Diversity and Complexity in the Classroom: Valuing Racial and Cultural Diversity

Abstract

From a diversity perspective, all students should receive an education that continuously affirms human diversity – one that embraces the history and culture of all racial groups and that teaches people of colour to take charge of their own destinies. With regard to teaching, a diversity perspective assumes that teachers will hold high expectations for all students and that they will challenge these students who are trapped in the cycle of poverty and despair to rise above it. Individual teachers in individual classrooms play an important role in providing equity of opportunity to learn and in ameliorating racism, but more comprehensive conceptions of diversity education capture the school’s crucial role as well. This article wants to address diversity in the classroom and how racial and cultural diversity is valued and what can be done to improve it.

Key words: cultural diversity, academic culture, teaching and learning styles, class discussion, didactics

Introduction

Visions of education for a multicultural society, strive for equity of opportunity to learn, largely through the conveyance of three policies: heterogeneous grouping, highly interactive instruction that appeals to a wide variety of learning styles, and inclusive curricula. This call for total reform strongly suggests that the existing conceptions of education are inadequate for promoting multicultural equity. Unfortunately, these same conceptions have shaped the schooling of prospective teachers. Their education likely has been characterised by tracking (the process of...