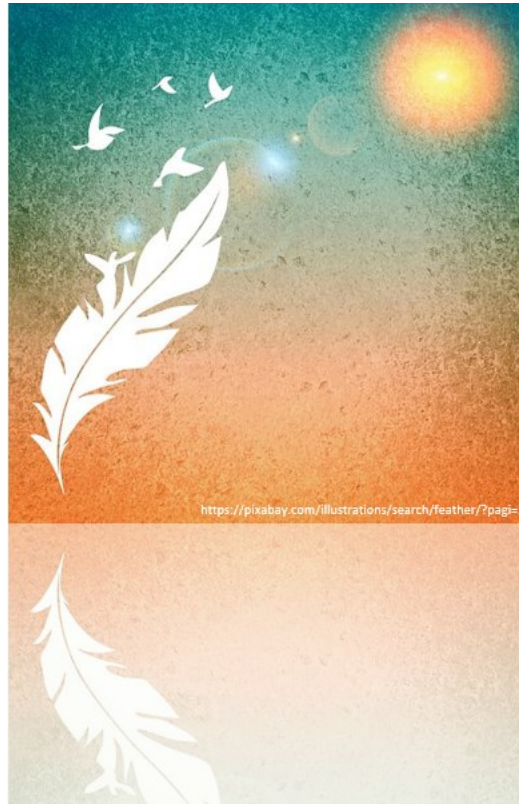**Supporting Student Accommodations and Inclusion Processes in Post-Secondary**

Education: A Bottom-Up Approach

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Abstract

This paper is set within the context of my experiences in post-secondary education as both a student and faculty. Over the past seventeen years, I have witnessed an exponential increase in student accommodations and inclusion processes. The program that I am a faculty member in is a cohort program that used to be much more standardized than it is to date. For example, when I attended the program, every student attended the program full-time and wrote all their exams together. A minimum passing grade of seventy percent was expected with no opportunity to rewrite supplemental examinations. Presently, the program is much more dynamic. There are now part-time spaces available to accommodate student needs. Other accommodations include the option to write exams in different locations to allow silence and extra time to write. There are also reserved seats in the program specified for indigenous students. These are all tremendous student accommodations and inclusion processes that require continual adjustments and adaptation by the faculty members and the institution. The foundational role of navigating through inclusion processes into the post-secondary education system is both important and necessary to support today's post-secondary learners. However, there appears to be a general expectation for faculty to be experts on their content, managers in the classroom, and skilled in communications, all during constant and relentless educational politics (Beavers, 2009). I argue it is the responsibility of faculty and the institution to incorporate methods and pedagogy to affirm student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. Realistically, student accommodations will only increase with inclusive processes; therefore, a more proactive approach that incorporates foundational educational philosophies and leadership is necessary to support continuity and mitigate oppression.

Keywords: *Student accommodations, inclusion, post-secondary*

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Chapter One

"An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of a Cure" ~Benjamin Franklin (Poem Analysis, 2023).

A New Journey

When I began the Master of Education program, I was in my first year of teaching in a dental hygiene program at a community college. One specific challenge I had with beginning to teach the dental hygiene paradigm was not having formal teacher training because I was a clinical dental hygienist with a Bachelor of Health Science degree. I resorted to drawing from my experiences as a dental hygiene student to compensate for this deficiency. However, my experience was quite different seventeen years ago in comparison to the present student experience. For example, student accommodations and inclusion processes in post-secondary education were minimal or non-existent in many programs. Now as a new faculty member, student accommodations are a prevalent topic of discussion, another challenge to combine with no prior teacher training. There is constant discussion of part-time enrollment opportunities, options to write exams in different locations with extra time to write, and reserving seats in the program for Indigenous students, to name a few. The accommodations often induce more discussion. For example, the part-time enrollment option extends the length of the program from two years to four years. The four-year option then requires adjusting practicums due to extending deadlines for competency completion. These adaptations within the program require ongoing evaluations of the quality of equity and equality in our program and institution.

When I was a dental hygiene student, the program was more standardized, and the student climate was predominantly Caucasian. It was a cohort program meaning every student attended the program full-time and wrote all the exams together and completed all the practicums together. A minimum passing grade of seventy percent was expected with no opportunity for rewrites or supplemental examinations.

