

Cultural
Inclusive
Learning Design

What is Cultural Inclusivity?

Cultural Inclusivity is defined as “laws and policies that ensure cultural participation, access, and the right to express and interpret culture” (UNESCO, 2017). From a learning perspective, cultural inclusion calls to support and address the experiences and needs of people from diverse cultures. It allows for the opportunity to learn and value unique contributions.

Culture and Learning

Culture includes the ideas, customs, knowledge and social behaviour and patterns of a group, people or society. Culture influences the way we learn because it affects the way we see the world, communicate with others and the way we interact with information.

Our goal is to include culture intentionally and thoughtfully in a way that allows for cross cultural sharing and connection.

Cultural inclusive learning design is an opportunity for all of us to learn and grow

People are accessing online learning materials at an increasing rate. With the reach of online resources, we want to ensure that the material is accessible to people from all cultures. In order to do this, we consider language choice and usage, accountability to different cultures, and technological aspects.

Contents

Cultural Inclusive Learning Design.....	1
Summary.....	2
Culture Learning Design.....	4
Language.....	4
Accountability.....	5
Community Mapping.....	5
Technology.....	6
Conclusion.....	6
References.....	7

Culture In Learning Design

The fast and expansive development of the Internet has enabled increasing accessibility to online global education. However, some critique's claim, "online education appears to reflect the English-speaking world's view of its design, with many of these values remaining implicit and opaque to users of online learning systems" (Hannon, D'Netto, 2007, p. 419). For example, a study of 241 students in online learning programs at a large South Australian University found that cultural differences impact participants' satisfaction with organizational and technological issues with local students reporting significantly higher satisfaction than international students (418). Without adopting inclusive practices, some individuals will feel marginalised, discouraged and isolated in learning materials. One way to address this issue is through cultural inclusive learning design. In learning design, it is important to remember how our own culture influences how we create learning materials and how people with different cultures access, engage and interpret that knowledge. There are tools we can use to ensure we account for cultural barriers and difference to make material accessible to all.

When designing for learning the goal should not be to have a culturally neutral learning site because people cannot be separated from their culture. For example, the aforementioned study found that "the pedagogical and cultural neutrality of online learning systems results in ineffective delivery of online education and reduces the attainment of good learning outcomes for culturally diverse participants"(Hannon, D'Netto, 2007, p. 420). Therefore, it is not our goal to remove culture to make learning accessible to everyone but rather include it intentionally and thoughtfully in a way that allows for cross cultural sharing and connection.

Language

Language has the power to shape the way we think and the way we learn. Language can determine your construction of space and time, it can also have effects on the brain's perceptual decision making (Boroditsky, 2019). Linguistic diversity shows how flexible the mind is but when designing for intercultural communication it is important to remember everyone is starting from different vantage points. Therefore, integrating language considerations in your learning design will make it accessible to more people

Recommendations for Language

- Do not use overly complicated language, the language should be accessible to multi-language speaker.
- Remember language is more than grammar, the choice of words and the context behind those words make a difference. Be mindful of your choices.
- Use language that is not specific to one region. Or if you choose to do so ensure that language region expands past the global north and consider including definitions of the word choice.
- Learning opportunities can arise out of including language and terms from different cultures when accompanied by definitions.

Accountability

When designing for cultures different than your own avoid hollow connections or shallow cultural celebrations, trivialization and essentializing. A hollow connection can be made by claiming a story from a culture different than your own or by appropriating different cultures. Similarly, a shallow cultural celebration can occur when using a cultural celebration as a storyline in a learning design without proper input from an authentic source. Trivialization can occur when you make light or comment on cultural practices or lived experiences different than your own. Lastly, essentializing occurs when a group of societies' identity or behaviours is presumed to be shared by all members of the group, society or people.

Recommendations for Accountability

- Making distinctions are just as important as making connections to ensure accountability (Tuck, Yang, 2012). This means that while it is important to include different views in learning design it is just as important not to overextend your relation to another culture to serve your learning design.
- When possible seek out authentic stories and when that is not possible research the storylines you are attempting to recreate or incorporate through community mapping.

Community Mapping

Drawing from Tandra Jackson and Brandy Bryson's 2018 article "Community Mapping as a Tool for Developing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" we have formed critical questions to pose when developing learning materials for different cultures.

1. What can you find out about the history of this location?
2. What celebrations and traditions are observed?
3. What services are provided in this area?
4. What services are available for youth and families in this area?
5. What goods and services are not available in the location? Where do people go to buy these?
6. What kind of open spaces are there for physical recreation? Where do kids hang out?
7. Are there positive places for kids to go? (Community centres? Recreation centres?)
8. What is the most common way for people from this area to make it economically?
9. What is the racial mix of the area? Has this changed over time, if at all? In what ways?
10. What is the economic mix of the area?
11. What community groups are in the area?

Through these questions you can develop a deeper understanding of context specific needs and realities. Orienting your design towards the causes and effects of the lived experiences of the community will allow you to create a critical and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Technology

While people are accessing online learning materials at an increasing rate, countries are still divided by access and availability. Unstable or limited internet, older technology and small screens or tablets are just some of the ways people have different access to learning materials. However, for cultural inclusive learning design, we orient ourselves towards the cultural transformation that technology has created. Technology has allowed us to connect like never before, yet in order to keep the human touch in online learning platforms we must consider personal relationships development.

Recommendations for Technology

- Know your audience's relationship to technology and their aptitude with its functions.
- Design for authenticity by creating meaningful learning opportunities that include a personal connection or ability to express one's self and opinions and points of view. However, remember that people's desire to share personal information varies greatly so accounting for varying levels of formality is good practice.
- Use technology wisely by knowing learner's ability to access online information.
- Charting the path to inclusion but considering intercultural strategies but also accessibility measures. Learn more about accessible learning sites here: <https://fabo.org/llab/accessibility>

Conclusion

When designing learning paths for other communities or cultures different than your own remember to locate yourself in the design. Acknowledge how your culture and language influences how you relate to and disseminate this knowledge. Think critically about your position as an educator, especially if you are a part of the English-speaking or Global North world's view. Creating culturally inclusive material requires us as the designers to critically question what we teach and how we are create appropriate and meaningful learning opportunities for ourselves and for our learners. Overall, remember to locate yourself in the design, make appropriate connection, differentiate when necessary and embrace diversity.

Culture does not have to be one or the other. When creating learning designs consider including multiple points of views and stories from people beyond your vantage point. In this way you can create a dialogue that people can access and relate to on different levels and in different ways. Most of all, cultural inclusive learning design is an opportunity for all of us to learn and grow.

References

- Boroditsky, L. (2019). How languages shape the way we think. <https://languageadvantage.ca/how-languages-shape-the-way-we-think/>
- Hannon, J., & D'Netto, B. (2007). Cultural diversity online: Student engagement with learning technologies. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(5) 418-432. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540710760095>
- Jackson, T., & Bryson, B. (2018). Community mapping as a tool for developing culturally relevant pedagogy, *The New Educator*, 14(2), 109-128. DOI: 10.1080/1547688X.2018.1426323
- Sleeter, C. E. (2012). Confronting the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy. *Urban Education*, 47(3), 562–584.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1).
- UNESCO. (2017). Cultural Inclusivity <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/urban-development/migrants-inclusion-in-cities/good-practices/cultural-inclusion/#:~:text=Definition,Challenges>