
A Practical Guide in Designing Curriculum for Diverse Learners

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Abstrack. The increasing diversity in the student population presents challenges for educators in designing curricula that cater to the needs of all learners. This article explores the importance of designing curricula for diverse learners and the benefits it brings in promoting educational equity and inclusive education. It emphasizes the need to recognize and respect learners' diverse backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles to create an environment that fosters equal opportunities and educational success. Library research was conducted to gather information on designing curriculum for diverse learners. Thorough literature searches were performed using online library catalogs, research databases, and academic journals. Relevant sources were critically evaluated for credibility and relevance to ensure reliable information. The article discusses the needs of diverse learners, the challenges in curriculum design, frameworks and models for designing curriculum, and strategies to adapt the curriculum to meet diverse learners' needs. It highlights the significance of understanding cultural backgrounds, language proficiency, learning styles, abilities, and equitable access to resources. The Universal Design for Learning framework and other models offer valuable strategies for inclusive curriculum design.

Keywords: Diverse learners, curriculum design, educational equity

BACKGROUND

In the field of education, the concept of diversity has gained significant attention and recognition. The student population today is more diverse than ever before, encompassing individuals from various cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, and ability backgrounds (Gay, 2018; Banks, 2019). This diversity poses unique challenges for educators, particularly in the design of curricula that cater to the needs of all learners.

Historically, traditional curricula were often developed with a one-size-fits-all approach, assuming a homogenous student body. However, this approach fails to acknowledge the individual differences among learners, resulting in unequal opportunities for educational success. It is crucial to recognize that learners have diverse

learning styles, abilities, interests, and cultural contexts that influence their educational experiences (Tomlinson, 2017; Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2020).

Designing curricula for diverse learners promotes educational equity by ensuring that all students have equal access to quality education. It acknowledges and respects the unique backgrounds, abilities, and needs of every learner, allowing them to fully participate in the learning process (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Inclusive curriculum design ensures that all students feel valued, respected, and represented in the educational setting. By incorporating diverse perspectives, cultural experiences, and inclusive content, curricula can create a sense of belonging for learners from different backgrounds (Banks, 2019; Helfrich & Simpson, 2020).

Diverse learners have varied learning styles, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or a combination of these. Designing curricula that incorporate different instructional strategies and resources can engage learners more effectively, improving their understanding and retention of the content (Tomlinson, 2017; Silver, Strong, & Perini, 2013).

In a multicultural society, it is essential for learners to develop cultural competence and understanding. Designing curricula that integrate diverse perspectives and experiences fosters cultural sensitivity, empathy, and appreciation for different cultures, promoting social cohesion and preparing students for the globalized world (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2018).

Tailoring curricula to meet the needs of diverse learners enhances their overall learning outcomes. By providing differentiated instruction, appropriate scaffolding, and targeted support, educators can optimize student engagement, motivation, and achievement (Tomlinson, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017).

In conclusion, designing curricula for diverse learners is of paramount importance in ensuring equitable and inclusive education. It acknowledges and embraces the uniqueness of each learner, promotes cultural competence, and maximizes learning outcomes. By adopting a learner-centered approach and incorporating inclusive practices, educators can create a curriculum that caters to the diverse needs of all students, fostering an environment of equal opportunities and educational success.

THEORETICAL STUDY

1. Definition of curriculum

The curriculum is a design or guide in carrying out learning and educational programs, which are provided by educational institutions that contain lesson plans that will be given to lesson participants in one period of educational level. The curriculum is a guideline or benchmark for achieving goals in education. J.Lloyd Trump and Dalmes F. Miller (1973), said that the curriculum is a series of methods that contain teaching and learning methods, how to evaluate students and the entire program, guidance and counseling, supervision and administration and structures related to time, room, and election subjects.

In Law Number 20 of 2003 article 1 says that, curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and learning materials as well as the methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals. So the curriculum is a guide regarding a series of activities that will be carried out in the teaching and learning process to achieve the desired educational goals.

