The Enhancing Series Case Studies: International Learning Experience

Managing Diversity - An American Perspective

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Summary
The higher education (HE) environment in the United States (U.S.) is becoming increasingly diverse, global, and multicultural (Toossi, 2002). Twenty years ago, the higher education population was predominantly white middle class (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Ginder, Miller, 2008), but there has been a demographic shift, and this, along with an increase in access to technology, has made HE more accessible to an increasing immigrant population (O'Donnell, 2006). When African American, Hispanic and students from other backgrounds (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2006) are added to the ethnic mix, lecturers need to keep pace with and be aware of these multiple variations in cultural identity and how this impacts on the student learning experience (Heistad, 2005).

In this chapter, we examine an American perspective on managing diversity in educational groupings, with a look at Marian University, Wisconsin, and more particularly at their Sport and Recreation Management Programme (SRMP) run by the School of Business. Marian has grown over time; it began as a teacher training school in 1851, became a junior university, and was granted full university status in 2008. The current president, Josefina Castillo Baltodano J.D., is driving the diversity initiative in Marian. In her inaugural speech she announced that inclusiveness and diversity would be part of Marian’s strategic direction. She stated:

“… we envision an opportunity to deepen our commitment to Marian’s mission by becoming a more diverse institution as reflected in the
composition of our board, faculty, staff and students. We envision that Marian will enhance curricular and instructional strategies and university support services responsive to a global world and a diverse student body, with a focus on developing multi-cultural competencies” (Baltodano, 2007, September).

Recognising the importance of globalisation and the need to keep pace with the diversification of higher education, in 2008 the university made a decision to adopt a global perspective, supporting core values to promote a culture that fosters intellectual, social and cultural growth in the community and globally.

Marian educators identified the need to develop a global perspective, become literate about diverse cultures and learn how to manage the implications of having more than one culture present in an academic programme. This “diversity literacy” not only has an influence on the way lecturers approach teaching and programme development; rather, it is a level of awareness, a broader way of seeing themselves and the students who participate in their programmes, that shapes everything they do as educators, from planning and preparation to programme delivery. Through examination of personal cultural assumptions, individuals may realise and discover more suitable approaches to designing and teaching higher education programmes. Subsequently it may be possible to encourage students in turn to consider their cultural assumptions and stereotypes, their cultural programming.

Objectives

We examine the overview and situation in which Marian operates, the model used to explain the university’s diversity strategy, what this has meant within the Sport and Recreation Management Programme (SRMP) and finally highlight some of the lessons Marian has learned during the early stages of implementation of this strategy.

Rationale

Marian University is a premier applied liberal arts university located in the Midwestern United States. It offers more than forty undergraduate and graduate programmes and a variety of adult accelerated-degree programmes. Its size permits a very favourable student–faculty ratio of 12.4:1 (Marian University, 2008), one of the lowest among Midwestern institutions. Marian’s programmes of study are designed to meet a full range of pre-professional and professional academic needs, including business, education, the arts, sciences, nursing and technology. There are 3,000 students enrolled from nineteen U.S. states and twelve countries, representing different ethnic backgrounds. Marian has dedicated itself to creating an accessible, inclusive community honouring diversity in areas such as:

Staff Recruitment Practices

These focus on retaining, attracting, developing and supporting a more diverse board, management and staff to reflect commitment to becoming a more diverse institution.
Curriculum and Pedagogy Policy

This policy integrates certain core values: community, learning, service, social justice, spiritual traditions (Marian University, 2008) and guides staff in creating a curriculum infused with multiculturalism, as a way to prepare students for success in a diverse, global 21st century. The goal is to enhance and expand curricular strategies, to focus on developing multicultural competencies and ensure that university support services are responsive to a global world and a diverse student body (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998).

Educational Access

This refers to the creation of an environment of inclusiveness and diversity through cross-cultural learning and exchange - for the entire campus and the surrounding community.

