Postmodernism in Higher Educational Administration

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ABSTRACT

Postmodernism has many inferences that can be applied to the theory and practice of higher educational administration. Today, in higher education administrators are continuously focused on strategies that will ensure the future of minority educational institutions. As a result postmodernism is an important factor in the future of higher educational administration. The purpose of this article is to provide theories and strategies of postmodernism which can be utilized in support of the student retention process. These recommendations will enable administrators to strategically plan for goals and objectives delineated in the institutions' strategic plan. Finally, this article will provide institutions with recommendations of best practices which can be utilized on a Historically Black College and University Campuses.

Introduction

Postmodernism has many inferences that can be applied to the theory and practice of higher educational administration. Today, in higher education administrators are continuously focused on strategies that will ensure the future of minority educational institutions. As a result postmodernism is an important factor in the future of higher educational administration.

Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article is to provide theories and strategies of postmodernism which can be utilized in support of the student retention process. These recommendations will enable administrators to strategically plan for goals and objectives delineated in the institutions' strategic plan. Finally, this article will provide institutions with recommendations of best practices which can be utilized on a Historically Black College and University Campuses.

Higher Education Today

Today's higher educational institutions are constantly faced with issues and trends that are impacting their effectiveness in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students within a traditional four-year time period. As a result, many higher educational institution across the country are focused on the retention rates of minority students, specifically focusing on the under preparedness of first time freshman students. All Historical Black Colleges and University's have open door policies which admit students regardless of their academic background. The only requirement for admission is a high school diploma. These institutions were created to afford students that would not have had a chance to attend a higher educational institution with that opportunity. Achievement in high school courses with an assured level of proficiency before graduation has an association with the continuation and completion of a degree in higher education. As Historical Black Colleges and Universities move forward into the future, eminence education strategies must be developed and implemented into the curriculum to address the under preparedness of first time freshman students and ensure student success. The graduation rate of a first-time freshmen has been potentially affected because of the under-preparedness of students when they enter college their freshman year.

Retention of Minority Students

The retention rates of minority students on many historically black colleges and universities are measured by numbers of students who re-enroll from one academic year to the next (Hoy and Miskel, 2005). This issue has become a lasting issue that has been faced from one academic year to the next. In order to raise the extremely low rates of minority students institutions are implementing plans within their curriculum and working to reduce the graduation rate from the six-year time period back to the traditional four-year time period. The plans that have currently been implemented on many historically black college and university campuses have been successful in increasing the retention rate which will have a positive effect over time.

The authors Morest and Karp (2005) discuss the diverse need of a diverse student body, ways to enhance retention, and learning, and the role of the faculty of the institution. The article discusses the transition period that students face and suggests ways to ensure a successful transition into the college environment. This will ensure a successful transition into college and therefore raise retention rates.

Currently, the retention rates of first time freshman students on historically black college and university campuses are the lowest while juniors and seniors on these campuses have higher retention rates. The retention rate of first time freshman students is extremely low as a result of lack of preparedness of these students. Institutions which have large populations of freshman students enrolled in developmental courses because they are not ready for college level courses have lower retention rates. The retention rate of first time freshman students is also low as a result of the transition many freshman students face when getting acquainted with institution life. Many students also face a transition with the separation from their parents (Feldman, Smart and Ethington, 2004).

In order to address the transition stages of first time freshman students and the under-preparedness of many freshman students, plans must be implemented in the curriculum to assist these students (McLeod and Young, 2005). Institutions must provide several resources to accommodate minority students and ensure student success. Institutions must also implement strategic plans to ensure the growth and success of these resources.

The Fundamental Pattern of Postmodernism in Higher Education

William Kritsonis (2007) identifies the importance of leaders to provide moral guidance to the average person. By far the most significant source of influence is the laws and customs of society have been placed at the forefront of our educational system. The conscience of a society is embodied in the traditions

of civility by which the common life is governed. The No Child Left Behind law ensures that schools is held accountable for the academic progress of every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level (NCLB, 2002). More than one-third of all students entering colleges and universities in the State of Texas each year cannot read, write or compute at post-secondary school standards. The standard school system must be structured and demand that graduates of elementary and secondary schools be academically competent students. Clearly, in the State of Texas elementary and secondary schools are not producing graduates that are academically prepared for post-secondary education (NCLB, 2002).

Culture of Postmodernism in Higher Education

Developing a culture of excellence in achievement in higher education for minority students is imperative to student success. Institutions must provide a positive campus culture for all students, and provide an environment that ensures student success in completing a four year degree. According to McLeod and Young (2005), minority students thrive and flourish in a positive and supportive academic environment. An institution must possess a commitment to student achievement which drives the functions of the institution from instruction and advisement to residential life and extracurricular activities.

