

Final Report: Educational Systems and Structures

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Introduction

In our workshop we explored educational systems and structures through the lens of multicultural competence as it relates to the workshop participants' experiences with the Seattle University Youth Initiative (SUYI). We used the Pope, Reynolds, Mueller (2004) Multicultural Competence Model as the guiding framework for our lesson plan designs, focusing our learning outcomes for both leaders and volunteers on one outcome each related to awareness, knowledge and skills relevant to our topic. The definition of multicultural competence we used in our workshop design was “the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant, and productive ways” (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004, p. 13).

Learning Outcomes

Using our definition of multicultural competence as a guide, we developed the following learning outcomes:

Dimension	Leader Learning Outcomes	Volunteer Learning Outcomes
Awareness	Leaders will identify the ways they have been privileged or oppressed by educational structures and/or educational policy.	Volunteers will identify the ways they have been privileged or oppressed by educational structures and/or educational policy.
Knowledge	Leaders will be able to recognize educational disparities between and among various populations at a systemic level.	Volunteers will be able to recognize educational disparities between and among various populations at a systemic level.
Skills	Leaders will help volunteers interpret and make sense of their own history with the educational system.	Volunteers will identify future areas for growth in their awareness, knowledge and skills within the topic educational systems and structures, and will be able to identify resources.

Theory to Practice

Throughout the workshop design process we found ways to connect theory to practice by incorporating student development and other relevant theories in the design of our workshop. One of the most significant theories we used in our workshop was Kolb's (1984) Theory of Experiential Learning. Our workshop acknowledges Kolb's (1984) theory by taking into account the different learning styles students bring with them to their learning environment. As such, we intentionally provided a variety of activities to engage participants in different ways. In our lesson plans we noted by each activity which type of learner would be most engaged.

We also relied on Yosso's (2005) Theory of Cultural Wealth in our workshop design by encouraging participants to critically analyze the way in which the current U.S. educational system is structured. In particular, the information provided and discussions generated acknowledge that the current structure favors the dominant culture in regards to funding, curriculum and teaching, resources and testing methods. It is crucial that both leaders and volunteers are aware of deficit thinking when interacting with SUYI communities and instead adopt a framework that values the unique cultural wealth of the Bailey Gatzert community.

As we previously mentioned, we relied heavily on Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller's (2004) Multicultural Competence Model in our workshop structure and design. We incorporated the tripartite model of multicultural competence by examining educational systems and structures in terms of students' awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Implied in this approach is the belief that the SUYI leaders and volunteers will be well-served by being exposed to multicultural competence coupled with their work at Bailey Gatzert. We have addressed elements of multicultural competence in our activities: awareness, by helping them understand educational privilege in their own lives; knowledge, by sharing information and

statistics that paint a realistic picture of educational structures in the U.S.; and skills, by engaging students as leaders or volunteers, helping them think about how they can put their new awareness and knowledge into action in their roles with the Youth Initiative.

Rounding out the familiar theories from class, we also relied on Perry's (1968) Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development. This workshop incorporates Perry's (1968) model by creating opportunities for students to engage with subject matter that challenges dualistic thinking and encourages development toward relativism. Through this process we hope participants would leave with a more contextualized view of the U.S. educational system and an awareness of inherent systemic inequity within this system.

Finally, we incorporated two additional theories from outside the student development literature. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory was used as we defined our topic of educational systems and structures using the macrosystem lens. We also utilized Astin's (1996) Social Change Model of Leadership Development in our approach, exploring our topic of educational systems and structures through the lenses of personal, group, and community leadership. First we considered how the topic related to the participants' leadership development as it relates to their personal experiences through the use of privilege self-assessments. Next, we encouraged participants to explore their Seattle University group membership as participants in SUYI, and finally, the activities in our workshop helped the students reflect on their leadership capacity within in the broader community through their leadership or volunteer roles with SUYI, extending to the broader the Bailey Gatzert community.

Description of Activities and Goals

We began our workshop with an icebreaker activity to gauge what knowledge about the U.S. education system participants were bringing with them into the space. We instructed all

participants to take a handful of Starburst candies as they entered the room; after we had introduced the topic, we asked participants to share a certain number of pieces of information about the educational system. The color of each starburst correlated with a number (e.g., orange=4, pink=3, red=2, and yellow=1), and when totaled, this was the number of pieces of information participants had to share. This activity was used for both student leaders and undergraduate volunteers.

