

Meeting Student Needs through the Open Campus: Opportunities and Possibilities

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Presentation Topics

- The Needs ~ Critical thinking, employability, civic responsibility/political astuteness, gender equity, ethical behaviour.
- Avoiding the tragedy of the **pedagogy of the oppressed**.
- On-line versus face-to-face/in-class.
- Retaining students in the online environment.
- Some Hope: The DFATD-SDEC Project in the Open Campus – Investing in employability skills of the Caribbean with sensitivity to Gender.

The Caribbean Context

- There is a deep concern for the Region's economic and social development trajectory.
- The context includes, *inter alia*,
 - crime and delinquency;
 - the seeming lack of readiness of university, college and high school graduates for the job market;
 - the inability of people to coexist;
 - the perceived and real threats to democracy and the extent of political participation or non-participation;

The Caribbean Context

- the apparent growth in white collar crime, including corruption and graft in public office;
- gender based violence and its implications for gender equity;
- the male/female differential in educational participation, especially at the higher education levels;
- poor health decisions as a result of deficient education; and
- poor governance overall.

The Needs

- **Critical thinking** ~ Critical thinking presupposes reading widely, pondering or reflecting on what one reads; interrogating the content, the assumptions and assertions; and drawing conclusions not in a haphazard or illogical way, but based on one's practical experience as well as previous and current readings.
- Some attributes anticipated in the Strategic Plan 2012-17 of The University of the West Indies:
 - A critical and creative thinker;
 - Innovative and entrepreneurial; and
 - Globally aware and well-grounded in his/her regional identity.

The Needs

- **Employability** ~ NB: The assumption must not be that graduates need no further training; but they must be trainable and educable;
- Graduates should possess some basic skills including abilities to:
 - Read and understand what they read;
 - Count and calculate;
 - Communicate orally and in writing;
 - Argue logically;
 - Tolerate and be respectful.
- The concept of emotional intelligence is absolutely important as a skill for employability.

The Needs

- **Civic Responsibility/Political Astuteness** ~ Teaching our students to become citizens who can sort through the apparent political, social and economic muddle and arrive at solid conclusions regarding governance of our relatively small societies.
- Some questions:
 - Are we truly convinced of the benefit of a truly democratic system where all sides feel their chances are fair?
 - Are all sides committed to the sanctity of the democratic system and its concomitant political, constitutional and legal instrumentalities?

The Needs

- **Civic Responsibility/Political Astuteness** ~
- Some questions:
 - Is there a firm commitment by all to the concept of the separation of powers (Judiciary, Legislature, Executive)?
 - Do the electors understand the power which resides in their collective hands?

The Needs

- **Civic Responsibility/Political Astuteness** ~ Sir Shridath Ramphal at the Sir Archibald Nedd Memorial Lecture in St. George's Grenada (2011) said:

“It is easy, perhaps natural, for us as West Indian people to shift blame to our Governments; and Governments, of course, are not blameless. But, in our democracies, Governments do what we allow them to do; they themselves say: ‘we are doing what our people want us to do’. It is not always true; but who can deny it, when we accept their excesses with equanimity, certainly in silence.” (Is the West Indies West Indian?)

The Needs

- **Gender Equity** ~ Fundamentally, gender equity addresses the basic concern of interaction between males and females within our Caribbean countries or societies.
- Important because it is essentially about the best use of our human resources and therefore whether gender acts as a barrier towards either achieving its full or optimal potential.
- Important within the home, office and the society in general. Lack of gender equity can mean loss of productivity because we may not use our HR optimally.

The Needs

- **Ethical Behaviour** ~ According to Cyndi Banks (2009):

“Ethics provides us with a way to make moral choices when we are uncertain about what to do in a situation involving moral issues. In the process of everyday life, moral rules are desirable, not because they express absolute truth, but because they are generally reliable guides for normal circumstances.” (Singer 1995 in Banks, 2009, p. 3)

The Needs

- Cyndi Banks (2009) offers a table of Virtues and Spheres of Existence from *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*, 3rd ed., by Hinman, 2003 (See next slide)

	Deficiency	Mean	Excess
Attitude toward Self	Servility Self-deprivation	Proper self-love Proper pride Self-respect	Arrogance Conceit Egoism Narcissism Vanity
Attitude toward offenses of others	Ignoring them Being a doormat	Anger Forgiveness Understanding	Revenge Grudge Resentment
Attitude toward good deeds of others	Suspicion Envy Ignoring them	Gratitude Admiration	Over-indebtedness
Attitude toward our own offenses	Indifference Remorselessness Downplaying	Regret Remorse Making amends Learning from them Self-forgiveness	Toxic guilt Scrupulosity Shame

	Deficiency	Mean	Excess
Attitude toward our own good deeds	Belittling Disappointment	Sense of accomplishment Humility	Self-righteousness
Attitude toward the suffering of others	Callousness	Compassion	Pity “Bleeding heart”
Attitude toward the achievements of others	Self-satisfaction Complacency Competition	Admiration Emulation	Envy
Attitude toward death and danger	Cowardice	Courage	Foolhardiness
Attitude toward our own desires	Anhedonia (inability to experience pleasure from activities usually found enjoyable)	Temperance Moderation	Lust Gluttony

	Deficiency	Mean	Excess
Attitude toward our friends	Indifference	Loyalty	Obsequiousness Sycophancy Flattery Fawning
Attitude toward other people	Exploitation	Respect	Deference Submissiveness Sycophancy

Avoiding Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Friere (1975) argues that it cannot be assumed that:
 - when teachers teach students are taught;
 - teachers know everything and students know nothing;
 - teachers talk and the students listen meekly;
 - students always comply with the choices that teachers attempt to enforce;
 - students gain vicarious satisfaction or pleasure from the actions of their teachers; and
 - students always adapt to the programmes/agenda selected by the teachers or institutions, without reference to the actual needs of the students.

