Strategies for Stressed Teachers to Solve Challenges in the Diverse Classroom

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Abstract

This paper explores teaching strategies to support K to 12 classroom teachers as they negotiate the ever increasingly diverse learning needs of students found in many Canadian contexts. I became interested in this topic of diversity when I was a new teacher, at an inner-city school. In this context, diversity meant students who were different in some way. Differences such as, having an exceptionality, ethnicity, speaking another language, being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, Indigenous, or suffering trauma, pose stressful challenges to teachers. As I substitute taught in many schools, I quickly realized that there were diverse learners in every school, in every socio-economic neighborhood. The challenges posed to teachers due to diversity are significant as diversity does not only exist in inner-city schools but, in every school; therefore, this problem effects every learner and every teacher, everywhere. My assertation is that teachers feel overwhelmed and may struggle with the increased demands posed by teaching these diverse leaners. I claim this because teacher burnout is at an all time high, and the diversity of students is not abating, it is increasing. These vulnerable and diverse students often get a diluted education because of these challenges. I further claim that employing the strategies described in this paper will make teaching this diversity easier for classroom teachers to manage and therefore easier for students to learn. In the practical setting of the classroom, there will be less: stress, disruption, and student failure. In the global context, once these strategies are applied, teachers will be better prepared to teach their diverse students, resulting in greater success in student learning all over the world. In closing, it is my hope that education for both teachers and students will be improved by the application of the strategies for diversity presented in this paper. Keywords: Diversity. Strategies. Classrooms. Teachers. Stress.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic of diversity in classrooms, how this can pose challenges to teachers, and explains how this topic arose as an interest to me. My early experiences as a teacher are described in relation to the topic of diversity. The challenges these experiences created for me, my feelings, and opinions are discussed. The significance of this topic is explored as it relates to me, to teachers in general, and to the academic community. I then present my argument to finalize my introduction of this paper.

My Journey as a New Teacher

The interest in my topic of diversity and the challenges it creates for classroom teachers was on my mind since I took my Bachelor of Education degree at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) many years ago. In my final long practicum for my Bachelor of Education Program, I was assigned to an inner-city school with very diverse learners. It was a grade one class where I got to know the students and their stories, some of which were heart-breaking. One boy had been abused and was in counselling. He was both sweet and scary. He would be compliant and kind one moment, then would deliberately step on classmates fingers, the next. I learned that behaviors of children with trauma can be complex and confusing. Their learning profile can be all over the map, strong in some areas and weak in others. I have also learned about how trauma effects the brain by damaging it and how this impacts learning. I had a student with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD), and he would explode in anger for no apparent reason. One girl had lice all year and her clothing, backpack and agenda smelled strongly of marijuana. She was emotionally needy and wanted hugs all the time. I was afraid to hug her because she had lice. Additionally, hugging students is not really allowed. But that student really needed a hug! There was a boy with Autism who refuse to do any work, talk, or move. I believe that he was not able to do most tasks and he did not know how to ask for help. There were many more diverse learners in my classroom that year. I found despite being a grade one class, I had to prepare materials for a range of four grades

to accommodate all the levels of learners: pre-school, kindergarten, grade one and grade two for those

who were excelling. I had to do this to keep the students engaged in their learning. At the time, I

thought this was an unusual circumstance, a one off. I have since learned that this is the standard for

every class, everywhere. This was not made clear in teacher training. Every class, each year since then

has been full of diverse, complex learners who require modifications, adaptations, and special

considerations. That experience of teaching that grade one class during my long practicum transformed

me. It changed how I viewed diversity and deepened my understanding of it. The added ingredient of

love, also helped to transform my relationship with my students. They became more than just

anonymous learners on a page, they were children. And they were my responsibility.

Developing My Interest in This Topic

Over my years of teaching since then, I have learned many things about diversity. I have picked

up some tools and strategies, to manage the complexities that teaching diverse students presents, but it

would be nice to have a list or a compendium of strategies that teachers can go to successfully mange

the complex and diverse learners they must teach. I grew concerned as I continued teaching and often

heard other teachers voice similar concerns about how challenging teaching to such diversity could be.

As a new teacher, this challenge of managing and teaching to many levels of complex diversity was a

daily problem that I struggled to find solutions to and still do. Every year that I teach brings a new class

full of different and complex learners with various types, levels, and severities of diversity. The trend it

seemed to me, is that diversity is increasing. I wanted to learn more about this problem so that I could

better manage the challenges I faced. However, during my studies in the Master of Education Program

when I took the course EDUC 5041 Diversity: Constructing Social Realities, this vague concern came into

focus. Reading articles like: *Social location matters: Inequality in work and family life courses at the*

intersection of gender and race, by Aisenbrey and Fasang, (2018) made an impact on my understanding

of how diversity effects us all. The multiple self-reflections that I wrote in this course made me aware of

my own white privilege and how I fit into the jigsaw puzzle of diversity around me. It made me better

understand where those with different diversities were coming from, in terms of their social location. In

the course: EDUC 5401 Principles, Processes of Educational Leadership the topic of diversity was

addressed from the perspective of and administrator. This is a very different viewpoint, in my opinion,

than a classroom teacher. However, both viewpoints, that of an administrator and a classroom teacher

acknowledge the challenges that diverse learners cause in the classroom. The vague concern about

teaching diversity that grew as an undergraduate, developed as I studied in the Master of Education

program and now has been turned into the topic of this research paper.

Significance of the Topic

Diversity is actually observed in all classrooms in terms of skin colour, cultural backgrounds and

learning needs. In this context, diversity means students who were *different* in some way, such as have

an exceptionality, ethnicity, speaking another language, being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community,

being Indigenous, or suffering trauma. When I substitute taught as a new teacher in many different

schools, I quickly realized that there were diverse learners in every school, in every socio-economic

neighborhood. The challenges posed to teachers due to diversity, like having an exceptionality, is

significant because diversity does not only exist in inner-city schools but, in *every* school. The challenges

posed by the complex interaction of all kinds if diversity, effects the general community and the

academic community because there are diverse members in these communities in every country,

worldwide. To put a finer point on my topic, it is significant because it effects *every* teacher and *every*

learner, everywhere.

Presenting the Argument

In this paper, I claim most classrooms have a variety of students with diverse abilities and

learning needs, and that diversity is now found in every school. Researchers have found that all students

are diverse, they are different from each other relative to their learning styles, attention span, capability

to stay on task, and how well they work with peers (Kirylo, 2006). This argument can be further clarified

by not asking the question whether a class of learners will be diverse, but rather what the particular

composition and dynamics of the diversity will look like (Kirylo, 2006). Class composition and the

dynamic interaction of diverse learners pose challenges to the classroom teacher. I assert that most

teachers may struggle with the increased demands created by teaching this wide range of diverse

leaners. I claim this because teacher burnout is a growing problem (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017).

Studies have found evidence that diversity in many forms in the classroom is growing, and that

educators are under stress due to the increased demands this complex, diverse learning environment

poses (Carballo et al., 2021; Digital Promise, 2016; Farmer et al., 2019; Howard, 2007). I further claim

that, employing the strategies described in this paper will help to solve challenges faced by the

classroom teacher as they teach to their diverse classroom and allow students to learn more effectively.

My reasons are that once these strategies are successfully applied, the students will be more engaged in

their learning, and therefore more progress will take place. The link to employing strategies for teaching

diverse learners is based on evidence of a multifaceted approach and the application of strategies to

enhance active learning in diverse classrooms (Edyburn & Edyburn, 2021; Feldman & Denti, 2004;

Howard, 2007). This multifaceted approach involves strategies such as: High-Access Instruction (HAI),

(Feldman & Denti, 2004, p. 2), offering students choice, teaching content in various ways, and using

accommodations like visual reminders and assistive technology (Chan et al., 2016; Edyburn & Edyburn,

2021; Iduye et al., 2021; Jarvis et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2013). Employing these strategies will aid

teachers in solving the daily challenges created by the diversity of students.