2. The role of curriculum in education

According to Oemar Hamalik (1990), there are three important roles of the curriculum, namely as follows;

a. conservative role,

The curriculum can be used as a means to transmit the values of past cultural heritage which are considered still relevant to the present to the younger generation. This conservative role essentially places a past-oriented curriculum. This role is very basic which is adapted to the fact that education is essentially a social process. One of the tasks of education is to influence and foster student behavior in accordance with social values of life in the community.

b. Creative Role

The curriculum must be able to develop something new in accordance with developments that occur and the needs of society in the present and the future. The curriculum must contain things that can help every student develop all the

potential that exists in him to gain new knowledge, new abilities, and new ways of thinking needed in his life.

c. Critical and Evaluative Roles

The values and culture that people live in are constantly changing, so that the inheritance of past values and culture to students needs to be adapted to the conditions that occur in the present. In addition, the developments that occur in the present and the future may not necessarily be in accordance with the needs. Therefore, the role of the curriculum is not only to pass down existing values and culture or apply the results of new developments that occur, but also has a role to assess and select values and culture as well as new knowledge to be inherited. In this case, the curriculum must actively participate in social control or filter. Social values that are no longer in accordance with current conditions and demands are eliminated and modifications or improvements are made.

Curriculum and education are an inseparable relationship. As is well known that the curriculum acts as a guide in the administration of education. If there is no curriculum, education cannot be carried out and educational goals will not be realized. As a guideline for the implementation of education, besides that, the curriculum is always adapted to existing situations and circumstances. The curriculum is arranged in a systematic, clear and detailed manner with the aim that it is easily understood and used as a guide for the implementation of the teaching and learning process.

RESEARCH METHOD

For this article, library research was employed as the chosen method to gather information on designing curriculum for diverse learners. The process involved conducting a thorough literature search using online library catalogs, research databases, and academic journals. Relevant keywords and phrases were utilized to retrieve scholarly articles and books that focused on diverse learners and curriculum design. The selected sources were critically evaluated for their credibility and relevance to ensure the reliability of the information presented in the article. The benefits of library research for this article include access to comprehensive and diverse perspectives, integration of evidence-based arguments, and proper citation of sources to maintain academic integrity.

Overall, library research served as a valuable method to gather reliable information and support the discussions and recommendations in the article.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Needs of Diverse Learners

Understanding the needs of diverse learners is a complex and multifaceted process that requires educators to delve into various aspects of their students' identities and experiences. One crucial aspect to consider is the cultural background of learners. Culture plays a significant role in shaping individuals' perspectives, values, communication styles, and ways of learning. Cultural diversity within the classroom brings a richness of experiences and knowledge that can enhance the learning environment (Gay, 2010).

Cultural background influences how learners perceive and interpret information, engage with instructional materials, and interact with peers and educators. For example, students from collectivist cultures may prioritize group collaboration and cooperation, while those from individualistic cultures may place more emphasis on individual achievement (Hofstede, 1980). By understanding these cultural differences, educators can create instructional strategies and learning experiences that accommodate and celebrate diverse cultural perspectives. This might involve incorporating culturally relevant materials, inviting guest speakers from different cultural backgrounds, and fostering an inclusive classroom climate where students feel valued and respected.

Language proficiency is another crucial factor when addressing the needs of diverse learners. Students with limited English proficiency or those who speak English as an additional language may face challenges in fully engaging with the curriculum. Educators need to be aware of language barriers and provide appropriate support to facilitate language development and academic success. Strategies such as scaffolding instruction, providing language support materials, and promoting language acquisition through meaningful interactions can help bridge the language gap and ensure equitable access to learning opportunities (Cummins, 2008).

Learning styles and preferences vary among students, and understanding these differences is vital for effective curriculum design. Some students may be visual learners,

relying on diagrams, charts, and visual representations to process information. Others may be auditory learners, preferring spoken explanations and discussions. Kinesthetic learners may benefit from hands-on activities and movement in the learning process. By offering diverse instructional approaches that cater to different learning styles, educators can increase student engagement, understanding, and retention of the curriculum content (Dunn & Dunn, 1992).

