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ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Question 1: Implications of Increased Diversity of Students

One of the main issues with today's universities and colleges is the increased students' diversity. In simple terms, diversity can be defined as the state of being or having composed of different and varying elements. A good example of diversity is the inclusion of different types of students (with varying cultures and races) in universities and colleges (Casteen, 2004). There are numerous projects initiated in such institutions and their intention is to promote diversity. It is now the high time for renewing both adult and higher education to advance social progress, end the discomfort with social difference, and directly deal with most of the inequality issues evident in everyday life.

The diversity of a college's students, staff, and faculty impacts its intellectual personality, productivity, and strength (Carr-Ruffino, 2016). Diversity of age, experience, religion, physical ability, ethnicity, race, gender, and much more attributes engineers the richness of both teaching and research environments. Moreover, diversity in intellectual outlook, discipline, personality, and cognitive style provides students with a breadth of ideas that facilitate a dynamic intellectual community.

A vast and growing research body suggests that a diverse staff, faculty, and students body benefits the collaborative missions of both teaching and research through increasing problem-solving, innovation, and creativity (Elizabeth, & Margaret, 2005). Yet diversity of students, staff, and faculty also has challenges. Increased diversity may result to less effective communication, less cohesiveness, increased anxiety, and also increased discomfort among the community members. However, in deriving maximum benefits and minimizing the challenges from

diversity, there is need to learn how to appreciate and respect each other's stylistic and cultural differences and be aware of the behaviors and unconscious assumptions. Such attributes and assumptions can influence the interactions.

As earlier mentioned, diversity provides benefits for teaching and research. Research provides that diverse working groups turn out being more creative, innovative, and productive compared to the homogenous groups (Elizabeth, & Margaret, 2005). One of the findings was evident in a controlled experimental performance study in a brainstorming session. The experiment compared the generated ideas by the ethnically diverse groups involving Blacks, Asians, Latinos, and Whites to those of an ethnically homogenous group of Whites only. The evaluators that were unaware concerning the source of the ideas did not find a significant distinction in the generated number of ideas by the two groups. Therefore, in applying the effectiveness and feasibility measures, they rated the generated ideas by the diverse groups as of higher quality.

Also, numerous studies show that diversity is of benefit to students. Cumulatively, such research offers extensive evidence that diversity tend to provide a positive influence to all students, majority, and minority (Elizabeth, & Margaret, 2005). One of the supporting evidence involves a national longitudinal study featuring 25,000 undergraduates from 217 four year universities and colleges. The study shows that the institutional policies that foster diversity of the college community provides positive impacts concerning cognitive development and satisfaction of the students with the campus leadership abilities and experience. Such policies can facilitate inclusion of related themes to diversity in teaching and research; therefore, provide the students the ability to confront multicultural and racial issues in both classes and extracurricular activities.

In other two longitudinal research- one performed in 1990 and 1994 involving almost 1500 students in University of Michigan, and another by HERI in the years 1985 and 1989 featuring 11,000 students from 184 colleges- provides that interacted students with both ethnically and racially diverse peers within the class were greatly engaged in ⁸active thinking, motivation, growth in intellectual engagement, and growth in academic and intellectual skills (Herring, 2009). Notwithstanding, a more recent survey of almost 9,000 students at some selected higher learning institutions shows that rather than superficial and casual interactions, meaningful engagement results to greater benefits with racially and ethnically diverse groups.

According to the report by the National Study of Student Learning, both out-of-class and in-class involvement and interactions with the diverse groups foster critical thinking (Herring, 2009). The study also identifies a strong correlation among the willingness by the students to accept both intellectual challenge and diversity and the extent through which a college's environment is considered as racially nondiscriminatory. Besides, a study involving 1,215 members of faculty in the departments offering doctoral degrees in chemistry, computer science, physics, microbiology, and electrical engineering suggest that women faculty plays significant roles in ensuring both learning and success of the women graduates.

As initially stated, increased students, staff, and faculty diversity has its considerable negative impacts. For instance, numerous research reports that minority and women members in a faculty happen to be less satisfied with most job aspects compared to most of the male members. Such aspects feature committee assignments and teaching, professional relations with their colleagues, inclusion in decision-making, inequalities in salaries, tenure, and promotion. Additionally, another report from minority faculty at colleges and universities involving eight

Midwestern states suggest that the faculty of color face isolation, exclusion, racism, and alienation in the predominantly white colleges.

Multiple surveys also present that minority students always feel unwelcome and isolated in the predominantly white universities; hence, experiencing differential treatment and discrimination (Ioannides, 2010). Minority status may come from ethnicity, race, national origin, disability, and sexual orientation among other factors. Also, with the case of women students, especially if they fall under minority groups in their classrooms, can encounter or experience unwelcoming environments. Such climates include presenting disparaging or stereotypic views of women, sexist language use, sexual harassment, and differential treatment from tutors. However, research demonstrates that lack of a past positive experience with the members of minority groups leads the most of the majority group members feeling anxious concerning their engagement with the minorities. Such anxiety makes the majority members to avoid interactions with the minorities or respond with hostility.

In conclusion, there is need to reap the diversity benefits while minimizing its challenges. We have to overcome the strong human tendency of feeling much comfortable whenever around persons we resemble. Also, there is need to learn how to value, appreciate, and understand the difference. For instance, it is advisable to consider if the assumptions concerning minorities or women fit in the current influencing decisions. Diversity is a way of achieving both institutional and educational goals and objectives. As such, simply adding diverse persons to a homogenous community does not automatically develop a more intellectually stimulating and welcoming institution. Substantial attention, engagement, and long-term efforts are significant in realizing the associated benefits that diversity has to provide in ensuring that all the academic community members are listened, valued, and respected.

