Cultural Affirmation in Online Learning

We need to address sociocultural differences in online learning environments to create a sense of belonging for all students.

"There needs to be serious debate about issues concerning the social and cultural dimensions of task design, communication channels and structuring of information if the needs of culturally diverse learners are to be met. Educational computing, or the use of technology to mediate learning, is imbued with cultural values and assumptions." —McLoughlin and Oliver, "Designing Learning Environments for Cultural Inclusivity: A Case Study of Indigenous Online Learning at Tertiary Level"

Barriers

Cultural safety must be addressed, ensuring respect, inclusion, and empowerment

Multilingual learners and those with diverse learning needs do better with plain English, including the opportunity to submit assignments in non-written alternatives

Eurocentric design, content, and technologies can further isolate diverse learners

Cultural adjustment, language concerns, and learning issues may create problems due to different expectations and learning perspectives

Stereotypes are still present, and instructors need to critically reflect on their role and responsibility to support diverse online learners

Evidence-Based Strategies

- Provide culturally relevant teaching that includes content that relates to students' lived experiences

- Acknowledge cultural strengths of diverse students

- Foster learner-centric interactions with awareness of students':
  - Social obligations
  - Geographic location
  - Literacy and linguistic capabilities
  - Prior tertiary experience
  - Sociocultural-political background

- Practice culturally safe learning by sharing power and supporting equal engagement between different world-views

- Offer alternative assignments, such as mind maps, songs and poems, blogs, websites, slide presentations, and use of technology to demonstrate learning outcomes

- Recognize that online team project work is challenging. Be intentional when assigning groups, and provide diverse teams with tools to support intercultural interactions

For more data and context, read the full report from ABLE Research Consultants

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