

Patana Mehirdel

EDPN 671

Reflective Journal

1. Description of Highlight(s) – chapter, article or event that pertains to course. (20 pts.)

Provide a brief summary of a chapter, article, behavior, event, etc. that is relevant to the course. This is an informational summary – do not include your personal reaction or speculation.

The textbook “Affirming Diversity” by Sonia Nieto and Patty Bode, chapter 8 includes case studies that were conducted to show students testimony and determination about culture and language. In fact, “Pride and Conflict in Culture and Language” informs that students take pride and satisfaction in their culture while still are struggling with internal conflicts such as assimilating to society (Nieto, Bode, 2017). In addition, the chapter discusses that many of the young people recognized that their culture is not just about what they are doing but it is also about who they are as a person (Nieto, Bode, 2017). Also, these students are calling themselves “cultural hybrids” which means that they intend to mix American values into their culture. However, “Self-Identification” varies among amongst all students and some students either identify themselves as their parents native cultural background/birthplace or they view themselves as Americans only and explain that their parents come from other countries.

On the other hand, some interviews conducted that there are many students who feel ashamed about their culture and about some people who reflect their culture (Nieto, Bode, 2017). In fact, some students blame their families or communities for their failure and one African American student explained that assumptions such as “she is not going to achieve well” hold her back from achieving the highest potential of learning. Therefore, educators and the school environment play a critical role in supporting students with their cultural identity acceptance and with allowing students to feel comfortable, brave and determined to explore academic concepts by using their cultural identity.

2. Initial Emotional Response (surprised, embarrassed, sad, inspired, excited, puzzled, etc.) (5 pts.)

I am not surprised after reading about the students responses during the conducted research about the acceptance of the youth`s cultural identity and how some people feel about their cultural background while trying to assimilate it to the American culture. Every school should be presenting their students cultures and languages and it makes me really upset to see that there are some cultures, religions and languages that schools totally neglect. The students responses allowed me to reflect on my experience growing up and it is sad to say that I felt embarrassed about my cultural identity while growing up. I can say that I agree with some students who say that they feel embarrassed about their culture because of some individuals

who reflect their culture. My family is from Afghanistan and growing up I was constantly reminded about the political events happening in Afghanistan. Also, when 9-11 would be the topic in class, I would feel embarrassed and really uncomfortable because I would be scared to become a victim of bullying. In fact, there were many time where some students in high school even called me a terrorist and most of the time my peers had negative assumptions about my religion as well. I feel that the past decade has made progress in attempting to eliminate racism and discriminating cultures, religions and languages but think that schools need to make more effort in hiring teachers from diverse backgrounds and allowing them to create an environment where students respect each other's backgrounds.

Learning Process

3. Prior Assumptions or Opinions about the described highlight (10 pts.)

What was your assumption, bias or opinion about the highlighted topic *before you read/experienced the highlight (article, chapter, event, etc.)?*

Chapter 8 of “Affirming Diversity” by Sonia Nieto and Patty Bode introduce many different views of students voices regarding their cultural/language identification while connecting it to success and achievement. I assumed that the responses of students would vary and I assumed that some students would explain their cultural background as either being neglected or cherished during their academic experience. Also, I assumed that some students would explain their cultural identity as an “embarrassment” and also assumed that some students would respond as being prideful about their cultural and language background. In all, I thought about the different experiences students go through growing up and being provided with comfort in blending in their native language and culture into the academic environment. I assumed that students achievement would be connected to students being able to explore and live their culture, language and religion freely throughout their learning experience.

4. Source of Assumption or Opinion What made you have such an assumption? (5 pts.)

As I have already mentioned I grew up experiencing neglect of my own culture, language and religious background during school settings and during class discussions. Growing up, we constantly learned about the Hispanic culture and learned about important political events that shaped students minds about African American students and Muslim or Jewish students. I have seen Hispanics being prideful about their culture because of the fact that it was cherished in school and have witnessed assumptions about students who wore a scarf to school. The schools that I went to were neglecting students culture and language that came from Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran or Iraq. In fact, growing up students who came from these countries and who were Muslims had to come to school during their religious holidays whereas now many districts made holidays such as Eid a day where students are off and can celebrate with their family and friends.

