

Learning about ‘Imparting’ from Higher Education Experiences of Students with Disabilities at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. “A Constructivist Grounded Theory study informed by an Afrocentric view”

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Abstract: *This research piece is about the nature of imparting. It discusses the constituting elements, modalities and functions of imparting. Higher education experiences of students with disabilities at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia was used to generate this account. At a theoretical level, this account gives conceptual insights into imparting. At a substantive level, on the other hand, it shows how imparting is used to secure accommodating learning arrangements.*

Key words: *Imparting, goals, barriers, claiming, imploring, system-centered perspective, self-perception*

In a higher education context, imparting refers to communicating one’s needs for accommodating learning arrangements. Its targets are individuals responsible to take measures towards such needs. In institutions of higher learning, such individuals include instructors, department heads, deans, special needs support officers and university presidents. These individuals constitute ‘the system’ in higher education settings to which imparting is made.

As a strategy, imparting helps to secure accommodating learning arrangements. A blind student, for instance, may request his instructors for lecture notes in braille. This or another student may suggest the preparation of audio course materials. Broadly, accommodating learning arrangements enhance engagement in learning tasks. For example, instructional materials in braille and audio formats enable blind students to read, follow lectures and participate in classroom discussions. Because of these, it could be said that imparting facilitates learning through securing accommodating learning arrangements and accelerating engagement in learning activities.

Contents of imparting are derivatives of goals [1] and barriers. In the experiences of higher education students with disabilities, goals are what students set to achieve in specific timeframes.

Finishing one’s higher education study, for instance, is set as a short-term goal. Whereas securing a modest means of livelihood, gaining a better financial stability and specializing in an area of one’s preference are instances of long-term goals. Such goals lend imparting its contents of inquiry. For example, what it needs to finish one’s higher education study shapes what one communicates as an accommodating learning measure. In other words, if the need is a Sign Language interpretation service then that would be what a Deaf student asks for and or suggests. Once barriers are experienced, however, barriers also start shaping the contents of imparting. In higher education experiences of students with disabilities, barriers relate to system [2] and person-level experiences that hinder engagement in learning tasks. A lack of Sign Language interpretation service, for instance, is a barrier. It makes taking part in learning activities such as following lectures and participating in class discussions difficult. As a result, a Deaf student would communicate his needs for this service so that he could take part in these learning tasks.

Imparting takes place in two modalities, named claiming and imploring. In claiming, for example, a student with disability imparts with a stance that he has a right to get what he asks for and or suggests. As a result, his endeavors of imparting could go up to confronting the system. This happens if the system resists and or fails to respond to the student’s requests and or suggestions. In imploring, on the other hand, the student imparts ‘begging’ for favors. Inherently, these modalities of imparting are results of self-perceptions. The way a student with disability perceives himself shapes how he approaches responsible individuals in higher education settings. A ‘lifted self,’ for instance, makes a student with disability to stand up for himself and demands his right for accommodating learning arrangements. A ‘negative self’, on the other hand, makes one to implore. For example, a Deaf student who perceives himself as incapable may expect his instructors to do him a favor.

This relates to his belief of ‘I cannot do tasks by my own unless I receive assistance from others.’ Consequently, his attempts of imparting could have imploring features. On the contrary, a student with a ‘lifted self’ who believes that he is capable and ‘no less of anyone’ expects the system to respond to his requests and or suggestions. Thus, when he approaches the system, his endeavors of imparting are shaped by his presumption of ‘It is my right to get what I ask for and or suggest and the system is responsible to address my needs.’

These modalities of imparting are also ways of reminding the system of its responsibilities. As a result, students with disabilities approach responsible individuals with such intention. For example, when requests and or suggestions for accommodating learning arrangements do not get replies at a classroom level, a student may go to department heads. If requests and or suggestions are not addressed there, deans may be approached. If solutions are not given at deans’ offices, a move to presidents’ bureaus could be made. In all these endeavors, the student is positive in getting responses from the system. He believes that the system would address his attempts of imparting. This perception is a result of the student’s optimism towards higher education institutions. It emerges out of defining these institutions as proactively accommodating and if not, ready to become conducive as a response to one’s requests and or suggestions. Higher education institutions’ top position in the educational ladder leads to the advent of such presumption. Most importantly, however, this perception results in the evolvment of the system-centered perspective. This is a belief in the system in addressing one’s endeavors of imparting. It shapes the student’s relationship with the system and the way he approaches it. It gives him a hope of getting accommodating learning arrangements and energizes him to continue his attempts of imparting.

In conclusion, goals and barriers lend imparting its contents of inquiry and thus induce it. It could also be said that it is because of these two forces that imparting comes into existence. The system-centered perspective and the student’s perception of himself, on the other hand, shape the way imparting is made.

References

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