Awareness

We then transitioned to our Educational Privilege Self-Assessment activity. Included in our packet was a privilege inventory that we instructed each participant to fill out. The inventory was designed to give participants a personal perspective on their own educational experience, particularly the ways they might have been privileged. See Appendix A for complete inventory.

Processing Questions: Student Leaders
What are your general reactions to this activity? How did it make you feel?
Did any statements of educational privilege trigger certain emotions for you?
Did anything surprise you? Or leave you with questions?
How does this information relate to you within your role as a leader?

Processing Questions: Volunteers
What are your general reactions to this activity? How did it make you feel?
Did any statements of educational privilege trigger certain emotions for you?
Did anything surprise you? Or leave you with questions?
How does this information relate to you within your role as a volunteer?

How does this information relate to the students you will be working with in your volunteer role?

Knowledge

Although being aware of our own experiences plays an important role in facilitating our understanding of the educational structure, it is also helpful to have knowledge about societal structures and systems in order to be better comprehend how they impact our experiences as well as others. We began by referring to a diagram in our packet that illustrates what the system looks like, and identifies how SUYI interacts with the system in order to improve equity for all students (see Appendix B). We then finished with a multiple choice activity designed to increase participant knowledge around our topic of educational systems and structures (see Appendix C).

Processing Questions: Student Leaders

How do you see these issues impacting the overall educational experience/attainment of students?

In what ways, if any, have you experienced these issues in your own educational experience? In your students' educational experience?

In what ways is SUYI addressing these issues?

What impact are you, as a leader, having on the educational structure? What resources are you providing for volunteers?

Processing Questions: Volunteers

How do you see these issues impacting the overall educational experience/attainment of students?

In what ways, if any, have you experienced these issues in your own educational experience? In your students' educational experience?

In what ways is SUYI addressing these issues?

What impact are you having on the educational structure? What resources are you providing for students?

Skills

We understand that our topic of educational systems and structures can be confusing and overwhelming at times, and we hope that participants were able to better understand the impact of the SUYI at a systems level after having engaged in awareness-raising and knowledge-building activities. At this point, we chose to focus on what happens after participants leave the workshop. What will they do with this newly found knowledge? What skills can they begin building?

Student Leaders: Developing a Plan for Action

As the student leaders have an extra layer of responsibility in terms of being role models for other volunteers, we wanted to tap into that responsibility by asking direct reflective questions about how they will interact with volunteers around our topic of educational systems and structures now that they have gone through the workshop. We asked student leaders to reflect on the following questions through writing:

1. What are ways you can increase knowledge and awareness of educational systems and structures in the campus community?
2. With your volunteers?

Volunteers: Scenarios

We created scenarios for the volunteers, as they are more accessible to students who may not have as much investment in SUYI as the student leaders. All volunteers have had some exposure to these topics either through our workshop or through their time at their SUYI partner school, so we wanted to build off of their previous experience to show them how our topic might come up in day to day life while volunteering. One scenario involves a tutoring situation with a

high school student, another with a third grader, and a third scenario based in a university classroom setting.

Scenario A: You are helping a high school senior apply to colleges and scholarships. You notice that they are applying to two community colleges and one four-year institution. You know the student's teacher has been encouraging them to apply to only four-year institutions, and you notice that week after week, the student appears uncomfortable with talking to her teacher about the schools she is applying to. How might you approach this situation?

Scenario B: You are taking a class about the American Educational System as an elective for your major. When discussing the higher education system, your teacher asks for opinions on affirmative action. One student raises her hand and explains, "Affirmative action is really unfair. It's like reverse discrimination for White students who work hard to get into a good college. Why can't everyone be considered based on the same standards and leave it at that? We always have to make things so complicated!" How would you respond?

Scenario C: You have been working with a 3rd grader, an immigrant student from Ethiopia, consistently for the past few months as a volunteer in an after-school tutoring program. The student's mother consistently arrives 10-20 minutes late to pick up her son after the program. Another tutor in your group notices this, and makes a comment about how the mother must not be paying enough attention to her son, who is struggling in multiple subjects, because she is frequently late. How would you react?

