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Teaching in a global society: Considerations for university-based educational leadership

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Abstract

Those who work in university-based programs are in a unique position to positively influence teaching, leading, and learning in the 21st century—whether in traditional face-to-face classrooms or online. To ensure culturally responsive practices, postsecondary faculty and administrators must be proactive about critically reflecting on their own professional praxes related to adult learning. This paper offers a mini-review of concepts derived from the literature for promoting inclusive postsecondary learning communities in a diverse and global society. This conceptually based paper blends current practices with traditional adult learning theories and includes considerations for those who work in university-based programs that prepare educational leaders.

Keywords

online learning, adult learning, inclusive learning communities, culturally responsive practices, course design

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Teaching in a Global Society: Considerations for University-Based Educational Leadership Programs

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Abstract

Those who work in university-based programs are in a unique position to positively influence teaching, leading, and learning in the 21st century—whether in traditional face-to-face classrooms or online. To ensure culturally responsive practices, postsecondary faculty and administrators must be proactive about critically reflecting on their own professional praxes related to adult learning. This paper offers a mini-review of concepts derived from the literature for promoting inclusive postsecondary learning communities in a diverse and global society. This conceptually based paper blends current practices with traditional adult learning theories and includes considerations for those who work in university-based programs that prepare educational leaders.

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Introduction

Faculty and administrators who work in university-based preparation programs model civic responsibility and a global perspective for aspiring K-12 public school teachers and leaders. In the United States, university-based programs that prepare educational leaders are considered advanced-level programs by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Programs (2015). Council for the Accreditation of Educator Programs defines advanced-level programs as “educator preparation programs at the post-baccalaureate or graduate levels leading to licensure, certification, or endorsement” (para. 1). Those who work in university-based programs are in a unique position to positively influence teaching, leading, and learning in the 21st century—whether in traditional face-to-face classrooms or online. Creating and maintaining inclusive learning communities for a diverse and global society can be particularly challenging for online instructors of adult learners. Using their knowledge and understanding of teaching online, postsecondary instructors make decisions about instructional design to maintain desired levels of student learning and student satisfaction within adult learning environments (Costley & Lange, 2016). Candidates enrolled in university-based programs seek the assistance of university faculty and administrators as role models for facilitating positive interactions with others and advancing skills and dispositions for teaching, leading, and learning in a global society.

To help adult learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the 21st century, postsecondary instructors rely on their own practices and assumptions about teaching and

learning—including social and emotional constructs, culture, and motivation for learning. Vella (2002) described praxis as “doing with built-in reflection” (p. 115). Improvement of professional praxis in teaching and leading must be planned, intentional, and supported. Although it is not easy to scrutinize one’s own practice and assumptions, a process of becoming a critically reflective teacher (Brookfield, 1995) is a necessary component for influencing learning to bring positive change. Brookfield expounded,

No matter how much we may think we have an accurate sense of ourselves, we are stymied by the fact that we’re using our own interpretive filters to become aware of our own interpretive filters—the pedagogic equivalent of trying to see the back of one’s head while looking in the bathroom mirror. (p. 28)

Brookfield (1995) recommended viewing one’s own teaching through four lenses: “(1) our autobiographies as teachers and learners, (2) our students’ eyes, (3) our colleagues’ experiences, and (4) theoretical literature” (p. 29). Faculty reflecting critically on their own practices and assumptions may provide additional insights for modeling civic responsibility and a global perspective as they interact with students to meet the goals and objectives within the program.

To remain current and competitive in a global market, university faculty who work in online educational leadership programs must seek continuously to evaluate and prioritize usefulness of curriculum content while simultaneously meeting the demands inherent to teaching online courses. Such duties include managing and applying new technologies, facilitating online discussions, and conducting appropriate assessment of student learning outcomes. Accordingly, researchers (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012; Strong et al., 2012) have called for additional research on how to effectively design and facilitate online learning in higher education. Faculty and administrators who work in programs that prepare educational leaders focus on providing a quality curriculum consistent with meeting requirements for state certification and national accreditation.