New Knowledge

Looking back, I realize I would have benefited from a less rigid and more diverse curriculum and environment. I recognized this when I resorted back to my student experiences while discussing student accommodations and inclusion processes as a new faculty member. This is when I began an inquiry on the topic in the Master of Education program. I started reflecting on which factors allowed me to succeed without accommodations. I began to understand the opinions I had developed based on my student experience. Different courses provided me with perspectives and evidence to expand my thoughts on the topic. Principles and Processes of Educational Leadership provided an understanding of the purpose of student accommodations and inclusion processes and gave me insight into transformational leadership. Understanding and Managing Conflict guided my priority to look at all angles and consider the best and worst-case scenarios. Examining the philosophies and history of education steered my own teaching philosophy. Diversity: Constructing Social Realities sealed my profound sense of empathy for all students. I explored oppression, with an emphasis on the truth and reconciliation movement. The Indigenous Literature course expanded my lens on the history of the people in Canada and I formulated the opinion that educators have a responsibility to provide an inclusive atmosphere by promoting equity and equality. Then, I began to ask questions. How did I make it through a

rigorous program with limited accommodations and inclusion processes? How am I going to approach the ongoing adaptations and adjustments of the student accommodation and inclusion processes as a faculty member?

Building the Foundation

The answer to these questions is present in leadership theory and pedagogy demonstrated as a "bottom-up" approach. It is the responsibility of faculty and the institution to incorporate methods to affirm accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. This requires a proactive approach to support the student holistically. When this is not demonstrated, typically due to inadequate training and experience to deal with the adult learner's complex learning and psychosocial needs, the time and funding are prioritized within the hierarchy of the educational system, leaving student and faculty needs unaddressed (Housel, 2020).

Educators play a foundational role in the education system and are considered facilitators rather than instructors; therefore, it is necessary to put more focus on opportunities to develop the skills required to manage student diversity (Beavers, 2009). Realistically, student accommodations will only increase as inclusive processes increase. Forces such as globalization, technological advancements, and economic and social transformation shape the current trends of the adult learner and contribute to diverse personalities, identities, and world views (Awang-Hashim, Kaur, & Valdez, 2019).

The methods and pedagogy grounded in transformational leadership and the educational philosophies of Thomas Aquinas, Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and Nel Noddings, guide teaching

and learning applications that meet the expectations of the current globalized demographic in adult education (Awang-Hashim, Kaur & Valdez, 2019). They provide insight into nurturing relations and experiences and have the potential to fill in gaps when the foundation is being poured. This is necessary to sustain student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. I will begin by exploring the literature on student and faculty needs, and the educational philosophies that emphasize self-reflection (Aquinas), equality (Friere), critical thinking (Dewey), and an ethic of care (Noddings). A description of transformational leadership and how the educational philosophies connect to this style of leadership will follow as well as a discussion on deficit ideology. Lastly, I will apply my own experiences with transformational leadership, the philosophies and pedagogy related to the dental hygiene paradigm, and connections to the truth and reconciliation movement.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Student Needs

Accommodations

Research shows up to 96% of classrooms in higher education contain students with disabilities (De Los Santos, Kupczynski & Mundy, 2019). Many of these students will require some form of accommodation throughout their academic careers. A student accommodation is defined as:

> any change to a classroom environment or task that permits a qualified student with a disability to participate in the classroom process, to perform the essential tasks of the class, or to enjoy benefits and privileges of classroom participation equal to those enjoyed by adult learners without disabilities (Horton & Hall, 1998, p.8).

Essentially, the objective of accommodations is to manage equitable opportunities for students and support inclusivity. However, accommodations vary between higher education institutions, and it is not mandatory that they be provided, especially if the institution must incur costs. Consequently, students who enter higher education with disabilities have lower retention rates because they feel a lack of inclusiveness within the institution (De Los Santos, et al., 2019). This demonstrates how there are inconsistencies with a top-down approach to student accommodation and inclusive procedures, specifically across institutions. I argue it is the responsibility of faculty and the institution to incorporate methods and pedagogy from the bottom up to affirm student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. Student support must be both

predictable and sustainable otherwise they develop a negative perception of the process and become disconnected from their journey through education.

Faculty Needs

Strategies for Preparing Student Accommodations

Current demographics show "relentless expectations of the globalized economy require higher education practitioners to re-examine and realign their teaching and learning practices" (Awang-Hashim, R., Kaur, A., & Valdez, N., 2019, p.106), stating there is a need for improvement during the climb of the diverse student climate. Beavers (2009) explains teachers are "the foundational component of any educational system," (p.25) claiming it is vital to focus on appropriate and effective training. There is also an emphasis that adult educators be viewed as facilitators rather than instructors and often the suggestion is to implement professional development measures. Suggestions for professional development include utilizing faculty experience as learning opportunities, facilitating dialogue among faculty with direction toward problem-solving, encouraging faculty to facilitate rather than administrate, and creating an atmosphere that supports diversity, open-mindedness, and critique. According to Awang-Hashim, & et.al (2019), the majority of post-secondary institutions have likely undergone systematic diversity initiatives; however, the solutions have been developed based on local context, which creates inconsistent delivery. Further, the initiatives tend to present using the accommodation model. Although accommodations are meant to improve equity and access for students, they can create the opposite result, holding students responsible for their own exclusion (Nieminen, 2023). For example, the student requiring the accommodation is being measured