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Question 2: The Process of Adult Learning and how it Differs from Children Learning

Since adults constitute to approximately half of the existing student community, it appears effective ¹ to consider the andragogy effect in the online curriculum for the higher learning to continuously fulfill the needs of the community it represents. Up to date, the most accepted adult learning model is the Knowles' theory of andragogy. However, though it has several limitations, andragogy offers a point of start both in learning and practice. It is anticipated that with time andragogic assumptions may fall under much definitive position in the higher education online curriculum. Therefore, andragogy is the accepted adult learning process that tests the validity of predicting the amount of learning actually gained.

According to Knowles et al. (2005), there are six proposed principles concerning adult learning process depending on the learner's self-concept, need to know, readiness, previous experience, motivation, and orientation. The learner defines each of these principles; hence, communicating respect towards the adult student from the tutor. However, Laird (2003) shows that the adult learning involves the following attributes:

- A problem-center approach
- Active teacher-learner involvement
- Integrating previous activities into new learning
- Cooperating relationships among teachers and learners
- Teacher-learner collaboration in planning
- Mutual teacher-learner evaluation
- Experimental activities.

- Teacher-learner evaluation for redeveloping activities in learning. Such attributes imply that adult learning serves as a cooperative endeavor for both the learner and teacher.

The model provides a self-directed learning (SDL) that is an accepted andragogy premise. Debates continue concerning if SDL appears to be an adult learner's characteristic or if teachers should help the adult learners in becoming self-directed. Additionally, SDL interpretations fall under two categories. Foremost, adult learners perform the teacher's role and educate themselves- a process known as autodidaxy. Second, the adult learners are in control of the learning process and they learn from the tutor in the more learning traditional form. Such interpretations happen not to be necessarily mutually exclusive; hence, they can overlap.

There is no single day that goes by without experiencing learning in some way. However, as people age from childhood to adulthood, the way they learn, absorb, and retain the information greatly changes. Learning needs for adults differ from those of children in various ways. First, adults always have a couple of experiences in drawing on, and like in doing so (Cercon, 2008). There should be adult opportunities in connecting learning to their individual unique work or personal conditions, as well as potentiality for them in personalizing the learning in such regard.

Also, unlike children, adults are mainly not used in taking educational direction. Children often learn since they are subject to learning things that are related to the distant future and they proceed without questioning. Contrary, adults require to be told why and what they are doing in connecting the desired learning objectives to their own progress and goals (Cercon, 2008). Moreover, adults require significant self-reflecting opportunities to internalize their learning. Unlike adults, children turn out being more social in the class setting compared to adults. Children talk with each other concerning their experience. Adults should be provided with such

opportunities in reflecting on the new learning; if not so, they fail internalizing and retaining as much information as possible.

Additionally, adults possess the preconceived notions concerning the subject matter, learning styles, and education. They mostly prefer learning a specific way, despite not being the appropriate to their personal needs. On the contrary, children always attempt most of the new tasks and see through, in spite of how well they perform. In overcoming such a barrier in adult learning, there is need to appeal to numerous styles of learning and present the information in various ways. Finally, adults are always afraid of failure (Cercon, 2008). Children, on the other hand, lack such social filters and remain willing to practice. Therefore, adult learning should be scaffolded if not so adults will keep risking to lose their intrinsic focus and motivation.

The ways concerning how different individuals learn still remains an ongoing concern to the educators. People possess different attitudes, preferred learning styles, aptitudes, and perspectives that influence the process of learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Also, people have distinct experiences and backgrounds they bring into the experience of learning. Such factors and elements exists despite the learner's age. Therefore, there may be generalization that both adults and children learn in significantly different ways. And through understanding how a given group learns, trainers and educators have designed courses that are expected to enhance the experience in learning while maximizing the effectiveness of a given group.

It is significant to understand that despite the fact that the teaching approach to children and adults should be carried out differently in optimizing the learning potential of both groups, most of the basic learning principles are similar in both children and adult learning. Every teacher

possesses his/her own teaching style. Besides, as the traditional styles of teaching develop with the differentiated instruction, more teachers are advancing their approaches in relation to the learning needs of their students. Therefore, there are various situations whereby it can be appropriate to teach both adults and children with a similar teaching style. One of the instructional method is the lecture or authority style (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Such a teaching process will be of use when the learning involves long lecture sessions. The style allows the students to absorb information through taking notes.

Also, coaching or the demonstrator instructional method can be used in teaching both adults and children. The process involves the demonstrator to retain the role of formal authority through showing the students what they are expected to know (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Often, the demonstrator is more of a lecturer, but their lessons involve multimedia activities and presentations. Such a teaching style provides the tutor with an opportunity to incorporate various formats such as multimedia presentations and lectures. However, despite the fact that it is not the job of the teacher to entertain students, it remains vigilant to engage your students in the process of learning. Choosing a style that addresses the diverse students' needs at the distinct levels of learning starts with a self-evaluation and personal inventory of a teacher's weaknesses and strengths.

Since teachers possess teaching styles or instructional methods that reflect their definite curriculum and personalities- from history, math, English, and science- they should remain focused with their teaching goals and avoid attempting to be all the things to all the learners. Nevertheless, as the teachers advance their teaching styles including integrating them with efficient skills in classroom management, they understand what works best for their curriculum and personalities.

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