Title:
Breaking the Code: Barriers Affecting Inclusive Thinking

Authors: Linda Algozzini, Valencia Gabay, Shannon Voyles, Kim Bessolo and Grady Batchelor

Structured Abstract:

Purpose:
This case study reviews a Group Coaching and Mentoring (GCM) change model and its significance in dissolving barriers and promoting equity in virtual learning environments. The study examines the model's approach to shifting instructor mindsets to align with institutional core values and initiatives that best serve a 21st century adult learner.

Methodology:
The change model, grounded in group coaching and mentoring, metacognition, self-regulated learning, and Community of Practice theory, incorporates participatory action research design focusing on cycles of action, reflection, and evaluation.

Practical implications:
The Group Coaching and Mentoring framework improved engagement. The design, while implemented in a higher education arena, is applicable to other entities seeking to bridge gaps using metacognition and self-regulated learning to become adaptable and inclusive.

Findings:
This study illustrates the change model's success in moving educators towards deeper understanding of self and individual student differences. It further showcases how professionals adapt and improve practices using self regulated learning and metacognition to better serve the population they teach.

Originality/value:
The change model, recipient of one of this year's Effective Practice Awards from the Online Learning Consortium (2017), is recognized for innovation and replicability in and beyond higher education.

Keywords: Equity, Inclusion, Community of Practice, Metacognition, Self-Regulated Learning, 21st century learners, Change Model, Organizations

Article Classification:
Case Study

Introduction

The explosion of technology has brought the world together. No longer separated by time or distance, cities from Tallahassee to Timbuktu are connected, and continents are virtually as close as they were when they were one. Meanwhile, the growth of substantive online learning programs allowing anyone to seek a degree, without the hindrance of geography, disability, age, gender or desired program of study, has opened up higher education to the globe. With a computer and the Internet, students from every location on Earth are finding themselves in classrooms together. Digital natives interact with digital immigrants; low vision, hard of hearing, and reclusive individuals exchange perspectives with business leaders and market researchers. Those from impoverished, underserved communities are learning alongside the privileged class; gender is often invisible or immaterial. Given the assortment of learners that can inhabit any online classroom, and the absence of visible barriers that might otherwise inhibit student-student engagement, online instructors are poised to foster inclusive diverse-friendly classrooms and positively impact 21st Century learners.

Purpose

Online university instructors come to a classroom with their own set of demographics, often specializing in one field of study, such as Engineering, English or Mathematics, but less cognizant of what it means to foster the instructor-to-student and student-to-student engagement that invites disparate individuals to learn from each others' different life experiences and perspectives on course material. While challenging, it is worthwhile to harness the ability of content experts to utilize best practices that serve educational, as well as workforce considerations related to inclusion and diversity. When preparing such an endeavor, it is vital to incorporate the needs of all involved, which includes the larger institution: its mission, vision, and core values. This applies to educational settings as well as business and professional enterprises. To effectively marry these converging elements - connecting of the world through technology, a higher education opportunity for all, institutional DNA - in a way that fosters inclusion and celebrates diversity a strategic, holistic approach is needed.

The expanded understanding of diversity and inclusion beyond traditional categories provides a glimpse into this case study's perspective on how inclusive mindsets must coexist for global cohesion. The purpose of this study is to show how

the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework improved professional practices at the individual and organizational level. It produced transformative shifts in thinking. This model was effective in bridging gaps in cultural diversity and inclusion, ensuring University vision and core values were met, while growing educators who were more engaged and prepared to meet 21st Century learner needs.

This framework was applied to a fully online 4-year university. The institution's student body consists of military, government, business professionals and nonprofessionals. Eighty-eight percent of the student population is working adults while 77% are military and 23% are civilian. With over 88,000 students and 77,000 alumni, there are 59% enrolled in Bachelor' degree programs, 16% in Associate of Arts and 9 % enrolled in certificate programs and other related fields (American Public University System, 2017 & Algozzini, Bessolo, Voyles, Gabay and Batchelor, 2016). This data suggests that this university's demographics are broad and cross-sectional based on the categories listed above.