State and national standards in teaching and leadership guide those who work in schools at the K-12 level and in university-based programs of preparation. For those who work in K-12 public schools, changes related to improving student achievement include the widespread initiative to adopt Common Core State Standards (2018) and the federally legislated Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). To carry out established guidelines, educators and educational leaders at the K-12 level must be able to understand and effectively apply relevant standards and regulations.

Those who work in formal programs that prepare school leaders focus not only on K-12 level Common Core State Standards, Every Student Succeeds Act, and Professional Standards for Educational Leadership adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015), but also on the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (2015). Revised standards and regulations bring new opportunities for educators to evaluate approaches in teaching, leading, and learning—including technology enhancements, interdisciplinary applications, and re-envisioned accountability for inclusive communities of care and support. The prevalence of educator accountability (Barnett et al., 2013) for student achievement throughout the U.S. education system necessitates a holistic approach to teaching, leading, and learning—including a comprehensive curriculum that not only prepares future school leaders, but also encourages adoption of culturally responsive practices for teaching and leading in a global society.

The purpose of this conceptually based paper is to explore relevant streams of knowledge about traditional adult learning theories and culturally responsive practices as consideration for those who teach in university-based programs. Research presented in this discussion is extant in the literature about teaching, leading, and learning. While the body of literature on educational leadership is extensive, little is known about teaching advanced-level leadership preparation programs in online spaces. Current topics such as online learning in higher education and inclusive learning within diverse communities are included as crucial elements in this discussion. Relevant streams of traditional and contemporary knowledge are presented in a cohesive structure to provide additional reflection for those who lead and teach within university-based educational leadership preparation programs.

Methods

Researchers conduct literature reviews for multiple purposes and organize them in a variety of formats for different audiences (Toracco, 2016). Suitable for readers with limited time constraints, Pautasso (2013) described a *mini-review* of literature as a condensed review that provides formal and critical analysis of extant research and synthesis of current knowledge to bring new understandings to a focused issue. This paper provides a mini-review with recommendations from the literature for teaching and learning in online spaces, including considerations for university-based educational leadership programs. A mini-review that blends traditional foundations of adult learning with current approaches for teaching and leading may help faculty and administrators acquire additional knowledge for building and supporting inclusive learning communities within university-based programs of preparation. Pautasso's (2013) ten recommended rules for conducting a literature review served as guidelines in the process. Examples of Pautasso's rules deemed as most helpful were: "Rule 1: Define a topic and audience" (p. 1); "Rule 6: Be critical and consistent" (p. 3); and "Rule 7: Find a logical structure" (p. 3).

Searches of relevant literature yielded a selection of published works about motivation, transformative learning theories, and culturally responsive practices—together with related information about teaching adults online. Multiple queries were conducted using the World Wide Web and library databases relating to areas of education, humanities, and social sciences. Some database examples include Academic Search Premier, ERIC, JSTOR, and SAGE Journals. Combinations of relevant terms or keywords were used to conduct the search. Simple and advanced searches included the following keywords: online teaching, online learning, online course, graduate course, higher education, educational leadership, program of preparation, culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching, culturally responsive leading, adult learner, and motivation in learning. Strategies for conducting the review included scanning references of articles for additional sources and preparing annotated bibliographies of relevant publications. Topics found in the literature were reviewed, categorized, and incorporated into the review of literature presented here.

Review of Literature

Managing information at the cutting edge of newly adopted legislation, education reform initiatives, technology, and research-based practices is a fundamental requirement of a successful educational leadership preparation program. Knowledge presented in this paper may be useful to those who work in university-based preparation programs and others interested in co-constructing

opportunities for inclusive teaching, leading, and learning in traditional and online spaces. This mini-review (Pautasso, 2013) focuses on the following four areas: (a) understanding principles related to theories of motivation and culturally responsive practices; (b) increasing awareness of nontraditional adult learners, social and emotional constructs, and deficit thinking; (c) exploring online learning and relevant practices for course design; and (d) considering approaches for leadership praxis in a global society.

