Integration of Diversity into Curriculum of all ECE Major Courses
Project Lead:
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The intent of this project is to enhance the recently Higher Education and Coordinating Board (HECB) approved BAE in Early Childhood Education (ECE) by refining the infusion of diversity into the curriculum in all twelve ECE Major Courses. At present only one course is devoted exclusively for integrating diversity into student’s academic and practical knowledge, and through analysis of reflections, many students emphasize diversity understandings only from this course, although there are other opportunities for diversity learning in other courses.

There is a profound knowledge content base regarding diversity to be found in the research literature (e.g. Moule, 2012); however the transmission of this knowledge may be insufficient to change beliefs, perceptions, and/or actions (McNaughton 2007) of many in our student population. For example, numerous students come from a behaviorist education tradition and as such diversity is viewed and valued from a deficit perspective. Thus a transformative approach to curriculum needs to infuse current diversity knowledge in all course curriculum, but equally important is to facilitate a process where the student experiences change as they move from an instructional to a learning paradigm. Anti bias sensitivity cannot be mandated.

Thus in summary this project seeks to transform ECE students understanding and practical knowledge of diversity by the following:

• First, current research on diversity in ECE programs and teacher preparation will be reviewed, with the most current diversity knowledge and principles infused in all course curriculum of the 12 courses of the ECE Major at EWU.
• Second, students will experience the development of a process of change through a learning paradigm as evidenced by student reflective practices that demonstrate cultural competence and connections.

Project Proposal: Significance

“The new problem situation cannot be handled with the old theoretical means”.
(Havermas, 1989:302)

There are many excellent sources outlining the knowledge about cultural competence, equity situations, and effective practices for culturally and linguistically diverse children. (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007)). One very important element of the problem is the lack of understanding how to empower students in their own learning about the very important and sensitive issues of diversity. This problem is illuminated in
the following example, as in the past I have attended well intentioned diversity training sessions and was amused at how frequently the trainer knew so little about the processes of including the participants in teaching and/or learning or of building community for collaborative learning opportunities. A process of a dialogue was usually promised, but even that was not forthcoming as interesting content, innuendos, and mystic was poured upon the group, and the group became non-engaged. Education for change is so much more than training!

The current knowledge regarding diversity such as social justice understandings, multi-cultural perspectives, and cultural competence foundations need to be integrated into the curriculum of our Major courses. However the integration of information is only the first step in providing for students to influence and/or change perceptions and actions thus making a real difference in their learning of and living as diverse student populations. The values and traditions of many mainstream students require transformative experiences to become both knowledgeable and sensitive to the other. Required are “educators whose curriculum intentions are transformative and whose emancipatory struggle creates environments that are enabling, democratic, and just” (Junack and Marshall, 1992:100)

Thus learning in higher education focuses on preparing student professionals to work with diverse children in a changing society. A learning paradigm provides opportunities for students to have a voice in their learning, to develop a teaching/facilitation role that understands the integration of knowledge and pedagogy, and to view constructionism as a theory and practice of learning as a basis for integrating diversity into the curriculum.

**Project Objectives**

1. The first and very important work of this initiative is to research and integrate current principles, language and concepts of diversity into all learning outcomes of the 12 courses in the ECE Major curriculum. This proposal has support from an ongoing analysis of student reflective practices that indicate their learning about diversity is centered almost exclusively in a specific diversity course that introduces students to educating young children with diverse backgrounds. This finding mirrors the research data that recognizes a course focused only on diversity, rather than integrating diversity concepts in all courses, detracts from the holistic learning about diversity.(Katz, 2008)

2. The second and supportive objective is to immerse the students in a learning paradigm process, in conjunction with field based work, with the intent of transforming how students become empowered in their learning and living in a complex and diverse society.
**Project Design**

1. **Integration of Diversity into the Curriculum**
   - Review current research and literature to find recent diversity principles and knowledge, and write a review of the literature
   - Use of narrative inquiry and/or interpretive ethnographic to gather additional information that can be infused in the curriculum
   - Evaluate each ECE Major course to ascertain where diversity principles may be integrated into the curriculum
   - Transform curriculum with the infusion of diversity knowledge and applying a learning paradigm process to make connections

2. **Learning Paradigm Process for Student**
   - Involve students in the processes of learning
   - Facilitate the use of principles of constructionism in student learning
   - Support the articulation and transformation of learning through reflective practices and field-based opportunities.

3. Analyze and interpret the information (data), develop a final report and construct presentation/workshop formats to disseminate the information.

**Dissemination Plan**

1. Department of Education Faculty Forum to present findings
2. Cross Campus meetings of BAE Representatives (CALE) to present project findings.
3. Evergreen Center for Innovation Undergraduate Education to facilitate seminar with p-3 certification instructors and administrators
4. Presentation to state, national, and/or international ECE Conference
5. ECE Community Partners presentation(s)
6. Article submitted to ECE national Journal
7. Final report to EWU, to DEL and to NAECTE

**Timetable (2011-2012)**

Summer/Fall Quarter 2011: Literature and Ethnographic research for information for curriculum transformation

Fall and Winter Quarter (2011 - 2012): Writing curriculum for integration of diversity in all ECE classes

Winter Quarter (2012): Completion of Infusion of Diversity aspects into the remainder of the ECE courses and instructing classes using integrated curriculum and a learning paradigm process.

Spring (2012); Analyzing reflective data: Begin writing article and presenting data locally

Summer and Fall (2012) : Continuation of Presentation of Results at a conference level

Summer/Fall (2012): Writing and submitting Final Report.