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Research Proposal

Abstract

Attending to the Voices of Motivation from Disadvantaged Student Writers from Different Socio-Economic backgrounds in Community Colleges

This project aims to understand the mind set of low-income students who are from same socio-economic backgrounds, especially what inspire them to complete a college level essay in community colleges. Community colleges student population have increased intensely by students who are from poor low-income families, and they come from diverse academic, socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Research provided theoretical and conceptual understanding into the problems faced by educators who want to design programs to responsive to the needs of low-income, culturally and linguistically diverse students (LeCourt; Glass and Wong; and De Gennaro). Ronald David and Pia Wong projected that the writing instructors should understand and implement effective pedagogical practices to better serve the students who are historically underserved. They advocated with the help of network of teachers and schools the creative ways to publicly value the language, culture, and experiences of these students. In order to accommodate such modification, the writing instructors should adapt the concept of engage pedagogy which entails:

“Engaged pedagogy requires that teachers grasp the lives of their students in both intimated detail and broad outline, and also understand the role of schools in identify formation. Engaged pedagogy elevates students’ voices, perspectives, historical and cultural backgrounds, emerge cultural formations to the status of the core curriculum” (Glass and Wong 73).

They should change the curriculum content and instructional practices as they adapt the engaged pedagogy. This research explicitly focuses on students coming from low-income backgrounds to understand the complexities involve in everyday life routine. The poor and working class students are often very motivated to succeed but the problem is that they are overworked in other areas of their life and their financial struggles can make success in academic work very difficult. Writing instructors can understand the differences in the minds of these students who are coming from a disadvantaged background to tailor the teaching pedagogies which will help them to foster an inclusive classroom environment The research will help one understand the possible factors that motivate the students to get the writing job done. It provides a window into the students’ thinking and learning process. These students suffer through multiple handicaps of being disadvantaged economically, socially, and culturally. These situational factors hinder the student’s readiness and ability to successfully write for a college course. This project will discover how students perceive college level academic discourse and writing differently from personal perspectives. By understanding what inspires them to compose and revise the discourse document, writing instructors can design instructional practices to accommodate their interests and address their limitations to guide them in becoming effective writers. This will also help writing instructors explore the gaps in understanding, as to what matters to them the most as college writers, so that we can acknowledge those areas of improvements and enhance students’ chance of success in community college with writing

across the curriculum projects. The pedagogical approach can be modified with effective teaching techniques to meet the unique needs of poor students coming from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Background Information

Many economically poor students in community colleges come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite having the potential to reach academic excellence, they are hindered by a myriad of factors from their personal lives and the current one-dimensional educational system set in place. It is important to conduct research among minority students in order to learn about their experiences, what they regard as writer's block, writing anxiety, writing stress and other aspects of the writing process. How they view writing and other aspects that will make them successful writers are needed to be analyzed. This research focuses on the factors that can help or deter student writing process. It aims to suggest possible solutions that can support them to accomplish college success. Brad Hughes claims that "writing is a skill, because learning to write is a difficult process which requires sustained and repeated practice." Students struggle through writing process. There are different types of students. According to Merrill Harmin and Melanie Toth, they believe that all students are motivated to get the work done at college, and they possess different variety of motivation; the fully active learners, the responsible students, the halfhearted workers, and the avoiders. Many times, community college writing instructors find it challenging to motivate and inspire these halfhearted students and the avoiders. It is imperative to understand the what the writers think about the writing process, self-reflections, voices and their inner feelings.

College professors who are affluent and possess sound background knowledge about the reading and writing strategies unintentionally simplify the concept of the composing process. But

the reality is that the writing is a complex process. It is more than grammar, style, syntax, punctuation, and genre. David Bartholomae explains the writing process as:

“The students have to appropriate (or to be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and they have to do this as though they were easily and comfortably one with their audience, as though they were members of the academy, or historians or anthropologist or economists; they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline. They must learn to speak our language” (Bartholomae 5).

When students lack common understanding of these disciplines, then they cannot compose. The writing instructors are responsible to understand the circumstantial information about these students coming from different socio-economic status and disadvantaged backgrounds. The current research concentrating on students’ writing attitude and writing behavior surveys and these surveys provide them the intellectual platforms to share their concerns regarding the composing processes. This project had an objective of gathering information directly from poor and disadvantaged students, to give their voice to their thoughts, ideas, and needs in the writing process.