Literature Review

Research in recent decades stresses the importance of intentionally teaching while considering diversity and inclusion as sound pedagogical and Andragogical practice. Education is pursued for intellectual growth and knowledge creation. This is enhanced the more educators open their eyes to horizons not yet encountered within their own lives. According to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1997), diversity in educational settings stimulate "intellectual and emotional growth" for the student and the instructor (p.4). As a result, when students complete their academic career, they will approach the professional arena through a broad lens of perspectives; primed with expectation and awareness, just as they had experienced in their classrooms (1997).

Issues related to diversity and inclusion are improved and yet stymied in a virtual classroom. Without gender, race, age or disability as a barrier, opportunities arise to authentically interact with and learn from others of different backgrounds. At the same time, complications can surface: how do we know who to reach out to if we can't confirm who doesn't understand cultural differences or 'codes', or who may need pre-emptive support? How do we draw out those who hold back? How can we identify students from cultures for whom speaking out is not valued? As Johnson (2011) points out educators must be cognizant of the "characteristics of those who are participating in e-learning initiatives and how that may affect e-learning

outcomes" (p.176); how can this be achieved when we can't see who we are serving?

In the relatively short history of online education, strategies have been studied and tested on how to capitalize on a learning environment without borders or barriers, where diversity can thrive. Luyt (2013-2014) pointed out that online learning is full of contradictions related to diversity. On the one hand the playing field is fairly level as differences among students are not immediately evident, yet written communication (such as in discussion forums) can benefit those from dominant cultures. For example, strong, independent Western missives are favored over those from cultures who might be more polite or deferential to authority, for whom language is less linear (e.g., where silence plays a role) or where imitation and memorization are valued over original thought. Yet if properly harnessed alternate perspectives can transform a learning experience by getting students to "examine pre-existing worldviews, challenge certain assumptions and raise awareness about social issues" (Luyt, 2013-14, p. 17), resulting in expansion of a student's understanding and adding to knowledge creation. Luyt (2013-14) appealed to online educators to "manage online settings to provide opportunities for divergent and silent voices to emerge" (p.17).

Moreira (2016) observed that the expansion of online learning on higher education's landscape provides opportunities to learn in a global community. Serving traditional students, professionals, and lifelong learners, the mix of students in online classrooms is vibrant. However, with this assemblage comes a challenge: how to develop online education that is best suited for a multifarious population. Moreira's (2016) study of an established Massachusetts on-ground university with a successful online program found that, even there, gaps were evident in how online teachers were trained and how they met issues related to student diversity. She found the "lack of inclusion policies has caused particular difficulties" (Moreira, 2016, p.4) and asserts that institutions need to create professional development opportunities related to these concerns.

Clarida, Bobeva, Hutchings and Taylor (2015) reviewed how gender, age (i.e., digital immigrant versus digital native), culture and geographic location can influence how an adult student interacts with technology and online learning in the UK. In their study of inclusion and exclusion, the authors noted that, while adult students of all ages are encouraged to take online classes, the traditional on-ground pedagogies supporting many of these classes may not best serve a technology based learning

situation. In their research, Clarida et al (2015) found that any age can experience digital exclusion and "peers can contribute to digital exclusion" (p. 96).

When studying diversity related to learning modalities in the online classroom, Bates (2010) wrote about the challenge of teaching students to think critically. "It requires open discussions, questioning, reflection and revision of earlier thought processes" (Bates, 2010, p.298). While discussion forums are an opportunity for knowledge creation as they allow students to "create collaboration and social interaction" (Bates, 2010, p. 297) the diverse demographics of online higher education classrooms mean that polite disagreements, which are part of critical thinking, must be guided and modeled so they are fully understood by all cultures, since that practice may be foreign to some cultures. Rich and meaningful communications that can "entice the 'typical Asian' student to share critical thoughts" and "remind the 'typical American' student that a personal opinion is just that and needs to be supported by evidence in an academic exchange" (Bates, 2010, p.299) can be facilitated by a culturally aware instructor.

