

# Action-Research Report

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## **Initial Focus**

From the beginning, my group's action-research project has centered on creating new ways of harnessing diversity from within the CCT department. The concept of diversity is truly broad and there are many possible directions to take with this topic. But along with any choice of direction there exists the assumption that diversity can positively affect the education that CCT offers.

Diversity's benefits include a widening of one's perspective, a firmer appreciation for the value of others' knowledge, and an increased ability to see new ways of approaching old problems. All of these benefits are crucial to the development of critical and creative thinking. Diversity can take many forms and it is the challenge of CCT's professors to take advantage of its educational benefits. Professors can harness the benefits of diversity by using three educational tools in particular:

- 1) Syllabus—to *establish classroom mindsets* about the beneficial effects of diversity
- 2) Classroom interaction—to *demonstrate* the value of diversity
- 3) Assigned reading materials—to *widen the scope* of diversity outside the classroom

The professors of CCT are the primary constituency for this project. Professors are where the environment of every class begins; we felt that our action-research should start there as well.

## **Individual Research**

My individual research has centered on Allyn Bradford and CCT 616 (The Dialogue Process). I asked Professor Bradford to answer a brief questionnaire designed to give me a good understanding of his attitudes regarding diversity as well as how these attitudes have shaped CCT 616. In addition to this questionnaire, I analyzed the effects of his syllabus, classroom interaction, and texts in the classroom.

Professor Bradford's responses showed that he has a clear vision of how diversity contributes to his class (completed questionnaire is attached to this report). I shared with my group my assessment of Professor Bradford's attitudes and the other three members did the same for their researched courses. From this discussion we arrived at a proposal for the next step in our research.

## **Current Proposal**

Our group discovered that diversity was upheld as a beneficial educational tool in CCT, but there wasn't a strong consensus about *how* it should be utilized. It would be useful to have a unified idea of how diversity can positively affect the student body. I

feel that the following proposal will answer this need as well as deeply involve our constituency in action-research.

Dialogue has proven to be a great facilitator of understanding within small groups. We propose that the faculty commit to two sessions of dialogue each month. The organization of these dialogue sessions should be as follows:

#### First dialogue session:

- 1) Begin with a brief outline of guidelines to be followed within the dialogue atmosphere. This should be done so as to ensure that everyone understands how to act within dialogue.
- 2) Start the dialogue with the question: "How does diversity help CCT students in their pursuit of critical and creative thinking?" Using this question as the impetus will ensure that the concept of diversity is the central focus in the dialogue.
- 3) End with a Check-Out that consists of stating two things: what you got out of the dialogue and one action that you will take in the next two weeks. In this manner, faculty can synthesize the dialogue into their thoughts as well as involve themselves in the action-research project.

#### All other dialogue sessions:

- 1) Faculty begins the dialogue with a Check-In. This Check-In will consist of restating their last Check-Out as well as relating what happened as a result of their one action. This step is necessary in order to establish accountability to the action-research project.
- 2) Dialogue should follow based on the difficulties and successes described in the Check-Ins.
- 3) End with a Check-Out in the same format as in the first dialogue.

#### **Next Steps**

The next logical step is to test faculty interest and willingness in the project. This could be found out by sending out an email to each faculty member inquiring about their willingness to work two dialogue sessions per month into their busy schedules.

Assuming I receive a consensus of positive interest and willingness I would need to settle on a time and place that would be convenient for the entire faculty. Such a decision would be based on discussions with a cross-section of faculty, followed up with more email contact.

My role and my group's role would change. For one, we would act as facilitators and organizers of the dialogues. Secondly, we would shift our research focus to the secondary constituency: the CCT student body. Supporting diversity's continued existence in CCT is as much the responsibility of the student body as it is of the faculty. I could interview a cross-section of students to find out attitudes regarding diversity's benefits and guide future action-research from these responses. My findings (and that of my group) could be incorporated into the faculty's consciousness through participation in the bi-monthly dialogue sessions.