Strategies for Maintaining Optimism

We know that changing our educational system to improve the successes of the students for whom it is currently failing can seem like a big task. There are so many different players in this game, and resources are scarce. We wanted to arm participants with positive thoughts and motivating ideas to hold as they interact with others who might not be as optimistic. We all need reminding, sometimes, as to why we are doing the work we do. As such, we included in our packet a list of strategies to keep motivated and optimistic (see Appendix D). As this was the last portion of our time with participants, we wanted to leave them feeling empowered with knowledge and awareness, but also leave them with skills to combat any negativity they may

encounter along the way. Change takes a long time, especially when working with systemic issues like education, and it was important for us to remind our group that they are not alone.

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

Strengths

As a group, we felt that our workshop achieved what we wanted to achieve in terms of raising awareness, building knowledge, and developing skills related to our topic of educational systems and structures. While we intended each activity to build off the previous, we were pleasantly surprised by how well participants were able to refer back to what they learned in the previous activities. For example, one participant, who was a volunteer, acknowledged in our last activity that awareness of the educational system is necessary in order to have conversations with peers about topics like affirmative action.

One strength of our workshop included our ability to translate theory to practice, both in the context of student development theory as well as the participants' ability to take their theoretical knowledge of educational systems and structures and apply it to their work with students in SUYI partner schools. For us as facilitators, we were intentional about choosing activities that would engage a wide variety of learning styles and accessibility levels. We were also intentional about meeting students where they were at developmentally, for example students who may still be dualistic thinkers according to Perry (1968), but still challenging them to engage in the complexities of the topic.

We found that the three of us worked very well together as a group, both in the development stage of our project and with our facilitation styles. We had similar expectations for what the workshop would look like, and were able to combine our efforts efficiently and intentionally to create a final product we are all proud of. During the workshop, we felt

comfortable jumping in and asking follow-up questions, and we trusted one another to provide support and feedback when necessary.

Challenges

While our group worked well together and we were happy with how our workshops went we recognize there is always room for improvement. Early on during the planning process it took us some time to get our minds around our topic of educational systems and structures. This highlighted how helpful it would have been to have subject matter expertise in our topic area going into the workshop planning phase. Being students and teachers at the same time was a challenge. Had we walked into this assignment with better subject matter expertise we could have devoted a greater proportion of our time on the workshop design process which may have increased the effectiveness of our workshops.

A second challenge that arose for us was the need to be adaptable throughout the workshop design process. Over the course of the quarter the parameters we were working from regarding the number of participants to expect and the configuration of the room setup shifted. While this presented a challenge in forcing us to be more flexible with finding different ways to adapt our content to suit different situations, it probably made our final product stronger in the end. In addition, the need to be adaptable to changing circumstances is a reality of life in student affairs and a good skill to practice while in school.

A third challenge was our limited awareness about the nature of the other workshops being presented by fellow classmates. While we did know the overall topics selected, we did not know much about the specific ways our classmates were presenting their material or have a chance to fully explore areas where our subject matter may or may not overlap. As we think about the learning outcomes we hoped to achieve with both the leaders and volunteers, it may

have strengthened their experiences if all the workshop facilitators could have been more aligned in our workshop delivery to make sure students would walk away with a comprehensive understanding of the beginning concepts of multicultural competence.

Lessons Learned

One key lesson our group learned from this experience was the importance of implementing student development pedagogy within service learning. Our group is confident that the amount of learning that occurred in our presentation was due to it being grounded in student development theory, research and best practice. One of the most significant examples of this was our use of the Multicultural Competence Model (Pope, Reynolds, & Muller, 2007). By using this framework as a lens by which to view educational systems and structures, we helped students understand their role within that system. Most importantly, students were strongly impacted by their reflections on their own educational privilege. They were shocked to see the privilege they had been afforded by their educational experiences and referred to it throughout the workshop in relation to their work with SUYI and the reality of the students they work with.