It's undeniable that the e-learning environment has the potential neutralize barriers between classmates, yet in the still-early years of its existence, Limburg and Clark (2006) reported "the same dynamics of privilege and disenfranchisement" (p. 49) found on-ground are found online. These authors remind us a fundamental component of multicultural education lies in relationship: student-to-instructor and student-to-student.

Matters related to providing a rich and optimal learning opportunity for all students will remain a concern for educators who want to see all students succeed, but this is not just an education issue. Corporate and business entities face similar problems. They are in need of workers capable of building relationships and connecting with others in a virtual world or global arena. Educational Testing Service's 2013 research report identifying the most important 21st Century skills included global awareness and digital citizenship on its list. The University of Wisconsin Stout also recognized the need for global perspective on its list of Skills and Traits Employers Seek for 21st Century. To their register is added the need for interpersonal skills and those who are "able to relate warmly, effectively, and consistently with a wide range of people, even those who irritate you, confuse you, or are just plain unpleasant" (n.d.). Number one on Harvard Business Review's 2012 list of three skills every 21st Century manager needs is "code switching between cultures" (Molinski, Davenport, Iyer and Davidson, 2012, para 2).

It is clear there is a need to continue exploring and experimenting with ways to foster diversity and inclusion in the virtual world. One framework for doing this, whose initial results are promising, is the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework, an award winning holistic approach to instituting a cultural shift.

Methodology

The goal of the framework was to improve teaching excellence to support University persistence and retention, promote learning equity for a diverse student population, and increase the quality of practitioner performance. One benchmark necessary for improving excellence was transforming thinking from old patterns to new ones that encompassed mindset growth. This type of change needed planting, germination and time. Like the persistent drip of water can change granite, the regular and predictable cycles inherent in a participatory action approach allowed internal change to take hold of individuals' long held practices. Participatory Action cycles were integrated into this change model for their emphasis on continual reflection, evaluation, and action.

To initiate the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework, leadership talent was considered from the pool of 145, full time and part time faculty members working remotely within one department. The Faculty Director chose eight, full time individuals to lead Community of Practice (CoP) teams. Mentor Leads were of a variety of ages, gender, race, educational backgrounds and demonstrated varied skills in leadership and professional expertise. To ready this cadre to successfully lead their CoP teams, the Director recognized a variance in her pool of faculty, where some were responsive and innovative but others maintained a *status quo approach* to their work. For example, some faculty clutched to outdated practices that had one time been effective but no longer served the institution's strategic initiatives. Therefore, it was important that Cop teams were supplied resources and pre-work that focused on metacognition, self regulated learning practices, and team dynamics. Knowing potential challenges that existed, the leads would need to meet with the Faculty Director to prepare for the year's work (Algozzini, et.al, 2016).

The initial Director-Lead meeting included structured opportunities for coaching, relationship and team building, airing fears about leading peers, and addressing concerns. An important component of this first coaching session, and all to come, was not yet apparent to Leads: the Director was modeling how to conduct CoP

meetings the Leads would facilitate in the future. The modeling of coaching and mentoring would become evident as the weeks progressed.

In two months of weekly Director-Lead meetings, there was a consistent pattern built in: pre-work, reflection, evaluation, sharing, and learning with and from each other. This reflects the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which allows for first, second and third person perspectives to emerge as each filtered layer of cycles of action continue. As time advanced, Leads developed a sense of what it felt like to be coached and mentored, what it meant to connect with virtual co-workers, how it felt to be part of a team, and began to envision how they would mentor their own CoP teams.