Motivation and Culturally Responsive Practices

Derived from the extensive body of literature on teaching and learning, principles relating to theories of motivation (Grow, 1991; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988) and culturally responsive practices (Bottiani et al., 2018; Gay, 2002, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2009) are recognized in this discussion as essential elements in re-envisioning adult education to meet the demands of a culturally diverse society.

Motivation for learning varies from individual to individual—regardless of age. Grow’s (1991) staged self-directed learning model uses Hersey and Blanchard’s (1988) theory of situational leadership as a foundation to describe a continuum for learning. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) recommended the supervisor adjust one’s own behavior for relationship and task orientation to better accommodate the maturity level of the employee. With respect to Grow’s (1991) model for application of self-directed learning, teachers of adults assess each student’s level of maturity or capacity as a self-directed learner and adjust instruction accordingly to better accommodate students’ needs. By observing how students interact in online discussions and activities, instructors can assess student ability for using technology and determine student readiness for participating meaningfully in online spaces. Further, instructors can use their online presence to model necessary skills and influence positive behaviors for student engagement and collaboration.

Although conducted at the K-12 level, Ladson-Billings’ (2009) research on culturally relevant teaching may provide insights for teachers of adult learners. In a study of successful culturally relevant pedagogy at one elementary school, she identified two qualities the otherwise diverse group of female teachers had in common. The first quality was experience in the field—all of the women in the study had been teaching for at least 12 years—and the second quality was “that each of these teachers could point to a transformative moment in their lives that forced them to reassess the way they did their work” (p. 8). Ladson-Billings’ (2009) work on culturally relevant teaching is salient to the preparation of not only teachers, but also educational leaders—as those who implement programs and systems that support culturally responsive practices in K-12 schools. Those who work in programs that prepare K-12 school leaders can challenge students to reflect on the meaning they find in their own practices in relation to such concepts as social justice and leadership (Bogotch, 2002), caring leadership (Louis et al., 2016), inclusive leadership (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015), and being a listening leader (Safir, 2017), which may help to set the tone for positive transformation and renewal.

In a systematic review of empirical studies about inservice interventions intended to promote culturally responsive practices (CRP), Bottiani et al. (2018) credited Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) and Gay (2002, 2010) for their work in culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching respectively. Of 179 peer-reviewed articles screened for consideration, 10 articles met the criteria established by Bottiani et al. (2018). According to these researchers, the 10 eligible articles

included school-level or staff interventions to improve culturally responsive practices and reported findings from an empirical research study. Findings from their review suggested, “that empirical research examining the impact of interventions to improve CRP is in a relatively nascent stage, with the majority of studies (six of 10) being published in the past 7 years” (p. 13). The incipient nature of the literature on CRP is not indicative of the efforts invested by educators for developing and implementing culturally responsive practices in U.S. universities and schools.

Nontraditional Adult Learners, Social and Emotional Constructs, and Deficit Thinking

Reflecting on one’s own assumptions about nontraditional adult learners (Chen, 2017), social and emotional constructs (Hu & Smith, 2011; Smith & Hu, 2013; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Uchida et al., 2004), and deficit thinking (Abdi, 2016; Dudley-Marling, 2015; Sharma, 2018; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Valencia, 1997; Weiner, 2006) may not only inform educators’ and students’ worldviews, but also provide additional insights for developing culturally responsive praxes for teaching, leading, and learning.

Nontraditional Adult Learners

Graduate students in educational leadership programs are often enrolled part-time while employed full-time in education or other fields. With respect to age and employment status, part-time graduate students may be categorized as nontraditional adult learners. A student typically described as a nontraditional adult learner (NAL) is 25 years of age and older (Chen, 2017). Additionally, a student who is 25 years of age and younger with “characteristics indicative of adult responsibilities” (p. 1) is categorized as a NAL (Chen, 2017). A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (Horn & Carroll, 1996) identified a nontraditional adult learner (NAL) as an individual who meets one or more of the following seven characteristics: “delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, attended part time, financially independent, worked full time while enrolled, had dependents other than a spouse, was a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma” (p. i).