This paper will continue by reviewing the literature on this topic. Diversity in the classroom will

be defined and the fact that diversity is increasing will be discussed. The various challenges that teachers

face and how these impact, both the teacher and the learner will be explored. The context of the

strategies will be explained and, the application of the six strategies in the classroom to help teachers

solve these challenges, will be described. The ways that these strategies impact the students learning

will be explained, as well as how they impact teachers. Opposing viewpoints will be explored and

considered. The findings of the paper will be summarized and reviewed. The implications of these

findings will be discussed in both, local and global contexts and directions for future research will be

suggested. Finally, the paper will conclude with my closing thoughts about diversity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the current literature regarding diversity in the classroom, the challenges faced by classroom teachers, and the impacts felt by teachers and students alike these challenges posed by diverse learners create. Definitions of diversity are discussed as a starting point, the fact that diversity is an ever-increasing phenomenon is addressed. The challenges that teachers face are then detailed in regard to class size and composition. The increase in the demands placed upon teachers, coupled with decreasing supports in the classroom, are explored as contributing to teacher stress and teacher burnout. How these factors impact teachers and students is reviewed. Finally, connections to the argument are solidified and a summary of the literature is presented.

Defining Diversity in the Classroom

Diversity can mean different things to different people; therefore, it is crucial to define what is meant by diversity in the classroom. According to Rowan et al. (2021), the term diversity in the field of education "often functions as a kind of "catch-all" or shorthand way to reference any/all groups who are in some way regarded as different from the kinds of learners who (according to research) are most/more likely to experience educational success" (p. 115). The important distinction made by the authors is that diverse learners are seen as different from other learners. Rowan et al. go on to further explain the need to use "specific terms to acknowledge and speak about student differences: terms such as gender, sexual identity, location, family form, religion, ethnicity, race or cultural identity, Indigenous identity, or socioeconomic status" (p. 116). This definition of diversity in the classroom is echoed by Long et al. (2019), who studied students who were ethnically, racially, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse (p. 2). According to Digital Promise, (2016), "students today are more diverse across many categories, including linguistics, culture, geography, and socioeconomics" (p. 2). The same

article focused data on students' diversity in the areas of; low socioeconomic status, English language

learners, and diagnosed disabilities (p. 2). Author Todd Rose, (2016) wrote:

> we now better understand that there is no such person as the "average" student. There are a
>
> number of unique characteristics that guide our capacity to learn that cannot be described by a
>
> one-dimensional value; we seldom take into account -the neurobiologically-based diversity we
>
> see more and more in today's classroom (p. 33).

Defining diversity in the classroom is an elusive concept that many scholars struggle to agree upon. For

the purposes of this paper, diversity means any learner who is different in some way, including but not

limited to: culture, race/ ethnicity, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, diagnosed disability,

geographically, trauma effected, linguistically, family form, gender, Indigenous identity, or religion.

Defining diversity in the classroom is an important step in understanding how it poses challenges for

teachers because diversity is not one thing; it is a complex and dynamic collection of traits that can be

difficult for teachers to manage.

Diversity is Increasing

The literature shows evidence that diversity in the average K to 12 classroom is increasing.

Studies have found evidence that diversity in many forms in the classroom is growing (Carballo et al.,

2021; Digital Promise, 2016; Farmer et al., 2019; Howard, 2007). Farmer et al. (2019), wrote that **"**over

the past several decades, schools have become increasingly heterogeneous in terms of students'

academic, cultural, linguistic, and social characteristics. The growing diversity in many classrooms

reflects a variety of factors" (p. 286). These factors include how diverse students are taught in school.

Similarly, Long et al. (2019), support these claims when they found that "public schools have changed

dramatically, becoming increasingly diverse" (p. 1). These findings reinforce the claim that diversity is an

increasing phenomenon in schools. Additionally, Digital Promise, (2021) underpins these findings,

"students today are more diverse across many categories, including linguistics, culture, geography, and

socioeconomics" (p. 3). Lee and Buxton, (2011), echo the findings of the previous scholars "the growing student diversity in the classroom has caused concerns among school personnel regarding how to best meet the learning needs of all students" (p. 277). While the findings of most scholars of the academic world seem to support the argument that diversity is increasing, the findings of Harris, (2020), dispute these facts, "research has found a consistent decline in institutional diversity for the last 40 years" (p. 354). Harris' claims are based on data collected from institutions of higher learning, on degree's awarded and on the race of the students (p. 346). The claim that diversity in the average K to 12 classroom is increasing maintains it's integrity because, the demographic of students studied is different than Harris' University students. The increase in diversity in the average classroom presents challenges in complex ways for the classroom teacher and this is causing teachers stress.

Challenges Teachers Face

        The challenges teachers face in teaching to diverse classrooms are multifaceted and complex. These challenges arise because most teachers may struggle with the increased demands created by teaching this wide range of diverse leaners. Rowan et al. (2021), wrote about how many teachers feel a lack of confidence regarding their ability to work effectively with learners who are in some way diverse **"**for many teachers, including new graduates, working with the groups referred to either specifically or generically as diverse learners is still experienced as challenging and complex" (p. 114). The suggestion being that these new teachers feel unprepared for the challenges that such diversity brings. The dynamic interaction of these diverse learners with each other and the non-diverse learners, can lead to challenging behaviors that make the job of the classroom teacher harder than expected. Schrum et al. (2007), discovered evidence that supports this finding when they wrote about teachers in training; specifically, about their "understanding of diversity in schools and the benefits or challenges of creating a discussion of diversity" (p. 205). These challenges discussed include, behavioral difficulties, learning difficulties, and a decrease in the supports that were formerly found in the classroom. In reviewing the

literature on this topic, no evidence could be found to counter this claim, that most teachers may struggle with the increased demands created by teaching such a wide range of diverse leaners. These increases in demands, the decrease in supports, and the challenges caused by the dynamic interaction of diverse learners create difficulties for classroom teachers that can be hard to navigate.

Class Composition and Dynamics

The diversity of students, including the class composition and the dynamic interaction of these diverse learners pose unique challenges to the often-unprepared classroom teacher. As Kirylo, (2006) argues, diversity in the classroom is no longer a question; what teachers should be asking, is what the particular composition and dynamics of the diversity will look like. In the field of education, class composition refers to the ratio of diverse students to non-diverse students; for example, how many students with a diagnosed disability and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are there in each class. The dynamic interaction of these students may differ depending on the personalities of each learner. Sometimes the interaction can be wonderful and nurturing, where friendship's blossom; other times, the interaction can be negative and disruptive. At the extreme end of this spectrum is where teasing, conflict, and bullying can happen due to the differences between learners. Similarly, Blatchford & Webster, (2018), found that inclusion policies for pupils with disabilities "can result in difficult decisions regarding classroom organisation and classroom management" (p. 681). This evidence buttresses the claim that class composition and the dynamic interaction of diverse learners pose challenges to the classroom teacher.

Increase in Demands on Teachers

Teachers have experienced a sharp increase in the demands on their time, their teaching ability, and coping mechanisms in recent years. Teachers have taken on a host of duties due to the increased

diversity found in the classroom. Reporting and documentation of diverse learners for IEP purposes, are

some of these new duties that used to fall under the purview of administrators and

Learning Assistance Resource Teachers (LART's). Carroll, (2018), wrote that "the employer's

expectations of teachers are increasing, with more and more duties and responsibilities being added

each year" (p. 18). These duties are typically fulfilled during non-instructional times, on lunch breaks or

after school. It is not only the administration that is demanding more of teachers, but parents and the

learning community are as well. Carroll found that, "parents and the public have higher and higher

expectations of teachers including, but not limited to, demands for increased contact and immediate

responses via email, text, telephone and in person meetings" (p. 18). Having meetings about student

behaviors, at lunch, during prep time, or after school and filling out incident reports are further

examples of the increase in demands on the classroom teacher. Fulfilling multiple roles, such as helping

students with trauma and mental health issues, is yet another demand that teachers must oblige.

According to Carroll, teachers have reported "an increase in mental health issues in all student

populations" (p. 18). Providing accommodations and modifications to lessons for diverse learners is

another example of the increase in demands placed on teachers. Farmer et al. (2019), wrote that

"general education teachers often do not have the expertise, training, or resources to make these

accommodations on their own" (p. 297). These accommodations require specialized training in the field

of Special Education, which most teachers do not have. Carroll found that, "teachers are in the

classroom all day and then often stay late to prepare for the next day to mark tests, papers and/or

projects" (p. 18). These findings support the argument that increased demands of teachers time and

abilities that goes beyond the scope of their training and is contributing to the stress that many teachers

face in their diverse and complex classrooms.