Office of Equity & Inclusion

An Office of Equity & Inclusion has been established. This office leads the university-wide integrated approach to enhancing intercultural/diversity awareness for students, faculty, staff and the community. This includes leading the social justice committee and developing a plan to address the core value of social justice. The social justice core value is creating individual and societal change which supports the value of dignity, and opportunity for every person. The functions of the social justice committee are:

- To enrich curriculum and non-curricular activities of the university with cross-cultural experiences.
- To expand multi-cultural connections in the surrounding community.
- To promote an appreciation of ecological and social justice among men and women of various racial, cultural and economic groups.
- To plan inter-group programmes to embody human and cultural diversity among members of the campus as well as the local community.
- To act as an interdisciplinary resource base to facilitate multi-cultural classroom learning.
- To assist the university's affirmative action officer in an advisory capacity in order to effectively implement the university's affirmative action and non-discrimination policies.
- To assist university planning with regard to multi-cultural and ecological issues.
- To serve as an advisory body to professional divisions of the university regarding social justice/human relations issues.

A major issue faced by SRMP lecturers at Marian is how to keep pace with the diversification of higher education and be effective and successful in addressing the diversity and cultures of students attending their programme.
Context

Over a five year period (2003 to 2008) SRMP enrolment included 500 students from six different ethnic backgrounds. The university and the SRMP anticipate continued growth in the cultural diversity of students and increased enrolment of diverse students in the SRMP. The SRMP is designed to prepare undergraduate students with a background in sports and recreation services management, as well as in the scientific principles of sport. Emphasis is placed on career orientation within the context of a liberal arts background. Thus the SRMP curriculum combines core business and liberal arts classes with sport and recreation management classes. The focus is on interacting effectively with various clients in sport and recreation centred enterprises; ensuring fundamental business principles are successfully adapted to the specialised settings of sport and recreation-centred enterprises; interacting effectively with clients to ensure that business philosophies are successfully applied in the field of sport and recreation.

On graduation, SRMP students are qualified to work in a variety of areas such as recreational programming, corporate fitness and management, professional/non-professional sports organisations and sports marketing.

As well as being a diverse group themselves, it is highly likely that these graduates will be working in locations or organisations where handling diversity in their working lives will be a necessary skill. Therefore, the management of diversity in the SRMP at Marian is becoming an increasingly urgent issue.

Figure 1 shows a framework devised to help understanding of five important themes; global perspective is the overarching umbrella theme adopted by the SRMP staff. The four other interrelated themes are means of supporting and facilitating the attainment of a global perspective among staff and students.
Figure 1. Framework for Managing Diversity (Pesch, 2006)

Description

Develop a Global Perspective

SRMP lecturers saw the growing importance of globalisation and an increasingly diverse student population, and they are in the process of developing cultural competence and a global perspective (Bennett & Salonen, 2007). They are intentional in learning about the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of the diverse students they work with. They are developing cross-cultural skills and aspire to become culturally literate which will help them relate to culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000). They are trying to be sensitive and empathetic to student needs. This includes being sensitive to aspects such as customs, values, beliefs and norms – cultural programming, a series of deeply held convictions and emotions. Cultural programming includes, for example, differences in food, language, attitudes towards study, what university life will be: religious practices, beliefs, values, daily habits and others (Pesch, 2006).

This initiative started in 2006 and as we write is still in the process of development. The SRMP lecturers recognise that the questions this approach raises are complex and not easily answered. To achieve this ideal, they are attempting to:
• Develop some knowledge of the language and culture of the diverse students in the SRMP.

• Work closely with colleagues from other cultures through, for example, professional and community organisations.

Understanding cultural programming is a complex matter (Anthonissen & Verweek, 2005). The staff at Marian recognise that they need to learn about how different cultures view many aspects of life. For example, self-knowledge - North Americans seek self-knowledge primarily through external sources such as personal therapy, religious affiliations and self-help books whereas people in the United Kingdom and Australia view self-knowledge as a personal act of courage and discovery (Rosen et al. 2000). Knowing that differences of this sort exist and understanding the implications is how the SRMP lecturers aspire to learn to value differences in the world view of their students.

Understand Learning Styles and Culturally Diverse Students

Research on culturally diverse students and learning styles suggests that lecturers who have developed a global perspective will also be sensitive to the different learning styles culturally diverse students bring to learning events (Dilg, 1999).

