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Future college graduates will need to know how to function effectively within international work groups. One noteworthy characteristic of many older, working students at metropolitan universities is that they are already engaged in such efforts. Their knowledge and skills may be invaluable in the classroom, but are they being tapped? Perhaps these students can team with faculty members as "learner experts" who complement the instructor's content expertise. Partnering with these students in developing course content, or in delivering innovative curricular experiences, may go a long way toward keeping courses up-to-date, relevant, and exciting.

Metropolitan Universities:

Schools for International Preparation?

Metropolitan universities may be the best campuses for preparing undergraduate students to be successful in international work settings. More and more, college graduates will live in their local community, but function as international employees. Their fellow employees will live in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and South America. Increasingly, American students will want to graduate knowing how to work effectively in a multicultural and international milieu. How will we assist them in developing the needed skills?

Over a decade ago, Naisbitt (1984), in *Megatrends*, correctly asserted that globalization of the world's economies was fundamentally changing the way Americans should prepare themselves for the work place. The common practice of active networking to address global problems has underscored the importance of being able to communicate with international neighbors. Now, with the ability of international work teams to design and produce wealth using communications technologies (e.g., the Internet) as information conduits (Toffler and Toffler, 1995), there is an even greater need to prepare graduates who are at least marginally aware of the importance of multicultural issues.

Metropolitan colleges are uniquely positioned to prepare the workforce of the future because they have

more of the natural resources necessary for multicultural education than do "traditional" residential campuses located in rural areas. For example, metropolitan universities generally enjoy a ready supply of nontraditional students, diverse in race, background, and experience. In addition, substantial proportions of these students have meaningful and valuable work experience.

It is not uncommon for metropolitan universities to describe their undergraduate student bodies in "bimodal" terms, comprised of both traditional-aged, full-time students and an equally sizeable population of older, part-time students who are working full-time jobs. Therefore many students in these universities are already aware of employment opportunities that require familiarity with team concepts and multicultural communication skills. Isn't it logical to assume that they have something unique and valuable to add to classroom discussions? Many have honed their communication skills as a result of working in team-structured corporate environments, and their experiences may be expected to bring course content alive for younger, less experienced students.

The Emergence of a Multicultural Work Force

Today, there are frequent news reports on American corporations moving away from sending work overseas to cheaper labor markets. Instead, there are new headlines reporting integration of American employees with Asian, South American, and Australian workers who are all linked to the same company by the information superhighway. The constant improvements in computers and communications, particularly private satellite hookups, have made it easier and cheaper for companies to link work forces in India, China, and Taiwan with employees in America. Engineers or software programmers in the U.S. can work on a project during the day, then send it electronically for more work in Asia while they sleep. As a result, processes can be reengineered and projects can be completed in less time, or in close to what is now being called "real time" (Toffler and Toffler, 1995). The result is an integration of widespread local work forces by one international company that produces complex products or services for fast-changing demand in a worldwide market.

Self-contained local work forces are already becoming a thing of the past. In the last decade, we barely noticed that automobiles were becoming multinational products. Parts and design for any given "American" model are

now produced throughout the world and assembled in any number of countries. As a result of such changes in design and manufacturing, "communities" of the future may no longer be so well defined by their local tax districts. The development of powerful personal computers, modems and high-capacity undersea telephone cables will continue to open the door for millions of highly skilled Americans to join employees of the same company who live on the other side of the earth. Naturally, these kinds of groups will continue to value and foster interculturally skilled team members and group leaders if they are to be successful.

Challenges in the Classroom

How can faculty in metropolitan universities prepare graduates for success in these emerging international work groups? Usually a step removed from the corporate structure, business faculty often find it difficult to introduce new pedagogy or modify the curriculum quickly enough to stay abreast of real time changes in the corporate world. Perhaps they can benefit from calling upon, or teaming with, selected students who are already employed in companies that do business this way. After all, as Cropley (1977) noted nearly two decades ago in summarizing research on adult learners, "Adults are not preparing for the future, they are embroiled in the momentous changes of the present."

The nontraditional and multicultural attributes of a metropolitan student body in many ways represent a particular strength in the teaching-learning equation. Faculty and other students can benefit from what these working learners know about what is happening in the multinational workplace. Coursework can be designed to take advantage of their real life, real time experiences.

By selecting undergraduate students to *team with* university faculty, urban universities can combine the resources of a subject expert (the college professor) with learner experts (carefully selected undergraduates) at minimal cost. This type of instructional team can, without undermining the instructor's authority, create a pedagogical approach that not only includes multicultural components, but actively engages learners by encouraging them to compare their actual and emerging work experiences with the theoretical content of the course. In this way, students are not only required to master content, but to critically appraise whether the knowledge base being transmitted has currency in the work world. At least one special benefit of this

approach accrues to the instructor: the feedback serves as an important check of the ever quickening pulse of the job market and, by extension, the marketplace of ideas.

