

FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESSFUL ETHICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

By Camilla Sharshekeeva, Provost American University of Kyrgyzstan

The unprecedented scope of changes in the political and economic system caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union has resulted in different controversies in the realm of higher education. When I dream of changes in Kyrgyzstan I think of some miraculous actions in education that could change things for the better. To explore what aspects of higher education should be reconsidered, I tried my utmost to look through the research papers of different western scholars and learned about William Perry, a deceased professor of Harvard University. I chose him because he was very unique in his influence on those individuals who teach, study, and work with college and university students and because his entire career and the manner in which he lived has influenced generations of faculty members, administrators, and those who themselves created theories of college student development and instruction. His book: "Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years" gives the scheme that was worked out by him according to which William Perry and his colleagues have observed the student's development. W. Perry distinguishes 9 positions of the student development. Positions 1, 2, 3 show modification of Dualistic Stage.

To make it clear I would like to say that Perry means the period of the students' development from the moment when the student sees the world in polar terms of we-right-good vs. other-wrong-bad and Right Answers for everything exist in the Absolute, known to Authority whose role is to mediate (teach) them to the student's

acceptance of diversity of opinion and uncertainty as legitimate but still temporary in areas where Authority "hasn't found The Answer yet."

Positions 4, 6, 7 refer to Relativism which covers the period when the student perceives legitimate uncertainty (and therefore diversity of opinion) to be extensive and understands that "anyone has a right to his own opinion" or we may say the student discovers qualitative contextual relativistic reasoning up to the state when he apprehends the necessity of orienting himself in a relativistic world through some form of personal Commitment (as distinct from unquestioned or unconsidered commitment to simple belief in certainty). Positions 7, 8, 9 deal already with the period of the student's development beginning from his making an initial Commitment in some area to the state when he experiences the affirmation of identity among multiple responsibilities and realizes Commitment as an ongoing, unfolding activity through which he expresses his life style. The last three positions belong to the period called Evolving of Commitments. I started recently an educational research center at AUK which is called "Bureau of Study Counsel". This name was borrowed from Harvard University's educational unit initiated by W. Perry in 1956. The plan that we would like to accomplish is to interview students at the beginning of the academic year and then at the end of the academic year to see whether he moved in his development or not. In either case we would like to explore why it happens. My assumption is that the main factor that affects effective ethical and intellectu-

al development is critical and analytical thinking. In the Soviet Union especially in provincial institutions education would mostly focus on teaching information rather than on how to question and process that information. Now, educators have begun to see critical thinking as a skill that can be taught to students at all different levels of thinking ability. I do not doubt the fact that anybody can develop to think critically. The reasons why we should focus on critical thinking because students will increase their ability to perform thinking processes that help them reach any kind of school, career, or life goal. Secondly, they can produce knowledge, rather than just reproduce it. Also, there is more hope that the student could be a valuable employee. Ultimately, critical thinking increases the student's creativity. To test it, I would like to give training via Bureau of Study Counsel at AUK to some

faculty and see what it may result in comparison with those who go ahead traditional way. Another very important innovation intensifying ethical and intellectual development is, I believe, "Multiple Intelligences" by Howard Gardner. I came to the conclusion that to recognize the individual differences in students, particularly their different ways of learning is another way to encourage a multiplicity of viewpoints. My plan is to administer tests on "Multiple Intelligences" with the faculty and students and see to the varying instruction to address the needs of different kinds of students. So, this is what I am planning to accomplish, because I am sure that the above mentioned things may bring a person to a stage in which commitments evolve and could meet the requirements in terms of the ultimate product of the university-its graduate who is expected to change our lives drastically.