

Is the “Adjusted curriculum” necessary?

What this research was about and why it is important

The article is concerned with the concepts of multilingualism, multiculturalism and multi-literacy within a society. In particular, it investigated how speaking different languages in different contexts can have an influence on the individual, especially in the context of schools where numerous cultures and languages are coming together. Hence, it is interesting to investigate what the dynamics at schools look like and how school curricula reflect the multicultural/multilingual environment, if at all.

What the researchers did

- The researchers reviewed which languages in different societies have which importance, in order to define a threshold level. The threshold level, or baseline, is a defined minimum level of proficiency that should be aimed for within a curriculum. They also reviewed what other aspects might be important to teach to the students.
- They also wanted to find out to which degree multilingualism had an impact on the learning ability towards other languages or subjects.
- Two different groups within one society were compared in their primarily used languages at school and at home.
- Based on their findings, the researchers constructed the concept of the “Adjusted curriculum”, which incorporates the needs of multilingual communities in multilingual schools and classrooms.

What the researchers found

- Trilingual patterns of language use as an example of the multilingual environment, for example speaking Arabic with the family and friends, Dutch at the workplace, and English in an academic or international context.
- The multilingual reality of language use in- and outside of the classroom is not represented well by curricula.
- Students that use a different language at home and at school, mainly scored lower points in assessments. Therefore, the researchers argue for an “Adjusted curriculum”, in order to accommodate for that reality.
- But multilingual speakers and learners can have an advantage when acquiring a new language, because they can identify similarities with and differences to languages they already have knowledge of.

Things to consider

- We live in a multicultural environment, in which multilingualism is becoming more frequent.
- Especially teachers should be aware of multilingualism in their classroom and should embrace it, rather than suppressing it, in order to increase the awareness, respect and appreciation for other languages and cultures.
- In addition, adjusted curricula should help the students to develop near-native proficiency in the dominant language, as well as ensure the maintenance of minority languages, through the means of a threshold level. The threshold should consist of the most useful vocabulary that enables the student to participate in language interactions.

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