


Chapter 21

Students' Perspectives on Culturally Responsive Instruction (or Lack Thereof) in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been an influx of diverse students entering higher education (Mishra, 2019). Though the representation of students is widening, the curriculum has not adapted to the population it purports to serve. When academia disregards students' cultural influences, there is an opportunity to miss connections that foster learning, growth, equity, and inclusion (Fuentes et al., 2019). Depriving

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diverse students of a versatile multicultural learning environment has been shown to decrease their academic performance, perceived social status, engagement, and motivation. (Blume, 2016; Phillips et al, 2020). Not only are students involuntarily subjected to a homogenized perspective, but emerging research surrounding decolonizing the curriculum tends to exclude underrepresented students' voices. This chapter provides narratives by minoritized students who have navigated academia in hopes of advancing those currently pursuing higher education. The authors' aim is to enhance the book by including student voices to ensure the curriculum is truly culturally responsive.

INTRODUCTION

I am not interested in a curriculum of inclusion. What we need is a curriculum of liberation.

-- John Henrik Clarke, a Pan-Africanist American writer, historian, and professor,

In the past century, there has been a significant increase in the enrollment of minoritized students in higher education, driven by global efforts towards inclusivity (Mishra, 2023). While access to higher education has improved, diverse students continue to encounter social and academic disadvantages within most American colleges and universities. Minoritized students, in particular, face challenges such as academic underperformance, heightened stress levels, and marginalization (Phillips et al., 2020). In recent years, scholars and faculty members have directed their attention towards the concept of “decolonizing the curriculum,” aiming to adopt inclusive and equitable practices that acknowledge and address the experiences of diverse students (Fuentes et al., 2021; Shahjahan et al., 2022). However, it is worth noting that most of the existing research and discussions on this topic tend to exclude a crucial stakeholder group: the students themselves. Recognizing this gap, our book chapter takes a student-centered approach to decolonizing the curriculum, placing emphasis on amplifying the voices and perspectives of students. By doing so, we aim to contribute to the ongoing efforts of creating an inclusive, perhaps even liberatory educational environment that acknowledges and counteracts the challenges faced by diverse students.

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