

Strategies for an inclusive classroom setting



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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Introduction

Explanation of key terms

Anti-biasOxford Dictionary gives the definition of bias as “[the] inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair”. Thus, anti-bias is an approach implemented to ensure that bias does not occur in any context in the classroom environment. “ In an anti-bias

classroom, children learn to be proud of themselves and of their families, to respect human differences, to recognize bias, and to speak up for what is right” (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010: 5)

Identification According to Gestwicki (2014: 261) identification is the process of imitating or adopting ideas of admired individuals.

Diversity Diversity refers to a range of different things. In the context of this paper, it refers to differences in the following aspects cultures, learners, learner’s backgrounds, languages and ability groups.

Multi-cultural Multi-cultural education is an adaptive process that incorporates Education the idea that all learners have equal opportunities in school, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, and ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics (Banks, 2013: 1)

Gender Identity Awareness of gender in biological terms that an individual is either male or female

Prejudice Prejudice is defined as a “ judgement or opinion, against or in favour of a person or thing formed beforehand or without due examination of the facts” (Lemmer, Meier & van Wyk, 2012: 31).

Stereotypes According to Oxford Dictionary, a stereotype is defined as a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. A stereotype is when one creates “ mental cages in order to place people items or events into conceptually specified groups” (Lemmer, Meier & van Wyk, 2012)

Culture Culture is a multi-faceted concept, composed of many interrelated aspects, all of which have an influence on the teaching and learning process. According to Coetzee, van Niekerk & Wydeman (2008) cultures are processes of social and human interactions; embrace a body of knowledge; dynamic, creative and continuous processes; continuously modified over time and every culture has its own system of values, beliefs, norms and attitudes.

Race Race refers to a group of people who are grouped together or classified according to a common physical characteristic, such as the colour of their skin.

Racial / Cultural Identity Understanding of one's racial or ethnic understanding (Gestwicki, 2014: 262)

Literature Study

An anti-bias approach to education aims at developing a sense of self-awareness in each individual, fostering a sense of appreciation, tolerance and understanding for the differences between children and cultures, and highlighting the similarities between them. Instilling an anti-bias approach is particularly important in Early Childhood Development. There are four core goals of anti-bias education, namely; children demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities; each child expresses comfort and joy with human diversity and is able to use accurate language to describe human differences as well as form deep human connections; children increasingly recognize unfairness and are able to describe unfairness, understanding that unfairness hurts; and children will

demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Anti-bias includes bias relating to gender, race, culture, religion, disability, age and language. This approach aims at incorporating different cultures fully into the environment in an inclusive, integrated and on-going process, avoiding superficial representations, isolated and trivial representations . , and patronizing events (Gordon & Browne, 2014: 259). Children as young as two years old begin to notice differences in race and gender, as well as form categories and classifications about the world, and people, around them (Gordon & Browne, 2014 : 258). During their early years, children begin to develop socially and emotionally. Identification, the process in which a child imitates an admired individual in their environment, takes place during these formative years, and is a key step in a child's development, particularly pertaining to personality and social development. According to Gestwicki (2014: 261) the identification process is related to issues of acquiring gender or sex-role identities, acquiring cultural or racial identities as well as developing a sense of self-confidence and personal competence. For optimal learning, children derive meaning from what is being taught by connecting the new knowledge with what they already know. Thus it is crucial that each child's own cultural or family reference is reflected in their learning environment. A child's experiences " are embedded in the social exchange within their own cultural groups and their frame of reference, which reflect[s] the shared meanings and experiences of those groups" (Meier & Marais, 2012: 130)

Gender Roles

During their Early Childhood years, children begin to form their gender identities. A gender identity is composed of two different aspects; an awareness of sexual identity, such as whether they are male or female biologically, and an awareness of sex-role behaviour. Sex-role behaviour, often determined by the culture, is the different roles and behaviours of the two genders. A child seeks to understand what being male or female means, and learns about the different roles through observation and asking questions. Before the age of four, children often engage in gender neutral games, wherein boys and girls play together comfortably. Thereafter, children tend toward gender-specific forms of play, and choose to play with children of the same sex (Gestwicki, 2014: 261). Children learn about their gender roles through observation and imitation of those in their immediate environment. Thus parents and teachers, and the way in which they encourage gender roles and model specific gender characteristics and behaviour also have a profound influence on the child's gender role perceptions. Their perceptions of gender role are also influenced by the media, and stereotyping in their immediate surroundings and society. In order to steer clear of gender stereotyping in the classroom, teachers need to be mindful of their words and actions in the class that could be perpetuating gender stereotypes (Gordon & Browne, 2014: 124). In a predominantly female environment, such as early childhood education programmes, one needs to be aware of the behaviour they model, and ensure that the environment, materials, examples used, as well as expected behaviour are fair and non-bias, and cater to boys too. Although there are developmental differences between the genders, in the rate of maturity, as <https://assignbuster.com/strategies-for-an-inclusive-classroom-setting/>

well as the rate of physical growth, there are “ no significant differences between girls and boys intelligence and reasoning behaviour” (Gordon & Browne, 2014: 124). Consequently, teachers should not hold unequal expectations for the genders, as this inhibits the child’s ability to reach their full potential (Meier & Marais, 2012: 139).

In order to avoid gender based bias, teachers need to be actively involved in self-reflection and be engaged in a constant state of awareness of their expectations and the behaviour they are emulating, and the effect these expectations and behaviours have on a child’s growth and development. During a child’s formative years, the child is in the process of forming a healthy gender identity, and the teacher is actively involved in aiding in this development. According to Gestwicki (2014: 274) teachers facilitate this development when they answer child’s questions about their bodies and themselves in a factual manner. Teachers also offer experiences and scenarios that challenge stereotypes of gender behaviour as well as organise the children’s environments to encourage cross-gender play. Teachers should also be mindful of language and images in books, and teaching materials, to ensure diversity in work and home life is portrayed. It is also essential that teachers work closely with learner’s families, and are aware of the possible cultural influences that could influence a parents views on non-traditional gender roles. It is important to maintain open communication to avoid tension, and to better understand and be respectful of the child as well as their family and background. One also needs to be actively challenging child’s stereotypical words or actions, and “[t]eachers[RC1]intervene with

immediate and follow-up activities to counter [the] cumulative, hurtful effects of these messages” (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010).

A healthy gender identity is very important to a child’s development, and it is during their formative years that this identify is formed and moulded. It is the teacher’s ethical responsibility to provide an environment and classroom-culture that is free from bias and stereotypes. The teacher should be actively trying to eliminate bias, and to intervene when children use actions or comments that are stereotypes or bias. It is important that a teacher remain mindful of their own perceptions of gender roles and actively model behaviour and language that is free from bias and stereotypes.

Cultural and Racial Identity

Creating an anti-bias environment that conveys a genuine respect for all diversity fosters positive attitudes towards cultural and racial identities. It is crucial that the core aims of an anti-bias approach (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010) are achieved, and the structures and processes are in place to effectively achieve these aims. South Africa is a multi-faceted and diverse country, with multiple different cultures and races. Diversity however “ not only constitutes groups such as ethnic, race, language and religious groups” (Lemmer, Meier & van Wyk, 2012: 19) but also the range of personal differences between the individuals within the different ethnic groupings. In the classroom setting, each teacher and child is a unique individual, with unique and “ distinct set of beliefs, values and attitudes to form a complex and unique classroom culture” (du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2007).

Culture is a complex human phenomenon, and in the multi-cultural education perspective, “ culture can be viewed as a composite of significant

and interrelated aspects, all of which have specific significance for the teaching-learning process” (Coetzee, van Niekerk & Wydeman, 2008: 117).

Unfortunately there are learners that enter the class with preconceived prejudices that they have picked up from their home environment or immediate surroundings. According to the SAHRC report of racism in schools, “[I][RC2]earners approach schools with the prejudice imbued in their home environments” and it is necessary to “ transform the minds of learners”. It is not only parents attitudes that instil a sense of prejudice in young children’s lives; other sources include “ school, classmates, siblings and the media” (Lemmer, Weier & van Wyk, 2012: 32). As some children are entering the classroom with prejudices, it is essential that the teacher is proactive and actively deals with those prejudices and stereotypes as and when they arise. It is important that the teacher acknowledges and respects the different cultures in their class, and ensures that this respect is incorporated in all aspects of the daily programme. It is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that the all interactions, materials and experiences convey respect for all people. It is important to bear in mind that education is a “ powerful agent of cultural transmission and preservation” (Coetzee, van Niekerk & Wydeman, 2008: 118). According to Gestwicki (2014: 277) teachers must be aware of what is included or excluded in the classroom environment, as this is a clear reflection of what is valued by the educational institution and teachers. A lack of respect for the varying cultures in the class, or a serious cultural alienation could lead to cultural isolation, cultural erosion, learning problems, behaviour problems, conflict and communication problems (du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2007: 152).

