Chapter 4
Adopting Critical Culturally Responsive Online Pedagogy at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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ABSTRACT

The history of oppression for Black students in the United States dictates a distinct and intentional approach to the design and facilitation of online courses. For the students enrolled at the nation's 100 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), such an approach is critical. This chapter introduces Critical Culturally Responsive Online Pedagogy (CCROP) to foster meaningful online learning experiences. To understand the relationships that exist among power, online learning as a modality, and positive learning and behavioral outcomes for learners that enroll at HBCUs, it is important to first understand relevant pedagogies: pedagogy of the oppressed, cultural responsiveness, pedagogy of love, and critical pedagogy. Of equal importance is the state online education in general and online education at HBCUs. CCROP includes ten tenets. Special considerations for online HBCU faculty and HBCU leaders are also included.

INTRODUCTION

Questions about the quality of learning experiences in online programming have loomed for decades. In its novelty, many considered learning online the new hot thing that would soon go up in vapors. At this point, online education has solidified itself as a useful, profit-inducing, access-granting option for education. However, the questions around virtual learning have often caused stains on the perceived

quality of programs that are offered online. Some scholars and skeptics have used generalizations to criticize online learning. Online learning has been scrutinized for the lack of personal interaction, learners' dependence on technology, the potential for cheating, and authentication of submitted content--as if online is the only medium where isolation, technological dependence, and cheating could occur. Other critics contend that the curriculums of distance learning programs are not robust, and that online learning does not present opportunities for authentic learning experiences.

Many of these arguments were muted when the world was forced to turn to emergency remote learning during the midst of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. There was a sharp turn to leverage technology and online methods to connect teachers, learners, and parents who were forced into isolation. Maybe we should stop now and demonstrate a great debt of gratitude to the distance learning community, for as "bad" as some may claim the learning was during the COVID-19 lock down, where would we have been without these measures? Despite the appreciation we all should have, some are fine with reducing online learning to an emergency, "when we need it" medium. Some scholars and educators also are comfortable with the misnomer that emergency remote learning and online learning are synonymous. They are not.

While some spend their time and efforts of taking a "glass half empty perspective," other educators on all learning levels realize that negative outcomes associated with learning (i.e., cheating, learners who feel alone, and over dependence upon technology) occur in all of education and through all modalities.

Traditionalists who favor in-person learning have elevated in-person instruction often because of its seminal occurrence. Being first does not make it the best. Other naysayers have been more concerned with the potential threat that online learning poses to the teaching profession, particularly with the explosion of artificial intelligence.

Certainly, any autonomous form of learning demands that learners are self-motivated, practice integrity, and manage their time wisely. Likewise, this online learning requires systematic processes and diligence on the part of academic institutions.

For the authors of this chapter, our goal is not to argue the universality of online learning because all things are not for all learners. Instead, we outline these schools of thought merely to provide a more comprehensive discussion around the current state of online education and virtual learning with specific emphasis on minority and underrepresented students.

All educators should be working to make improvements through meaningful assessment, evaluation, and redevelopment. For the supporters of online education, who are regularly charged with defending the virtue of this learning modality, a common question looms, "How do we improve upon the student's learning experience, or how do we make online learning better?" This line of questioning is flawed because it is posed with the implication for "better" being more akin to in-person learning experiences.

Again, the problem with this implication is that not all in-person learning experiences are active, meaningful, didactic engagements in relevant contexts. These experiences do not always help learners make meaning of the modern society, produce new meaning and artifacts, nor contribute to global innovation. These courses are not always facilitated by professors who are content experts, versed in relevant pedagogical practices, or dialed into the culture and experiences of the modern learners.

In many cases, in-person learning experiences are characterized by bias, deficit perspectives, passive learning, and banking. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the latter term, we will get to that in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed section of this chapter. Ultimately, many college professors assume the role as the "all knowing" authority whose job is to impart knowledge of their "empty" learners. The instructor attempts to push his or her perspective on the learners, and a power struggle ensues. Even

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