

Carpe Diem Examined

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Robert Arnove explains that the fields of comparative and international education are broken down into three dimensions: scientific, pragmatic, and global. These three components provide a framework for the study of global education and offer a better understanding of international education systems while contextualizing them and determining which aspects to incorporate or avoid to improve educational experiences internationally and locally (Arnove, 2013). This paper will explore the Carpe Diem charter school system through the three dimensions described by Arnove.

Carpe Diem schools are blended learning structures with a rotation-model. According to Staker and Horn (2012), the rotation model implementation is when “students rotate on an individually customized, fixed schedule among learning modalities, at least one of which is online learning.” Students do not have to rotate to another station, and their schedules are determined by the school, teacher, or an algorithm. Carpe Diem schools rotate the students through thirty-five minute rotations between online and offline learning (Staker & Horn, 2012). Carpe Diem-Yura, now DesertView Middle and High School, outperformed the other county schools for four consecutive years (Weller, 2015). However, the results did not outweigh the lack of interest in the model. Carpe Diem’s expansion into three other states failed mostly because sitting in cubicles all day typing away with limited social learning was not appealing to students or their parents (Dobo, 2017). Although, at least one school closed because of a ruling disallowing charter school funding by the state education department (Murphy, 2018). From Arnove’s scientific dimension, the Carpe Diem blended model requires more research into the long-term effects of its implementation.

Carpe Diem's overexpansion and failed growth serve as a warning when examined through Arno's pragmatic dimension. In an article from The Hechinger Report, Robert Sommers, formally in charge of the school's expansion, lists the model's weaknesses. Sommers stated the technology was too central, more teachers were required, and they needed less scripting and more autonomy. Additionally, student extra-curricular activities were limited, and their ability to self-regulate and motivate was misjudged (Dobo, 2017).

From a global dimension, a blended learning model like Carpe Diem could be utilized in areas which have access to the internet and more sophisticated adaptive learning applications but which have limited teacher resources. However, it seems as if the model is particularly suited to self-motivated students, and that has to be a consideration. A blended learning model with a focus on high-technology may work in regions where infrastructure exists to allow for computer usage but where travel is limited.

Overall, the initial concept of the Carpe Diem model seems innovative and clearly, some aspects were successful during those first four years. Yet their model does not account for the social aspect required for learning. Certainly, if students are not able to travel to a school and need a method to learn and apply their knowledge, a blended model may work for those who are self-driven. Guidance from a knowledgeable teacher who can help direct students is vital to education; teamed with the individualized, adaptive learning some algorithms can produce, an environment that fosters individuality and student achievement can exist.

References

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