



A Self-Assessment for Educators

By 5.1.2e, BSc

Leiden University

Content

Introduction	2
Literary research	3
Dutch universities	3
Theoretical framework	4
Method	5
Diversity in sources	5
Diversity in working methods	5
Diversity of testing methods	6
Conclusion	Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.
Self-assessment for Educators	6
Discussion	8
References	9

Introduction

Diversity is an essential factor in the education that a university provides. Diverse curricula inspire skills and attitudes on top of their teaching (Laird, 2010). Such teachings encourage, amongst others, open-mindedness and analytical intellect, which lie at the basis of university education. University students must be offered a broad array of viewpoints and perspectives to groom them as critical, worldly thinkers. Thus, it is crucial to gain insight into the diversity of a curriculum.

Recognizing this importance, the initiative for this diversity research came from the Central Diversity Commission of Leiden University.

Looking for a way to assess the diversity levels within the curricula currently being taught at Leiden University, a call for an assessment method went out.

The purpose of this research is to develop and propose such a method for the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University, allowing assessment of the diversity of curricula.

This research will be divided into two parts. Firstly, it will discuss the literary research on the subject of diversity in college curricula. Accordingly, it will elaborate on the method proposed. Finally, it shall conclude with a self-assessment, with which educators can check diversity in their curriculum. After finalizing the method, pilot research will be conducted on the honors course taught by 5.1.2e

Literary research

The definition of 'diversity' or 'diverse' indicates that a range of different variables is present or at play. Diversity touches upon multiple aspects; gender, age, political views, religion, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, lifestyle, interest, and so forth; it is vast.

Therefore, for this research's scope, diversity will be defined according to the definition of the Central Diversity Commission of Leiden University. According to the Commission, diversity in the learning and teaching environment is 'inclusive learning,' resulting from 'inclusive curricula, courses, and pedagogy' (Leiden University, n.d). Thus, this definition of diversity emphasizes the diversity of the curriculum itself.

Dutch universities

Since 2014 Leiden has implemented policies to ensure inclusion and diversity (Leiden University, n.d). As the Diversity Office at Leiden University is still young, it is wise to look towards other Dutch Universities to understand how they have shaped diversity.

For instance, Erasmus University's Diversity Office focuses on creating a safe learning- and working environment, especially regarding social justice. Recently, they have also been looking into new policies and activities. Such an activity is the Erasmus University College Cafe's, where students and teachers discuss themes such as inclusion and diversity.

Utrecht University organizes mostly activities to stimulate diversity from within, not necessarily focusing on curricula. They organize diversity-afternoons for employees to educate them about diversity. This way, they aim to create more consciousness on the subject of diversity. On top of this, they host 'outreach-activities' to reach out to children from non-dutch backgrounds through a buddy-program. On the other hand, there are no initiatives aimed at current students and diversity.

At the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, significant diversity research was conducted ((KNAW-Webinar: Antiracisme Op Universiteiten, 2020). The report offered recommendations; however, not many of them have been implemented. The University of Amsterdam also released a report (KNAW-Webinar: Antiracisme Op Universiteiten, 2020) with ideological guidelines. These guidelines would apply to any Dutch university; however, none of these were practical nor recommending actions to take. Non-practical guidelines seem to be a larger theme amongst Dutch universities. Thus, indicating the need to address this gap of practical improvements for diversity in university environments.

Theoretical framework

Literature research has highlighted certain aspects of testing diversity in the curriculum.

Nelson Laird (2010) investigated and measured how diversity is included in a course.

According to Laird, diversity should be measured by two scales; inclusive learning and diverse grounding. Diverse grounding is whether the course's basis is diverse, such as the diversity of the sources that are the backbone of the course. Inclusive learning is how the course's basis is taught, such as the working and testing methods.

Moreover, according to Laird (2011), there are nine elements of a course that influence its diversity. These are; purpose, content, perspectives, learners, instructors, pedagogy, classroom environment, evaluation, and adjustment. His model is rooted in the framework by Latucca & Stark, who developed a model for (diverse) course planning.

The frameworks of Latucca & Stark (2009) and Laird (2011) have inspired the method presented in this paper.

As the educator shapes the course content, one has considerable agency on the curriculum's diversity. The educator is, therefore, the basis of our method. The components from both frameworks that fell within the lecturer's agency were filtered and categorized. This way, three overarching components have been identified that influence the curriculum's diversity: diversity in sources, diversity in working methods, and diversity in testing methods.

In the following chapter, these components will be elaborated on, whereafter they will serve as a basis for the self-assessment.

Method

Diversity in sources

The first aspect of the curriculum is the sources offered and treated by the lecturer. The most apparent is the literature sources used in the curriculum, as these are the backbone of a course (Hurtado 2001; Mayhew and Grunwald 2006). The main goal of ensuring diversity in the curriculum sources is to prevent the framing of a subject.

Diversity in literature sources

The origins and background of a literary source determine the diversity of the source. These entail the background of the author, the discipline, and the publishing period. Namely, these components determine the framing of a source. The background of the author entails aspects such as gender, age, and culture. To improve diversity, the sources could offer perspectives from different disciplines, such as geography, anthropology, history, among others. Thus, to increase diversity in literary sources, it is critical to offer sources with diverse backgrounds and origins. Diverse sources of literature will moreover challenge students to see the matter from different viewpoints.