Decrease in Supports in the Classroom

A reporting of the literature has found a problematic trend; that there is a decrease in supports

available to teachers in the classroom. Jimenez-Castellanos, (2010), found that in speaking of the

available resources for diverse students, "the debate focused more around the issue of adequacy of

allocated resources designed to serve disadvantaged student populations" (p. 352). In this case, the

author is speaking about financial resources that support programs and personnel in school settings.

While money does help to fund learning, the truly valuable supports that are shrinking in the classroom

are the human resources: the Certified Education Assistants (CEA's) who are specifically trained to work

with diverse learners. According to Carroll, (2018), "there is more integration of special needs students

often without the extra supports needed to make this successful for both the student(s) and the

teacher(s)" (p. 18). Here, when the author speaks of 'extra supports', she is referring to CEA's or other

support staff who would help the students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Edyburn & Edyburn,

(2020), support these findings, stating "teachers are generally capable of recognizing the range of

academic diversity within their classroom, they voice concern about the lack of resources for addressing

learner differences" (p. 244). Decreasing supports in the classroom, in various forms, are posing

additional challenges for classroom teachers who are sometimes doing the job of two people: the

teachers and the CEA's. This decrease in supports available to teachers and students, is putting more

pressure on teachers and on the entire class of learners.

In reviewing the literature, evidence was found that counters my argument that supports in the

classroom are decreasing. In their study, Blatchford & Webster (2018), found "the number of full-time

equivalent (FTE) TAs in mainstream schools in England has more than trebled since the year 2000" (p.

684). Here the acronym TA stand for teaching assistant. These findings dispute my argument that there

is a decrease in supports available to teachers in the classroom. These findings show the opposite; that

supports in the classroom are increasing. The authors continue, "school leaders report that one of the

main reasons for the increase in TAs is that inclusion policies would be impossible to implement without

them" (p. 684). This study was carried out in the United Kingdom (UK), which has different policies

regarding the number of support staff available in the classroom and the ways these supports are

funded. While these facts in evidence from the UK may be true in that country, here in Canada, our

supports in the form of money and personnel in the classroom are shrinking (Carroll, 2018; Edyburn &

Edyburn, 2020; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). These decreases in available supports in the classroom place

the majority of the onus on the teacher to modify each lesson, give added time to and accommodate for

learners with IEP's, document, track these IEP goals, manage behaviours, and somehow teach to the rest

of the class. These tasks were designed to be carried out by various support staff, in addition to the

classroom teacher, not solely by the classroom teacher. These increased demands, coupled with the

decrease in supports in the classroom equal elevated stress levels in teachers.

Impacts of Challenges Teachers Face

The impacts of these challenges that teachers face is evident in the increased stress that

teachers are experiencing across the profession. This stress is manifesting itself in a variety of ways,

most notably in the rate of teacher burnout. This teacher burnout is connected to the number and

frequency of stress leaves those teachers are taking from work (Carroll, 2018; Heinemann & Heinemann,

2017). Another troubling trend that conveys the impact of the challenges that teachers face in diverse

classrooms are the rates of teacher resignations. According to Larry Booi – President of the Alberta

Teachers' Association, "many teachers are leaving because they can't meet the expectations or take the

pressure" (Carroll, 2018, p. 18). Carroll continues with these stark statistics, "teachers are taking early

retirement, going on stress leaves, and quitting young. The Canadian Teachers' Federation report that

we lose many teachers (30%) in the first five years of their careers" (p. 18). These facts support the

argument that teachers are under stress due to the challenges they face in their diverse and complex

classrooms, and that the impacts of these challenges are having a detrimental effect on teachers and

students.

Many teachers buckle under the pressures of teaching in diverse classrooms, however, there are

also some teachers who rise to the challenges they face and grow more resilient. Positive impacts of the

challenges teachers face can be seen in the research of Wang (2021), who studied teacher resilience in

diverse settings. When writing about resilience in teachers, Wang found that "teacher resilience is a

dynamic process in which different components have to work interactively and collectively to adapt to

adversities that challenge a system (i.e., person, community, institution, and ecosystem)" (p. 4). The

adversities that challenged the teachers and caused them to become more resilient, Wang wrote about

are the same adversities that lead other teachers to burnout from stress. In their study on teacher

resilience, Robelo & Pérez, (2017), found similar evidence "that positive emotional relationships

between students and teachers build resilience and decrease risks of failure and dropout, in contexts

where pupils' cultural characteristics are highly diverse" (p. 57). This evidence appears to dispute the

argument that the stress teachers experience in diverse and challenging classrooms lead to teacher

burnout. The evidence, in fact seems to indicate that challenging and diverse classroom dynamics can

also lead to both the teacher and the students developing resilience. The question these findings rises

are what factors lead to resilience, and which factors lead to burnout? One factor that stands out as a

countermeasure to stress and it's detrimental effects, is the development of positive relationships

between students and teachers (Elmadani et al., 2021; Farmer et al., 2019; Robelo & Pérez, 2017). This

point of evidence that disputes my argument can not be denied and therefore, it will be explored

further in chapter three of this paper. However, in the absence of this positive teacher-student

relationship, my argument holds true. Teachers (in general) feel the stress of the challenges teaching to

diverse learners brings to the classroom.

Stress Upon Teachers

The increasing diversity of learners in the classroom is putting stress upon the teachers by placing increased demands on them to manage this complex, diverse learning environment (Carballo et al., 2021; Digital Promise, 2016; Farmer et al., 2019; Howard, 2007). Elmadani et al. (2021), stated that, "one of the leading causes of teacher anxiety is when teachers cannot understand diverse students' needs and manage student behavior" (p. 9). This evidence infers that many teachers are unprepared for the needs of diverse students, their behaviors, and do not have skills needed to manage these stressful behaviors. The stress that teachers are under is evident in the number and frequency of stress leaves teachers have taken in recent years, as previously mentioned. Carroll, (2018), wrote, increasingly teachers reported that "work-life balance is becoming more and more challenging to achieve" (p. 18). One way this stress is impacting teachers is in the quality and amount of sleep they get. According to Carroll, "many teachers report difficulties sleeping due to anxiety about finishing their work, and the stress of not completing it keeps them awake" (p. 18). The result of this lack of sleep, is tired teachers who are less patient in the classroom and more reactive to student disruptions. This negative behavior loop can adversely impact student learning outcomes and damage precious teacher-student relationships. Carroll goes on to list a litany of ways that stress impacts teachers such as: feelings of negativity, loss of sense of personal accomplishment, difficulty regulating emotions, isolation, depression, anxiety, complete exhaustion, low energy, lack of motivation to plan, and ceasing to socialize at work (p. 19). All of these stressors combined can lead to a lower quality of life. When diverse students experience complex and challenging behaviors, such as swearing, fighting, crying, flipping their desk over, slamming doors, verbally or physically assaulting the teacher or their peers; this causes stress to both the teacher and the entire class of learners. The literature reviewed indicates that educators are under stress due to the increased demands this complex, diverse learning environment poses (Carballo

et al., 2021; Digital Promise, 2016; Farmer et al., 2019; Howard, 2007), and these findings support the argument.

Stress Upon Students

        The members of the learning community that are impacted are not only the teachers but the students as well. The impact that students feel as a result of the challenges that arise from diversity in the classroom is also complex. Iduye et al. (2021), discovered that "diverse students often experience discrimination from peers and faculty in the classroom, resulting in adverse academic outcomes, including disengagement from educational experiences and a feeling of lack of belonging in education programs" (p. 1178). This disengagement supports the notion that stress in the classroom not only affects the teachers, but the whole class of learners, including diverse learners. Similarly, Rowan et al. (2021), found that "members of each population—including people who may or may not be statistical "minorities"—are more likely than others to experience schooling as a place where they are minoritized and/or marginalized" (p. 113). Experiencing marginalization is stressful for students and negatively effects their learning outcomes. It is not only the students who identify as diverse who experience stress in diverse classrooms due to the dynamic exchanges between peers; it is all the learners present in the classroom who feel the stress of these difficult interactions. Stress can also come from academic sources, such as test anxiety and feelings of inadequacy when diverse students do not understand the content being taught. Farmer et al. support these findings when they wrote "students who receive special services are not alone in experiencing social, academic, and behavioral difficulties" (p. 288). The challenging behaviors that some diverse learners exhibit, cause other students to experience stress. Stress and anxiety can also arise from learning difficulties. Stress and difficulty learning in diverse classrooms are experienced not only by the diverse students but by all students in these challenging classroom environments.

