

Community Colleges and Adult Education

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Abstract - Over its 100-year plus history the community college has struggled to make clear its mission. As a comprehensive community college its mission has bounced around to focus on liberal arts, developmental, workforce, community, and general education. In today's increasingly competitive society with shifting values and changes in power it is likely that workforce education/career and technical education will remain a foundational mission of the community college. Workforce education is strongly supported by state and federal legislators who demonstrate that support with billions of dollars. It is strongly supported by business and industry. And it is strongly supported by parents and students (Banion2019) This paper discusses the importance of community colleges to adults, communities and organizations.

Keywords - Community Colleges, Adult Education, Organizations.

I. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of adult education program in the community colleges began in the 1920s and continued slowly until about 1950. Medsker (1960) states that in the United States enrollment in Junior college adult education programs increased from about 21,000 in 1936 to over 400,000 in 1957. From 1960 to 1965, part-time Enrollments increased more rapidly than full-time. In 1970, approximately one half of all community college enrollments were part-time students, a figure which is now inching the one million mark. Today, most community colleges accept the functions of community services and adult education (Monroe 1972).

Studies about community colleges:

Humpherys and Hocevar study, 2012:

As community colleges face increasingly tight budgets and calls for a renewed focus on improving student outcomes in the form of graduation rates, colleges must address the concept of access. How much access to higher education can they continue to provide low-skilled students in adult education and similar programs? One way to ensure access to

these students is through formalized transition to college programs. The authors summarize characteristics of two transition program models and introduce research at a community college that evaluated the effectiveness of three characteristics in the models (Humpherys and Hocevar, 2012).

Tollefson study, 2009:

In his study Tollefson, 2009, stated that Community colleges in America are now very visible and highly respected institutions of higher education. More than 1,000 community colleges in all 50 states now comprise nearly 25% of all colleges and universities in the U.S., with over 6.5 million students, or about 45% of all college students.

State and local governance and coordination of community colleges vary from single-state governing boards to minimal state control and strong local governing boards. The relative degrees of state and local control of community colleges generally "follow the money," in that accountability to state and local governing board and state legislatures is generally about proportional to the funds provided by each level of government.

Funding for operational support of community colleges comes primarily from state and local governments, with considerable federal support for grants and subsidized loans to students. In 2000–2001, the largest proportional funding sources for community colleges were: state governments (44.6%), local governments (19.5%), tuition and fees (19.5%) and the federal government (5.4%). State lotteries in at least 38 states represent a relatively new source of funds for community colleges, often in the form of student scholarships.

Many of the earliest public junior colleges charged no tuition, especially in California in the early 1900s. Now many community college students pay \$3,000 or more per year in tuition and fees, and recent annual tuition increases in many states have been in double digits. This is a troubling trend that threatens to reduce access to higher education for poor people (Tollefson, 2009).

Pham, et al, study, 2019 :

The current research investigates the employment outcomes of Career Technical Education (CTE) from California community colleges. They used three years of data from the California Community Colleges Career Technical Education Outcomes Survey, a survey of former community college students. They documented overall positive employment outcomes. Students earned a higher hourly wage, Hypothesis 1, improved their work status, Hypothesis 2, and improved their work term, Hypothesis 3, after their schooling compared to before their schooling, whether or not the student earned a degree or certificate. They also documented that wage increases were positively related to the degree to which participants' job is related to their field of study. These results are consistent with the intended industry-specific curriculum of CTE programs: California Community College students receive positive employment outcomes from the training they receive in their CTE program, (Pham et al, 2019).

Tarker study, 2009:

Tarker noted that Due to a significant turnover of community college presidents, considerable research has emerged on the topic of community college leadership in recent years. What competencies, skills, knowledge, behaviors, and traits do community college presidents need to possess – especially when they face an unprecedented number of challenges including increased accountability, changing government funding models, and pressure to adopt significant curriculum reform to improve student completion and success rates? An unintended result of the expansion of

the literature may be the emergence of a research phenomenon called construct proliferation. Construct proliferation occurs when multiple, competing theories and frameworks are developed to explain a similar phenomenon, which can impede research. One solution to this problem may be to use transformational leadership theory and the five-factor model as theories to help synthesize these multiple constructs (Tarker, 2019).

