ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate innate versus adapted values, how this affects the success of an educator in the online classroom, and the ability to embrace and impact spheres of influence. The innate values that we are created with are influenced by culture, family, education. It is adapted values that can influence perspective for both the educator and student. As educators, it is important to understand this and to work to pull from the core (innate) values of students and ourselves. The 7 mountains of culture represent those areas of influence over society.

KEYWORDS: Education Mountain, Online Education, Values

INTRODUCTION

Over a decade ago, Dr. Ed Delph a world-renowned author on the subjects of faith and community stated, “The most effective influence is from the top down, not the bottom up” (Delph, 2005). While Delph’s focus has been to bring a paradigm shift in the way a faith based individual relates to his/her community, his work on the 7-spheres that influence society challenges traditional mindsets, whatever the culture or age.

To explain this concept Delph gives the following analogy:

- You go into a restaurant. As you walk in you notice the premises are messy, the tables are full of dirty dishes and no one is there to seat you. After you are finally seated, you look at the menu and are shocked by the prices. Reluctantly, you order the overpriced food, which takes forever to arrive at your table. The food is terrible
- As you leave the restaurant, you find out from one of the locals that the restaurant changes owners faster than it changes employees. Most of us would not go back to that restaurant unless it happened to be the only restaurant in town. Many of us would not eat out at all!
- Just think of the public-relations image of this restaurant in the community. It doesn’t take long for the community to get their opinion out on a restaurant like that. Its public-relations image will determine its destiny
- What takes place in the community eventually becomes known in the community - whether a business, church, school or city hall. Your organization’s public-relations image defines it positively or negatively before your potential customers ever step through the door (Delph, 2005)
This same principle can be applied to an individual or a school. The innate values that we are created with are influenced by culture, family, education, etc. to form adapted values by which all things are judged. It is adapted values that can influence perspective for both the educator and student. As educators, it is important to understand this and to work to pull from the core (innate) values of students and ourselves.

The 7 mountains of culture represent those areas of influence over society. This aligns with Delph’s teachings that these spheres are a place of influence. An arena where innate values are embraced to influence and bring change (Hillman, 2008). These spheres, also referred to as arenas of influence or 7 mountains of culture, are divided into seven key areas: business, government, education, arts/entertainment, religion, family, and media (Hillman, 2008).

**EDUCATION MOUNTAIN**

The Education Mountain contributes to the development of technologies and the advancement of each of the other Seven Mountain spheres. Education provides a “fundamental vehicle by which information that is specific to each mountain is ascertained, articulated, and dispensed” (Bradshaw, 2015).

From the perspective of educator this is true. Education is key to the learning process and in the development of each student. For those not provided with educational opportunities the reverse can be true. They are deprived of some of the most fundamental rights such as the opportunity to be equipped in life and a fighting chance for survival in the world (Bradshaw, 2015). For some, education is the mountain from which all rivers flow. It is instrumental in the development of those privileged enough to benefit from the process.

**INNATE AND ADAPTED VALUES**

It is an innate need for a human being to work. The term work is inclusive of anything that we put our hand to. As an educator, it is an honor to invest both heart and soul into others. In fact, it is one of the greatest pay-it-forward acts one can do because it touches lives and therefore influences society. Yet even with this mindset an educator still struggles with a myopic approach due to personal experiences that have resulted in adapted values.

In 2004 the Master program at Florida State University (FSU) was strictly in the traditional classroom. One instructor, a member of the Board for the Business Department, stated that FSU would never offer online courses in this program. Not even a year later FSU announced that they would be offering a hybrid of online and traditional classroom options in the next upcoming program. Cultural demands forced them to meet the emerging needs of consumers. FSU had to adjust and adapt to these cultural changes in education. Just as a company must adapt so does emerging generations and those that have come before. The innate values are changed and shifted to form adapted values and this is what forms the looking glass from which all things are viewed: our perspective in life.
Hilton defines values as internal motivators. Adapted values are formed through experiences such as family, education, mentorship, culture, experience, etc. With this understanding of internal motivators, several things become evident in educating millennials. Technology has influenced the culture of the last several decades and we have been forced to evolve with it which has formed adapted values – we have adapted and our values reflect this adaptation. Millennials have not only been born into this but they are using one or more devices every day of their lives. All of this has served to influence and affect the innate and adapted values of this emerging generation.