Within the Marian context, the SRMP lecturers considered student learning needs and knowledge acquisition processes alongside current resources and facilitation styles. They concluded:

• It is not enough to be culturally inclusive. Although it is important to take cultural differences into account when planning, developing or facilitating classes, lecturers came to understand that teaching students in the SRMP programme requires knowing about the students’ learning styles as well as their cultural values.

• Getting and keeping students actively involved in learning lies partially in understanding learning style differences and preferences, so staff see themselves as sensitive to different learning styles and believe that they need to use different teaching or facilitation strategies to work with different learning styles.

Vary Educators’ Facilitation and Teaching Styles, Course Delivery Format

While the SRMP lecturers know that they need to deal with language differences, dialect, and differences in communication patterns, putting all this into place is a challenge. They have a basic belief in the importance of a flexible, facilitative, friendly, sensitive and approachable teaching style. They are keen to implement solutions, but have limited resources. It is expensive and difficult to hire interpreters and find curriculum materials such as books, CDs and videos in multiple languages. Publishers are coming around, but not enough materials are developed yet to meet their needs.

All SRMP lecturers are aware that they need to vary their teaching and facilitation styles whatever the class, but that it is particularly important with a culturally diverse
group. They are engaged in setting up the following processes to enhance their ability to teach these groups:

- Partnering with other lecturers who are successfully teaching culturally diverse students and absorbing their teaching and facilitation methods and strategies - this includes the facilitation of structured warm-up activities, demonstrations, role play, and other activity-based learning exercises.
- Attending professional development programmes to learn about the practices, exercises and techniques lecturers use to increase participation and group learning.
- Using a variety of computer-based training, experiential activities, games, simulations, case studies, lectures and web-based activities.
- Learning how to manage highly interactive classrooms and use roundtable discussions, simulations, case study debriefs and action learning sessions.
- Creating effective hybrid learning models and know-how to develop and integrate curriculum that can be delivered via the Web, face-to-face, or through both media.
- Adapting their curriculum to include role-playing activities which prepare students to work in their home country using formal and informal daily exchanges customary in relevant countries outside the U.S.
- Practising cultural etiquette and greetings to use during daily exchanges as part of the course curriculum.
- Attending educational workshops addressing how to teach and facilitate courses with culturally diverse students.

**Preparation for Culturally Diverse Groups of Students**

Lecturers get to know the students before they start the programme and establish a relationship with them. They make a point of talking to students frequently during course planning and preparation to reinforce student awareness of the purpose, goals, needs and outcomes of the SRMP. They also familiarise themselves with the cultural context of the students and use the U.S. government office of protocol website to learn about the cultures of the students. They read newspapers to see what is going on in the popular culture of the countries represented by the SRMP students.

**Design Culturally Sensitive Educational Materials**

Programme design is consistent with the cultural orientation of the students participating in the sports education programme. Lecturers use and adapt materials that are relevant to participants’ actual day-to-day work and life experiences, with names and situations that reflect the cultural mix in the class. Materials also aim to make all students alert to the need for cultural sensitivity in the world of work, and help them to develop an awareness that they may be working in regions where this will be essential.

For example, a case study used in class about a sport marketing manager working in the south-western U.S. will show that they need to know the characteristics of the largely Hispanic population in that region in order to be effective.
Evaluation and Current Progress

Staff recruitment

Putting this strategy into practice is a challenge, and the faculty are at the beginning of a process which they know will take time. A student centred approach is key for them, and the department is finding it difficult to recruit lecturers with the work experience and teaching style that meets the needs of students with culturally diverse learning styles. Current staffing consists of a programme manager, one full time teaching member and a number of part-time staff. The department are reassessing hiring practice to retain, attract, and develop faculty who can support a more diverse student population as the programme grows.

Student satisfaction

The SRMP faculty and staff are in the initial stages of working with the Office of Equity & Inclusion, focusing on student recruitment and retention. Results from the National Survey of Student Engagement were consulted. (This is a U.S. survey especially designed to provide students and prospective students with information about their undergraduate experience, including views about the quality of education. The survey has a broad scope, with hundreds of colleges and universities of all types and sizes participating each year). Staff are aiming to use the results to learn more about how students evaluate various course elements. They hope that feedback from the survey will guide them in modifying their courses to enhance student learning.