Chen (2017) identified the NAL as an important but often-neglected population at the postsecondary level. He further explained, “The assumption in this perspective is that learning is an ancillary activity implying less urgency or need” (p. 2). In any case, postsecondary institutions have increased efforts enrolling traditional students from the following populations: (a) domestic students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, and (b) international students (Chen, 2017). Whether students are traditional or nontraditional, implementing necessary supports for all students is critical because adult learning is an essential function to remain competitive in today’s workforce. Lamb and his colleagues (2017) identified the following key skills individuals will need for the 21st century: “(a) critical thinking, (b) creativity, (c) metacognition, (d) problem solving, (e) collaboration, (f) motivation, (g) self-efficacy, (h) conscientiousness, and (i) grit or perseverance” (p. 3). A global market and economy presents myriad opportunities for gainful employment, but employees must demonstrate the ability to use technology, communicate effectively, and interact respectfully within diverse communities—in person and online.

Online learning is gaining popularity in colleges and universities worldwide because delivery of instruction online provides learners more flexibility of place and time than traditional face-to-face courses (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012; Lee & Mendlinger, 2011; Strong et al., 2012). Lee and

Mendlinger (2011) stressed the importance of students having some knowledge of technology and computer skills prior to enrolling in online courses, adding that familiarity with technology “can provide a better online learning experience by enhancing interaction between students and instructors” (p. 244). Limited use of technology in online spaces means limited access to formal and informal learning—and limited access to virtual interaction, which may provide a sense of belonging for some adult learners. Further, necessary development of 21st century skills (Lamb et al., 2017; Liao et al., 2019; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012) may help adults become more confident and engaged as learners.

In addition to acquiring technological skills needed for effectively navigating online learning, some adults may be hesitant to further their education because of limited language or reading abilities. In a review of studies conducted at the undergraduate level, Perin (2013) stated, “low reading and writing skill among a sizable proportion of postsecondary students has been an ongoing concern in the United States since the 1970s, when open admissions policies were instituted in many publicly funded colleges across the country” (p. 118). She called for additional research to study more closely the performances of English language learners as compared to other learners. While Perin’s review focuses on students in undergraduate programs, less is known about the preparedness of English language learners in graduate-level programs that prepare educational leaders.

Limited language or reading abilities may not only affect students’ capacity as self-directed learners but may also inhibit them from seeking advanced learning opportunities altogether. As an example, students who are new to online learning in higher education may experience for the first time reading and synthesizing information in scholarly publications and applying research-based concepts while navigating new technologies. Chen (2017) asserted, “evaluating college-readiness of students, while needed, runs the risk of blaming students when they do not fit the academic culture” (p. 2). Convenient and affordable access to remedial education (Wellman & Vandal, 2011) may help adult students build necessary skills and find more meaning in their learning experiences. Implementing necessary supports for all students is critical because continuous, lifelong learning is essential to keep pace with a rapidly changing global society and workforce.

Social and Emotional Constructs

Exploring social and emotional constructs such as collectivism versus individualism may provide additional insights for instructors with respect to the design and facilitation of online courses. Merriam and Bierema (2014) stressed, “an ongoing lament as globalization takes hold and classrooms are increasingly multicultural, diverse, and multilingual is that learning cultures often clash, particularly between East and West” (p. 244). Developing a global perspective requires awareness of personal assumptions and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 2000), and adjusting one’s own praxis for teaching, leading, and learning. As an example, Uchida et al. (2004) posited individuals from East Asian cultures are more collaborative or collectivist in their approaches to social activities and learning, and individuals from European-American backgrounds are more independent. Understanding how social and emotional constructs vary from East to West—or from culture to culture (Hu & Smith, 2011; Smith & Hu, 2013; Uchida et al., 2004) may promote further consideration of cultural values when planning activities in traditional or online learning environments. Understanding differences in social and emotional constructs also provides

opportunity for faculty and students to make meaning of various forces that have potential to complicate relationships and routine interactions within diverse learning communities.

