

Education 3.0: Some Innovation Required

Jeff D. Borden
D2L, IICE, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bestselling organizational, behavioral, and academic authors such as Dan Pink, Peter Senge, John Medina, Clayton Christensen, and dozens more illustrate that despite research-based, proven actions regarding organizational, managerial, and strategic planning best practices as well as innovative thinking that is impactful or efficacious, organizations continue to employ behaviors that are dysfunctional, ineffective, and lead to poor outcomes. Some of these same authors amongst others point out that this is as true in higher education as any sector. But while other industries are primed for innovative solutioning to these issues, education employs systems and processes that prohibit transformation. Reaching Education 3.0, meaning to leverage the best learning practices through the confluence of neuroscience, research-based learning design, and educational technology, will require innovative strategies and practices. The question is whether colleges and universities can push through existing, dysfunctional infrastructure and move forward to help students learn, succeed, and thrive.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them” ---Albert Einstein

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has long lauded itself as a lighthouse for strategic thinking and innovation (Hatakenaka, 2015), yet in practice such self-aggrandizing seems to be rife with incongruity and confirmation bias. In other words, academics are quick to suggest that the most unbiased, ethical, culture-driving innovation comes from higher education research, while in parallel the higher education sector struggles to leverage research-based findings that change or influence standard practices (LSE Enterprise Limited [Panteia], 2014). As one example, consider the specific issue of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Diversity has seen a surge of attention around the globe, perhaps stemming from police actions in the United States regarding persons of color in 2019-2020 (Harmon et al., 2021). These (and other) highly publicized, cultural events including ensuing protests and marches have led to editorials, attacks, actions, reactions, and changes from many business sectors, including higher education. Change for everything from curriculum to instruction to hiring practices are being discussed and debated. According to Axios (Frank & Alvarez, 2021), “At least 21 states are advancing measures to restrict education related to race and history, according to Chalkbeat, an Axios reporting partner. Some teachers and professors are being threatened or facing termination for teaching critical race theory.”

But while the use of content is under scrutiny with regard to diversity, higher education is feeling pressure to act in other, newfound ways. “During the last five years, appointments of chief diversity officers at colleges and universities have grown significantly. A review of job announcements reveals many listings from institutions that are seeking their first chief diversity officer. The chief, or senior, diversity officer is increasingly becoming a highly sought-after and indispensable administrative leader (Parker, 2020).”

So, it appears that many aspects of diversity, from gender to race to generational differentiation, are being scrutinized across tertiary education. But why would this be necessary? Scholars from higher education have warned other sectors of the problems stemming from a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion for decades. Whether discussing race, gender, or even age, academic researchers have made recommendations to the “general public” for years. The obvious answer is that colleges and universities have paid little attention to their own findings.

For example, “Generational diversity has been noted as an obstacle for many U.S. organizations, yet there is a lack of understanding of how to leverage generational diversity in the workplace. This unawareness could be disastrous for companies wanting to increase economic wealth through human capital (Legas & Howard Simms, 2012, para. 1).” But even when looking at a less historically incendiary context like age, while professors and researchers admonish other sectors for under-

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