Lessons Learned from Efforts at Institutional Change: Case Studies of Six OCEPT Institutions

Study: Tom Chenoweth, Ph.D., and Mary Kinnick, Ph.D., in conjunction with Dan Walleri, Ph.D., Mt. Hood Community College

This three-year case study of six Oregon higher education institutions was aimed at understanding more about factors that help and hinder attempts at institutional change. The “change” focused on efforts by these institutions (Portland State University, Western Oregon University, Oregon State University, the University of Portland, Pacific University and Portland Community College), to strengthen the mathematics and science preparation of future K-12 teachers and encourage greater involvement of under-represented groups in the teaching profession. This five-year, statewide collaborative project, known as OCEPT (the Oregon Collaborative for Excellence in the Preparation of Teachers) was funded by the National Science Foundation. While goals and accomplishment levels and the depth and pervasiveness of change varied across the six institutions, OCEPT-influenced changes most likely to be sustained included: new kinds and levels of faculty collaboration; peer-led teaching and learning approaches, along with emerging evidence that these approaches positively affect student course performance; increased faculty awareness of their role in teacher recruitment, with related changes in classroom practices; and continued strengthening of access to information and academic advising for those preparing to become teachers. These institutions, however, did not make significant progress on one major goal of the project—to increase the numbers of under-represented groups interested in teaching careers. Change was affected by the compatibility of OCEPT goals with institutional and faculty culture, as well as by local collaborative leadership, the size and complexity of the institution, the presence of local “boundary-spanners,” and how OCEPT resources were used.

“Lessons Learned from Efforts at Institutional Change: Case Studies of Six OCEPT Institutions” was published in the fall 2003 issue of The Journal of Mathematics and Science: Collaborative Explorations. For more information please visit www.mth.pdx.edu or contact Chenoweth at chenoweth@pdx.edu, Kinnick at kinnickm@pdx.edu and Walleri at walleriid@mhcc.edu.

Coping Strategies as Predictors and Mediators of Disability-Related Variables and Psychosocial Adaptation: An Exploratory Investigation

Abstract: Hanoch Livneh, Ph.D., and Lisa M. Wilson, Ph.D.

Psychosocial adaptation to chronic illness and disability (CID) has emerged as one of the most widely researched areas in rehabilitation and disability studies during the past 50 years. This study examined the relationships among four predictors (functional limitation, perceived visibility of condition, and two disability-associated affective responses—anxiety and depression), coping strategies, and two outcome measures of psychosocial adaptation to disability (disability-specific psychosocial adjustment and life satisfaction). The study was based on responses from 121 university students with disabilities. Two models were tested to investigate the contribution of coping strategies to psychosocial adaptation to disability. The findings of this exploratory study suggest that coping strategies add significantly to the variance in both outcome measures after controlling for disability-related factors, while coping strategies as mediators was mostly unsupported. These findings suggest many avenues for future rehabilitation research and practice and further highlight the complexity of psychosocial adaptation to CID.

For further information on “Coping Strategies as Predictors and Mediators of Disability-Related Variables and Psychosocial Adaptation: An Exploratory Investigation” contact Livneh at livnehh@pdx.edu and Wilson at wilsonl@pdx.edu. The full text article may be read in the summer 2003 issue of Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin.
Completed Doctoral Dissertations 2002-2003

Petti, Amy Daggett. 2002. Comprehensive School Reform Influence on Regular Teacher Practice: An Examination of Powerful Learning Labs Within the Accelerated Schools Project, Listening in the Classroom. Adviser: Dr. Chenoweth.


Struggling for Voice: Students’ Experiences in Collaborative Online Groups

Abstract: Regina O. Smith, Ph.D.

The literature on small collaborative groups in small online courses revealed that these approaches to learning are largely based on speculative and theoretical assumptions about the advantages of learning in these contexts. We know about the theoretical advantages of collaborative learning but less about the reality of learning in these contexts and working within small collaborative online groups.

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of learners’ perceptions of their experiences with collaborative learning approaches that utilize small online groups, the issues learners faced, and the ways learners negotiated those issues in an online context. This study contributes to our understanding of the dynamics and processes associated with online collaborative learning. These dynamics include the tensions between the group and the individual, the possibilities for individuation, and the psychodynamic relationship between the computer and the learner. Twenty-five learners from an online graduate course in education were selected for study. The findings of this study suggest that online group work represents a location in which members rework their sense of self as a learner and a group member. The process of group transformation, and the sociocultural process associated with consensus problem-based learning influences these opportunities.

This study allows faculty, learners, as well as those with other interests in small group learning in online collaborative contexts, to reconsider the issues these learners face. Therefore, the results of this study can enable higher education and adult educators to recognize additional issues that might affect learners’ experiences in small collaborative online groups. This awareness can equip them to more fully attend to underlying psychological issues in these groups.

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Current and Upcoming Work

Professor Joel Arick, Associate Professor Gary Nave (retired), and Research Associate Tera Hoffman are about to publish Functional Assessment and Curriculum for Teaching Everyday Routines (The FACTER Program), which is due out early next year.

FACTER is a curriculum developed for teachers to be used with students who are working on a functional curriculum. The curriculum includes an Elementary and Secondary curriculum guide. The curriculum uses both “pre-routine” instructional strategies and “during routine” instructional strategies. Teachers can chart student progress towards independence on typical routines conducted in the school and community.

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