

Chapter 12

Cultural Considerations in Postsecondary and Vocational Education: A Discussion on Equity and Accessibility

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the culture of a college in post-secondary education and how the educational institution can affect how others experience it. Specifically, this chapter looks at varying aspects of culture that relate to engagement, instruction, operations, and campus climate. Cultural considerations in post-secondary and vocation education are also discussed in the context of the current issues facing college campuses, with a specific concentration on student retention, online education, instructional practices, funding practices, and the acceptance of people groups. Throughout this chapter, considerations are offered for the institution to determine potential benefits to an institution. It is the choice of the institution to make choices that best fit the needs of its students. Not every choice will benefit every institution as no two institutions are the same. However, there are benefits in education to what others have attempted and learn from past educational experience.

INTRODUCTION

Culture in adult learning environments is crucial to student success (Bruner, 1996). Culture is essentially the mission, vision, and values of the educational organization (Tierney, 1988). Culture differs from the construct of climate. Climate is the *temperature* within the organization and are based on the perceptions of how the students “experience” the organization. The culture of an organization can affect how others experience that organization. For example, a university may have a culture that does not provide programs that help the student succeed in college. College Atlas (2017) reported that students do not attend college because they feel that “[it] is too hard.” If a college enrolls a student in their university,

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the next issue is to retain the student until graduation. While some students are ready to succeed at the collegiate level, others are not. Additionally, some may argue that high school students should be ready for college. The fact of the matter is that many are not. Higher education institutions offer programs that help students succeed at the collegiate level. The U.S. Department of Labor is funding opportunities for students to attend college while assisting the student to locate high quality child care (Community College of Aurora, 2017). The students in the program are also shown how to succeed in college, and the college assists the student to find employment after college (A. Johnson, Personal Communication, December 22, 2017). This program, Strengthening Working Families Initiative, is active at Aurora Community College and Denver Community College. Eligibility for this program is any student 17 years or older who possesses a high school diploma or a G.E.D. (or willing to complete a G.E.D.); has an interest in Health Care, Information Technology, or Advanced Manufacturing; and is the custodial parent of a child below the age of 13. These institutions are taking initiative to facilitate student success while in college and even go so far as to maintain contact with the student one year after the program to gauge how the student has acclimated after college.

Many students do not learn adequate study skills, note-taking skills, typing skills, proper sleeping and eating habits, and other behaviors necessary for college success. Thus, a student that enrolls may not succeed in college because of a system that does not provide tools for them to succeed. However, the student may not necessarily choose to forget school altogether but may choose a school that caters to their individual needs. It is the consideration of an institution to choose the clientele to which they want to accommodate, or accommodate altogether.

This chapter will look at varying aspects of culture that relate to engagement, instruction, operations, and campus climate. The delivery of current issues in college campuses regarding student retention, instructional practices, a case study on funding practices, the acceptance of people groups, and the climate of these groups in terms of acceptance and worth will be investigated.

FUNDAMENTAL LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

The idea of college education has shifted, and educational differentiation is now common or best practice. Generally, differentiation is the attempt to provide equal learning opportunities to students by means of instructional practice. Differentiation and intervention refer not only to educational content and teaching but also the resources that universities offer to ensure individual programmatic success and to foster positive academic culture. There are many reasons for these necessary changes, the principal of which is the requisite to satisfy the need to appease and accept learners of various cultures. Researchers agree that, because people are diverse, there is a necessity to satisfy this diversity (Perez et al., 2012). Ultimately, differentiation and intervention are methods for providing equity and accessibility to students of heterogeneous backgrounds. Bruner (1996) claimed that within every context (i.e., an educational institution) not every system or culture places equal emphasis on identical mechanisms. However, it is relevant for an educational institution to consider the culture and meet the needs of its students *where they are*. The implication is that educating students is only one part of the larger picture.

In education, it is for the institution to allow a student's culture to have unprecedented freedoms and display relevance to the existing culture of its students (Bruner, 1996). Further, consideration of successful pathways to student job placement and/or career advancement concerns students. Job placement and career advancement certificates can be a key motivational factor to employed students seeking promotion

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