against able students, which is an act of discrimination. The student is automatically put into a vulnerable position because the process of acquiring accommodations is "resource-taking" (Nieminen, 2023, p. 616). Typically, a diagnosis is required first, which can be expensive and time-consuming. Then the student must access assessment for accommodations, a process that the general student population does not have to deal with. They can also be denied accommodations. If the focus started from the ground up, with the student/teacher connection installed prior to having to bridge a gap, there could be a more solidified foundation for all adult learners. Required accommodations would become more consistent and sustainable with less of a gap to bridge.

In a retrospective, non-experimental research study on support methods for higher education students with disabilities, it was concluded that increased contact between students and faculty created a positive feedback loop with higher success of accommodations and modifications (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Further, increased faculty interaction with the students requiring the accommodations created a two-fold effect because of the opportunity to share each other's knowledge. This concept of installing the student/teacher connection initially links to late modern and post-modern educational philosophies that highlight self-reflection, equality, critical thinking, and an ethic of care to support students.

The explorations of the philosophies combined with a description of transformational leadership and deficit ideology are meant to explain the responsibility that faculty and institutions have to incorporate methods and pedagogy that affirm student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. This requires a proactive, bottom-up approach to support student needs holistically.

Educational Philosophies

"It is in the roots, not the branches, that a tree's greatest strength lies." -Matshona Dhliwayo (Goodreads, 2023).

Now that I have discussed student and faculty needs with an emphasis on inconsistencies with student accommodations and the importance of building the student/teacher connection, it is time to explore and explain educational philosophies that support nurturing relations from the bottom up. Although these philosophies are not new, I would like to present them through the lens of pouring a foundation to initiate support of the learner, from the bottom-up, to secure connections that can be transferred along their transformational journey.

Self-reflection (Aquinas)

I will start with Thomas Aquinas for he indeed was a strong advocate of reflective practice. This is shown in his dualism, built from Aristotle's foundation, in that life and learning represents the dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical body (Gutek, 2011). From this categorization came the "extension of the spiritual into the intellectual dimension of theory and the corporeal into practice" (p. 81), which to me represents the purpose of reflective practice. My interpretation of this comes from Aquinas's believing "the supernatural and the natural orders [are] compatible and complimentary" (p. 81). Meaning that our soul, the essence of our being, and our beliefs provide us with the capacity to integrate, guide, and reflect upon our environment and visa versa. The use of reflective pedagogy in post-secondary education can appear in the form of linking theory into practice, whereby the student can be assigned reflective tasks which

can guide their integration into what they are expected to demonstrate. The outcomes of the reflective activities are two-fold because it provides the students the opportunity to think about what they are experiencing, and the instructor gets to learn about the student's individual learning. The result is that both the student and teacher are able to assess and support the development of reflection and integration skills from the bottom up, which can create a steady connection between the educational processes.

Equality (Freire)

Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed compliments the encouragement of reflective pedagogy because his work encourages a balance between new ways of education and traditional frameworks (LiteracyDotOrg, 1996), which suits a bottom-up framework. For example, Freire's concept of educational banking is described as the notion of the students appearing as empty vessels, in need of the teacher essentially filling the vase with information in a dominant and authoritative way. This sounds too familiar to my experience as a new faculty member, with limited experience in student accommodations, attempting to make decisions about student accommodations and inclusivity. Freire discussed that educational banking is demonstrated too often in classrooms, which makes me wonder, would he agree the banking model is being misused in the boardroom? Freire believed the major detriment to banking was it sets limitations on the student's ability to develop their own critical conscience. Consequently, reflection and transformation are hindered. In contrast, Freire offered the concept of praxis. This process requires both action and reflection, which leads to more action. Essentially an opening to encourage dialogue to gain knowledge of one's social reality. This requires action within one's environment to allow for critical reflection. The concept of praxis applies to the responsibility of

faculty and the institution in that growth and inquiry must be conducted and incorporated from the bottom up to affirm student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum.

