

# Navigating Toward Multiculturalism: A Model for Competency Based Programs



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## ABSTRACT

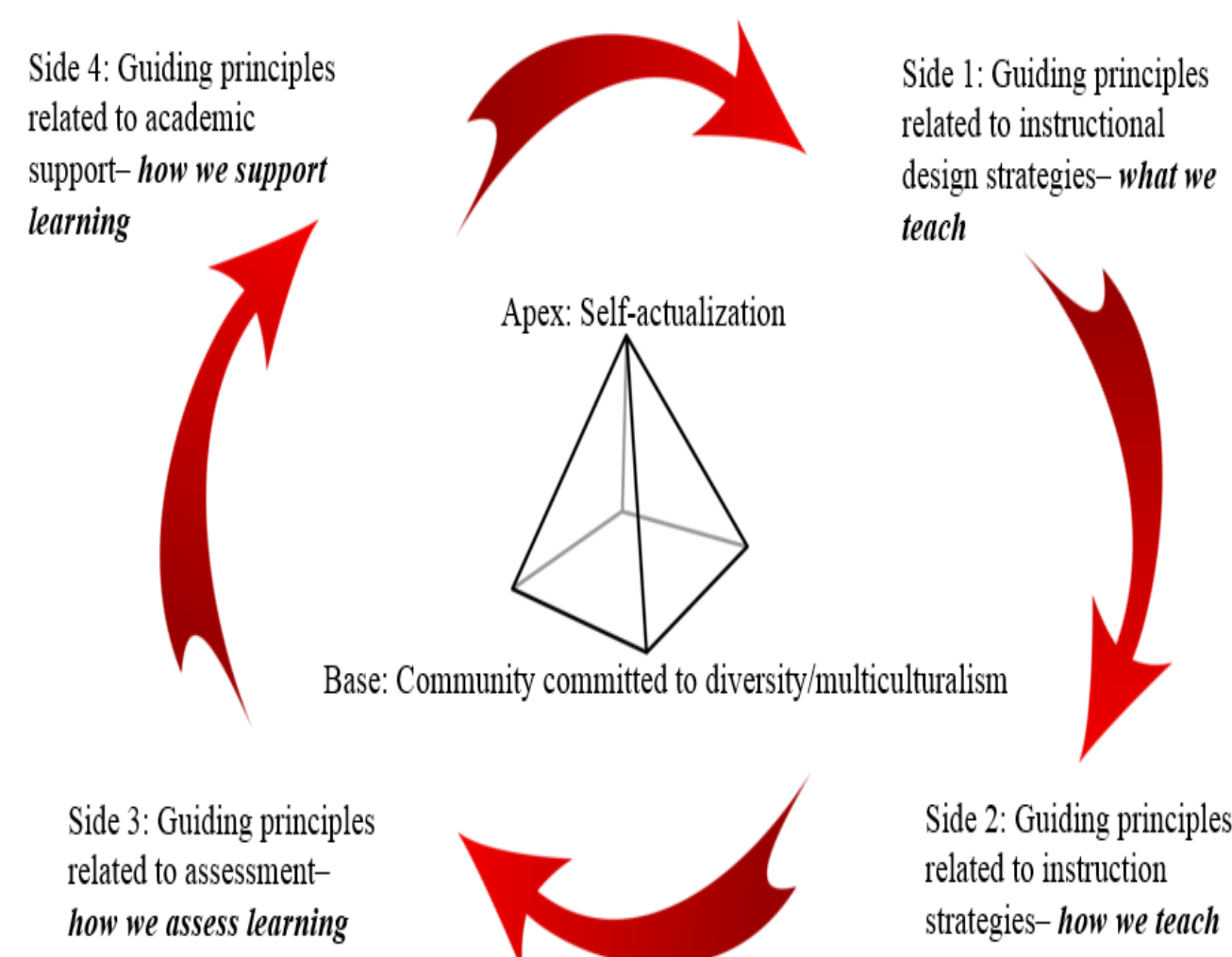
Competency-based education (CBE) has the potential to be a powerful lever for access and equity in higher education. Integrating multiculturalism into CBE programs can further promote equitable educational outcomes across achievement gaps. In an effort to develop a University wide scalable model to identify and revise courses with achievement gaps several steps were developed including frameworks for identifying root causes of inequitable outcomes, and proposed solutions to address these challenge within the Nursing and Health Sciences Program. The project combines elements from the proof of concept gateway course analysis and the Pyramid of Inclusion model to provide replicability and scalability to curriculum change processes and application of the framework and strategies across courses and programs