Smith and Hu (2013) credited Confucian philosophy as having influenced collectivism in Chinese classrooms where “discipline and conformity that reflect teacher domination and authority” (p. 88) is stressed. These researchers added that American classrooms focusing more on inquiry, practical application, and democratic values are modeled after Dewey’s (1916, 1938) progressivist approach to education. They conceptualized a blended framework of Eastern and Western philosophies for a more holistic view of teaching and learning in the 21st century. Findings in the study confirmed elements of their blended framework were consistent with the 21st century skills. Smith and Hu combined Eastern values of “responsibility, commitment, industry, and persistence” (p. 102) and Western values of “individuality, self-confidence, and democratic education” (p. 102) into one framework for further consideration and exploration.

Although educators applying a blended framework (Smith & Hu, 2013) for teaching and learning may necessitate adoption of a new paradigm, positive attributes of Eastern and Western cultures may effectively support teaching and learning of 21st century skills and a global perspective in education. Lee and Mendlinger (2011) added, “catering for cultural diversity seems imperative for the diffusion of online courses for international use. ...Subsequently, Western vs non-Western culture constitutes a set of parameters that may significantly influence online learning acceptance and satisfaction” (pp. 243-244). As instructional leaders, university faculty, university administrators, and K-12 public school administrators stay current on newly adopted initiatives and regulations that affect educators so they can provide relevant and appropriate inservice opportunities for professional development. As aspiring school leaders, students enrolled in educational leadership programs must also be prepared to provide social and emotional supports that foster civic responsibility and culturally responsive practices for a diverse society. K-12 school leaders not only model positive behaviors and respectful treatment of others for staff and students, they understand the importance of preparing students to work in a continuously changing global market and economy.

Deficit Thinking

Inaccurate assumptions about individuals whose cultures or backgrounds are different from our own are described in the literature as deficit thinking (Dudley-Marling, 2015; Dudley-Marling & Dudley-Marling, 2015; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Valencia, 1997; Weiner, 2006). Pointing out the dangers of deficit thinking at the post-secondary level, Dudley-Marling (2015) noted,

In the United States and Canada schooling is conceived as a competition with clear winners and losers. The winners go to the best colleges and universities with a pipeline to the highest status, most lucrative careers. The losers in this high-stakes contest are assigned to the lowest academic tracks, perhaps drop out, and, in the end, compete for low status, low paying jobs. (p. 1)

Having conducted research in the United States on families from Somalia and students from other places of origin, Abdi (2016) advocated ending the paradigm of deficit thinking because it marginalizes students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Regarding negative effects of deficit thinking, she added, “everyday classroom interactions can have powerful meaning, imparting intended and unintended lessons about who belongs and who doesn’t” (para. 6). When the culture of the learning community reflects the dominant culture, the message is that any group that is not

from that culture is not valued (Abdi, 2016). Deficit thinking is harmful to students' well-being (Sharma, 2018) and is counterproductive to inclusive learning communities where all students can experience a sense of belonging. Deficit thinking by some can have detrimental and lasting effects on individuals who seek acceptance as equal contributors within communities for learning and beyond.

Increasing awareness of culturally diverse social constructs and adopting culturally responsive practices (Bottiani et al., 2018; Gay, 2002, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2009) within universities and K-12 schools may eliminate harmful incidents of deficit thinking. Piquemal et al. (2019) noted that both the teacher and students have a responsibility to cherish a hospitable learning environment. These researchers added, "a safe space would enable marginalized students to feel empowered to address negative stereotypes and prejudices directed towards them" (p. 190). When teachers think critically about their practices, they increase their own awareness of how they and their students interact within the classroom—whether it is traditional or online. Brookfield (1995) noted that critically reflective teachers not only attempt to work in a more democratic way, they also "create activities, assignments, and patterns of interaction that challenge unfair habits, competitive ethics, and destructive expectations that are unthinkingly imported from the outside world" (pp. 266-267). University and school personnel are encouraged to continue supporting and researching programs at all levels of education that promote culturally responsive practices and build on a variety of social and emotional constructs.

