Developing Inclusive Pedagogical Skills for Educators in Higher Education

Jessika Chi, M.A.
PhD Education and Leadership, Hillsboro, OR

Abstract

Inclusive Pedagogy:
- Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching method that takes into account the diverse experiences and perspectives of students. In an inclusive learning environment, all students are given equal access to learning and are co-creators of knowledge.

- Instruction is delivered in a way that reduces learning barriers (Florian & Hawkins, 2011).

- As colleges and universities are becoming multicultural organizations, educational leaders are realizing it is how we teach rather than what we teach that actually matters (Jackson, 2005; Danowati & Tuitt, 2011).

Educator Development:
- Emerged in American higher education in the 1950s during times of social change and student activism (Benjamin, 1992; Rice, 2007; Ouellett, 2010).

- Rise of the student rights movement increased pressure on faculty to sharpen their teaching tools and broaden the scope of faculty development beyond publication success to include a holistic focus on both scholarship and teaching (Benjamin, 1992; Guff & Simpson, 1994; Lewis, 1996; Rice, 2007).

- Student-centered pedagogical methods such as active learning and inquiry-based learning strategies brought students directly into the teaching and learning process (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Sorensen et al., 2006).

- Rapidly changing student demographics require educators, administrators, and faculty to develop multicultural competencies that allow them to more effectively serve an increasingly diverse student population (Danowati & Tuitt, 2011).

Faculty Readiness To Discuss Race in the Classroom

While faculty members may value diversity and are in a unique position to facilitate classroom diversity that pedagogically avoids, supports, or challenges students’ learning about race, many faculty make few to no changes in their classroom practices to deal with issues of race (Pasque et al., 2013).

- Failure to respond to racism in the classroom is rooted in the lack of understanding of the significance of racism in students’ lives (Boyson, 2012).

- By acting upon microaggressions in the classroom and creating a more inclusive environment, faculty are better prepared to respond to racism in the classroom (Pasque et al., 2013; Linder et al., 2013).

- Faculty members are not fully prepared to serve diverse student populations (Pasque et al., 2013; Ouellett, 2010). Underlying Structures:

- Faculty hold the most power within the organization and therefore have the most influence, particularly when it comes to their experiences, justly students’ concerns as isolated incidents, and point to all the ways in which progress has been made in terms of inclusion.

- Because root causes are never addressed fully and short-term solutions are applied, students over time will become dissatisfied, and the cycle begins again.

Underlying Structures:
- Faculty need to develop skills in facilitating dialogues about race and racism in the classroom (Pasque et al., 2013; Quaye, 2012).

Impact of Inclusive Pedagogy on Students
- When faculty do not engage in conversations about race, the consequences are significant for students of color (Linder et al., 2013).
- Ignoring issues of race can lead to an increase in racial conflict and microaggressions (Pasque et al., 2013; Linder et al., 2013).
- When ignored or mishandled, racial conflict can distract students from their studies, cause emotional exhaustion, create post interpersonal and intergroup relations, silence students of color, and undermine the learning process (Pasque et al., 2013). When both white and students are most satisfied with faculty who employ inclusive pedagogy.

- Lack of racial diversity at all levels within the organization (26% of students color, 30% staff color, and 14% faculty color).

- Center for Teaching and Learning workshops on developing pedagogical skills are not mandatory or tied to any system of accountability.

- Mental Models

- Learning occurs from student to teacher only.
- Faculty know their content best and should have full power and autonomy over the curriculum and classrooms.

- Conversations about race in the classroom are unnecessary and take away from the course content.
- It is not the faculty member’s role to facilitate conversations about race or mediate racial conflict.

- The belief that all students are welcome and equally supported in the classroom is not widely shared.

- The mental models and structures create an environment where faculty members are not encouraged to develop inclusive pedagogical skills; therefore, faculty members are not fully prepared to serve diverse student populations and may lack the skills required to facilitate conversations about race and culture. Changing the mental models and system structure leads to a different pattern of behavior that could result in students of color feeling supported and validated in their educational environment.

References


