E-forum 2011 Discussion Paper

Addressing Socio-Cultural Diversity through the Curriculum

21 November - 9 December 2011
1. Introduction of the E-forum 2011 (21 November - 9 December)

Since 2005, the UNESCO-IBE Community of Practice (COP) in Curriculum Development has held an annual e-forum on key themes of curriculum development, providing a unique opportunity amongst COP members for inter-regional, multi-lingual and open discourse, with the support and facilitation of international experts.

Through a discussion paper and a series of weekly questions, the e-forum aims to stimulate reflection and discussion, and ultimately to advance the debate from an interregional perspective. Participants can contribute in all 6 UN languages, while their contributions will be translated into English. The findings of this e-forum will be published and disseminated in a summary report. The focus of this year’s discussion is the role of curriculum in addressing socio-cultural diversity, which is highly relevant to our ever-globalizing world.

2. Introduction of the theme

The UNESCO - IBE seeks to bring together education experts to dialogue about addressing socio-cultural diversity through the curriculum.

What is socio-cultural diversity? Socio-cultural diversity in this context includes race, class, ability, different learning conditions and styles, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality and other dimensions that make up the identity of the individual student and impact his or her learning experience. Thus, diversity needs to be taken seriously by educators. It is the only way to make sure that students of all backgrounds are not excluded or marginalized due to their unique needs and learning styles, but are instead supported by the education system and receive an education that helps them reach their fullest potential. Schools provide a social setting in which students can learn ways to deal with socio-cultural differences.
3. Overview of the 3 sub-themes

This diagram shows the connections between the E-forum sub-themes:

Rationale

In addressing socio-cultural diversity through the curriculum it is important to think about how to design the curriculum content, structure the implementation, and devise the assessment. Over the 3 weeks of the E-forum, we will consider each of those components while recognizing that they are interconnected and have implications for each other.

Under each sub-theme you will find case studies that illustrate some of the issues related to the topic.

**Week 1: Curriculum Content**

Focus questions:
1. Which issues concerning socio-cultural diversity are included in your current curriculum and which are not?
2. Are there any diversity issues that have been historically neglected or disregarded? Why?
3. What diversity issues and perspectives should be included in your curriculum to address local, national, regional and global challenges?

Key challenges in creating a curriculum that addresses socio-cultural diversity:
1. It should be clear how the content of the curriculum is decided upon. Should a national-level core curriculum for all be created with adaptations done locally, or should adaptations be prescribed centrally?
2. Curricula often do not take into account the rich learning opportunities that students have outside of school through informal learning in everyday environments while the skills and knowledge learned in school can have little relevance to the students’ lives. Minority students in particular are often marginalized through the disconnect between their own culture and the predominant school’s culture.

Case study I - U.K.:

Copleston High School is an oversubscribed mixed comprehensive school in the U.K. for students aged 11 to 18. It has a student population of around 1722 (school year 2000), among which 4% of the students are learning English as an additional language, while 10.8% have recognized special educational needs. Most students have an average socio-economic background. Since 2008 the school has revised its history curriculum to include more local history and investigations as well as reflect the diverse population of the school. In 2011 Ofsted, the U.K.’s official body for inspections, recognized Copleston High School as a school of good practice because of its exemplary history curriculum.

Key aspects:
- providing students with detailed insights into how the local community fits into a wider and national and international history framework
- conducting field visits in the local community to study the local history
- working with local stakeholders and community leaders to propose a project
- engaging students in a project which can be used by the local community

Please see:

Video explaining the new history curriculum: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIJ46Jo-0I
Questions to consider:
1. How relevant do you think is the inclusion of Thomas Clarkson into the history lesson as one example of addressing socio-cultural diversity in the curriculum?
2. How should the content of a curriculum be relevant to the context of a school?
3. In your context, what would or could you change to make the curriculum more relevant in addressing socio-cultural diversity?

Case Study II - Peru:

Village schools in the district of Puno in Peru are implementing a bilingual program serving the indigenous population. In 1996 the Peruvian government officially introduced the Educación Bilingüe Intercultural (EBI) program through article 20 of “La Ley General de Educación No. 28044” in order to promote respect for diversity, intercultural dialogue, instruction in indigenous mother tongues, mastery of the local indigenous language as well as Spanish for teachers in areas with predominantly students from the indigenous population and the inclusion of members of the indigenous population in the design and implementation of educational programs relevant to them. According to a census done in 2007, around 38% of Peruvians have Quechua, 27% have Aramaya and about 35% have Spanish as their mother tongue.