Online Learning and Course Design

The literature about online learning at the graduate level (Churcher et al, 2014; Costley & Lange, 2016; Strong et al., 2012) is limited, particularly with respect to university-based programs that prepare educational leaders. In a study about student satisfaction in online agricultural courses at the graduate level, Strong et al. (2012) described a learning environment based on the following six constructs: "instructor support, student interaction and collaboration, student autonomy, authentic learning, personal relevance, and active learning" (p. 102). These researchers added, "The ability of students to meld ideas into cohesive concepts can be leveraged by a higher degree of directed learning from the instructor and a greater collaboration among students" (p. 106). They recommended educators of online classes support graduate students' social presence by enhancing student-to-student and instructor-to-student interaction and collaboration. Meaningful and collaborative learning experiences are possible in online spaces, especially when students and instructors use their social presence to engage authentically in classroom discussions and online activities.

Strong et al. (2012) suggested designing activities that promote collaboration and authentic learning experiences aligned to student interests, and including social media such as Facebook or Twitter to help increase student satisfaction and help students increase their social presence in online learning environments. In a study using Facebook as a learning tool (Churcher et al., 2014), findings showed that "Facebook postings and comments provided students with more explicit ownership of the examples used, and topics discussed, in class" (p. 40). Churcher et al. (2014) added that wiki-based interactions "allowed students to debate, correct and work in a collaborative environment to scaffold information while expanding their zones of proximal development" (pp. 43-44). While students in the study were motivated to learn from each other and participate in online discussions, cultivating a virtual environment that supports student motivation capable of

influencing authentic engagement (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012) can be challenging for online educators. Facilitators of adult learning can promote student-centered learning by intentionally designing activities that employ multiple means of interaction, honor diversity inside and outside the learning community, and encourage contemplation about one's own beliefs in online and face-to-face courses.

Learning in an online space allows students time to process new information and reflect on their responses, which may support a student-centered environment. Despite a shift toward a more student-centered online environment, researchers (Costley & Lange, 2016) warned that students still need an effective instructor to facilitate online interaction. Studying the effects of instructor control in online learning environments at the undergraduate level, these researchers found that students' perceived levels of learning increased in online environments where instructors controlled content and interaction. They pointed out, "Although it appears that an online environment that is controlled can increase levels of learning, it is important to be aware that online communities should still be student-centered" (pp. 178-179). Findings in the study underscored the importance of designing online courses to optimize learning and interaction.

Exploring Relevant Practices for Course Design

Exploring and applying culturally responsive practices, frameworks for overall course design, and new andragogies are vital to fostering inclusive communities in adult learning. Culturally responsive practices for teaching and leading (Bottiani et al., 2018; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016) are essential to re-envisioning adult education for meeting the demands of a culturally diverse society. Universal Design for Learning is a framework for teaching that focuses on providing students with multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, and multiple opportunities for expression (Meyer et al., 2014; Rogers-Shaw et al, 2018). Student-centered activities and a flexible approach for learning afforded by Universal Design for Learning appeals to a diverse population, including traditional and nontraditional adult learners.

Additional methods or practices for adult learning found in the literature include film-based assignments (Olson et al., 2016); museum learning (Kawalilak & Groen, 2016); biographical prompts (Lohr & Haley, 2018); service learning (Early & Lasker, 2018); and problem based learning (Roopashree, 2014). Roopashree (2014) defined problem based learning as an instructional approach that "advocates experience-based education and which helps the students to learn by solving problems and reflecting on their experiences, thereby helping students to become active learners by placing them in real-world problems which makes students responsible for their learning" (p. 9). Responding to the need for empirical studies about online learning, Early and Lasker (2018) conducted a study about integrating service learning in an online undergraduate health course. They noted some of the drawbacks of online learning as "learners feeling that they are learning in isolation, mundane assignments lacking in the experiential, and students feeling a lack of instructor presence and community online" (p. 1). Online activities that require problem-based learning and service learning may facilitate increased collaboration and anticipation of how one might deal with actual situations encountered.