With time, the Director began sharing responsibilities with the Leads. Collaboratively, Leads researched pre-work related to quarter goals, co-created weekly agendas and protocols. However, some just watched the activity, supportive of their Lead colleagues, yet resistant to jump in. As the process unfolded, it was apparent each person needed to grow at his or her own pace. While all would be Leads and carry out the framework, the goal was not to make cookie-cutter managers but to allow leadership to emerge in an organic flow.

Once Leads began meeting with their CoP teams, the process the Director had started with them was replicated. The first meeting was prefaced with prework; the meeting itself was an opportunity for relationship building, voicing fears and expressing concerns. Further meetings maintained the same structure of pre-work, action, reflection and evaluation, thus creating the Participatory Action cycles. The CoP teams met weekly for numerous months, and the regular, predictable structure of action cycles facilitated by calm leadership began to shift the mindset of the faculty. As the teams worked together, built trust, honored each other's differences while acknowledging that there were requirements to be met, change started. The weekly CoP meetings required faculty to put a magnifying glass on what they did, question why they did it, ask if it was effective, identify what they wanted to change, and reflect on how their actions impacted students.

Scrutinizing this design against other perspectives did more than ensure its success. It positioned the model to be effective across and throughout industries. To wit, the design is useful for more than improving instructional practices. At this university, it built relationships, increased satisfaction and launched collaboration among individuals who had worked in the same department for years but had never met nor reached out to each other. The design moved beyond one university

department and into the larger institution, it has been partnered with K-12 education and is applicable in the business world. Its depth and breadth are still being explored. One of the lenses now being examined relates how to cipher cultural codes so individuals can effectively work with various populations and demographics.

Practical Implications

The Group Coaching and Mentoring framework, with four powerful pillars, supported by regular participatory cycles of action, reflection, and evaluation created a significant mindset change in a large faculty, while it enhanced faculty satisfaction and classroom engagement. It "improved instructional practice as evidenced by weekly organizational engagement reports" (Algozzini, et. al, 2016, p.15). Moreover, the "data analytics from this report noted a significant increase in faculty performance that remained constant throughout the coaching and mentoring model's application, changes that were not evident in other departments of the university" (p.15).

When instituting change, it is valuable to move beyond one industry and examine what is useful across industries. This is especially true in education, where practicality is sometimes sacrificed for theory. Thus, as change was considered in a university department it was studied through lenses to ensure the scope of the design being created was broad and expansive. For example, the design plan was examined through a business model, where effective practice includes clear communication, building relationships, and trust. Specifically, Osterwalder's Business Model (Osterwalder and Pignuer, 2010) was applied to determine how the framework would blend with recognized essentials aligned to business marketing, relationships, value proposition, and return on investment (ROI), which are channels representing the intake and output of the framework design. Each channel provides specific data for how well the process could be replicated inside and outside of the University, generating additional income streams for product model salability or as facilitated consulting from the design and implementation experts.

The model was tested on trust, high touch, safety, honesty, transparency, and collaboration within the utilization of identified Community of Practice teams. Consistent, systematic and recurrent networking highlighted significant *value adds* as they related to increased motivation (student and faculty), increased satisfaction, shared responsibilities, communication, having a voice, teaching excellence, and proficiency with skills. The value channel also identified areas where participants lacked the *will* to change.

As with any successful endeavor, partners are important assets. The GCM implementation began as a higher education initiative for change, thus the initial partners were within the University. Throughout the yearlong application the partners expanded to organizations outside of the higher education realm.

