

Multiculturalism and professionalism

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The 2008 presidential race is the testimony of increasing multiculturalism in United States, first time in the history of this great nation a woman or an African American will be a serious contender to be the Commander in Chief. The race in itself is not an aberration or affirmative action but a reflection how our society is evolving. In the latest census more than 20 percent of American identifies themselves under two different ethnic backgrounds. The country is now truly becoming the melting pot of world's different cultures.

This increasing multiculturalism is no where more prominent than American schools where the children of majority, second generation of immigrants and various other sections of the society studying together and learning to build their own dream world in their own ways. The five most common challenges faced in a multi cultural environment are (Jeffrey Sanchez, 2005)– Managing diversity, resolving cultural conflicts, creating a culture of inclusion, building team spirits and harnessing the advantages of differences.

Managing Diversity – A teacher has to be competent into managing diversity and first step in managing it is understanding diversity. For a teacher to be successful he/she should have knowledge of subject he/she is teaching and knowledge of subjects whom he/she is teaching. Knowledge of subjects will not only help him/her in developing empathy with them but also provides him/her an opportunity to innovate him/her teaching approach.

Resolving Cultural Conflicts – Number of times there are no wrongs or right, just the difference of perspective due to cultural grooming of children. If the teacher is not equipped with the cultural grooming of children then he/she

won't be able to arbitrate effectively and thus fail to take the whole class in one direction.

Creating a Culture of Inclusion – The most effective tool for managing diversity is creating a culture of inclusion where students are encouraged to recognize the cultural difference of each other and even though they may not agree with them but receptive enough to understand that there is difference, no superior or inferior values but just different values.

Building Team Spirit – A teacher need to have a good knowledge of team building as working in the teams students are most likely to understand each other differences better than just providing them dossiers of information. Working together will help them in accommodating each others perspective and how they can contribute to the given task.

Harnessing the Advantages of Difference – Today from school, to clubs and corporate houses are all striving to achieve diversity, the reason for it is the advantages various cultures bring in. Teams with diverse members are better equipped at looking at the same problem from different perspective and these diverse perspectives enable the team to come up with various different solutions.

Steps a Teacher can take to create a Culture of Inclusion

The teacher can take following steps to create a culture of inclusion where no student feel alienated but instead feel welcomed and respected (Karlfried, 1995) -

Creating a descriptive communication plan for students, a good beginning could be multiple messages with same message.

Secondly the teacher should not assign work and responsibility on race or cultural generalizations.

Thirdly the teacher should strive to develop a performance metric which is easily understood by the students and also completely transparent and fair to each section of the class.

Finally teachers and students both be exposed to cross cultural interaction and workshops where they can understand the motives of cultural values rather than just taking on them face.

Conclusion

Cross cultural understanding and respect today is not only important for students but also for teachers as they are the focus of building tomorrow's America where the present generation of school will be decision makers. Multiculturalism and professionalism not only has to go hand in hand but one has to feed the other. If today's school generation has lesser problems with cross cultural environment in school then it will have even lesser problems at work places in future.

References

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