As the Report of the Wingspread Group on Higher Education (1993) recently noted:

> There is a growing body of knowledge about learning and the implications of that knowledge for teaching. What is known, however is rarely applied by individual teachers, much less in concert by entire faculties. We know that teaching is more than lecturing. We know that active engagement in learning is more productive than passive listening. We know that experiential learning can be even more so (p. 14).

An instructor teamed with one or more undergraduate learner experts can continue to offer classes that are interesting to students, pass muster in terms of relevance in the workplace, and challenge students to become active and creative in their own thinking about what is critically important in a multicultural work world.

The Undergraduate Learner Expert

Traditionally, especially in research universities where doctoral students fill the role of teaching assistants, there has been little use of undergraduate students in curriculum design or instruction, regardless of their levels of maturity or experience. The author is not aware of any university settings in which this particular concept of learner expert has previously been employed. Even undergraduates who have been successfully engaged in enhancing the mastery of content have not been asked to assist in the development of course content and design. Therefore questions and caveats with about such a model are in need of definition.

What roles would the subject expert and the learner expert actually play? How can they team to codesign course material that is up-to-date, culturally inclusive, and representative of what is happening in this multinational work world?

Universities have long used teaching and graduate assistants to help in classroom instruction and research. Metropolitan universities have unique opportunities to employ a similar but perhaps more relevant instructional

model. Instead of requiring student assistants to teach a class by themselves, faculty would team with them to modify course content and methods, facilitate active learning with other students, demonstrate emerging computer-based communications, and arrange for appropriate field trips or guest speakers.

In addition, these learner experts might also be selected more for their interpersonal skills than for their content expertise in a specific major. Global education clearly involves a broader way of thinking, not just mastery of content (Woods, 1991). Consequently, primary candidates for learner expert positions might be students who are behavioral studies majors, or who have had life experiences culturally variant from the professor's but similar to many of the other nontraditional students enrolled in the class.

Learner experts who are ethnic minorities would be able to share what they have learned from living among citizens of the same nation whose culture and ways of knowing are different. Learner experts from the behavioral sciences would bring an interest and understanding of what motivates people and the manners in which they learn. They could, for example, introduce the use of Myers-Briggs personality inventories, then demonstrate how valuable it is to be able to understand one's own preferred learning and working styles in relation to others.

Insights from behavioral science majors and students from ethnic minority homes, combined with the content expertise of the professor, make possible riveting classroom examples of conflict resolution strategies and motivational techniques. In this environment, students may model how to work successfully with others who have diverse learning styles or distinctive cultural backgrounds. All learner experts would share with the subject specialist the discovery and implementation of these successful learning paradigms.

In 1969, Arthur Chickering based his classic text, *Education and Identity,* on field notes and research about how students learn and what they are mastering as a result of their college experiences. Often referenced by student affairs professionals and more recently cited by academics as guidance for student outcomes assessment, this treatise describes seven "vectors of development" that younger students have in common. These include achieving competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, clarifying purposes, and developing integrity. Clearly these are characteristics that are needed in the international workplace.

Chickering also argued that "colleges and universities will be educationally effective only if they reach students 'where they live'" (p. 3), and that "...if urgent and emerging national and international problems are to be met with the breadth of information, the complexity of thought, and the wisdom generated by diverse experiences, such areas must receive attention." He further contended that "professional preparation and educational programs that are relevant to social problems and that facilitate significant student development and professional preparation need not be mutually exclusive" (p. 4).

In a team teaching model that incorporates the experiences of older student learners who have already learned some of the lessons of working in a multicultural world, opportunities to facilitate younger students' growth and understanding abound. Learner experts could teach from a variety of perspectives: by self-disclosing how they coped with significant life transitions, responded to prejudicial decisions, reacted to capricious judgments, recovered from failures, and profited from their successes. From their examples, fellow students would begin to learn adult methods of coping, while the instructor would learn other ways to lead learners in understanding both subject matter and its application in the realm of interpersonal relationships.

Helen and Alexander Astin (1993) advocated the teaching of leadership by giving students the responsibility for tutoring other students, participating in groups with other students, and pursuing volunteer work. Nontraditional students are excellent candidates for assuming the responsibility of tutoring their peers, and they are a ready resource to the professor seeking a more experiential pedagogy and curriculum. This is not such a radical idea; some of our toughest and most conservative institutions—the service academies—have been doing it for decades. In fact, the socialization of cadets to prepare them for leadership positions involves the successful attainment and completion (each successive year of enrollment) of increasing responsibilities for the learning and behavior of other cadets.

In this model, the curricular and pedagogical lesson plans for each class could be coordinated by the professor. Input on the multicultural lesson plans and methods would be provided by the learner experts, who would receive monetary compensation or course credit. Those seeking course credit could be given the opportunity to enroll in a three-hour course called "college teaching." A full-time instructor known for his/her devotion to and acclaim as an outstanding teacher could be given the opportunity to direct

this practicum class of learner experts. In addition to team teaching with a senior faculty member, these learner experts could meet weekly for, say, a two-hour practicum wherein their experiences in the classroom would be evaluated and analyzed against effective leadership tactics and conflict resolution strategies. Discussions and readings common to their teaching experiences could be explored. Critiques and role playing situations experienced in their classrooms could provide the feedback that these learner experts need to polish their developing skills.