Young children are aware of cultural and racial differences, and their perceptions of these differences and different cultures are developed and moulded during their pre-school years. According to Gestwicki (2014: 262) children, by the age of four, are aware of their racial or cultural identity and have absorbed attitudes, negative and positive, towards their own and other's identities. Thus it is crucial that young children are taught to respect one another's differences, enjoy and cherish human diversity, as well as use accurate and non-bias or stereotypical language for human differences (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Although differences between individuals and cultures are discussed, the similarities between them are also emphasised and celebrated. Children learn to identify with one another through their similarities and to respect their differences. Teachers should create a classroom environment that will " allow optimal learning in a climate of safety, care and acceptance" (Coetzee, van Niekerk & Wydeman, 2008: 119). Children feel accepted in a classroom community when they see themselves, their families and their cultural background reflected in every aspect of their school day. " All children and families have a sense of belonging and experience affirmation of their identities and cultural ways of being" (Derman- Sparks, 2010)

To ensure anti-bias in their classrooms, and to make sure that their class and curriculum reflects the plurality of their contemporary society, teachers must ensure that all pictures and books realistically portray the diversity in the class, and give a realistic and well-rounded view of different cultures, avoiding stereotypes and over simplification (Gestwicki, 2014: 276). They should endeavour to provide toys, materials and activities throughout the

class that children can identify with, that represent their various families as well as the “ major groups in the community and nation” (Gestwicki, 2014: 278). Content about different ethnic groups should to fully integrated into the curriculum, and should occur regularly and naturally, not as an appendage to the curriculum. Different cultures should be discussed in depth and holistically, and teachers should maintain open and constant communication with parents and families to ensure that they too fully understand the children’s backgrounds in their class. Parents should be fully involved, and invited to school regularly to share songs, stories or traditions of their cultural and language background (Gestwicki, 2014: 278).

Language

Religion

Disablity

Language

Example of checklist

Facility: _____

Address: _____

Manager: _____

Telephone Number: _____

SECTION A

Observational Checklist

Yes No

Entrance

Wheelchair access?

Visible signs in different languages?

Cultural and ethnical differences reflected in displays around school?

Playground

Does the environment cater to gender differences?

Does the playground cater to those with physical disabilities?

Classroom

Do the instructional materials (posters ect) reflect diversity in the classroom?

Are there culturally diverse toys?

Does the environment cater to gender differences?

Are gender stereotypes present in the classroom?

Are different languages and cultures reflected in the teaching in the

classroom? (e. g. xhosa song in Morning Ring)

Other

Ethnic balance within staffing?

Do the bathrooms cater for physical disabilities?

SECTION B

Interview questions

Interviewee: _____ Interviewer: _____

Position: _____ Time: _____

How does your selection process work?

What process do you use to divide your classes?

Collectively, do your staff speak / understand a range of South African languages?

What is your school's language policy?

How do you ensure each child's unique family is reflected in the classroom?

Do you consider your facility open and non-bias towards all families?

Including gay-lesbian families, single parents, cross-cultural families and adoptive families?

How does your curriculum reflect the diverse nature of our society?

How do you communicate with the learners families?

What is your policy regarding learners with physical disabilities?

How do you deal with different religious holidays?

Do you do Bible stories in your Morning Ring?

Are the meals you prepare catered to all religions / cultures?

Do you cater for gender differences in your educational activities and art activities?

How do you deal with bias, racism or stereotypes in the classroom or on the playground?

Do you consider your facility to be anti-bias?

Participants

Name: _____ Signature _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Signature _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Signature _____ Date: _____

Written Report on findings

School A

School B

Suggestions

Resources

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[RC1]??

[RC2]?