Key aspects:
- use of music, theater and poetry in language instruction of Spanish and Quechua
- involving parents and members of the community in the language learning process
- involving students in the local cultural community activities to familiarize them with the indigenous traditions

Please see:

Video on the bilingual language program for the indigenous (Spanish):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pme47nAEH8c&feature=related

Overview of the district of Puno (Spanish):
Background paper on the bilingual language program in Puno, Peru (Spanish):

Questions to consider:
1. How relevant is language instruction in addressing diversity through the curriculum?
2. How should the local community context be taken into account in deciding on curriculum content?
Focus questions:
1. How should the curriculum be sensitive to diversity issues in your specific context, where it is implemented? What are some potential obstacles and solutions? (Specific examples and personal experience preferred)
2. How should the consideration for socio-cultural diversity influence teaching methods and styles to meet the diverse needs of learners?
3. How should teachers be trained, supported and empowered to include socio-cultural diversity issues in the curriculum? What should the role of teachers be in the development of a more comprehensive curriculum in your context?

Key challenges:
1. Connecting the goals of education with the everyday experiences of students
2. Determining how much instruction time should be spent on core concepts

Case Study III – Sweden

The Ross Tensta Gymnasium in Stockholm, Sweden is a public school located in a neighborhood consisting predominantly of immigrants of about 15 nationalities. It is an upper secondary school with about 750 students from ages 16 to 18, preparing them for university or vocational studies. The school is part of the Ross Institute and works closely with the Ross School in Long Island, New York in the U.S.A. The school approaches education with a holistic view incorporating interdisciplinary teaching.

Key aspects:
- Teachers organize themselves in interdisciplinary teams based on the same group of students
- Promoting hands-on learning through art, drama, and music
- Using history as the basis for subject integration
- All students use laptops in the teaching process

Please see:

Video on the school's efforts in addressing diversity (English):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWxsqOYynnk

Video on the school's curriculum (English):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02G_RS0kaWQ

Ross Tensta Gymnasium website (Swedish): http://www.tea.edu.stockholm.se/
An example of school learning networks and collaboration from the UK (English): http://www.dep.org.uk/projects/current-projects/local-learning-networks-of-schools/

Questions to consider:

1. What do you think about using history as the base for subject integration? (e.g. project of teaching food consumption by first examining how it has developed)
2. What do you think about the consideration that students from different backgrounds come to school with “different legal systems and family rule systems than those they are facing in Swedish society and in Swedish schools”?
3. What do you think about the importance of giving attention not only to academic learning, but also to the moral, physical and emotional growth of learners?
4. What do you think about the partnership between the Ross School in New York and the Ross Tensta Gymnasium in Sweden? Could you imagine such school partnerships in your context?
Week 3: Role of Assessment in Practice

Focus questions:
1. What are the potential learning outcomes of a curriculum that addresses socio-cultural diversity? What kinds of knowledge, skills and core competencies should be assessed?
2. What kinds of assessment tools could be used? What should be the criteria used for assessment?
3. How can assessment support the learning process and improve the well-being of all students?

Key challenges:
1. Standards-based assessment can potentially be used to discriminate and exclude learners who do not meet the standards in the expected time and manner. It may also lead to blaming the teachers if their diverse learners do not reach the same standards.
2. The wide use of assessment has practical effects. For example, teachers feel pressured to teach to the tests rather than teaching the curriculum and paying attention to the individual needs and learning patterns of their students.
3. Teachers and the wider community have implicit theories and assumptions on what constitutes "good assessment", which might reflect their own experiences as students, making them resistant to change or implementing assessment that addresses socio-cultural diversity.

Case study IV - Australia

Since 1972 in the state of Queensland in Australia, the Queensland Study Authority (QSA) has been responsible firstly for publishing and providing syllabus and curriculum guides from Prep to Year 12, and secondly for designing, operating and supporting the system of externally moderated school-based assessment. They are in partnership with universities and other organizations and are working with a network of about 1800 schools.

Key aspects:
- Schools are given a curriculum around which they can devise their own programs reflecting their community, resources, student interests and teacher talents
- External moderation: set of procedures to ensure that results meet the requirements of syllabuses and are comparable from school to school
- Established network of school teachers and panels as an authority for curriculum and assessment
- Provide resources to train teachers and schools throughout the state
Please see:

Video about the assessment strategy:  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xOIJ_TocoI&feature=related

Information about the QSA: http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/

Assessment Overview:  

Questions to consider:

1. How can assessment strategies and practices take the culture of the school community into consideration?
2. Are there currently networks of teachers and schools that collaborate on improving assessment in your context?
3. What do you think about the practice of regularly sharing assessment strategies across schools and among teachers to see how assessments are meeting standards?
4. How is the range of learning styles catered for in the Queensland Assessment system? What about in your specific context?
## Glossary of Terms