Teacher Burnout and what it costs

The complexity and challenges that diverse classroom pose, is a contributing factor in the high rate of teacher burnout and this is costing our learning communities a high price. A reporting of the literature found that the rate that teachers are experiencing burnout due to stress, is increasing. According to Carroll, (2018), "teachers who seek support from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) often report feeling ill equipped to handle the challenges they face in the classroom" (p. 18). Carroll continues, "Ontario reports that burnout seems to be especially severe. Mental health issues were cited by nearly 50% of the teacher claims on long term disability (LTD)" (p. 19). Heinemann & Heinemann, (2017), echo these findings that teacher burnout is at an all time high. This evidence supports the claim that educators are under stress due to the increased demands this complex, diverse learning environment poses. The financial cost of all these stress leaves taken by teachers, is hard to quantify, as these statistics are kept by the employers and are highly confidential. Beyond the personal cost to teachers who burnout and the financial cost to the system that pays for stress leaves disperses, there is the cost to the student, who ultimately pays the price in lowered learning outcomes. Elmadani et al. (2021), found that "teachers' inability to successfully manage their emotional well-being may affect students' ability to succeed academically" (P. 2). These findings support the evidence from other scholars that teacher burnout resulting from stress in diverse classrooms, has a detrimental effect on the teacher and the student.

Summary

In reviewing the literature on the challenges that teachers face in teaching diverse classrooms, many points of evidence were found in support of the argument. Firstly, the definition of diversity in the classroom was established. Secondly, findings supporting the fact that diversity is increasing were reviewed. Next, the challenges that teachers face in diverse classrooms were explored. These challenges included class composition and the dynamic interactions between the diversity of students within the

classroom. The increased demands on teachers time and abilities were presented, as well as the

decrease in supports in the classroom. The many impacts that teachers face in diverse classrooms were

listed, most notably, a decline in self-care of some teachers leading to high levels of stress. An opposing

viewpoint about the effects of stress teachers face in diverse learning contexts was presented and

involved the development of resilience in some teachers instead of burnout. The increase in teacher

burnout and what this costs our learning community was laid out. This evidence reviewed in the

literature, supports the claims made in the argument of this paper. While the challenges that classroom

teachers face due to their diverse classrooms seem daunting, there is hope in the form of teaching

strategies to counteract these challenges.

Chapter Three: Application of Strategies in the Classroom

In this chapter the application of specific strategies to target the challenges that diverse learners pose to the teacher in the classroom are explored in detail. The strategies are explained in context as they relate to the author. This chapter is organized by describing the overarching approach that guides the application of the more specific strategies to the learners in the diverse classrooms. The first, and perhaps the most important of these strategies, is relationship building. The next strategy detailed; is to model the behavior you want to see reflected in your learner and explicitly teach those concepts. Then, the strategy of active learning and what it means in the context of the classroom, is explored. The power of student choice and how this strategy can engage diverse learners is described. Visual cues and reminders are illustrated and the various ways they help diverse learners are outlined. Next, assistive technology is defined as it applies to diverse learners in the classroom. How these strategies impact diverse students, and their learning outcomes is reported and related to the literature reviewed. Similarly, how the application of these strategies impacts the teachers in diverse classrooms is expressed. Finally, a discussion of opposing viewpoints is explored as it relates to teaching in complex and diverse classrooms. A summary of the chapter and the relevant points discussed is then reviewed.

In this paper I claim that diversity exists in every classroom and this diversity poses complex challenges to the teacher. I further assert that utilizing the strategies detailed in this paper will help the stressed teacher solve many challenges that this diversity raises in the classroom and will help the diverse students learn more effectively. This chapter combines the evidence from the review of the literature with the application of the strategies to real world settings to provide support to the claims made in my argument. Specifically, each strategy is described in detail and backed by evidence supported by peer review literature. This evidence is connected to each strategy as it applies to the practical application in the diverse classroom, and this evidence provides undeniable support to the

claims made in my argument that these strategies will aid the overwhelmed teacher combat the

difficulties faced in the diverse classroom.

Strategies in Context

The context of the strategies explored, directly applies to me professionally, as I selected this

topic based upon the context of my workplace. I chose to apply my understanding of the evidence

gathered in my review of the literature, to the practical setting of my own very challenging grade six-

seven classroom at the elementary school where I teach in SD 73. This practical setting was the perfect

testing grounds to try out the strategies described in this paper for efficacy. My classroom is made up of

a wide range of diverse learners which includes diversity such as, learning disabilities, Autism, Fetal

Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD), mental illness, anxiety, trauma, Indigenous students, students who

have suicidal ideation, and students who identify as LGBTQIA+. Not only do my students struggle to

learn on an individual basis, but they struggle with the added dimension of conflict and behavioral

disruptions between one another. The significance of my argument in this context is that my argument

not only applies to all teachers who struggle to face the challenges that teaching to diverse learners

pose, but it applies to me too, on a professional level. I chose this topic because I struggle with these

challenges daily and I wanted to learn more about their causes and ways to solve these complex

problems. In researching this topic, I have discovered a number of great strategies to combat the myriad

of complex challenges that teaching to my dynamic and diverse class of learners presents. The evidence

of the use of these strategies to solve many difficulties posed by diverse learners in the classroom

provides support for my argument that using these strategies helps the classroom teacher to solve the

challenges faced in the diverse classroom. This is significant because, if I can figure out evidence-based

ways that work to solve the challenges, I face in the classroom due to diversity; then I am confident that

others can to.

Key Strategy: Relationship Building

Relationship building is the key to a smooth work environment in the classroom, especially with

diverse learners. One factor that has been proven as a countermeasure to stress in the classroom and

the difficulties that diverse learners pose, is the development of positive relationships between students

and teachers (Elmadani et al., 2021; Farmer et al., 2019; Robelo & Pérez, 2017). As discovered in the

review of the literature, the successful application of this strategy to a stressful learning environment

can lead to the development of resilience instead of teacher burnout (Elmadani et al., 2021; Farmer et

al., 2019; Robelo & Pérez, 2017). Building trusting relationships is essential for success in diverse

learning environments. In fact, some believe that the forming of trusting relationships must come first

(Cosner, 2009; Farmer et al., 2019; Robelo & Pérez, 2017). I concur with these findings, that before the

hard work of learning and accomplishing goals can start, trusting relationships must first be formed.

Cosner (2009) wrote, when speaking about building trust that it "helps to make collective action of

various sorts more feasible" (p. 252). As I look back over my experiences from my own practice and

reflect, I have found this to be true in my own personal experience building trust with students. Very

little work gets done, in my opinion, in an environment of discord and mistrust. In forming relationships

with students, trust needs to be established for optimal working conditions to occur. Forming these

trusting relationships sometimes does not come easy, and specialized training may be required.

Elmadani et al., (2021) wrote "teachers in diverse schools need emotional support and training that can

lead them to enhance their relationships with students, teachers, parents, and staff" (p. 10). These

enhanced relationships benefit the whole learning community, not just the teachers and students.

Having positive trusting relationships between students and teachers, helps to prevent and reduce the

frequency and severity of behavioral disruptions.

