Seeking Social Justice for Today’s Student Through an Appreciative Lens

Keynote 2020 Adult Student Recruitment and Retention Conference

Heather Doyle, MEd. Counselling

Outcomes

- Understand how the six phases of Appreciative Education apply to your work.
- Contemplate how systems of power and oppression influence our work.
- Consider how to work within a more critical framework.
- Learn tools for effectively working with varying student identities in an education setting.

Land Acknowledgement

Identities

Acknowledgements
Defining Advising

**Letter to the Editor: Is Advising a Political Activity?**

Joe Washam, University of Georgia

In “Critical Advising: A Freirean-Inspired Approach,” Andrew Panuwat (2016) argues that advising is not a politically neutral activity. Although I agree that the “politics” of academic advising is an important (and largely unexamined) topic, I feel the political vision embodied in Panuwat’s conception of critical advising is underdeveloped.

In sympathy with the advising-as-teaching-and-learning position of Brown and Trachte (1999), Panuwat argues that advisors should foster critical reflection in students with the goal of promoting social justice and the common good (p. 4). The benefit of renovating advising around the goal of world transformation through critical reflection, Panuwat claims, is that it would align advising argument classes rather too conventionally to the goals of integrative learning (Lowenstine, 2005, 2013, 2014, 2015). To the student who asks about graduation requirements, for example, he suggests that in addition to giving specific information (which is what the student wants and needs), “the advisor can also raise the question of ‘Why do you think (or anticipate) the course is required (will be important) for graduation?’” This question certainly helps students “develop an understanding of the curriculum” (p. 7), but it falls short of Panuwat’s conception of the social-justice oriented personal and political goals of Freirean-inspired advising. It also bypasses the foundations of critical advising, which, according to Panuwat, is not to study the...
Taking a critical approach

Focuses on intentional approaches.

- Causes us to acknowledge our own subjectivity and how it shapes our positionality in practice.
- It acknowledges the agency of participants as both researchers and collaborators.
- Allows us to center marginalized voices.

Why be critical?

- To better understand and expose systems and institutions that regulate behavior and perpetuate inequitable outcomes.
- Highlights a change-oriented approach.
- Questions common sense assumptions and taken-for-granted norms.

Why is it important to consider a critical lens?

- Persistent experiences with racism accumulate over time and have significant effects on mental health, physical health, social connections, and educational and professional opportunities.
- To appreciate the student experience, it is crucial to completely understand how individuals develop themselves in relation to their cultural environments.
- Individuals are shaped by their social contexts.

Critical Reflection

- Transformation in the direction of social justice can only come through critical reflection.
- Reflection becomes critical when it has two distinct purposes:
  1. Understand how power underlines, frames, and distorts educational processes and interactions.
  2. Question assumptions and practices that seem to make our lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests.

Individuals are shaped by their social contexts.

Critical practitioners....

- Attend to the differences between groups and seek to remedy underlying systemic inequities that produce differential outcomes.
- Expose and address power, privilege, and structures.
- Consider thoughtfully histories and contexts.
- Make explicit assumptions and intentions.
- Disclose colorblind and ideological neutral claims.

What is Anti-Oppression?

- A way of thinking about the world
- A way of naming oppression that happens against certain people based on their identities, and a way to work toward disrupting that mechanism.

- Identifies the experience of people based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, class background, physical appearance, etc.
- Challenges the way people are treated based on these identities.
How to work within an anti-oppression framework

Analyze power.
Recognize that all power imbalances are socially constructed.
Be continuously conscious of how to accurately identify what is and what is not oppression.

Know how to identify the processes by which power imbalances occur simultaneously at the individual, organizational and systemic level, resulting in the exclusion of social groups.

Address inequalities at the individual level.
Critically evaluate whether actions have a positive impact on rebalancing power and reducing systemic inequalities within the community, organizational culture.

In all interactions/situations, have I thought about my power, privilege and social location and how it impacts my actions?
Have I questioned/challenged dominant ways of thinking to transform power towards equity?
If yes, how can I promote these AO actions at an institutional or systemic level? If no, what do I need to do differently?
Have I ensured the actions I have taken are equitable, collaborative and power sharing? How can I measure this?

— Institutional oppression occurs when those from the dominant groups take for granted that their values are organizationally supported, thereby, giving them tangible power and acquisition of resources to shape and define how decisions and policies are made and, indirectly, determine who should benefit from them.” (Yee, 2008).

