

Cultural competency



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Cultural competency can broadly be defined as the desire to understand cross cultural values and adapt to the changing societal pattern of globalization. It becomes a highly critical paradigm in the area of education as it significantly impacts the development of students and their attitude towards different race, culture, religion and nationality. In the present context, the community school is faced with huge challenges when children from 30 immigrant families, majority of who do not speak English, are admitted in the new session. Dr. Guanipa (1998) has described cultural shock as the ' physical and emotional discomfort' one suffers when one goes to another country to live. The paper would primarily discuss the ways and means the school can help adapt the new students in the new environment. The school starts in two weeks time. Thus, creating a cultural proficiency within the school environment must become the priority of the educational leadership within the school. Sederberg (1984) claims that in organization the power belongs to those who can define or describe circumstances in ways that convince others that things are as they say they are. Educational leaders, who are endowed with effective communication skill and cultural understanding, have the capability to influence the cultural identity of the group within the institute thus facilitating changes in the institutional culture to adapt to the changing environment.

Thus, the role of specialist teachers or teachers who are proficient in the language of the immigrant population becomes highly crucial. Learning the language and culture of the host country facilitates rapid adjustment. Hence, school administration and the teachers must take initiative in encouraging networking with immigrant population and their children so as to create awareness regarding the need to adapt to changes vis-à-vis language barrier

and cross cultural understanding. As a specialist teacher, I would facilitate their adjustment by organizing interactive session to familiarize them with new language and culture. The primary aim would be to teach them important words of English so that they are able to communicate with the rest of the students.

Another aspect would be to create cross cultural understanding. This is a very important aspect of teachers as leaders. They are able to motivate the students coming from diverse background to understand each others culture and develop mutual respect. Indeed, educational leadership helps in the process of acculturation. Initial loss of identity in the host country is gradually recovered by accepting the differences and adapting their own values according to the new environment. The hostility experienced at first is mitigated once immigrants become familiar with the new culture of their host country.

Thus, while language barrier is a major factor, the educational leadership greatly facilitates in creating a more cohesive and congenial atmosphere of learning. The students learn to interact with each other without racial prejudice and develop attitude and behavior which is conducive for a mutually benefiting and tolerant society. Educational leaders facilitate the acceptance of the changes in a smooth manner. One can successfully conclude by saying that ‘ within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change’ (Marilyn & Gayle, 2001, p. 2).

(words: 524)

Reference

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