental flaw is that these 'effective methods' are assumed to work regardless of what we teach and whom we teach. This paper is focused on intercultural intelligence and its application to education. It presents a comprehensive literature review on context and cultural diversity in terms of beliefs, values and worldviews. What has worked well with a group of homogeneous local students may not work well with more diverse and international students. It is because students hold different notions of what it means to learn or know something. It is necessary for educators to move away from certain sets of generic teaching skills, which are based on a limited, particular view of teaching and learning. The main objective of the research is to expand our teaching strategies by incorporating what students bring to the course. There have been a growing number of resources and texts on teaching international students. Unfortunately, they tend to be based on the deficiency model, which treats diversity not as strengths, but as problems to be solved. This view is evidenced by the heavy emphasis on assimilationist approaches. For example, cultural difference is negatively evaluated, either implicitly or explicitly. Therefore the pressure is on culturally diverse students. The following questions reflect the underlying assumption of deficiencies: - How can we make them learn better? - How can we bring them into the mainstream academic culture?; and - How can they adapt to Western educational systems? Even though these questions may be well-intended, there seems to be something fundamentally wrong as the assumption of cultural superiority is embedded in this kind of thinking. This paper examines how educators can incorporate intercultural intelligence into the course design by utilizing a variety of tools such as pre-course activities, peer learning and reflective learning journals. The main goal is to explore ways to engage diverse learners in all aspects of learning. This can be achieved by activities designed to understand their prior knowledge, life experiences, and relevant cultural identities. It is crucial to link course material to students' diverse interests thereby enhancing the relevance of course content and making learning more inclusive. Internationalization of higher education can be successful only when cultural differences are respected and celebrated as essential and positive aspects of teaching and learning.

Keywords : intercultural competence, intercultural intelligence, teaching and learning, post-secondary education

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