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>All activities teachers or other professionals systematically use to gauge students’ level of achievement and/or development in different areas of their educational experience (academic, behavior or social), usually in measurable terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity Development</strong></td>
<td>Any activity which aims explicitly at strengthening the participants so that they can better achieve their development objectives by having a positive and sustainable impact on any of the following: individual officers with the necessary capacities and incentives; organizations which have a clear mandate and are effectively run; a supportive public service; and a motivating, stable and structured context, without having negative effects on any of these levels.</td>
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<td><strong>Community of Practice</strong></td>
<td>Group of people who have in common a passion for a topic, a domain of knowledge, a notion of community and a practice. The members of the community of practice deepen their knowledge and expertise mainly through knowledge production and sharing, and information exchanges, combining face-to-face and on-line activities.</td>
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<td><strong>Compency based Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>A curriculum whereby the achievement expectations of students are defined in terms of a set of competencies.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content Standards</strong></td>
<td>Broadly stated expectations of what students should know and be able to do in different subjects and grade levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Core Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Common set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that all students should master. It can be formulated as a set of core contents or defined as a set of core subjects.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-Curricular Approach</strong></td>
<td>Educational approach where selected content, including themes to be taught (e.g. values) or competencies to be developed (e.g. writing) are largely included in other learning areas of the curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Contract between society, politics and schools/teachers about the way of organizing and providing sequences of learning experiences aimed at producing desired learning outcomes. The curriculum reflects the kind of society to which we aspire.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Design</strong></td>
<td>Strategic process of an informed and deliberate construction of learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the desired level and scope of competencies, knowledge and understanding upon completion of a learning stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Development</strong></td>
<td>Professional activities which teachers, researchers, and other educationalists undertake in order to improve and support the curriculum, from the development of innovative teaching materials or methods, to the formulation of new learning outcomes or</td>
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<td>Curriculum Evaluation</td>
<td>Assessment of the value of the entire curriculum process by gathering evidence to judge the degree of achievement of aims, and also to enable decisions to be made on future progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Framework</td>
<td>Documents that provide general orientations on what knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes should be incorporated into school programs and how this should be done, by stipulating the parameters to be considered when setting curriculum goals and contents, when choosing learning methods and materials and for assessment of the attainment of education standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Implementation</td>
<td>Efforts carried out after a stage of curriculum design to turn designed ideas into a set of teaching practices. This usually requires in-service education and support materials such as teaching guides and/or textbooks to assist in the process of change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Integration</td>
<td>Teaching approach that enables students and teachers to construct broadly applicable concepts/abilities/competencies without subject-area boundaries.</td>
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<td>Curriculum Processes</td>
<td>Processes that produce quality curriculum. These include: curriculum development, curriculum consultation, curriculum implementation and curriculum evaluation.</td>
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<td>Curriculum Reform</td>
<td>In a restricted sense, is a move to implement changes to teaching and learning, involving subject contents, didactics, pedagogical development and evaluation. In a broader sense it entails a parallel political process expressing social expectations to meet social needs through education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Relevance</td>
<td>Judgment made from the point of view of a stakeholder in the education process about the likelihood of satisfying social and individual learning needs through the curriculum.</td>
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<td>Curriculum Renewal</td>
<td>Developmental, consistent, long-term and ongoing process that helps a school to move toward a more effective curriculum.</td>
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<td>Curriculum Structure</td>
<td>Array of relationships between curriculum elements. The structure of the curriculum can be organized around different principles: learning goals, subject knowledge, and pedagogy, among others.</td>
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<td>Culturally Relevant</td>
<td>an approach to teaching and learning that uses cultural referents to impart awareness, knowledge, and skills. Culturally relevant teaching includes conceptions of self as teachers, conceptions of social relations, and conceptions of inequality. Culturally relevant teaching asks teachers to consider their own underlying beliefs and ideologies as they attempt to teach all students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>a learning process that fundamentally changes the content,</td>
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<td><strong>Transformation</strong></td>
<td>process, and basic assumptions of the traditional curriculum and gives students the awareness, knowledge and skills to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from multiple points of view. (Gloria Ladson Billings - Dictionary of Multicultural Education)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>the social categories that ascribe roles, behaviors and personalities based on sex. Gender is sociological.</td>
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<td><strong>Inclusive Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Flexible, relevant and diverse curricular settings, provisions and processes which embrace the individual characteristics and needs of learners from a lifelong learning perspective. It implies a holistic and universal design, taking into consideration the diversity of needs of all students and their right to education.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Informal Education</strong></td>
<td>Educational and learning activities often unintended or not deliberate, sometimes referred to as the “hidden curriculum”. Typically the lifelong process by which people learn from their environment and everyday experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Localization of Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Process whereby institutions, staff and local communities, rather than national educational boards, assume more responsibility for developing curricula.</td>
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<td><strong>Multicultural Competence</strong></td>
<td>a framework incorporated in counseling and education programs that prepare individuals to service diverse populations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Multicultural Education</strong></td>
<td>Field of study and emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups.</td>
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<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>Although race refers primarily to skin color, the concept of race is negotiated socially, and changes over time and across cultures</td>
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<td><strong>School-Based Curriculum Development</strong></td>
<td>Process by which schools transform the broad goals and content frameworks present in national/state curriculum documents into an actual set of effective learning opportunities for their students.</td>
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<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td>identifies an individual’s physical/ emotional spiritual attraction to another individual.</td>
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<td><strong>Social Class</strong></td>
<td>economic, political and social relations that mediate life in a culture that attaches meaning to a given social order. Social class status determines allocation of social power and the privileges associated with it</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Based Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Assessments intended to determine if students meet particular standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Whole School Approach</strong></td>
<td>A method of addressing the needs of students, staff and the community within the curriculum and across the entire learning</td>
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environment by implementing reform and/or integrating topics into the curriculum as well as the functional procedures of the school, through its daily and informal activities.
References

