MULTICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION: CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

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Abstract

A recent Fulbright grant by the author at the University of Potsdam, Germany focused on providing Multicultural Teachers Education programs of instruction for European teachers from Germany and other European countries. The purpose was to assist in-service and graduate teacher training programs at the university with the expanding multicultural student populations to acclimate with new environments by teaching critical thinking skills. Ten modules were developed and co-taught by a German professor and a Fulbright recipient United States professor at the University of Potsdam, Germany. Instructors infused ethnic and critical thinking content and perspectives by varying their teaching strategies to accommodate the learning styles of those who have immigrated and placed primarily in educational systems to continue their education within a new cultural environment. The program emphasized that competent multicultural instructors will assist with the expansion and improvement of their educational institutions by providing cultural and critical thinking training to migrants within the educational institutions of Germany and the European Community, the ability to work and communicate in global communities can only be achieved if students can analyze, evaluate, and integrate information that helps them comprehend social, cultural and economic policies. A migrant trained as a critical thinker at an early age can have an impact on expanding and improving the social, cultural and economic future within their environment. The teacher education programs included discussions on reasoning in a logical manner, an evaluation of what is written and spoken, a reflection on students’ ideas and individual thoughts, a revaluation of reasoning, an opportunity to pose questions, and the analysis and clarification of student-teacher responses. This process will help teachers to assist students with becoming lifelong learners and using critical thinking techniques toward decision making and adapting to new cultural environment. Infusing critical thinking into the multicultural teacher education curriculum ensures commitments are made to make reflective decisions and develop positive attitudes toward other ethnic, cultural, racial, religious or sexual identity groups. The focus of this multicultural teacher training curriculum is to assure multicultural teachers have the knowledge of various cultures, traditions, and religions to assist with the enrichment of students’ critical thinking skills. The teacher education seminars and the 10 module contents embrace new thinking, encouraged creativity, and foresee cause-and-effect relationships within the educational organizations. Critical thinking accepts and appreciates cultural diversity while respecting both human dignity and universal human rights. Instructors should serve as mentors to convey the characteristics and knowledge that enhances multicultural teaching coupled with the practice infusing critical thinking skills within the curriculum of all educational institutions.

Keywords: Multicultural Teacher Education, Critical Thinking, Curriculum Development for Migrants, Enhancing Multicultural Teaching.

1 INTRODUCTION

Instructors need and are requesting multicultural training to assist with the education needs of migrant and refugee students. These students are struggling to manage and merge the cultures to seek inclusion in both the educational environment and the social and economic spheres of the migrating country. The German educational system has mandated that teachers be provided programs which instruct knowledge that focuses and enhances multicultural students learning with the practice of critical thinking skills for educational, social, and professional advancement. Teachers should acknowledge various cultures, traditions, and religions and enrich students’ critical thinking skills by focusing on similarities and dissimilarities among the cultures. Infusing critical thinking into the curriculum ensures that knowledge is acquired, and commitments are made to make reflective decisions and develop positive attitudes toward other ethnic, cultural, racial, religious or sexual identity groups. This process will help migrant students become lifelong learners and use critical thinking techniques toward decision making within the new social, political, and professional organizations within their new environments. The author researched what is needed to adequately train teachers to
help new and expanding multicultural populations within the population to acclimate to new environments within Germany and other European Community nations. An openness to inquiry, an emphasis on critical thinking skills, and a welcoming, supportive environment coupled with technology, group work, and extracurricular activities will encourage migrant student the desire for participation and inclusion within and among EC institutions. To be successful with both present and future immigrant education, a set of 12 instructional modules were developed as a foundation for a teacher education program and offered at the University of Potsdam, Germany with a grant from Fulbright Program to incorporate, expand, and improve teacher training programs focused on migrants. This curricular enrichment would promote sound democratic living and provides those traits most successful with adaptation within a new culture and environment. To fulfill this need, the author developed and implemented a 12-module program focusing on the multicultural teacher education curriculum. The modules were presented to those graduate teacher education programs at the University of Potsdam, Germany. This program of instruction was developed to assure knowledge and skills, which are needed to promote multicultural teaching and learning within the educational institutions. These modules provided basic information on teaching methods and utilized the knowledge and importance of critical thinking as a foundation toward successful programs of instruction. Examples of teaching methods include a discussion on reasoning, an evaluation of what is written and spoken, a reflection on students' ideas and one expressing individual thoughts. Migrant students would discuss cultural difference, which encouraged one's evaluation of reasoning, welcome the opportunity to pose questions, and analyze and clarify responses within all modes of communication. This program of instruction would benefit those instructors who are seeking information on how to enhance their effectiveness in reaching the migrants who have been or are arriving within Germany and the European Community, and those seeking immigrants seeking integration within the social and educational systems in Germany and other European community countries.

