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MOVING A UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE TOWARD A LIFELONG LEARNING ORIENTATION

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Extensive research and experiments have been conducted into the processes necessary for moving a university or college toward a lifelong learning orientation. These ideas are presented here for consideration and assistance for those who wish to implement and test the ideas in new and different contexts

This paper focuses on the following elements: A definition of lifelong learning; Criteria producing a solution to today's lifelong learning issues, Faculty development of good practice oriented toward understanding & helping adults learn; Domains for planning and implementing a successful lifelong learning institution; Understanding developments that will change the environment in which lifelong adult learning will take place, and, The experience of adult learning innovation over the last generation and some of its important contributions to this rapidly changing environment.

I. Lifelong Learning Definition:

A master concept or principle regarded as the continuous and never complete development, changes, and adaptation in human consciousness that occur partly through deliberate action but even more as a result of the business of living, where learning may be intentional or unintentional that includes acquiring greater understanding of other people and the world at large, based on four pillars of learning: learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be.

II. Solution to Today's Lifelong Learning Issues in the University Will Result From:

1. Inclusiveness of adults
 - placing high value on providing education in the adult years
 - ongoing responsiveness to the demand by a dynamic society for providing new forms of adult education

2. Access of learning opportunities for adults through innovation
 - responsiveness to adult learners
 - + creation of greater access
 - + increase of
 - * pluralism &
 - * multiculturalism
 - + welcoming of part-time learners
 - + establishment of degree programs that are
 - * external &
 - * competence-based
 - a new stage of innovation marked by
 - + changed faculty roles where learning takes priority over teaching (*Note -- see # III below)
 - + new institutional configurations of
 - * web based, asynchronous &
 - * multi-institutional collaboration
 - + broad application of
 - * technology &
 - * distance learning
 - + the enduring values of
 - * egalitarianism
 - * individualism &
 - * pluralism

III. Faculty Development of Good Practice Oriented toward Understanding & Helping Adults Learn in:

1. Determining learner needs
 - assessed carefully
 - addressed
 - + fairly &
 - + equitably
2. Adult learning programs
 - arise from needs assessment &
 - planned to accomplish learner outcomes
3. Adult learning experiences
 - high quality
 - * positive learning environment
 - * flexibility
 - * adaptability
 - * mutual respect between teacher & learner
 - adult learner-centered
 - + encouraging a positive psychological environment for learning
 - + allowing learner participation in the design of experiences
 - + relating learning to learner's
 - * prior experience &
 - * application
 - + using varying types of learning techniques
 - + recognizing & addressing different learning styles
 - + providing continuous feedback to learners
 - + arranging appropriate physical settings
4. Adult learning assessment
 - outcome based
 - designed to evaluate participants' previous learning
 - + formal or
 - + informal

5. Faculty and staff needing

- to be adequately prepared to work with adult learners by
 - + participating in faculty development learning experiences &
 - + keeping abreast with the current literature and research in how to help adults learn
- to participate in ongoing evaluations and development of their own capabilities in six major building blocks of
 - + beliefs and notions about adults learners
 - + perceptions concerning qualities of effective teachers
 - + ideas of the phases and sequences in the learning process
 - + teaching tips and learning techniques
 - + implementing the prepared plan
 - + cultural and contextual awareness
- to articulate and clarify their own teaching philosophy regarding adult learners

6. Programs for adult learners having

- clearly stated missions
- sufficient resources to carry out their missions
 - + rigorous financial administration that supports the adult, lifelong learning mission
 - + necessary services for
 - * learning &
 - * student support
 - + policies governing
 - * learner confidentiality &
 - * other matters
 - + ethical standards for
 - * learner recruitment &
 - * professional practice

7. Characteristics of highly effective adult learning programs are very clearly delineated

It was as though this research snapped multiple pictures of a barely visible phenomenon from various angles, and when developed, all pictures revealed the same clear image.

Results revealed that adults can and do experience significant personal growth at midlife. However, adult students grew significantly only in one type of learning environment, they tended not to grow or to regress in another type. What was the difference? The seven key factors found in learning programs that stimulated adult development are:

1. An environment where students feel safe and supported, where individual needs and uniqueness are honored, where abilities and life achievements are acknowledged and respected.
2. An environment that fosters intellectual freedom and encourages experimentation and creativity
3. An environment where faculty treats adult students as peers--accepted and respected as intelligent experienced adults whose opinions are listened to, honored, appreciated. Such faculty members often comment that they learn as much from their students as the students learn from them
4. Self-directed learning, where students take responsibility for their own learning. They work with faculty to design individual learning programs which address what each person needs and wants to learn in order to function optimally in their profession
5. Pacing, or intellectual challenge. Optimal pacing is challenging people just beyond their present level of ability. If challenged too far beyond, people give up. If challenged too little, they become bored and learn little. Pacing can be compared to playing tennis with a slightly better player; your game tends to improve. But if the other player is far better and it's impossible to return a ball, you give up, overwhelmed. If the other player is less experienced and can return none of your balls, you learn little. Those adults who reported experiencing high levels of intellectual stimulation--to the point of feeling discomfort--grew more
6. Active involvement in learning, as opposed to passively listening to lectures. Where students and instructors interact and dialogue, where students try out new ideas in the workplace, where exercises and experiences are used to bolster facts and theory, adults grow more.
7. Regular feedback mechanisms for students to tell faculty what works best for them and what they want and need to learn--and faculty who hear and make changes based on student input

8. Changing faculty roles with the focus moving

Away From ----->Toward

The Instructional Paradigm

The Learning Paradigm

Learning Theory

- > Knowledge existing 'out there'
- > Knowledge coming in 'chunks' & 'bits' delivered by instructors
- > Learning as cumulative and linear
- > Fits the 'storehouse of knowledge' metaphor
- > Learning as teacher-centered
- > Learning as teacher controlled
- > 'Live' teacher, 'live' students required
- > The classroom and learning are competitive and individualistic
- > Talent and ability are rare

- > Knowledge existing in each person's mind & being shaped by individual experience
- > Knowledge being constructed, created, and internalized
- > Learning as a nesting & interacting of frameworks
- > Fits the 'learning how to ride a bicycle' metaphor
- > Learning as student-centered
- > Learning as the students' responsibility
- > 'Proactive' learner required with teaching resources accessible
- > Learning environments and learning are cooperative, collaborative & supportive
- > Talent and ability are abundant

Productivity/Funding

- > Definition of productivity as instructing the unlearned
- > Cost per hour of instruction per student
- > Funding for hours of instruction

- > Definition of productivity as helping adults learn
- > Cost per unit of learning per student
- > Funding for learning outcomes

Nature of Roles

- > Faculty as authoritarian experts
- > Faculty as primarily lecturers
- > Faculty and students acting independently and in isolation
- > Teachers classifying and sorting students
- > Staff serving /supporting faculty and the process of instruction
- > Any expert can teach
- > Line governance; independent actors

- > Faculty as models exemplifying lifelong learning
- > Faculty as primarily designers & implementers of adult learning techniques & environments
- > Faculty and students working in teams with each other and with other staff
- > Teachers helping develop every student's competencies and talents
- > All staff as educators who help produce student learning and success
- > Empowering learning through challenging and complex means
- > Shared governance; teamwork

IV. Domains for Planning and Implementing A Successful Lifelong Learning University:

1. A clear written statement of mission and purpose regarding the university becoming a lifelong learning institution;
2. A strong commitment, including funding, to undertake the program of lifelong learning;
3. An appropriate match between adult learners and the program of lifelong learning, as exhibited through
 - Recruitment,
 - Admission into the program,
 - Entry that is welcoming & inviting, &
 - Continuing practices;
4. Provision of a Favorable Climate of Learning, Including
 - Advising,
 - Responsiveness to inquiries,
 - Supportive procedures for application, &
 - Other services;
5. Provision of an adult learner-oriented curriculum and modes of lifelong learning;
6. Adaptability to adult learner circumstances, either individually or in context;
7. Recognition and involvement of adult learner experience;
8. Commitment and development of faculty and staff to serve lifelong learners;
9. Clearly identified administration and governance for serving lifelong learners;
10. Ongoing evaluations for program enhancement, and documentation increasingly reflecting an orientation toward lifelong learning; and,
11. Positive program impact and future prospects for lifelong learning.

V. Understanding Developments that Will Change the Environment in which Lifelong Adult Learning Will Take Place.

1. Multiple opportunities for learning offered by diverse sources will replace the past monopoly of formal academic institutions.
2. Learners will demand and find greater flexibility and fluidity in the learning process and the accrediting of learning.
3. Technology not only will open up access to more learning but will conquer barriers of time, distance, and convenience that previously have been prohibitive.
4. Learners will plan their own learning as they need it. They will demand just-in-time learning in segments or modules to serve as building blocks to further credentials. They will seek out peers, knowledgeable persons, and other informal sources of learning wherever they are.
5. Many earners will need guidance to and help with appropriate selection among the many sources of information and learning. Services will need to be provided along the lines of a lifelong learning resource system made up of institutions, voluntary organizations, economic enterprises, the media, environmental resources, and people.
6. Employers and consumers will have greater expectation that credentials accurately represent ability to apply learning and perform roles based on that learning.
7. Many persons will experience learning as a continual process intertwined with living that enhances their economic potential, enriches their lives, and engages them with their surrounding society.
8. Disparity and inequality will continue among more and less educated people. Those who do not now recognize the value of lifelong learning will have to be actively engaged in developing their potential.
9. Greater collaboration will be necessary among institutions to share resources and between institutions and client groups such as employers, unions, governmental agencies, and social agencies to achieve mutually sought learning goals.

VI. The Experience of Adult Learning Innovation Over the Last Generation Has Contributed Some Important Elements to this Rapidly Changing Environment.

1. It has broken the constraints of older systems that prevented change.
2. It has driven institutions to explore alternative processes to reach agreed-upon ends.
3. It has raised the lifelong learners' expectations that adaptation and innovation be the order of the day in this new generation:
 - successful flexibility in
 - + time,
 - + place,
 - + routine;
 - learning designs to serve students' varying goals;
 - learner-centered models to accommodate self-determining initiative of many learners;
 - faculty serving as mentors & facilitators to assist autonomy of learners selecting learning resources;
 - combining sensitivity and adaptability to individual learning styles in more structured models serving focused objectives of some groups;
 - reaching persons who reject or are unaware of the possibility of learning; and,
 - increasingly including and involving persons who have been underrepresented in higher education in the past.

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