

Chapter 8

Impact of Culturally Competent Teachers on Their Students' Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important phenomena in the teaching and learning process is academic performance. It is known to be a variable that has given rise to various national and international research studies, in which the factors that can influence academic performance, such as the cultural competence of the teacher, are generally analysed to a greater or lesser extent. For this purpose, an introduction to the importance of cultural competence in the education system is given. The authors proceed to conceptualise the terms “cultural competence of teachers” and “academic performance” and then carry out a study through a systematic review of the main scientific databases in order to better understand the knowledge structure of this scientific domain. Among the conclusions, they highlight that the teaching staff is aware of the importance of diversity; however, they state that they feel little competence in this field. Likewise, the scarce presence of cultural competences in teacher training plans prevents teachers from responding effectively to the challenges posed by a culturally diverse classroom.

INTRODUCTION

So-called globalisation has transformed the way we live, work and play, affecting our view of relationships, bringing people living thousands of miles apart into closer proximity. In this context of globalisation, education faces several important challenges in preparing our children to live in a global and diverse society. Educational institutions must respond to this challenge by re-examining their curricula and pedagogy to equip their students with the skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary to develop a sense of global citizenship and solidarity.

To meet these challenges, schools need teachers who are committed to the implications of globalisation, who can work effectively with increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse students, and who teach a globally oriented curriculum. Teachers who prepare their students to succeed not only locally, but globally, in culturally diverse contexts, while contributing to increased academic achievement. Cultural content is an indispensable element not only for good teaching, since culture as an essential element of diversity becomes important in the act of understanding the teaching-learning process, where aspects such as the system of symbolic appropriation, the set of behaviours and manifestations, affect the construction of meaning and the academic performance of students. But, also, for the development of the student as an individual person and as a member of society, since the ultimate aim of the education of people is to foster their cognitive and affective development, while at the same time enabling them to integrate into society, so that they can exercise their rights and duties as citizens.

We consider this study necessary for the following reasons. Firstly, we contribute to increasing the field of knowledge in relation to teaching cultural competences and their possible impact on students' academic performance. Secondly, the information obtained helps to better understand the knowledge structure of this scientific domain by analysing research articles published in high impact journals. In this way, by identifying the lines of research and their interconnections, based on the information contained in the databases analysed, the understanding of this knowledge structure will be favoured. And, finally, knowledge of the scientific production analysed will provide insight into the development and evolution of cultural competences and their implications for students' academic performance.

In this sense, the objectives we set ourselves with this chapter are to know the field of knowledge in relation to cultural competence and academic performance; to better understand the knowledge structure of this scientific domain and to determine the impact of this domain in recent years.

Cultural Competence in Teaching and Academic Performance

In order to make a significant contribution to the transformation of an education based on diversity, the cultural competence of teachers and how this can influence quality teaching becomes relevant. In this context, one of the main challenges in education in the so-called knowledge and information society is the transformation of the school into a social entity that offers quality education for all as a condition for individual development; in the same way, it must attend to the diversity and interculturality of citizens, where difference is conceived as a condition of human beings.

Thus, first of all, we will conceptualise the terms “culture”, “cultural competence of teachers” and “academic performance” in order to approach the object of study. Culture dynamically represents learned language, values, beliefs, behaviours and practices. It guides what we think, what we do and who we think we are. Culture influences our decisions, perceptions, attitudes and how we interpret our environment (Brown, 2013). Thus, the concept of culture could be summarised as a set of distinctive intellectual, af-

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