Critical Thinking (Dewey)

Freire's concept of praxis provides the opportunity for action, promoting critical thinking versus a traditional banking model, leads to Dewey's genuine and pragmatic enterprise. Based on defining and solving human problems, Dewey's philosophy of human life is that it is ever-changing, as is the environment; therefore, there are no absolutes, rather occurrences are on a continuum. Further, according to Dewey: "the teacher has usually more to learn than to teach" (Gutek, 2011, p.284), which emphasizes the responsibility teachers have to reflect on and connect with methods and pedagogy that will fortify the environment. Dewey believed: "the purpose of education to be the cultivation of thoughtful, critically reflective, and socially engaged individuals" (PHILO-notes, 2021); therefore, the classroom is the place to provide intellectual insights and inquiry, where processes can be observed and practiced. This is the place where reinvention can progress while the students diversify. When a connection between the student and the teacher is instilled, the foundation for inclusion is being built. The student will feel supported through relations and experience, filling in gaps that may have existed. This is more proactive than approaching needs reactively, which has been demonstrated with a more traditional model of education whereby there is the distinguished normative group and those who try to keep up with them through accommodations. A bottom-up approach is sustainable and conserves resources.

Ethic of Care (Noddings)

Nel Noddings' (2005) philosophy on the ethics of care provides context for a humane approach to improve education without sacrificing elements of the traditional model of teaching such as specialization and rigor. Noddings developed alternative approaches to the many complexities in education, including methods of evaluation and minimizing gaps in equality. This was acknowledged when she wrote: "every class is different. Who the teacher is, who the students are, and what they are trying to accomplish separately, and together all matter" (p.8).

Noddings (2005) discussed how evaluation methods are often managed in the education system, stating there is much replicability and narrowness to managing evaluation processes and issues that arise in schools in general and no significant changes happen. More frequently than not, the teacher takes on the reconstruction of curriculum to try to teach better and this becomes what is known as "methodolatry" (p.7) or "the worship of method" (p.7). This adds additional weight on the teacher and increases the expectations of the students. Noddings interpreted this pattern as both dangerous and unnecessary. She believed getting the teacher to perform better rather than focusing on the learning needs of the students is a poor choice for resolving issues as the focus is not on the recipient of care. Noddings provides an example to demonstrate this concept: "Has Johnny learned X?" (p.7), showing there is a preconceived expectation of what Johnny learned. If Johnny did not learn X, then the issue may be seen as X was not properly taught. The solution would then be X should be taught better. On the contrary, a solution may be that Johnny needs to do better. However, both solutions are incorrect because the question isn't about Johnny, rather it is about X. According to Noddings' philosophy of care, a more appropriate question for a more productive evaluation would be "What has Johnny learned?"

(p.7). The central focus of this question is Johnny, and it will initiate a more objective method of assessment. The answer(s) to this question would provide a realistic perspective of Johnny's learning without expectations of anyone doing better. Instead, a foundation of what is needed for Johnny to learn can be developed.

Noddings' example exemplifies how student accommodations can be mismanaged because the focus of the accommodation and the cascade effect that is caused by them can take away from the student and their progression. In my introduction, I mentioned that discussion about student accommodations often induces more discussion. The adjustments can be time-consuming and resource-taking, and the desirable outcome may not happen. The faculty and the institution are responsible for carefully conducting these procedures, so they remain student-focused.

Transformational Leadership

The hallmarks of the educational philosophies I have explored above fall under the style of transformational leadership. According to Buck, Mercer, St. Clair & Herbers (2019), transformational leaders have the ability to "discover capacity and inner power to effect positive change in both self and the service of others in need" (p.102). Applying the principles of self-reflection, equality, critical thinking, and an ethic of care promotes this ability. Further, transformational leadership is a prominent leadership concept in education as it is associated with the creation and development of organizational capacity and conditions. Ultimately improving the attitudes of teachers, student learning, and overall achievement (Tucker & Sarper, 2021). Typically, transformational leaders have a vision of the goal in sight. They communicate

along the path in a way that fosters understanding and encourages motivation. Open-mindedness is withheld during the changes that occur with the growth needed to achieve the goal all while trust is maintained. Transformational leadership not only encompasses the principles of the educational philosophies I have explored, but it is a method to affirm student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum because it demonstrates characteristics that support student needs holistically.

Deficit Ideology

As highlighted in my introduction, the Master of Education program had a profound influence on my development and reflection on supporting student needs. The Diversity: Constructing Social Realities and the Philosophy and History of Education courses helped me acknowledge my social identity and responsibility while enhancing my ability to empathize with those who remain oppressed. I also grew an awareness of the teaching philosophies that steered my own teaching philosophy, which heavily endorses equity, equality, and autonomy. I obtained knowledge of the history of the people in Canada in an Indigenous Literature course and realized the responsibility educators must provide to manage an inclusive atmosphere by promoting equity and equality. With this realization came an awakening of the apparent gap in equity and equality in the educational system.