Educational leadership faculty can encourage more engaged learning and critical self-reflection by incorporating relevant problem-based learning, service learning, and teaching case studies into

online course curriculum. Content-specific teaching case studies that relate to cultural awareness (e.g., Fleig, 2016; Horsford & Powell, 2016; Theoharis & Causton, 2016) and processing emotion (e.g., Tenuto et al., 2015, 2016) in educational leadership provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own experiences in relation to scenarios presented. Some of the major methods or practices that are used specifically in educational leadership programs include “multimedia methods, cases, simulations, technology, action research, and reflection” (Crow & Whiteman, 2016, p. 130). Faculty who work in programs that prepare educational leaders are encouraged to explore a variety of practices found in the literature and determine their usefulness to online learning as a part of effective course design.

Leadership Praxis in a Global Society

Implementing change within a culture of autonomy or a culture that resists change poses a challenge to those who are leading change. In a national study about reforming programs that prepare educational leaders, researchers (Murphy et al., 2008) found evidence suggesting university-based programs have historically operated within a culture of autonomy. They added, “The culture of autonomy is incompatible with the kind of work needed to develop programs” (p. 2196). Recommendations for reform include replacing the autonomous culture with a culture of community, collaboration, and integration. Noting that program reform initiatives require technical and adaptive change, Murphy et al. (2008) further explained,

Technical change demands the commitment of resources that are in short supply—time, people, money, favors, and all the opportunity costs of other benefits foregone. Adaptive change asks of people that they give up even more important things—familiar ways, loyalties to everyone somehow connected to the status quo, and identity. (p. 2195)

Brookfield (1995) explained, “in colleges, becoming known as a raiser of awkward questions can gain you a reputation as a troublemaking subversive who refuses to play by the rules that everyone else accepts” (p. 229). A holistic framework for leadership provides a lens through which to view possible alternatives to traditionally held practices and assumptions. He added, “to become critically reflective, we need to find some lenses that reflect back to us as a stark and differently highlighted picture of who we are and what we do” (pp. 28-29). Educational leadership faculty and administrators can make a difference by cultivating democratic, ethical, and socially just leadership praxes, which are important aspects of educational leadership preparation and practice. Leadership approaches offered for consideration in this paper may promote a culture of community and collaboration within university-based programs.

Renewed approaches in education that complement leading in a global society are emergent in the literature. Educational leaders and faculty can provide necessary input and choose a leadership framework that best fits the needs of their program and culture of the organization in which they work. Pedagogically centered leadership (English et al., 2012), social justice and leadership (Bogotch, 2002), caring leadership (Louis et al., 2016), inclusive leadership (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015), cultivating democratic professional practice in education (Tenuto, 2014, 2015), and promoting ethical leadership praxis in a global society (Tenuto & Gardiner, 2018) are some of the approaches or frameworks found in the literature for fostering caring and inclusive communities in education. Equally important are understandings of social and emotional constructs, cultural awareness, and critical reflection as part of a foundational vision for practices in education and beyond.

Successful implementation of renewed leadership approaches at the university level may not only promote collaboration within university-based programs, it may directly translate to increased faculty awareness and capacity for fostering inclusive communities in online spaces. As further consideration, students in university-based programs who become educational leaders may use these renewed leadership approaches to support culturally responsive practices in K-12 schools (Bottiani et al., 2018) and higher education (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016) and other frameworks that essentially prepare all learners to positively interact, work, and live in a diverse society.

Discussion

No matter the level in education, students rely on their administrators and instructors to transcend negative perceptions and inaccurate assumptions about them and their communities, and to help them navigate the educational system. The school leader, as a positive influence in establishing a trusting and collaborative school environment, should not be underestimated. Those who work in university-based preparation programs can adopt a holistic approach to teaching, leading, and learning that may foster dispositions of inclusion and care for students who are shaping their teaching and leading philosophies.