**II. WHY ADULTS ENROLL IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ADULTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Some adults join such programs to enhance their economic status and to get better jobs. Some come to enjoy learning more about the world, meet friends, etc. Early retirement and the growing amount of spare time give people enough time to take classes to stay away for a while from the house. Husband, and children.

Basic education. Many people leave schools before high school graduation; later they realize that they are disabled through life by need for a diploma. If the chance for more study is attainable to them, many of them will enroll in a part-time study to complete their secondary education when adults join such programs, they want to gain knowledge in subjects that they did not study in high school. For these students, the community college provides courses in great books, in philosophy of science, and in foreign language, among others.

Degree objective. There has been a great growth in the number of employed adults who want to have an associate degree through part-time study. Consequently, more stress is being put on organized patterns of adult courses, which are similar to the courses needed by the full time student. The request of industry for more highly educated employees adds to the increase, as does the craving of housewives to retrain themselves for office work or teaching. This degree objective of adult part-time students is a recent and obvious reason for more development in community junior college adult's education (Monroe, 1972).

Paris reported in his study, 2018 that Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community in the City University of New York (CUNY) system, argues that community colleges are “are the largest disruptive force in higher education of the past fifty years.” Their open access makes it at least possible to realize “the vision of universal, equitable higher education.” That vision, of course, has not been realized because of many interconnected factors, including eroding financial support and ideologically-based attacks on higher education. At the same time, she describes the incredible, Hesburgh award

winning achievements of LaGuardia, despite the broader national “insidious effort to undermine what we in higher education, and particularly in community colleges, do and the support we receive.” She recommends greater advocacy efforts, especially from higher education leaders across the board, for greater support for community colleges and recognition of their critical role in achieving equity (Paris, 2018).

Monroe (1972) found that evening college students were often seeking to complete a college degree program. Even though they might never transfer to a senior college, they believe that their job status would be much improved because of the college courses which they had completed. Many large companies today encourage their employees to attend evening school; some pay all tuition and book charges. Monroe (1972) said that companies like Western Electric and International Harvester invited community colleges to come to their premises with instructors and courses for their adult employees (p. 134).

Occupational training or retraining. An outcome of enlarging and developing technology has been the fast outdatedness of vocational skills and the effect of a need for renewed training or retraining for another occupation. The radio repairman is an example of this need. As television invaded the American home during the immediate postwar period, thousands of radio servicemen came to junior colleges and technical schools to learn the secrets of television repair. Hardly had they become used to their new skills, when the introduction of color broadcasting sent them back to school for additional training. Almost immediately thereafter, the substitution of the transistor for the vacuum tube brought another set of technical problems and another demand for adult classes.

Adult occupational training provides the skills needed for entry into an occupation. Men in blind alley jobs and housewives whose children no longer need their full time attention frequently seek this training. Introductory courses in machine shop, electronics, bookkeeping, real estate, or drafting are examples of courses offered for men; secretarial training and practical nursing courses may attract women who feel the need to qualify for employment (Thornton, 1960, p. 241).

Homemaking education. Community teachers of homemaking realize that the best time to teach skills in homemaking and understanding of life is after marriage. The community college offers homemaking classes as part of adult education programs. Consumer economics, low-cost cooking, family entertaining, and parental and infant care

are some of the courses which may be giving to part-time students.

Avocation courses. Having too much time with the tedious and encouraging nature of many occupation, motivates adults to look for vocational education through adult education programs. Some of the courses offered in a community college adult program are woodworking, mineral and lapidary work, oil painting, ceramics, weaving, craft work, and other adaptable skills.

The geriatric purpose. Society must encounter the growing problem of its older people and look for human answers. Having an interest in one or more courses of study and in the friendship of classmates can maintain mental energy. It is likely that such interest or desire and activity can enhance the physical condition. Also, the financial costs of adult education for these people would be minimal in comparison with the custodial costs that might be saved. Philosophy, history, current events, geography through travelogues, literature, and some hobby classes have all confirmed their desire and usefulness when offered, especially for classes of students over sixty years of age.

