A Closer View on Diversity of Learners
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Everybody would agree that no two students are exactly the same. Learners do not come from the same mold. But given the fact that students differ from one another, they must have equal opportunity to learn in school. Diversity or differences among our students have placed greater demands to teachers in today’s school. Students may differ in race which is commonly indicated by the color of the skin. They may belong to different ethnic or religious groups and speak different languages.

Fadzilah et al (2010) emphasized that Knowledge of Diverse Learners (KDL) is increasingly recognized as an essential component of knowledge base for effective teaching as in today’s schools, teachers must be prepared to teach a diverse population of student (Banks et al. 2005). In other words, teachers need to be aware that their students in a classroom are and always have been different from one another in a variety of ways. KDL refers to an understanding of diversity of students in terms of their abilities and interests and how they respond to diverse situations; an application of different teaching strategies; and how various types of classroom activities might be managed.

In most public schools, students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Increasing number of children come from families that are plagued by poverty, unemployment, frequent relocations, limited access to high quality medical and social services and perhaps crime ridden neighborhoods. In the midst of this diversity, the students are exposed to be given equal opportunities to education. Thus, there is a need for curricular and instructional modifications, teaching styles, re-examination of teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and perception. With greater emphasis on teaching styles, there is no one size fits all in facilitating learning. Students have different needs. We cannot expect that by using a single strategy on a daily basis, everybody will learn the subject matter thoroughly.

The inclusion of learners with special needs has also increased diversity in schools. Environmental adaptation of classrooms, behavior support plans, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, team teaching are some of the responses to promote better learning with a class having diversity of learners. Taking into account, the diversity in schools is a major challenge. Every one’s
heritage is given due respect, and differences should be regarded as strengths to build on rather than deficits to overcome. In all walks of life, every person is unique. Therefore, teachers are expected to promote learning fairly among her learners.

Reference:
Fadzilah et al. (2010) Knowledge of Diverse Learners: Implications for the Practice of Teaching