2 METHODOLOGY

The author pursued a literature review on multicultural education, critical thinking, and migrant students' educational needs within a new educational environment. The results provided content for a competency based 12 modules of educational instruction necessary for the teacher education programs to be offered within the German educational institutions. These modules focusing on Multicultural Education provided content with varying teaching strategies to accommodate the learning styles of those who have continued to migrate and adjust to the new educational and cultural environment. The modules provided multicultural instructors with competencies to assist with the expansion and improvement of training that will facilitate implementation of multicultural educational and critical thinking programs.

The ability to work and communicate in global communities can only be achieved if students can analyze, evaluate, and integrate information that helps them comprehend cultural and economic policies. This knowledge conveyed to migrants within the educational institutions would ultimately enhance the economy and ensure a democratic society in which an individual's impact on and responsibility for the world are understood. An organization seeks those who have the ability to make the best decisions. The 12 modules included critical thinking and decision-making skills with each module to enhance the learning abilities of the multicultural students. Providing a critical thinking leadership skill can have an impact on organizational strategic policies and expand and improve planning, organizing, coordinating and evaluating by assessing organizational decisions. Critical thinkers embrace new thinking, encourage creativity, and foresee cause-and-effect relationships in organizations. Critical thinking accepts and appreciates cultural diversity while respecting both human dignity and universal human rights. The content of these modules was presented and discussed within the graduate teacher training seminars at the University of Potsdam titled: Project Teacher Training for Multicultural Education: The Fulbright proposal requested an educational specialist to propose, develop, and conduct lectures within seminars and workshops designed for graduate teacher education students of English for EC teachers and for Syrian and other refugee teachers participating with a multicultural teacher training program at the University of Potsdam. Dr. Britta Freitag-Hild, Program Directed and the author a Fulbright specialist received approval for this project focusing on a seminar for those teachers who were mandated to extend and improve instruction to immigrants within the educational systems in the European Community countries beginning with Germany. These trained multicultural instructors would be able to design programs of instruction within their educational institutions by identifying methods for resolving the challenges of multicultural and refugee education in Germany and other nations receiving immigrants. Dr. Britta Freitag-Hild, focused on German
Education System and the new revisions requiring teacher education programs train for teaching within multicultural educational environments. The University of Potsdam seminar of graduate teacher training students and in-service teachers attended a series of 6-hour graduate instruction for 12 weeks. The seminars consisting of multicultural teachers and professors, who identified themselves mostly as Syrian, Afro-German, Afro-French, Polish, Turkish, and native Germans.

The teacher training programs of instruction consisted of 12 modules focusing on the following subject areas: Cultural Diversity, Multicultural Education Theory and Practice, Methods Assuring Quality Education to Immigrants, and Critical and Creative Thinking. The modules conveyed information on intercultural competencies, provided multicultural teaching research, and explored the needs of the present educational systems when dealing with cultural diversity in schools. The author instructed the university graduate students, who developed individual plans for change and originated new curriculum for multiculturalism adaptation within the educational system leading toward growth and innovation within the expanding multicultural educational environment. Dr. Frietag-Hild reviewed and directed the modules on multicultural education for teachers during the seminars. The focus of this project through seminars emphasized of methods of teaching strategies for elementary, secondary, and college refugee students within multicultural classrooms. Students were asked to develop for adaptation a refugee curriculum and received instructional materials appropriate to the curriculum. Students evaluated educational curriculum and noted any the bias, stereotypes and deficiencies found within the existing programs of training materials, which were created and included areas on culture, ethnicity, race, racism, stereotype prejudice, core values, migrant oppression and refugee discrimination.