A good way to build trust, especially with diverse groups is to listen. In describing fundamental

skills of communication, Slater (2008) identified listening to both verbal and non-verbal behavior as key

factors in emotional intelligence, which greatly aids in building relationships (p. 62). To slow down, listen

first and speak only after the other has had their say, are among the first steps in building trust. In

writing about building trusting relationships, Anderson (2012) wrote, "it is the ability to listen that

breeds innovation in a society" (p. 16). As a classroom teacher in a diverse classroom, I use this strategy

of listening to my students on a daily basis. Building a trusting relationship is difficult when one party

feels they are not being listened to. When speaking about training teachers to bond more effectively

with their students, Elmadani et al. (2021) wrote, "school-based play therapists (SBPTs) play a significant

role in building relationships in schools due to their knowledge of communication skills that can support

student– teacher relationships" (p. 1). The flip side to the coin of listening, is speaking or to

communicate effectively. Nowhere, is this skill of communicating effectively and listening more

important than in the diverse classroom. Learning this skill of effective communication is a step toward

forming trusting relationships between teacher and student, which is a vital strategy in the multifaceted

approach to combating the difficulties created by the diversity of learners in many classrooms.

  The next step in building trust in a diverse classroom is to form a respectful and caring

relationship. Slater, (2008), wrote that knowing people is crucial to developing trust and respect that

characterizes collaborative relationships and mutually understood common ground (p. 62). In the

context of my own classroom, one great way I accomplish this is by doing 'getting to know you' activities

at the beginning of the school year. I begin each school year with a slide show entitled, "All About Me".

It contains photos and general details about me, that are appropriate to share with children. When the

teacher and student feel like they know each other, they are more willing to open up and share in a

collaborative manner that characterizes a positive working relationship. This reciprocity in collaborative

learning is mirrored in the give and take of a trusting relationship. Robelo & Pérez, (2017), found that

"the establishment of trust and care between students and teachers, such as those reported in the

Mexican analysis unit, may contribute more effectively to the generation of school spaces that promote

resilience" (p. 56). This point of evidence directly connects to the literature review chapter of this paper,

where I uncovered findings that building a trusting relationship in challenging and diverse classroom can

lead to both the teacher and the students developing resilience. The why of this fact seems obvious to

me; the two people involved in the learning relationship are invested in terms of time and the desired

outcome. Both parties want the other to succeed. The two parties involved are the teacher and the

student, the time and effort put into the relationship is the investment, and the desired outcome is the

successful learning of the proscribed curriculum. Both the teacher and the student care about one

another. Forming trusting relationships in diverse classrooms is an overarching strategy that

encompasses and is a part of the rest of the strategies discussed in this chapter. This evidence that

relationship building helps to solve the challenges faced by the classroom teacher provides support to

the claims made in my argument that using such strategies helps teachers solve difficulties created by

diverse students in the classroom.

Strategy: Modelling and Explicit Instruction

Evidence from the review of the literature shows that employing strategies such as modelling

and explicit instruction are effective tools for the teacher to use in combating challenges diverse leaners

pose. This evidence provides support to the claims made in my argument that using these strategies

help the classroom teacher solve challenges faced in teaching diverse learners. Dignath & Veenman,

(2021), found "research has shown that all students can benefit from explicit strategy instruction" (p.

525). When researching strategies for teaching diverse students, Dignath & Veenman, found that

modeling is among the most effective, "explicit instruction means that the teacher clearly instructs the

students about a strategy by explaining and demonstrating how to execute a particular strategy,

clarifying benefits of strategy use, and supporting students in strategy application" (p. 494). The key

word being 'demonstrating' how to execute a technique or strategy. This explicit form of teaching by

showing the diverse students which behavior you would like to see is called 'modelling' (p. 491).

Modelling the behavior by showing what good examples look like and also showing what bad examples

look like are effective ways to clarify instruction.

I utilize these strategies of modelling good and bad examples, in my own teaching context. This

leaves little room for misunderstanding and helps diverse learners stay on task by clearly understanding

what is expected of them. In my experience, it's when the clarity of instruction breaks down and the

student does not know what they should be doing, that disruptive behaviors ensue. Modelling and

explicit instruction are strategies that I also use daily in my diverse classroom. Many students have

difficulty envisioning how a task or an assignment should look. When I explain an assignment to my

class, I always model what an "A+" paper looks like and describe how to go about doing just this. I keep

examples from past students (with their permission) to show the class what I'm looking for. Dignath &

Veenman, (2021), explain that explicit instruction "gets particularly effective when providing learners

with conditional metacognitive knowledge about how, when, and why to apply a certain strategy" (p.

519). Teaching the diverse learners to think about their learning process, to monitor their own

understanding and performance is known as metacognition. Teaching this strategy of metacognition,

coupled with explicit instruction increases the effectiveness of instruction for the classroom of diverse

learners (Acquah et al., 2020). This evidence on the use of teaching these strategies of modelling,

metacognition, and explicit instruction in the diverse classroom provides support to the claims made in

my argument that using targeted strategies aids teachers in solving the challenges created by the

diversity found in todays classrooms.

Strategy: Active Learning

The application of specific strategies to target the challenges that diverse learners pose and the

diverse ability levels they bring to the classroom, is one way that teachers can combat the challenges

that diverse students create. Diversity in the classroom has become the new norm, with this diversity

comes a complexity of behaviors that can be difficult to mange. Strategies for teaching these diverse

learning classrooms, therefore, require multifaceted approaches. Applications of specific strategies to

enhance active learning in diverse classrooms are what is needed. A shift in the paradigm away from

"blaming the students and their families for gaps in academic achievement" (Howard, 2007, p. 22) is

what is needed to improve overall learning. The shift needs to head toward "asking the teacher to

analyze their teaching and look for areas where instruction may be breaking down" (Feldman & Denti,

2004, p. 2), because this has been proven effective in improving student learning. One specific strategy

that has been empirically proven, according to Feldman and Denti, is called "High-Access Instruction"

(HAI) (p. 2). Here is an explanation of HAI: "high-access instruction is a way of teaching that uses

empirically sound and valid learning strategies to (a) actively engage all learners in a classroom, (b)

maximize student participation, and (c) ensure that diverse learners focus their attention on critical

concepts and big ideas" (p. 3). The article describes in detail fifteen specific HAI teaching strategies to

actively engage learners. It also provides evidence that six commonly practiced teaching strategies do

not work and warns teachers to stop using them (pp. 3-4). One example of a common low-access

teaching practice that does not work is the practice of hand raising, as it robs the low-achieving student,

the second-language learners, the student with learning disabilities, and the less confident student of

the chance to think and contribute (pp. 3-4). An example of a HAI strategy is called thumbs up when you

know (p. 4). This technique allows students to demonstrate that they know an answer without blurting it

out, which deprives other students of the critical time they need to cognitively process the question and

form an answer (p. 5). This thumbs up when you know approach is one that I have already incorporated

into my teaching practice. I find it quite effective. The article goes on to expound fourteen other HAI

teaching strategies, which I have incorporated into my evolving teaching practice. Here is a short list of

some of these specific HAI strategies: Group responding, classroom whip around, partner strategies,

think-pair-share, class-wide peer tutoring, and random questioning by drawing popsicle sticks (pp. 4-9).

These strategies help teach diverse learners more effectively with active learning by promoting student

engagement, which reduces challenges that the teacher must face. The successful application of these strategies supports my argument that once these strategies are in place, diverse learners will be more engaged, more progress will take place, and the stress upon the teacher will decrease.

