

Culturally Response Pedagogy & Teacher Preparedness

By Cynthia Douglas

The workshop on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) & Teacher Preparedness this author led at the NYS TESOL 2013 Annual Conference was intended to be a forum for discussion about how teachers feel they were prepared to work with diverse student populations when they were in their teacher training programs through CRP methods. The overwhelming response to this question was that teachers were not/are not prepared to work with diverse students simply by taking a course or two on multicultural education in their teacher education programs at the undergraduate and even graduate level. Teachers truly need to understand how to incorporate Culturally Responsive Pedagogy when they are in the field getting first-hand experience with culturally and linguistically diverse students. How can this task be accomplished?

CRP is not the trivial celebration of cultural elements/icons from a minority community. It goes beyond the thin social function of multiculturalism in the classroom that might materialize as a day or month long acknowledgment of a particular sub-group of American society. In its full meaning, CRP relates to students' linguistic and cultural facets so that the curriculum and classroom objectives are accessible. Gay describes CRP as acknowledging the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum (2000). Teachers do not naturally know this content; they acquire and become adept in these skills through years of experience and/or intensive hands-on training.

As it stands, a vast majority of teacher education programs (TEPs) do not provide sufficient training to keep pace with the changing public school student populations. Challenges facing educators in meeting the needs of multicultural students include developing cultural awareness, identifying pedagogical approaches, and adjusting curriculum content (Banks, 2005). CRP teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritages. It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools. TEPs should require all student teachers to complete fieldwork in a heavily culturally and/or linguistically diverse student population for at least four to six weeks. If there are not any available schools that fit that description, then they must complete an equivalent student teaching time via some form of distance learning via Skype premium, Adobe Connect, Citrix Go To Meeting, and Microsoft Lync (for example) where they can interact with those students in real time. If this opportunity is afforded to student teachers, it would be a positive step toward making TEPs more effective considering the changing demographics of most school populations in the United States. Lastly, in the age of the Common Core Standards, it is essential to train teachers on how to interpret the requirements to have students respond to literature. Teachers must be able to direct students to do the following:

Respond to literature by employing knowledge of literary language, textual features, and forms to read and comprehend, reflect upon, and interpret literary texts from a variety of genres and a wide spectrum of American and world cultures.

(Retrieved from: <http://www.engageny.org>)

The problem lies in that teachers cannot direct students to relate to different cultural perspectives if the teacher doesn't know how to do this crucial element with his/her own students. Teachers must be able to show students how to relate academically to other cultures and world views, but it is indeed a difficult task for them to realize when they themselves have to toil with relating to the students' cultures and languages. It

was not the intent of this workshop to definitively resolve this problem, rather to open up the topic for discussion for educational leaders and academics to ponder for serious consideration and the clear need for change.

The following is a list of recommended books and links for teachers and administrators related to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

- Bennett, C. I. (2010). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice*. Boston [u.a.: Pearson.
- Gottlieb, M. H. (2006). *Assessing English language learners : Bridges from language proficiency to academic achievement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Henson, K. T. (2010). *Curriculum planning: Integrating multiculturalism, constructivism and education reform*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Hollins, E. R. (2008). *Culture in school learning: Revealing the deep meaning* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Magnuson, K. (2011). *Steady gains and stalled progress: Inequality and the black-white test score gap*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Noguera, P. (2003). New York City, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The Death And Life Of The Great American School System: How Testing And Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books.
- Santa, A. O. (2004). *Tongue-Tied: The Lives Of Multilingual Children In Public Education*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sarto, A. D., Ríos, A., & Trigo, A. (2004). *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Links:

APA Div. 12 (Sec. IV) Clinical Psychology of Ethnic Minorities

<http://www.apa.org/divisions/div12/sections/section6/>

APA Div. 40 Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee –

http://www.div40.org/Committee_Activities_Pages/Advisory_Committee/ethnic_min_affair_com.htm

APA Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs

<http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/homepage.html>

References

Banks J. A. and Banks C. M. (2005), *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (5th ed.),

Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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