Diversity in teaching

As suggested by Maruyama and Moreno in 2000, it is also key that diversity is addressed in one's teaching. For example, when teaching about a particular theory or idea, the teacher should inform the students about different theories or viewpoints existing on the matter. The atmosphere in the classroom, therefore, should provide space for questions and challenge students to think critically about the views with an open mind. This will promote diverse and inclusive exchanges during the curriculum.

Diversity in working methods

Diversity in class methods

The curriculum should offer diversity in types of working methods. The element of discussion contributes significantly to the diversity of the course content. It is, therefore, essential for the lecturer to facilitate discussion. The purpose of the discussion is to share opinions and views on the subject and openness in listening to other viewpoints. This promotes encounters with difference and diversity (Reason et al., 2010).

Moreover, as the lecturer teaches, they frame their teachings. This means these teachings are taught from a specific viewpoint, which is unavoidable (Nelson Laird, 2010). This 'framing effect' could be decreased by, for instance, inviting guest lecturers.

Diversity in learning methods

Every student takes up information in diverse ways, which should be stimulated by diverse learning methods. Diverse learning methods can entail practical components for experiential learning, film, mind mapping, literature, images, or team projects. Especially on the former, it is a suggestion to group students from different backgrounds in teams together. These group dynamics will encourage them to break down their prejudices and stereotypes and promote diversity and inclusivity in the classroom (Kuh et al. 2004; Umbach 2006).

Diversity in testing methods

As the diversity of the course content increases, so should the testing method reflect this. A university or faculty aiming to increase diversity in curricula should acknowledge that there is also diversity in the expression of knowledge. Some students will score better on oral grading, some on essays, others on multiple-choice exams. Recognizing that the students in the class are diverse, so are their learning methods; therefore, testing methods should justify this diversity. This means that the curriculum should not consist of one final exam with either open or multiple choice answers. It would improve the diversity of testing methods when the final grade is built up of different components; a final exam, a presentation, team projects, a participation grade, an essay, and so forth.

Self-assessment for Educators

Based on the research mentioned earlier, the following checklist for educators to assess diversity in their curriculum is proposed.

Diversity in sources

- Are they from authors from within the university, country, or a similar culture?
- Do the sources offer different perspectives, for instance, from different cultures or disciplines?
- Are the authors or creators of these sources from diverse backgrounds? In terms of gender, age, nationality, discipline, etc.
- Are the sources from different publishing periods?

Diversity in working methods

- Do you facilitate space for discussion?
- Does the course entail diverse learning methods? Such as practical components for experiential learning, film, mind mapping, literature, images, or team projects.
- If team projects are facilitated, do you ensure diversity within the teams? An equal mix of gender and nationalities, not the same teams regularly, etc.
- Are you open to facilitating different viewpoints in the classroom? For instance, by inviting guest lecturers.

Diversity of testing methods

- Is the final grade consisting of different components? Such as a final exam, a presentation, team projects, a participation grade, an essay, and so forth.

Results

If answered affirmatively on all the questions above, the curriculum is diverse. On the contrary, if questions are answered negatively, these highlight areas that the curriculum could improve on, to promote diversity and inclusion. In total, a score of 9 points can be achieved. When a low score is achieved (1 to 4), this indicates that diversity should be further investigated. If the average of all courses in the Faculty of Archaeology is higher than a 7, one could consider it a diverse faculty.

Discussion

Is diversity in a curriculum necessarily better? This is a critical question that has arisen during this literature research. Is it wrong to not provide diverse sources to students? Is clinging on to the concept of diversity a good thing?

Another important note is that the results coming from this testing method could be quite confronting for the lecturer. It is, therefore, important to also think about the evaluation and delivery of the results. Furthermore, after the results are known, how does one advise to make improvements in the diversity of the curriculum? How does one include diverse content in the course? These would be an interesting matter to research in the future.

References

Hurtado, S. (2001). Linking diversity and educational purpose: How diversity affects the classroom environment and student development. In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Diversity challenged: Evidence on the impact of affirmative action* (pp. 187–203). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

KNAW-webinar: *Antiracisme op universiteiten*. (2020, June 29). [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVTXRaVNUyU&feature=youtu.be>

Kuh, G. D., Nelson Laird, T. F., & Umbach, P. D. (2004). Aligning faculty activities and student behavior: Realizing the promise of greater expectations. *Liberal Education*, 90(4), 24–31.

Nelson Laird, T. F. (2010). *Conceptualizing diversity inclusivity for college courses*. Unpublished manuscript.

Laird, T. F. N. (2011). Measuring the diversity inclusivity of college courses. *Research in Higher Education*, 52(6), 572–588.

Lattuca, L. R., & Stark, J. S. (2009). *Shaping the college curriculum: Academic plans in context* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Leiden University. (n.d.). *Our vision of diversity*. Retrieved 21 December 2020, from
<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/dossiers/diversity/our-vision-of-diversity>

Maruyama, G., & Moreno, J. (2000). University faculty views about the value of diversity on campus and in the classroom. In *American Council on Education, American Association of University Professors (Ed.), Does diversity matter? Three research studies on diversity in college classrooms* (pp. 9–36). Washington, DC: American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors.

Mayhew, M. J., & Grunwald, H. E. (2006). Factors contributing to faculty incorporation of diversity-related course content. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(1), 148–168.

Reason, R. D., Cox, B. E., Lutovsky Quaye, B. R., & Terenzini, P. T. (2010). Faculty and institutional factors that promote student encounters with difference in first-year courses. *Review of Higher Education*, 33(3), 391–414.

Umbach, P. D. (2006). The unique contribution of faculty of color to undergraduate education. *Research in Higher Education*, 47, 317–345.