Although service learning is usually placed within academic affairs, this opportunity provided great insight into the benefits of incorporating student development theory into their framework for learning. What makes service learning so fascinating is that even though it is primarily an academic venture; the pinnacle of the experience for students is the partnership between the university and local community. This point of interaction between the student and community is where a strong collaboration between service learning and student affairs is essential. As educators, our group highly values the classroom experience; however, from this opportunity we have learned that there is a different type of learning that occurs when students enter into new environments in the name of service. Student development theory provides

educators with an effective framework to ensure that student's learning moves from purely academic and knowledge based to a process that is personal, transformative, and meaningful. In the end, we have learned that collaboration between academic and developmental approaches of service learning will be the most beneficial in supporting student growth.

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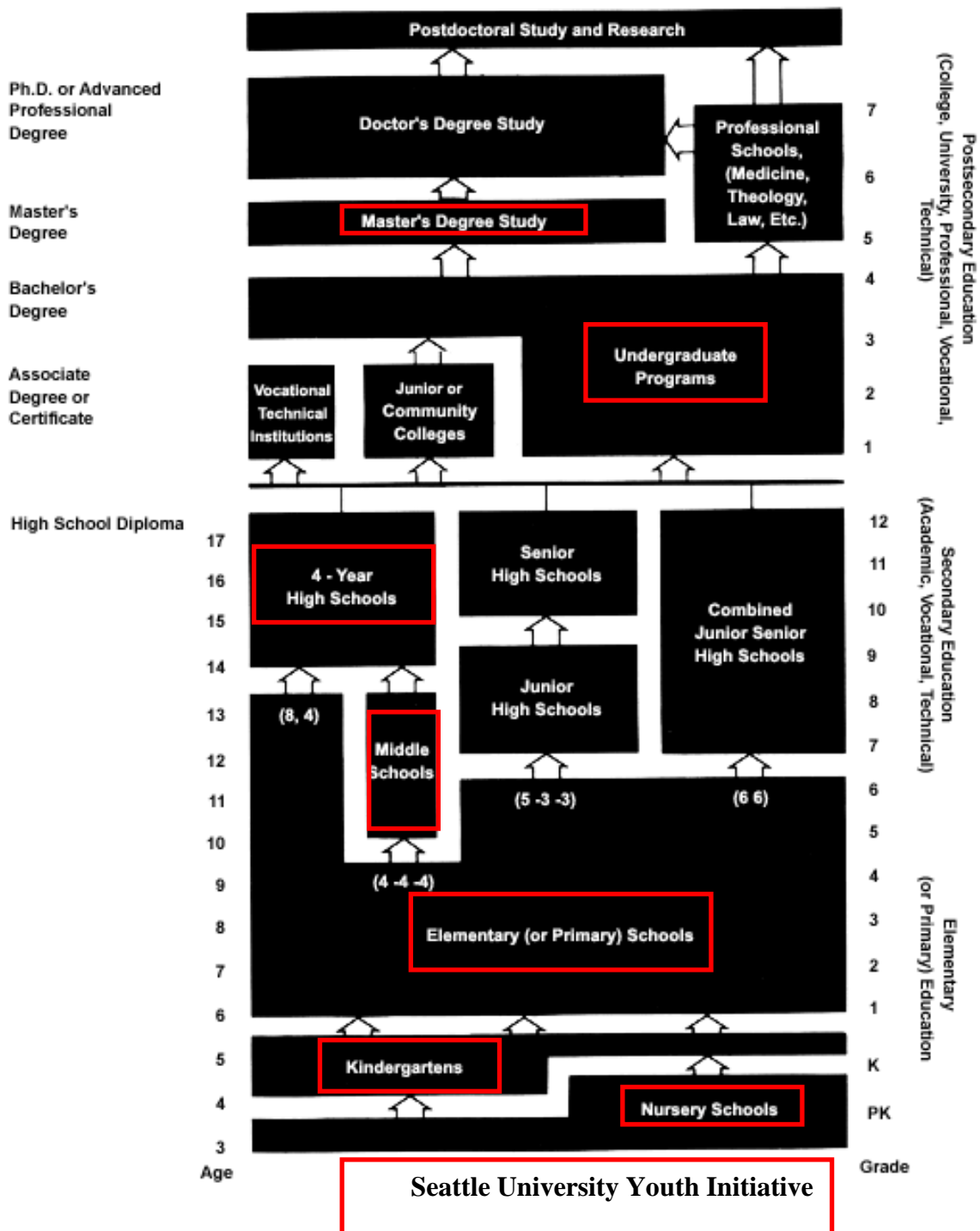
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APPENDIX A: Educational Privilege Inventory

Instructions: This educational privilege self-inventory is designed to give you a personal perspective on your own educational experience. Read through each of item and check the box if it is true for you.