We often assume that students know what’s expected of them. New students often are not in a position to make realistic appraisals of the requirements of being a student. In this sense, risk can be defined as a student misjudging course demands and the required investment. Risk is reduced (and chances of success increased) if we engage upfront in the process of assertively and supportively shaping expectations and contracting with students.” (Lizzio, 2011)

Power of positive thinking

Evolution of advising

A variety of activities and tasks that involve providing information to students.
“Decision-making processes during which students make their maximum educational potential through communication and interaction with an advisor” (Grites, 1979)
“Situation in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to students about an academic, social or personal matter. The nature of the direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor or even teach.” (Kuhn, 2008)
Advising & retention

What do we know?

“Institutions which consciously reach out to establish personal bonds among students, faculty, and staff, and which emphasize frequent and rewarding contacts outside the classroom are those which most successfully retain students. Such interaction is the single strongest predictor of student persistence.” Vincent Tinto, 1988

Five institutional conditions to support student success (Tinto):

1. High, clear and consistent expectations.
2. Support is available.
4. Engagement with staff, faculty and peers.
5. Learning is relevant and value added.

Appreciative Education is a framework for delivering high-quality education on both an individual and organizational level.

Helps educators to embrace positive mindsets, leverages learners’ strengths and empowers ownership over the learning process.

DEFINITION

Appreciative Education is a theoretical infrastructure that recognizes the value of student stories and their lived experiences as the advising relationship.

By being more reflective of our own identities as advisors, as well as those of our students, we are able to work with others in a more intentional, thoughtful and impactful way.
Benefits of appreciative education

- Better able to understand peoples' strengths, skills and talents;
- Become more effective and efficient;
- Enables stronger relationships, resulting in greater job satisfaction and higher student satisfaction;
- Provides a common language and encourages collaboration;
- Creates engagement - builds community of practice.

Disarm

Immediacy Behaviors

“People are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer.”

Daily Disarms
Cheyenne Henry: Student Success Adviser

I was born and raised in Winnipeg. As an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) woman from the Prairies, I would also like to acknowledge the T’aa’nak’é territory I now reside in. I am honoured to be exposed to the rich culture and traditions of the Nation.

I received my Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba in 2004. I spent many years working in community development in Winnipeg’s inner city as well as academic advising and program coordinating with the University of Winnipeg. I have extensive experience working with urban Indigenous communities and inner-city communities in areas of housing, poverty, economic and community development, along with leadership and social entrepreneurship.
“The creation of environments that clearly indicate to all students that they matter will urge them to greater involvement... Clearly, institutions that focus on mattering and greater student involvement will be more successful in creating campuses where students are motivated to learn, where their retention is high, and ultimately, where their institutional loyalty for the short- and long-term future is ensured” (Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering, 1989)
Questions to ask/reflect on

- Whose reality is reflected and whose isn’t?
- What assumptions are being made that may affect historically marginalized students?
- What needs to be done to address inequities and inconsistencies?
- Are there any positive impacts on equity, diversity and inclusion that can be suggested?
- What success indicators do we want to implement?

DREAM
Uncovering personal and organizational visions.

Parallel Plans

When is failure not ok?

DESIGN
Co-create a plans.

“When people select their own goals, they are likely to have greater self-involvement in achieving them. If goals are prescribed by others, however, individuals do not necessarily accept them or feel obligated to meet them.”
- Albert Bandura

S
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Hidden Curriculum

Consciously or unconsciously hidden
Not written and not explicitly acknowledged
Values and skills separate from the official curriculum


Appreciative Referrals

What offices would you refer student(s)?
How might students' social identities, background, and experiences impact what resources you make available to students in the Design phase?
How might a student's lived experience affect their comfort in seeking out certain resources/offices?
What role do systemic barriers play in students accessing resources (or not)?
How can you ensure the referrals are appreciative?
Particularly for traditionally marginalized students, what might be some barriers for seeking out resources on campus?

DELIVER

Emphasizes the importance of personal and organizational resilience as obstacles and challenges arise.

Academic Hope
Self-efficacy

Refers to one’s belief in their capability to successfully complete tasks or goals.

One’s belief in the likelihood of goal completion can be motivating in itself.

Self-efficacy influences three major outcomes or behaviors:
- Approach versus avoidance
- Level of performance
- Persistence

Basic principle: individuals are more likely to engage in activities for which they have high self-efficacy and less likely to engage in those they do not.

Don’t settle: setting our own and helping others set their internal bars of expectations high.

Set the Bar High

If you have LOW expectations, students will live DOWN to them.

Condoleezza Rice

Don’t settle: Pocket of Greatness

Feel the fear & do it anyway
LET’S GET CRITICAL

The more I learn, the less I realize I know.

CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE

The assumption that change has to start at the top is wrong.

BE INTENTIONAL

"Start where you are."
References


Heiser, C.A; Prince, K; Levy, J.D. (2017). Examining Critical Theory as a Framework to Advance Equity Through Student Affairs Assessment. Vol 3 (1); University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.