In addition to learning styles, learners' abilities and prior knowledge significantly impact their educational experience. Students with disabilities or learning differences may require accommodations and support to access the curriculum effectively. It is essential for educators to identify individual learning needs and provide necessary accommodations, modifications, or specialized interventions to ensure that all students can fully participate and succeed (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Furthermore, acknowledging and valuing students' prior knowledge and experiences fosters a sense of relevance and promotes a positive learning environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Educators can build upon students' prior knowledge, making connections to new concepts and engaging them in meaningful learning experiences.

Equitable access to resources and learning opportunities is another critical consideration when designing curriculum for diverse learners. Disparities in access to technology, textbooks, materials, and extracurricular activities can create barriers to learning and hinder educational success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Addressing these inequities requires proactive measures such as providing equal access to resources, leveraging technology to bridge gaps, and offering targeted interventions to support students who may require additional assistance (Estrada et al., 2018). By ensuring equitable access, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that fosters the success of all learners.

Understanding the needs of diverse learners goes beyond acknowledging surface-level differences. It involves recognizing the intersectionality of their identities, including cultural backgrounds, language proficiency, learning styles, abilities, and prior knowledge. By embracing and accommodating these diverse needs, educators can design a curriculum that promotes inclusivity, equity, and meaningful learning experiences. It is crucial for educators to engage in ongoing professional development, collaborate with

colleagues, and seek input from students and families to ensure that the curriculum is responsive and supportive of all learners' needs. By valuing

and leveraging the diversity within the classroom, educators can create an environment where all learners can thrive and reach their full potential.

2. The Challenges in Curriculum Design for Diverse Learners

Designing curriculum for diverse learners comes with its own set of challenges that educators must navigate to ensure equitable and inclusive educational experiences. These challenges encompass a range of areas, including language barriers, cultural biases, learning style variations, and resource disparities.\

Language barriers pose a significant challenge in curriculum design for diverse learners. Students who are English language learners or who have limited proficiency in the language may struggle to fully comprehend and engage with the curriculum content. It is essential for educators to consider language support strategies, such as providing bilingual resources, offering English language development programs, and incorporating language scaffolding techniques (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2018). By addressing language barriers, educators can create an environment where all learners can access and participate in the curriculum effectively.

Cultural biases also present challenges in curriculum design. Biases, whether explicit or implicit, can unintentionally marginalize certain groups of learners, perpetuating inequalities in education. Educators need to critically examine the curriculum for cultural biases and ensure that it reflects diverse perspectives and experiences (Banks, 2019). This may involve integrating culturally relevant materials, incorporating diverse historical and literary narratives, and fostering discussions that promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures (Gay, 2010). By addressing cultural biases, educators can create a curriculum that recognizes and values the diversity of their learners.

Accommodating different learning styles is another challenge in curriculum design for diverse learners. Students have unique ways of processing and retaining

information, and these individual learning styles should be considered when designing instructional strategies. Educators can employ a variety of teaching methods, such as visual aids, hands-on activities, cooperative learning, and technology integration, to cater to diverse learning styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1992). By providing multiple pathways for learning, educators can engage and support learners with varying preferences and strengths.

Equitable access to resources and learning opportunities is a critical consideration in curriculum design for diverse learners. Disparities in access to educational resources, technology, and extracurricular activities can perpetuate educational inequities. Educators must address these disparities by advocating for equal access to resources, leveraging technology to bridge gaps, and providing targeted interventions to support students who require additional assistance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). By ensuring equitable access, educators can create a level playing field where all learners have the necessary tools and opportunities to succeed.

Recognizing and addressing these challenges is essential to create an inclusive and effective curriculum that meets the needs of diverse learners. Educators must engage in ongoing professional development, collaborate with colleagues, and seek input from students and families to gain insights into the specific challenges and needs within their classroom (Banks, 2019). By actively addressing these challenges, educators can design a curriculum that promotes inclusivity, fosters engagement and understanding, and prepares all learners for success in an increasingly diverse society.

3. Frameworks and Models for Designing Curriculum

Exploring existing frameworks and models for designing curriculum provides educators with a wealth of resources and strategies to effectively address the diverse needs of learners. One prominent framework that has gained recognition in recent years is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Developed by Meyer, Rose, and Gordon (2014), UDL is a research-based framework that promotes inclusive and accessible instructional practices.