Conversely, school environments with limited awareness or support for cultural responsiveness can create conditions that negatively impact students' dispositions or worldviews. Deficit thinking can have serious ethical implications on students (Sharma, 2018), so early detection and deconstruction of negative assumptions is an imperative for establishing inclusive communities that promote responsible citizenship and culturally responsive practices. Deficit thinking is not only harmful to the well-being of learners, it is counterintuitive to establishing and maintaining communities where all individuals feel welcome—where all are treated with dignity, kindness, and respect.

Educational leaders and teachers share responsibility for developing culturally responsive praxes, implementing culturally responsive curriculum, and modeling positive behaviors for responsible citizenship. Guiding students toward self-direction is complex (Grow, 1994; Tennant, 1992), but faculty can support adult learners to be more engaged and self-directed by using student-centered practices within inclusive online communities. This necessitates a focus on course design, which includes using methods or practices that support development of course content, assessing student understanding of course content, and promoting positive online interactions within an inclusive learning community. Future work remains in building collaboration within university-based programs of teacher preparation and leadership preparation for developing a more seamless curriculum consistent with state certification, national accreditation, and professional standards focusing on cultural responsiveness and care.

Faculty and administrators in university-based programs have a role in not only preparing students as future educators and educational leaders, but also in supporting traditional and nontraditional adult learners from diverse backgrounds. This role includes promoting culturally responsive praxes and taking necessary steps to address the needs of individuals as current students and as future employees in a global work environment. To ensure caring and inclusive communities within a complex global society, educators of adult students must be proactive about critically reflecting on their own professional praxes and relationships with others.

Conclusions

Creating and maintaining inclusive learning communities can pose a challenge for educators, including administrators and instructors in higher education. Extant research-based concepts and strategies may help support those who prepare students to meet the demands of a culturally diverse society and global workforce. Online learning is one strategy that is gaining popularity in postsecondary institutions worldwide. Since online education is relatively new, it has not been studied as widely as traditional face-to-face education. Additional studies are needed with respect to providing online courses at the postsecondary level. This paper provides a *mini-review* (Pautasso, 2013) with recommendations found in the literature as consideration for those who want to know more about creating and maintaining inclusive learning communities within traditional face-to-face classrooms or online spaces.

While ample research exists about faculty who work in educational leadership programs (Crow & Whiteman, 2016) less is known about the candidates enrolled in educational leadership programs. Crow and Whiteman added, “Recently, research has identified characteristics of graduates but not the candidates who enter our programs” (p. 138). They recommended conducting additional empirical studies investigating students’ skills, competencies, and dispositions. Additional quantitative and qualitative studies on the use of online practices for preparing educational leaders would make a relevant addition to the literature. Bottiani et al. (2018) also recommended conducting rigorous empirical studies that explore challenges associated with measuring and operationalizing CRP at multiple levels of education.

Blending educational theory as it relates to teaching, leading, and learning with effective strategies for online teaching may further praxis for teaching and leading in a global society. Not only does theory inform practice, it also helps educators shape their individual practices as an integral part of continuous improvement and professional growth. Current knowledge found in the literature may bring new understandings and promote valuable discourses in education across the globe. Activities such as reflecting on research-based concepts, applying research-based strategies, and implementing research-based frameworks may help close the gap between theory and practice.

University administrators and faculty who work in educator preparation programs understand the salience of a holistic approach for teaching, leading, and learning. The following four topics discussed in this paper may provide additional opportunities for reflection: (a) understanding principles relating to theories of motivation; (b) increasing awareness of nontraditional learners, social and emotional constructs, and deficit thinking; (c) exploring online learning and relevant practices for course design; and (d) considering approaches for leadership praxis in a global society. As role models of responsible citizenship within a larger community, faculty and administrators help all learners—traditional or nontraditional—navigate the education system and find their niche in university-based programs of preparation. A reasonable focus for advancing teaching and leading is university faculty and administrators promoting and modeling inclusive learning communities for aspiring educational leaders—who will be responsible for supporting culturally responsive programs and practices in their schools.

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