3 RESULTS

The outcome of multicultural education for migrants was to provide a quality education and training for instructors, which could fulfill the German Department of Education which would require multicultural education programs available to all teachers and other educational instructors. The 12 teacher education modules would ensure the knowledge, skills, and abilities be taught and utilized within migrant educational programs. Although instructors cannot fulfill all the needs of multicultural students, they can utilize the 12 teacher training modules. These modules were developed toward helping instructors and students obtain reasoning skills for all issues, become self-directed learners, develop the ability to focus their thinking on whatever issues arise, and analyze a variety of issues related to human diversity. Members of the European Community nations expect to have the biggest migration since World War II and projects continual growth in the increase of migrants. The Fulbright proposal provided an educational teacher education specialist and professor to develop, and conduct lectures within seminars and workshops designed for graduate teacher training programs. A university seminar for graduate teacher training students and in-service teachers brought together multicultural educators with a series of 6-hour seminars comprised of graduate and in-service teachers of English. Refugee Teachers from Syria and Eastern European countries attended the university courses and seminars with German and EC teaching professionals. The 12 modules presented provided a program of instruction, which would be instrumental toward assuring teachers focus and enhance their ability to successfully teach within the multicultural environmental among the various educational institutions in Germany. The curriculum content consisted of teacher education multicultural modules focusing on the following areas: Cultural Diversity, Multicultural Education Practice, Methods Assuring Quality Education to Refugees, and Critical Thinking. The modules conveyed focused on developing intercultural competence, providing multicultural teaching research, and exploring the needs of the present educational systems when dealing with cultural diversity in educational institutions. The University of Potsdam graduate students developed individual plans for change and originated new curriculum for multiculturalism adaptation within the educational system leading toward growth and innovation in teaching immigrants within the expanding multicultural educational environment. The 12 modules were identified and provided information on the following subject areas (1) Multicultural Education Today, (2) Infusing critical thinking within the curriculum,(3)Adapting methods with teaching migrant students, (4) the importance of understanding esteem, empathy, and equity within the education environment,(5) Intercultural development and models of culture, (6) Surging Beyond cultural conditioning,(7) Knowledge and importance in the role of religion and realism (8)Theories and research in Multicultural education (9) Leadership and critical thinking knowledge for educators, (10) Educational Leadership: (11) Aspiring to Peak Performance, and (12) Project Management for Education.
The graduate teacher training program at the University of Potsdam and as evidenced by the student feedback provided clear instruction on the knowledge and abilities needed to assist immigrants and refugees with focused instructional methods within the multicultural educational environment. Migrants would receive proper multicultural education with those trained instructors when reentering their respective educational institutions. Since organization seeks those who have the ability to make the best decisions, each module included critical thinking skills discussions with each multicultural teacher education module. Participants within the seminar were asked to develop and present for adaptation a multicultural curriculum for an educational institution and received instructional materials to assist their writing the curriculum. The teacher training materials were revised and enriched with discussions on culture, ethnicity, race, core values as well as racism, stereotype prejudice, and migrant oppression and refugee discrimination. Students analyzed their written multicultural curriculum and noted any the bias, stereotypes and deficiencies found within the programs of instruction.

Providing critical thinking leadership skills can have an impact on organizational strategic policies and expand and improve educational organizations ensuring multicultural programs. Competent multicultural instructors will assist with the expansion and improvement of their educational institutions’ multicultural programs. Their teaching expertise provide training that will facilitate migrant students with an individual’s impact and responsibility as a citizen of the adopting nation. To ensure a democratic society, the ability to work and communicate in global communities can only be achieved if immigrants and refugees can analyze, evaluate, and integrate information that helps them comprehend the cultural and economic policies in the countries to which they have migrated. Educators embrace the topics of new thinking, which encourage creativity and developed teachers’ intercultural competencies by working collaboratively dealing with issues of migration, the refugee crisis, cultural diversity and the integration of the refugees into society. Seminar attendants were eager to utilize those teachers’ professional competencies to assess and evaluate their educational institution’s multicultural programs. A critical thinking focus on multicultural education accepts and appreciates cultural diversity while respecting both human dignity and universal human rights. These values are incorporated within the 12-module multicultural teacher education program and are crucial to assure critical thinking and cultural conditioning knowledge are offered within the teacher education programs offered in colleges and universities.

REFERENCES