According to Gorski (2011), there is a deficit perspective that is enmeshed in the educational system which maintains a gap in equity and equality. Evidently, this is due to the history of imperialism from "larger sociopolitical conditions and ideologies borne out of complex socialization processes" (p.2). Similar to my discussion on the potential for discrimination during

student accommodation obtainment, students are constantly being evaluated based on their

weakness instead of their strengths. The deficit perspective consequently oppresses students and

deteriorates their expectations as well as lowers the morale of educators. This dynamic sustains

inequities by encouraging victim blaming. This is when behaviors perceived as negative or not

socially normal are justified because of one dimension of someone's identity. For example,

assuming the student is not trying hard enough when in fact they do not have adequate nutrition.

It is critical that efforts to mitigate deficit ideology are made.

According to Noddings' (2005) theory, centralizing the practice of caring, specifically by

practicing confirmation is a component of what is considered moral education. Confirmation is

described as "an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others" (p.25). It provides an

opportunity for openness and dialogue on a variety of behaviors being displayed (positive,

negative, or in between). The caring framework that is grounded in confirmation provides a

sense of trust between encounters; therefore, the communication allows for morals to be

developed and exercised that allow for a better sense of self. This results in people wanting to

improve themselves and their situations. Importantly, there is a less punitive approach to

discipline because disapproval of certain acts is acknowledged and managed but is separated

from the person rather than branded into their identity. This is very different from victim

blaming, where one identity or act is used to justify oppression and causes students to internalize

blame. Something that could occur when the student feels they hold the responsibility for their

accommodation. Providing consistent confirmation could ultimately foster a more just society

and eliminate that gap that deficit ideology has held open. Minimizing oppression will guide

self-gratification and realization. Students and teachers can learn to sympathize and empathize

more organically because they have a better understanding of their own inclinations through confirmation practices. The unlearning of deficit ideology is a crucial component of faculty and institutional responsibility of affirming student accommodations and advocating for inclusion on a continuum.

Summary

The literature on student and faculty needs with respect to student accommodations and inclusion processes shows there is space to build upon the framework to minimize inconsistencies that occur from the top-down approach. The main theme offered was building the connection during student/teacher interaction to support students initially, eliminating inequity and inequality from the bottom-up. To emphasize the importance of connection, the educational philosophies of self-reflection (Aquinas) (Gutik, 2011), equality (Friere) (LiteracyDotOrg, 1996), critical thinking (Dewey) (Gutik, 2011), and an ethic of care (Noddings, 2005) were explored. A description of transformational leadership and discussion on deficit ideology followed to enhance the demonstration that it is the responsibility of faculty and the institution to incorporate methods and pedagogy to affirm student accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. The objective here is to support student needs holistically.

In the next chapter, I apply transformational leadership to my experience as a dental hygiene student. I reinforce the educational philosophies I have explored by relating them to the dental hygiene paradigm. Finally, I will render the connection between deficit ideology and truth and reconciliation.

Chapter Three: Application:

Experiences with Bottom-Up Approaches in the Dental Hygiene Program

*"There's a crack in everything, that is how the light gets in." Leonard Cohen (*Best Poems Encyclopedia, 2015)

Transformational Leadership

As I mentioned in my introduction chapter, when I was a dental hygiene student at a community college, student accommodations, and inclusion processes were minimal or non-existent in some cases. Retrospectively, I believe I would have benefited from some of the accommodations I have witnessed today because I experienced high levels of test anxiety throughout the program. Receiving accommodations such as extra time and a quiet writing space for exams would have eased some of the stress. However, despite the seeming lack of inclusive procedures during my time as a dental hygiene student, I did witness what I now know to be transformational leadership. This type of leadership had a significant impact on me and encompasses all the educational philosophies I have described in Chapter 1: Self-reflection, Equality, Critical Thinking, and Ethic of care.

According to Baylor, (2012), the main characteristics of transformational leadership are serving the needs of others, empowering others, inspiring followers, setting a vision, and instilling trust, confidence, and pride while working together. My experience with this type of leadership created a foundation that kept me grounded during challenges as a student without

options for accommodations. The experience is essentially what is driving me to visualize the puzzle pieces of my bottom-up approach to continuously support students.

