

Chapter-9

PERSONALIZED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, higher education has been rooted in standardized curricula and rationalized processes derived from industrialization. This model offered factory-style efficiencies, but it has recently been criticized for ignoring characteristics of individual student learners and failing to adequately meet the needs and expectations of more diverse student populations. One solution lies in personalized learning, which, grounded in new theories and insights about learning as well as different approaches, helps cultivate deeper student engagement. Today, personalized learning is being adopted in higher education with help from pioneering educators and administrators reporting benefits and caveats, and opportunities to assist students unduly affected by challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter will profile the history of personalizing learning, tensions existing with status quo education, and provide insights into best practices for initiating and sustaining its use in higher education.

Keywords: Personalized Learning, Higher Education, Pedagogy, Pedagogical Relationality, Neoliberalism

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, conventional education for students of all ages has been criticized for instructional approaches driven by standardized curricula, testing and assessment practices. These practices are hold-overs from an education model developed in the early 20th century in which mass schooling from primary grades through higher education was engineered to match and reflect processes of industrial efficiency (Brass & Lynch, 2020; Turner et al., 2017). This model has dominated education since its inception, and it has proven very adept at integrating computer-based technologies that have helped it endure. Nonetheless, insights and emerging theoretical frames arising in recent decades, especially in what are known as the learning sciences (e.g. neurobiology, psychology, cognitive science), have helped mount a challenge to the dominant, standardized educational model. These insights collectively recognize a conception of human learning that reflects important characteristics unique to each individual, no matter their age. Related to this, higher education institutions have also taken steps to be more inclusive of students who have traditionally been marginalized for physical, intellectual or cultural differences and provide them with more opportunities to achieve academic success. As a result, educators of many stripes and levels have incorporated this information into more personalized approaches to course design, instruction, assessment and administration.

THIS IS A LIMITED PREVIEW OF THE CHAPTER.

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