## OBJECTIVES

1. Identify and describe an environment of inclusion and multiculturalism using CBE.
2. Identify how knowledge, professional, and personal experiences are shaped by the diversity of contexts (e.g. cultural, social, racial, political, economic, global perspectives, historical trends, current events, and future directions)
3. Identify skill development that promotes competency mastery without excluding learners on the basis of nonessential skills.
4. Analyze diverse learning styles, abilities, ways of knowing, and previous experience and background knowledge related to multicultural education

## PYRAMID OF INCLUSION CURRICULUM DESIGN MODEL

Pyramid of Inclusion



The Pyramid of Inclusion model for multicultural competency-based education provided actionable strategies through the design of environments of inclusion and integrated multicultural concepts for CBE. The pyramid of inclusion model emphasizes the importance of what we teach, how we teach, how we assess and support learning from a multicultural standpoint illustrating a full range of multicultural strategies. An actionable approach in the integration of multicultural concepts into competency-based education is offered by examining gaps that exist in the performance of non-Caucasian learners in academic settings. The strategy presents a model to support the design of environments of inclusion and integrates multicultural concepts into CBE programming. This project is key to a University's mission in addressing critical and relevant issues related to a diverse learner population and gaps in diversity, equity, and inclusion within the curriculum.

## PROJECT PLAN

The University needed a scalable model to identify and revise courses that have achievement gaps. Through this project a framework was initially developed for identifying root causes of inequitable outcomes and proposed solutions to address the causes within our control. This project builds off of the proof of concept gateway course analysis and the Pyramid of Inclusion Model. This project also aims for replicability and scalability – the extent to which this framework and solutions can be applied across courses and programs.

### Strategic Importance

The project is key to the University's mission statements:

- The University believes that a diverse learning community is vital to achieving our mission of extending access to higher education. We believe that attracting, engaging, and supporting diverse learners, faculty, and staff strengthens our university.
- The University values human potential and is committed to being an inclusive and culturally competent institution.
- The University strives to promote equity within and beyond our community through intentional actions and the transformative exchange of ideas.

Multiculturalism, diversity and equity in academia are critical issues and very relevant at this time. This work is also connected to enterprise strategy: Academic Model (academic success and equity), Academic Quality Framework, and a commitment to quality. The foundation of the project is grounded in a commitment to learner equity.

Milestone	Goals/Work Activities
<b>Phase 1</b>	
a. Building framework around inequitable outcomes within courses	➤ Review the results of the Proof of Concept of MSN 66xx series, Care Coordination.
b. Asking the deep dive questions within equity that help build the framework	➤ Define the key questions, data sources, and expertise needed and at what points. Engage subject matter experts.
c. Determining the expected outcomes and measurements of success	
<b>Phase 2</b>	
a. Putting the framework into practice	Assess Root Causes by Exploring
b. Dissecting MSN 66xx series Care Coordination	➤ Learner readiness (e.g., what competencies did the learner have prior to starting this class).
c. Document the root causes	➤ Faculty insights (find out from faculty what they are seeing).
	➤ Curriculum enhancements.
	➤ Academic supports
<b>Phase 3</b>	
a. Determining Scalability & replicability	Planning and Implementation
	➤ How can we apply this framework and method to courses?
	➤ What were the inputs, resources, and constraints?
	➤ What are the outcomes?
a. Following persistence gaps and determine if there is any decrease	Evaluation
b. Report on findings	➤ What did we find?
c. Determine next steps	➤ What interventions make a difference?

## MULTICULTURAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES INTEGRATED INTO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

### Guiding Principles and Application in the Course Room

While diversity is often described in terms of gender, age, physical appearance, ethnicity, religious identity, and sexual orientation, these categories are considered surface-level or demographic diversity. On a deeper level, diversity is defined as personality, values, attitudes, knowledge, and preferences.

Guiding Principle	Suggestions for Application
The content and tone of our courses support diversity and incorporate inclusive language that respects diverse cultures, identities, abilities, and beliefs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evaluate content and tone of materials within the context of the principle.</li> <li>➤ Use a balanced perspective when including diverse cultures, emotional examples, or controversial topics.</li> <li>➤ Consider that the learner's first language may not be English.</li> </ul>
Instructional materials incorporate universal design principles, providing options that show respect for learners' perspectives, values, attitudes, knowledge, and preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Anticipate the needs and interests of diverse audiences.</li> <li>➤ Present alternative reading options in a Study.</li> <li>➤ Give learners options for how to take in information.</li> <li>➤ Consider: Which alternative study options would best serve learners from backgrounds I can't necessarily anticipate?</li> </ul>
Assessments incorporate universal design principles, providing options that show respect for learners' perspectives, values, attitudes, knowledge, preferences, and differing abilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Present multiple deliverable options in Assessments.</li> <li>➤ Create authentic real-world assessments that allow learners from different backgrounds to integrate their own experience with course content.</li> <li>➤ Consider ADA compliance in interview activities.</li> <li>➤ Give learners options for how to present information.</li> <li>➤ Provide multiple means of engagement.</li> <li>➤ Consider: Which deliverable options best anticipate the various technical backgrounds and personal experiences of a wide variety of learners?</li> </ul>
Discussions incorporate universal design principles, providing options that show respect for learners' perspectives, values, attitudes, knowledge, preferences, and differing abilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide discussions that allow learners to share diverse backgrounds and experiences, to help broaden understanding of different cultures/experiences.</li> <li>➤ Consider disabilities, race, religion, profession, and general learner privacy when asking learners to speak about themselves in discussions and other forums.</li> <li>➤ Give learners options for how to present information.</li> <li>➤ Provide multiple means of engagement.</li> </ul>
Our courses encourage learners to become aware of and question their own implicit biases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide opportunities for the learners themselves to become more aware of their implicit biases.</li> <li>➤ Incorporate ways to raise awareness of implicit biases in assessments/media when possible.</li> <li>➤ Consider: How could we help learners to develop cultural thinking skills (based on the learners' program/degree level) to enhance their ability to make decisions without cultural bias?</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

It is clear that no single course or experience can fully "teach" students how to effectively communicate, relate, and work cooperatively with people of different backgrounds. To gain the necessary intercultural skills, students need ongoing practice and multiple opportunities to grow, staged over time and in new and changing contexts. The University needed a scalable model to identify and revise courses that were identified as having achievement gaps. Using the Multicultural education theory five essential dimensions were used as the focus to incorporate multicultural principles within the curriculum; content integration, pedagogy, environmental or institutional culture, prejudice reduction, and knowledge construction (Banks, 2001).

What should a course look like after incorporating multicultural, inclusive, and equity principles? In addressing this question, several assumptions must be made explicit:

- Every course has several dimensions that can be considered in planning for change: content, instructional strategies and activities, assessment strategies, and classroom dynamics.
- In terms of content, courses in some disciplines (e.g., sociology) are more easily modified than courses in other disciplines (e.g., nonmetallic materials; calculus).
- Course revision for multicultural change and equity is a continuing and interactive process between the individual instructor and course as the former grows in multicultural sophistication. For this reason, describing an ideal end product for a specific course can be like sighting a moving target.
- The course syllabus should accurately reflect multicultural intent. A comparison of syllabi with actual course instruction will demonstrate that the multiculturalism of some transformed courses is not reflected in their syllabi, while some courses with obviously multicultural syllabi do not demonstrate multiculturalism in practice.
- All course goals, including multicultural goals, should be made explicit to students, actualized in content and instruction, and their attainment monitored.
- Syllabi constitute a major source for external evaluation of program quality, including meeting of professional standards regarding multicultural content and strategies.

One can accept that resistance to past methods of engaging multiculturalism and equitability must be considered as part of the educational landscape that we occupy as academics. Given that the perception of such resistance tends to deter intercultural learning, we postulate the need to shift from a content-focused pedagogical paradigm to a way of learning that utilizes diverse viewpoints in productive and rewarding ways across the curriculum. In addition, modeling multicultural education and equity best practices in the design and implementation can lead to positive responses. The measurement of success with implementation of the design principles will determine if the multicultural and equity goals are successfully implemented. These outcomes are the four basic elements for change: content, teaching, strategies, assessment, and classroom dynamics. A transformed course will challenge traditional views and assumptions, however, these changes encourage new ways of thinking and re-conceptualizes the field in light of new knowledge, scholarship, and ways of knowing. We hope to demonstrate that the greatest majority of courses offered in the University can demonstrate the principles of multiculturalism and equitability.

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