The theoretical constructs included the tenants of coaching and mentoring, metacognition; self regulated learning and Community of Practice theory. It applied cycles of participatory action and provided regular opportunities to reflect on and question existing practices. Activities embedded in the participatory action cycles eventually illuminated a cipher response to long held assumptions and practices (existing "codes" such as language, culture, custom, value, beliefs) allowing participants to retain individualism while becoming more open in their understanding and appreciation of colleagues with different perspectives, backgrounds and life experiences. As this shift became internalized, it transferred to interaction and engagement between instructor-to-student, student-to-instructor, student-to-student and student-to-content, thus permeating all areas of the classroom. As instructors became more aware and in-tune to diversity from their work in the CoP teams, they began to model the ability to work with and learn from others of diverse backgrounds and experiences. As they learned to cipher between their peers, breaking old barriers and standards, they demonstrated in their classrooms how to break through barriers between students. This is a concrete example of mindset growth in action. The purpose of the framework was teaching excellence and meeting university initiatives to stay relevant; the unanticipated and far-reaching results of the framework are still emerging and being explored.

One unexpected by-product of the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework was building relationships in a virtual world. The design created a bridge between instructors who were located all over the globe. The framework built trust, made it safe to be vulnerable, and allowed for diversity and inclusion of a wide range of teaching experiences, personalities and perspectives. That openness to diverse experiences filtered to the virtual classrooms. As instructors modeled this openness within the forums, students learned and replicated that model, being open to reflective thinking and sharing their insights as seen in student-to-student and instructor-to-student engagement. For example, students shared comments related to interactions between instructors and peers, which supported their understanding or expanded their learning because alternate perspectives were provided from classmates of different backgrounds.

Unquestionably, the Group Coaching and Mentoring model, with its ability to help others break through existing codes that might be barriers, and its potential to bridge gaps between people and ideas in a virtual world, can be a catalyst to support inclusion and diversity.

Supporting Technologies

Working in an online environment spanning time and space requires creative measures to effectively interact with colleagues acknowledging the diverse ways in which people need to access and comprehend information. Cloud-based storage, collaborative organizational tools and Internet-based conferencing platforms were ideal in supporting the Community of Practice teams' engagement efforts, learning styles, space and time differences.

Weekly meetings and conferencing took place in a virtual environment. Therefore, Internet based conferencing tools like UberConference allowed the Director, Leads and Community of Practice teams to come together to share, reflect, evaluate, and take action with resources. Each conference line allowed 10 team members to meet. This was the platform's *free* service. The Director and Leads were each given one UberConference line and password to conduct their meetings. The conferencing tool generated invitations for upcoming meetings and call summaries that could be distributed to each team member once the meeting ended. This option provided an archive record system and allowed individuals to review at their own leisure to solidify their understanding.

Multifunctioning, the Google Suite (free version) provided an all-in-one productivity option for team collaboration for all of the Community of Practice teams to leverage an assortment of accomplishments. Working with Google docs in real time allowed for fluid brainstorming, editing and timely production, pre-work essentials, and weekly agendas.

- Google forms provided a convenient way to design in- house surveys to collect data pertinent to research efforts.
- Google Calendar was used to plan out all Lead and Mentee meetings throughout the year.
- Google sheets was used for scheduling, finding the perfect meeting time or quick sign up for delegating responsibilities.

For storing and file sharing, Dropbox was the perfect solution. The Director gave each Lead access to a Dropbox file for storing agendas, meeting minutes and any

details related to Lead materials used to support team practices. Files could easily be accessed and disseminated via a link and immediate feedback could accompany any file shared.

A collaborative online organizational tool, Trello provided a way for members of each team to visually see their progress of assigned tasks and predict the next steps for future projects. Each team was given their own Trello board to communicate challenges, successes, or timelines related to group activities. Teams could personalize by posting images, graphics or attach documents and checklists to make their boards more interactive and enhance team dynamics.

The use of digital tools powered the efforts of Community of Practice teams giving diverse colleagues a chance to communicate beyond email and messaging. For example, Trello offered a visual platform, which met the needs of a specific learning style, and became a systematic organizational model for those who needed management support. The variety of digital tool options increased instructor awareness about the importance of digital tools for the 21century learner whose goals include becoming effective communicators and presenters of information in various mediums.

