

LEARNING MATTERS at LINGNAN

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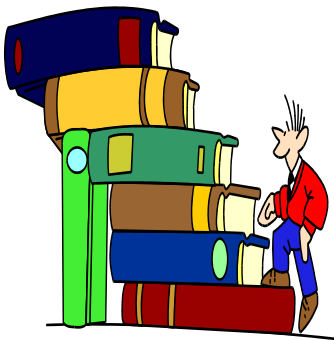
TEACHING  LEARNING CENTRE

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From the Editor:

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'Learning Matters at Lingnan' are short papers that aim to promote a dialogue on teaching and learning. I encourage all staff to consider this as a vehicle for sharing thoughts on educational issues as they might affect us at the University. If you feel you have something which might be appropriate for inclusion in an issue of this publication, then please forward it to the TLC. I would be delighted if staff (and not only academic staff) from outside the Teaching and Learning Centre were to be prominent or even occasional contributors.



This edition is contributed by Dr. Yolanda Young of the Student Services Centre, giving an account of the development of university students in seven major areas.

Understanding the Developmental Tasks of University Students

One

Developing competence

The college years provide opportunities for progress towards increased competence in intellectual areas, in physical and manual skills, and in social and interpersonal relations. Intellectual competence involves using the mind's skills to comprehend, reflect, analyse, synthesise, and interpret, and the ability to reason, solve problems, weigh evidence, think originally and engage in active learning. Physical and manual competence involves using the body as a healthy vehicle for high performance, self-expression, and creativity. Interpersonal competence is the skill in communicating and collaborating with others.

Two

Managing emotions

During college years, students must struggle with a variety of strong emotions that have both biological and social origins. Emotions include anxiety, anger, depression, desire, guilt, and shame. Students must become aware of their emotions and learn how to control them as well as integrate them into their decisions and behaviours. The ability to affirm the validity of one's own feelings, despite parental resistance, is an essential step in identity formation.

Three

Moving through autonomy towards interdependence

Autonomy involves not simply one's freedom to choose or act free of outside influences, but rather a freedom that also recognises one's dependence on and obligations to others, both individually and collectively. In general, students must establish emotional independence from parents and peers and break free from the continuous need for reassurance, affection, and approval. They must be able to do things in a self-directed way with the recognition of interdependence for support.

Four

Developing mature interpersonal relationships

Developing mature interpersonal relationships involves (a) tolerance and appreciation of differences and (b) capacity for intimacy. Both require the ability to accept individuals for what they are, to appreciate and respect differences, and to empathise. Developing mature relationships is also the ability to choose healthy relationships and make lasting commitments based on honesty, responsiveness, and unconditional regard.

Five

Establishing identity

Development of identity involves: (a) comfort with body and appearance, (b) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (c) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, (d) classification of self-concept through roles and life-style, (e) sense of self in response to feedback from respected others, (f) self-acceptance and self-esteem, and (g) personal stability and integration.

Six

Developing purpose

Developing purpose entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist despite obstacles. To be intentional is to be skilled in consciously choosing priorities, in aligning action with purpose, in motivating oneself consistently towards goals, and in persevering despite barriers to setbacks. Students must develop a sense of purpose in their lives, leading to planning their goals and priorities for their careers, personal interests and interpersonal and family commitments.

Seven

Developing integrity

Values and beliefs provide the foundation for interpreting experience, guiding behaviour, and maintaining self-respect. It is closely related to establishing identity and clarifying purposes. Developing integrity involves reviewing personal values in an inquiring environment that emphasises diversity, critical thinking, the use of evidence, and experimentation. Students must develop a personally valid set of beliefs and values that have internal consistency firm enough to provide a guide to behaviour.

Summary

These seven areas represent the fundamentals of development during the young adult college years which every student must master in order to become fully mature. An understanding of the developmental tasks of students will certainly help teachers understand students better, putting their concerns at the forefront of the teaching and learning process.

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Reference:

Chickering, A. and Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and Identity. 2nd Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This issue and the back issues of ' Learning Matters at Lingnan ' can be retrieved from the following URL – <http://www.ln.edu.hk/tlc/level2/td.htm>.