

A reflection: cultural differences and communications

[Education](#)



Cultural Differences in the room There is lack of experience among the teaching force when working in diverse environments giving rise to a rift between the teaching force and diverse students. This has raised concern to the extent that there are programs designed particularly to diversify the teaching force, through for instance the 2007 Grow Your Own Teacher Act. It has then become an urgent need to explicitly equip teachers with these skills of how to deal with diverse students through pre-service teaching where teachers learn through teacher education programs and in-service teachers where educators teach diverse students. There has also been advocacy on the issue of teaching culturally relevant material where the content and structure of the curriculum has been called to review (Robinson & Clardy, 2011). In a multicultural classroom, teachers should discover and embrace diversity and use the differences as a basis for growth and progress. This entails acknowledging differences that demand work, resolution, openness and being considerate. Addressing these differences along with using them to create a successful multicultural classroom contributes largely to advancing the educational objectives of students. Openness calls for teachers to make the attempt to get to know the students within as well as beyond the classroom. Lack of this skill will create a feeling of being estranged between the teachers and students, and between students themselves causing there to be uneasiness. This implies that teachers approach teaching in a fearless manner where they are willing and ready to try new things in the classroom to broaden their understanding of the diverse students. In addition, teachers must avoid taking things personally, judging the students and be confident in themselves (Wan 2006). Teachers should also avoid making assumptions and be prepared for the unexpected

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for instance in the Mexican culture touching is a norm and students will be seen to touch the teachers. This may make people from different cultures that are unaware of this habit uncomfortable. Teachers should therefore be prepared to accommodate such customs and habits. Having the resolve to accommodate students' differences calls upon teachers to seek their perspectives in a bid to gain insight into their culture and more importantly create an environment where students can learn about each other and develop cognitive abilities (Stephan and Vogt, 2004). To be able to teach effectively in culturally diverse classrooms, teachers should adopt culturally sensitive strategies along with content so as to ensure that there are equitable learning opportunities afforded to all students; where learning should not be perceived as only academic success, but individual fulfillment and personal development. Teachers should seek to know how minority students view the world, and process and organize information. This is because ethnicity has been seen to affect cognitive abilities as well as motivational styles; not only within the classroom but in the outside world particularly social-class groupings. In becoming multicultural, teachers should develop an insight into their own cultural perspectives which allows them to become aware of the cultural expectations that determine their behavior, beliefs and expectations. This includes realizing that their cultural perspectives are neither the universal norm nor the only right one, since becoming multicultural consists of understanding the efficacy of their activities on students in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should build cultural competence that will enable them to function comfortably in a multicultural classroom and interact cordially with students from cultures different from their own. Cultural competence will allow teachers to cope

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effectively towards psychological and emotional stress from dealing with the unfamiliar, respond satisfactorily to miscommunication, create rapport with others while being able to sense their feelings and communicate successfully with people from diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2010). Without doubt, these are multifaceted skills that necessitate cultural understanding that evolves in the course of time and awareness gained from interpersonal experiences.

Moreover, teachers should become conscious of the key role that nonverbal cues play in the course of cross-cultural communication and the interrelationship between language and culture. Language is identified as the marker that gives one group identity and a sense of individual belongingness to the group, reflecting the values and conventions of its speakers; hence it is seen as a function of culture (Haynes 2012). Overall, teachers need to become aware of how to identify themselves with the content of instruction and teaching methodologies to suit students' cultural plus individual preferences. This is because the content may be incompatible with the students' cultural norms and values which will most likely result in cropping up of distrust and misunderstandings. Teaching should therefore be approached with three things in mind- a broad skill set, the right frame of mind and dedication. References Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press. Haynes, J. (2012). *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children*. Indiana: Xlibris Corporation. Robinson, C. C., & Clardy, P. (2011). *It Ain't What You Say, It's How You Say It: Linguistic And Cultural Diversity In The Classroom*. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 18(3), 101-10. Stephan, W. and Vogt, P. (2004). *Education Programs for Improving Intergroup Relations: Research Theory And Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press. Wan, G. (2006). *Teaching* <https://assignbuster.com/a-reflection-cultural-differences-communications/>

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