Schedule

The table below shows more detailed information on the current status of the diversity management in the SRMP programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiatives, Activities, Opportunities to Support SRMP Diversity Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part of first year student experience; faculty mentor and encourage students to optimise their university experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional and national workshops sponsored by the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). The Society promotes, stimulates, and encourages study, research, scholarly writing, and professional development in the area of sport management <a href="http://www.nassm.com/">http://www.nassm.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Speakers</td>
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<tr>
<td>A range of guest speakers contribute to the programme, including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minor league baseball team manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA executive directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCAA athletic director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of guest services, major league football</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alumni from the programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Directors of a variety of organisations (including resorts with athletic facilities), addressing managing facility, personnel and wellness in profit and non-profit organisations

### Course Delivery Formats
Discussing blended approach delivery, and investigating platforms that will work with the programme including face-to-face and online.
No online delivery, or interpreters currently, but students with learning disabilities are accommodated by providing support tutors, and alternative assessment methods at no cost to the student. This is an area that is also under development.

### Course Materials
Current materials reflect and emphasise mostly gender equity. Multicultural materials are relatively young.
There are 5 major publishers in sports management and Marian will work with these publishers to ensure textbooks and support materials reflect current population diversity in the SRM field.
One or two courses require students to read newspapers or do research online, to research who is being marketed to, ‘who they see’, and the challenges ethnically diverse employees face in monoculture sport and management organisations. They also consider the trend of diversity in coaching.

### Opportunities for students to study sport recreation and management internationally and how to make these available to the students.
Nothing is available in sport at the moment, but the university does run a programme elsewhere.

### Service learning projects (opportunities to participate in the community)
Recreation department runs an after school youth programme working with kids and provides various opportunities e.g. officiating, proper sportsmanship, management and volunteering.
YMCA (family programme) with opportunities for internships, working with the home school students requiring physical education.
Internships with minor league baseball teams...

### Discussion
In this case study we have identified how staff at Marian have worked towards managing cultural diversity. They are hoping to fully implement the initiative by the autumn of 2009.
This has not been an easy road and it continues to be a challenge. The diversity initiative has come from a university strategic directive and therefore has to be
embraced by staff to whom this is a new way of thinking. This presents its own challenges.

Developing a global perspective is not something that happens overnight and requires significant reflection and thought by individuals and groups. Embarking on this path is not always comfortable and requires changes to the ways people deliver their courses. It also requires examination of one’s own cultural programming, again a difficult process. A lesson learned is not to ignore the knowledge and experience that students bring to the classroom, but to respect and use it to support learning.

Having said that, through examination of their own cultural assumptions, lecturers may realise and discover more suitable and inclusive approaches to managing cultural diversity which will benefit all students.

SRMP staff and lecturers are committed to integrating multicultural materials into curricular and instructional strategies, despite the dearth of multicultural materials (books, simulations, videos, etc.) available from publishers. However, developing their own multicultural instructional materials is time consuming and costly, and with a small faculty, means more programme and course preparation time.

President Baltodano’s vision of an inclusive strategic direction to support diversity at Marian requires resources to ensure that staff and faculty efforts and commitment are supported. Marian recognises that they are taking the first steps to promote a culture that fosters intellectual, social and cultural growth in the SRMP, the community and globally, and although the path may be difficult, the effort is already worthwhile and all students, and staff, should see benefit from it now and in the future.

Biographies

Mari Jo Pesch, PhD, is a trainer at the University of Colorado Hospital, Anchutz Medical Campus in Denver, Colorado. In her PhD research, she focused on global perspectives of trainers and trainer perceptions of culture, race and ethnicity on facilitation of training programmes in multinational corporations. Before joining the university, she worked for AC Nielson Marketing Research and taught graduate and undergraduate courses at multiple academic institutions in the United States. As a consultant, Dr. Pesch has designed curriculum and facilitated training and educational programmes for school districts, companies and organisations of all sizes, focusing on strategies to build employee skills and knowledge linked to organisation and business needs.

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