Dorda S.V.
Education and Research Institute of Business Technologies "UAB"
Sumy State University
Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages

UNIVERSITY DESIGN FOR STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS

Over the last twenty years, universities chose commitment to access, they enrolled an increasing number of diverse students, and they began focusing more attentively on student learning results. As a result, universities changed their thinking about how, where, and with whom their students learn. Strange and Banning argue that "instead of thinking of learning as a one-dimensional activity, we understand it better now as a multidimensional experience involving multiple intelligences and a wide range of styles and preferences. Instead of planning from behind closed classroom doors, we now sample from a full palette of varied sites and venues – real, virtual, and distant. Instead of focusing on the vertical path from student to teacher, we now explore horizontal webs, where experts, peers, practitioners, and other resource persons ground the holistic processes of discovery, insight, and application in a dynamic community of learning" [2, 136].

L. Dee Fink identifies six types of significant learning: foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, learning to learn. Fink described what students do about learning in terms of filling files – their course file and their life file. However, both files might be filled with knowledge, Fink thinks that "two files are totally disconnected" [1, 8]. Here is the main idea of significant learning: "If we want to promote significant learning, we need to help students connect what they learn in our courses with their life file. In general this means drawing from students' past and current life experiences when building the basis for their learning and then linking new learning to possible future life experiences" [1, 8].

According to Strange and Banning, "learning may also be seen most broadly as a progression in meaning making and understanding toward increasingly complex and advanced ways of viewing and interacting with the world. This process requires both the acquisition of new information and access to opportunities for the exercise of new skills, competencies, and ways of thinking and acting. Ultimately, the goal of learning

might be seen as the merging of personal identity, values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and interests toward a purposeful endpoint of fulfillment and human actualization" [2, 139].

To fulfill these educational experiences Strange and Banning propose a hierarchy of environmental design. The need for environments that promote inclusion and safety precede the need for environments that encourage engagement and community. They think if concerns of inclusion and safety are in question, the promises of engaging and communal environments are compromised. They stress that the conditions of learning community depends largely on the effectiveness of the two previous strata [2, 140]. According to their model, an educational institution must first present an inclusive, safe, and secure environment for all students. Without sense of security and inclusion, without sense of belonging to the university community, free from fear and threat, educational goals will fail. So, the first step for university management is to create such conditions and serve such goals.

Safety and inclusion are only the starting points. University environment must engage students in learning experience both in and out of the classroom. Without such engagement, students will remain detached from the opportunities that call for their own learning.

Safety, inclusion, and engagement are prerequisites for the educational goals and success. However, they are insufficient to ensure all learning goals. Only through the community experience, students can reach a sense of membership. Moreover, the rapid changes of educational environment promise to alter the way students meet their educational needs.

References

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