Reflecting on Educational Leadership in a Diverse Society

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Author Note

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Introduction

Given my undergraduate education at an institution with an emphasis on social justice issues and education, I was looking forward to developing a stronger sense of the theory and practice behind the activities that I participated in when I was an undergraduate. A semester later, in Educational Leadership in a Diverse Society, I've developed skills that allow me to identify social justice issues in postsecondary education, propose solutions and strategies to address them, apply research to advance access and equity, and work collaboratively with group members in diverse settings (PLO 4, 6, 8). In particular, the position paper assignment asked me to remove personal bias from a social justice and equity issue that occurred at the workplace and allowed me to analyze the situation from different perspectives in an objective fashion. I was further able to fulfill a personal goal by identifying some of my personal triggers in working with students as well as develop as a professional by better understanding the politics that exist at an institution when it comes to personnel issues.

Links to Program Learning Outcomes

Through the position paper assignment, I evaluated the need to provide advising support to culturally-based and historically African American fraternities and sororities. In this process, I had to navigate the social justice issues that arise from the perspective of racial and ethnic injustices that were instilled in the academy. Through research on the history of foundations and that revolving around the issues of campus climate, I was able to understand how the traditional design of fraternities and sororities forms oppression for chapters that are culturally-based and historically African American (PLO 6). This included the research of Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, and Milem (1998) that demonstrated the need for added support and advising. In this process of deconstructing the argument and applying research, I was also able to identify

possible solutions I am providing by supporting an environment that may have limited resources and funding allocations to be provided to staffing (PLO 4).

Links to Personal and Professional Goals

In my designing of the position question, I found it important to identify an issue that was personal to me. I remember a student confronting me about support services provided to Greek students. This student noted that he felt that the current advising support was established only for certain population and that there was an inequality in advising support that was provided to the culturally-based organizations. After working on this paper and deconstructing the argument at hand, I realized that I had been defensive in my response to my student claiming that there might have been no differences in advising style. While my claim might have been true, it also didn't mean that the advising being provided was the one they needed. Instead, I was triggered in the process of providing that response as I was from a historically-White fraternity. In this process, I believe that I was able to identify a personal trigger and understand how I navigated that conversation. Fortunately, my advising style encourages conversation to be initiated and driven by the student and I was therefore able to achieve a level of understanding with them.

On a professional level, I think that the position paper assignment allowed me to understand the dynamics that are at play in higher education institutions and how they affect the politics. While the institution received the designation of being a Hispanic-Serving Institution, there is nonetheless a need to balance the programs provided to historically underrepresented students as well as understanding that there is a limited amount of resources that can be allocated and distributed. In this process, I think I've learned the need for creative solutions that can address the outcomes at hand and the importance of understanding the needs of the constituency that we serve instead of just addressing the position that they have.

Conclusion

Given the vast amounts of social justice training I had received in the past at my undergraduate institution, I was not exactly sure what to expect when I first enrolled in this course. Throughout the semester, I have found great appreciation for developing a deeper understanding of a variety of social justice issues; one that is grounded in theory and research and that provides a more useful framework in providing access and equality. To me, this has guided how I might treat issues of access and equality and really challenged me to question whether when something is being done because "that's how it is" is actually correct or rather an inherent privilege that may exist for a certain population. I look forward to the opportunity of continuing to navigate these issues of social justice as I work with my peers and diverse students to collaboratively create solutions for change.

References

Hurtado, S., Clayton-Pedersen, A., Allen, W., & Milem, J. (1998). Enhancing Campus Climates

for Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Educational Policy and Practice. The Review of Higher

Education, 21(3), 279-302.