My journey with transformational leadership began with one instructor who profoundly influenced my professional life. From the beginning, they displayed a genuine interest in me, both as an individual and a dental hygiene practitioner. The instructor assessed my motives, and satisfied and valued my educational needs. The experience throughout the dental hygiene program fostered integration, motivation, and sustainability. According to transformational leadership theory, expressing interest in others stimulates self-awareness, empowerment, and self-direction. This is not always an easy task for the leader because it requires delegation and an ability to trust the learner (Buck, et. al, 2019). I remember challenging my mentor on numerous occasions throughout my establishing self-direction, namely when I failed a procedure. I was confrontational at times, and it was during those moments that I recognized the responsibility attained to remind me of my strengths and weaknesses. My decisions moving forward were gradually left up to me, establishing autonomy and transformation into a health care professional.

Transformational leadership was fundamental for me to become both a healthcare professional and now faculty in the dental hygiene program. The goal of transformational leadership is the growth of both the leader and the follower, which enhances knowledge and long-term motivation. How do we obtain growth of both the leader and the follower to enhance knowledge and sustainability? By committing to the philosophies of self-reflection (Aquinas) (Gutek, 2011), equality (Friere)(LiteracyDotOrg, 1996), critical thinking (Dewey)(Gutek, 2011), and an ethic of care (Noddings, 2005)! When implemented "the school becomes less bureaucratic, and it functions as its own transforming agent.5 Instead of empowering selected

individuals, the school becomes empowered as a collective unit," (Balyer, 2012, p. 582) and will have qualities to support growth through the increase in student diversity.

Dental Hygiene Connection

To further incorporate my combination of educational philosophies and transformational leadership, I wanted to discuss the connection to the dental hygiene profession. The dental hygiene profession is grounded in the ADPIE process (assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation) at its core (British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals, 2023). The ADPIE process is used to deduce oral and systemic health issues and to prevent them. During my time in the Master of Education degree program, I studied many educational philosophies and found my profession held strong connections to Dewey and Noddings. The nature of Dewey's work was progressive in that he believed in the evolving nature of beings (Gutek, 2011). The dental hygiene profession is progressive and involves the evolving scientific method. Connections to Noddings' (2005) work can be seen in *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, where, like healthcare practices, the focus is on connectedness, reasoning, and interdisciplinary and experiential learning. Noddings provides a good example of the sustainable effects using nursing as an example:

> It is not just that the nurse will provide care in the form of physical skills to the patient. Rather, it is a moment in which each will decide how to meet the other and what to do with the moment. This is obviously very different from defining a medical encounter as a problem-solving event … Problem-solving is involved, of course, but it is preceded by a

moment of receptivity- one in which the humanity of both parties is recognized-and it is followed by a return to the human other in all his or her fullness" (p.24).

This example demonstrates the foundation of care that I have developed as both a student and a faculty member within the profession of dental hygiene. This approach can improve one's capacity from the ground up, echoing through their education into society.

Truth and Reconciliation

"Diversity is Being Invited to the Party: Inclusion is Being Asked to Dance." -Verna Myers (AppNexus, 2019).

Now that I have laid out the framework to support my bottom-up approach to managing inclusivity on a continuum, I wish to emphasize a big piece of the inclusion puzzle. Perhaps this piece is the reason for my topic in the first place. To begin, I would like to acknowledge that even though I did not receive specific accommodations in dental hygiene school, I did receive every other opportunity that was available to me, which includes my experience with transformational leadership. Many people do not receive such privileges. I was not aware of this deficit until I progressed through the Master of Education Degree program and now have an understanding that it is the reason to pursue equity and inclusion processes within education.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Gorski's (2011) perspective of deficit ideology, a discriminating process within the educational system that maintains a gap in equity and equality. The deficit perspective is said to stem from imperialism and prevails in education today. Deficit

ideology is a contender for faculty and institutions to affirm student accommodations and inclusion processes.

In keeping with the connection between deficit ideology and discrimination within the educational system, I am now going to apply a big piece of the discrimination puzzle to the educational system.

In spring, 2021, I had an awakening experience during an Indigenous literature course. My instructor for the course was a published Indigenous author and residential school survivor named Garry Gottfriedson. Prior to taking the course, I had an awareness of the horrendous impact of the "60's scoop" and residential school trauma that echoed through multiple generations. I was well versed in the health-related disparities of this marginalized population. However, I had never reflected on my privileged social location until we explored the true history of Canadian politics guided by Canadian Indigenous literature. I wrote a poem in that class as part of a reflective process while digesting the knowledge:

The Birds Know
I am standing in the middle of my backyard.
I am blonde, I am blue-eyed.
My skin is "white."
I am standing in my white-privileged backyard.
It is a privilege to own my own backyard.
Do I own it?
I just had a realization.
I realize the birds cry every spring.
I realize the birds cry every spring because they know.