Findings

Close examination of component parts of the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework illuminate how each piece served an essential function that resulted in successful mindset shift. Faculty completed a pre/post survey at the end of the implementation of the framework. In this survey, they were asked to rate their responses on a scale that included very low, low, neutral, high, and very high. They responded based on before and after the framework was instituted. In that survey, the faculty was asked to rate their willingness to adapt their instructional practices. Before the framework, 70% said they were high or very highly willing to adapt, 22% reported this as neutral and 6% as low. Once the framework was implemented, the faculty self-reported this to be 93% high or very high with only 6% as neutral. The faculty was also asked to rate their confidence of aligning their instructional practices to the organizational strategic initiatives. Before the framework, 48% reported their confidence as high or very high while 32% reported this to be neutral and 19% as low or very low. After the framework, 96% reported their confidence as high or very high with only 3% as neutral.

Metacognitive processes and understanding and utilizing one's own thinking promoted self-questioning. It directed the faculty to the significance of the actions that were taken and forced individuals to determine the impact of those actions. This caused them to consider whether the action should be replicated or revised,

thereby using discernment as an avenue for reflective evaluation. In a self-reported pre/post survey, 45% of faculty rated their understanding of how to improve their instructional practice using metacognitive processes before the framework was in place. At the same time, 22% of faculty reported their understanding as high or very high. However, after the framework was in place, 93% of faculty self-reported their understanding of high or very high with only 6% at neutral.

Self-regulation strategies on the surface appear to focus on management of self, time, and energy. However, this drove the thinking toward making connections with the known and unknown while bridging cognition, metacognition, and motivation. The end result showcased empowerment of thought, stirring intrinsic motivation of the heart and mind toward self-actualization. Before the framework, only 16% of faculty self-reported that their understanding of how to improve their instructional practices using self-regulated learning strategies was high or very high while 51% reported theirs as neutral. However, after the year of work, 96% of the faculty reported this as high or very high with only 3% at neutral

Community of Practice teams were the home base that allowed a *one voice* phenomenon to take hold where a common language existed among the team. Teams demonstrating this commonality and convergence evolved to the point of ciphering the differences and exclusions within their group. This transformation allowed strengths to emerge, thus shifting focus to the team's work and ability to meet goals and standards as one aligned group. When teams learn how to cipher or break the barriers that inhibit performance, then diversity or separateness is no longer at the forefront and individuals can harness the value of being unique as a catalyst for mindset growth. In the pre/post survey, 70% of the faculty responded that they were high or very highly willing to offer support to their colleagues before the framework. After the framework, that result was 100% in the high or very high response. In the same survey, before the framework, 35% reported that their willingness to seek assistance from their colleagues was high or very high. However, after the framework, 90% reported that they were high or very highly willing to seek assistance from their colleagues.

Typical of what occurs when serious endeavors are executed, new horizons come into focus. The Group Coaching and Mentoring framework created a significant mindset shift and numerous lessons were learned. The process helped faculty transform their thinking into effective 21st Century practitioners, more able to meet the needs of lifelong learners in a changing world. In the pre/post survey, 80% rated their understanding of student differences as high or very high, 9% as neutral, and

9% as low. After the framework, 93% reported as high or very high with only 6% as neutral. Before the framework, 16% of faculty self-reported their ability to inspire students to think critically and on a deeper level as very low or low, 41% as neutral and 41% as high or very high. After the framework, 90% reported their ability in this area as high or very high and only 9% as neutral. The framework cemented habits of metacognitive reflection and self regulated learning, which can deepen and expand learning while keeping individuals engaged and excited about their profession. Currently, this department has seen an explosion of interest in academic publishing and presenting. The work done this year bridged gaps between virtual co-workers, building relationships and trust among colleagues, while it filtered these characteristics into the classroom. Before the framework, 51% of faculty rated their ability to engage students in discussion as high; after the framework was implemented, 93% of faculty self-reported their ability as high or very high. It should be noted that not all faculty embraced this process; of 43 original department members, three chose to leave. This was valuable. An organization should fit an individual as an individual should fit the work they do; recognition of a mismatch is beneficial for all. There is always room to grow, shift and change; the Group Coaching and Mentoring framework illustrates how this is possible. (Algozzini, Gabay, Voyles, Bessolo & Batchelor, 2017).

