



Teaching Across Cultures: Building Pedagogical Relationships in Diverse Contexts

Ikpeze, Chinwe H.
Sense Publishers, 2015

Book Review

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The ability to teach across cultures is more important than ever and many professors are searching for practical resources to help navigate the complexities of twenty-first century classrooms that are both face-to-face and online. Ikpeze's *Teaching across Cultures* offers practical tools and it provides the theory behind the approaches he outlines although at times, he leaves the reader wanting more detail on how to incorporate his strategies in the classroom.

Ikpeze trains teachers in pedagogy for a cross-cultural context, and emphasizes that all classrooms are multicultural. Through his own experiences as a teacher, he identifies the gaps and missteps that occur in a multicultural classroom and how to address these problems primarily with two approaches: Cultural Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) and the cultivation of "Third Space" in classrooms and online environments.

Ikpeze shares freely the classroom problems he encounters as a self-disclosed foreign born (of African descent) and accented English speaker. His openness is refreshing and invites the reader to connect their own teaching challenges with his. CRP demands a responsive teaching style that invites students to bring their wisdom and cultural selves to learning. The creation of third spaces brings together opposing viewpoints into a space where they are questioned and blended. It is an ambiguous space that moves out of binary modes of thinking and learning to a mode of hybridity.

The first step Ikpeze covers is the concept of a self-study. Self-study involves intensive data gathering that moves beyond the troublesome student course surveys that often perpetuates race, gender, and class biases to a mode of gathering data from a variety of sources to

construct a picture of a teacher's self-presentation, reception of this presentation, and pedagogy. It is not a one-time process. Ikpeze emphasizes the need for maintaining academic rigor and teaching objectives while addressing the problems discovered in the self-study.

The second step in his work emphasizes building relationships between student and teacher, between students and their selves, and between students to allow greater understanding. This work allows the creation of a "third space" where students' knowledge from day to day living is invited into conversation with academic knowledge. This technique requires intentional exercises and regular engagement with students both in and outside the classroom.

Teaching across Cultures is theory heavy and at times frustrates the practitioner who wants to move directly to the practical strategies. While Ikpeze emphasizes relationship building as the foundation for cross-cultural pedagogy, the realities of class size and teaching load shapes the ability of professors to effectively employ many of these tools.

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