

The benefits of an ethnically diverse teaching force

Aotearoa continues to become more ethnically diverse as we embrace the multi-cultural aspect of our country. Our student population mirrors this diversity, and we need to ensure our schools are supporting the communities, cultures and ethnicities to provide the best learning environment.

The Education Review Office - an external evaluation agency that informs and facilitates improvement in learning services - has said schools need to assess how they will engage and interact with various communities as the ethnic population of their school increases (Education Review Office, 2018).

Encouraging an increase of ethnically diverse teaching staff in our schools will allow us to begin developing a wider cultural understanding of the benefits and solutions this can drive within a learning environment.

The importance of relationships and rapport to develop a sense of belonging

Where teachers and students share the same ethnicity or race, studies highlight the academic advantages including the ability for them to connect ethnically, racially and sometimes linguistically and provide a deeper understanding of the cultural environment, allowing teachers to act as mentors, role models or cultural translators (see Dee, 2004; Durand, 2010; Kamenetz, 2016; Nevarez, Jougاناتos, & Wood, 2019).

This has a positive influence on a student's learning ability through developing a trusting relationship these role models and in turn can boost students' confidence and motivation providing a sense of belonging and creating a positive learning environment.

Cultural awareness

Non-ethnically diverse teachers can still have a significant impact on a student's learning ability and become effective role models if they embrace the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of their students' cultures and life experiences (Nevarez, Jougاناتos, & Wood, 2019).

Multicultural and diverse schools and classrooms foster positive interactions and create a learning environment that delivers greater creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. This collaboration supports students to work together and enables them to benefit from one another's experiences, bounce concepts off one another, and find innovative solutions together (Kamenetz, 2016).

Given all this data, it is crucial to remember that students from various ethnic backgrounds gain more from a widely diverse teaching workforce. Therefore, policymakers should consider methods and steps to address the existing racial and ethnic achievement gaps in the educational sector.

References

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