Strategy: The Power of Student Choice

Combating the challenges that diverse learners pose in the classroom, requires teachers to apply strategies such as allowing students the opportunity to choose their topic within a required assignment. No one likes to be forced to do tasks they feel are unpleasant. This can be said for diverse students who are made to do schoolwork that is difficult or uninteresting to them. When scenarios come up in the classrooms where diverse students are made to do work that they find unpleasant, called a non-preferential task, the teacher can be faced with a myriad of disruptive behaviors. These disruptive behaviors are the diverse students' attempt to avoid doing the non-preferential task, like writing. I witness this avoidance behavior daily in my grade six-seven classroom each day. However, when asked to choose a task that the diverse student found interesting, the engagement level increased, and the disruptive behaviors decreased. Research on student choice in the classroom by, Patall et al. (2010) "revealed that when students received a choice of homework, they reported higher intrinsic motivation to do homework, felt more competent regarding the homework, and performed better on the unit test compared with when they did not have a choice" (p. 896). Clearly, the opportunity to choose effects the level of intrinsic motivation that the diverse student experiences. In common vernacular, teachers call this the 'buy in', when students invest in their project and are eager to learn. When students are intrinsically motivated to learn, they have no time or interest in exhibiting disruptive behaviors because they are fully engaged in their learning. One way that I provide my students with choice is by assigning them a passion project where they choose their own topic of interest and deeply investigate it across multiple subjects. For example, one student chose to research *Ballet.* She wrote about the history of ballet, the science of balancing, the bones of the feet, pivot

points, and she prepared a slide show about the famous ballets, showing examples and excerpts from these ballets. This was far more volume and depth of learning than I would have assigned to a child her age (eleven), but it was her choice, her passion that drove her learning. Providing student choice is a powerful strategy because it gives the diverse learner a sense of control over their classroom experience. As Patall et al. wrote, "this result highlights how useful providing choice can be to establishing a classroom environment and a teaching style that supports students' interest and enjoyment for school tasks" (p. 912). When students are happy and enjoying their learning experiences due to control over their choices, they are far less likely to cause disruptions in the classroom. I have found this to be true in my own grade six-seven classroom. My practical setting is significant to my claim that employing strategies, such as giving students choice, helps teachers solve the challenges that diverse students pose.

Giving students choice in their learning, in diverse classrooms, helps to build independence, trust, and self-confidence. This strategy of giving the diverse student choice shows the learner that their teacher trusts them and believes in them, and in turn the diverse learners grow more autonomous in their learning. Patall et al. stated "providing choices may be the most concrete way for teachers to communicate to students that they view them as autonomous learners" (p. 912). This drive for autonomy and independence is a natural aspiration for most students, and having choice helps not only diverse students, but *all* students come closer to achieving it. I have certainly found this to be true in the context of my own classroom. Employing the powerful strategy of giving students choice is one effective way the classroom teacher can combat the challenges that teaching a diverse classroom entail. These findings support my claim that the challenges the classroom teacher faces in teaching to diversity can be ameliorated by the use of this strategy of providing student choice.

Strategy: Visual Cues and Reminders

An effective strategy in aiding teachers who teach in diverse and complex classrooms is to provide visual cues and reminders. In their study on teaching young students to read use pictures and visual cues, Arslan-Ari & Ari (2021), found that "findings have shown that the use of pictures in electronic storybooks play a crucial role in supporting children's comprehension of the story" (p. 12). These visual cues help the student become more engaged in the lesson and aides in their understanding of the content. Indeed, visual cues have been standard practice in teaching students with exceptionalities such as, Autism for many years now (Foster & Mirfin, 2017; Hanney et al., 2019). Visual cues help learners in their recall and in attending to relevant content, as found by Arslan, (2018) "Visual cues enhance the effectiveness of animations by directing the learners' attention to the relevant information at the right moment and by freeing up working memory resources for meaningful learning" (p. 140). I use this strategy of visual cueing in my classroom on a daily basis, and I find it effective. When I review material that was previously taught, I re-show the visual images to aide the students in their recall. I find that this helps them to get and stay engaged in their learning, to work independently, and complete more work. I also, put a visual timer on the Smartboard, counting down the remaining time in a learning activity, which helps with completion of work, and aids in transitions. Similarly, Foster and Mirfin, (2017) found that "if pictorial cues can be harnessed to assist children to improve their self-regulation, reduce distractibility, to persevere, to complete tasks and be more independent in the classroom, then such visual supports are predicted to be a valuable asset for any teacher working with mixed ability students" (p. 79). This finding provides additional evidence that displaying visual cues and reminders not only helps the diverse ability student to learn but, to improve their self-regulation. This evidence coincides with the literature reviewed in the last chapter and supports the claims in my argument that the use of strategies such as utilizing visual cues helps the classroom teacher manage the challenges that diverse learners pose.

Strategy: Assistive Technology

A final strategy in the multifaceted approach to help teachers solve difficulties raised by the diversity of students and their many ability levels in their classrooms, is the use of assistive technology. A commonly used example of assistive technology is the computer program, Google Read and Write that aide students to read aloud text or to create text from the students verbal speech (dictation software). Some other examples of assistive technology in the classroom are translation software, picture dictionaries, spell checkers, text magnifiers, graphic organizers, and mobility enhancement software called sip-and-puff enhancers that control technology with head mounted tubes. Using assistive technology to aide students with exceptionalities or learning disabilities has been proven to help these learners improve the length and quality of the work product they output. In their study with Autistic learners, Ozdowska et al. (2021), found that "students all achieved significant improvements in the quality of their writing when using writing-support software" (p. 957). When diverse students find success and experience improvement in their learning outcomes, they feel a sense of achievement. This boosts their confidence in themselves and helps to improve their outlook with regard to schooling. In my experience, happy and self-satisfied students are much less likely to act out and cause behavioral disruptions. The link between the use of assistive technology and improved student achievement naturally leads to a conclusion that a reduction in disruptive behaviors follows these improvements in diverse learners achievement of learning outcomes. Chukwuemeka & Samaila, (2020), discovered similar evidence that supports these findings "there are great benefits to the use of high-tech assistive technologies resources in special education schools" (p. 100). These benefits can be seen in the improvement in learning outcomes, achievement of educational goals, and a reduction in off-task behaviors. The finding that assistive technology helps to support diverse learners in the achievement of their goals, further supports the evidence gathered and reviewed in the literature review chapter of this paper. This evidence on the use of assistive technology in the diverse classroom provides support to the

claims made in my argument that using targeted strategies helps the teacher to solve challenges created

by diverse learners in the classroom.

Impacts on Students

The impact these strategies have on students in diverse classrooms is mostly beneficial, but not

entirely. When teachers use these strategies in the diverse classroom, the result is typically, higher

student engagement and therefore an improvement in the students learning outcomes. Feldman &

Denti, (2004) found that "when teachers systematically apply high-access strategies across the

curriculum, learning gains accrue for all levels of students" (p. 11). Indeed, many of the strategies

mentioned benefit all students, not just those who are diverse in some way. This applies directly to my

own context, as I have found in my grade six-seven classroom, the use of strategies such visual cues,

timers, and schedules have become an essential part of each instructional day, to the benefit of *all* my

students. In fact, if I forget to change the daily visual schedule, students will approach me, point this out,

and ask me to change it. I also have students ask me to put on the visual timer, because they like to see

how much time is left in the work period. Knowing what to expect in the classroom, and knowing what

comes next, gives students a sense of familiarity, comfort, and security. Robelo & Pérez, (2017) found

evidence that supports this statement, "the school environment is the second source of security after

the home and sometimes it is the only one" (p. 56). Anything the classroom teacher can do to increase a

sense of safety, routine, and predictability for these diverse learners is beneficial for the student.

Building positive relationships, giving students choice, and using visual reminders are all powerful

strategies that increase student engagement and give the diverse student a sense of control and

autonomy over their learning. This can be empowering for diverse ability learners and boosts their self-

confidence and sense of independence. Elmadani et al. (2021) found results that reinforce this claim,

"participants saw changes in students' development, such as improving social skills, the biggest change

in this class other than academic was social skills, taking responsibilities, making them more responsible,

and becoming more independent" (p. 7). The positive impacts of using these strategies in diverse

classrooms seems to be advantageous and lends support to my argument that these strategies help the

classroom teacher to solve problems faced in those diverse classrooms.

While the outcomes from the employment of these strategies is largely helpful in diverse

classrooms, not all outcomes resulting from these strategies are positive. The use of assistive

technology, for example, can cause some diverse students to feel stigmatized, singled out, and

embarrassed that they need such accommodations. Ozdowska et al. (2021), expressed that "technology

needs to be integrated into classrooms in an inclusive and socially valid way so that students who rely on

assistive technology are not left feeling stigmatised and micro-excluded" (p. 936). This impact on the

diverse student can cause embarrassment, resulting in these students refusing the help from assistive

technology because they don't want to appear different or be singled out in any way. I have observed

this very scenario in my own professional setting, my classroom. My student with a learning disability

has an individualized educational plan (IEP) to use the assistive technology software in 'Google Read and

Write' to dictate and record his speech to text for writing assignments. However, he often does not use

it because he is embarrassed. I have found an inclusive work around that is effective to ameliorate the

stigma of this situation. I simply offer the option to all students, so as not to single this one diverse

student out. Many of my non-diverse students have begun to use this assistive technology program due

to my promotion of the software. The result is that the diverse student can now safely use the software

to his advantage without feeling stigmatized. The application of these strategies in my professional

context of my own classroom have shown results consistent with the finding from the review of the

literature and support my argument.