List of people/experts


Books and Journal Articles:


Global and Anti-Racist Perspectives within the Primary Curriculum (2006) (Radford Primary, Nottinghamshire).


Websites:


Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence. www.crede.ucsc.edu/

Course syllabus from the Indus Training and Research Institute (ITARI) about integrating cultural diversity into the curriculum. http://www.itari.in/categories/multiculturalism/IntegratingCulturalDiversityintoCurriculum.pdf


Institutionalizing Core Values: Diversity, Ethics, and Civic Responsibility in the Curriculum. By Marilyn Kurata, director of core curriculum enhancement at the University of Alabama at Birmingham http://www.diversityweb.org/DiversityDemocracy/vol14no1/kurata.cfm

Multicultural Education Internet Resource Guide: More than 50 Internet resources are linked to this website providing an extraordinary collection of information, guidance, and support for students, teachers, administrators, professors, and families.
http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/Multi.html

Multicultural Education: Here you will find links to information about international cultures and guidance for effective multicultural education.
http://www.emtech.net/multicultural_education.html

Multicultural Pavilion: Featuring resources, research, opportunities, quotations, and activities including an awareness quiz, this website provides an extensive amount of information related to all areas of multicultural education.
http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/

Oxfam’s (2006) Education for Global citizenship: A guide for schools is designed to equip teachers with different strategies for teaching about controversial issues, enabling children to develop critical thinking in relation to controversial issues and widen their understanding of responsible global citizenship. This resource guide explores what controversial issues are, why they should be taught, why some issues are, or can become, controversial and outlines existing guidance on handling controversial issues in the classroom. The guide contains activities for use with all ages across the curriculum and can be downloaded free from

Policy and practice for teaching socio-cultural diversity (pre-service teacher training )
www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/diversity/Source/Volume_1_En.pdf
https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/2945/4/Vol3Final%5B1%5D.pdf

Research review commissioned by the U.K. Ministry of Education.

Teaching Diverse Learners, Culturally Responsive Teaching
www.lab.brown.edu/tdl/tlstrategies/crt-research.shtml

Teaching Diverse Learners, www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl/

Using Assessment to Guide and Revitalize Diversity Instruction. By Susanne Bohmer, instructor and co-chair in the department of sociology, Edmonds Community College, Washington.
http://www.diversityweb.org/DiversityDemocracy/vol12no1/bohmer.cfm

Organizations

Association of American Colleges and Universities, www.aacu-edu.org
American Commitments: Diversity, Democracy, and Liberal Learning provides clear explanations of the fundamental frameworks for multicultural education in higher education Diversity Digest is AACU’s resource for specific information about diversity and higher education www.diversityweb.org

European Wergeland Center (EWC) http://www.theewc.org/content/about.ewc/
The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is a European resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship. It is the result of an innovative cooperation between Norway and the Council of Europe (CoE).

National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), http://www.nameorg.org/
A non-profit association founded in 1990, NAME provides guidance and support for all educators with links to information, research, conferences, and publications.

Urban Education Institute, http://uei.uchicago.edu/
A resource related to urban education, this website offers information and links to research and practices to reach and teach all children.