

Chapter 19

K. Patricia Cross's Chain-of-Response (COR) Model for Widening Participation at Higher Levels of Lifelong Learning in a World of Massification: Past, Present, and Future

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ABSTRACT

Adult and community education theorists and practitioners in the 20th century focused on reasons people sought degrees beyond high school. As time went on, a greater need became apparent for a more educated populace. This need then drove the focus from only undergraduate education to higher education and expanded into graduate education. Participation quickly became a major topic for these leaders. Over 30 years ago, K. Patricia Cross (1981) created the Chain-of-Response (COR) model to better understand the decision-making processes of participation in higher learning institutions. These 20th century studies were largely from a deficit-model perspective rather than the positive perspective that has emerged in early 21st century research. A historical analysis of the COR research points to future and emerging trends showing COR value beyond U.S. borders for deeper understanding of widening participation, massification, and diversity in higher education. This is explored in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Participating in higher education has been a theme of interest for as long as formal education structures have existed. However, never before has

the concept of participation in learning become so widespread and critically urgent. This chapter will focus on participation in learning, but particularly on the “widening participation” movement in higher education (or institutions such as

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universities and colleges) in countries outside of the United States, particularly in England, which has been one of the most vocal in the literature and in policy making. [See Clayton (2012) for a history of the widening participation movement 'agenda,' and Leach (2013) for policy development in participation and equity in higher education within New Zealand, England, and Australia from 1960-2011.]

In England, the widening movement has been impacted by the now defunct national program, Aimhigher (2004-2011), which enhanced "social inclusivity through raising educational attainment and aspiration with the purpose of widening participation in higher education" (Doyle & Griffin, 2012, p. 75). According to Tinnacher and Baxter (n.d.), the policy made an impact on attainment to counter gaps in achievements, and also made some progress in growing participation of first year college students, which was due to local partnerships and coordinated outreach programs.

Several turning points have led to an increased interest in participation on both a cross-cultural and intercultural analysis basis, as well as in understanding motivation by many organizations and populations in the global, international world of the 21st century and the skills needed by an aging adult community. Educational leaders utilizing the COR model can better understand the active participants of this workforce. Since 2011 and the 30th anniversary of the publication of the book *Adults as Learners: Increasing Participation and Facilitating Learning*, at this particular time in history with the "widening participation" of higher education in England, Europe, indeed throughout the world, it seems particularly important to examine the model's past use comprehensively. It also seems pertinent to peer into the possibilities for the future with an eye to using the model to better understand higher to graduate education with individuals desiring to seek education or to educate others.

This chapter will explore higher education from entry level through graduate level and will put forth a discussion regarding K. Patricia Cross's

(1981) Chain-of-Response (COR), a model to better understand the decision-making processes of participation in higher learning institutions. For this examination of the COR model, I wondered if the literature would show improvements in sampling and data analysis with the many technological tools of the 21st century unavailable and unimagined in the 20th century. With the advancement of technological software programs and research engines, research studies framed with Cross's model could provide more data more quickly to improve the quality of knowledge about higher levels of education. Also, for some inexplicable reason, most journal articles and chapters "neglect dissertation research" (Brockett, 1991, p. 337); therefore, the bulk of the research studied was doctoral dissertations and theses that used the COR model as well as some journal articles.

By examining the continued value and usefulness of Cross's COR model, the significance emerges from the deep, rich data about institutions wanting to provide higher education and individuals wanting to receive higher education. This model, however, has yet to fulfill the promise of providing enough data on discrimination against underrepresented populations particularly as to what knowledge and skills are proving most useful and how abilities and expertise are transferred into the community. An analysis of the COR components has continued and should continue to provide data leading to opening doors into the future and to emerging trends in formal higher education.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to revisit K. Patricia Cross's Chain-of-Response (COR) model to see how the model has been used in the 21st century and to examine its continued value. A second purpose remains for the exploration of its continued usefulness beyond borders for adults seeking continuing and further higher education. This article questions the timeliness of the model and its significance in today's educational systems for underrepresented populations in higher education including graduate education, which has been less pronounced in the literature. Largely due to

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