Impacts on Teachers

The impacts of the practical application of these strategies on the diverse classroom of learners

on teachers are both positive and negative. The positive impacts of the strategies are an increase the

benefits of positive teacher-student relationships which improves the efficacy of both student learning

and teacher satisfaction. This leads to a positive learning atmosphere for all members of the learning

community: teachers, students, and the community. Elmadani et al. (2021), found that, "school

personnel need to attend to the change in their student population's cultural diversity by promoting a

positive atmosphere and meaningfully engaging with culturally diverse students" (p. 1). These positive

work environments help teachers feel that their work is meaningful and successful. The successful use of

these strategies help teacher hone their skillset and move toward mastery of their teaching profession.

Personally, I can attest that there is no better feeling than knowing that all of my effort and hard work in

getting through to a diverse student, has been successful. The use of these strategies helps the

classroom teacher accomplish this success by solving many problems posed by diverse students in the

classroom. Feldman & Denti, (2004), concurred in their findings, "teachers need specific research-

validated instructional tools, that will empower them to effectively respond to the challenges posed by

increased academic diversity, including serving students identified as learning disabled" (p. 11). This

sense of empowerment helps teachers experience professional success and feel they have accomplished

their goals. These valuable experiences impact teachers as they teach to diverse and dynamic

classrooms, and this is what drives teachers forward and fuels their motivation.

There are some negative impacts on teachers of utilizing these strategies in the diverse

classroom however, that can not be ignored. The added work and stress of accommodating all the

ability levels of the diverse students can drain a teacher of their energy and drive in the classroom. This

added pressure to teach a lesson in three sometimes four different modalities to reach all diverse

students can be very stressful. This ties back to the literature reviewed and indicates that educators are

under stress due to the increased demands this complex, diverse learning environment poses (Carballo

et al., 2021; Digital Promise, 2016; Farmer et al., 2019; Howard, 2007). Many teachers are unfamiliar

with these strategies such as, the use of certain assistive technology, and they feel they do not have the

time to learn to use them. Elmadani et al. (2021), found that when learning new training models, teachers "may need to shorten training based on skill level or work with individual teachers identified as having difficulty building effective teacher–student relationships" (p. 9). The fact that recommendations to shorten the training were made, indicates that lack of time is an issue. I have definitely noticed that lack of time is a problem in my own school setting. I have often worked through recess breaks and lunch hours without taking the time to rest, eat, or even catch my breath. I find myself working in the evenings, prepping lessons, and worrying about my students. In speaking about the negative impacts that teaching to challenging and diverse classrooms entail, Carroll (2018) wrote, "planning has become more challenging because of low energy, and feeling like there is a lack of time" (p. 19). This point of evidence supports my claim that educators are under stress due to lack of time, and increased demands that complex, diverse classrooms present. I can testify to feeling this stress and time pressures in my own professional context. These facts support the findings from the literature review and uphold my argument that preparing these multiple strategies for diversity in the classroom puts additional stress on the classroom teacher.

Opposing Viewpoint

In researching the literature, an opposing viewpoint to my argument was discovered concerning diversity in the classroom. In this opposing viewpoint the efficacy of learning outcomes for students of diversity was questioned. When researching the success of learning outcomes for diverse learners, Duncan et al. (2020), discovered "that the number of students placed in segregated settings in regular schools was increasing, and there were growing rates of suspension and exclusion of students, many of whom were students with a disability" (p. 60). An example of the segregated setting that is mentioned is a quiet room, where disruptive students are placed while they are having an emotional outburst. I have personally seen this happen regularly at several schools where I have worked. This is standard practice, to remove the diverse student who is yelling, swearing, or destroying school property and place them in

a quiet, safe place. The placement into a segregated setting is for safety's sake, and not only for the

diverse student, but for the safety of the rest of the learners present. These findings indicate that the

strategies utilized are not benefiting all diverse students and that the resulting behaviors are

stigmatizing some of them. This evidence backs up my claim that the difficulties posed in teaching

diverse students in the classroom are complex and contribute to teacher stress. The evidence presented

by Duncan et al. (2020) however, seems to counter my claims that the employment of strategies can

overcome these challenges. Perhaps, there are some forms of diversity that present such tenacious

behavioral problems, that these strategies will not be effective to overcome them. I do concede that in

the case of certain types of brain trauma, such as, early abuse, and brain injury such as, Fetal Alcohol

Syndrome Disorder (FASD), these kinds of behavioral strategies may be ineffective. The link between

early trauma and school failure, although not strong, has been established. Korpics et al. (2021), spoke

to this point when researching adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), "the association between ACEs

and academic performance was not significant, but the trend did show that an increase in school failure

with 1 and 2 ACEs" (p. 806). These finding seem to support my supposition that there are certain kinds

of challenges that accompany some forms of diversity that classrooms strategies are just not sufficient

to alter.

Despite these opposing viewpoints, the duty to teach to the highest standards still remains in

the hands of the classroom teacher. Whether the outcome results in success or failure, it is my opinion

that classroom teachers must apply the strategies to the best of their abilities, especially in the

challenging and diverse classrooms. The viewpoint that opposes my argument that employing select

strategies will solve challenges created by diverse students and will allow students to learn more

effectively, seems to hold merit as it applies to select types of diversity. However, in regard to all the

other various forms of diversity, the application of the strategies discussed in this chapter are effective

in resolving the challenges that arise from diversity in the classroom.

Summary

The application of my argument that strategies can be employed to solve the challenges that teaching to diversity pose, was applied to the practical setting of my classroom. From this context, the strategies were laid out and described in detail. The approach that encompassed others was explained first, relationship building, because this strategy is inherent in and a part of the other strategies. Next, the strategy of modelling and explicit instruction was explained. Active learning was then described and the ways it applied to the diverse classroom were detailed. Next, the power of student choice was explored with specific examples given. The effective use of visual cues and reminders was outlined and the ways it helps students refocus and stay on-task was illustrated. The use of assistive technology in the diverse classroom was defined with a few examples of how these applied to specific learning needs. Throughout the chapter, connections were drawn to my professional context and the ways the application of these strategies was significant were detailed. The application of the strategies was shown to be deeply connected to my argument on several instances in this chapter and is supported by evidence gleaned from the literature review. The positive and negative impacts of these strategies on the students was explored. The ways the application of these strategies impact teachers was outlined. Connections from this chapter to the literature review chapter were made clear at various junctures. Finally, a discussion of a viewpoint in opposition to my argument was examined.

This chapter has explained how the argument I have advanced that utilizing the strategies detailed in this paper will help the stressed teacher solve many challenges that this diversity raises in the classroom, applies in a practical context. In the next chapter, I will explain how my Capstone Paper matters and why it is important in the world. I will accomplish this by explaining how the internal outcome, the success of my argument, leads to an external outcome, the successful application of the strategies in the diverse classroom.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

This chapter begins with describing the internal outcomes of my paper, which includes a restatement of my argument, to remind readers of the importance of this argument. The preceding three chapters are then summarized and connections to how each chapter is linked to the literature reviewed, the application, and to each other are detailed. How my ideas developed through my courses in the Master of Education program are reviewed. Then, how this brought me to my claim and the reasons behind them are explored. Next, the success of my paper is described. The implications of my paper as they relate to the external outcomes are then detailed. The implications of my paper relating to, my ideas about the topic of diversity in the classroom and how they relate to other practical settings are explained. Directions for future research are explored. This paper ends with my closing thoughts to wrap up this analysis about the challenges faced in diverse classrooms.