The Universal Design for Learning framework emphasizes three main principles: multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement. By offering multiple ways for learners to perceive, process, and demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum content, UDL aims to remove barriers and provide equal learning opportunities for all students (CAST, n.d.).

The first principle of UDL, multiple means of representation, encourages educators to present information in various formats to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. This can involve providing text-based materials, visual aids, multimedia resources, and other accessible content. By offering multiple representations, educators ensure that learners can access and understand the curriculum content regardless of their individual learning styles or abilities.

The second principle, multiple means of expression, focuses on providing learners with various options for demonstrating their understanding of the curriculum. This can include diverse assessment methods such as written assignments, oral presentations, multimedia projects, or group discussions. By allowing students to express themselves through different modalities, UDL supports their individual strengths and preferences, promoting engagement and deeper learning.

The third principle, multiple means of engagement, aims to foster motivation and active participation in the learning process. Educators can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment by incorporating strategies such as providing choices, offering hands-on activities, promoting collaboration, and integrating real-world connections. By personalizing the learning experience and making it relevant to learners' interests and experiences, UDL enhances their engagement and promotes a positive attitude towards learning.

In addition to UDL, other frameworks and models exist that offer valuable insights and strategies for designing curriculum for diverse learners. Examples include Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2017), and the Culturally Responsive Teaching framework (Gay, 2010). These frameworks highlight the importance of considering students' cultural backgrounds, prior knowledge, and experiences in curriculum design and instruction.

By exploring and incorporating established frameworks like UDL and others, educators can benefit from evidence-based practices and innovative approaches that have proven effective in addressing the diverse needs of learners. These frameworks provide a solid foundation for designing curriculum that is inclusive, engaging, and responsive to the unique characteristics and strengths of each learner.

4. Adapting Curriculum to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

Adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners is a crucial aspect of inclusive education. It involves tailoring instructional strategies and materials to accommodate the individual learning styles, abilities, and interests of students. By providing differentiated instruction, educators can ensure that all learners have equitable access to the curriculum and opportunities for meaningful engagement and learning (Tomlinson, 2017).

One key element of adapting the curriculum is providing varied learning materials. Diverse learners benefit from a range of resources, including text-based materials, visual aids, multimedia resources, and hands-on activities. By offering multiple modalities of information presentation, educators can address the different preferences and strengths of students. This approach allows learners to engage with the content in ways that are most meaningful and effective for them.

In addition to diverse materials, offering alternative assessments is essential in adapting the curriculum. Traditional assessment methods may not accurately measure the knowledge and skills of all students, particularly those with diverse learning needs. By providing alternative assessments such as projects, presentations, portfolios, or performance-based assessments, educators can accommodate different learning styles and allow students to demonstrate their understanding and abilities in ways that align with their strengths.

Collaborative learning approaches also play a significant role in adapting the curriculum for diverse learners. By promoting collaboration and cooperative group work, educators create opportunities for students to learn from and with their peers.

Collaborative learning allows diverse learners to engage in meaningful interactions, exchange ideas, and benefit from diverse perspectives. It fosters a supportive and inclusive classroom environment where students can learn from each other and develop important social and communication skills.

Personalizing the learning experience is a central aspect of adapting the curriculum for diverse learners. Educators must recognize that students have unique interests, backgrounds, and abilities. By considering individual differences and incorporating student interests and experiences into the curriculum, educators can create a more engaging and relevant learning environment. This personalization increases student motivation, enhances their understanding and retention of the content, and fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment in their learning journey.

Adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners requires ongoing assessment and reflection. Educators should continuously monitor student progress, provide timely feedback, and make adjustments to instructional strategies as needed. By being responsive to students' evolving needs, educators can ensure that the curriculum remains relevant, accessible, and effective for all learners.

Adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners involves incorporating differentiated instruction, providing varied learning materials, offering alternative assessments, implementing collaborative learning approaches, and personalizing the learning experience. By embracing these strategies, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that supports the success and achievement of all students, regardless of their diverse needs and backgrounds.