Avoiding Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Jaffee (2003) speaks of the “**pedagogical ecology of the traditional classroom**” (p. 228) which he describes as incorporating a set of restricted social roles and cut and dried expectations that constrain the behaviours of teachers and students and bestow superior status and power to particular social actors.

Avoiding Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Jaffee (1997) suggests four pedagogical principles and practices that can aid the learning process for online learners:
 - **Interactivity** - design of courses so that they promote regular interaction between teachers and students, among students, and linking students to the learning environment.
 - **Mediation** - involves the teacher putting forward and constructing questions concerning the course material in a manner that students are challenged to apply knowledge to a familiar context.

Avoiding Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Jaffee's (1997) four pedagogical principles and practices cont'd:
 - **Active learning** - practised by sifting through the written or lecture material, reordering and reformulating concepts, ideas, and arguments with a view to applying them to local circumstances and making what has been learnt or understood more intelligible (Jaffe, 1997).

Avoiding Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Jaffee's (1997) four pedagogical principles and practices cont'd:
 - **Writing to learn** - effective in accomplishing active learning; asynchronous technology can be particularly valuable in aiding this.

On-Line vs. face-to-face

- According to Bergstrand and Savage (2013, p. 304):

“It is likely that online courses are not universally ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ to traditional courses but depend on the training and resources provided by institutions, as well as on the decisions and teaching strategies of instructors. Thus, administrators and instructors at institutions of higher education should continue to strive to ensure that undergraduate students enrolled in online courses receive the same quality of education as their peers in traditional classroom environments.”

On-Line vs. face-to-face

- According to Driscoll et al. (2012, p. 325):

“Overall, these findings support arguments that there is no inherent deficiency in the effectiveness of the online classroom. They furthermore cast significant doubt on a number of prior studies that, through failing to control for previous academic performance, have found the opposite to be true. Our results suggest that the conclusions of any comparison between online and F2F courses that fails to control for student aptitude should be called into question. Our results also highlight the need for further examination of which students are electing to take online classes and the reasons behind that decision.”

On-Line vs. face-to-face

- According to Driscoll et al. (2012, p. 326):

“Learning is a flexible and dynamic process that can be successfully accomplished across a wide range of settings, methods, and strategies. The quality of the learning experience is determined by the pedagogy used, not the medium through which the learning takes place. If designed properly, in a way that stresses interaction, clear structure, and strong content, online courses can offer a learning environment that is as equally effective and enjoyable as the traditional classroom.”

On-Line vs. face-to-face

- The asynchronous environment has its advantages:
 - Shielded by their respective computers – intimidation and shyness may be reduced.
 - Students have more time to ponder their possible responses.
 - Possibility of groupthink is minimized.
 - A forum is provided for the submission of an array of autonomously and originally constructed responses that are shared online.

Retention of students in Open Campus

- Warrican *et al.* (2014) argue that the finding of a retention rate of nearly 80 percent among the cohort of students in the Open Campus is very commendable, when there is much concern about the high attrition rates among students in online programmes (Mon, 2010; Simpson, 2012).
- They explain this high retention rate thus:
 - all students are assigned to online tutors for each course that they take.
 - both students and tutors have the support of a team that includes experts with technical and pedagogical knowledge.

Retention of students in Open Campus

- Warrican *et al.* (2014) :
 - students have access to the country sites where they can also receive assistance.
 - At these sites, they have access to library and computer lab facilities, as well as audio-/video-conferencing facilities, which provide them with direct contact with their tutors if the need arises.
 - Online support teams provide assistance with both academic pursuits and any personal challenges.

The DFATD-SDEC Project

- In March 2013, UWI Open Campus signed a four year (2013-2017) Contribution Agreement with the Government of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade & Development (DFATD) aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of UWI Open Campus to increase the number of employable graduates who contribute to the socio-economic development of the Caribbean Region – long-term goal.

The DFATD-SDEC Project

- The project Agreement is called Strengthening Distance Education in the Caribbean (SDEC).
- Its aims include:
 - 1) Development of new and renewed market demand driven programmes (online and face-to-face).
 - 2) Enhanced gender-sensitive marketing and communication.
 - 3) Capacity building in the areas of transformational organisation, change management, leadership, and systems and processes and telecommunications/ICT.

The DFATD-SDEC Project

- The SDEC project is valued at CND 31.062M, of which \$19.260M is funded by the Canadian Government. Other funding partners include The UWI Open Campus (\$7.658M, contribution-in-kind), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB, \$3M) and the Universal Service Fund (USF, \$1.144M).

The DFATD-SDEC Project

The ultimate aim of the project is to:

- 1) Increase employable male and female graduates by strengthening UWI Open Campus' institutional capacity;
- 2) Offer increased access to post-secondary education, regionally and beyond, through enhanced programmes and learning sites.
- 3) Deliver education on demand, anytime and anywhere especially to remote and other underserved communities (e.g., working adults, the male youth and community-based persons with little or no access to brick and mortar tertiary level institutions and Internet services).

Conclusion - Best Practice

- The formation of the Open Campus in 2008, I argue, is a fundamental attempt at Best Practice by the Regional University to serve and meet the demands for accessibility to and participation in Higher Education by the peoples of the Caribbean.
- The Open Campus has a mandate to lead the UWI into the Future.

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