Learner Diversity – What does it mean to teachers?

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Background about myself

Part one

“Catering for Learner Diversity” WHY?

Part two

Experience and Practice Sharing

(local and international)
What should I say about myself?

I am a teacher!!
I used to teach 30 students in one class
Now I have 3 students in my class
What a Transformation!

- From the Biggest class to the Smallest class
  - Is it easy now?
    - NO
  - Any Idea Why?
    - THEIR LEARNING NEEDS ARE VERY DIVERSE
Part One

“Catering for Learner Diversity” WHY?
# I taught in 3 different Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In a disruptive class</th>
<th>In a band-one EMI class</th>
<th>In a class with diverse needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maintain discipline</td>
<td>mark practice papers</td>
<td>busy with everything!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit quietly</td>
<td>Get 5*/ A</td>
<td>Cater for learning diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend class smoothly</td>
<td>HKCEE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do we deal with diversity in Hong Kong

- Differentiate, Categorize and Segregate

**Chinese**
- Band-One
- Band - Two
- Band Three
  - Class A – the best
  - Class D – the worst

**Non-Chinese**
- Westerners going to international schools
- S. Asians going to schools for ethnic minorities
- Autism
  - special needs
  - disabilities
Is this effective?

Oh Yes

PISA 2009 results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>On the overall reading scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OECD average</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai-China</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong-China</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who is doing just a little bit better than us?

- Finland
The most striking thing is that the Finnish education system is doing better than us even though Finnish students spend the least number of hours in the classroom.

Even more, they do not segregate, no categorization or banding of schools

Even more, they don’t have constant exams! No test papers.
Million Dollar Question

How do they do it?

I went to Finland last year to find out myself
I saw very diverse classrooms
I don’t exactly know the answer to the question but I learnt it is possible to achieve the best even with highly diverse classrooms.
Catering for Learner Diversity

WHY?

It is good for our society as a whole. Every child will have an equal opportunity to achieve to the fullest.

I believe every single child should have equal opportunities to be educated despite their limitations.

More and more schools in Hong Kong acknowledge diversity in classrooms.

However, in Finland they have a big problem with their education system. The population is over qualified. But teachers are proud of this.
Part Two

Experience and Practice Sharing

1. Motivation
2. Behavior Management
3. Nutrition and Food
4. Supporting Parents
1. Motivation

“Work and play are words used to describe the same things under different conditions”

Mark Twain

Make learning fun!

Approach with excitement - the activity may seem boring and undesirable if you aren’t excited about it.
1.1 Reinforcement is a powerful tool which can be used to motivate students

1.1.1 Primary reinforcers

   e.g. edible items and drinks

1.1.2 Conditioned reinforcers (learned/secondary reinforcer)

   Social recognition (praise statements, smiles, clapping)
   Activities with Teacher

   Activities done by self
1.1.3 Ambient Reinforcers

e.g. smelling food items/ people’s hair

  watching leaves be blown by the wind

  repeating a line from their favorite songs/movies

  swinging, bouncing
1.2 Identify Reinforcers

Standing back and watching what the student does when he/she is left alone
1.3 Praise with action is a powerful reinforcer

- Be sure to pair words of praise with actions, facial expressions and tones of voice that make the comments more exciting

  E.g. fantastic, great, you did it, wow, how nice,

  nice work, that’s the way,

  I like the way you did…
2. Behaviour Management

- Understanding the function of behaviour

Q: Why do some students behave in certain ways?

Understand the cause of the student’s behaviour & purpose

find ways to manage it

help the student to self-manage their behaviour
2.1 Escape Behaviour

Three categories

- 1. Disruptive behaviour (screaming, hitting, scratching, kicking, throwing/damaging items)
- 2. “Cute” behaviours (attempting to get people laugh)
- 3. Non-responding behaviours (looking out the window, looking as tired/bored, Nothing doing anything that is asked of him, doing tasks slowly with minimal effort)
2.2 Challenging Behaviour

Severely problematic / socially unacceptable behaviour

- 1. physically aggressive behaviour
- 2. self-injurious behaviour
- 3. verbal abuse (including shouting/ swearing)
- 4. sounds that other people find distressing

(Caroline Hattersley 2013)
2.3 How do you react to challenging behaviour?

“The way in which we react to someone’s behaviour affects the way they respond to us.”

Calm, consistent manner
manage effectively
stop the behaviour from escalating
2.4 Common beliefs surrounding behaviour

- He’s just doing it to get attention
- She should have known better
- He knows exactly what he’s doing
- If I let him get away with it this time he’ll think it’s OK to behave like that all the time
- I shouldn’t let him win
- If I give her what she wants then that just rewards the behaviour
2.5 Identifying Causes of Challenging Behaviour

01. Anxiety

Q: What are the triggers?

1. Discomfort (e.g. environment, phobia)
2. Change
3. Escape / avoidance
4. Denial of wishes (somebody is asked to stop something s/he enjoys doing)
5. Transition
6. Mood/physical state (stressed, tired, hungry/ill)
02. Social and communication difficulties

unable to communicate feelings and needs result in behaviour

03. Overload/ Meltdown

A student loses control
2.6 How to respond

Technique: Low arousal response

Staying calm and use a consistent approach

- 1. take a break
- 2. reduce verbal and non-verbal communication
- 3. give space
- 4. give a choice
- 5. give warnings

(Clements and Zerkowska 2000)
03. Nutrition and Food

- How much are you aware of what your student’s diet is?

  How important is it for you to be aware of their dietary needs?

  Food Allergies
  Gluten Free diet
  Sugar & Chocolate
  Peanuts
04. Supporting Parents

- When do you call parents?

- Do you like calling parents?

How do I do now?

Remember, the parents of students with special needs are already drained and frustrated. They don’t need another phone call to remind that.
Teaching is not limited to the curriculum. There are many other aspects which can help us to make it easier to cater for learner diversity.

A diverse classroom is a challenge but there are techniques to face this challenge.