Innate values are very different from adapted. Innate values are those things that we are born with. It is that 1% uniqueness that causes us to be different from those around us and there is even “evidence that certain moral values may be imbedded in our DNA” (Hilton, 2017). Innate values can be nurturing, loving, and purposed. As we grow and mature than we adapt to those influences in our life. Adapted values push us to fill our own needs rather than compelling us with the need to give to others (Hilton, 2017).

The values that we adapt over time can literally put us in a box and we become an echo instead of a voice. It can result in one who lives a self-focused life, taking instead of giving. For example, a young woman who has gone through sexual assault becomes either introverted and afraid or a finely-honed machine ready to do battle. In either scenario, the woman is justice driven in her approach in life. The innate value – justice – is adapted in an unhealthy way as the core human survival traits emerge (Hilton, 2017).

Another example is a little girl with brothers who constantly tease her about her weight. Even though she is a tiny little thing they convince her that she is obese and ugly. Her innate value is then adapted to what she is repeatedly being told about herself. She has adjusted her value system, form adapted values, based on the culture she grew up in.

From a psychological approach Moesgaard (2015) lists the three most basic needs of humanity: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Whether in the online or traditional classroom, as educator, these basic needs are evident in students. It is the behavior that stems from the adapted values that are misunderstood. In the example of team tasks, the student who is aggressive or angry towards peers, or the instructor, is operating in fear. Fear of failure is most prominent but the important thing to remember is that there is something deeper than the aggression. Understanding the innate need to be competent and to achieve is helpful in navigating as educator. Moesgaard shares a metaphor that illustrates this:

- If you put an avocado pit in a pot of earth it will probably grow into a tree, because it is the nature of avocados to do that [But for that to occur] they need sun; they need water; and they need the right temperatures. Those elements do not make trees grow, but they are the nutrients that the developing avocados need, that are necessary in order for the avocados to do what they do naturally (Moesgaard, 2015)

Knowledge transfer between generations is not new. The methods may have evolved to meet the technological demands of today's student but the transfer or download of wisdom from one generation to the next still lives on. A millennial student's relationship with information is
rapidly changing, which can “present a new set of interpersonal boundary challenges for us as faculty” (Espinoza, 2012). Yet, connecting with students does not necessarily mean that it is at the expense of academia. Per Espinoza (2012), the “primary challenge that we face when working with today’s students is suspending the bias of our own experiences.” In other words, the ability to change the student’s perspective is only through our ability to understand our own personal bias which is formed from our experiences (adapted values). If an educator is successful in this, then they are strategically positioned for change.

Values drive attitudes and behaviors. If these values compete with the values of others there is confusion and discord. As online educators, this is often the case in team tasks. We observe a conflict in values and the result is those who push forward into leadership roles and those who detach and become non-committal in the process. This can also be true in a traditional classroom but it seems to be a more difficult situation to navigate both for students and educators in the online classroom. This conflict in values whether adapted or innate can result in frustration and feelings of failure or lack of success. It has also been observed to result in aggressive behavior for those students facing a lower grade because of the lack of commitment in others. This aggressive behavior is observed by both the educator and peers (Espinoza, 2012).

Core values, also described as innate, are the motivators behind everything that we do. Bridget Croke (2014) lists three core values of millennials: belonging, recognition, and need for ease. While it is true that not all students, in the process of furthering education, are millennials it is good to understand the core values of emerging generations. Croke is not referring to relationship in the reference to “belonging” but rather the “badge of honor” that stems from a product or service that is popular among peers. Recognition refers to feeling special and unique: not an easy thing in today’s world. This recognition is in social circles where they are seen as cool. An example is an online community filled with “humblebrags” or “casual shares of images and recent achievements” where a peer group is likely to value and recognize through “likes and comments” (Croke (2014). The third core value is the “need for ease” outside of deep – seated values; taking the path of least resistance (Croke, 2014).

As educators, it is important to embrace the values of the organization we represent. It is just one of the ways that we can positively influence those students that we briefly encounter. The opportunity to share wisdom and knowledge is complimented by the values that impart. It is important to bring influence and to impact the education mountain through this sharing of wisdom and knowledge.

This is equally true for our students. These innate and adapted values form who they are as an individual. Each begins with innate values and a 1% unique DNA. This individualism is then influenced through culture, education, and family to form adapted values. This is the student who is placed in your sphere of influence for just a moment in life. Understanding this uniqueness and the many things that have impacted their value system equips you to be a place of wisdom and knowledge received in the process. This not only has the potential to affect your biased perspective but theirs as well. The result? Wise, nurturing, caring influencers in whatever arena(s) of society those touched are called to impact. This is what changes a life, family, and community. This is what impacts society.
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