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KAREN FOLEY: Welcome to the *Student Hub Live*. And in this induction for primary studies students, we're going to focus on valuing diversity in primary. And I'm joined by Kim Walker today, who is a lecturer on the primary team. And she's worked in primary schools for 20 years before becoming a primary education teacher educator.

So Kim, I really wanted to focus on diversity. I mean, what does diversity mean in this sort of context? And why is it so important in primary modules? It's been a key theme of our discussion throughout this afternoon. So could you explain why it's so relevant?

KIM WALKER: Well, one of the reasons why it's so relevant is when we heard earlier from Cherry and Lynda, when we were talking about the Open University perspective on diversity, which is that many of our students will need support of some form on their learning journey across the modules. And that quite often that may be specific and ongoing, for instance, if you have a disability.

On primary modules, it's different because-- slightly different. It's broader and in some ways more embedded and significant because diversity is about-- for us it means that we are all different, and that we need to support all of our students differently because they bring their own differences, their own learning needs, and also about their own strengths as well.

So we start off by reflecting on their own differences, their own diversity, both in terms of the needs for support, but also in terms of the strengths that they bring to their learning, so their skills, their experiences, and their abilities because those will inform how they are supported as well, and what they bring to their learning, the strengths of their learning, and how they support each others and their peers as learners. And so what diversity means on primary modules is recognising your own differences, recognising those as differences in the way that we may need support, but also recognising those as strengths as well.

KAREN FOLEY: It's been the key thing that our students have been talking about today in our live chat is their diverse perspectives.

HJ: Yes, we've been just talking about the different things that are available from the Union for support, and the different things that people found helpful, so things just like comb-bound books, using readers for digital text as well. So I think we just really appreciate that but the

university takes into account the fact that students are so diverse.

And anytime any of us could need help, as well whether it's just tutors giving us an extension because we live crazy, stressful lives, or even if it's support with equipment as well. And the best thing I always say, and we can chat about here, is just let your tutor know or call up the university and say, I think I might need some extra help, or is there anything you can do in this situation? And all the lovely people at the end of the phone will always point you in the right direction or give you the information that you need.

KIM WALKER: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And we're going to be talking to Jill next about the tutor perspective. So there's a sense then that there's a lot of diversity in our student population, and it's about celebrating those and learning with various individual circumstances. But also diversity as a key theoretical strand that underpins many of the modules in terms of the way that you view children and primary studies, and I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about how this strand starts at level 1 with the two core modules that you've got? And how that feeds through in the overall qualification?

KIM WALKER: Well, I think one of the things that I was going to add earlier is one of the reasons why understanding and reflecting on diversity is so important in primary modules is because we need to understand our own diversity in order to support children's diversity, recognise what they bring, how to support their differences, and the strengths that they bring as well. So we embed that into our modules at level 1, which is the E103 is our level 1 module.

And that's we introduced with-- we start by looking at the community of the primary school, and it begins with a case study of a school in a very diverse community, and we really learn about the perspectives of educators within those schools. We listen to children who are in those schools to find out about their experience of learning, what they enjoy learning, and what they don't enjoy so much, and how their school supports them and their families with moving forward and making progress in learning.

So because we recognise that for our students, not all of our students can-- will have access to working in a primary school, or volunteering in a primary school, that first block within E103, which is learning and teaching in the primary years, gives us an opportunity to look at a primary school, be part of a primary school environment, and understand what's going on in a

very rich way as students, and what's going on for children and primary school staff there.

And then from there, we move into reflecting on our own diversity, which means looking at our autobiography and our own experience as learners. So we look back at what helped us as learners. And what didn't help us so much. And at the end of that block, we use those skills to plan our professional development. So we have an activity which is called personal development plan, which aims to support us to think about the strengths that we have as students and as learners, and also the areas where we might need a bit more support.

So it could be things like getting access to the computer, for instance, that you might want to think, OK, well, I need to-- that's going to be a bit of an issue for me. I need to think about how I'm going to get that access. Or it could be that you only have certain times of the day when you can study, so you can put that on to your plan as well and think about how you're going to address those issues.

But you're also thinking about what your strengths are as a student when you're studying, and how they're going to support you to complete your module and achieve success in your module. So that's another aspect in which we build student diversity and recognition of diversity into the level 1 module in order to complete that module successfully and think about where students are going next and how their learning might support their professional aims and ambitions in the long term.

And then following on from that, we also look at inclusion, which is an incredibly important concept, both at a local level and an international level. Because when we think about the notion of inclusion, as soon as you say that word, inclusion, you start to think about, OK, we're including some people, how are we doing that? And we're excluding others, and how are we doing that?

