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Interfaith Dialogue and Higher Education: Education for Peace

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Abstract

Dialogue programs used in university settings are recognised as being an effective tool in establishing relationships between people of diverse backgrounds, social groups and religions. Facilitated dialogue has been shown to reduce prejudice and be an effective means of content learning for students. Interfaith dialogue, if well managed, can result in genuine interactions between students and establish dialogue norms of tolerance, respect, willingness to listen, ability to express oneself honestly and admit fault with one's own beliefs. As diversity among student populations in university settings increases, establishing dialogue norms and safe environments for students to share personal experiences and develop a greater understanding of the views and the beliefs of 'others' is of vital importance. If dialogue norms are developed in students, their ability to interact with others in society with increased understanding and religious literacy will contribute to positive diversity. This article discusses the aims of peace education, intergroup and interfaith dialogue, and informational interfaith pedagogy programs at James Cook University (JCU). The JCU grassroots Interfaith Project began in 2015 and preliminary observations show that it supports students in active learning that expands their religious literacy and appreciation for dialogue norms. In the current global climate, preparing students to be able to contribute positively to diversity on campus and in society is an important step in building peaceful societies.

Key words

Chaplaincy in higher education, university, interfaith dialogue, James Cook University, peace education



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