5. Strategies for Inclusive Curriculum Design

Strategies for inclusive curriculum design play a vital role in creating an educational environment that values and respects the diverse needs and backgrounds of learners. Inclusive curriculum design goes beyond simply addressing the needs of diverse learners; it aims to create a sense of belonging and equity for all students. By incorporating various strategies, educators can foster an inclusive classroom climate that

supports the success and engagement of every student (Banks, 2019; Helfrich & Simpson, 2020).

One important strategy for inclusive curriculum design is to incorporate diverse perspectives, experiences, and cultural content into the curriculum. This involves including materials, examples, and resources that represent a wide range of cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities. By doing so, educators validate the experiences and identities of all students, promoting a sense of inclusivity and helping learners to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It also allows students to gain a broader understanding of the world and fosters respect for diversity.

Promoting active and collaborative learning is another key strategy for inclusive curriculum design. Active learning approaches, such as hands-on activities, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks, engage students actively in the learning process. By encouraging student participation and collaboration, educators create opportunities for students to learn from each other, share their perspectives, and build meaningful connections. Collaborative learning also promotes empathy, understanding, and teamwork, which are crucial skills for navigating diverse and inclusive environments.

Creating a supportive and inclusive classroom climate is an essential aspect of inclusive curriculum design. Educators can establish a positive classroom environment by cultivating mutual respect, promoting open dialogue, and creating opportunities for student voice and choice. By fostering a sense of belonging and safety, students feel comfortable expressing their opinions, sharing their experiences, and engaging in learning activities. A supportive classroom climate also encourages students to value and respect each other's diverse perspectives, promoting empathy and creating a sense of community.

Differentiating instruction is another strategy for inclusive curriculum design. By recognizing the diverse needs and abilities of learners, educators can tailor instruction to meet individual students' requirements. This may involve providing different levels of challenge, offering various instructional approaches, and using flexible grouping strategies. Differentiation ensures that all students, regardless of their learning styles or abilities, have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences. It allows educators to address the unique strengths and areas of growth for each learner, promoting equity and maximizing student engagement and achievement.

Regular reflection and assessment are crucial components of inclusive curriculum design. Educators should continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and make adjustments as needed. This may involve seeking feedback from students, colleagues, and families, and reflecting on the impact of instructional decisions on diverse learners' experiences and outcomes. By engaging in reflective practice, educators can refine their teaching approaches, identify areas for improvement, and ensure ongoing alignment with the principles of inclusive curriculum design.

Strategies for inclusive curriculum design aim to create an educational environment where all learners feel valued, respected, and represented. By incorporating diverse perspectives, promoting active and collaborative learning, fostering a supportive classroom climate, differentiating instruction, and engaging in regular reflection and assessment, educators can create an inclusive curriculum that meets the diverse needs of learners. These strategies not only enhance student engagement and achievement but also promote a sense of belonging and prepare students to thrive in diverse and inclusive society.

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Understanding the needs of diverse learners is crucial for designing an inclusive curriculum. Educators need to consider various factors such as cultural background, language proficiency, learning styles, abilities, and prior knowledge. By embracing and accommodating these diverse needs, educators can create a curriculum that promotes inclusivity, equity, and meaningful learning experiences. This involves providing appropriate language support, incorporating diverse instructional approaches, offering accommodations for students with disabilities, and ensuring equitable access to resources and learning opportunities. Adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners requires providing varied learning materials, offering alternative assessments, implementing collaborative learning approaches, and personalizing the learning experience. By incorporating strategies for inclusive curriculum design, such as incorporating diverse perspectives, promoting active and collaborative learning, fostering a supportive classroom climate, differentiating instruction, and engaging in regular reflection and assessment, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that

supports the success and engagement of every student. It is essential for educators to continuously engage in professional development, collaborate with colleagues, and seek input from students and families to ensure that the curriculum is responsive and supportive of all learners' needs. By valuing and leveraging the diversity within the classroom, educators can create an environment where all learners can thrive and reach their full potential.

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