Specific examples. Gabert (1981, p. 28) gave some examples of why people enroll in adult education programs offered by community colleges:

Jim was promoted to lead foreman. He is concerned that he will sometimes have to write memos that will go to the front office. He is taking basic punctuation and spelling on Saturdays at the community college campus.

Hank has always considered himself a pushover and is frequently mad at himself because of it. When he read in his church bulletin that the community college was offering a course on self-Assertion: Constructive speaking and listening on Wednesday evening in the Sunday school building, he decided to enroll.

The Smiths are retired and enjoy their monthly one-day trip to some of the local sightseeing spots, sponsored by the senior citizens' center in cooperation with the community college. The trip next month includes lunch, a museum tour, and some free time for shopping, all at a very reasonable cost.

Goals of the Community College in Adult Education

Before talking about why community colleges offer adult education programs, it is valuable to look at some of their overall purposes. The statement of the Johnson county community college in suburban Kansas City presented below is one that could be taken as a stereotype for most community colleges, with little change for domestic considerations:

Be responsive to the general educational needs of the community.

Educate individuals in the community by helping them develop their intellectual and social potential.

Provide community-wide, nondiscriminatory access to educational opportunities.

Be a catalyst for educational innovation, cultural activities, community cooperation, and international awareness.

Assist students who wish to prepare for college study beyond their freshman and sophomore years. Train individuals in needed job skills.

Assist local business, government, industrial, and community organizations with their training information and research needs.

Be a location where groups and organizations can meet to carry on their activities (Gebert 1981, p.12).

Smith, et al, 2015, argued that Ten years ago, community college presidents' most valued datum was the number of students enrolled, which drove the colleges' funding. Providing access to higher education for the millions of students without the time, money, or academic preparation to attend a traditional four-year college was (as it always had been) their top priority.

Today, a growing number of community college leaders are laser-focused on a different number: how many entering students complete their coursework and earn a credential or degree. Finding ways to help students overcome the academic and life challenges that have kept graduation rates appallingly low at most of the nation's 1,000 two-year public colleges is now their prime concern.

It has been no small feat to change the national conversation about the role of community colleges in our society from providing access to also promoting success. Now, a decade into the college completion movement, what do we have to show for it (smith, 2015).

They continued that the good news first: Hundreds of colleges have adopted innovative approaches to helping more people finish more quickly degrees that matter in the marketplace. Some institutions have also increased completion rates for certain groups of marginalized students.

Major national reform strategies, such as Achieving the Dream, which launched the college completion movement in 2004, and the Developmental Education Initiative have helped refocus college cultures and concerns from buildings

and budgets to student success. Other significant initiatives include Accelerating Opportunity, Breaking Through, and Completion by Design (smith, 2015).

III. CONCLUSION

It was reported by Paris, 2018 that Thomas Bailey, President of Teachers College of Columbia University, notes that community colleges have always had a dual role, providing vocational training and credentials, on the one hand, and preparing students for transfer to bachelors' degree programs, on the other. There has always been some tension and tradeoffs between these two roles and now greater pressure on both—for “bachelor's degrees for all” and for job-related “short-term and sub-baccalaureate awards.” All this while the community college “disproportionately enrolls students who face the greatest academic, social, and economic barriers to their success ... [and] spends the least money per student.” Though there are arguments on both sides of the debate, Bailey indicates some important advantages to the transfer function—if completion rates can be raised. He suggests a number of strategies including increased financial support, stackable credentials, and pathway programs to increase completion, increased student services, and community partnerships to support these efforts (Paris, 2018). Today, community college student affairs practitioners are more actively engaged in innovative and effective programs and services that directly contribute to student success. They are more meaningfully involved in institutional initiatives that are far more engaging than decades ago. While their work today in providing essential services continues to be important, student affairs colleagues seem more valued and respected by academic leaders and faculty for their collaborative contributions to fulfillment of institutional missions and visions that are broadly shared (Floyed, 2018).

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