

AVOIDING BIAS IN MULTI-FACETED CLASSROOMS

by:

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After the encouragement from DepEd Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones for schools to start implementing limited face-to-face classes, various educational institutions across the country have started welcoming students back for onsite learning. This will be employed in addition to online and modular distance learning modalities which have been implemented in schools since the onset of the pandemic.

While utilizing various ways to deliver quality education to all learners, ensuring that impartiality is being practiced is of core importance. All essential learning competencies should be covered using a variety of learning methods without compromising objectivity. As much as we have to consider learners' individual differences in terms of their strengths and learning preferences, it is also crucial to give importance to how we can instruct learners in ways that won't discriminate against anyone.

As educators, we have to regularly assess whether we are providing the same degree of instruction as well as conducting the same level of assessment to our learners irrespective of their chosen learning methods. Whether we deliver instruction online or face-to-face, the way in which we discuss a specific topic should conform to the standards set by the department and should be at par with the means by which we teach via modular instruction. Considering that unconscious bias happened in regular classrooms before this new normal set-up, it is indeed a demanding challenge to avoid partiality in today's educational setting.

To avoid the possibility of prejudice in today's classroom, it is essential to acknowledge that bias does exist and is manifested in different ways. Taking appropriate actions to resolve this is the next stage such as the application of intercultural communication techniques which is a process that involves several steps such as inquiry, framing, positioning, dialogue, reflection, and action.

Inquiry is the phase when we ask questions to better understand other people's beliefs and the way in which they think. It is followed by framing, the step where issues from different perspectives were identified. We all have cultural frames which limit us in understanding the world, thus there is a need to expand them. It is important to determine the reasons behind our learner's chosen modality and thus create a plan based on these reasons.

After expanding our frames, we should consider the ways by which we can access power in various circumstances, hence the positioning. Dialogue is also indispensable as we have to communicate with others to fathom the depths of their thoughts which further lead to understanding, tolerance, and acceptance. Doing all these won't matter without reflection, the phase when we change our perspectives as we finally understand ourselves as well as others.

Lastly, we should take action based on our understanding of ourselves as well as our learners in order to make our diverse classrooms, a safe and fair place for learning.

References:

Bowman, K.D. (2020, August 4). Strategies for Countering Unconscious Bias in the Classroom. International Educator. www.nafsa.org. <https://www.nafsa.org/ie-magazine/2020/8/4/strategies-countering-unconscious-bias-classroom>