The leader of the institution must implement strategies to make certain that the campus environment and the organizational culture mediate student academic achievement. The leader must also ensure that the environment provides for supportive experiences. The culture of the organization is mediated by student success (English, 2003). The leader of the institution must also ensure that the institution's organizational structure is accommodating and possesses a written and comprehensive strategic plan that transforms the general ideals and values of the institution. The general ideals and values within the strategic plan are structured into detailed goals, measurable objectives and strategies for achieving the objectives (Ramsden, 1998). The strategic plan must include specific targets for retention and graduation. The strategic plan must also possess measurable objectives related to all of the aspects of institutional life that affect student success.

Leadership in Higher Education

The leader of the organization must utilize transformational leadership in communications and marketing in order to remain present with the demands of ever-changing student population.   The leader must possess the ability to transform the institutional climate to support an ever-transforming culture. This is

imperative in creating powerful, positive relationships within the organizational climate that foster optimism, innovation and teamwork needed to achieve challenging goals (Gardner, 1990). By utilizing transformational leadership, the value of student and stakeholder satisfaction contributes to an encouraging educational setting that provides quality learning.

Theory of Motivation in Postmodernism

An institution must provide opportunities for students to be connected with the institutional environment. The institution must also provide opportunities for the students to adapt into the organizational culture while ensuring vocational stability, educational stability, and student satisfaction and student success. The institutional environment and organizational culture both mediate student academic and social experiences. Educational stability, student satisfaction and student success are the building blocks of the retention process.

The authors Bolman and Deal (2003) provide a brief summary of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954). People do not move towards self -actualization because of the impediments placed in the way by the environment. A students' success is determined by the extent to which they grow in terms of their abilities and interests. It is important for an institution to motivate their students during the matriculation process. The institution recognizes the importance of meeting their students' needs and interests and responds positively in order to lead their students towards self-actualization.

An institution must possess a unique learning environment that is diverse and allows for smooth operations. The administration, faculty and staff are all committed to promoting academic achievement and student success. As a result of their commitment to promoting student achievement the administration, the faculty and the staff are rewarded for continuously monitoring and analyzing the learning environment to ensure its effectiveness in promoting student success. The success of the learning environment is measured and analyzed from the results of benchmark test in all academic areas each semester. The structure of the organization is also supported and guided by effective administration, faculty and staff members who continuously shape the organizational culture to facilitate learning. The organization utilizes a strategic planning process to ensure the future and growth of the institution.

Systems of Power

The leadership within an institution must transition in order to effectively manage the organization. Shaping the culture of the institution has become an increasingly studied aspect of the institutional leadership as a result of the need to promote student success. The leader of the organization possesses the traits needed to transition the institution and foster the vision. The leader of an organization possesses knowledge of the political aspects and dimensions of effective leadership which determines the culture of the campus environment.

The leader of the institution also possesses the ability to control, give authority, or influence others as the visionary of the organization. By gaining an understanding of the unique elements of the academic culture the leader has the ability to determine the leadership style that is appropriate for his or her environment. The leader of the organization has also instituted a positive campus environment that fosters student achievement. By fostering student achievement the leader exerts reverent power and utilizes his or her ability to control, give authority, or influence others with personal charisma, ideas, and beliefs. The leader is familiar with the organization and knows the ways in which to utilize reverent power to transition the organization in the best interest of the students. The leader of the organization also possesses the skills necessary to act strategically and tactfully when necessary to shape the organizational culture. The effective leadership provided by the visionary provides the skills necessary to meet student needs. This leadership also shapes the culture of the institution and promotes empowerment over his or her staff in order to foster constructive and positive decision making within the organization. This leadership also influences others to explore challenges and facilitate the planning process to shape the culture of the organization. The authors Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003), suggests that it is important for the leader of the organization to be forward looking in order to set goals. The institutional leader is self-reflective and possesses the ability to evaluate their effectiveness in leading others within the organization.

The leader of the organization also possesses a vision for the future of the organization and possesses the ability to shape the campus culture in order to ensure institutional effectiveness. The transformation process institutes the leaders' vision into practice while changing the attitudes and behaviors of the organization. The transformation process shapes the learning environment and facilitates the practices of the administration, the staff, the faculty and the students, and offers a sense of belonging to the institution.

Lastly, the leader of an organization must be aware of the political aspects and dimensions of effective leadership which determine the culture of the campus environment. These dimensions consist of the ability to transform the culture of

the organization in order to transform the learning environment and foster student achievement.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, postmodernism has many inferences that can be applied to the theory and practice of higher educational administration. Today higher educational administrators are continuously focused on strategies that will ensure the future and success of minority educational institutions. As a result postmodernism is an important factor in the future of higher educational administration. The purpose of this article was to provide theories and strategies of postmodernism which can be utilized to apply postmodernism effectively in support of the student retention process. These recommendations will enable administrators to strategically plan for goals and objectives delineated in the institutions' strategic plan. Finally, this article provided institutions with recommendations of best practices which can be utilized on a Historically Black College and University Campuses.

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