They know about this land.

"Squawk!" "Squawk!" "Squawk!"

They know about the land that I "own."

"Caw!" "Caw!" "Caw!"

They know about the Indigenous people.

Silence…

The community-driven and holistic pursuit.

"Cheep." "Cheep." "Cheep."

They know about the shame.

More Silence…

The shame metastasizes from Canada's darkest secrets.

Starving souls of language and divinity like black cancer.

They know about colonial pride too.

Were they envious? Of the holistic matriarchy?

Well, they were no doubt selfish.

Because they wanted to be "first."

But not first nations.

They wanted everyone individualized, but in uniform.

It's easier to blame an individual, harder in a group.

Unless you force them into a residential school.

Create your "own" hierarchy.

Release the black cancer to destroy honor and children.

But they were looking ahead, right? Providing safer places than the reserves?

Nah, there were no formal plans for residential school graduations.

Their plan totally backfired.

Paperwork and greed are now enmeshed in "old-fashioned" law.

Enmeshed like thick honey oozing down a chain smoker's fingertips.

"Old fashioned" law is considered original law.

But not aboriginal law.

Because their law is outlawed.

Because it's not scientific.

So, it doesn't count, right?

So, what does count?

It counts when the birds cry every spring in my "own" backyard.

Because they know.

The significance of this poem is the perspective on the history of colonial pressure attempting to eliminate Indigenous ways of knowing. Currently, there are many initiatives to incorporate the resurgence of indigenous ways in education. However, I find myself wondering how something can have the ability to rise again if it was never provided the opportunity to fully implant in the first place.

My introduction for this paper mentions there are now reserved seats in the dental hygiene program for indigenous students. This is an important symbol of reconciliation and sheds light on the dishonorable truth within the educational system. Accommodating seats demonstrates an aspect of responsibility for inclusion processes. However, the approach does not connect the student to the foundation. I do not anticipate that simply filling seats will satisfy what it means to replenish indigenous ways in education. Considering the history of the student climate is predominantly Caucasian, I am not convinced the dental hygiene program consistently portrays the diversity of society. If an Indigenous student filled a seat, would the student experience a connection to the dental hygiene paradigm the ways I did? Or would there be discrimination because of the deficit ideology that persists in post-secondary education? It is clear affirming student accommodations and advocating for inclusion on a continuum is the

responsibility of the faculty and the institution and must be embedded in the foundation to sustain any decisions higher up.

Fortunately, the foundation is being poured. A wider role to improve the wellness of Aboriginal people is on the horizon (Brascoupe' & Waters, 2009). Acts to inform both non-Indigenous and Indigenous educators to "seek sustainable and peaceful ways to live" (Madjidi & Restoule, 2008, p. 77) are being implemented. Cultural recognition is a key component to accomplishing sustainability and peacefulness. Embedding cultural recognition into the framework of education promotes cultural competence and cultural safety, providing a continuum for inclusion processes and a more balanced society long term (Brascoupe' & Waters, 2009). An example of cultural recognition within my context of the dental hygiene paradigm is incorporating discussions on the historical trauma of Indigenous populations with respect to health promotion and practices. The concept of cultural safety, which encompasses the ability to maintain cross-cultural relationships, mutual empowerment, and a negotiated and equal partnership should also be emphasized. The most significant aspect of cultural safety is that its success can only be determined by the recipient (First Nations Health Authority, 2023). This demonstrates efforts to mitigate oppression, which connects closely to Noddings' (2005) ethic of care philosophy because the focus is on the student's needs.

I invite you to look around your familiar space and think about what you connect to. Do you have the capacity to reflect? This is the foundation of Aquinas (Gutek, 2011). Do you feel a sense of fairness with what you have accomplished during your educational experiences? This is the foundation of Friere (LiteracyDotOrg, 1996). Regardless of your answer, are you able to provide an explanation that goes beyond "yes" or "no"? Critical thinking. This is the foundation

of Dewey (Gutek, 2011). Do you practice an ethic of care? This is the foundation of Noddings (2005).

The objective here is to keep you humble, not carry any burden. The objective is to strive for connection to minimize gaps in equity and equality in the educational system.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

"When you reach the top, keep climbing" ~Barry Finlay (They Said So, 2023).

Student accommodations and inclusive procedures are increasing in post-secondary education. There are tremendous efforts being made to improve equity and access for all students. Unfortunately, the procedures are inconsistent across institutions, decreasing retention rates for less able students and encouraging a hierarchy for achieving needs. The focus should be from the ground up, with the student/teacher connection installed prior to having to bridge an inclusion gap.