5. Assumption/Opinion Check – Validation/Invalidation (20 pts.)

How does the highlight described validate or invalidate your prior assumptions or opinions based on what you have learned during the class or read from the textbook? Please present academic contents, theoretical base, or research as an evidence of the (in)validation. Make it clear that you understand the topic/subject.

The interview indicated that the opinions and experiences vary amongst students where some students felt that their culture was cherished or neglected. Some students explained that assumptions about their cultural heritage held them back from learning and reaching their highest learning potential. Also, the textbook explains that “Young people are involved in creating new cultures where aspects of the native culture is retained, modified and reinserted into different environments (Nieto, Bode, 2017). Some students are brave and live their native culture through American values while they are unknowingly inventing a new norm of their native culture.

The research that was conducted by educators in the textbook reflected my upbringing and experiences and the research is proof on how students can use their cultural background during their learning experience. Furthermore, the textbook asserts that “Most students volunteered that their culture helped them in many ways and that they felt proud of their cultural identities” (Nieto, Bode, 2017). As I have mentioned, I have seen many of my peers (most of them Hispanic or White) express pride and happiness about their cultural background during school settings. For example, Hispanic students would use their cultural experiences, such as celebrating Cinco de Mayo for their narrative writing. They would feel proud and happy to share whereas there were students who refused to write about their Eid festival or Ramadan experience. Throughout the chapter, I was able to connect to the students responses and opinions and I was able to emphasize with students experiences and feelings about their cultural and linguistic heritage.

6. Realization/Aha Moment or Epiphany (20 pts.)

What was the “Aha!” moment for you? How have your views or beliefs been changed? Analyze/reflect on how your ideas have evolved.

I have realized that students who feel comfortable in sharing their cultural backgrounds with their peers or teachers enables them to learn better and reach a better quality of learning. Embracing their native culture and language allows students to open up and not hold back during learning activities. I have realized how important it is to allow students to cherish their culture and have the environment allow them to cherish it and be proud of who they are. Also, after reading the chapter, I have realized the important role of an educator, which is making the student feel comfortable and safe during their learning experience. In fact, the educator needs

to create an environment in the classroom where all the students feel accepted and respected for who they are as a person, culturally and religiously and linguistically.

Furthermore, I read that the research concluded “Cultural and linguistic connections can play a key role in students' academic success and when language and culture is reinforced by family or school settings then the students are able to achieve better and have higher self-esteem” (Neto, Bode, 2017). I have realized that students who are cherishing their culture at home and not in school become frustrated and it limits them from learning. Also, I have realized that students who cherish their culture at home and have the opportunity to cherish it in school flourish during their academics and become mentally strong human beings. I agree with Bode and Nieto and am grateful for their research. It is an eye opener to all educators and it stresses the importance on implementing students cultural and linguistic background into their teaching experiences.

7. Implications for future teaching practice (20 pts.)

What specific changes do you intend to make in your teaching or classroom environment?

Present specific examples such as strategies, lesson plan or action to make.

I will make sure that my students have a voice in my classroom. I want to enable my students to grow mentally and socially by living their culture in their classroom. From the very beginning of the school year, I will encourage them to share their cultural background and connect it to their learning experiences. Writing prompts will be created, where students will be able to share and reflect upon their religion, culture and language. My classroom library will consist of books that connect to every students cultural background while I will be planning interactive read aloud activities that allow for discussion and a growth mindset. Also, I will be promoting students languages and will allow students to share some vocabularies in their native language with their peers which will allow students to respect other languages. In fact, it will be my mission to understand each of my students cultural heritage and I will try my best in connecting with my students and their parents by using a variety of multicultural resources for my teaching experiences. Furthermore, I would like to create research activities for students where they can find resources (digital, articles, books etc.) about their peers culture and present it to the classroom. Group work allows students to work together and it creates a social contract amongst each other. I am looking forward to create activities, where students can cherish their identity and share it with their classmates and teachers without being judged or discriminated. My classroom will be a room full of visuals that promotes bilingualism and openness to learn about diverse cultures and religions. Indeed, my classroom will be colorful and my students will feel comfortable and determined to reach their highest potential of learning.

Resources:

Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2017). *Affirming diversity: The Sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Pearson.