Students should possess self-motivation to succeed in college. Furthermore, Nancy Sommers explain that “For the students, the extent to which they revise is a function of their level of inspiration. In fact, they use the word *inspiration* to describe the ease or difficulty with which their essay is written, and the extend to which the essay needs to be revise. If students feel inspired, if the writing comes easily, and if they don’t get stuck on individual words or phrases, then they say that they cannot see any reason to revise” (382). So, this research centers around the same concept of what inspire students to get their writing done. The data gathering strategy

for this project is to administer surveys to poor and disadvantaged students; to prompt them to share their experiences with their attitudes, and to highlight writing behaviors in regard to their dilemmas and delights of the college level writing process. Zak Lancaster shares his concerns regarding the writing process, when he proposed that the writing instructors should possess the responsibility to understand the linguistic peculiarities of student writers. His projected strategy involves kinds of discourse selves and voices that the student writers construct in their writing with the consequences of their values and choices they construct (460). It is utmost important to gain awareness of the values and beliefs of these students. Hence the data from this research will help the writing instructors with knowledge to frame their pedagogy in two meaningful ways; to engage in the students' learning process, and to help them succeed. Students can report their writing attitudes and behaviors, which will play a major role in helping them maintain discipline and enthusiasm to get the writing done on time. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are in desperate need of writing and speaking skills in order to succeed in life. They have to demonstrate these skills to acquire jobs at workforce. It's not only their reading and writing skills, but their skills in building relationships with instructors such that the instructors can fully understand their predicament. We see academic struggles and failures on the surface, but their struggles are more predominant in English composition classrooms. Success in our society requires effective communication, along with a strong sense of self-motivation. Historically, poor students have significantly worse outcomes in degree attainment, certification, and transfer (Barhoum). Poor students are at great disadvantage when compared to other privileged students as who can compose essays in good structure and form, who already have a firm grip on brainstorming, self-editing, and revising. Leon Galis explored the problems of poor students from illiterate mountain people in Appalachia and confirmed that the change should be instituted

at the individual level accompanied with a major shift in the institutional approach to poor students learning process. He believes that students need certain habits of mind and conduct to succeed in college. If poor students are not equipped with those behaviors and attitudes, then it is difficult for them to succeed in community college (Galis 95).

Methodology

The community college constitute students from diverse academic backgrounds, socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. I will explore the range of developmental student writing attitudes and writing behaviors within two community colleges freshman English classrooms. The participants of this study will be poor student writers enrolled in developmental and remedial writing classes in community college. This study is undertaken to explore their views and attitudes towards the writing process. Much of the research in writing process was focused on product followed by process movement covering all aspects of the writing process including free writing, revising, formulaic writing, genre theory, and pre-writing (David, Lancaster, Devitt, Sommers, and Elbow). Over the years, the focus was centered around the writing discourse. Currently, the focus is being shifted to students and their cognitive levels of development, their anxieties, fears, and stress of the writing process. The research seldomly covered the views and experiences of poor and disadvantaged students. To obtain this information, a Writing Attitude Survey will be administered to 50 students and they will get 15 minutes of time to provide written response to the Writing Attitude Survey. The surveys will be administered over the course of Fall semester 2019. Students will complete two surveys, the first before the assignment, and the second after completing the assignment writing assignment of a research paper. This survey was developed by I.J. Podsen in 1997. The score ranges from 20 to 100 and higher scores reflects a positive and confident attitude towards writing process.

Writing Attitude Survey

Likert scales are used with a development of an idea or statement which is followed by a series of numbers which the participants can choose to show how they agree with that idea. The numbers are added for several statements and that total score represent the participant's attitude towards the concept.

5. Strongly Disagree 4. Disagree 3. Don't Know 2. Agree 1. Strongly Agree

1. I avoid writing whenever possible. 5 4321
 2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated. 1 2345
 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas. 1 2345
 4. I am afraid of writing when I know it might be evaluated. 5 4321
 5. My mind seems to go blank when I start writing. 5 4321
 6. Expressing my ideas through writing is a waste of time. 5 4321
 7. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication. 1 2345
 8. I like to write my ideas down. 1 2345
 9. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas in writing. 1 2345
 10. I like to have my friends read what I have written. 1 2345
 11. I'm nervous about my writing. 5 4321
 12. People seem to enjoy what I write. 1 2345
 13. I enjoy writing. 1 2345
 14. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly. 5 4321
 15. I'm not a good writer. 5 4321
 16. I like seeing my thoughts on paper. 1 2345
 17. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience. 1 2345
 18. It is easy for me to write good letters. 1 2345
 19. I don't think I write as well as most people. 5 4321
 20. Writing is a lot of fun. 1 2345
- GRAND TOTAL

The Writing Behavior Inventory survey will be administered to the same group of students after completing the research paper assignment to understand their writing behaviors. The Writing Behavior Inventory reflects the level of confidence and competence with regard to particular writing assignments. The higher scores indicate efficient and effective professional writing behaviors (Rafanello 58).