Chapter Summaries

My introduction chapter discusses student accommodations and inclusion processes lack of prevalence when I was a dental hygiene student seventeen years ago. Now, they are a frequent topic of discussion as a dental hygiene faculty member. I expressed this as a challenge because I am new to teaching and my past education was in the health sciences. I reflect upon the contrast between my previous student experience and my new teaching experience led me into an inquiry process in the Master of Education program. Specifically, the courses on leadership, the philosophy and history of education, diversity, and Indigenous literature were my guides.

Then, I present it is the responsibility of faculty and the institution to incorporate methods to affirm accommodations and advocate for inclusion on a continuum. This claim is supported by evidence outlining the foundational role of educators and the need to focus more on the student/teacher level before needs become unaddressed.

My literature review chapter began with exploring the literature on student needs and faculty needs, including a definition of a student accommodation. The definition connects the

argument of the responsibility of faculty and the institution to incorporate methods and pedagogy from the bottom up because the literature shows student accommodations are not predictable and are still an act of discrimination between able students and less able. The faculty needs section of the chapter provided more detail on what I introduced in Chapter 1, which was there are high expectations of teachers as the student climate becomes more diverse. Then I emphasized the student/teacher connection and introduced the educational philosophies. Self-reflection was the focus for Aquinas with an emphasis on both the teacher and the student acquiring the skill to obtain the ability to integrate learning through the connection of self and others (Gutek, 2011). Equality was the focus for Freire, specifically from the perspective of the faculty member and their responsibility to reflect and take action to improve their surroundings (LiteracyDotOrg, 1996). Freire's concepts of educational banking were discussed to emphasize connection rather than filling an empty vessel with knowledge. Critical thinking was the focus of Dewey, with respect to cultivating thought and putting it into practice through connection and reinvention (Gutek, 2011). Lastly, Noddings' ethic of care philosophy (2005) was discussed, demonstrating the student/teacher connection. The focus is related to the teacher's responsibility to assess student needs while connecting with them, rather than the focus being on the output of the teacher.

Transformational leadership was introduced in the next section of chapter 2, with a focus on how it relates to the described educational philosophies and the leadership style is conducive to supporting student accommodations and advocating for inclusion on a continuum.

Deficit ideology was the final topic in Chapter 2. The discussion added to the previous mention of how student accommodations contain discriminating properties because students

continue to be evaluated based on weaknesses versus strengths or ableness. I emphasized that efforts to mitigate deficit ideology should be made which connects to Nodding's (2005) central practice of care, known as confirmation. The act of confirmation focuses on the strengths of others and does not enmesh others' weaknesses with their identities in a negative way.

My application chapter began with a short history of how limited student accommodations and inclusion processes were during my experience at a community college. Then I discussed and applied transformational leadership with respect to the educational philosophies and how being led by that style of leadership, specifically because it supports the growth of both the leader and the follower, provided the support I needed to manage my student experience without accommodations.

The next section of the application chapter is connecting the dental hygiene paradigm to the educational philosophies with respect to teaching, learning, and healthcare. Dewey (Gutek, 2011) and Noddings' (2005) work was emphasized in the discussion because of their importance in building a foundation with connection during the nature of evolving beings.

The last section encompasses the truth and reconciliation movement and the significance of it when related to my student experience. I did not receive accommodations when I was in dental hygiene school because they were very limited or did not exist at all. However, I received everything else available, including a transformational leadership experience that I can disseminate. There are many people who do not have that privilege because a horrendous decision to create a deficit was made. There are acts of reconciliation occurring in education, the most important one is embedding cultural recognition in the curriculum to mitigate oppression

and enhance connection. Essentially this demonstrates a bottom-up approach to supporting student accommodations and inclusion processes in post-secondary education.

Implications

My paper presents the notion that the top-down approach of the student accommodation model can be considered an act of discrimination between an able student and a vulnerable student. This is not to say that student accommodations should be eliminated because there is a place for them. However, this is an opportunity for teachers to practice the foundational philosophies meant to create connections and empower one another. It is also time to address the marginalized populations who were not recognized in the past.

I have absorbed so much information in the Master of Education program. It has helped me to understand my social identity and reflect on my past experiences as a student and my current experiences supporting student accommodations and inclusion processes as a new faculty member. The transformation of society and how it funnels into post-secondary education is obvious. Change is the only constant. It is the responsibility of the faculty and the institution to include everyone on the journey. When we root the students rise.

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