Areas of Concern

The likely difficulties in developing a collaborative teaching model involving professors and undergraduate learner experts are several. To begin, this is a groundbreaking idea that, in some quarters, might be considered unacceptably radical. After all, we are accustomed to thinking of ours as a model of higher learning that ostensibly involves the transmission of knowledge from the knower to the unknowing. To some faculty members it is threatening and risky to admit that students without degrees might actually have something of unusual substance to contribute to the design and delivery of a college level course.

In addition, the novelty of the idea leaves ample room for confusion, mistrust, and blame in the collaborative relationship. Will faculty be able to adjust their focus and expectations in working with undergraduates? Will student learner experts be willing to accept a considerable degree of responsibility for meeting and engaging the professor in meaningful dialogue about the state of the work world as s/he has experienced it? Will faculty be willing to admit that they too can benefit and learn from this relationship? Or will they be threatened by the idea that they are necessarily removed from some key aspects of the work world? Will professor and student be up to the task of jointly defining curricular components and identifying areas of important cultural variation? In turn, will they be able to address these topics in the classroom setting to make learning a more relevant, dynamic, meaningful experience?

Obviously, this model of teaching will not fit the style of all faculty members. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that innovation in this area be attempted only with enthusiastic, motivated faculty who are capable of recruiting and working with students who will challenge them. It will be especially important to articulate the roles and expectations of the collabora-

tors, and to pilot the use of such a model in selected courses. Careful attention should be paid to formative and summative evaluations of the "experimental" sections by students who have enrolled in them and by department chairs or coordinators who may have an interest in expanding the use of this approach.

Conclusion

The well prepared graduate of the future will be able to work with and lead other employees who are joined by cyberspace but separated by cultural differences. This graduate will be able to communicate with fellow employees who have radically different backgrounds, coping mechanisms, and learning styles. For this reason, multicultural education should be elevated beyond the status of a mere elective, sought out by the disenfranchised or by students evangelizing for its support. It can and should be integrated into classroom experiences. If the practical elements of multiculturalism are underscored, modeled, and mastered in the classroom, they will be viewed as valuable individual skills, if not vocational necessities.

This suggested approach to multicultural education affirms that instructors, like students, are learner/teachers. It encourages nontraditional students who have valuable work experiences and/or hold dissimilar beliefs and customs to bring these forward to others as ways of knowing, doing, and leading. Restructuring classroom pedagogy to include learner experts as members of the teaching team would transport the concept of equal access and opportunity past the admissions office to the classroom.

Effective new learning approaches might well emerge in those metropolitan universities that invite students to share in the privilege of teaching. Some students may become leaders in the emerging international work forces because of the opportunities they received as team teachers, or as a result of their early preparation for such work environments. Metropolitan universities can take the lead in developing such an approach, adjusting their coursework and curriculum along the way. In doing so, they will be helping their graduates to remain in the local community *and* lead other employees who work several time zones away. Will faculty take the challenge?

Suggested Readings

Astin, A. *What Matters in College*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc.,

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Chickering, A. *Education and Identity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1969.

Cropley, A.J. *Lifelong Education: A Psychological Analysis.* Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1977.

Toffler, A., and Toffler, H. *Creating a New Civilization*. Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Wingspread Group on Higher Education. *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education*. The Johnson Foundation, Inc., 1993.

Woods, R. "Toward Cultural Empathy: A Framework for Global Education." *Educational Record*. 72 (4) 1991: 10-13.

Is your institution a metropolitan university?

If your university serves an urban/metropolitan region and subscribes to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities printed elsewhere in this issue, your administration should seriously consider joining the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities.

Historically, most universities have been associated with cities, but the relationship between "the town and the gown" has often been distant or abrasive. Today the metropolitan university cultivates a close relationship with the urban center and its suburbs, often serving as a catalyst for change and source of enlightened discussion. Leaders in government and business agree that education is the key to prosperity, and that metropolitan universities will be on the cutting edge of education not only for younger students, but also for those who must continually re-educate themselves to meet the challenges of the future.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities brings together institutions who share experiences and expertise to speak with a common voice on important social issues. A shared sense of mission is the driving force behind Coalition membership. However, the Coalition also offers a number of tangible benefits: ten free subscriptions to *Metropolitan Universities*, additional copies at special rates to distribute to boards and trustees, a newsletter on government and funding issues, a clearinghouse of innovative projects, reduced rates at Coalition conventions. . . .

As a *Metropolitan Universities* subscriber, you can help us by bringing both the journal and the Coalition to the attention of your administration. To obtain information about Coalition membership, please contact Dr. Bill McKee, University of North Texas, by calling (817) 565-2477 or faxing a message to (817) 565-4998.