

Integrative Learning

Today, everyone is on information overload. Human beings have a great desire to socialize and interact with each other. For them to do this, they need all the information they can get. They are constantly looking for information to enable them to achieve social and in some cases political status. Information helps people achieve this and information is largely available and flowing from every direction. The students therefore need to know how to collect the scattered information and merge the various facts needed for them to understand the world which is seen as complex. It is imperative for students to acquire skills in the integration of information. Integration is the joining together of different facts to be able to explain or use these facts. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, an undergraduate education that results in the students acquiring an integrative ability is seen as of very high quality (Association of American Colleges and Universities, pg 8).

Integrative learning is essential because it readies students for the complexities and challenges they are likely to face in the society and their areas of work currently and in the future. For many years, learning has been fragmented into single disciplines.

However, despite the fragmentation, there was need for approaching the various issues in life in an integrative way. It is with this in mind that AAC&U came up with the idea that all the educational institutions should strive to develop their students into integrative thinkers. This would be done by making sure that the students were developed in such a way that they could create a connection between different facts and apply the facts used in solving problems in one situation to solve another (Association of American Colleges

and Universities, pg 9). Integrative learning is very important particularly now when most business enterprises are requiring their employees to have integrative skills. In addition to this, the employees are expected to understand other skill sets by cross training. The ability to integrate skills spares the company from the many losses that could occur if their employees were only one sided.

Value of an interdisciplinary undergraduate education

Interdisciplinary undergraduate education is whereby the student gets to learn knowledge from multi-disciplines. An interdisciplinary undergraduate education is crucial to all students and is fast becoming a requirement by potential employers. That is why the curriculum vitae, should be a requirement to all people seeking employment. Curriculum vitae contain a lot of information about a potential employee so they stand out above other prospective candidates. The prospective employer uses this documentation to understand the areas of studies that the employee has covered. The employer will be interested in an employee who has touched on multiple disciplines of studies as this will mean the employee's skills are potentially more flexible and rounded than someone with one discipline of study.

Interdisciplinary undergraduate education is better than a single major because the student becomes more flexible and is not rigid as compared to the student who has majored in one discipline. The interdisciplinary undergraduate is better placed to handle different situations that arise as a result of the complexities of life (Association of American Colleges and Universities, pg 11). A student with a single major on the other hand, may only excel in the discipline he or she has studied. When faced with a situation he or she has not studied, he or she may become adept. The interdisciplinary student can blend the various skills he has learned from the multiple disciplines to provide the best solutions to a problem.

I have studied business and communications as two disciplines. Business is a very important course as it is applicable everywhere. Every enterprise is a business and needs to succeed in a very competitive world market. Every company has a product, tangible or intangible, that needs to produce revenue. Communications also applies everywhere. Without communication, no business can survive. Communication is used by people to convey and negotiate different needs and wants. Advanced communication tools such as the internet, has led to the development of international trade for even the smallest business. This example of business and communications proves the interconnectedness of these disciplines and how important they are to each other.

What I have learned about interdisciplinary and about myself

It is important to first explain my understanding of the word interdisciplinary. I understand it to be the combination of two words: inter and disciplinary, the later coming from the word discipline. Inter means amidst and disciplinary means related to a certain field of study. Thus, the word interdisciplinary means amidst fields of studies. In explanation, interdisciplinary means the study of several disciplines together. This is very important because I can employ the knowledge I have studied to various situations that arise, making me a marketable employee. This helps me in solving many types of problems effectively and efficiently. This can save my employer money because they will not have to solicit the services of someone who is qualified in a single field and can rely on their own resources. In addition to this, I can blend knowledge from the various disciplines to come up with the perfect solution.

To be honest my understanding of interdisciplinary studies did not seem to come to me as easily as it does now. The syllabus was extremely intimidating at first glance. I believe

the assignment that was most beneficial to me within my interdisciplinary research was my academic plan. Before I was required to map out my course completion I was going semester by semester not looking any further than I actually needed to. To start off with, I thank you for creating such a powerful assignment; I am now in understanding of how close I really am to having my degree in hand. I also have been able to map out the exact classes I would like to take each semester to guarantee I will not be overloaded during any such semester. I see myself realistically having my degree in hand by 2011. I believe working with current issues on a weekly basis helped me gain real world understanding of how Interdisciplinary Research within business and communications applies to every aspect of the world. It was amazing how stories around the world, from health care to entertainment, would help better understand a story from putting an interdisciplinary perspective on it. On top of these two assignments I gained an abundance of knowledge in regards to both of my disciplines of business and communications through my concentration area assignment. This assignment allowed me to discover myself in where I want to go with my degree as well as the concepts and theories of each to give me a better understanding of each discipline individually. Interdisciplinary Research has taught me so much not only about my areas of concentration, but as well about myself and the path I plan to take in the future.

Conclusion

My career of choice would be to pursue a career in Sports Marketing. I feel I am now well equipped in both business and communication skills and will be very comfortable in working as a Sports Marketer. As well, I believe Integrative learning is very important to students as they get to know how to use the information they have acquired from

different fields to solve problems in different situations. Interdisciplinary undergraduate education is the study of various disciplines. Integrative learning and interdisciplinary education is encouraged for all students as it is the way forward.

References

Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002). Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities