Using Communities of Practice to Facilitate a Coaching and Mentoring Framework to Foster Inclusion and Diversity within a Virtual Higher Education Landscape

Breaking the Code: Barriers Affecting Inclusive Thinking

Guiding Questions

1. What are supportive measures we can use to build bridges to reduce the existing gaps toward inclusive thinking?

2. How do we explore meaningful and relevant opportunities to confront bias with existing gaps, which inhibit inclusive thinking?

3. How do we develop inclusive mindsets to support global cohesion?

Operational Beliefs

I. The human experience is unique.

II. It is less important to point out differences.

III. It is more meaningful to identify ways to interact and understand each other.

IV. Decoding, deciphering, interpreting, breaking code barriers are part of the solutions for inclusive thinking.

Critical Consciousness

Critical Consciousness is a hyper state of awareness where the adult learner needs to interact and perceive the world around them. To engage with the world we must first understand ourselves and our place within it. The learner must then begin to interpret and understand diversity, roles, values, beliefs, etc. so contextual awareness can bring meaning and offer connections. From there the learner can frame and shape their perceptions and thinking. (Gay &Kirkland, 2003).

Terms to Know

Decoding: Start with a whole and break it down or make interpretations for what is said or not said, understanding barriers that keep individuals/institutions separate or stuck.

Deciphering: Converting or unscrambling something.

Interpreting: To Make meaning.

Breaking Code Barriers for finding solutions for inclusive thinking: Determine how to make connections or determine how to solve or create strategies to address; how to make an authentic connection.

The Group Coaching and Mentoring Framework

The Group Coaching and Mentoring Framework consist of four pillars working independently yet interconnected promoting change at an organizational and individual level: Community of Practice, Coaching and Mentoring, Metacognition and Self Regulated Learning. While not formally part of the Group Coaching and Mentoring Framework, Critical Consciousness represents a focal point for those participating in the change process.

Community of Practice

In simple terms, Communities of Practice (CoP) are groups of people who meet to share ideas, drive creativity and knowledge creation. It is an opportunity for individuals to grow their practice and promote learning with and from each other. More specifically, Communities of Practice "are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." There are three distinctive elements of a CoP. At the very core of a community of practice is a domain, or a thread that pull individuals together; an "identity" (Lave and Wegner, 1998). Second, there must be a sense of community or interaction among the group. The idea of establishing relationships and building rapport are at the heart of a CoP. Finally, there must be a practice where a pool of resources and a collection of experiences are cultivated to develop practitioners towards a path of excellence within their profession. For the Group Coaching and mentoring framework, communities of practice served as home base for grounding theoretical into applied practice for each individual.

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are usually two distinct processes applied to individuals for growth and development. Coaching is a process that supports an individual toward reaching a goal or performance level that they want to attain or achieve. Mentoring usually takes on the elements of advising, guiding, and facilitating much like an elder might provide to someone younger or inexperienced. In the case of the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework, Coaching and Mentoring were merged, holding to the original precepts and qualities for each process while being applied to groups as well as individuals outward to the whole group. The combination served as a theoretical pillar pushed out in filtered layers from the head coach (manager) to Mentor Leads who mentored a Community of Practice Team consisting of 5-6 employees who worked collaboratively toward designated goals. This may sound simple, yet in reality was very complex moving deeper and expansive as the Lead coach pushed outward to the whole group.

Metacognition

Metacognition refers to thinking about how you think, being cognizant what you know and do not know and your ability to draw on previous knowledge and apply it to a new and existing tasks (TEAL, 2012). Metacognitive processes go beyond the cognitive strategies you might associate with study skills and learningIt involves the ability to devise a process for learning, how to approach meeting a goal or solve a problem. With regard to the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework, metacognitive practices served as a foundation to helping individuals put themselves in the position of the adult learner to better understanding the skill set students would need to be productive in a global society (TEAL, 2012).

Self-Regulatied Learning

In short, self regulated learning refers to "...one's ability to understand and control one's learning environment" (TEAL, 2012, para. 1). Self regulators set attainable and realistic goals. They successfully adapt to one's setting; making sure to effectively manage emotions, time and energy surrounding certain tasks. Three components of self regulation are cognition, metacognition and motivation. Cognition are the skills related to learning, such are memorization and recall. Metacognition, as noted earlier, refers to one ability to critique the learning skills and motivation deals with a person's beliefs about their learning capabilities. In the Group Coaching and mentoring frame work, this pillar is critical to adult learners understanding how to shift in their thinking in order to meet the goals and organizational change taking place in the virtual workplace.

References and Resources:

Gay, G. & Kirkland, K. (2003). Developing cultural critical consciousness and self feflection in preservice teacher education. Theory Into Practice, 42, 3, pp. 181-187.

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For additional resources on the Group Coaching and Mentoring Framework, including presentations and publications visit: http://www.ctlondemand.com/hetl/

For more information on fostering organization change, visit www. facilitatorsofchange.com