So, we start to explore the notion of inclusion in level 1 by looking in particular at ideas around providing support for children with special educational needs, for instance, how they're included in schools, and how they're supported to address barriers. But also how they might be excluded. Also children with disabilities, how they might be included and excluded, or children with-- who are bilingual learners, the challenges that they might experience and how they can be supported to overcome them. And also all of those differences being recognised and valued.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's a iterative process in terms of identifying aspects, reflecting on them, and considering

the implications for both inclusion and exclusion by default, and what being part of one group means in terms of not being part of another.

KIM WALKER: And yes. And actually, we're all part of many, many different groups, so I suppose that's one of the things that we are trying to say across our modules. It's that we are all different. There is nobody quite like us. And we need to celebrate that and look at where we are and think about how we move forward. And part of the way that our modules are designed is in ensuring that there is a lot of support that we're coming up at things. We're providing resources in lots of different ways to ensure that we are all-- our differences are recognised, supported, and valued.

KAREN FOLEY: So, you've given us a really clear outline of the layers that are going to be happening in terms of value in diversity and the implications of that throughout the qualification. And you've mentioned some of the modules, in particular E103 here. But I wonder if you could briefly tell us about the new primary modules because you've been working very hard as a team creating some of these. So could you tell us what they are and when they're going to be available?

KIM WALKER: Well, E103, which as I said, was a level 1 module, this is just going into its second year of presentations. So it had its first year of presentation last year. And it's just about to have its second year.

The level 2 module, which is subject knowledge in the primary curriculum, is about to have its first presentation this year. So that is an absolutely new module. But in terms of students actually accessing that, there isn't a particular curriculum that we're following, so you can be living anywhere in the world and it will be relevant to you.

And also in terms of ensuring that the resources are appropriate for you, we're drawing on a really wide range of resources so that you can learn about the curriculum and different curriculum-- different curricula, sorry.

And also one of the things that we've aimed to do is-- oh gosh, and I was just-- it was just something at the back of my mind there about--

KAREN FOLEY: It will come back to you in a minute, Kim. And I did also want to ask you, actually, about the third level module, which is Comparative Studies in Primary Education because this is in its first presentation. And throughout today, we were talking earlier with Ian about the various strands, the optionality at level 2, and then the third year, in terms of the aspects that were

available to students.

Now having a module about comparative studies leads me to go into the lines of is, this about this multicultural, global perspective? Are you look at comparisons in that context? Or is it something different?

KIM WALKER: In many contexts, actually. One of the reasons why this level 3 module came about was because the Foundation degree on its own was very successful, but students were saying, well, actually we would like to be able to have a core level 3 module where we could complete a primary study degree, BA Honours level. So basically that's why we decided to move forward with developing a level 3 module.

And we want it because students were asking for this. And we wanted to respond to their feedback. We said, OK, what kind of qualification, what module at level 3 would interest you? And students basically really wanted to know more about different context. So that's where comparative studies in primary education where that came from.

And as you said, it's very diverse. We are looking at education, primary education, across the globe. We're looking at it in many international perspectives, in many different countries so that we can identify what the similarities are in primary education, but also identify the differences and think about why those differences have emerged.

So the way that this module will develop-- or is developed, is it's broken up into five blocks. And the first one looks at what are we comparing as you were implying there. So that's about what we mean by comparing and looking about the influences on those differences and similarities in different contexts, for instance, social differences, economic differences, and political differences that might have an impact on primary education.

And then we move on to the what, how, and why of education-- of primary education. So what are students learning? What are children learning? Looking at that curriculum in different contexts. We're also looking at the how children are being taught, and why they're being taught in that particular way. So what strategies are being used in different contexts? And how are they different?

And then, again, we move on to inclusion because inclusion is an area which different countries have had different journeys towards because they have all these different influences, economic and social, acting upon them. So we need to-- we wanted to explore those journeys

in the context of particular international developments that have happened, that have encouraged schools on primary education systems towards inclusion.

But then we move on to the impact on learners in different countries, and the impact on their identities. So for instance, thinking about how might a child who's a refugee learner in a refugee camp, what might their experience of learning be? Or for instance, a child who's bilingual moving from one country to another and resettling, in particular circumstances, what might their experience be? So we're looking at those.

And we're also looking in many, many different countries. We're exploring Peru. We're exploring Vietnam. We're exploring Canada, Africa, India. So it's a very kind of-- we're drawing on studies internationally in many different countries. So there's lots to compare.

KAREN FOLEY: And whilst case studies can offer such rich sources of data? From a methodological perspective, I can see that you're looking at what are we comparing. And so that gives students another challenge at level 3 to really grapple with. Kim, thank you so much for filling us in on these areas explaining why this is so important, and how it threads through.

I hope you found the session useful at home. We're going to talk next to Jill McLachlan. But before we do that, we've got a short video about the Briggs building. When we come back, we're going to be talking about the importance of your tutor and about communicating with them in your studies. So do stay tuned. And we'll be back in two minutes after this short video.

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