Summary of Findings

In this paper I have claimed that diversity exists in every classroom and this diversity poses complex challenges to the teacher. These diverse students have differing ability levels and therefore, different learning needs. Researchers have found that all students are diverse, they are different from each other relative to their learning styles, attention span, capability to stay on task, and how well they work with peers (Kirylo, 2006). Clarification of the argument has been made by asking what the composition and dynamics of the diversity looks like, rather than asking if there will be diversity in any given classroom at all, for this diversity is a given fact. The dynamic and complex interaction of these diverse learners pose unique challenges to the classroom teacher. I made the claim that most teachers struggle to meet the needs of so many different ability levels and complex behavioral needs. I asserted this because teacher burnout is a growing problem (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). The literature shows that diversity is increasing in the classroom, and this causes educators stress due to the multitude of demands this complexity of diversity creates (Carballo et al., 2021; Digital Promise, 2016; Farmer et

al., 2019; Howard, 2007). I claimed that utilizing strategies detailed in this paper will help the stressed

teacher solve many challenges that this diversity raises and will help the diverse students learn more

effectively. The reason for this increased learning efficacy is because once these diverse learners are

more engaged in their learning, deeper learning and more progress will occur. Employing these

strategies for teaching diverse learners is connected to evidence based on a multifaceted approach to

the applications of these strategies to magnify the active learning in diverse classrooms (Edyburn &

Edyburn, 2021; Feldman & Denti, 2004; Howard, 2007). I claimed that utilizing the strategies detailed in

this paper will help the stressed teacher solve many challenges this diversity raises in the classroom and

will help the diverse students learn more effectively. The theoretical implications of the paper as they

relate to the scholarly conversation about diversity in education is explored. The practical implications of

paper are explained, as they relate to teacher education globally. Ideas for future research are then

identified and discussed. Finally, closing thoughts are expressed.

Each of the preceding chapters highlights the fact that diversity in the classroom is growing, this

causes teachers stress due an increase in the demands on their time. Strategies to combat this stress

and teach this diversity more successfully are detailed. Chapter One explored my learning journey as an

educator and my experiences with diversity. Through these experiences as a teacher and a student, I

identified that I struggled to teach various forms of diversity. This chapter links to the literature

reviewed by explaining my reasons for the investigation of this topic. This chapter links to the

application of the strategies in the classroom, by providing the questions that the application chapter

gives answers to. The introductory chapter links to the other chapters by opening the discussion about

diversity in the classroom. Chapter Two examined the vast body of literature about diversity in

education and the challenges this diversity presents. This examination found considerable support for

my claims that diversity is a growing phenomenon in the classroom, that this diversity is causing

teachers stress and is leading to many teachers burning out. This chapter puts forth evidence from peer

reviewed literature that provides support to the claims made in my argument that diversity is increasing, teachers are under stress due to the challenges posed by diversity, and employing the strategies helps teachers solve the challenges that diversity poses. Chapter Three applied my learning from this research into several practical strategies that have been proven effective in teaching diverse students. The strategies discussed began with the overarching strategy of relationship building. The five strategies that followed were: modelling and explicit instruction, active learning, the power of student choice, visual cues and reminders, and lastly, assistive technology. The impacts of the application of the strategies on students and teachers were detailed. An opposing viewpoint was presented and discussed. These three chapters all connected to my argument and to each other by providing reasoning behind the theories and evidence to support these reasons. This evidence of practical, real-world applications in the form of strategies teachers can use in their classrooms today provides support to the claims made in my argument that utilizing these strategies help the classroom teacher solve the difficulties that diversity presents in the classroom.

This paper has successfully advanced my argument by providing overwhelming evidence from the literature reviewed to support the claims in my argument that diversity is growing, teachers are under stress due to this diversity, and that strategies can be employed to help teachers solve the challenges faced in the diverse classroom. Additionally, this paper has successfully shown applications of these strategies to practical settings for those stretched teachers who may be struggling to accommodate diverse needs, to solve the challenges that arise from diversity in the classroom. This paper has successfully shown how these applications can apply to wider audiences and effect teachers globally. These findings have shown this topic to be of high significance to teachers and students all over the world because diversity exists in each of those classrooms. The strength of these facts in evidence, combined with the practical application of the strategies described, leave me convinced that my

assertation that employing these strategies will aid teachers in solving the challenges created by diverse students, is true.

Implications

The theoretical implications of my paper concern the way that preservice teachers are educated about diversity in the classroom. The fact that so many new teachers enter the teaching profession feeling unprepared to handle the complexities that diversity presents, informs the scholarly community that there is something missing in the way teachers are being trained to teach. Research into why sufficient diversity training is not happening in teacher education needs to be undertaken. The obvious result of this knowledge, that diversity training is lacking, is to remedy the problem by increasing the level and depth of diversity training preservice teachers receive. Therefore, I conclude that changes in the way teachers are trained, needs to happen.

The practical implications of my paper as they relate to a global context are in the way teachers are educated. The way that practical changes could come about would be to insert more background about the various forms of diversity into teacher education in universities globally. This would have a positive affect on global education for teachers. Each of these types of diversity should also be paired with the best practice ways to accommodate for the diversity mentioned, in an explicit manner. For example: if your student has violent tendencies towards other students due to trauma from abuse, apply strategy 'A', in conjunction with strategy 'B'. These findings could be applied to other educational settings all over the world such as, middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. In addition to these educational settings, these strategies could be applied other industrial environments such as, job training in various private sectors. If teacher education were modified to incorporate these changes, I believe that positive implications will be felt by teachers all over the world in the form of decreased stress and increased job satisfaction and by students in the form of improved learning outcomes.

The implication of my paper in practical settings of the classroom, would result in effective

change in the way teachers and students are educated locally. These changes could be implemented

locally at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) by changing the Teacher Education program to incorporate

these additions, which would affect new teachers in the future. Teaching more about diversity, the

many kinds of diversity, and teaching strategies to aid the teacher with diversity at TRU, could help to

implement these changes immediately. Additional information about diversity can be taught to existing

teachers in SD 73 and throughout British Columbia, by adding this training to various professional

development days. These teachers could then begin implementing these helpful strategies in their own

diverse classrooms right away. The implications of teaching diverse populations of students locally

would garner immediate and positive benefits to the teachers and the students. The long-term benefits

would be an overall improvement of diversity education locally, for both teachers and students.

Future Research

The field of teacher education that prepares preservice teachers to teach diverse populations is

an understudied area. According to Rowan et al., (2021), "there have been, to date, very few systematic

reviews that have focused explicitly on questions relating to how teacher education can best prepare

future teachers to work with learners identified as diverse" (p. 117). This is clearly a gap in the literature

and needs to be studied further in depth. As this area is not well researched, it stands to reason that this

area of teacher training is also lacking. Rowan et al. continued, "the literature that relates to "teacher

education" and "diverse learners"—the literature that teacher educators could reasonably be expected

to draw upon when responding to the challenges above—is diverse, and not yet understood as fully as it

can be" (p. 114). This evidence suggests that new teachers graduate with very little training on how to

handle the complex learning needs of diverse students. Better understanding of this under-examined

area of research into preservice teacher education as it relates to diversity, is one step that can be taken

to close the gap in the literature on this topic. Teacher education in diversity needs to be studied further

and preservice teachers need more targeted instruction on how the teach diverse learners in the

practical setting of the classroom.

Closing Thoughts

In closing, I would like to reiterate the importance of my topic, that diversity is in every

classroom, and this diversity poses stressful challenges to the teacher which are difficult to overcome.

The solution presented in this paper, is the application of evidence-based strategies to solve the

problems that teaching diverse students poses. These findings lead to the obvious conclusion that there

is something missing from teacher training. The implication of this fact is the way teachers are trained

needs to change by having more content taught about how to teach diverse students. The specific

strategies supported by evidence from peer reviewed literature, needs to be taught to preservice

teachers to ready them to teach diverse students. The result for teachers will be less stress because they

will be better prepared to face the complexities teaching diverse learners pose in the classroom. The

result for students will be more engaged learning that is accessible and therefore, students will

experience more academic success. Additionally, there will be less disruptive behaviors because these

diverse students will be fully engaged in their learning. In the practical setting of the classroom, there

will be less stress, disruption, and student failure. In the global context, teachers will be better prepared

to teach their diverse students, resulting in greater success in student learning all over the world. In

closing, it is my hope that education for both teachers and students will be improved by the application

of the strategies presented in this paper.

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