

What Is Cultural Diversity and Why Is It Important?

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The things you do and the practices you were taught inform who you become. Culture is a broad term that encompasses beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and overall can be understood as our “way of being.” When you go out into the world, you will come into contact with people from different backgrounds and walks of life. It’s a good rule of thumb to honor cultural diversity with your actions. So, what is cultural diversity and why does it matter?

Let’s get into the details of how cultural diversity can take shape in professional settings, within educational institutions, and overall, in most aspects of life.

Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is synonymous with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica as, “the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture.”

The importance of cultural diversity can be interpreted on the basis of these related actions:

Recognizing that there is a large amount of cultures that exist

Respecting each other’s differences

Acknowledging that all cultural expressions are valid

Valuing what cultures have to bring to the table

Empowering diverse groups to contribute

Celebrating differences, not just tolerating them

So, what are some examples of cultural diversity?

Cultural diversity looks like this:

In A Workplace: Having a multilingual team, having a diverse range of ages working together, having policies that are vocally against discrimination, etc.

In A School Setting: Having students from all over the world (like at the University of the People), being accepting of all religious practices and traditions that students part take in, supporting students to share their cultures with one another, etc.

The Importance Of Cultural Diversity In Education

Cultural diversity is important in every setting in life, but it can be even more pivotal when it happens within education. Students around the world have the right to equal access of quality education, and as such, there are many upsides that come along with it when institutions believe in the power of diversity.

Cultural diversity in education helps to support:

1. Deep Learning

Learning happens within the curriculum and outside of it. With a diverse student population, students have the privilege of gaining more understanding about people and backgrounds from all over. This also contributes to diversity of thought and perspectives that make learning more interesting and dynamic.

2. Confidence and Growth

When students participate with people from varied cultures, it provides them with more confidence in dealing with things outside of their comfort zones. It can build strength of character, pride, and confidence.

3. Preparation For The Future

If a workplace has done the necessary work, it's bound to be culturally diverse. Attending a culturally diverse institute of education will prepare students for their future in a workplace.

4. More Empathy

Interacting with people who have diverse practices, beliefs, life experiences, and culture promotes empathy. While you can never fully understand someone's life without being them, you can learn, listen, and understand.

Benefits Of Cultural Diversity

The world is naturally multicultural. Approaching cultural diversity with a mindset and actions that embrace this fact leads to many benefits, like:

Compassion: Communication and understanding of differences leads to increased compassion instead of judgment.

Innovation: Varied perspectives and lens of looking at the world lend to innovative thinking.

Productivity: People who come together and bring their own style of working together tend to support a more productive team.

New Opportunities: The diversity opens the door to new opportunities and the blending of ideas which would otherwise have been homogeneous.

Problem-Solving: Challenges are layered, so having people with different backgrounds can lead to better problem-solving with richness of opinions.

How To Support Cultural Diversity

Individuals and institutions alike have the agency to support cultural diversity. If you're unsure how you can take action to do so, consider these ideas:

Interact with people outside of your culture

Be open-minded to listen and let go of judgment

If you see anyone who is being culturally insensitive, speak out against it

Accept that differences are beneficial and not harmful

Don't force your beliefs on people with opposing views

Advocate to hire people or work with people who are not within your same culture

Travel the world as much as you can to take part in cultures and understand them from the source

Read literature and learn from different cultures

Absorb media and art from around the world

Learn a new language and communicate in a friend's native language rather than your own

How Unpeopled Supports Diversity

The University of the People was founded with the mission to offer accessible education that's affordable to students from the entire globe. We believe that our differences bring strength and can help to promote world peace, just like education. That's why we have a global student body with students attending our online degree programs from over 200 countries and territories. While our institution is set up to be affordable to all because programs are tuition-free, we also extend specific scholarships that help to grow cultural diversity.

