


Chapter 14

Facilitating a Socially Just Higher Education Community to Support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

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ABSTRACT

Young adults are often the catalyst for societal change and often during their time in higher education settings is where they exercise their civic voice and impact the university setting as well. The social justice continuum model is a framework for institutions of higher education to reflect and assess on their efforts related to social justice and involve students in changing the environment and helping the institution maintain its commitment to social justice. This chapter focuses on culturally and linguistically diverse students who attend predominantly white institutions. The areas of (a) curriculum, (b) mentoring, (c) admissions and (d) the learning environment will be examined in relation to the social justice continuum model and recommendations are provided to assist institutions in embodying social justice principles in action and providing a robust culturally sustaining learning experience for all students.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States has had several high-profile demonstrations organized and led by youth (ACLEd, 2020). Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) adolescents and young adults are engaging in acts of civil disobedience as they want more concrete and substantial change and not just talk or promises of change, which has been the mantra since the advances of the Civil Rights era (Apeles, 2020; Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, 2020; Took, 2020; Yazdani, et al, 2022). The social justice continuum model (SJCM; Abel & Gonzalez, 2020) addresses how and why a Predominately White Institution (PWI) can manifest a commitment to social justice through a continuous improvement cycle, like the growth effectiveness model (GEM; Abel, 2020), focused on data-informed decision-making and accountability.

Historically, PWIs have engaged in efforts that have not fundamentally changed the way the campus operates or increased a sense of belonging among CLD students or diminished the occurrence of microaggressions they experience while studying and engaging in campus life (byrd, 2022) quite often have little no alignment with institutional values, goals, and resource allocation. The initiatives put forth by PWIs often address what byrd (2022) refers to as first-order changes that focuses on representation and campus composition, which can be needed but is insufficient to create and retain real advancement in the application of diversity, equity, and inclusion) across identities for CLD learners. Second-order change that focuses on structural barriers is often not the focus of DEI initiatives promoted at PWIs. Therefore, while numbers of CLD learners may increase the structural barriers or systematic practices that foster acts of microaggression or outright instances of bias and discrimination are not eradicated or reduced (byrd, 2022). This chapter explores how two theoretical constructs can be used by PWIs and integrated into their strategic planning and assist in developing plans and accountability metrics that address both first and second order changes that support an authentically more inclusive environment for CLD learners (byrd, 2022) that becomes a norm for how the institution operates. It may also help institutions to move the needle of eliminating socio-economic inequalities in education, which no country has currently done (OECD, 2018).

Social Justice Continuum Model

Abel and Gonzalez (2020) created the SJCM to demonstrate the progression of stages a predominantly White institution (PWI) might experience on its journey to becoming a place committed to social justice. We defined social justice as an orientation that evaluates beliefs and actions to achieve and maintain distributive, procedural, and interactional justice within an institution and the larger society. An

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