Writing Behavior Inventory

0.Never 1. Rarely 3. Don't Know 4. Sometimes 1. Always

1. I set aside a specific time during the day to work on writing tasks. 0 1 2 3 4
2. I gather information I need before I begin writing. 0 1 2 3 4
3. I use prewriting techniques to generate ideas (for example, outlining, mind mapping, freewriting). 0 1 2 3 4
4. I identify the specific purpose for each document. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I usually develop a working draft. 0 1 2 3 4
6. I review my draft for style, purpose, and audience. 0 1 2 3 4
7. I develop a second draft. 0 1 2 3 4
8. I proofread to check for common writing problems. 0 1 2 3 4
9. I am sensitive to my audience's problem or concern. 0 1 2 3 4
10. I avoid educational jargon. 0 1 2 3 4
11. My writing presents a professional image. 0 1 2 3 4
12. I have developed routines to organize incoming paperwork and answer routine correspondence. 0 1 2 3 4
13. I use a computer to produce my written materials. 0 1 2 3 4
14. I submit all written reports on time. 0 1 2 3 4
15. I collaborate with staff on documents. 0 1 2 3 4
16. I often seek feedback on my documents. 0 1 2 3 4

GRAND TOTAL

I will analyze the patterns of their attitudes and behaviors to their final products and to compare and contrast their behaviors and attitudes to their grades on the assignment. It will help the writing instructors to gauge the intensity and approach that these students have in their writing personalities. The data will help us to explore the core differences between the good and effective writers.

Participants

The participants will be from two community colleges, first year composition poor students with different socio- economic backgrounds coming from different race, gender, and ethnicity. They will be in a classroom environment. The participants can be of any age or gender. The surveys will be provided to them after the class. Disadvantaged students have varying thoughts and experiences as these students' face overarching challenges in trying to succeed at a community college. Being poor and disadvantaged might make them less likely to persist and succeed

compared to mainstream traditional students. The participants can provide more reliable evidence that can be utilized to support students in their efforts to succeed in college writing across the curriculum assignments.

Results

The two surveys: Writing Attitude Survey and Writing Behavior Survey will be administered to poor and disadvantaged students and data will be analyzed using the coding system. Categorizing data will include categorization scheme with pre-specified criteria related to the items in each of the survey. Additionally, there will five categories: Motivation, Inspiration, Obstacles, Dilemmas, and Challenges to explore how do these attitudes and behaviors of individual students relates to these patterns. Is there any individual pattern that can be utilize to generalize the large scale pattern which might provide resource guide? This resource material can be used to plan effective writing pedagogies. A simple qualitative analysis will involve exploring recurring patterns and themes. The data analysis will explore the relationships between student attitudes and their self -reported writing behaviors. It will provide a body of ethnographic research about what factors are impacting a student's work. College instructors can look at these concepts in new ways to make changes that are critical for student's success in community college. Data collected will be used to determine how to serve students effectively, paying close attention to students who are underserved and underprepared. It will provide personal-based evidence and most reliable experiences of writers to explore more opportunities to engage students.

Conclusion

Scholars reinforced that the students should poses self-motivation to get the writing done. Understanding the writing process of the poor and disadvantaged students is crucial to fix the

community college education system in America. Students' successes and fears of writing will be addressed to help them succeed in community college. It is incredibly unfortunate that 80 % percentage of students in community college takes one or more remedial courses. Further, 25% who took remedial education course completed a degree in 8 years of college attendance (Community College Resource Center). When students are positively engaged to share their concerns and joys of the composing process, it paves the way for them owning their learning experiences. This research will offer the opportunity to understand their own limitations and shortcomings. It provides them with an intellectual forum to interpret and share critical expressions of their responses to the writing process to internalize learning through their own narratives.

Implications

This research will help community college instructors to learn and understand what educational curriculum works and what doesn't. With this research, they can select relevant learning content and customize pedagogy to reach out and cater to these poor and disadvantaged students.

Teaching the composing process is a challenge and if students are not self-motivated, it becomes a daunting task. Teaching should be empathetic and arouse curiosity to engage students in a meaningful way. Once we understand student's predicament with the learning situation, the intended learning outcomes can be easily achieved. High levels of student engagement and interest is crucial signaling educational success. This research will empower the writing

instructors to plan the teaching instructions and classroom activities to promote critical thinking and incorporate different learning styles, integrating the outcomes of the current research into their teaching pedagogies to help their most underserved 1disadvantaged students.

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