MEDU206 Addressing Inequality and Difference in Educational Practice

ECTS Value: 3 ECTS

Overall Objectives and Outcomes

Over the years, the concept of unity in diversity was not implemented effectively. For, to achieve unity in diversity, acceptance and integration there needs to be understanding and this can only be achieved through education. Healthy multicultural environments can only be achieved through a conducive learning environment where students are taught about disability, different cultures, religions and traditions.

Discrimination, racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia can only be mitigated if addressed more profoundly within the classroom. Both students and teachers come to school with preconceived ideas which may do more harm than good. Thus, educators too need to have a reality check. This module is intended to help educators become critical of education policy and practice at macro and micro level with regard to how these facilitate or inhibit equality and integration in society and the community. Educators will be expected to identify and develop their own personal position and to challenge normative assumptions with a view to promote transformation towards equity and social justice.

This module also helps educators learn and relearn about other cultures and religions (context based). It empowers educators and provides them with the right tools to teach students learn to accept and tolerate different students coming from different cultural backgrounds and needs. The course also provides, teachers with tools and pedagogical assistance on how to address sensitive situations in the classroom like, disability, socio-economic barriers, racism, xenophobia, islamophobia, extremist views and radicalisation. It helps them teach students how to be critical about what they see on TV, on the net and on social media as well as punctuating events around the world.

As learners progress through the module they will be encouraged to engage with critical theory to investigate equity and diversity to transform their practices making them more inclusive. Themes of ethnicity, disability, religion, gender and poverty and the interaction between them will be considered, with an emphasis on how they influence the individual and his socio-cultural context.

By the end of this module, the learner will be able to:

Competences:

a. Analyse relevant policy and practice related to inclusion in education;
b. Demonstrate an understanding of the effects of discrimination, inequality on students' educational process;
c. Reflect on personal histories, cultures, values and attitudes to establish their positionality with regard to inequality and difference;
d. Create a harmonious environment for all students in the school and/or classroom;

e. Plan tasks and activities that promote an equal level playing field for all the students in the classroom to succeed;
f. Engage in effective communication with the students when sensitive subjects about citizenship, values, religion and traditions arise in the classroom;
g. Evaluate their practices proposing adequate changes and/or improvements for more inclusive classrooms.

Knowledge:

a. Clearly convey the message to students that independently from their religion or nationality, democratic values are there for everyone to respect and safeguard;
b. Introduce reforms or indeed new measures to facilitate integration and acceptance of foreign students to meet their needs;
c. Eliminate discriminatory practices;
d. Appreciate that education policy is much more than formal policy documents but includes processes of policy implementation in which teachers can support, subvert or transform the original intentions of policy makers;
e. Realise that empowerment, social cohesion and recognition of human rights for all can only happen when learners are equipped to transform society;
f. Value the need for students to be given opportunities to recognise and criticise unjust policies and practices taking place around them.

Skills:

a. Understand the structures and processes of education system and the impact on different social groups in terms of social class, gender, religion and race;
b. Relate current inclusion policy initiatives in education to their impact on practice;
c. Tackle and address issues related to discrimination, racism, islamophobia, xenophobia through an effective use of pedagogical instruments as well as the curriculum;
d. Raise awareness amongst students about the importance of tolerance, acceptance, shared humanity and respect towards democratic values;
e. Collaborate with and build partnerships with relevant organizations and entities in the field;
f. Develop empowering classroom practices that enhance students' critical engagement with their own learning.

Assessment Methods

This module will be assessed through: Practical Assignments, Peer-review and Self-reflection.

Suggested Readings

Core Reading List:

1. *Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta.* European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014.
2. The Malta National Disability Strategy: Rights, Responsibilities, Action. Parliamentary Secretary for Rights of Persons with Disability And Active Ageing. The National Commission Persons with Disability & the Focal Point Office.

Supplementary Reading List:

1. Allan, J. Catts, R. (2012). Social Capital, Children and Young People: Implications for practice, policy and research. Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy Press.
2. Avis, J. (2016). Social Justice, Transformation and knowledge. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
3. Ball, S. J. (2008). The Education Debate. Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy.
4. Biesta, G. (2015). "What is Education For? On Good Education, Teacher Judgment, and Educational Professionalism." European Journal of Education, Vol. 50, no. 1.
5. Brooks, R., McCormack, M. and Bhopal, K. (2015). Contemporary Debates in the Sociology of Education. Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan.
6. De Lissovoy, N. (2013). "Pedagogy of the Impossible: neoliberalism and the ideology of accountability." Policy Futures in Education. Vol. 11, No. 4.
7. Gorard, S. (2010). "Education Can Compensate for Society - a Bit." British Journal of Educational Studies, 58: 1, p. 47-65.
8. Leeman, Y. (2008). "Education and Diversity in the Netherlands". European Educational Research Journal, Vol. 7 No. 1
9. Pels, T. & De Ruyter, D.J. (2012). "The Influence of Education and Socialization on Radicalization: An Exploration of Theoretical Presumptions and Empirical Research." Child Youth Care Forum, 41, p.311-325.
10. Ragazzi, F. (2016). Suspect community or suspect category? The impact of counter-terrorism as 'policed multiculturalism.' Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 42:5, p. 724-741.
11. Rich, S. & Troudi, S. (2006). "Hard times: Arab TESOL students' experiences of radicalization and othering in the United Kingdom." *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, p. 617.
12. Robinson, K. and Jones-Diaz, Criss (2016). Diversity and Difference in Childhood: Issues for Theory and Practice. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.
13. Santoro, N. and Forghani-Arani, N. (2015). "Interrogating practice in culturally diverse classrooms: what can an analysis of student resistance and teacher response reveal?" European Journal of Teacher Education, 38,(1), P. 58-70.
14. Shor, Ira. (i992). Empowering Education. Chicago, IL, United States: The University of Chicago Press