Toolbox Diversity in Education

INTRODUCTION

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Welcome
Within this toolbox you will find different tools to incorporate diversity work in your educational practices as a university lecturer or teacher. It provides exercises that teachers can assign for students, but also to use yourself. These exercises focus on awareness and reflection on one’s own identity and positionality, critically engaging with literature, and dialogues in the classroom.

Although specifically aimed at university lecturers, students and other educational professional are also welcome to make use of the different tools. The overall aim is to create an inclusive environment for students and teachers of all backgrounds.

The full English and Dutch versions of the Toolbox are published here: https://cat-database.sites.uu.nl/toolboxdiversity
Vision Statement - February 2019

Introduction
From September 2017 until February 2019, the project Toolbox Diversity in Education was carried out at the department of Cultural Anthropology. The aim of this project was to develop a toolbox for university lecturers and teachers that offers tools to integrate diversity in an innovative and concrete manner into our educational practices. The overall goal is to create a more inclusive environment in which students with diverse backgrounds and positions can recognize themselves. At the start of the project, we conducted a small-scale qualitative research at the department in which students and staff shared experiences with and visions on diversity in education at the department. Furthermore, we conducted a literature research, and investigated existing practical initiatives on diversity in education. We conducted a pilot in September 2018 in which the different tools were implemented in several courses at the department of Cultural Anthropology. Besides developing the toolbox, we provided (solicited and unsolicited) advice in the process of redesigning the bachelor programme at the department on the topic of diversity. In this vision document we share our research results, approaches to diversity, and the contents of the toolbox.

Conceptualizing Diversity
Recently, diversity has become a ‘buzzword’, a way to point to issues of internationalization, gender equality, ethnic and religious discrimination and disability. The use of the concept of ‘diversity’ in such varied ways, makes it difficult to formulate a definition. Furthermore, in popular usages diversity risks to be reduced to a question of ‘quota’ for women or international staff and students, without questioning the existing dominant canon and practices in education. The conceptualization of diversity in education that we propose goes beyond these popular understandings, and centers on the question of whose knowledge we are producing, from which perspective, and for whom this knowledge is meant. Recognizing that currently certain (white, Western, secular) perspectives are prioritised and others overlooked, we strive for a more equal position of different knowledges and epistemologies in our education. We conceive of the university as a place where different people, different histories, and different contexts connect
and build knowledge together. In this way, for us, diversity in education includes a critical reflection upon the power relations inherent in practices of knowledge production and dissemination.

**Anthropology and Diversity**

Despite noticing that diversity has now become a buzzword, a notion of diversity has always played a central role in social sciences and cultural anthropology in particular. The idea that anthropology is "self-evidently" diverse surfaced in some of the interviews we conducted. From our point of view, this points out a paradox. On the one hand, diversity is the core of anthropology: it is about the study of human, social and cultural diversity. However, this "self-evidence" of diversity within anthropology has also stood in the way of conceptualising diversity in relation to knowledge production and power. Diversity in anthropology is still predominantly localized in the “other”: anthropologists study the diversity of the “cultural other” (e.g. the savage, the third world, minorities), and consequently the question of (the lack of) diversity in who is producing that knowledge, the anthropologist, is not (sufficiently) being taken into account.

**Approaches to Diversity**

Three theoretical frameworks define our approach to diversity:

- **We take up unlearning** as a method to reflect on existing habits, biases, and assumptions in (anthropological, academic) thinking. The premise is that in order to be able to engage with different and more diverse epistemological views, one must first let go of dominantly held believes, truths, privileges, and presumptions that might limit recognizing non-dominant views as knowledge (based on Spivak 1993).

- **Decoloniality** is a perspective to understand how the production of academic knowledge is influenced by our colonial history and its ongoing legacy. It resists the reinforcement of exclusionary perspectives and power relations that are the product of colonial and imperialist settlements of scientific institutions, and produces knowledge and teaching that generates social and

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environmental justice (Wekker et al. 2016: 3, 10). Decolonizing is the ongoing practice that accompanies the decolonial perspective.

- **Intersectionality** means that diversity is never only about one aspect of difference (gender, race/ethnicity, etc). Various forms of discrimination reinforce each other and need to be understood in relation to each other. For example, experiences of gender are always related to people's ethnic and sexual backgrounds. Different social positionings thus need to be taken into account (Wekker et al. 2016: 10-11; Crenshaw 1989).

**Research Results**

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Operationalization: the Tools in the Toolbox

- Literature scan: "scan" your literature selection by looking at the (social, disciplinary) backgrounds of the authors. Which relevant perspectives might be missing? And where to start looking for that ‘missing’ literature that enriches your course.

- Critical reading: how can students learn to situate the authors read in relation to their work: how might their (social, disciplinary) background have influenced their writing?

- Critical self-positioning: exercises for self-reflection and situating yourself and your students experiences and backgrounds in relation to doing research and fieldwork: "How do your experiences shape what you (can) know about the world?"

- Dialogues in the classroom: entrances to discuss racism, sexism, and other -isms (including lived experiences, privilege), and tips for using inclusive language.

- Suggestions for further reading on the topics above.

You can find all the tools in English and Dutch here: [https://cat-database.sites.uu.nl/toolboxdiversity](https://cat-database.sites.uu.nl/toolboxdiversity)

Notes on using the toolbox: Although we have set up the tools to complement each other, you do not need to implement every tool. Instead, you may want to select certain tools, or even certain exercises within the tools that you consider relevant for your work.

We also invite you to create other exercises inspired by this toolbox if that matches your educational goals.