- You have attended a private school.
- You started school speaking English (or the dominant language of that school).
- You studied history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school.
- You are now educated in a school where the vast majority of faculty members and staff are of your ethnic or racial group.
- You were told by your parents that you were beautiful, smart, and capable of achieving your dreams.
- School is not in session during your major religious holidays.
- Your parents never had to sit you down when you were young and explain to you, “this is what people might call you, and this is how they may treat you, and this is how you should deal with it” because they knew you were going to encounter it and because it was an important issue in your family and community.
- You have always felt like you looked/acted like most people in your school.
- You can find faculty members who look like you at Seattle University.
- You took an SAT prep course before taking the SAT.
- You were afforded the opportunity to take a summer prep course at a local community college or enrichment center before entering your current institution.
- There were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up.
- You have never been discouraged from academic pursuits or jobs because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or learning disability.
- You were encouraged to attend college by your parents.
- Both of your parents completed high school.
- You have never been accused of cheating or lying because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or learning disability.

APPENDIX B: United States Educational Structure



NOTE--Adult education programs, while not separately delineated above, may provide instruction at the elementary, secondary, or higher education level. Chart reflects typical patterns of progression rather than all possible variations.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

APPENDIX C: **Educational Systems Multiple Choice**

1. The practice of placing students in specific curriculum groups on the basis of test scores and other criteria is the definition of which term? (Can you provide an example?)

A. Tracking	B. Alienating
C. Judging	D. Pigeon-holding

 2. Which type of school makes their own hiring and admissions policies and determine their own curricula?

A. Public	B. Charter (packet)
C. Home (packet)	D. Private

 3. What type of school is governed by local school districts and their boards and have policies and regulations that tend to be uniform across all schools within a district? (public)

A. Public	B. Charter (packet)
C. Magnet (packet)	D. Private

 4. TRIO is a federal educational program that provides outreach and services for disadvantaged students.

A. True	B. False
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 5. The No Child Left Behind Act is what type of educational reform?

A. Standards-based	B. Teacher-based
C. Curriculum-based	D. Financing-based
- Notes:
- Based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education
 - The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools.
 - The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state
6. What percentage of Seattle Public School students are eligible for free or reduced lunch?

A. 42.4	B. 64
C. 22	D. 10

 7. What percentage of Seattle Public School students are transitional bilingual?

A. 35	B. 22
C. 12.1	D. 4

Notes:

- An educational theory that states that children can most easily acquire fluency in a second language by first acquiring fluency in their native language.
- The goal of transitional bilingual education is to help transition a student into an English-only classroom as quickly as possible.
- Bilingual teacher instructs children in subjects such as math, science, and social studies in their native language, so that once the transition is made to an English-only classroom, the student has the knowledge necessary to compete with his peers in all other subject areas.

8. What percentage of Seattle Public School students' graduate high school within 4 years?

A. 85

B. 70

C. 95

D. 62

9. What percentage of teachers, whose main assignment was secondary mathematics, had neither a major nor a certification in the subject?

A. 25

B. 40

B. 3

D. 12

Notes:

- This percentage was higher than the percentage of English teachers or science teachers that had neither qualification (8 and 4 percent, respectively).
- For schools with at least half White enrollment, 8 percent of mathematics teachers had neither qualification, which was lower than the overall rate and the rate for schools with at least half Black enrollment (25 percent).

10. The percentage of kids, in public education, with access to music has declined 50% in the past five years. True or False?

A. True

B. False

Notes:

- The study of music, theatre, and other forms of art have been shown to stimulate other parts of student's minds and even keep them out of gangs and other harmful situations.
- Statistics from a nationwide survey by the Gallup organization show that,
 - "95% percent of Americans believe that music is a key-component in a child's well-rounded education,
 - 80% percent of respondents agreed that music makes the participants smarter;
 - 78% believe that learning a musical instrument helps students perform better in other subject areas; and
 - 88% believe participation in music helps teach children discipline