


Chapter 1

Implementing Self-Efficacy Through a Strengths Perspective Approach

Nikkita Jackson

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6543-123X>
Central State University, USA

Karleah Harris

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, USA

Jonathan Trauth

Central State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to provide insights on using the strengths perspective approach to increase self-efficacy and motivation to improve the retention and success of diverse student populations. It will also cover retention and success regarding diverse student populations through the lens of a trauma-informed care approach. It is important to consider the unique challenges that come with the students as they enter the school while learning to be both independent and self-supporting for the first time in their lives. Suppose a student has the challenge of an adverse childhood experience. In that case, it is important for the practitioner to consider this when advising and counseling a student who has come to them with their unique circumstance. Using the strengths approach and positive psychology will be essential to succeed with a student of this background.

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INTRODUCTION

Our work highlights using the strengths perspective approach to increase self-efficacy and motivation to improve retention and success of diverse student populations. This chapter moves the view from focusing on students' weaknesses, which is the common viewpoint and shifts the focus to recognizing students' strengths, which ultimately provide more support to help the students reach goal attainment. This approach is used in social work when working with clients who pose many challenges and struggle with goal outcomes due to lack of support and low motivation. Using the strength perspective approach helps refocus the students and allows them to use the positive skills embedded in them to promote retention and the success needed to graduate.

BACKGROUND

Retention as the Focal Point

Retention and success regarding diverse student populations have been an ongoing conversation. Retention has become the main topic and continues to be the focal point of many discussions with several questions. For example, what is the reason for low retention? What can we do to fix the program? Why is this an ongoing conversation? What can teachers/faculty members do to increase motivation? What is the underlying issue? There appear to be many questions but not enough solutions to solve this matter. We live in a very diverse world, and we must keep this in mind, as well as in the forefront, that students bring a sense of diversity into the classroom. Adserias et al. (2016) state, "institutions embedded within broader society, colleges and universities are neither immune to the persistent challenges, nor to the rewards of promoting the values of social diversity, equity, and inclusion" (p.315). Diversity can be viewed as differences in people based on their educational background, gender, ethnicity, age, family status, sexual orientation, income, faith, religion, area of residence, social class, and others. Diversity is what makes the world unique. Diversity is inevitable and should be approached as a level of importance in the classroom. The classroom setting is also diverse as it pertains to preparedness vs. unpreparedness. Clement (2016) mentioned that:

one reason why a structured course has been hypothesized to help reduce the achievement gap in four-year college science classes is that it may provide underprepared students with an opportunity to learn how to apply concepts with feedback in class, something that college students, as self-regulated learners, are expected to do independently when they study (p.351).

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