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What are Funds of Knowledge? A Collaborative Approach to Education

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What are Funds of Knowledge? A Collaborative Approach to Education

Janna M. Bernstein, M.Ed.
Student Engagement and Diversity

The practice and the need it addresses	Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students	Resources and where to find them	How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

Teaching Practice: Using "Funds of Knowledge"

As instructors, we tend to be so focused on the curriculum materials and what needs to be covered, that we fail to ask, "How do our identities inform our roles as educators? How can our students' experiences inside and outside of the classroom shape the course dynamics?"

It is important as educators to have a holistic understanding of students' identities as these experiences influence classroom dynamics. As noted by Dugan (2017), "…identity, knowledge, and power are influenced profoundly by ideology and hegemony and in turn play a role in shaping people's stocks of knowledge" (p. 40). "Stocks of knowledge" are characterized by five principles: they are familiar, serve to help navigate the world, "shaped by lived experience, altered only through novel situations, and socially constructed based on identity" (Dugan, 2017, p. 34). These "stocks of knowledge" are also known as "funds of knowledge" by multicultural educators.

Practice in Research

From my observations and class discussions, UNLV students in both my first-year seminar course and leaderships courses are more engaged in class when this practice is utilized. Course evaluations also show higher rates of satisfaction.

This framework provides an understanding that engagement in the classroom is a collaborative approach. Students bring their home experiences into the classroom and teachers become the "…bridge between the students' worlds" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 137). Thus, it is imperative that instructors validate and acknowledge the pupils experiences as "much of the teaching and learning is motivated by children's interests and questions" (Moll, et al., 1992, p. 134). It is crucial that we engage our students in "problem-posing" education that allows both educators and students to share in the creation of the curriculum and creative dialogue (Freire, 1993, p. 60). Critical pedagogy further allows us to "use the experience and knowledge of students to engage in such praxis" (Martin & Te Riele, 2011, p. 29). Hence, true learning occurs when students and teachers can share in the journey by being vulnerable and expressing their true selves.

Helpful Resources

Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses.* San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Ringwood, NJ: Penguin Books.

Martin, G. & Te Riele, K. (2011). A place-based critical pedagogy in turbulent times: Restoring hope for alternative futures. In C. Malott & B. Porfilio (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: A new generation of scholars* (pp. 23-52). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into practice*, *31*(2), 132-141.

Online Resources/Handouts

Genzuk, M. (1999*). Tapping into community funds of knowledge.* Los Angeles: Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project/ARCO Foundation. Retrieved from http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~genzuk/Genzuk_ARCO_Funds_of_Knowledge.pdf

Handout:http://modules.nceln.fpg.unc.edu/sites/modules.nceln.fpg.unc.edu/files/foundations/handouts/Mod%204%20Funds%20of%20knowledge.pdf

Steps in Adopting the Practice

1) Collaborative dialogue starts the first day of class!
2) Create Classroom Agreements

Guidelines:
- Work to be self-aware of how you are reacting to the course content and classroom experience.
- Be willing to deeply reflect on why you may be having the feelings and experiences that you are, and explore how this self-awareness can lead to greater learning.
- Be willing to grapple with challenging ideas and work to be humble in the process.
- Challenge yourself to explore the roots of your opinions on the issues presented in the course.
- Be willing to articulate why you believe what you believe.
- Be open to analyzing how your identities and experiences influence your interpretation of the course material and your interactions within the classroom environment.
- Be willing to challenge yourself to facilitate areas of growth. Recognize that growth often comes out of places of discomfort
- Add anything else

TIPS
- Continue open dialogue as semester progresses
- Allow the students to guide the conversation, if you are unable to finish all of your lesson plans each day- do not fret!
- Utilize current events and real world examples to create informed conversation- most classes do not discuss such ideas