Even though the faculty's responses before the framework was implemented were fairly strong, the range of responses show that the faculty was not working in concert. Since the framework focused on shifting the individual in order to benefit the whole, the overall results are positive. Overall, the results after the framework was implemented show that each individual worked through their own processes in order to achieve similar results.

The conclusion of the GCM year provided an opportunity to study the results of the framework's application to one department in the university. As noted earlier, analytics conducted over many weeks confirmed the success of the endeavor: faculty in this department "demonstrated a 98-100% engagement rate, compared to 75% engagement in other departments in the University" (Algozzini, et.al, 2017, p. 86).

Originality

The Group Coaching and Mentoring framework was designed to address University initiatives to increase instructional excellence while meeting the needs of a changing world and student demographics. Conceptualized by an educator with over 40 years of hands-on experience, it was possible to create and successfully execute this

framework because of four decades spent studying, testing and observing what worked and being to identify what needed changed.

Group Coaching and Mentoring provided a problem-solving approach where instructors were put into action to transform thinking, shift pedagogical methodologies, and clarify how to immerse in mindset growth to break existing barriers that keep silos and separateness as the norm. It became a professional development model that supported collegiate peers hailing from different backgrounds, with diverse beliefs/mores/values, including divergent viewpoints to engage in conversations that supported thinking and learning how to learn when diversity is present. Implemented with no financial outlay, the design utilized one individual's knowledge and skill, strategically disseminated that to rising leaders, who then completed the cycle by replicating the practice to an entire department. The design is one, which is applicable in education, business and other industries to meet the needs of a training or professional development format to shift organizations.

As confirmation of the value of this change framework, the 2017 Online Learning Consortium (OLC) Effective ***Practice Award*** was bestowed upon the design *Applying a Group Coaching and Mentoring Framework to Shift an Organization Culture* and to the team who wrote about the framework.

> This honor is bestowed through a peer review process and selection is based on scholarly and industry criteria. The award reflects standard-bearer in the field. OLC focuses on five pillars of quality in online education: access, learning effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, student satisfaction, and scale (institutional commitment to achieve capacity enrollment via cost effectiveness). The winning practices were selected for recognition based on their ability to provide evidence of innovation and replicability (OLC, 2017).

Through implementation, the effectiveness of this framework has been proven in practice, with analytics, and endorsed by peer experts in the field demonstrating potential for replication inside and outside of education.

Conclusion

Participating in a Group Coaching and Mentoring process where Community of Practice theory is utilized as the avenue for team collaboration, interaction, and engagement allows individuals a safe environment where limited

perspectives/assumptions are gently challenged, and biases uncovered. This risk-free space permits professionals to grow and become habitually introspective. *What does an adult learner's technophobia teach me about my own barriers to learning? How can an immigrant's desire to succeed in a new country inspire me to reach my goals? How does an individual's struggle to write for a global community highlight the value of clear communication? To what degree does a colleague's ability to speak their truth inspire me to be authentic? How does someone's willingness to try and make mistakes point out where fear stops me?*

In the larger view of life, similarities far outweigh differences, yet the human experience is a unique one. To prepare *all* learners for the opportunities awaiting them in the 21st Century, it is less important to name the ways people differ and more meaningful to identify the ways individuals can grow from interacting with and understanding each other. That is the true meaning and authenticity of *Breaking the Code: Barriers to Inclusive Thinking*. The Group Coaching and Mentoring model accomplishes that and more using uniqueness and distinction as its core signature.

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