Chapter 63

Bringing Together Personal Learning, Higher Education Institutional Elements, and Global Support for a Re-Orientation toward a Focus on Lifelong Learning and Education

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ABSTRACT

This extended research study focused on bringing together personal learning, higher educational institutional elements to be considered for helping higher educational institutions and individual learners in various countries to re-orient themselves toward a focus on lifelong learning, and placing this within the support and context of lifelong learning and education around the globe. Research is presented on the background and experiences of various higher educational institutions and individual learners in this regard, developing a tentative policy statement and identification of the elements of a re-orientation toward lifelong learning focus as products of several worldwide conferences. In addition, the support of UNESCO in its global reach encourages this to move forward rapidly into the future.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions around the world in the 21st century are being faced with serving the educational and learning needs of a non-traditional population [older than the traditional college age of 18-22]. This new population requires different

approaches for fulfilling their educational desires. Their individual abilities in lifelong learning influence how they enact learning. They come into the higher education setting on a part time basis, study and take courses for a period of time, and then drop out for a while. They return later, seeking to 'pick up' their course of study again where they were when they were previously enrolled. The institutions have to deal with shifting populations,

learning needs, how to work in these situations, and placing this within a global context of supporting lifelong learning and education.

BACKGROUND

Research Design

This extended research focused on bringing together personal learning, higher education institutional elements to be considered for helping higher educational institutions and individual learners in various countries to re-orient themselves toward a lifelong learning focus, and placing this within the support and context of lifelong learning and education around the globe. This global support was especially prominent from the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Some Adult Educators at the University of Missouri — St. Louis (UMSL) were involved in researching the background of this topic on the North American Continent and the Northern Hemisphere. Other Adult Educators at The University of The Western Cape [UWC], Cape Town, South Africa were involved in researching the background of this topic on the African Continent and the Southern Hemisphere (Flint, et al., 1999; Serving Adult Learners…, 2000; Wood, 2001; Walters, n.d.; Walters & Volbrecht, n.d.).

This information was shared as one backdrop for a worldwide conference on the topic of "Lifelong Learning, Higher Education and Active Citizenship" held in Cape Town in October, 2000. There were *95* Adult Educators from 19 countries at the conference. This was also a follow-up and continuation of the work begun at the UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education [CONFINTEA V] in Hamburg, Germany, 1997 (Agenda…, 1997), continued at the University of Mumbai, India in 1998 (Mumbai Statement…, 1998), and the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in Paris in 1998.

These gatherings of adult educators resulted in the formulation of The Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution (2001). They named six major elements. The next step in the process saw the two schools from South Africa and The University of Missouri, changing those six elements to seven major elements, and developing measurable performance indicators [MPI] for the practice of lifelong learning in higher education institutions.

A five member team from The University of Missouri [UM] went to Cape Town to work with personnel from The University of The Western Cape [UWC] in May, 2001. The aim and task of this meeting was to address the issue of moving a higher education institution from a traditional orientation toward a lifelong learning orientation. They developed Measurable Performance Indicators [MPI] for tracking the progress of any educational institution in the direction of Lifelong Leaning. This information also applies to the educational function of other institutions as well. This coming together of adult educators two different times resulted in the formulation of the Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution, and the MPI. The six [and ultimately seven] elements included: [1] Overarching Frameworks, [2] Strategic Partnerships, [3] Research, [4] Teaching and Learning Processes, [5] Administration Policies and Mechanisms, [6] Decision Support Systems, and, [7] Student Support Systems and Services.

An additional study adds some perspective on the responsibility of the learner in developing and maintaining an orientation toward lifelong learning. Li [2005] presented her findings on a system of lifelong learning at the Commission on International Adult Education [CIAE] Pre-Conference of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, Pittsburgh, PA. Her system is narrowly focused on the learner and does not take into account what an educational

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