Chapter 13

Building Soul and Measuring Flow in the Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

For effective learning to occur, a culture must be created that connects the students to the teacher, to each other and to the content. Faculty must use social capital to meet and exceed learning outcomes. The benefits of creating a sense of soul in the classroom so that flow can occur is the most important ingredient in ensuring success in the learning environment. Collectively the synergy of the course, the type and amount of learning and the type of community built in the learning environment can create a healthy or toxic environment. Academic and nonacademic indicators must be incorporated into the measurement of excellence in the learning environment because these strategies are required to be competitive in the job market and because it is the right thing to do. Strategies to support a global perspective through venues of economic, psychological, social and human capital towards a greater good are provided in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

The backdrop of any intellectual interaction, be it on-line, hybrid or flipped, is the ease of sharing information in a trusting and engaged environment. Regardless of the content matter, without high trust and low corruption, the learning can, and eventually will, become stagnant. With the influx of technology and methods for

delivering information, the need to create a culture that cultivates multiple capitals with a segue to building a better world requires engagement and positive exchanges of information. This culture is taken on by the teacher and is carefully executed so that the highest level of learning can occur. The purpose of this chapter is to: 1) define soul and flow in the learning environment; 2) justify the importance of including academic and nonacademic indicators in measuring effectiveness of institutions and 3) describe strategies for maximizing soul and flow in the classroom.

BACKGROUND

Best practices in delivering information are well documented. Libraries of information exist on teaching strategies for every age and almost all content matter. While teaching strategies have been proven successful, the strategies are only as good as the students are in feeling engaged in the information and the level of safety they feel in speaking up to make an inquiry, a mistake or even an opportunity to creatively synthesize a new idea. Students feeling assured that their voices are heard and that a diversity of ideas can be expressed are indeed all components of classroom culture.

Learning strategies are only as efficient as the facilitator. Furthermore, the type and amount of information devoted to the greater good is sometimes lost in the content of a formula or theory. Thus, the need to include and engage all learners towards excellence in and outside of the classroom can be crafted and implemented to support all academic efforts. Experienced scholars have a drive to ensure that engagement and trust are high in the classroom. The art and science of creating a culture of learning, better known as social capital, is an area that deserves equal attention when reviewing best practices in the learning environment.

Healthy Environments Support Learning

Each of us has been in a learning environment here each person was engaged, the learner and practitioner were present, and the learning experiences flowed together and were challenging and meaningful. Not only were the learning contributions meaningful, there was a sense of identity, accomplishment and enjoyment associated with the learning activities. The type and amount of learning accomplished had a relevant and long term place in shaping the learner.

In contrast, each of us has had the unfortunate opportunity to be in the presence of a learning experience where the time could not tick fast enough so that the students (and teacher) could move out of the learning environment. In this type of environment one might see task oriented assignments, students doing the minimum or basic to meet the objectives and little to no external engagement from the facilitator or

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