Early Childhood Inclusive Education: Pre-Service Teacher Beliefs and Influential Diversity Course Content

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Abstract:

The goal of preparing pre-service teachers to value diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice is far from reality. Pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the presence of these groups of diversity in their classrooms, either, the goal to provide them with the competencies to advocate for and include all and every child, family, and culture in the learning process.

This poster describes pre-service teachers’ reactions to and reflections on content provided in a course focused on diversity and inclusion for undergraduate pre-service early childhood education majors.

Study Methods:

- Data collection occurred in Spring 2014.
- Consisted of engaging course content from a co-taught, interdisciplinary, early childhood education course.
- A subset of students enrolled in the course in Spring 2014 provided permission.
- Stake of analyses include determining and describing course content that evoked reactions from students and teachers, not the course objectives.

Course Content:

- Consideration of the variability in human condition as related to early childhood.
- Race/ethnicity.
- Social/economic status.
- Family configuration (two parents, single parents, and same sex couples).
- Disabilities.
- Language and culture.
- Each unit included two to three lessons focused on various aspects of diversity:
- Within weekly and unit reflection papers, students shared their reactions to content.
- Based on all course content provided, students most often mentioned learning area content, then media videos and documentaries, then their needs and questions.
- The most common needs included individual growth and change statements followed by positive feedback on content.
- Individual student needs often included a reference to course content and a reaction statement.

Lessons:

1. Diversity overview:
   - Content overview.
   - Activities include recognizing diversity in inclusive ECE.
2. Culture, Development, and Identity Formation:
   - Culturally based views of early development, care and education.
   - Culturally responsive pedagogy and practice in ECE settings.
3. Power and Agency:
   - Power and agency in diverse settings.
4. Cultural and Social Identities:
   - Young children’s social and cultural identities.
5. Diversity in Family, Individuals and Organizations:
   - Supporting children with families and communities.
6. Multicultural Diversity:
   - Supporting young children in two homes.
7. Experiences of Diversity:
   - Experiences of identity, language, family diversity.
8. Assumptions & Reflection:
   - Practice that promote inclusive teaching strategies in diverse classrooms.

Examples of Students’ Reflections:

Bellevue, PA.

"I really liked how the course was organized and how it allowed me to see the diversity in early childhood education. I found the activities to be really helpful in understanding how diversity can be integrated into the classroom. The course was very engaging and provided a lot of valuable information that I can use in my future teaching career." (Student 1)

"I was really happy with how the course was structured. I found the content to be very relevant and applicable to my future teaching career. I especially enjoyed learning about the diversity in early childhood education and how it can be integrated into the classroom." (Student 2)

"I found the course to be really helpful in understanding how diversity can be integrated into the classroom. The activities provided a lot of valuable information that I can use in my future teaching career." (Student 3)

References:


